

# My last duchess and porphyry's lover



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

“ My last Duchess” is set in the renaissance, period in Ferrara, northern Italy, whereas “ Porphyry’s Lover” is set in the Victorian times. Two different age gaps The madness and love in both poems is shown in many ways such as the obsession for control. Control is shown in both poems, the duke in “ My Last Duchess” has a passion for control over his wife, “ Too easily impressed; she liked what ever, she looked on, and her looks went everywhere. ” This shows that he had no control over her, as she looked everywhere and she was too easily impressed by the things she saw.

The madness for control in “ Porphyry’s lover” is in a different context as we have the idea that the speaker is ill as he is described as “ one so pale. ” He states, “ at last I knew that porphyries worshipped me. ” This implies that the lover had finally gets what he wanted which is her love. Madness and love are also shown in the imagery of both poems. In “ My Last Duchess” the painting is the dominant image which “ Fra Pandolfs hands worked busily a day and there she stands. ” Fra Pandolf is the artist who painted the portrait.

The poem also refers to a sculpture of Neptune taming a sea horse, “ Notice Neptune taming a seahorse. ” This could be thought of the Duke picturing himself as “ Neptune” and his wife “ the sea horse,” the Duke could be trying gain control over his wife. In “ Porphyry’s Lover” a different type of image is shown which is called Tableaux Vivant. This is where a human is pictured or made into a certain picture by another human, “ I propped her head as before,” this is suggesting that the lover was positioning her head as before she died.

Both speakers seek to create the lovers as they want them to be. Another way madness and love are shown is within the form of the poem: the use of caesura, enjambment, and dramatic monologue. Dramatic monologue is where we are given a biased story from the perspective of one speaker often with a silent listener. One use of caesura is “sir, twas not all one! My favour at her breast, the dropping of the daylight in the west,” as the pace quickens the Duke’s tone changes and the reader can tell that the Duke’s anger is beginning to become more enraged.

In Porphyry’s lover the Caesura is used to make the reader seem the man is calm. “Happy and proud; at last I knew that Porphyry worshipped me”. Madness and love is also shown in the poetic devices such as metaphors, “that’s my last Duchess painted on the wall, looking as she is alive.” Implies that she could be painted to the point of looking alive. In “Porphyry’s Lover” she metaphorically is described, “she glided in Porphyries,” this would suggest that she peacefully came into the cottage.

It shows how the lover sought to see her as perfect he also describes her as “pure. Imagery is a prominent part in both poems, “Sir Twas not her husband’s presences that called that spot of joy on her cheek,” this describes what happened when the Duchess saw other men. It is a motive for the Duke’s jealousy. The male speakers both begin as seemingly normal people, “I listened with a heart fit to break” (Porphyry’s Lover) and “wilt you please sit down and look at her” (My Last Duchess). Both these capture the calmness in the speaker. However, they soon reach the point of madness, “she thanked men-good! But thanked I do not know” (My Last Duchess).

This suggests that it is all in the Duke's mind, a bit of a fantasy. "Too weak in her hearts indever to, set it struggling passion free" (Porphyry's Lover) evokes the madness growing in the lover. The women in both poems are not angels either, for the woman in "My Last Duchess" "She rode around the terrace- all and each would draw from her a liking speech or blush, at least." This would suggest that she was not loyal to her husband and went out to look for other men, which could have left him to become insecure and mad.

The woman in "Porphyry's Lover" goes against tradition in her time. As I mentioned before, the poem is set in Victorian times. Victorians did not like the idea of relationships outside of marriage. In fact, it was hated amongst them and if one was caught out then you would be ridiculed in society. Both women are shown to be "fallen" rather than the "angel" in the house, they both are presented in sexual terms "passion of her Ernest glance" (My Last Duchess) "she shut out the cold and the storm" (Porphyry's Lover) and this drives the lovers to murderous action.

As the madness for love grows, the men in the poems went in murdering their lovers to get what they want, "I gave commands, and then all smiles stopped together ... half-flush that dies along her throat." This suggests that the Duke paid someone to strangle her. The speaker in "Porphyry's Lover" is more open about the murder as he makes it sound easier to kill Porphyry, "In one long string, I wound it three times around her little neck, and strangled her."

This suggests that there was no struggle but we can not be sure that it is true as we only have one side of the story. The simplicity with which he

supposedly murders Porphyry reflects his distraught state of mind. In conclusion, I feel that the link between the themes are shown by the men in both poems as they start off as seemingly normal people but quickly progress to madmen driven by love for their lovers. This is because they have had unfulfilled love which leads to obsession which leads to action.