

\* IF his downfall was 'his own' actions then you are disagreeing with the statement as it is not 'Fate' or 'Fortune'

How far would you agree that the most striking feature of Browning's poems is the way characters experience extreme change of fortune?

Robert Browning often depicts characters in his poems, as people who experience an extreme change in fortune. One being Porphyria's Lover, where Porphyria has been stripped of her identity and dignity as her lover, "three times her little throat around" put a stop to her life. The other one being The Patriot, a man who was once glorified and worshipped by society, was <sup>now</sup> being led to the "Shambles' Gate" one can only presume that this is due to his own actions.

\* ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ → this is an interpretation, not definite

Firstly, this presumption completely supports the idea that the case of Porphyria and her lover is nothing but their change of luck. Browning portrays Porphyria's character as woman whom is very high in status and extremely wealth. However, this is completely irrelevant when considering the interpretation that she actually suffering from an illness. A woman who "glided in" was far "too weak" and incapable of being accountable for promiscuity, one can consider her loyalty towards her lover succeeded many hurdles, as she escaped the upper class prestige lifestyle with her illness. Even with this burden of an illness she still manages to "kneeled and made the cheerless grate/Blaze up" this elaborates on her commitment and prioritising nature, also showing her devout love for him. So, the act that Porphyria's Lover took on board was merely him repaying her in two ways. One being for the amount of love she has given him and two that he should be the one that sets her free of this pain. Browning depicts this in order to show that Porphyria's Lover has committed the highest act of love.

A01

write a strong argument presented here.

→ elaborate for A04.

Arguably, one can consider that Porphyria has done a shameful act which consequently led to her being known as 'The Fallen Woman' which suggests that it has nothing to do with her luck but the choices she has made. Brownings use of imagery emphasises on the sins that Porphyria has committed, with words such as "soiled" and "dripping." After all, she has nothing left to give as she has completely 'lost her innocence' as one would say. Porphyria's death is due to her not focusing or acting upon the norm of a Victorian female, instead she is explicitly revealing herself to the rest of society, staining their love and making herself impure. That is why it was only fair that Porphyria was killed due to her failure of meeting social expectations, making the wrong choices. Nevertheless, this same interpretation of Porphyria's promiscuous behaviour can be questioned as the narrator is completely fallible. Porphyria's Lover has had no striking change in fortune but acts upon his jealousy and bitterness of Porphyria's status as to say that killing her was a levelling device which takes away the social name that she carries. One could easily question the lover's psych as psychologically he is a disturbed individual who believes that he is socially superior, allowing him to take control of decisions and not having to rely on luck. Browning constantly sets up these characters, for example in 'My Last Duchess' the Duke of Farrar acts as if he is in charge of his lady. Browning depicts The Duke of Farrar and Porphyria's lover as an archetypal Victorian male, hence; why they consisted of male domineering characteristics who believed that woman were inferior, so in fact the women were the ones who experienced more misfortunes than men.

further interpretation

Evaluation? Which interpretation do you agree with?

Opposed to this, ~~Browning's poem~~ The Patriot is merely illustrating that it was his fortune to be worshipped by society even the "house-roofs" glorified his every step that mixed with "myrtle" as his arrival was welcomed. Browning creates a spectacular entrance of The Patriot, he deliberately portrays this image of a martyr who has self-sacrificed himself for the nourishment and life that he gives to people of his country. It is reasonable to say that it was his fortune to be loved in society,

and loved by the reader, when it is exposed to the reader that he is being led to the "Shambles' Gate" it is not specified on what his sin was. Browning intentionally does this in order for the reader not to judge him on the sin he has committed but rather to love him as a man "who leaped at the sun" for his country, gave life and hope to society. In addition, this could be The Patriot's fortune of being a hero, in order for him to gain a higher reward from God; he must pass these trails of acceptance at the time of death.

On the other hand, The Patriots change of fortune is his own fault as opposed to lack of luck, being a 'patriot' in modern society readers may interpret it rather negatively instead of it being looked at as someone who defends for their country. As his "misdeeds" are indications of him being a political traitor and war criminal, Browning allows us to speculate the attitudes and values of the patriot. One may interpret the leap at the sun as an act of bravery, which now can be undermined as a weaker argument in comparison to the patriots lack of logically and rationally decision making instead puts him at risk. One may also assume that this is the reason for his downfall and physically beaten body which "bleeds" due to the inadequate choices that he made.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that the most striking feature in Browning's poems have less to do with the extreme change of fortune but rather more with the decisions each individual character makes and carries out, one may believe that this is the reason behind the incidents such as being psychologically unstable.

some evaluation here.

Band 5 : WW1: Close analysis  
Balanced argument

① Evaluation of different interpretations.