

## 20 nov 2020 - My Last Duchess

*line 34 to 43*

The attention is shifted from the Duchess to the Duke, who reveals his proud temper, by refusing to stoop

The poem now comes to his climax, on line 45-46, when he says "I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together"; the duchess finally leaves the scene and disappears; the Duke in fact dismisses her in a few more words: "There she stands As if alive." which repeats the line at the beginning: this encloses the tragic event in an imaginary framework.

The duchess has been killed, because her husband disliked her, but the way the duke produces this piece of information is indifferent, laconic, dry, cynical, casual and cold.

If the poem ended here, it would simply sound like the skillful narration of a dramatic episode, but it would be incomplete and unconvincing. It is in fact only the last 10 lines that provide a series of shocking revelations, essential to the understanding of the poem

We get to know that "the count your master" is the Count of Tyrol, "the company below" is a group of friends, so we infer the identity of the auditor, that is the ambassador of the Count of Tyrol, and the reasons for the marriage, that are the countess of Tyrol needs to improve in the social ladder, and the duke wants a new wife and money.

We also can infer the reason why the Duke told the auditor the tragic story of his last duchess; the reason is to warn the Countess of Tyrol not to behave as his former wife.

Considering that the poem is set in Renaissance Ferrara, and that it is possibly based on a real historical event, the Duke **might** be Alfonso d'Este, who had his first wife Lucrece to be killed after only three years of marriage.

After defining the personality of the duchess, we are able to point out the duke's positive and negative connotations.

### **Positive:**

- lover of the art, he loves beautiful things
- he is aristocratic
- he is a patron of the artist
- he's a refined speaker

### **Negative:**

- he is cruel
- possessive
- cynical
- ready to kill
- greedy (avid for power and money)
- self centered
- amoral
- feels entitled to allot death on his properties, which is something that only god is allowed to
- the duke's true love is himself, and he considers his wife as a rightful pieces of property