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Dickens, William Makepeace
George Meredith, Anthony

Victorian era, see the entries on

eath of Victoria (1901) and the
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ncluded Thomas Hardy (who
the century), Alfred Noyes,
matists included Henry Arthur
Galsworthy, George Bernard
h as Lady Gregory, Yeats, and
vere in prose fiction—works by
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ublished his major final novels,
Golden Bowl, between 1902 and

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ntly) to the reign of George V
gnates a group of writers in the
entitled *Georgian Poetry*, which
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n “modern,” of course, varies
ed specifically to the literature
4; see *modernism and postmodern-*
multidimensioned experiments
l major achievements in all the
e poets W. B. Yeats, Wilfred
s, Dylan Thomas, and Seamus
e, D. H. Lawrence, Dorothy
ous Huxley, Graham Greene,
ts G. B. Shaw, Sean O’Casey,
ryl Churchill, Brendan Behan.
ern age was also an important
and influential English critics
lf, F. R. Leavis, and William

This entry has followed what has been the widespread practice of including under “English literature” the works of **anglophone authors**—that is, authors who speak and write in the English language—in all the British Isles. A number of the writers listed above were in fact natives of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Of the Modern Period especially it can be said that much of the greatest “English” literature was written by the Irish writers Yeats, Shaw, Joyce, O’Casey, Beckett, Iris Murdoch, and Seamus Heaney. And in recent decades, some of the most notable achievements in the English language have been written by authors who are natives of recently liberated English colonies (often referred to as **postcolonial authors**), including the Rhodesian Doris Lessing; The South Africans Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard, and J. M. Coetzee; the West Indians V. S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott; the Nigerians Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka; and the Indian novelists R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, and Salman Rushdie. See Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Emigrés* (1975), and refer to *postcolonial studies*.

The **Postmodern Period** is applied to the era after World War II (1939–45). See *modernism and postmodernism* and, for innovations during the postmodern period in critical theory and practice, *poststructuralism*. Refer also to *Periods of American Literature*.

peripety (pěřp’ ětē): 268; 372.

periphrasis (pěřf’ rāsīs): 269; 121.

perlocutionary act: 338.

persona, tone, and voice: These terms reflect the tendency in recent criticism to think of narrative and lyric works of literature as a mode of speech, or in what is now a favored term, as *discourse*. To conceive a work as an utterance suggests that there is a speaker who has determinate personal qualities, and who expresses attitudes both toward the characters and materials within the work and toward the audience to whom the work is addressed. In his *Rhetoric* (fourth century BC), Aristotle, followed by other Greek and Roman rhetoricians, pointed out that an orator projects in the course of his oration an *ethos*, that is, a personal character, which itself functions as a means of persuasion. For example, if the impression a speaker projects is that of a person of rectitude, intelligence, and goodwill, the audience is instinctively inclined to give credence to such a speaker’s arguments. The current concern with the nature and function of the author’s presence in a work of imaginative literature is related to this traditional concept, and is part of the rhetorical emphasis in modern criticism. (See *rhetoric*, *rhetorical criticism*, and *speech-act theory*.)

Specific applications of the terms “persona,” “tone,” and “voice” vary greatly and involve difficult concepts in philosophy and social psychology—concepts such as “the self,” “personal identity,” “role-playing,” and “sincerity.” This essay will merely sketch some central uses of these terms that have proved helpful in analyzing the experience of diverse works of literature.

Persona was the Latin word for the mask worn by actors in the classical theater, from which was derived the term **dramatis personae** for the list of characters who play a role in a drama, and ultimately the English word "person," a particular individual. In recent literary discussion "persona" is often applied to the first-person speaker who tells the story in a narrative poem or novel, or whose voice we hear in a lyric poem. Examples of personae, in this broad application, are the visionary first-person narrator of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (who in the opening passages of various books of that epic discourses at some length about himself); the Gulliver who tells us about his misadventures in *Gulliver's Travels*; the "I" who carries on most of the conversation in Alexander Pope's satiric dialogue *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*; the genial narrator of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, who pauses frequently for leisurely discourse with his reader; the speaker who talks first to himself, then to his sister, in William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"; the Duke who tells the emissary about his former wife in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess"; and the fantastic "biographer" who narrates Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Calling all such diverse speakers "personae" serves to indicate that they are all, to some degree, adapted to the generic and formal requirements and the artistic aims of a particular literary work. We need, however, to go on to make distinctions between such speakers as Jonathan Swift's Gulliver and Browning's Duke, who are entirely fictional characters very different from their authors; the narrators in Pope's *Epistle* and Fielding's *Tom Jones*, who are presented as closer to their authors, although clearly shaped to fit the roles they are designed to play in those works; and the speakers in the autobiographical passages in *Paradise Lost*, in "Tintern Abbey," and in "Ode to a Nightingale," where we are invited to attribute the voice we hear, and the sentiments it utters, to the poet in his own person.

In an influential discussion, I. A. Richards defined **tone** as the expression of a literary speaker's "attitude to his listener." "The tone of his utterance reflects . . . his sense of how he stands toward those he is addressing" (*Practical Criticism*, 1929, chapters 1 and 3). In a more complex definition, the Soviet critic Mikhail Bakhtin said that tone, or "intonation," is "oriented in two directions: with respect to the listener as ally or witness and with respect to the object of the utterance as the third, living participant whom the intonation scolds or caresses, denigrates or magnifies." ("Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," in Bakhtin's *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, trans. 1976.) The sense in which the term is used in recent criticism is suggested by the phrase "tone of voice," as applied to nonliterary speech. The way we speak reveals, by subtle clues, our conception of, and attitude toward, the things we are talking about, our personal relationship to our auditor, and also our assumptions about the social level, intelligence, and sensitivity of that auditor. The tone of a speech can be described as critical or approving, formal or intimate, outspoken or reticent, solemn or playful, arrogant or prayerful, angry or loving, serious or ironic, condescending or obsequious, and so on through numberless possible nuances of relationship and attitude both to object and auditor. In a literary narrative, the *narratee* (the person or persons to whom the narrator addresses the story) is sometimes explicitly identified, but at other times remains an **implied auditor**, revealed only by what the narrator implicitly takes for granted

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as needing or not needing explanation or justification, and by the tone of the nar-
rator's address. *Feminist critics*, for example, point out that much of the literature by
male authors assumes a male readership who share the narrator's views, interests,
and values. See Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader* (1978).

Some current critical uses of "tone" are broader, and coincide in reference
with what other critics prefer to call "voice."

Voice, in a recently evolved usage, signifies the equivalent in imaginative lit-
erature to Aristotle's "ethos" in a speech of persuasive rhetoric, and suggests also
the traditional rhetorician's concern with the importance of the physical voice in
an oration. The term in criticism points to the fact that we are aware of a voice
beyond the fictitious voices that speak in a work, and a persona behind all the
dramatic personae, and behind even the first-person narrator. We have the sense,
that is, of a pervasive authorial presence, a determinate intelligence and moral sen-
sibility, who has invented, ordered, and rendered all these literary characters and
materials in just this way. The particular qualities of the author's ethos, or voice, in
Henry Fielding's novel *Tom Jones* (1749) manifest themselves, among other things,
in the fact that he has chosen to create the wise, ironic, and worldly persona who
ostensibly tells the story and talks to the reader about it. The sense of a distinctive
authorial presence is no less evident in the work of recent writers who, unlike
Fielding, pursue a strict policy of authorial noninterference and by effacing them-
selves, try to give the impression that the story tells itself (see *point of view*). There
is great diversity in the quality of the authorial mind, temperament, and sensibility
which, by inventing, controlling, and rendering the particular fiction, pervades
works—all of them "objective" or impersonal in narrative technique—such as
James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Ernest Hemingway's "The
Killers," and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. For a particular emphasis
on the importance of the author's implicit presence as this is sustained from work
to work, see *critics of consciousness*. For a discussion of the relation between a poet's
speaking voice in real life and the qualities of his or her poem, refer to Francis
Berry, *Poetry and the Physical Voice* (1962).

Of the critics listed below who deal with this concept, Wayne C. Booth pre-
fers the term **implied author** over "voice," in order better to indicate that the
reader of a work of fiction has the sense not only of the timbre and tone of a
speaking voice, but of a total human presence. Booth's view is that this implied
author is "an ideal, literary, created version of the real man"—that is, the implied
author, although related to the actual author, is nonetheless part of the total fic-
tion, whom the author gradually brings into being in the course of his composi-
tion, and who plays an important role in the overall effect of a work on the
reader. Critics such as Walter J. Ong, on the other hand, distinguish between the
author's "false voice" and his "true voice," and regard the latter as the expression
of the author's genuine self or identity; as they see it, to discover one's true
"voice" is to discover oneself. All of these critics agree, however, that the sense
of a convincing authorial voice and presence, whose values, beliefs, and moral vi-
sion serve implicitly as controlling forces throughout a work, helps to sway the
reader to yield the imaginative consent without which a poem or novel would
remain an elaborate verbal game.