

Love is an abstract
emotion and can
produce conflicting
feelings



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Love is an abstract emotion, untouchable even though it dwells in our hearts.

It can have many faces creating conflicting feelings; yet each time it is immeasurable and its reach limitless. Love can be radiant and a source of joy and happiness for the possessor, altering one's life to such an extent that it can never be the same again. However, love's path is not always smooth for it can produce as much pain and sorrows as it does happiness. Even though it may create mixed feelings, love itself is not always the same. It can vary from person to person and the emotions that it creates within people also differ.

We can acknowledge this through the first two poems which I have studied. Although they both convey feelings of intense love, John Clare in 'First Love' attempts to show the doubtful stages of love at first sight, whereas Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet in 'How Do I Love Thee?' portrays the intensity of her long-term love in a very celebratory manner. 'First Love' and 'How Do I Love Thee?' are both very personal experiences as they are written in the first person narrative. I believe that the two poets, Clare and Browning, use this tense to create a greater impact on the reader. One example of first person narrative is as follows: "I ne'er was struck before that hour" (Clare) "I love thee to the depth, breadth and width..

." (Browning) They appeal more directly to the reader in a way that would not have been possible if the poems were written in second or third person narrative. We know this from words such as 'I' and 'My' which are used by both poets throughout their poems. In 'First Love', Clare tries to use concrete ideas to express love, as love is a conceptual emotion. One of the

examples used in the poem is: " My life and all seemed turned to clay" By expressing the debilitation he feels using such imagery, Clare is successful in capturing a solid emotion caused by the allusive love.

Similarly, Browning also compares her abstract love to something that she can visualise: " I love thee to the level of every day's Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight" As we can see from the above, both poets have tried to portray love by not only describing it as a solid and transfixed object, but also in a manner that connects it with other visual articles. This has been done through the use of strong language techniques such as similes and metaphors. Clare uses metaphors to express the extreme emotions he feels in ' First Love'. In the beginning of the poem, Clare states: " And stole my heart away complete" He then goes on to continue this metaphor at the end of the poem: " My heart has left its dwelling place And can return no more." Here, Clare tries to exaggerate the position of his heart, which is further emphasised because of the fact that he describes it twice using metaphors. In this way, the reader feels that this is a strong change that Clare experiences due to love; especially because his heart is the last subject of the poem.

As well as using similes and metaphors, Clare also uses personification to show the intensity of his love. " And then my blood rushed to my face" By using personification, Clare is able to make his feelings seem real and intense to the reader, in order to describe the emotions. Similarly, Browning also uses similes in a strong, figurative way in order to show the status of her love: " I love thee freely, as men strive for Right" In this phrase, Browning portrays the freedom she feels in loving this person, meaning that she loves <https://assignbuster.com/love-is-an-abstract-emotion-and-can-produce-conflicting-feelings/>

willingly. Furthermore, in the same phrase, we come across a hint of altruism, through the word 'Right'; this gives us evidence of the truthness of this mutual love, which she carries confidentially.

As well as the above, Clare and Browning also use rhetorical questions in their poems. Nevertheless, the effects of using such questions vary." Are flowers the winters choice? Is love's bed always snow? These two rhetorical questions used by Clare bring about a sense of doubt in the poem, 'First Love'. As we know, flowers never bloom in the winter; snow never stays transfixed and eventually melts. From this we can see how Clare is trying to compare such objects to symbolise the impossibility of his love." How do I love thee?" This is a rhetorical question used by Browning.

Unlike Clare, Browning uses the above phrase to convey the positive and definite strength of her love.'First Love' and 'How Do I Live Thee' both use imagery in different ways to illustrate diverse ideas." Her face it bloomed like a sweet flower" Here, Clare compares his lover's face to nature. As we know nature symbolises peace and harmony. By using a flower to represent nature, Clare can successfully transmit the harmonious emotions he feels upon sighting her face through the use of such language.

" They spoke like chords do from the string" Clare also uses music to embody love, as we can see from the above phrase. Music represents joy and love and due to this, Clare uses chords to exemplify this expression." Trees and bushes round the place Seemed midnight at noonday" From the above, we can see that Clare has used gothic and supernatural elements to express the emotions he feels being in love. The phrase tells us that Clare

feels like as if his entire world has turned upside down and we can understand how this love has affected him.

Nevertheless, not all imagery used by Clare is optimistic. He not only shows us the positive side of love, but also the negative effects that it can produce." Stole my heart away" Clare applies a sense of loss to his love, as we can see from the above. This is where the reader becomes aware that the love is not very powerful and that Clare has no confidence of it lasting." My face was pale, as deadly pale" Not only does Clare hint at loss, he also creates an element of death and sickness in his poem. This is to portray the mixed emotions that he is feeling and which have been caused by love.

Unlike Clare, who uses imagery to illustrate the conflicting emotion he feels, Browning uses her language to convey the grandness of her love. She does this in various ways:" I love thee freely, as men strive for Right; I love thee purely as they turn from Praise." Browning uses moral values such as ' Praise' and ' Right' to compare the greatness of her love with. She does not use tangible objects but abstract principles in order to prove the significance of her love. The fact that she writes the words using a capital letter at the start shows us the superiority Browning gives to these ethics and how much she herself values them."

..-I love thee with the breath, Smiles and tears, of all my life!" Here, Browning uses triple emphasis to express the power of her love. Through the use of repetition, the reader understands that she loves him to everything that she has experienced in her life.

As we have seen, language is used by both poets to express their feelings regarding love. Nevertheless, we can also comprehend these feelings by investigating the overall tone of each poem. In 'First Love', tone is used to illustrate the changes one can experience when in love. 'I ne'er was struck before that hour
With love so sudden and so sweet'
Here, the poet expresses a very rapturous and ecstatic atmosphere through the use of passive verbs. Nevertheless, the entire atmosphere alters when Clare begins to use doubtful phrases. 'Are flowers the winters choice?'
By using such phrases, Clare brings about a sense of doubt within the poem.

This is because he tries to use impossibilities to represent his chances of ever being with his lover. However, the poem then diverts its course and becomes more hopeful. 'She seemed to hear my silent voice
And love's appeal to know'
As we can see, the poem becomes steadier and a hint of hope is added. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of the poem is not totally positive and it does contain uncertainty within it.

From the above three quotes, we can acknowledge the overall mood of the poem to be unsteady and unbalanced. Sympathy is also felt for the poet because there is uncertainty on whether his love is returned or unrequited. On the other hand, a very diverse tone is illustrated in 'How Do I Love Thee?' because as Clare discusses how his love has affected him, Browning portrays the strength of her love. 'I love thee to depth, breadth and height
My soul can reach'
From this quote, we can understand the defiant and pompous tone used by the poet to illustrate her love. 'I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints'
Browning also shows the intensity of her love by stating it to be dearer to her than the love for her religion.

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Thus, the reader can understand the greatness of her love as if she actually prefers her lover to her faith.'In my old griefs and with my childhood's faith'Here, Browning states that she loves her lover in a way a child does; almost blindly and without any second thought. To add to this intensity, Browning also says'And if God choosel will love you better after death'Here, Browning tries to express that even death cannot separate her from this love and she is in a way, challenging God! Overall, we can see the great attachment the poet has for this person and the unwavering, boisterous tone that she carries in regards to her love. This is very unlike ' First Love' because of the steadfast and positive tone that runs throughout the entire poem.

Clare and Browning both structure their poems so that they support the tone of the poems. In ' First Love', Clare uses a regular rhyme scheme in order to make sense of a very upside-down, confusing experience. We know that this experience is very perplexing for Clare through phrases such as;" Trees and bushes round the placeSeemed midnight at noonday" Not only this, but Clare also uses colour that symbolises love. In the first verse, Clare uses phrases that illustrate the colour white. One example of this is'My face turned pale, as deadly pale'However, in the second verse, the colour red is expressed very violently.

' And blood burnt round my face'However, in the last verse of the poem is again symbolised in the colour white.'Is love's bed always snow'We can see how Clare uses different colours to represent love. On the other hand, Browning in ' How Do I Love Thee?' does not use colours to symbolise her love. Nevertheless, like ' First love' Browning also uses a regular rhyme <https://assignbuster.com/love-is-an-abstract-emotion-and-can-produce-conflicting-feelings/>

scheme by writing her poem in the form of a Petrarchan sonnet. She may be using such a rhyme scheme in order to emphasise the control and stability that she expresses in the poem.

Christina Rossetti uses the title 'A Birthday' symbolically. Birthdays bring about joy and happiness and are unique times that people may consider very special. In this way, Rossetti also tries to convey the uniqueness of her love and that it is just as special and joyous as the arrival of one's birthday. By choosing such a figurative title, the reader is not only informed of the subject, but also the mood and tone of the poem. Rossetti structures her poem so that it splits into two octaves. 'My heart is like.

..'In the first octave, Rossetti uses repetition and similes to emphasise the state of her heart. She does this by repeating the above quote three times and each time she uses a different simile, in order to stress her feelings. 'My heart is like a singing bird whose nest is in a watered shoot' The images used in the first octave are all associated with nature. The images that prevail are of idyllic perfection; therefore, they embody the state of her heart and that her heart can be no better.

From this, we can recognize the joyous and radiant feelings felt by Rossetti. 'My heart is gladder than all these because my love is come to me.' Rossetti delays telling the reader the cause for her joy until the very end of the first octave, in lines seven and eight. In this way, Rossetti adds tension and suspense to her poem; this technique is very effective because it grasps the reader's attention, so that they are encouraged to read on. In the second octave, the poet stops using repetition and begins to discuss her emotions in

a different way.'Raise me a dais of silk and down'As we can see, Rossetti starts to use imagery of rich and rare materials.

. 'Hang it with vair and purple dyes'Rossetti uses the colour purple because purple symbolises royalty.'Carve it in doyes and pomegranates'Rossetti also tries to use exotic imagery by using imagery such as pomegranates in order to add a great and glamorous affect. As we can see from the above three quotes, Rossetti is demanding for highly-classed, rich and exotic objects for her love because she believes her love deserves the best of everything; she wants to be decolant and luxurious.

Moreover, Rossetti uses very imperative and commanding words such as ' Raise', ' Hang' and ' Carve', in order to show the grandness she feels and the sense of power that has filled her because of this love.'Because the birthday of my lifels come, my love is come to me.'Rossetti uses enjambment in the last two lines to create a sense of urgency in her poem; this also helps to create a sense of pace within the poem. In this way, the reader can quickly find out the reason as to why she is feeling like this.

Throughout this poem, the reader remains unaware about Rossetti's love. We can only assume that her love is devoted to a human; nevertheless, through the phrases used by the poet, it is likely that this love is dedicated to a specific love for religion. We can acknowledge this through much of the imagery used by Rossetti:'My hear is like an apple-treeWhose boughs are bent with thickset fruit'Rossetti uses nature to express her joy of this love that has come to her. Nevertheless, as nature is also connected to God, Rossetti could be relating her love for not any human being, but to God and

religion. We can assume this to be connected to God because all the imagery used in the first octave is about idyllic nature. 'Hang it with vair and purple dyes' In the second octave, Rossetti begins to bring about a sense of royalty, richness and grandness into her poem.

As God is also regarded as a very high Being, she could be using such imagery to try and portray His greatness. As the colour purple conveys a sense of royalty and is commonly used in churches, Rossetti may be using this colour to portray the fact that her love is not for any worldly thing, but really for her religion. Robert Browning's dramatic monologue, 'My Last Duchess' explores a very possessive, jealous and controlling love. Although there is use of heroic couplets throughout the entire poem, no emphasis is added to the end of each line because of its speech-like format.

Browning also organises his poem like one continuous verse that has many enjambments. 'That's my last Duchess painted on the wall, Looking if she were alive. I call That piece a wonder, now' By using the enjambment, the reader is able to read the phrase continuously and due to this, the phrase can be more easily understood. Nevertheless, Browning in many places also uses Caesuras to create tension within the poem.'

.. This grew; I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together' We can see how the use of use caesuras in the semi- colons increases the suspense in the poem by creating such pauses. Looking back at the history of this poem, we find that Browning wrote this poem based on a true story. Browning was inspired to write this poem when he came across the story of the Duke of

Ferrara (1537-1597), who was from the powerful, wealthy family of Este in Italy and had married a fourteen year old girl from an equally rich family.

She died just three years after her marriage- most believe that she was poisoned. The story then goes on to say that the Duke decided to marry the daughter of the Count of Tyrol in Austria. Through these points, Browning illustrated this event through his perspective of what may have happened to the Duchess, three centuries after the event took place. From within the poem, we find the Duke to be a very power-loving man with plenty of riches.

This poem is very different from the other poems as the love is not for any human, but of obsession with control and secular materials. 'But to myself they turned (since none puts by The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)' In this instance, the Duke is talking to an Austrian envoy who has come to settle the wedding of the daughter of the Count of Tyrol to whom he has shown the portrait of his deceased wife. As we can see, this is a very harsh, selfish tone created by Browning to portray the character of the Duke. He uses a concept of control that only the Duke acquires; in other words the Duke himself starts to direct whether a person can cast their eyes on his dead wife or not.

We could also argue that the Duke is satisfied with the Duchess' death because he has such control over her that would not have been possible if she was still alive. In the poem, we find that the Duke dislikes the idea of his wife being pleased with anything but him. He believes that his wife should be inspired by him alone. 'She thanked men,-good! But thanked Somehow-I know not how-as if she ranked My gift of nine-hundred-years old name With

anybody's gift.' Here, we can see how the Duke believes that what he has done for his wife is the best that anyone can ever do. He is very self-centred and even wants to seize the joy his wife feels.

'...Who'd stoop to blame This trifling? Even had you skill In speech- (which I have not)- to make your will Quite clear to such an one..

..-E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose Never to stoop.' We can see that the Duke is a person who finds it difficult to put his feelings into words. Nevertheless, this is not considered the reason to why he did not speak to his wife about her actions that he disliked. In fact, the actual reason for this is that the Duke, being a very status-loving individual, does not want to express such thoughts to his wife as he thinks it is degrading to his 'stature'!

.. I gave commands Then all smiles stopped altogether' At this point, we reach the climax of the poem; Browning uses a caesura to emphasise the greatness of this phrase. As we can see, the Duke found no other alternative to solve this problem but to immediately kill his wife. Here, we find how much disregard the Duke has for his wife and how he discounts her feelings.'

.. Notice Neptune though, Taming a sea-horse, though a rarity Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!' The Duke is in love with possessions and boasts about his riches with much delight. Neptune and the sea-horse are not only a sign of his riches, but it could be that the Duke points the Sea God out because he likewise, wants to tame and control his wife. Browning very cleverly portrays this in order to alert the reader on the true character of the

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Duke. Moreover, there is more to the story if we consider the history of this poem; through this we can understand the veiled warnings that the Duke may be hinting to the envoy.

By explaining the consequences the Duchess faced, the Duke may be warning the Count that he does not want the same thing from his new bride-to-be.