

Introduction to His New Duchess?

Japhet N. Makia

Instructor of writing

Southern Arkansas University Magnolia (SAU)

U.S.A.

Abstract

“His New Duchess?” (an adaptation from Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess”) is a dramatic monologue by Japhet N. Makia, who looked through the lenses into the romantic era as he wrote “His New Duchess?” Makia realized that Robert Browning had actually left his dramatic monologue “My Last Duchess” in suspense. What, for example, did the Servant in Browning’s poem tell his Master (the Count) after the Servant listened to the Duke’s description of his Duchess as they both watched her painting on the wall? What message did the Servant take back to the Count about the Duke’s character? Did the Count let his daughter marry the Duke after all? So Makia took off from where Browning’s poem ends, using the Servant in Browning’s poem as the speaker in “His New Duchess?”

His New Duchess?

Japhet N. Makia

All is well; the farewell feast is done,
And our Count and Countess to Ferrara are gone,
Galloping jocosely, taking their daughter to the Duke
For wedlock on Sunday in his majestic castle by the brook.
And on this glorious Thursday in Padua we feast
On remains of our Count’s victuals, each servant a lowly beast.

When from that mission I returned, our Count
Bade me to promptly but adroitly recount,
As a true emissary, the story from Ferrara.
“Will my daughter find solace as Duchess of Ferrara?”
Was the first question he posed as together
We walked into his study. Needless to gather
My thoughts then (for that I’d done earlier), I sweetened his
Ears with these most aromatic words: “Count, there ne’er is
A man as kind, gracious, and gentle as that Duke.
‘His character is impeccable,’ said his Cook.
My lord, that Duke ne’er has hurt a duchess
And your Lucia he’ll for ever find luscious.”
He gulped each utterance that from my mouth popped,
And drunk with my words, our fiendish Count gaily hopped
About like a man whose wife had just birthed their first babe.
“At last,” Count Leonardo shouted, “I’ve found a god for my babe!

O Mighty Juno, bless Lucia and her groom to
Raise a large posterity and eternize my name, too.
Ferrara, May Olympus where thou forever dwell
Be a heaven soon for my daughter as well.”
Then he gave commands for the sumptuous farewell feast
For his daughter and invited his royal comrades to feast.

Comrades, that Duke of Ferrara is no god but a gorgon.
For butchering his last Duchess, he's worse than a dragon.
Only her painting now sits on his cursed wall.
That Duke ne'er will stoop to a wife whose countenance touches all,
And his last duchess complimented servants and beasts.
Count Leonardo's Lucia also cherishes us and her domestic beasts.
After Lucia's wedlock to the Duke, what next?
Will he again give commands, thus sticking to his deadly text?
Why, by those frowning faces, ye approve
Not my message to Count Leonardo and now reprove
Me? Ye know how the Count's austere laws have kept us low,
And we might nevermore our dreams follow.
Think of that, friends, and thou'd applaud my witty deed.
But why grasp thy saddles, rushing out in such speed?

Note: This is an adaptation from Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess."