

11th lecture

My last Duchess-Robert Browning

Effort DewDrop

Explanation

That is my last Duchess look at her

The messenger of a neighbouring Count has come to the Duke of Ferrara. The Duke of Ferrara is a widower, his last Duchess died recently, and he intends to marry the daughter of the Count.

The Duke shows to the messenger the portrait of the last Duchess painted on the wall.

The picture has been well done that it appears life-like and realistic. It looks a living, breathing reality. The Duke is proud of it and considers it a remarkable piece of art. He proudly tells the messenger that the picture is the work of the famous painter, Fra Pandolf.

I said' Fra Pandolf..... to turn and ask thus

The Duke shows the portrait of his last Duchess to the messenger who has come with an offer of marriage on behalf of the daughter of a neighboring Count. He would expect the daughter of his master, the Count, if she becomes his wife, to concentrate all his attention on himself. The messenger was the first person to turn to him inquiringly. He would satisfy his curiosity. He himself would explain to him (the messenger) the cause of that deep, serious expression.

Sir, it was not..... that spot of joy.

In the portrait, the Duchess is shown to have a faint blush on her cheeks. The Duke explains to the messenger how that slight flush of joy came to her cheeks. It was caused merely by the pleasure she derived from the presence of her husband. As a matter of fact, she had a childish heart and was easily moved even by little acts of courtesy.

The Duchess, as a matter of fact, had a simple, innocent nature, ready to appreciate even little acts of courtesy, and was easily pleased by a trifle. But the Duke regards it as rather childish on her part. Rather, in his opinion she lacked in dignity. He would expect a more proper behavior from his second wife.

She had a heart- how shall I say..... on blush at least

The duke further tells the messenger that the last Duchess had a very simple, childish nature. He fails to find suitable words to describe her childish simplicity. She was pleased by trifles. She like everything she looked at. She could not judge and distinguish between what was really worthwhile and what was not.

She had no discrimination, or sense of right and wrong. The Duke is critical of the dead duchess. His vanity is hurt at the very thought that she treated his own presents at par with petty trifles given to her by others.

She thanked man anybody's gift

The last Duchess was simple, innocent, and frank hearted. She thought there was no harm in thanking those who showed her even a trifling courtesy. She would appreciate even the slightest courtesy shown to her. The Duke did not like this.

His pride was hurt. She could not differentiate between the gift of rank and position that he had given her, and the petty trifles that others presented to her. She thanked everybody in the same way. The Duke is critical of the conduct of his last Duchess and considers it unbecoming and frivolous. In his opinion, she lacked in dignity and intelligence.

Who would stoop..... I choose never to stoop

The Duke tells the messenger that his last Duchess had the childish habit of thanking everybody. There was no harm in thanking others as such, but she failed to distinguish between the valuable gifts given to her by him, and the ordinary acts of courtesy done by others.

The duke further says that he did not try to correct her and put an end to her foolishness in thanking everybody, because he thought it hurts him to take note of her childish conduct. The speech clearly reveals that the Duke is a proud and conceited person. He has false notions of dignity and decorum.

Oh, Sir, she smiled..... smiles stopped together

The Duke tells the messenger that the last Duchess did not know how to conduct herself with dignity and decorum as the wife of a man of rank and birth like himself.

She had the habit of smiling. She smiled at everybody.

Her habit of smiling and thanking for the slightest courtesy shown to her increased so much that he could no longer tolerate it. Therefore he gave orders that her smiling should stop, and all smiling was stopped. How did the smiles stop? What were the orders he gave? The poet has left the meaning obscure.

I repeat the Count your master's..... in bronze for me

The Duke now changes the subject and talks about his intended marriage with the daughter of the Count, the master of the messenger. He tells the messenger that the natural generosity of his master is sufficient guarantee that his legitimate expectations for a dowry would be fully satisfied. A suitable dowry will not be denied to him. Then very cunningly he adds that, of course, his primary interest is not in the dowry but in the fair daughter of the count.

Analysis

Written in 1842 by Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" is the dramatic monologue of the duke of Ferrara who is negotiating his second marriage through an agent of the count of Tyrol on the grand

staircase of the ducal palace at Ferrara in northern Italy. Executing the elements of a dramatic monologue, the duke reveals his situation and much more than he intends to the both the agent and the reader.

Using iambic pentameter AABB couplets Robert Browning reveals the horrifying story of the murder of the duke's previous wife through the duke's conversation with the agent. As the duke attempts to paint an inaccurate picture of himself to the agent, desiring to appear as a noble, but abused and caring, loving husband who had no choice but to murder his prideful, disrespectful wife, the duke's true controlling, manipulative, jealous nature is revealed.

Type of Work

... "My Last Duchess" is a dramatic monologue, a poem with a character who presents an account centering on a particular topic. This character speaks all the words in the poem. During his discourse, the speaker intentionally or unintentionally reveals information about one or more of the following: his personality, his state of mind, his attitude toward his topic, and his response or reaction to developments relating to his topic.

The main focus of a dramatic monologue is this personal information, not the topic which the speaker happens to be discussing. The word monologue is derived from a Greek word meaning to speak alone.

Publication

... Browning first published poem under the title "I. Italy" in 1842 in Dramatic Lyrics, a collection of sixteen Browning poems. Brown changed the title of the poem to "My Last Duchess" before republishing it in 1849 in another collection, Dramatic Romances and Lyics.

Setting and Background

... The setting of "My Last Duchess," a highly acclaimed 1842 poem by Robert Browning, is the palace of the Duke of Ferrara on a day in October 1564.

Characters

Speaker (or Narrator): The speaker is the Duke of Ferrara. Browning appears to have modeled him after Alfonso II, who ruled Ferrara from 1559 to 1597. Alfonso was married three times but had no children. The poem reveals him as a proud, possessive, and selfish man and a lover of the arts. He regarded his late wife as a mere object who existed only to please him and do his bidding.

Duchess: The late wife of the duke. Browning appears to have modeled her after Lucrezia de' Medici, a daughter of Cosimo de' Medici (1519-1574),

Emissary of the Count of Tyrol: The emissary has no speaking role; he simply listens as the Duke of Ferrara tells him about the late Duchess of Ferrara.

Count of Tyrol: The father of the duke's bride-to-be.

Daughter of the Count of Tyrol: The duke's bride-to-be is the daughter of the count

Fra Pandolph: The duke mentions him as the artist who painted the fresco.

Model Question

The speaker in My Last Duchess is.....

A- the Duchess

B- the Queen

C- the Duke

D- the messenger