

THE DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

An Attempt at Definition

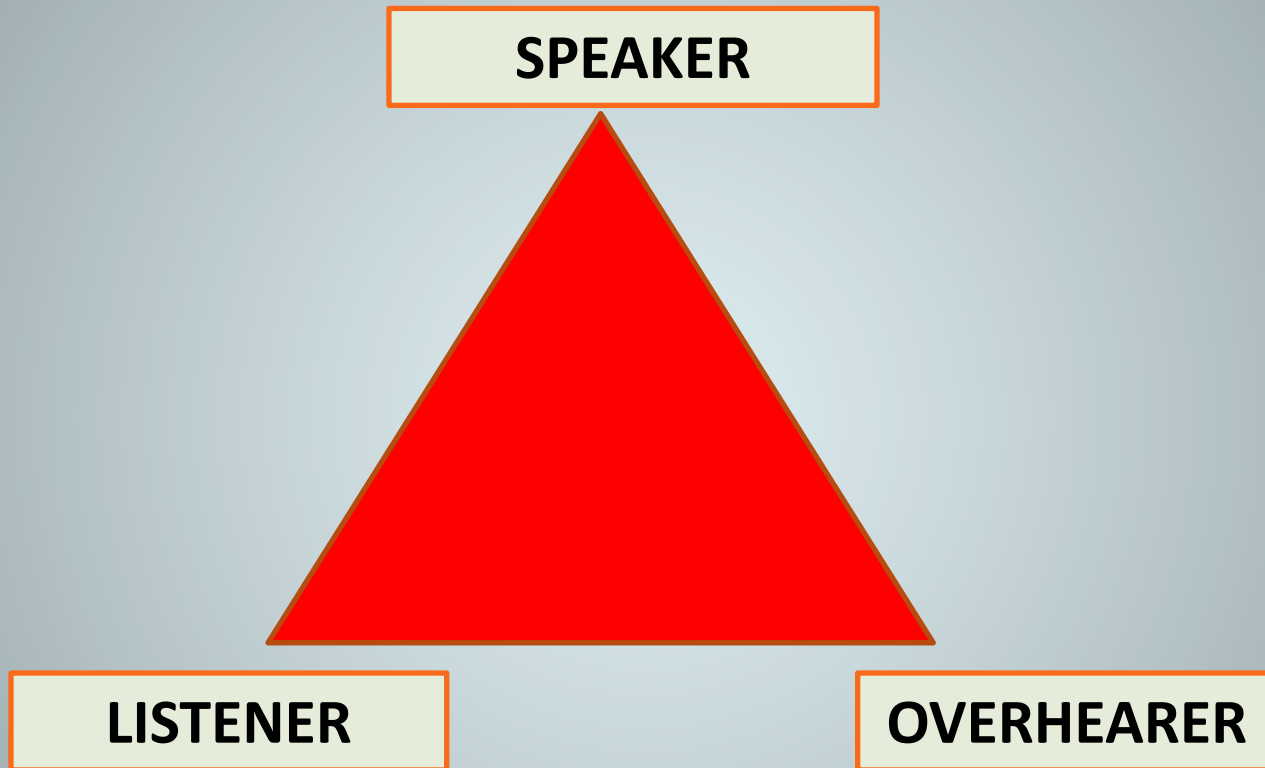
Soliloquy, Aside and Dramatic Monologue: Differences

- 1. Aside:** Speech by a character on stage, meant to be overheard by the audience, but not by other characters present on stage.
- 2. Soliloquy:** The speaker in a soliloquy is merely thinking aloud. It is not directed to an audience.
- 3. Dramatic Monologue:** Here the speaker's speech is heard by a silent listener. The presence of the listener influences the monologue delivered by the speaker.

In a Dramatic Monologue:

1. There must be a single Speaker to deliver the monologue.
2. He/She must address one or more Listener/s. Otherwise the work would transform into a Soliloquy.
3. The Listener/s must be silent. Otherwise, the work will become a Dialogue.
4. The presence of the Listener influences what the Speaker says.
5. The Speaker does not address the Reader, whose status is that of an Over hearer.

Triangular Relationship in a Dramatic Monologue



The Problem of Definition

To qualify as a Dramatic Monologue, a poem must display something more than the triangular relationship.

The Triangular Relationship can also be seen in lyric poems, particularly in Greater Romantic lyrics like Coleridge's 'Conversation Poems' and Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*.

Dramatic Monologue and Dramatic Lyric

- There exists a general consensus among scholars that the speaker in a **Dramatic Monologue** should be differentiable from the poet.
- If the speaker can not be clearly distinguished from the poet or is indeterminate, it is a **Lyric**.
- In case the speaker addresses a silent listener in the poem, it is better to classify the poem as a **Dramatic Lyric**.

Lyrics, Dramatic Lyrics, Dramatic Monologue: Examples

• **Lyric**

- *I Wandered
Lonely as a
Cloud*
- *London*
- *The Brook*

• **Dramatic Lyric**

- *The Sun Rising*
- *Tintern Abbey*
- *The Eolian
Harp*

• **Dramatic Monologue**

- *My last Duchess*
- *The Bandit's Bride*
- *The Mandolin*

The Speaker

- Since the speaker must be someone other than the poet, a Dramatic Monologue is expected to reveal some aspects of the speaker's personality. According to Philip Hobsbaum:

Three conditions, then, should be invoked as criteria for this form, the form of the dramatic monologue.

- First, it should appear to be spoken by a person other than the poet.
- Secondly, it should reveal some aspect of character.
- Thirdly, it should feel like drama.

Concise Definition of Dramatic Monologue

“In a dramatic monologue, a single speaker who is not the poet, utters a speech in a specific situation in a critical moment. He addresses someone whose presence we infer from his speech, and his speech reveals to the reader the speaker’s temperament.”

- M. H. Abrams

The Glossary of Literary Terms

The Occasion

Besides the Speaker and the Listener/s, the Occasion is very important.

The Occasion must be dramatic, that is it must feel like a drama.

The general practice is to depict the speaker at a moment of crisis.

Beth Session's argues that the dramatic action should take place in the present, thereby intensifying the dramatic appeal.

In a Beth Session's Classification

Perfect	Imperfect	Formal	Approximate
Speaker	Shifting of centre of interest from speaker; or,	Speaker	Speaker
Audience	Fading into indefiniteness of one or more of the last six perfect characteristics	Audience	Lacking one or more of the characteristics listed under the Formal or the Imperfect
Occasion		Occasion	
Interplay between speaker and audience			
Revelation of Character			
Dramatic action			
Action taking place in the present			

Brief History of Dramatic Monologue

Scholars vary in their account of the origin of the Dramatic Monologue.

➤ **Howard** believes that it originated from love lyrics, where the feelings of the lover are directed towards a particular person.

➤ **Hobsbaum** feels that it developed from Jacobean drama.

➤ Some modern scholars argue that it is a specifically nineteenth century invention.

➤ However, Hobsbaum's contention that "The Dying Indian" by Thomas Warton is the first Dramatic Monologue in English seems true to fact.

The Dying Indian [1747]

The dart of Izdabel prevails! 'twas dipped
In double poison—I shall soon arrive
At the blest island, where no tigers spring
On heedless hunters; where ananas bloom
Thrice in each moon; where rivers smoothly glide,
Nor thundering torrents whirl the light canoe
Down to the sea: where my forefathers feast
Daily on hearts of Spaniards!—O my son,
I feel the venom busy in my breast.
Approach, and bring my crown, decked with the teeth
Of that bold Christian who first dared deflower
The virgins of the sun; and, dire to tell!
Robbed Vitzipultzi's statue of its gems!
I marked the spot where they interred this traitor,
And once at midnight stole I to his tomb,
And tore his carcass from the earth, and left it
A prey to poisonous flies. Preserve this crown
With sacred secrecy: if e'er returns
Thy much-loved mother from the desert woods
Where, as I hunted late, I hapless lost her,
Cherish her age. Tell her I ne'er have worshipped
With those that eat their God. And when disease
Preys on her languid limbs, then kindly stab her
With thine own hands, nor suffer her to linger,
Like Christian cowards, in a life of pain.
I go! great Copac beckons me! farewell!

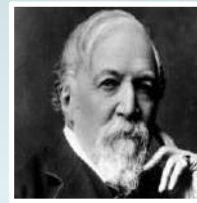
Tennyson and Browning

By common consensus, these two poets are held responsible for popularizing this form.



TENNYSON

- *Ulysses*
- *Tithonus*
- *St. Simeon Stylites*
- *The Bandit's Death*
- *Rizpah*



BROWNING

- *My Last Duchess*
- *The Laboratory*
- *Fra Lippo Lippi*
- *Andrea del Sarto*
- *A Toccata at Galuppi's*

Some Other Famous Dramatic Monologues in English

1. *Saul* – Lord de Tabley
2. *Mandolin* – Eugene Lee-Hamilton
3. *Saint Maura. AD. 304* – Charles Kingsley
4. *The Castaway* – Augusta Webster
5. *The Psychopath* – Carol Ann Daffy

Some Famous Dramatic Monologues in Bengali

1. *Patita* – Rabindranath Tagore
2. *Kobor* – Jasimuddin Mollah
3. *Kajla Didi* – Jatindra Mohan Bagchi

Reading List

1. **“The Dramatic Monologue: Its Origin and Development” – Claud Howard (1910)**
2. **“The Dramatic monologue” – Ina Beth Sessions (1947)**
3. ***The Poetry of Experience* – Robert Langbaum (1957)**
4. **“The Rise of the Dramatic Monologue” – Philip Hobsbaum (1975)**
5. **“From Monomania to Monologue: “St. Simeon Stylites” and the Rise of the Victorian Dramatic Monologue” - Herbert F. Tucker Jr. (1984)**
6. **“Speaker, Listener, and Overhearer: The Reader in the Dramatic Poem” – John Maynard (1987)**
7. ***Dramatic Monologue* – Glennis Byron (2003)**



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THE END