

Use of a dramatic monologue in Browning's "My Last Duchess and in U.A.Fanthorpe's "Not My Best Side"

(extract, section 3 only)

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Both "My Last Duchess" and "Not My Best Side" are dramatic monologues. Browning's monologue has much more depth, detail, and is a different style to that of "Not My Best Side."

Although a different style they have many of the same attributes. Firstly the characteristics of the main roles, the Duke in 'My Last Duchess', and St. George in 'Not My Best Side' are both very materialistic. The Duke talks about his last Duchess as a trophy and St. George is always talking about the latest equipment he has.

They are both also very egotistical, as the monologues are full of "I" and "Me." When I read the text I get the impression that the two characters' ego's almost hide their insecurities. St. George hides his insecurities behind his display of modern equipment and well bred horse, shown off by him saying "My horse is the latest model...". The Duke hides his behind the attractive looks of his wife, the Duchess, when saying, "...I call that a piece of wonder, now". This shows that he controls the picture, giving the impression he has forced her into a 2D world, which shows off her looks, believing them to be more important than her personality.

I think St. George's arrogance and persona are summed up in one line, when talking to the damsel, saying, "...you can't do better than me at the moment". Whereas the Duke's arrogance is not so obvious, he still is extremely pretentious, "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall". This shows his subtle arrogance in his use of 'my', making the beautiful Duchess an item he owned or possessed.

Both men view themselves in the highest regard. This is very obvious to the reader after just the first read. Examples of this in My Last Duchess are when the Duke says, "My gift of a nine-hundred years-old name," boasting about his families history, and St. George just says, "I have diplomas in Dragon." This is a very good use of alliteration, emphasising the "D's" for a more egocentric feel.

The lengths of sentences in My Last Duchess have great irregularity. This brings an excellent texture to the piece. It shows the reader what mood the Duke is in, and also creates a very good atmosphere.

Compared to Fanthorpe's poem where much of it is patronising towards the English culture. She also uses many short, aggressive

sentences like, "...You're in my way" which shows his impatience and shows he thinks of everyone as lower than himself. Again linking back to the ego.

If the characters existed today, they would probably be privately educated. They would definitely be upper-class citizens with a well-paid job in the city, maybe a banker or a stockbroker.

Both are sexist, believe men are the all-important beings. There are examples of St. George being odious, such as "...what you want?" St. George asks many questions where he does not give the Dragon or Damsel a chance to answer. He uses the rhetorical questions as almost a form of bullying. The Duke is by far the more articulate, "Notice Neptune, though, Taming a sea horse, thought of rarity, Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!" This is a very good example of him showing off to his visitors. Claus of Innsbruck was obviously an intensely well known artist whose work was worth a lot and considered a rarity.

There is great suspicion that the Duke killed his last Duchess. This underlines insecurity and flaws in his personality. The Duchess' personality was extremely outgoing and simple. The Duke wanted her for her looks, this backfires because, such is the Duchess' sweet natured personality she would talk to anyone as she would the Duke. An example was when he said that the Duchess was "Too easily impressed..." The Duke got very jealous, he wanted to have her to himself. This shows the Duke's insecurity in having to have everything to himself. This point's back to his materialistic needs.

St. George shows that he thinks the woman is simple by the repetition of words like 'don't and you' at the begging of a question. This embraces his thoughts of her being stupid, 'don't' is hard sounding and is seen to bully her, or just showing he is higher than the Duchess is.

Both poems *My Last Duchess* and *Not My Best Side* make very good use of writing in the form of a dramatic monologue. These two poems are very good to compare. Both set in different styles and time eras. The language in *Fanthorpe's* is very contemporary, in *Browning's* the language is much more sophisticated. This brings up the point that on the surface the two are very different, but if you look into the two personalities it is clear that they are in fact very similar.