**MY LAST DUCHESS - ROBERT BROWNING**

**ANALYSIS**

“My Last Duchess” is a dramatic monologue by Robert Browning. The text keeps both characteristics from drama (as the speech) and monologue (the speaking voice speaks to somebody that doesn't answer).

Just reading the title, the reader’s attention focuses on the words “my” and “last”: the first one implies a man with a possessive attitude towards his duchess, instead the second means it will never be another one after her. The speaking voice is different from the writer in order to bring in life the text. Browning gives us further information about the setting; this monologue is set in Ferrara. Why should he set his poem in Ferrara? This choice moves away the reader from the English Victorian Age and makes reference to the Italian Renaissance, at the time of duke Alfonso II d’Este. Deictics are an important part and characteristic of dramatic monologue.

The first person speaking voice is showing a fresco to somebody about his last duchess, it looks “as if she were alive”; the reader understands she is dead.

The reader understands she's dead. The duke considers it a “piece of wonder,

now”, probably he doesn't think the same thing before. There is an indirect style because he invites the listener to sit down and look to the fresco that nobody else has seen before, except the friar he took one day to complete the fresco. Nobody can see it without the duke’s permission (“since none puts the curtain I have drawn for you, but I”). There is a false start: the narrator goes back in order to explain the reason that led him to commission the picture. The duke underlines he has the power on the fresco, he can decide who can see it and what he or she has to see. The speaking voice is obsessed by the glance of the fresco’s subject, he continues to ask himself “how such a glance came there”. The duke is jealous of the it as he was jealous of his woman when she was alive; he didn't approve of her behavior and the way she smiled to everyone (“Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt, whenever I passed her; but who passed without much the same smile?”), so he killed her (“Then all smiles stopped together”). He wanted the fresco in order to have her only for himself; the first important thing for him was the way people looks at the picture, they have to see it from his same point of view.

Even if the text seems to focus on the duchess’ fresco, everything is about the duke's personality; he has a patronizing attitude, he’s obsessed and jealous of the picture and self-centered.

The assonance of the sound “y” and “i” focus the attention on the speaking voice.