

## DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE AS INTENDED SPEECH ACTS IN ROBERT BROWNING'S MY LAST DUCHESS: A PRAGMA- STYLISTIC STUDY

Assist. Prof. Fatima H. Aziz<sup>1</sup> and Assist. Prof. Amin Ukaal Ghailan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Translation, Faculty of Art, University of Basra

<sup>2</sup>Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of Basra

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**ABSTRACT:** *Although Browning wrote numerous dramatic monologues, his contemporaries often criticized his works as being too emotional. Browning's dramatic monologues are characterized by certain identifiable traits. The three requirements of them are: the reader takes the part of the silent listener; the speaker uses a case –making argumentative tone; and thirdly, we complete the dramatic scene from within, by means of inference and imagination. In other words, the first distinguishing characteristic of Browning's dramatic monologue is the reader who should take the part of the listener and his point of view is always available within the form. In My Last Duchess, the real listener (that is, the target of the argument) is the speaker's second –self: the Duke of Ferrara reveals his true character to the Count's representative. Thus, it becomes clear that in this monologue the putative auditor within the poem (the Count's Representative) is less important than this second – self. The tone of the argument tells us that there is a second point of view present, and it is that which we take. It is this strongly rhetorical language that distinguishes the dramatic monologue from the soliloquy*

**KEYWORDS:** Dramatic Monologue; Intended Speech Acts; Robert Browning; My Last Duchess; Pragmatics; Stylistics

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## INTRODUCTION

Many writers feel that in order to provoke an emotional reaction, they have to complete the excitement of everyday life, have to shock their audience in evermore novel and sensational ways. Thus, violence becomes a sort of an aesthetic choice for many writers, Robert Browning is one of these writers. Many of Browning's most disturbing poems, including "Prophyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess", reflect this notion (Sinfield, 1977: 4-6). This apparent decay of the Victorian Poets, coupled with an ebbing of interest in religion, led to a morally conservative backlash. The so –called Victorian prudery arose as an attempt to rein in something that was seen as the out – of – control; an attempt to bring things back to the way they once were. Hence, everything came under moral scrutiny, even art and literature. Many of Browning's poems, which often feature a painter and other artists – such as the poem in question, try to work out the proper relationship between art and morality (Dawson, 1970: 69). In exploiting these issues of art and modernity, Browning uses the *Dramatic Monologue*. Sinfield (1977) defines the **Dramatic Monologue** as:

" a poem with a speaker who is clearly separate

from the poet , speaks to an implied auditor , who  
while he stills silent , remains clearly present in  
the scene". For Browning, the genre provides a  
sort of play –space and an alternative persona  
with which he can explore sometimes controversial  
ideas,(P.64)."

### **Dramatic Monologue: A Way of Representation**

When discussing the poetic form of dramatic monologue, it is rarely that it is not associated with or its usage attributed to the poet Robert Browning. He has been considered the master of the form. Although some critics are skeptical of his invention of the form; for, Dramatic Monologue is evidenced in poetry preceding Browning, it is believed that his extensive and varied use of the form has significantly contributed to the form of dramatic monologue and has had an enormous impact on modern poetry (Ibid.: 5).Preminge & Brogon (1993: 799) affirm that " **the dramatic monologue of Robert Browning represents the most significant use of the form in post romantic poetry.**"

In Browning's monologues, we get the situation in extraordinary details: we get the descriptions of specific rooms or locations; we can tell what actions the auditor has performed while the speaker is speaking often we can tell the time of the day. In a word, a Browning's dramatic monologue is much more realistic poetry. For readers, the dramatic monologue is a powerful form of poetry with the potential to be quite persuasive. The form well suits poets who have something to express; it is a poetic propaganda whose dramatic elements and psychological implications make it a fascinating form to read. A dramatic monologue is such an expressive form of poetry that the auditor (listener: reader) follows the designs of the speaker almost automatically (Sinfield , 1977: 4) . Robert Langbaum (1985) expounds that :

the dramatic monologue is a combination  
of lyric and dramatic elements that represent  
a poetic innovation whose influence could be  
traced in the work of all the great modernist  
poets,(P. 34)."

### **Dramatic Monologue as a Technique**

The writer of any literary work may use different ways to present his thoughts through which the reader feels that he receives the character's inner thoughts. Cohn (1978: 11-4) reveals three

main methods of thought presentation : Interior Monologues ; Psycho-Narration ; and Narrated Monologue or Free Indirect Discourse .Interior Monologue is "**a narrative technique that exhibits the thoughts , feelings , and associations passing through a character's mind**" (Britannica Student Encyclopaedia, 2004). It can be considered as the most direct technique of thoughts presentation and the usual way of using such a way is in the first person fiction. Psycho-Narration is **mostly indirect technique of thought presentation .It identifies both the subject matter and the activity it denotes** (Ibid.) .Such a technique summarizes thought processes via the narrator's syntax and diction and almost refers to the character in the third person fiction . Narrated Monologue is **a mixture of interior monologue and psycho-narration**. Cohn (Ibid.) avers that narrated monologue is similar to psycho-narration in the sense that it "maintains the third –person reference and tense of narration." Similarly, it is like the interior monologue in terms of the production of the character's own mental language."

On the stage, some monologists open their monologues with a song so as to produce the audience into the atmosphere before starting their monologue. The melody and rhythm in the song may help to reduce the impression left by preceding acts and endow the audience a time to prepare their minds for the monologue .Page (2002: 3) notes that a song is "**serving to bridge the psychic chasm in the human mind that lies between the relinquishing of one impression and reception of the text.**" And, the monologist may end his /her monologue with a good finishing song so that he can depend on it to bring him (or her) back to tell stories. Page (Ibid.) asserts that the monologist "**gives the orchestra leader the cue, the music starts and off he goes in to his song.**" Sometimes, the monologist has some tricks or witty saying to win the applause and laugh from the audience which gives him a chance to interfuse in to his appeal that will gain applause from his audience. Thereby, he may sing a song, perform his tricks, tell his stories, or make his imitation that suits his talent best. Page (Ibid. ) argues that " a few end their acts with series recitations of the heart – throb sort that bring lumps into kindly throats and leave an audience in the satisfied mood that always comes when a touch of pathos rounds off a hearty laugh ." Of course, we should have a certain standard which we depend to work and the only true standard of anything is the pure form of monologue.

### Speech Acts: A Way of Representation

Speech acts are verbal actions that accomplish something: we greet, compliment, plead, supply information, and get work done (Ohmann, 1971: 243).

### Types of Speech Acts

Searle (1975 a: 346) manipulates that every speech act falls into one of only five very general categories:

**1. Assertive:** the speaker, in uttering an assertion conveys his belief that some proposition is true. And, it includes: statements, claims, hypotheses, descriptions and suggestions.

**2. Commissive:** by uttering a commissive, the speaker is committing himself to some future course of action. It includes: promises, oaths, pledges, threats, and vows.

**3. Directive:** here, the speaker attempts to get the listener to do something. It includes: commands, requests, challenges, invitations, orders, summons, entreats and dares.

**4. Expressive:** the speaker wishes to express his psychological state or attitudes. It includes: greetings, apologies, congratulations, condolences, thanksgivings, etc.

**5. Declarative.** When the speaker utters a declaration his very words bring about a new state of affair. It includes : blessings , firings , baptisms , arrests , marring , juridical speech acts such as , sentencing , declaring a mistrial , declaring out of order etc.

### Locutions and Illocutions

**Locution** means the utterance act. That is to say, sentences have a grammatical structure and a literal linguistic meaning; the bald, literal **Force** of the act: " **What did the speaker say?** "Not what did the speaker mean?

Whereas **Illocution** is the speaker's **Intention** of what is to be accomplished by the speech act, (Leech, 1983: 208). Compare : " **How would you like to open the window ?** , ( Locution : it is a question ), has the illocutionary Force of a Command : " **Open the window** ." Or, "Can I get you to open the window? , has a structure ,( locutionary Force), and a linguistic meaning : " will I be able to be successful in getting your cooperation in opening the window", but its **Illocutionary Force** is different , it has the force of a Polite Imperative: " **Please open the window !** " Henceforth, every sentence has both: A Locutionary Force and An Illocutionary Force (ibid.).

### Distinguishing Among Speech Acts

How do we know what the **Force** of a speech act is? Of course, by the **Context** or the **Setting** and by using their judgment and background knowledge of the language and the culture of that specific language, (ibid.).

### Speech Acts and Poetry

Hancer (1980: 301) stipulates that the speech act theory is useful "**in clarifying interpretation of literary text.**" however, he asserts that the lack of the application of this theory to literary writing is related to the fact that such works are surrounded with some kind of precaution (ibid.).

Freeman (1970: 9) expounds that "**language – including literary language – cannot ...be viewed apart from its context of situation.**" Another is that Searle (as cited in Abdullah, 1997: 41) declares that what makes a work fictional is the complex illocutionary intentions that the author has when he writes or composes it."These fictional worlds are "**the products of the**

**individual or collective imagination,"** i.e. they are 'cultural construct ' that depend in their existence on the production and interpretation of communicative object, such as speaker or written text "(Semino, 1996: 191).

Concerning the author's responsibility, Searle affirms that author, in dramatic works, do not themselves pretend the serious illocutions, but the fictional speaker who will ' carry out the pretending ' (Abdullah, 1997: 41).

Kasher & Kasher ( 1976: 79) state that " **to understand a poem is to construct an appropriate context of utterance** " because , as Pratt ( 1977: 175) believes " **literary works take place in a context , and like any other utterance they cannot be described apart from that context .** " To such a scholar, the deeper one delves into such a *Theory* about context of an utterance that can accompany the poem appropriately , the more one can understand the poem by a way of elucidation .

The literary writing is a series of hypothetical acts (Ohmann, 1971: 254). He adds that " **literature is a discourse having speech acts , which have hypothetical context and that** " the reader has to construct the fictional –world including the hypothetical speaker –such as The Duke in **My Last Duchess,** ( henceforth , **MLD**)- and circumstances that help to understand these speech acts by 'using his elaborated knowledge of rules for illocutionary acts ( ibid.).

### **Browning's Dramatic Monologue**

The distinguishing characteristic of Browning's Dramatic monologue is that they make new demands on the reader, and those extra – textual demands are signaled within the text by the figure of the auditor page (2002: 8). This auditor (listening –figure; Reader ) determines how he (auditor) must react to the speaker , and thus determines the kind of questions asked .

From this rhetorical effect we can infer the dramatic situation , and it is the interplay among the characters in these situations that Browning wishes us to imagine .Observing the speaker , we find that we have to piece together scraps of information to complete a picture of the speaker , and even , sometimes , simply to figure out what is going on . Thus, in each re-reading we must relive the process of discovering which the auditor experiences. Rather than a balance of sympathy and judgment, a better description of this process of discovery is engagement, then detachment: we, readers, must become engaged in the game of imagination which the poem asks us to play before we can attain a detached critical view of the whole work (Sinfield, 1977: 6).

### **A Study in Self- Revelation: Pragma-stylistic Analysis of Browning's *My Last Duchess***

Of course, every poem is to some extent an exploration for the reader, who is invited to appreciate the interrelations of thought, image rhythm etc.; Dramatic monologue adds further

dimensions, the task of the following thought of a speaker who is quite unaware of the reader (Sinfield, 1977: 29). As a matter of fact, the attention given to dramatic monologue during the Victorian Age and the attempt to distinguish the speaker "in the poem" from the poet is considered to be a reaction against Romantic subjectivity, and a wish to move from the poet's own emotions to a wide objective world. (Sinfield, 1977) asserts that the definition of a dramatic monologue:

Should include a first person speaker who is not  
The poet and whose character is unwittingly revealed,  
An auditor whose influence is felt in the poem,  
A specific time and place, colloquial language,  
Some sympathetic involvement with the speaker,  
And an ironic discrepancy between the speaker's  
View of himself and a larger judgment which the  
Poet implies and the reader must develop,"(P.:7).

Accordingly, and in comparison with the principles of drama, as Aristotale mentions: "Plot" and "Character", the dramatic monologue has a very little plot and only one real character (speaker) (Ibid.). So, this poem was first published in (1842), four years after Browning's visit to Italy. In (1849) he changes the title from (**Italy and France. I ...Italy to My Last Duchess**) (Penney, 2003: 8). The history of this poem is that **Alfonso II** (1533-1598), the fifth Duke of Ferrara (1559-1597) and the last member of the Este Family, in Northern Italy married his first wife **Lucrezia**, (14 years old), a daughter of the **Coimo I de' Medici** in (1558). Three days later, he left her for a two /yeas period. She dies only (17) years old in what some thought suspicious circumstances. **Alfonso** contrives to meet his second to-be spouse, **Barbara of Austria**, In Innsbruck in July (1565). Nikolaus Mardruz, who took orders from **Ferdinand II**, Count of Tyrol, led **Barbara**'s entourage then. This source is discovered by Louis S. Friedland and published as "**Ferrara and My Last Duchess**", **Studies in philology** 33(1936:656-84).

The first person narration adopted by the poet affects in making no way of understanding the poem without knowing about the speaker's (Duke's) perception of it. As it seems, it is very important for the reader to take into his consideration that the view of the speaker and his perception of an event are fully shown to the reader. The reader must search inside the speaker's speech as well as enter his mind so that he can know the other elements of the text such as the time and the place. To achieve such a process, the reader should have a lot of sympathy and familiarity which influence his attitudes to him. However, with the case of the Duke, the situation seems to be different. The reader should commit himself to the speaker (the Duke)



but at the same time, this will increase his disapproval of him and thereby the more the reader understands the personality of the Duke, the less he likes him.

### The Duke

Apparently and from the first glance, (right from the title of the poem), the emphasis in the title is on "My " and "Last". Ferrara reveals his sense of self –satisfaction as he continues to emphasize his sense of owing her , (My : is repeated for '5' times throughout the poem ), reflecting the fact that the woman is, ultimately , dead ; for , it , "Last" , might suggest more than a comparative exclusive designation , as would it be "Late " . Furthermore, looking at the Duke's speech acts (See Table No. 1) we can notice that the declarative speech acts have the dominance over the others.

Table No. (1)

Speech Acts in Browning's My Last Duchess

Speech Acts	The Duke	The Duchess	Total
1. Assertive	6	2	8
2. Directive	6	1	7
3. Expressive	6	10	16
4. Declarative	8	9	17
5. Commissive	1	-	1
Total	27	22	49

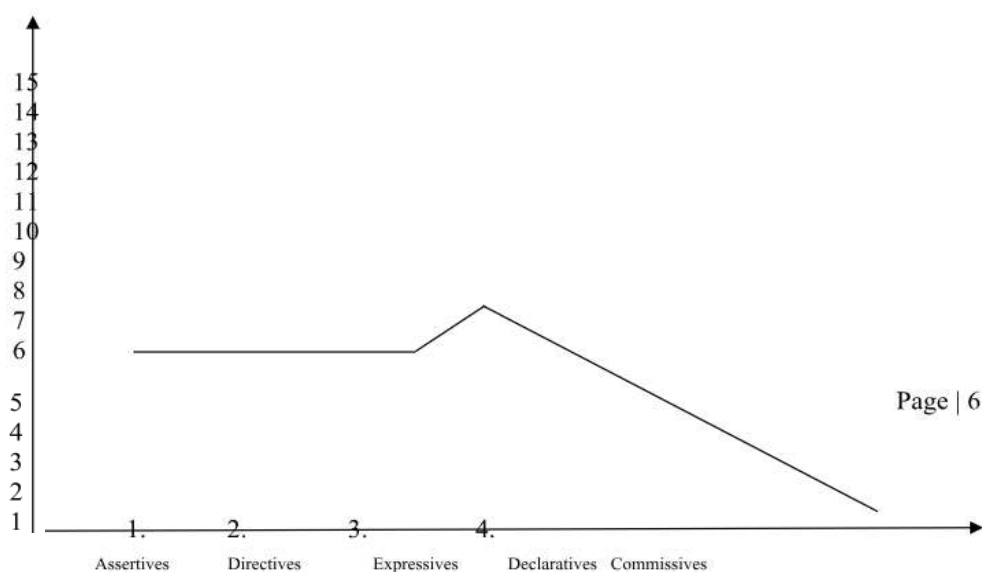
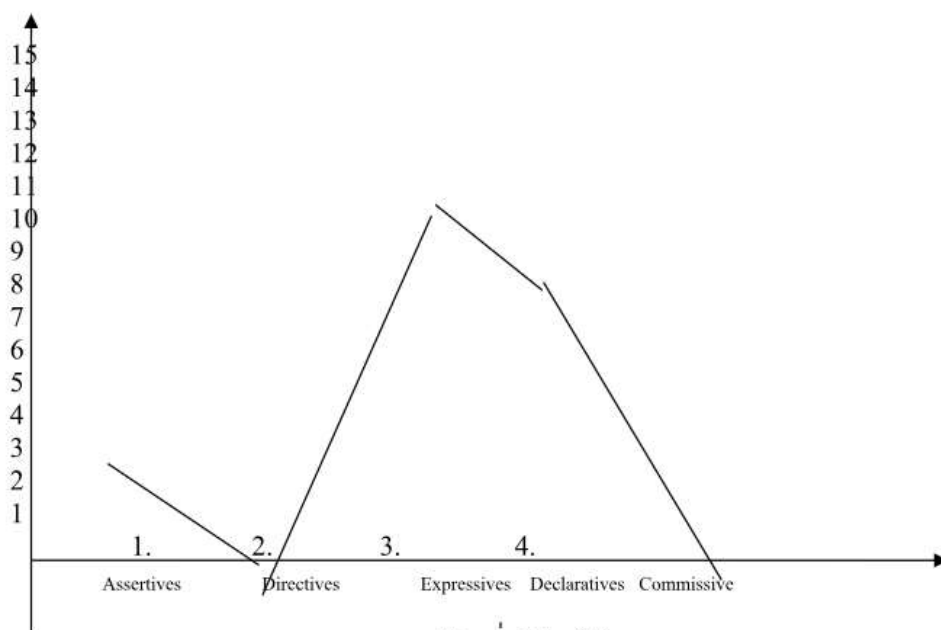


Figure No. (1)  
Speech Acts of the Duke



**Figure No. (2)**  
**Speech Acts of the Duchess**

This can explain the Duke's intention to make clear his relation with his last Duchess as well as the future life of the new one. The speech acts, such as (**said, called, say, passed, grew, meet, go down, cast**) tell us some truths about the life of the Duke in the lines (**5, 14, 22, 44, 45, 47, 53, and 56**) respectively. Of course, Declarative speech acts do not have a very clear importance as the other ones. Leech (1983: 206) affirms that Searle's fifth category of Declarations..., do not have an illocutionary force. Rather, declarations are conventional speech acts, and derive their force from the part they play in ritual. However, checking the speech acts, (mentioned above) has a great importance for the understanding of the poem. With the line no. (45), "**Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; )** the verb "**grew**" gives a good justification of the command following it at the end of the line as well as of the previous lines. It shows that the Duke has some distasteful feeling towards his Last Duchess:

### **1. That's My Last Duchess painted on the wall,**

**Looking as if she were alive ....**

**(MLD, 1-2).**

The portrait conveys the Renaissance society, which though esteemed a feminine beauty, invested power in ruthless rulers such as the Duke as effective and praiseworthy (Guozhi, 2006:2). Moreover, the Duke implies to the count's envoy, (the visitor), that the painting is superior to the original because the (male) artist has infused the face with an earnestness and depth in passion that the lady herself lacked (**as if she were alive**):



## 2. ....I call

**That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands**

**Worked busily a day, and there she stands. (MLD, 2-4).**

The portrait of the last Duchess is a symbol of compliance in marriage, that the Duke intimates to the envoy is what he expects from the Count's daughter. Besides, he utters the name of the artist "Fra Pandolf", (three times along the poem), in order to impress the envoy with his artistic taste and discernment. Thus, in repeating the name of the artist for three times, the Duke implies vaguely that the genius exhibited in the painting is somehow his, and that the choice of the artist is itself a higher creative act since the painting was done under his strict supervision; for, after all, Fra Pandolf's proletarian hands did not actually "**painted**" they merely "**worked**." That is, he was insensitive to the living beauty before him when the Duchess was alive, and finds it a wonder only, "**now**", that she has been transformed into a timeless, ageless beauty which only a work of art could contain. Furthermore the piece is something hand-made, painting, wonderful good one, not a person, not someone contemptible: not the real Duchess. Thereby, he demonstrates that only "**now**", after the passage of time, the Duke has forgotten the woman he had to dispose of, and he is free to admire the virtuosity of the (male) painter who has transcribed that woman's chief commodity her beauty in a less threatening form:

## 3. But to myself they turned (since none puts by

**The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)... (MLD, 9-10).**

The Duke keeps the full length portrait covered because he is like a jealous and emotionally insecure child he wants to show complete possession of the Duchess' smile; for, he likes to use it as an object lesson to enforce in others a view of him that obliges them to respect and fear him. Thereby, he believes that he is revealing his taste when in fact he is revealing the traditional masculine pathology that requires a man's wife to be entirely subservient to his will. Henceforth, the declarative speech act (**meet**) in line (47) (**As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet.**) Clearly links this line with the coming one. It shows the rituals of marriage and the introduction of the visitor to the house—hold.

As for the assertive speech acts, there are (6) of them. They are (**call, read, have drawn, durst, repeat, will be disallowed**). Right from the beginning of the poem, the Duke asserts to his listener that the picture of the last Duchess is a wonderful one. Also, he asserts the inability of the listener (**and any stranger**) to understand and read this picture (**for never read strangers like you that pictured countenance**). Such assertion shows the depth of the relation the Duke has with his last Duchess for no stranger can read her pictured countenance. Also, the speech act (**durst**) in line (11) (**And seemed as they**

**would ask me, if they durst**) shows the amount of (**The boasting**) of the Duke and how he is proud of himself. Such speech act comes after the conditional (**if**) and this increases the feeling of arrogance inside the character of the Duke:

4. ....Sir,'t was not

**Her husband's presence only, called that spot**

**Of joy into the Duchess's cheek: ...**

**(MLD,14-15).**

And:

5. ....She had

**A heart ...How shall I say? ...too soon made glad,**

**Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er**

**She looked on, ....**

**(MLD, 21-23).**

Therefore, the Duke interprets the Duchess 'plain enjoyment as impudence and rebellion against her social superior, surrogate father and master (the Duke). As a consequence with and by her enjoyment of the simple pleasures of life rather than just the expensive products of male ingenuity, the Duchess defines herself as a non-man. Therefore, while the real woman inconveniently took pleasure in things other than the Duke, the mechanically reproduced realistic picture of the woman is a suitable trophy in that it is a distillation of only her beauty. So for the Duke exposing the Duchess 'lack of discernment is the equivalent of exposing himself as one who could not master her; and that mastery is never realized while she was alive, asserts itself by his manipulation of a card that draws curtains, ironically, scarcely satisfying "control". Hence, the assertive speech act (**would be disallowed**) at the end of line no. (51) links it with the previous lines (49-50). It is about the assertion of the disallowance of the Duke for the new Duchess to have a pretence for the matter of dowry. The Duke is dissatisfied with his last Duchess. He also warrants the envoy of the new Duchess:

6. The Count our master's known munificence

**Is ample warrant that no just pretence**

**Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;**

**Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed**

**At starting, is my object.**

**(MLD, 49-53).**

As far as directive speech acts are concerned, there are also (6) of them. They are, (**please, sit, look, gave command, please, and rise**). The first three speech acts are "requests" from the Duke to the visitor to sit and look at the picture of the last Duchess. It is very clear that the Duke looks pleased with the Duchess as being locked in a painting.

With the line (15), the speech act "**gave command**" shows something very important about how the last Duchess was terminated:

7. ....Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whenever I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;

Then all smiles stops together.

(MLD, 43-46).

Such speech act links the line with the next one. Both lines seem to have one process killing the Duchess. The speaker in this poem is an Italian Duke. He first displayed the picture of his last Duchess. Then, he tells his listener about his ominous comment. The Duke looks dissatisfied with his Duchess. The command has the implication that the Duchess may be murdered. Or, he must have a role in her death. To illustrate, The Duke's continually referring to his auditor as "**Sir**" (5 times throughout the poem), and "**You**" (7 Times throughout the poem), similarly implies that the speaker's (Duke's) feeling that the envoy shares his outlook and interpretation of the Duchess' aberrant conduct, and will endorse the "**commands**" that the Duke ultimately felt he had to give; for, we can get the meaning that she smiled on him, whenever he "**passed**" her though she is sharing the same smile with anyone else. So, the Duke used his wife's supposed shallowness as an excuse, mainly to himself, for taking revenge on one who had unwittingly wounded his absurdly pretentious vanity, because he fails to recognize his superiority in even the most trifling matters (Brockington, 2001 : 3) :

8. ...and I chuse

Never to stoop....

(MLD, 42-43).

Furthermore, Browning's theme is the historical tyranny of man over woman; the tyrannical suppression of one nature by another merely on the basis of gender, and not with respect to economic or social necessity; for, he feels that in order to put at stop such unrestrained enjoyment and counter his feelings of inadequacy and rejection, the Duke had to do what he directs that he will never do –mentally "**stoop**" to reprove and correct. So, the Duchess, indicates the painter valued by the Duke's favour, since she occupies the first place among her accessories in the portrait, but her painting on the wall must have been nothing for her, but a prison. It is worth mentioning that the poem "**My Last Duchess**" is not about marriage, but it is about the hateful and selfish nature of the personality of the Duke and the understanding of

his thinking. Corson (1899: VIII as cited in Ibid.) mentions that in line (45) **I gave commands**", Browning replied first, (when was asked what this meant), "**I meant that the commands were that she should be put to death** but then he continued that" ...**or he, (Duke), might have had her shut up in a convent.**"

The final directive speech acts "please" and "rise" are requests for the visitor to rise and prepare for meeting the company (household) in the house of the Duke. As with the expressive speech acts, the portion of the character of the Duke is (6) only. They are (**seemed, know, disgusts, choose, notice, thought**). All of them are about the mental or psychological situation of the Duke. The expressive speech act (**know**) in line no. (32) shows the ignorance of the Duke with the behaviour of his last Duchess. This can be shown in the following lines:

### 9. She thanked men, - good; but thanked

Somehow ....I know not how ...as if she ranked

My gift of a nine hundred years old name

With anybody's gift.

(MLD,31-34).

The speech act (**choose**) in line (42) shows the hateful character of the Duke. It seems that the more the Duke talks about himself, the more his contempt and anger are shown. He said nothing to the Duchess about what he felt. On the contrary with his Duchess, he considers any outward expression of his concern (or feeling) would have meant "**stooping**". Therefore, he chose not to stoop to her. Of course, he abhors stooping due to his selfishness and his hatred to loose dignity. He also seems to be obsessed about his height comparatively to others. He is standing (along the poem) because the Duchess stands on the wall, while he requests the listener to sit, to rise, and to walk downstairs together. The Duke is also accustomed to holding the attention and thinking of others. Therefore, he tells the listener to look at the portrait of the Duchess and **notice Neptune** and think about the rarity of the scene:

### 10. ....Nay, we'll go

Together down; Sir ! Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea –horse, thought a rarity,

Which clause of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.

(MLD, 53-56).

With this part of the poem the Duke shifts the discussion away from the portrait to the negotiations about beginning business. Thus, he reveals everything that has gone before is mere elegant persiflage, a private conversation, and that only now is the real dialogue of competing interest about to begin. He implies that the envoy should apply his history (the Duke's) the fate of the unruly former Duchess to the female object of the transaction. And once again, the closing phrase "**for me**" establishes the whole propriety nature of the Duke.

The only commissive speech act in this poem is in line (52) "**avowed**". The Duke seems to have inhuman thinking in considering the Duchess just one of his objects. In this poem we may gradually feel the murder and the Duke's search for the next victim. Furthermore, the speaker (Duke) seems to be proud and cold-blooded in saying that the coming Duchess is "**his object**".

### The Duchess

It is very important to mention that all of the speech act attributed to the character of the Duchess are mainly voiced by the Duke. Therefore, all their types are made according to his own vision and attitude towards the last Duchess. The poem "**My Last Duchess**" is simply written to display the character of the "**Duchess**". Its first person narration focuses the attention on the Duchess. She is shown directly through the speech of the speaker (The Duke). With such a poem, the poet does not impose himself plainly in the description of the Duchess. Browning provides both the situation and the listener (**auditor**). The poet does not have a direct role in the poem and the revelation of the Duchess is not very witty. Of course, this will lead to a more understanding of the character of the Duchess than what the poet wants to reveal to his readers. Looking at **Table No. (1)**, we can easily notice that the expressive speech acts are dominant among the others. Such types of speech acts are ( **thought , made glad , impressed , liked , looked on , blush , thanked , made excuse , and smiled** ). The first speech act (**thought**) shows the difference –in thinking- between the Duke and his last Duchess. It also shows the elegance of the character of the Duchess and her interest in courtesy. The natural description of the Duchess gives the reader a chance to imagine the innocent nature of hers. This is also clear in the Duke's wording although he did not appreciate her clearly. The same suggestion is applicable to the next speech acts (**made glad, impressed, liked, looked on**) in the following extract:

11. A heart ... how shall I say? Too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed, she liked whate'er

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

(**MLD, 21-24**).

All of these speech acts are following each other in the description of the Duchess. As it seems , even the Duke is unable to deny the pure and human heart of the Duchess .Another one is that , the Duchess herself seems to be lovely to other people in the Duke's house .The next speech acts ( **blush , thanked, thanked** ) also express the prestigious behaviour of the Duchess with all people around .

The last two expressive speech acts are (**made excuse** and **smiled**). Such acts define the Duchess' delicate manner, but also the Duke's mind circling back to the same topic again and again. Of course, the important question to answer is "**why the Duke tells the listener about his last Duchess?!**" This may be related to the character of the Duke himself. He is too egoist

that he does not care what other people think. Or, he may put a warrant to the next Duchess. Anyhow, he seems to be too bad in thinking that he cannot stand his Duchess smiling at a servant or at any person. He has a great obsession with his failure to dominate his last Duchess. As a result, he can show his ruthless response or reaction, to that incident, to the coming Duchess. Apparently, such thinking makes the Duke hardly appealing to the reader.

The declarative speech act comes in the second stage. It has (9) acts as the following : (**came , laps , dies , went , rode , would draw , set , stopped** and **stands** ). All of these speech acts are ordinary acts made by the Duchess . We should not forget that all the declarative acts attributed to the Duchess are mentioned by her husband (The Duke ). He tells such things to the listener while looking at her picture. The character of the Duke is clearly not a lovely figure. He is selfish in being the focus of the whole attention of the poet. He looked pleased with the Duchess as being locked in a painting. The most important declarative speech acts of the Duchess are the two last ones (**stopped** and **stands**) in the following lines:

12. **This grew; I gave commands;**

**Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands**

**As if alive.**

( MLD, 45-47).

The acts (**stopped**, **stands**) come as a result of the Duke's directive (**gave commands**). The reader may ask about what happened to the Duchess. Or, he may wonder until finishing his sentence with, " **As if alive.**" Either the Duchess looks out at the listener from the painting and thereby she is portrayed as (**a life-like**) character. This implies that we are looking at a living woman more than a work of art (painting). Therefore, the Duke's wording makes us think that she may be dead. Also , the title ( **My Last Duchess**) motivates the reader's imagination and makes him ask : Does "she "in the quotation above refer to the Duchess or to her painting ? !

The assertive speech acts of the Duchess are (2) (**stands** and **ranked**). The assertive in line no. (4) (**Worked busily a day, and there she stands**) justifies the absence of the last Duchess from the conversation between the Duke and the envoy. She is locked in a painting. Also, the adverb (**there**) comes at the beginning of the sentence "**she stands**" which assures the place of the painting of the last Duchess to be on the wall.

At the beginning of the poem, the Duke mainly talks about the (**a life-like**) portrait. But, as his anger grew, he shifts to the Duchess herself in case she cannot be (**a life-like**). It is clear that, the Duke killed the joy that defined the emotions and feelings of her being. He talks about the Duchess "**as if alive**" in line no. (32) with the assertion on the verb "**ranked** " at the end of it .

As for the directive speech act, the Duchess has only one of them. This is the speech act "**let**" in line no. (39). This speech act is presented as a permission made by the Duke for the Duchess.



As it seems clearly, the Duke does not think of the Duchess as a portrait any more, but he talks about her "**as if she is alive**".

### Concluding Remarks

In the light of the above pragma-stylistic analysis of the poem, the researchers have come to the following conclusions:

1. To understand and comprehend Browning's **My last Duchess**, pragma-stylistically, one must make a few observations about the poem's dramatic monologue. One of these observations is that the speaker (who is not the poet) in the poem never changes his mind. A second observation is that the speaker uses his dramatic monologue in pursue of a meaning for himself, and then to learn something about himself as well as something about reality. In **MLD**'s dramatic monologue everything the reader hears is limited to what the speaker sees, thinks and chooses to tell. In other words, when reading **MLD**, the reader must come to a conclusion about facts and issues raised in the poem by making use of materials presented in the poem.

2. Soliloquies or speeches in a play have a context that directs the audience. Browning's **MLD** readers have only a title and a speech prefix, "**Ferrara**". Yet, these transfer clues to a drama that we observe, and the excellence of the poem lies in:

a. Monologues characterizing arranged marriages among the governing classes of the Renaissance period are nothing more than business transactions that commodified beauty.

b. Browning's Duke(the speaker) speaks in a noble poetry through which the reader comes to comprehend the courtesy, dignity, and artistic values.

c. Browning's Duke's dramatic monologue reveals his true personality to the Count's Envoy, ironically for, he wants to impress the Count's representative (Envoy) whereas he is unwittingly revealing his true ambitions. That is, according to the speaker (Duke) he tells us that he is entertaining an envoy who has come to negotiate the Duke's marriage to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the envoy through his palace, he stops before a portrait of his late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the duchess herself. His musings give way to describe her disgraceful behavior: he claims that she flirted with everyone, "....She had /A heart ...how shall I say? Too soon made glad, /Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er/ She looked on, and her looks went everywhere." (21-24), and did not appreciate his "My gift of a nine – hundred – years –old –name, ". As his monologue continues, the reader realizes with evermore chilling certainty that the Duke, in fact, caused the Duchess's early demise: where her behaviour escalated, "...;I [he] gave commands: "**Then all smiles stopped together** ..." (45-46). Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging another



marriage with another girl. As the Duke and the envoy walk leaving the painting behind, the Duke points at another notable artistic work in his collections.

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