**MY LAST DUCHESS**

“My Last Duchess” is a dramatic monologue written by Robert Browning. The monologue has a subtitle: “Ferrara”, which informs the reader where the scene is set. Reading the title and subtitle the intelligent reader understand space and time are very clear. In fact reading the word “Ferrara”, the intelligent reader understands the scene is set in Italy, indeed the word “Duchess” sends to a clear period of time: the Renaissance. In addition the word my, being a possessive adjective is connected to the idea of possession typical of man’s mentality of that period. So there may be a very closely relationship with the duchess and his husband: the duke, who probably is the speaking voice. He might be duke Alfonso II d’Este. Finally recalls something which is finished, so probably the duchess is dead.

As supposed from the title the speaking voice is not the poet, but the duke (in fact it is a dramatic monologue) who is showing to somebody a fresco in which his last duchess is represented (so his duchess is dead). He affirms “I call that piece a wonder now”. Browning focuses the reader’s mind on the word “now”, which means that something must be changed. In addition he says Fra’ Pandolf painted it. He adds the expression “and there she stands”, which create a tone of detachment between the duke and the duchess and then he invites the listeners to sit down and see the fresco. The obsession for the possession comes to light because the duke affirms that nobody has seen the fresco, but he, the listener and Pandolf. He has a very assertive tone, he has the power of the fresco. The duke wants to describes his wife, but to tell the truth in the poem comes to light his countenance, in fact all he says is connected with him. He is jealous, obsessed, self-centred and he has a patronizing attitude. His obsession for the power is underlined by the fact that the duke forces the listeners to focus his attention on duchess’ glance, the way she looks, she is characterized by the delight. All we know about the duchess is filtered by the duke. His obsession is remarked once again by Browning with the curtain which hides the fresco. Through the curtain the duke can decide which people to show it. Even in the words reported by Fra Pandolf’s ones he show the possession “Over my Lady’s”. Indeed Browning uses the repetitive sound “I” to focus reader’s mind on the speaker. In addition the intelligent reader understand from Fra’ Pandolf’s reported words that the duke killed his wife “The faint half-flush that dies along her troats”. In the poem there are some terms belonging to the speech “How shall I say?”. The duke tried to explain the listener the cause of duchess’ happiness and why she used to smile. He affirms she has a heart too easily impressed, in fact she liked everything. He affirms his duchess smiled to him, but he adds that she smiled to anyone in the same way (he makes some examples). To tell the truth the duke is inner sick, because he cannot dominate his wife and he couldn’t bear his wife smiled to anybody, he wanted his wife only for him. To make it possible it makes his wife, who loved, a fresco after killing her, to have her only for himself. The duke expresses all his resentment for duchess’ attitude saying “As if she ranked I know not my gift of a nine-hundred years old name with anybody’s gift”. He thinks he gave his wife the most important gift in the world and so she has to be grateful only to him. Indeed the duke asserts he didn’t speak with the woman about the question, because it would have been an humiliating act: “E’en then would be some stooping, and I chose Éen never to stoop”. Duke’s pathology grows more and more as the poem goes on. He concludes the narration explaining directly he ordered to kill his wife, in cause of her way of looking other people: “I gave commands, the all smiles stopped together”. In the final part of the poem the intelligent reader discovers the listeners is a messenger sent to a Count to marry his daughter with the duke. The poem finishes with the bronze of the sea horse, which is a warning to the messenger. In fact it means that if he doesn’t like the behaviour of his future wife he will kill her.