

Robert Browning's Porphyria's Lover | Analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Everyone comes from different surroundings, cultures, ethnicities, but they all have something forbidden to them. In Robert Browning's dramatic monologue, *Porphyria's Lover*, a tragic event of two lovers, the speaker and his love were separated, maybe by their class, afraid people wouldn't approve. Porphyria comes from a well-educated, upper class family, while he is in the lower-middle class. Browning sets the scene at a countryside cottage, where the speaker sits in the middle of a violent storm, while his love is at a feast, thinking of being with him. When she burst through the door, his life had brightened and he was happy once again, but not everyone gets a happy ending. Through thick and thin, he does what he thinks is best for him and his lover to stay together, even if it means sacrificing something you love.

The speaker sets the scene in a dark and gloomy environment, the hostile weather doing anything it can to upset the lake. Now that the scenes set, the speaker gives us an insight into his mind, which isn't exactly a happy place. "I listened with heart fit to break." (15) As he sits alone in his cottage, his hearts slowing breaking, but his mood soon changes when Porphyria enters. The speaker is in a depressed state of mind, thinking he wouldn't make it until she appeared.

"I listened with a heart fit to break./ When glided in Porphyria; straight/ She shut the cold out and the storm,/ and kneeled and made the cheerless grate/ Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;/" (115-9) The text above shows the difference Porphyria made on the speaker's attitude before she arrived. As he "listened with a heart fit to break", the loneliness was breaking his heart, but when Porphyria arrived, she started making a fire to warm him physically

and emotionally. " Which done, she rose, and from her form/ Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl, / and laid her soiled gloves by, untied/ her hat and let the damp hair fall, /"(ll10-13) the speaker showed how she started to undress herself in front of him. The description of her clothing being removed reveals her feelings towards the speaker. She went through a very intense storm, just to get to him, then showed her intention to stay by removing her clothes. When she sees no reaction, she continues to try and seduce the speaker. " And, last, she sat down by my side/ and called me. When no voice replied, / she put my arm about her waist, / And made her smooth white shoulder bare, /"(ll14-17) It's obvious that Porphyria is offering herself to him. She sits beside him and calls to him, but he doesn't reply. The speaker is unsure of his love for her, but she doesn't seem to give up on him. After no response, she takes his arm and places it around her waist, making her feelings clear. Once she's made every attempt she could think of to seduce him, she finally confessed her love for him. " Murmuring how she loved me-she/ too weak, for all her heart's endeavor, / to set its struggling passion free/ From pride, and vain ties dissever, / And give herself to me forever. /" (ll21-25) the speaker described her confession as "murmuring" and says that she is "too weak for all her heart's endeavor". The speaker talks about how she murmured of her love in his ear instead of making it publicly known. The speaker believed her love was too weak, which is the first time he's shown any reasons for his hesitant thoughts about her. " From pride, and vain ties dissever", this revealed how they wouldn't be accepted by society. He knows Porphyria's love isn't strong enough to break free from society's norms. " But passion sometimes would prevail,/ Nor could tonight's gay feast restrain/ A sudden thought of one so pale/ For love of her, and all in

<https://assignbuster.com/robert-brownings-porphyrias-lover-analysis/>

vain:/"(ll26-29) The lines above show that Porphyria had left a "gay feast" just to come see him. While the speaker sat alone in his cottage, barley holding through the storm, she had just come from a party. Her "vainer ties" could be that she is upper class and he is lower class, which makes society frown upon their love. We could assume she murmured her love to him instead of publicly confessing it because she is of a higher economic class.

When Porphyria was finally able to get a reaction from him, he started thinking about whether or not she would stay with him or if she just wants him in the moment. He claims their

Love is "all in vain", but Porphyria's actions do not suggest that their loves are in vain, but he believes when their love is open and put to the test, she'll feel completely different. "So, she was come through wind and rain./ Be sure I looked up at their eyes/ Happy and Proud; at last I knew/ Porphyria worshiped me: surprise/ Made my heart swell, and still it grew/ While I debated what to do."(ll30-35) At this point, he looked into her eyes and saw that she was happy and proud, and her love was real. Although he didn't know if her love would stay, he knew she loved him regardless of wealth and class. He begins to think about what to do. "That moment she was mine, mine, fair,/ Perfectly pure and good: I found/ A thing to do, and all her hair/ In one long yellow string I wound/ Three times her little throat around,/ And strangled her. No pain felt she; / I am quite sure she felt no pain. /" (ll36-42) In the lines above, speaker explains how he had her in his arms. When he looked into her eyes, he saw her genuine love, but fears he will lose her. So the speaker took Porphyria's hair and wrapped it around her throat until she

couldn't breathe anymore. He had an ironic concern for her, mentioning she "felt no pain", although he killed her.

"As a shut bud that holds a bee, / I warily opened her lids: again / Laughed the blue eyes without a stain. / And I untightened next the tress / About her neck; her cheek once more / Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss: / I propped her head up as before, / Only, this time my shoulder bore / Her head, which droops upon it still:"(ll43-51) In these lines, we begin to see the speaker's mental illness. He had wanted her for so long, and when she finally came, he was afraid to lose her so he killed her. Now that she's dead, he has no worry of her leaving. At this point, he's opening and closing her eyes, laughing at her eyes, kissing her cheek, and propping her dead body against his. "The smiling rosy little head, / so glad it has its utmost will, / that all it scorned at once is fled, / and I, its love, am gained instead!"(ll52-55) The speaker has now made it seem that Porphyria is an object. The speaker then claims that being with her was her "utmost will". Since he killed her, he got rid of everything she ever hated, and gave her a lifetime with him instead. He took away all her concerns and all her problems, making her think he did her a favor. "Porphyria's love: she guessed not how / her darling one wish would be heard. / and thus we sit together now, / and all night long we have not stirred, / and yet God has not said a word!" (ll56-60) These lines show that the speaker thinks he has given her the one thing she always wanted. He claimed her one wish was to be together forever, when he says, "She guessed not how her darling one wish would be heard" and proceeds to explain that he granted her wish by ending her life. "God has not said a

word!" he believes God agrees with what he's done since nothing's happened and he's been able to lay with her all night.

Mr. Browning did an excellent job on this poem, in my opinion, as it can help teach life lessons. For example, not everyone are as they play themselves out to be. Porphyria had no idea that she wouldn't ever leave that cottage again. Browning wrote this to combine early nineteenth century poetry with modern day poetry. He was also exploring his sensuality in his work, to see how much society can take. This work of Browning is considered a Dramatic monologue since it reveals aspects about a certain character through series of events. He most likely wrote this to help show the separations of feelings between the two, based on their beliefs and their social class. So don't try and judge a book by its cover, because the consequences can be misleading.

Works Cited

- Browning, Robert. Porphyria's Lover. Print.
- Annie, Lee-James Bovey, et al. " Analysis of Porphyria's Lover by Robert Browning." Poem Analysis, 21 Feb. 2019, poemanalysis.com/porphyrias-lover-robert-browning-poem-analysis/.