DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

Any poem that is written so that we hear only the words of one person engaged in a conversation is known as a 'dramatic monologue'. Someone is responding, but not heard. Through this one-sided conversation, we learn about the speaker's character, and the thoughts and feelings that person has. The psychological insights that we gain into this person's character give the whole performance a dramatic quality. It is as if the character were performing on stage in a play. As it is just one person speaking, so we call the poem a dramatic monologue because of the approach that it takes. Its actual poetic form may vary. Read the following example of dramatic monologue, 'Doctor to Patient' by Bruce Dawe.

Doctor to Patient

Please sit down. I'm afraid I have some rather bad news for you; you are now seventeen and you have contracted an occupational disease called unemployment. Like others similarly afflicted you will experience feelings of shock, disbelief, injustice, guilt, apathy, and aggression (although not necessarily in that order) and you'll no doubt be urged to try the various recommended anodynes: editorials in newspapers, voluntary unpaid work for local charities, booze, other compulsive mind-destroyers, prayer, comforting talks with increasingly less-interested friends. It is small comfort to know that the disease is universal and can accommodate the middle-aged and thirtyish and strikes down those in camps in Kompong Sam and Warsaw. However, you will discover, as time passes, that your presence in itself will make others obviously uncomfortable. Try not to let your shadow, at this stage, fall across your neighbour's plate; eat with the right hand only; do not touch others in public (this can be easily misconstrued); keep always down-wind, if possible. Please remember you have now become our common vulnerability personified. Oh yes, and, by the way, you will be relieved to know the disease is only in a minority of cases terminal.

Most, that is, survive. Next, please.

Bruce Dawe