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“Porphyria’s Lover”: Psychosis of the Author, Robert Browning

Robert Browning is completely sane. However like all authors, he has a God complex in which he is able to act on society’s fears and taboos and create a mirrored world in a poem where society’s qualms and constraints can be acted out, broken, and forgiven. It also helps that Browning being a man can portray such a scandalous tale depicting the sensual and violent world of mankind, and have it shake present society. Similarly as Chopin’s *The Storm* Browning entwines divine manifestation of a stormy night to which both authors acted as God, yet Browning instead of a fleeting passion of two lovers to brew and end, he allowed a violent murder to happen. Just as Chopin’s characters’ actions are forgiven by it not being concluded of a punishment, Browning’s narrator faced no punishment. The readers, whom are society looking in can only forgive Browning’s character for the reason being is they will never know the consequences of the actions already unfolded. However Browning not only acting as a God by creating his poem, but also as God within the poem as his character he is able to enact righteousness. Nevertheless Browning only brings to light the nature of society.

The storm in the poem all too well foreshadowed a coming event. Browning’s lines: The sullen wind was soon awake...It tore the elm-tops down for spite...And did its worst to vex the lake (2-4) suggests a conscious. In a sense this is Browning acting as God, the creator of the poem telling the reader of pending events, however it also suggests that God is pre-telling the narrator what is to happen in the coming moments. The protagonist, but yet antagonist is merely listening to the storm and does not act even when Porphyria comes in to the cottage and talks to

him. It is only when Porphyria professed her love to him then he acts. He says she “worshipped” (30) him which causes him to wait for a moment of clarity in how to respond.

Browning not only acting as an agent of God takes upon himself to cleanse the sin of idolatry as it’s been deemed by the commandments, “I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have any strange gods (man) before Me” and therefore the narrator kills his lover in order to purify her. However Browning’s poem is wholly similar to Chopin’s *The Storm* in which Chopin herself acts as God of her story to allow the sin of adultery to happen and be concluded within a storm. Browning does not follow the same pattern because he’s not acting as the God of the poem, but as an incarnate for society, particularly the Victorian culture who deemed that a woman was not to sleep with a man before marriage nor could she be alone with him. As her death comments not only on sexuality and sensuality, but also on class by way of the narrator stating that she was, “Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor...To set its struggling passion free From pride, and vainer ties dissever...And give herself to me forever” (22-25), the understanding of being with a lover of a lower standing forever (marriage) would drastically change her life as she would more than likely be disowned from her family.

Purification by death is a grand theme in Browning’s poem without a doubt to showcase the Victorian culture from a woman’s perspective. In an irrational way Browning’s narrator actually protected his lover’s virtue. She remained pure in life through death by society’s wishes, but she too, got as she desired which was to be together forever with her lover. As Chopin was God over her story, Browning of his poem, there was no true punishment, therefore everyone was happy, and so God did not say a word.