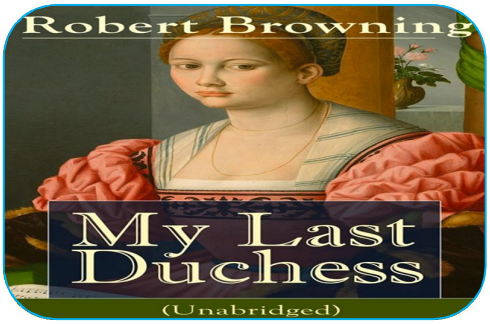
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DRAMATIC, SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN ROBERT BROWNING 'MY LAST DUCHESS'

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ABSTRACT:



My Last Duchess is one of the best examples of dramatic monologue in the Victorian period. Robert Browning presents psychology of the Duke of Ferrara in this poem. The Duke speaks to a person who came to negotiate his next marriage. Robert Browning gradually expresses the complex psychology of the Duke through his casual conversation with the man. The personality of the Duke reveals hierarchical structure and aristocratic conventions of Victorian society. Browning uses the powerful technique called dramatic monologue and through which the Duke of Ferrara reveals more about himself than about the Duchess.

The present research tries to examine Robert Browning's My Last Duchess from three perspectives: psychological representation of the human mind, its reflection of Victorian social values and use of dramatic monologue as a tool to represent individual and social activities.

The study argues that Browning transforms a historical situation into a universal exploration of power, jealousy, ego and human psychology.

KEYWORDS: *Dramatic Monolog, Victorian Society, power, jealousy, patriarchal society.*

INTRODUCTION

Robert Browning (1812-1889) is a well-known poet for his mastery and development of dramatic monolog technique in Victorian poetry. He often allows a fictional speaker to reveal his personality through speech unlike the conventional lyric poet who directly expresses his own feelings. My Last Duchess published in 1842 is the best example of this technique.

The fictional character in the poem is the historical figure Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara whose first wife Lucrezia de Medici died at a young age.

Browning not only simply reproduces historical events but also transforms historical situations into a psychological and social study. The Duke of Ferrara speaks about his last wife while showings her portrayal on the wall to an ambassador. His speech seems polite and controlled but Gradually It reveals Jealousy, Power, Possessiveness and authoritarian nature. The Duchess becomes an object controlled by the Duke even after her death. The present poem provides an excellent field for examining the relationship between Human psychology, social power and literary form.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research paper has the following Objectives
1.To analyse dramatic monologue as a poetic technique.
2. Two examine the psychological representation of human nature In My Last Duchess.
3.To examine the relationship between Power, patriarchy, possessiveness and Duke's character.
4. To study the reflection of Victorian social values and Aristocratic culture in the poem.

Dramatic monologue as a poetic technique

A dramatic monologue is a speech delivered by a single character in a Story, play, or poem. Who is directly not the poet. It addresses an implied or silent listener at a critical moment unintentionally revealing their own personality, flaws and inner thoughts of the character.

It contains
1.A Single person
2.A specific dramatic situation
3.Unconscious self- revelation
4.Psychological Revelation
5.implied silence listener

All the above points are presented Effectively in the poem My last Duchess by Robert Browning

Here in the poem the speaker is The Duke of Ferrara and who remains silent The reader hears only the Duke side of the conversation And this limited perspective creates dramatic tension. While speaking the intention of Duke was not to reveal his Weakness Through his speech He attempted to present himself as Refined culture and authoritative However his speech reveals his cruelty and insecurity. Dramatic monologue is as such a powerful technique which describes as self-relation through speech The speaker becomes his own psychological evidence. Browning use of Continuation of sentences and Conversational rhythm makes the Duke's Speech sound natural. The controlled rhyming Couplets provide formal order While the Duke's disturbing personality creates psychological disorder beneath that surface. Therefor Psychology and form are important In the poem.

Psychological Study of Human Mind

The central idea of the poem My Last Duchess that is psychological representation of the Duke. Browning throughout his poem never tells us about Dukes personality is jealous, arrogant or cruel. Instead, These qualities emerge through Duke's own speech.

The opening sentence of the poem" That's my last Duchess painted on the wall" reveals the Duke's possessive attitude. The word my is significant even when speaking about a dead woman. He presents her Primarily as something belonging to him. Duke's speech becomes evident of his jealousy about the Duchess when he complains that the Duchess was pleased by simple things. He objects to her appreciation of nature, people and ordinary experiences. Her response to life appears to generous and democratic for his aristocratic mentality. He expects her to reserve her highest I appreciation for his Noble status. His statement that she valued the kindness of others as much as His family name exposes his wounded ego. Duke cannot tolerate the possibility that his wife may find happiness Independently off his authority.

The most psychological revealing Line is:
"I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together."

The ambiguity of this line is the central idea in the poem. Browning does not explicit describe what happened to the Duchess. However, the Dukes language strongly suggests that he ordered her death. His calm manner makes the revelation more disturbing and the contrast between the horrifying implication of his controlled speech demonstrate the psychological complexity of his character.

Duke's personality can therefore be understood through several psychological traits
1. Jealousy: He is unable to accept Duchess' Independent emotional response.
2.possessiveness: He treats the Duchess as an object.
3. Emotional repression: He speaks about possible murder without visible Emotional disturbance.
4. Insecurity: Session with status Suggest An underlying fear of losing Authority.
5. Objectification: The Duchess is transformed from a living person into a portrait that he can control.
That's the Duke become the study of Deep psychology of human mind.

Victorian society and social values

My Last Duchess is set in Renaissance Italy; the poem can also be read in relation with to19th century Victorian social concern. Browning uses the historical setting to explore social structure that recognizable to his contemporary readers.

Victorian Society was full of hierarchical, social class, Wealth, family reputation and gender expectations played important roles in determining an individual's social position. The Dukes behaviour reflect this hierarchical Consciousness.

The Dukes considered his Nobel name more valuable than Personal affection he expects the Duchess To understand the difference between her position and his Vectoral status her ability to enjoy simple pleasure threatens Conception of social hierarchy.

The poem also exposes patriarchal attitude towards women. The Duchess is not treated as independent human being. Instead, she is expected to behave according to her husband's wishes. Her smile, social interaction and emotional responses are Interpreted as things over which the Duke was authority.

The line:
"The dropping of the daylight in the west"

The line illustrates the Duchess appreciation of natural beauty. Her openness and responsiveness contrast sharply with the Duke's restricted emotional world.

The Duke's final reference to Neptune taming sea- horse is especially significant the status symbolic. The statue represents his desire to control and dominate. The image of Neptune controlling the seahorse parallels the Duke's desire to control women and social relationship. Thus the poem expresses the relationship between wealth, aristocracy, patriarchy and power.

The Duchess as a psychological and social contrast

The Duchess never speaks in the poem, yet She remains psychologically important. We understand her primary through the Duke's description of her.

Sleep appears to purchase qualities such as:
1. Openness
2. kindness
3. emotional responsiveness
4. natural Simplicity
5. Equality of affection

These qualities are interpreted negatively by the Duke because they challenge his authoritarian expectation.

The Silence of the Duchess is itself significant. Her voice has been removed, while the Duke, controls the narrative this creates a powerful representation of patriarchal Society.

CONCLUSION

The poem, My Last Duchess by Robert Browning is more than a poem about jealousy husband. It is a complex psychological and social study. Through the Duke's speech, Browning tries to explore his possessiveness, Pride, jealousy Insecurity and class consciousness. The desire for control. At the same time the poem exposes the social structures of aristocracy, patriarchy and class Consciousness.

The dramatic monologue is the most important artistic device through which these dimensions are presented. Browning allows the Duke to speak freely but the very freedom of his speech becomes a means of exposing his personality.

Thus My Last Duchess demonstrates that the study of the individual mind can become a study of society itself.

Duke psychology is inseparable from social position, and Browning's dramatic monologue effectively connects personal behaviour with larger social structure.

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