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THE PERSONA: ITS DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH CRITICISM.

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THE PERSONA:
ITS DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH CRITICISM

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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1971

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INTRODUCTION

In our time the concept of the persona has emerged as one of the most widespread stereotypes of literary criticism. It has joined with the theories of role-playing held by sociologists and of game-playing held by psychologists to seize both the popular and the critical imagination. It has been advanced by teachers of literature, absorbed by students, and incorporated into a wide variety of scholarly and popular discourse. Its definition, though absent from most dictionaries and handbooks, and even from the Oxford English Dictionary, can be found readily now: in textbooks and glossaries and in recent dictionaries like the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language and in primers for writing like Walker Gibson's Persona: A Style Study for Readers and Writers.

The dictionaries and glossaries and primers all agree that "persona" is a latin word meaning "mask" and that it now refers to a character in a literary work and is associated with such generally synonymous terms as "person" and "actor" and "speaker" and "voice." At present, then,
the definition is quite clear.

But the history is not. There seems to be an assumption that either this concept began *ex nihilo* in our own age or it has always existed, from the Greeks to ourselves, in the same form which it now assumes. These assumptions, though obviously uninformed and simplistic, have seldom been challenged or corrected by contemporary users of the above-cited terms. Such neglect of history and theory is rather surprising in an age which is not without its own obscure and even trivial achievements in scholarship and criticism. And it has done great disservice to the literary critics who have lived since the Greeks and whose theoretical contributions have added so much to our own critical terminology and consciousness.

In this study I shall try to show that the development of the concept of the persona has not received the attention it deserves and that it constitutes a significant part of the history of English criticism as a whole. It is not my purpose, however, to examine the uses to which personae have been put in creative literature; that project would be an extremely valuable one, but would demand time and proportions equal to the present one. Suffice it to generalize that personae appeared in works of creative
literature far in advance of critical explanations and theories about them: although many poets since classical times used personae (and must have understood something about them), there was never—until relatively recently—a corresponding body of criticism and theory. This study is limited to considering critical works—books, essays, letters, prefaces, etc.—which explain or touch on the concept of the persona as it developed in each major epoch of English literary criticism.

To outline that development briefly: the concept began as a part of the theory of inspiration, wherein the gods were thought to speak through their mouthpieces, the poets; it developed during the English Renaissance primarily as an adjunct to rhetorical and generic discussions and as a semantic and logical cousin of the notions of feigning, masking, and veiling; it continued through the Neoclassical era primarily in the contrasting theories of directness and indirectness; it emerged quite fully in the Romantic era with the foregrounding of the figure of the poet and in the theories which, as a consequence, explored the position of the poet with regard to the literary work, primarily in those which delineated a four-phased process (separation, abstraction, projection, and re-
constitution) whereby the poet creates his personae; and it reached its modern sense in the works of Victorian critics whose observations led to the theory of the second self, the removal of "dramatis" from the "dramatis personae" form as it was applied to fiction and poetry, and the virtual disappearance of the author from his work.

Thus, elements of the concept of the persona in its modern sense have existed since Greek times, but these have been shaped and added to during each of the major periods of English literary history and have developed gradually into their modern formulation--one which was completed approximately a hundred years ago. In the past century this basic formulation has remained essentially unchanged, but there has been a polar disagreement regarding the application of the term and the concept, with some critics arguing that they fit almost all speakers in works of literature and some insisting that they apply to very few.
CHAPTER I

THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSONA IN CLASSICAL CRITICISM

To begin the treatment of English criticism with the major spokesmen of the classical era may seem strange, but it is essential. For the origins and early doctrines of English criticism, as Joel Spingarn and others have clearly demonstrated and as every student knows, are found in the classical critics as transmitted to England by way of the Continental--particularly Italian--Renaissance. Elements of the criticism of Aristotle, Plato, and Horace, in particular, were "combined to form a definite body of Renaissance criticism" in the works of critics like Scaliger, Castelvetro, Minturno, and Robortelli in Italy and of Du Bellay, Ronsard, Fresnaye, and the Pléiade in France. From the works of these critics, the Elizabethan and Neoclassical critics of England drew a great many of their ideas: in general, they followed the Italians and, through them, the classics. In particular (note Spingarn's choice of terms) Ascham was "directly indebted" to the Italians, Davenant and Hobbes were strongly influenced by the French,
Puttenham "directly based" his concept of the poet on Scaliger (who drew on Aristotle, of course), Jonson is "directly" Aristotelian in his definition of a poet, and Sidney and Jonson are Horatian and Italianate in their concepts of the purpose of poetry; indeed "there is not an essential principle" in Sidney's highly representative *Defense of Poesy* which cannot be "traced back" to the continental and classical critics. Such notions as ideal imitation, the concept of decorum, the nature of genre, the definition of tragedy, the superiority of poetry, the combination of the general and the particular, the ethical purpose of poetry, the noble character of the poet, the *utile et dulce* function of literature—all these, in their many variations, are derivative expressions of classicism. So too, in many senses, was the concept of the persona.

The concept of the persona was inherent in the vatic conception of the poet which had become traditional by Plato's day. According to Plato's observations, God was the first to use and the poets were the first to function as personae. As Plato explains it, the muse or god "impels" poets to make their works "by power divine." The real
speaker is God himself, and he speaks to men "through them," the poets. Therefore the poets are "only the interpreters of the Gods by whom they are severally possessed."³ So it is as "inspired and possessed" vatic speakers that poets make their appearance in the world, as personae of the gods, operating apart from "any rules of art" and going "out of" their own persons and senses.⁴

Plato offers another account of poetic composition that has nothing to do with inspiration, but that provides for a poet's speaking in a voice not his own. Here the poet creates a persona, whereas before he was one. This account appears in an incisive discussion about the difference between narrative in propria persona and narrative in the person of another: "And whenever someone makes a speech as if he were someone else, shall we not say that he makes his own manner of speaking as much as he can like the one who he told us beforehand was going to speak? . . . Now to make oneself like another either in voice or in looks is to imitate the person whom one makes oneself like. . . . In such a case, then, as it seems, he and the other poets make their narrative through imitation. . . . But if the poet should nowhere hide himself, all his poetry would have been made without imitation."⁵ In the phrase "as if
he were someone else" and in the notion of the poet making himself "like another," Plato hits upon issues central to the later concept of the persona, for therein the poet is given a voice and an identity different from his so-called 'real' one--either a voice of a narrator apparently outside the work (as in the poetic voice of a MacFlecknoe or a Rape of the Lock) or a character within the work (a Huck Finn or a Gulliver). Somewhat simplistically, however, Plato in another chapter goes on to fuse the poet and the narrator, referring to drama as "imitation" and to narrative as "the poet's own report of things"—failing to allow the poet an identity other than his "own." Plato seems, then, to have understood the function of the speakers, the differentiation of the poet's self from other persons, and the imitation of separate identities—even though he blurred some of the distinctions essential to the full development of the concept.

Although Aristotle, like Plato, never used the term "persona" itself, he approximated the concept in his discussion of rhetoric. The first of his three categories, "speaker, subject, and person addressed," contains potentially the notion of a persona. According to
Aristotle, the "personal character" of the speaker functions significantly to "make us think him credible" and to provide "the most effective means of persuasion" available. Of course Aristotle probably meant the genuine "personal character," and not one assumed or put on for the nonce. But once he had established the centrality of the speaker's character as a persuasive means, he raised the possibility that the apparent character of the speaker is what really counts and that such apparent goodness in personal character can be worked up and developed—-even artificially feigned.

Furthermore, Aristotle's views on decorum (as a part of rhetoric) led him to insist on the "appropriate" as an absolute essential to all communication, written or spoken. He insisted that a writer "must disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially" because naturalness is more persuasive. Here again Aristotle advocates a practice related to the concept of the persona: disguise. Writers and speakers are able to reach their audience more effectively if they create an ethos of goodness and naturalness; and they create this by using disguise and artifice.
In addition, the speaker must use "appropriate" language—the sort which is "in keeping with a particular disposition" or a "corresponding character." Thus a rustic and a teacher, a young man and an old man, a slave and a free man all must use the language which corresponds with their stations. And the language must also be appropriate to the emotion being expressed: the speaker should "employ the language of anger in speaking of outrage . . . the language of exultation for a tale of glory, and that of humiliation for a tale of pity; and so in all other cases." Aristotle defends or explains the use of appropriate language strategically, primarily in terms of its effect upon the audience: it makes people "believe in the truth" that the speaker, or through him the poet, is trying to convey. Propriety produces persuasion.

As a way of differentiating between the tragic and epic genres, Aristotle employs a simplified concept of the persona: in tragedy the poet never speaks directly, whereas in epic he appears himself as the narrator. In making the latter point, however, Aristotle was cautious, thinking that too much of the poet in the poem would harm the epic. Therefore he praised Homer as "the only poet who
rightly appreciates the part he should take himself" and
later he generalized prescriptively that the poet should
"speak as little as possible in his own person" if he is
to imitate well. Like Plato, Aristotle pretty much
assumes that the poet and the narrator share an identity;
nevertheless, he does make a clear distinction between
what the poet says through externalized speakers and what
he says "in his own person."

Both Plato and Aristotle differentiated between narra-
tive and dramatic or imitative art on the basis of who does
the speaking: the poet himself or some other person or
character. Both of them, further, sensed that an element
of deception is involved. On the one hand, there is the
poet "who never tries to turn our thoughts from himself
or to suggest that anyone else is speaking," in which case
the poet serves as a direct narrator; on the other hand,
there is the poet who "speaks as if he was himself Chryses
and tries his best to make us think that Chryses is
speaking," in which case he is using what our century
would call a persona. So both Plato and Aristotle rec-
ognized the practice of poets using personae, and both
of them discussed some essential features of that practice--
though they lacked our modern terminology.

Next to make salient observations on the concept of the persona was Horace. His most influential statement insofar as the persona is concerned was the famous "If you wish me to weep, you must first grieve yourself." Although Aristotle had said something similar in the Poetics regarding "appropriate gestures" and the need for convincing representation of states of emotion, Horace's remark has had enormous influence and, because it is quite vague, has been interpreted in opposing ways by later critics, depending on their own prejudices; indeed, later critics, as we shall see, drew upon it in both their attacks on and defenses of the persona.

In addition to this controversial dictum, Horace made at least two other noteworthy contributions to the development of the concept of the persona. He asserted the need for a doctrine of decorum--arguing that it makes a great difference "whether a god is speaking or a hero, whether a seasoned old man or a hot-headed, impetuous youth" and insisting that authors must make their speakers and characters "consistent" and believable. Authors, he thought, should "ascribe to each person whatever is appropriate to
him." Horace seems to have referred very favorably, though only in a passing way, to the tragic "mask" and "garb"--both important terms in later theories of Renaissance and Neoclassic critics which emphasize the defensive and protective functions of personae and the generic traits proper to them. Horace, then, apparently recognized the device and sympathized with the purpose of personae.

The next major critic whose writings are relevant to the concept of the persona was Longinus, who mentioned the case in which "a writer, when relating something about a person, suddenly breaks off and converts himself into that self-same person." Longinus describes this practice as a "species of figure" and as a "swift transition"--it seems that he thinks of it in much the same way Aristotle had, as something related to rhetoric. But on the whole Longinus' theory has both Platonic and Aristotelian dimensions: the practice represents "a kind of outburst of passion" and results when a crisis in the plot "constrains" the poet to shift from his own person to another. Thus Longinus ascribes the practice of using personae partly to a need in the writer to get outside himself and partly
to the formal demands which the work itself imposes upon its creator.

Elsewhere Longinus recognizes the process whereby an author "converts himself" into some other speaker or person. And, impressed by that process, he praises authors who employ it in their writings. He thinks Hyperides to be a superior writer because he has the demonstrated capacity to change his style and tone and because he "talks with simplicity, where it is required" and with other styles and degrees of complexity where they are required; whereas he excoriates Demosthenes as a writer because he employs "one unvarying tone in all his utterances" and cannot effectively delineate voices other than his own. Further than this, regrettably, Longinus does not go.

Of the bulk of classical criticism, that having to do with the concept of the persona and related notions constitutes only a small portion. But that portion carries with it significant implications, and it greatly influenced the observations and theories of later critics, whose development of the concept made use of elements which had already been singled out by the classical critics--including the vatic role of the poet, the nature of imitation, the re-
relationships between narrative and dramatic form, the rhetorical role of the speaker, the complicated doctrines of sincerity and decorum, and the fragmentation of the person of the poet into proper rhetorical and artistic forms.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


4 Ibid.

5 Plato, The Republic, Chapter III, trans. B. Jowett. This is a narrower sense of imitation than Plato uses elsewhere.

6 Ibid.


8 Ibid., I, 2.

9 Ibid., III, 1.

10 Ibid., III, 7.

11 Aristotle, Poetics, Chapter XXIV, trans. S. H. Butcher.

12 Plato, The Republic, Ch. II.


14 See Chapter III for a fuller discussion of this problem.

15 Horace, Ars Poetica, Part IV.
16 Ibid., Part X.

17 Ibid., Part IX.


19 Ibid., Chapter XXXIV.

20 Ibid.
CHAPTER XI

THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSONA IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE CRITICISM

The English Renaissance produced volumes of critical treatises, but most of them focused on moral and rhetorical issues. Consequently many critical concepts and terms found valuable in later ages were either overlooked or but lightly touched by the critics of the age. Among these was the concept of the persona. Although the period produced a wealth of literature wherein personae operate, it did not—regrettably—produce a corresponding wealth of theory about the nature and use of personae. So we find numerous examples—satyrs speaking satires, shepherds complaining in pastorals, tyrants ranting in plays—but no direct analysis of this device by critics. The period witnessed a remarkable example of practice anticipating theory: the device of the persona was present in literature, but the theory of the persona was not well developed in criticism.

As critics, Renaissance Englishmen were vigorously and variously occupied: arguing that the proper subject for poetry was human action and human life, asserting that
the poet mingles fiction with fact, explaining what catharsis meant or ought to mean, emphasizing the moral effects of literary works upon their audience, proving that poetry surpasses philosophy in its concreteness and history in its universality, defending the rules of the ancients and making them increasingly rigid in the process, explaining the merits of metrics and grammar and tropes and schemes. But in all their counting of feet and listing of tropes, none of these critics ever asked whether the narrator himself is fact or fiction, inquired whether the emotional effect upon the audience is heightened by a speaker, suggested that the poet's superiority over the philosopher and the historian may involve his ability to don a mask, hinted that the persona could be as significant as the length of an Aristotelian day, argued that the ethos of the speaker overrides the exploits of the author, or suspected that a poet's license to create a second nature may also give him a license to create a second poet. These critics clearly concerned themselves with a wide range of topics, but the concept of the persona and the device of using personae were not among them.

In spite, however, of the fact that these critics
neither used the word "persona" nor discussed the device or the concept directly, they were not unaware of the roles and functions of speakers. In the writing of satires and pastorals, for instance, the use of such speakers was both consciously realized and critically discussed. George Puttenham knew that the speeches and rebukes found in satire were spoken by particular types of speakers who were both separated from the poet himself and formalized in their natures; in satire, he noted, the speeches were uttered by "the rurall gods."¹ And in the writing of pastorals, as William Alexander pointed out, authors were following a formula of "disguising" the passions which they themselves suffered and which in turn they were attributing to "the Persons of Shepherds" who served as their speakers.² These critics reveal an awareness of something akin to what we call the persona, something wherein an author speaks in a voice not his own and disguises his own attitudes and creates—as we would say—distance between his speakers and himself.

The dichotomy between the author and his speakers was best perceived and expressed by Edmund Spenser, in his discussions of his own works and those of ancient poets.
He wrote that Virgil used "shepheards" as the "speakers" of his poems and that Theocritus made goatherders the "persons and authors" of his tales. By the term "persons" Spenser probably meant the characters or actors in the ancient works; but by "authors" and "speakers" he seems to have meant something quite different: inasmuch as he saw both as things quite distinct from the poet himself, he must have been thinking of what we call personae. At this stage, however, Spenser is doing little more than recognizing an equivalent rhetorical strategy.

It is in his Argument to the October Eclogue that Spenser elevates the distinction between poet and personae into something of theoretical import. The speaker Cuddie, the "perfect paterne of a Poete," is presented as someone quite separate from "The Author hereof." And in the Glosse to the same poem, "E. K." tells us: "I doubt whether by Cuddie be specified the author selfe, or some other. For in the eyght Eglogue the same person was brought in, singing a Cantion of Colins making, as he sayth. So / that some doubt, that the persons be different." These observations, though brief and fragmentary, indicate an awareness on Spenser's part of a separation between the poet
himself and his speakers—between the "author self" and "some other" voice. Whether Spenser intended it or not, the "other" self or speaker or author seems strikingly similar to what we conceptualize as a persona. And in this sense, at least, his separation of the real from the apparent author assumes more than a merely descriptive significance; for this separation is central to both the device and the concept of the persona.

Of all the critics of his age, Spenser makes probably the clearest statement of the author-speaker dichotomy. Other critics who wrote more extensively and analytically never seem as explicit, although their observations and terminology are not greatly removed from his. As a group, these critics—including Puttenham and Alexander, Sidney, Harington, Gosson, Bacon, Jonson, and Chapman—reflect the status of the device and the concept of the persona as recognized and understood during the English Renaissance.

Generally they share two traits in their treatment of what we call the persona: they never confront it directly or in detail, and they tend to become sidetracked onto other issues whenever they do approach it. Perhaps Puttenham provides the most typical example of their pattern. The
writers of satire, he observed, "made wise as if the gods of the woods, whom they called Satyres or Siluanes . . . whereas in deed they were but disguised persons under the shape of Satyres." Herein he recognized that such making-wise and disguising constitute a "device" which poets employ, but he did not--after having recognized the device--attempt to analyze it. Instead he assumed it to be an agent of some moral power: it serves poets by making their admonitions seem graver and hence have a stronger effect upon their audience. Then he suddenly forgot about the "device" altogether and launched into a discussion of the moral power of literature. As with Puttenham, so with other critics: whenever they hit upon the device or upon elements of the concept of personae, they become diverted.

The majority of these critics do, however, emphasize and discuss three terms which, though occurring in differing contexts, are relevant to the concept of the persona: "fain," "maske," and "vaile." The relationship between their terminology and the concept itself is one which can be established mainly by logical implication—and we cannot be sure that they were aware of this implication, nor can we be certain that their use of these terms derives directly from their awareness of a separation between the poet
and his speakers. It is possible, admittedly, for a poet to feign in his own person, as in the case of an autobiographical writer; or it may be that a poet confines his feigning to the creating of his subject matter, not his manner of presenting it. If so, he and his feigning have little to do with the concept of the persona. Nevertheless if the context and expression of the terms has relevance to the speaker as well as the subject, to the manner as well as the matter, then they fall within the area delineated by the concept of the persona. So we must consider not only the presence of the terms themselves in criticism, but also the context and applicability of the terms.

The feigning power, in reference to both the subject and the speaker, is discussed in detail by Philip Sidney. In feigning the subject matter, he observes, the poet can create and deal with ridiculous and ignoble worlds, though his primary task is to create a golden world out of the brazen one of his own experience. In this concept of feigning, the poet is allowed to go beyond the actual, to feign a world such as has never existed in fact.8

In addition to feigning fundamental subject matter; the poet is also allowed the privilege of feigning his method of presenting it, particularly in using speakers.
In his discussion of Plato, Sidney noted that the poet has the power to feign basic forms of presentation: Plato "faineth" the speakers in his dialogues, and they "speake" what is not literally true. The speaker, then, is not the poet himself; nor do the views expressed by speakers have to conform to the private views of the poet or the literal representation of reality.

In his concept of feigning which allowed the poet a free hand with both the matter and the manner, Sidney justified the practice on three grounds: it is obvious, its motive is pure, and it is very effective. All perceptive readers are aware of it, in Sidney's opinion, and anyone who does not realize, for instance, that Aesop is feigning in his Fables deserves to have his name chronicled among the beasts. Further, although admitting that feigning involves a sort of deceit, Sidney insisted that poets do not actually lie, for three reasons: they never present their stories as "actually true," they deal not with the literally true but with the ideally true, and the motive behind any incidental deception is always a wholesome one. Finally, the effect upon the audience of something "fayned" is as great or greater than that of some-
thing "true"—it has equal power to teach, and even more power to move.

The term "fain" was used, in a manner reminiscent of Sidney, by John Harington. Refuting the notion that poets are liars, Harington argued that "by the rule of Poetica Licentia" a poet may feign whatsoever he wants. 

Harington seemed, however, to be rather reluctant to grant the privilege of poetic license, and granted it mainly because it was one of Aristotle's rules. Although he did not deeply analyze the concept, Harington performed the singular service of explicitly relating the concept of feigning to the rule of poetic license.

In a similar sort of conceptual linkage, Ben Jonson connected feigning with creativity. Using typical Renaissance etymology, he defined a poet as a "maker, or a fainer," and employed the word "fain" as a synonym for "make" and "form." In this sense of its meaning—but with none of the connotations of deception or lying given the term by other critics—he made it a key term for describing the creative power by which a poet pursues his art. Although he neither saw feigning as a practice necessarily implying a persona nor viewed creativity as
having the originality and spontaneity which later ages came to believe in, Jonson attached to the concept of feigning a sense of respectability deriving from its association with the poet's power to create.

Whereas Jonson referred to feigning with respect, Francis Bacon viewed it with suspicion. His main concern was to put poetry into its proper place within the larger area of knowledge and to locate its proper source in man's mind. As a part of knowledge, poetry includes, among other things, feigning. Although chastizing writers for emphasizing manner over matter, he admitted feigning as a property of poetry—connoting something exaggerated, unreal, untrue, but necessary. Its proper function was to "cloath and adorn" the truths of philosophy, but it always bordered upon being another of the famous Baconian "distempers." Hence, although Bacon recognized the existence of feigned chronicles, lives, epistles, orations and such, he did not regard with respect the concept of feigning itself. In general he saw it as a necessary evil for certain kinds of writing; at best he thought that it could enhance the cause of morality and perhaps add a touch of delectation.

Related to the notion of feigning is the concept of
the "maske" or "visard." The practice of masking was seen to be rooted in the need for teaching and moving. The masking itself constituted a distinct form of the technique of indirection—a basic feature of the persona as well. Perhaps the fullest discussion of masking came from George Puttenham, who observed that "one Roscius Gallus, the most excellent player among the Romaines, brought up these vizards which we see at this day used, partly to supply the want of players, when there were moe parts than there were persons, or that it was not thought meet to trouble & pester princes chambers with too many folkes. Now by the chaunge of a vizard one man might play the king and the carter . . . or any other part he listed very conueniently. There be that say Roscius did it for another purpose . . . he deuised these vizards to hide his own illfaoured face." The explanation given by Puttenham shows not only an awareness that masks or vizards were used, but also it shows that there were reasons for their use: one pragmatic (to supply sufficient bodies) and one protective (to hide the wearer's face). Puttenham's explanation is quite similar to those given by later critics for the use of personae in genres other than the drama. When Browning, for instance,
presents twelve different points of view toward a Roman murder case, he is doing much the same thing as an actor who dons different masks. And when later critics speak of voices and point-of-view they are similarly expanding or elaborating a notion embryonically present in Puttenham's passage. Both Browning and modern critics, admittedly, shift their focus from the player to the poet and from the stage actors to the fictional narrators, but the process they describe has significant similarities in technique as well as motive. We may well suspect that later poets and critics have adopted an idea which originated in the practice and criticism of the drama and have adroitly amplified its context to its present proportions.

As with feigning, so with masking: some Renaissance critics showed an intense dislike for the concept and the practice. Stephen Gosson, for instance, perceived but one use for the whole notion: poets use a mask or vizard to hide their own faults, and for nothing else. As he put it, they "mask" themselves in a "vizard" in order to cover their own vain ways, their wantonness, and their folly. Gosson did not think it necessary to discuss the idea of masking or to consider the aesthetic or moral effects of
the practice, but sought solely to unmask and to expose poets to the public. To him, the primary work of the critic was simply to "pul off the vizard" and put the poet where he and his works belonged, in the "dunghils." Curiously enough, he agreed with Puttenham about the vizard having the power to expand a poet's powers, but he viewed that expansion with hostility and sought to destroy it.15

The third term related to the concept of the persona is that of the "vaile." When discussing the drama and actors, as we have seen, Puttenham termed the masking device a "vizard." But when discussing poetry and the poet, he named it a "vaile." Hence, it is a broader and more metaphoric type of masking. He believed that the poets had devised eclogues not for the purpose of representing rustics and communicating love, but in order to comment on greater issues "under the vaile" of rustic speakers.16 Such a step, even though conveyed by a misty metaphor rather than by extended analysis, represents a sophisticated critical statement on Puttenham's part—one akin to such modern theories as William Empson's and one clearly related to both the device and the concept of personae.

Feigning, masking, and veiling constitute, then, the
closest approach in Renaissance thought to the concept of the persona. They are related to this concept primarily by logical implication: freedom to feign a second nature and an unreal world implies freedom to feign a second speaker; the use of masks by actors allows poets the same privilege; and expansion of the masking concept to the metaphoric theory of veiling extends the techniques of indirection from drama to other literary genres. Each step moves closer to the concept of the persona.

The Renaissance conceptions relating to the persona can be approached from two other directions: the notion of the poet's divine power and the concept of genre. As to the first, the notion of divine inspiration persisted into the Renaissance, but in a very diminished sort of way. Although from earliest times poets had been associated with magicians and prophets, by the Renaissance the separation of the three was virtually complete: critics no longer believed that poets could rhyme people to death or that poets' words carried religious authority with them as had those of Isaiah or Archilochus. Admittedly one or two thought that poets were beloved of the gods or even that the poet's voice and works were from God, not from man.
But few critics persisted in believing that ancient Platonic theory of the supernatural role of poets. Curiously enough, however, critics were highly impressed by the etymological argument—which, as far as it went, had some obvious similarities with the notion of persona—and in their belief that "poet" and "vates" were inseparably wedded, critics still clung to the theory of the vatic role of the poet.

According to the theory of genre, a poet was virtually forced to use personae when he wrote. Critics brought up on the principles of classical rhetoric and literature knew very well that when a poet wrote in a given genre, decorum required him to take a particular stance, to speak from the proper point of view: satire had to be spoken by a satyr (though the etymology connecting the two was later shown to be false), pastorals by shepherds, tragedy by noble characters, comedy by low ones. In complying with these rigid stances, poets in effect were employing personae. So these generic requirements themselves molded and developed the concept of the persona and forced poets to use the device of the persona.

For instance, the satiric genre exerted a strong and
lasting influence upon the use and theory of the persona. Since its beginnings, satire had always involved some sort of satiric spokesman thought to be the appropriate speaker for the subject and the task. In the Middle Ages the dominant types had been the anonymous clergyman and the plowman. In the Renaissance the arrogant malcontent and the crude and wanton satyr became the dominant types. Writers assumed such a fundamental connection between the genre and these types of speakers that the satire was often dominated by the personae; indeed, often the interest in creating personae and in fully delineating their characters overshadowed the targets which had prompted the satiric attack. Further, most critics argued that such personae should be the conventional, ready-made, generically appropriate types. In both theory and practice, the satiric genre fostered the development of particularized personae. Certainly anyone writing satire knew about and felt obliged to use the proper one--and knew that such a speaker was not, as the Irish would say, 'his own self.'

Other genres also contributed to the development of personae, and critical commentary about those genres led eventually to concepts of various personae. The pastoral
genre, for example, gave rise to a particular type of persona. For centuries poets followed the pattern traditional for creating pastoral spokesmen: a shepherd, in a natural setting, singing or lamenting about themes like the beauty of the simple life or the loss of a mysterious mistress, or celebrating the ideal of the good life. Whatever the theme, the speaker seldom varied. As Puttenham saw him, he was the speaker of "idle wooings" and of "amorous musicks."

Or as Thomas Lodge demonstrated, he is a very simple country type who, amid his "painted feelds," sings of "Contentment, happie loue, and perfect sport." And he was, generally, a man characterized by simplicity, naiveté, contentedness, some sort of sadness, sincerity—and perhaps even some responsibility for a distant herd of sheep. In short, he was a stylized type; and in this sense, a persona.

Among English men of letters—whether rhetoricians or philosophers or poets—the practice of using personae was widespread; some of them may have understood the concept itself, much more than we suspect or can discover and prove. Although they did not have or use the word "personae" in anything like its modern sense, they did find words whose
usage and meaning anticipated it: "fain," "mask," and "vaile." And they seem to have been generally sympathetic to the classical theories and practices relating to the concept--such as the theory of genre, the notion of decorum, and the use and recognition of speakers quite separate from the author's own person. To think that the concept of the persona was central to the criticism of the age, of course, would be inaccurate. But many elements associated with it were developing in the criticism and the creative writing of the period. A theory was slowly and unevenly emerging.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1 George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, Chapter XIV.


5 Ibid. As to the identity of "E. K." the editors of the Variorum Spenser conclude that "recent authorities" believe that "Spenser had more or less share in the commentary with another person designated E. K." Ibid., p. 645. Whether or not "E. K." was himself a Spenserian persona, we can only conjecture.

6 Puttenham, Chapter XIV.

7 Ibid.


9 This last reason is, of course, irrelevant.


11 Ben Jonson, Timber, or Discoveries. Spingarn, I, 51.

13 Sidney, pp. 207-8.
14 Puttenham, Chapter XIV.
16 Puttenham, Ch. XIV.
17 Sidney, p. 232.
19 For an excellent discussion of these movements see Alvin B. Kernan, *The Plot of Satire*, pp. 1-12, and *The Cankered Muse*, pp. 1-53, 89-90, 151-2.
20 Puttenham, Ch. XIV.
21 Thomas Lodge, *In Praise of the Country Life*.
CHAPTER III
THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSONA IN ENGLISH NEOCLASSICAL CRITICISM

The central fact for us about the Neoclassical era is that nothing was written directly on the topic of the persona. Whenever critics did deal with anything indirectly related to it, they by no means agreed in their opinions. On the matter of the presence of the poet within the poem, for instance, the disagreement was polar: Hugh Blair thought it good for poets to become involved personally and even to let their personal involvement show, whereas the Earl of Shaftesbury reserved his admiration for the poet who "makes hardly any figure at all, and is scarce discoverable in his poem." Such diverse attitudes were characteristic of the period. And these attitudes led to a stasis in the development of the concept: virtually nothing was written explicitly about personae or about the theory involved in their formulation. Instead the age's critics wrote about things like human nature, art and aesthetics, the processes and limits of perception and understanding, the events in the poets' lives, the moral function of literature, and so on; but they seldom--except
for their adherence to the usual concepts like decorum and genre--asked the kinds of questions or performed the kinds of tasks which might have resulted in some kind of theory of personae--analyzing a work in terms of its structure, pondering the nature and effects of the narrative voice, discussing the relation between a work and its speaker.

Nonetheless, when we--from our point of view--see in Neoclassical criticism statements and notions having similarity to the concept of the persona, we can ill afford to ignore such observations; for only by examining such incomplete and indirect data can we hope to arrive at a sense of the concept's later development. When we examine these observations, we can detect two basic tendencies: one essentially favorable to it and one unfavorable.

The unfavorable tendency in Neoclassical criticism stemmed from three features of that criticism in general: an intense interest in the life and character of the author himself, and a consequent belief that his words came from his own person; an ever-persisting demand for sincerity and truth, resulting in a distrust of the artificial or the fictitious; and a preponderance of judicial and aesthetic, rather than structural or descriptive, criticism.
Since a persona is by definition a speaker separate from the author himself in at least some sense, critics who focus their attention upon the person and character of the author are not likely to give much thought to the possibility of fictive or partly fictive speakers, to other voices than the author's own. It seems quite unlikely that a critic with the mental frame of reference, say, of David Hume would ever dream of the existence of personae: for him the "mind and intention of the author" was the primary point of interest, and to enter into the identity of the author was his main purpose in reading. And a critic of no less stature than Samuel Johnson voiced similar views: he saw art, as Jean Hagstrum points out, principally as a "revelation of the author." Johnson assumed that an author writes in his own person, that whatever an author writes represents (or ought to represent) his own genuine opinions, that a writer never expresses or allows his characters to express anything not essentially in accord with what the author really believes. In his discussion of Swift Johnson equates him with Gulliver, making no distinction between the author and speaker—indeed, using the two terms synonymously. Regarding the Essay on Man Johnson fused the
two roles again, seeing both author and speaker as the real person, Pope. And in discussing *Lycidas* Johnson fused the man Milton with the pastoral speaker of the poem, objecting to the poem because it was dishonest—after all, Milton had never done what the speaker claims to have done: battened flocks and driven afield. Such undue and literalist emphasis upon the person of the author was fairly common during the Neoclassic era and exerted, I think, an effect adverse to the development of the concept of the persona.

The doctrine of sincerity, a widely accepted Neoclassic principle, also inhibited the growth of a theory of the persona. Those critics who followed it—Johnson, Dennis, Hume, Fielding, and many more—attacked authors for using unreal speakers and characters and emotions and attitudes. Voicing the Horatian doctrine, Henry Fielding wrote that "no man can paint a distress well, which he doth not feel while he is painting it." Like Fielding, other critics opposed the same sorts of what they saw to be insincerity and affectation. Johnson once excoriated the "affected" and "fictitious" practice which Pope followed in using anonymous and pseudonymous speakers. Because Pope did not
express his own habitual sentiments when using these poses, Johnson thought that such poses were either wilfully disguised versions of Pope's own character or temporary qualities assumed without either historical or psychological reality. He dismissed such practices as "strange" and "unnatural." Such application of the doctrine of sincerity, though aptly termed "relentless, literal-minded, and unsophisticated" by Professor Hagstrum, was very much characteristic of the criticism of the age.

Combining the doctrine of sincerity and the biographical approach, many critics assumed further that the poet is always the same and that all his works are spoken in the same voice. In a typical discussion of a literary work, say of Lord Kames or of Hugh Blair, there will be numerous references to "the writer" or "the poet," but seldom will there be any mention of other speakers. Even among those who noted a separation between a dramatist and his dramatis personae, there was no attempt to transfer the notion of separation to other genres--most merely echoed Aristotle in seeing this separation as a basis for the generic difference between drama and narrative. A poet, it seems, was thought to have a single, unalterable,
established voice from which he could not vary.

Such insistence that the poet himself is always the speaker led to some curious and even laughable conclusions. Writing of Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar, the critic John Hughes so thoroughly fused the poet with his speakers that he formed some notions about Spenser and the pastoral: that there is no difference whatever between Spenser himself and the speakers of his pastorals, that Spenser at the time of composition was "a passionate lover" who composed his pastorals "in the country," and that any would-be writer of poetry need only "examine his own heart and copy the scene about him."¹³

The preoccupation of Neoclassic critics with judicial and aesthetic criticism was the final deterrent to the development of a concept of the persona. Of course this did not preclude or ban the use of personae as a literary device, but it did direct the energies of the best critics to problems which were essentially unrelated to the concept of the persona. Critics held up prescriptive definitions of literature and beauty; they judged the success of contemporary authors according to how well they met these definitions; they compared, directly or indirectly, English
works with those of the ancient masters; they applied rigid moral tests to both authors and works. They argued that literature should make men good, that virtue should be rewarded and vice should be exposed—they gave us Lear with a happy ending. They advocated the methods practiced by Homer and Virgil, and they attacked the ugliness in Swift's writings and the injustices in Shakespeare's. Like the critics of the Renaissance, they were easily attracted away from the literary work and into literary byways. And largely because their emphases lay elsewhere, their characteristic judgments indicate neither an awareness of nor a concern for the concept of the persona.

There were, nevertheless, a few Neoclassical critics who had attitudes which were basically favorable to the concept of the persona—though they developed the concept only in an indirect way. Of those who used the device of the persona, John Dryden was probably the first to defend its use. In his 1668 Essay of Dramatic Poesy, he employed four personae to voice varying attitudes toward the disputes involving the ancients vs. the moderns, the English vs. the French, and rhyme vs. blank verse. Perhaps the first attempt at a theory relating to personae appears in
his explanation for his use of the device: they permit a greater "freedom of discourse" and allow an author to "relate" differing opinions without having to "reconcile" them. Later in his career Dryden continued to show that he was conscious of the variety of speakers which a poet could use, though he did not comment very fully on such usage. For example, he noted that Ovid usually speaks through "persons" other than himself, whereas Virgil usually speaks in his own person. And he held Shakespeare to be the great Janus of poets because he had "two faces." But beyond these brief observations Dryden did not go.

There were other, more consequential, critical observations which dealt more directly and fully with the concept of the persona. Perhaps the best of these was the pragmatic argument of an anonymous critic in a piece called Tears of the Muses that the use of a speaker separate from the real author facilitates communication and increases the psychological effect of a work upon its audience. This critic argued that the poet must "abandon his personal Self" and use the "mouth of some figurative Speaker." The main reason for an author to use the device was rhetor-
ical: the figurative speaker has greater ethos, or is of "more Consequence," than the real author. Although this discussion probably had little direct influence on later ones, it is notable that the distinction made here between the "personal Self" of the poet and the "figurative speaker" of the work, as well as the pragmatic concern for audience response, became substantial concerns for later critics who dealt with the concept of the persona.

Other critics agreed with the anonymous theorist that the moral and psychological effects of fictitious speakers surpass those of the author himself. James Beattie believed that such "persons" and "relators" are better able to keep the audience in a state of suspense: since the writer knows what the catastrophe will be, he can share no suspense with his audience--but his "relators" can. Similar to Joseph Addison argued that the audience is more "awed and elevated" by the words of a speaker like Aeneas or Achilles than by Virgil or Homer talking "in their own persons." And John Dennis put the normal psychological explanation in terms of religious ecstasy: when the speaker in a work is God himself, and not the poet, the audience is wrought up more readily and thoroughly, since
"what God says" outweighs what mere poets say.

Not only the psychological effect, but also the artistic quality of a work of art was thought to be greatly increased when the poet employed speakers other than himself. The Earl of Shaftesbury, for one, attacked the sort of author who "writes in his own person" as being egotistic and shallow; and he viewed works by such as follow that practice to be inferior. Conversely, he thought highly of the writer who makes "hardly any figure at all, and is scarce discoverable in his poem." Underlying this judgment is the notion that the work itself, not the poet, should be emphasized: the "scene" should present itself, independent of the author or of any direct overtures from author to reader. This thinking of Shaftesbury's resembles Dryden's theory of indirectness: literature ought to consist of fine indirect strokes which remain undetected, rather than of direct and butcher-like blows. Both Dryden and Shaftesbury, then, preferred indirectness and assumed the indirect to be the more finely wrought.

The use of independent speakers was thought to be not only an aid to indirection but also a way of improving the structure and the narrative of a work. Alexander Pope,
for instance, believed that Homer's use of speakers instead of his own voice enabled him to create a narrative form of "the most animated nature imaginable" and a plot wherein "everything moves, everything lives." And Hugh Blair thought that such speakers facilitated the plot and improved the structure by allowing the poet to begin in medias res. Although both arguments seem unconvincing—Pope fails to explain precisely how the action is effected by such speakers, and Blair does not explain why a poet cannot begin in medias res while using his own voice—the significance of these arguments is not their power but their very presence: they reveal an undoubted assumption that separate speakers somehow dignify the structure of art.

Probably the assumption was better defended by those who discussed the concept of poetic license. As we saw earlier, Renaissance critics had used the notion of poetic license in connection with the concept of feigning. A number of Neoclassic critics, including Dryden, John Hughes and Thomas Blackwell, expanded that concept through definition and application. Dryden, in his Apology for Heroic Poetry, defined it as a "liberty" taken by poets in "speak-
ing" in figurative, non-prose forms and as an imaginative sort of "representation" which transcends the true or the probable. After thus theoretically defining the concept, however, Dryden did not clearly apply it to particular poets or works. That task was done by Hughes and Blackwell, among others. Hughes distinguished between Spenser the author and the "actors" of his poems, then went on to define those actors as "fancied beings" whom Spenser, in accord with the doctrine of poetic license, had "invented ... without being restrained." To Hughes, poetic license meant that an author is free to give his actors whatever "stature, customs, and manners" he pleases. And this was precisely what Spenser had done in creating his "actors." In a similar vein, Blackwell in his Life and Writings of Homer insisted on the poet's license to "count-erfeit manners" and to feign whatever "persons and characters" he desires, including those who function as narrators. In thus defining and illustrating the concept of poetic license, these critics in effect established a logical corollary to the concept of the persona.

The final, and perhaps most important, contribution to Neoclassical theory relating to the concept of the persona
was made by Thomas Twining, a Scottish minister and translator of Aristotle: he was the first name the concept. He separated the poet who "speaks in his own person" from the poet who writes "personative" poetry, characterized by the use of what Twining termed "personations" who function as its speakers. In calling these speakers separate from the poet "personations," Twining probably came closer than any other Neoclassical critic to the concept of the persona as we conceive and call it, and by providing the terminology he opened the way for later developments.29
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letres (Edinburgh, 1762), Chapter XXXIX, p. 444.


8. Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, Book IX, Chapter I.


10. Ibid., p. 212. In the interests of fairness, we should note that Johnson occasionally made statements less simplistic and limited in their range: he believed that poets are not always limited to their own personal ideas and that a poet who appears from his writings to be a cheerful man is not necessarily so in reality. See, for example, Life of Pope, Works, X, 313, and Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford, 1934), III, 251.

11. Hagstrum, p. 45.
12 Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, ed. J. R. Boyd, Chapter XXIII, pp. 444-5. Like Aristotle, Kames believed that in narrative poetry the poet "introduces himself" and that in the drama he "presents his actors, never himself."


15 Ibid., 99-100.


21 Shaftesbury, p. 179.

22 Ibid., pp. 179-181.


25 Blair, Chapter XLII.


27 Hughes, *Remarks...*. Elledge, I, 304.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSONA IN ENGLISH ROMANTIC CRITICISM

Our study to this point has had to rely heavily on parallel and associative evidence; although the terminology and theories used by earlier critics often verged near to the concept and although many critics seemed to recognize the device, the word "persona" never quite appeared and the most promising theories never developed fully. This is not to say that earlier criticism was rough and unsophisticated, or that later criticism is inherently superior. Detailing the relationship between the poet and his poem was not a central concern of pre-Romantic criticism. But the criticism written during and after the Romantic era reveals a shift in emphasis—a shift which led to the appearance of "persona" in criticism.

Romantic criticism placed great emphasis upon the author and the expression of his vision: the poet was placed at the center of both creative theories and critical evaluations. The interest in the poet was not, however, in terms of external biographical and historical fact; instead, it stressed only those externals which were, as
M. H. Abrams put it, "converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's mind."¹ For the Romantics the old question "What is Poetry?" became "What is a poet?"² And in approaching poetry through the poet they achieved their most significant critical contributions.

Admittedly a good deal of what emerged from this approach to criticism was antithetical to the concept of the persona. All too often critics dealt with questions of a personal or psychological nature and attempted to use the poem as a source of information for analyzing the poet. Such psychologizing tended to disregard and to discount the poet's speakers and to ascribe all statements to the poet himself.³ Often the Romantic critics, particularly in the ad hominem attacks in the review-journals, viewed poetry as a revelation or exposure of the author. And of course such attacks hardly furthered either criticism or the concept of the persona.

Such emphasis on the poet himself resulted in a critical fusion of the voice of the poet and the voices of his speakers. Whether critics read the work for the sake of discovering its author or looked into the poet's person for an explanation of his works, it was assumed that the poet and the speaker were both identical and interchangeable.
There seems to have been widespread adoption of the Wordsworthian notion that poetry constitutes a man speaking to other men in his own voice and person. Many critics attacked the poet directly, and most Romantic poets became victims of such ad hominem criticism. Shelley's poetry, for instance, was often attacked because it was written by one accused of immorality and atheism—or as Hazlitt put it, of having a fever in his blood and a maggot in his brain. Wordsworth's poetry was thought to be tainted by his pantheism, his political views, his regionalism, and more than anything else, his "morbid spirit." Coleridge's poetry was criticized because he himself was lazy, unhappy, and undramatic; and his characters were scorned for resembling him. Byron was maligned as a poet because of his personal life and because he was thought to sprinkle his own problems throughout his works. And Keats was scorned for being too young and for being a Cockney. Such attacks, it must be admitted, have always plagued poets, and in this respect the Romantic poets are not unusual. But they were unusual, as we shall see, in the way they responded to these attacks.

In spite of such attacks, many critics who followed
this poet-oriented approach noticed contradictory attitudes and conflicting tones and saw that the author was not a homogeneous figure and that his works were not consistent. Although some critics continued to identify Swift with Gulliver, Byron with Juan, and Wordsworth with the "I" of his poems, eventually these characters came to be viewed as something other than a direct revelation of the poet's genuine self. Critics and poets joined to establish some theories of indirectness and distance, severing the poet from the characters and speakers he created and moving toward the concept and device of the persona.

The major Romantic poets contributed to the emerging concept by putting distance between themselves and their speakers and, at times, by explicitly insisting that the critics recognize that distance. For example, Wordsworth in *The Thorn* used as his speaker an "imaginary narrator," Byron used as his narrator the historic prisoner of Chillon, and Shelley admitted that Alastor, though representing a young poet, was not to be confused with himself. Stimulated by charges like the one in the *European Magazine* and *London Review*, which excoriated *Don Juan* for its moral laxity and its sneers at religion, Byron chastized such
critics as ignoramuses and advanced the theory that he was artistically expressing opinions consistent with the characters of his speakers. And Byron retorted to the fairly widespread belief that the Harold of Cantos I and II was "drawn from myself" by insisting that although some "parts" may be, he would "not own even to that" and by asserting that he "would not be such a fellow as I have made my hero for all the world." 

Instances like these drew sufficient attention to the complex functions of the poet for a few critics to theorize about the poet in terms of his art and of his created speakers. John Keble, though mistaken in thinking that the thoughts expressed by Homer's characters were his "own," argued that those characters serve as "veils and disguises" which the poet places over his own "deepest feelings." William Hazlitt, after examining the poet Wordsworth and trying to relate what he found to Wordsworth's poetry, concluded that Wordsworth was too egocentric to project beyond himself, to voice sentiments different from his own, and to create characters who differ from himself. Both Keble and Hazlitt here recognize the need for the poet to express himself through others.
Following the lead of A. W. Schlegel and Thomas Carlyle, many critics sought to find the "person" of the author in his works—and this was particularly true of Shakespearean critics. Schlegel had insisted that Shakespeare had "unlocked his heart" and had expressed "his own feelings in his own person" in the Sonnets.\(^\text{18}\) And Carlyle thought that Shakespeare had given us in his works so many "windows" through which we could perceive the genuine soul of the poet.\(^\text{19}\)

But some critics, most notably Coleridge and Hazlitt, although they shared with their peers an intense interest in the person of Shakespeare, discovered that he could nowhere be palpably seized or clearly identified. Coleridge came to view Shakespeare not as a personality but as a "Spinozistic deity—an omnipresent creativeness," and he concluded that Shakespeare's poetry is "characterless" and that his works do "not reflect the individual, Shakespeare," in any personal sense.\(^\text{20}\) Hazlitt, in spite of his belief that the opinions of the man are present in the creations of the poet, came to see Shakespeare as someone highly capable of transcending and escaping his own personal identity and limitations.\(^\text{21}\)
Most of the major poets and critics argued for some form of separation of the poet from his speaker, some fragmentation of the elements of the poet's true self, and some sort of metamorphosis of those elements into characters and speakers. It is apparent that Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Coleridge, and Hazlitt all understood most or part of this three-part process.

Wordsworth made a basic distinction between the poet's "human character" and his "poetic one." And he went further in separating an author's thoughts presented in his own person from sentiments expressed by speakers other than himself. Indeed, the phrase "in his own person" occurred many times in Wordsworth's criticism, usually as an explanation of the narrative point of view he held to be the opposite of the one involving a "narrator." For instance, in his commentary on his poem The Thorn, Wordsworth insisted that the poem was not spoken in the "author's own person" but through the person of a "loquacious narrator." Not content with merely noting this distinction, he wrote a lengthy explanation of what that narrator was like. 25  

Although as a number of critics noted, Wordsworth was not always skillful in distinguishing the thoughts
and diction of his speakers from one another or from his own, he was committed theoretically to the idea of separation. And in his own criticism of other poets he was careful to separate an author's own character and personal situation, whatever it be, from his poetic self and from his dramatic and poetic speakers.  

Shelley, too, was keenly aware of the dimension of distance, of the prerogatives of poetic license with regard to the creation of externalized mouthpieces, and of the powers of authors to range beyond their own situation and character. Like Wordsworth, he thought the man and the poet to be of "two different natures." And similarly he separated the author himself from his speakers. He noted that his own speakers could not be equated with himself: they represented characters and conceptions distinct from his own, and so should not be considered "cold impersonations of my own mind." He observed privately that anyone who took him for any of his characters or speakers was "mistaken quite." And he provided some theoretical basis for such defenses in his assertions that fiction allows an author a "license" to voice opinions and create speakers which are "widely different from . . . such as are
Metaphorically he asserted a projectionist theory very much like Hazlitt's: poets are a "very cameleonic race" capable of taking on the qualities of whatever they choose—even of "the very leaves under which they pass." Lord Byron, though he did not write as much criticism as the others, did get right to the heart of the matter in some significant instances. Once he became enraged at parsons and priests who mistook what his speakers said for what he himself sincerely believed; he insisted that he himself did not deny the immortality of the soul, but that such opinions were voiced by his character Cain—in accord with the principle of art that speakers must be believable and consistent and should speak "according to their characters." Later he theorized that an author should not embody himself in his speakers, but should allow them to speak as they are "likely to argue," whether or not that agrees with his own views on a given topic. Furthermore, Byron affirmed that his Harold was a "fictitious character," a "child of Imagination" created for the purpose of unifying the work, and that his original intent had been to "deepen" and "fill up" this character into a sketch of a
"modern Timon," whose similarities to any "real personage" were at best quite trivial. However, by the time of the third Canto, Byron had virtually thrown off the fiction: thereafter the "I" of the poem became, in Leslie Marchand's words, "Byron's own self, or his acknowledged alter ego." Finally, Byron seems to have thought of such fictitious spokesmen as costumes for himself, as we can see in the "I want a hero" phrase from Don Juan. In putting on and taking off these fictitious garbs and in so conspicuously talking about them, Byron reveals a fairly sophisticated understanding of how personae operate.

Without doubt Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron understood and expressed some key elements associated with the concept of the persona; but none of them ever analyzed or explained their ideas as thoroughly as did Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Keats. These three, along with an anonymous writer for the Westminster Review, brought the concept of the persona to its fullest development in the Romantic era.

Coleridge made many contributions to the emerging concept: separating or distancing, imaginative reconstitution, projection, the interacting movements of fusion and aloofness, and even the use of the term "persona."
Like most other critics who dealt with the issue of speakers, Coleridge began by differentiating between the author and the man. Then he separated the author from his characters or speakers: his numerous comments on Shakespeare show that he viewed Shakespeare as a poet outside of the works, manipulating and regulating and shading and creating characters not meant to have a close relationship with the poet himself. In discussing Hamlet, for instance, Coleridge noted the numerous features which make up "Hamlet's character," but he nowhere tried to pass them off—as later Freudian critics have sometimes done—as Shakespeare's own. His only fault, from our post-Bradley point of view, lay in so thoroughly individualizing Shakespeare's characters that he bestowed upon them a flesh-and-blood quality which "belongs to real existence." Once the characters are seen in these terms, however, there is obviously a complete dichotomy between author and character.

Besides setting up this basic dichotomy, Coleridge made some important theoretical observations on the complex relationship between author and speaker. He observed that Shakespeare's characters are drawn from the author's
own intellectual and moral qualities by means of a metamorphic process wherein he isolates a single one of his own qualities, exaggerates it to "morbid excess," imagines himself in circumstances different from his own, projects the isolated and exaggerated quality outside his own being and condition, places it in a context "no way connected" to his own, modifies and particularizes it into an "individuality" which has realistic existence, and then--having established its "utter aloofness" from his own feelings and personality--allows it to develop and perform according to the needs of its dramatic or poetic environment. Although the Shakespearean speaker or character retains fragments of the poet's own moral and intellectual faculties, he has been metamorphosed into an independent, realistic, and artistic entity: the fragment of the poet has been reconstituted into the figure of the speaker. In his explanation of how Shakespeare created his characters and speakers, Coleridge came very near--nearer than anyone before him--to the concept of the persona. Though he did not, in his Shakespearean criticism, use the name, he did much to develop the concept without the term and to provide a theoretical basis for the term.
Both Coleridge and Hazlitt gave similar explanations for the futility of seeking the man himself in Shakespeare's writings: Shakespeare could go outside himself with ease and assume identities entirely external to himself and different from one another. To Hazlitt, Shakespeare easily and totally identified himself with any external thing or character and had the power to pass from one such character to another like a "soul successively animating different bodies." To Coleridge, Shakespeare was able to externalize anything internal and to assume the essence of anything outside himself "by a strong act of imagination and mental metamorphosis." In following such projectionist and metamorphic theories, both Hazlitt and Coleridge avoided the biographical fallacy which so many of their peers fell prey to; they approached the work of art without becoming entangled in the undecipherable or the irrelevant personality of the artist. In Hazlitt's theory of successive projection of the poet into different forms or roles and in Coleridge's theory of fragmentation and metamorphosis--fragmentation being a process whereby "fragments" of the author become "individual and separate" essences capable of being reformed into externalized characters--a theoret-
ical basis for creating persona was being established. Interestingly enough, Coleridge was reported to have used the term "the persona" itself—in relation to "subjectivity" and "dramatic character," for the purpose of differentiating between an author and his created characters. 

William Hazlitt added other insights to the developing theory. Drawing on the *ars est celare artem* formula, he advanced a theory of indirection in his personal preference for works in which "the author himself never appears" and in his belief that it is "the perfection of art to conceal art." He advocated and examined the process whereby poets "project" or "thrust" themselves out of their works and into external creations. Finally, he played a large role in establishing what W. J. Bate has termed "the ideal of the 'characterless' poet," an ideal which was to be highly influential upon later poetic theory and practice.

Most important was his theory of how a poet could "abstract" himself from his present conditions and being—in order to "throw" himself into those of another. This process could operate in either of two directions: forward into some future stage of his own development, or somewhat laterally out of his own being and into that of another.
In both, the poet's imaginative identification with something beyond himself enables him to objectify and transcend that self. It was this process, Hazlitt argued, which the great poets had followed: each had in himself the "germs of every faculty and feeling," and by abstracting and throwing them he could assume any shape and "become" any thing. Again, from our viewpoint, this theory contains elements integral to the concept of the persona.

Hazlitt's theory of abstraction and projection, as well as his concept of the ideal poet, had a powerful influence upon the mind of John Keats. In his theory, Keats resembles both Coleridge and Hazlitt: he often drew illustrations from Shakespeare, he dealt with the process of abstraction and projection of the self, and he asserted the need for the poet to go out of himself and into his creations. And in accord with his own theories, he sought to annihilate his poetic self by throwing it powerfully and completely into his materials, both speakers and objects. His central doctrine, as his friend Richard Woodhouse summarized, was that the true poet "can assume any character, Essence, idea, or Substance at pleasure." In order to do this, the poet must have "no Identity" and "no self"; his
personal self must be "annihilated" and must never intrude into or be identifiable with the "personages" he creates. Although Keats admitted some difficulty in subduing his own self and complained of a clash between his personal and poetic selves, he was quite convinced that neither of these ought to enter his poetry: a poet must remain characterless and transparent if his art is to remain pure.\(^{53}\)

What process should the poet follow to achieve his ends? Once the self has been—somehow—"annihilated," the resulting negative self can "assume" any identity it chooses, by being projected or "thrown" into any object or personage which the poet sees or can imagine.\(^{54}\) To "thrust" the self into the assumed identity, to completely lose consciousness of his own identity, and to "live for a time" in those imagined beings or conditions—these are the steps.\(^{55}\) Perhaps Keats was illustrating these when he made the famous observation that "if a sparrow comes before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel."\(^{56}\) Whatever the case, it seems that these views are logically and causally related to the concept of the persona—involving as they do the disappearance of the authorial self, the fragmentation and projection of the poetic self, and the
reconstitution or metamorphosis of those severed fragments into dramatic characters and poetic speakers.

It remained, however, for an anonymous Westminster reviewer, discussing Coleridge's poetry (coincidentally), to employ the term "persona" in essentially its modern context. This reviewer examined Coleridge's poetry in much the way that Coleridge had earlier examined Shakespeare's. While tracing the influence of Coleridge's theories, the reviewer theorized that the poet should stimulate his audience with new combinations of emotion and form, an end which is best achieved through dramatic means—whether in poetic, dramatic, or narrative form.

Among these dramatic methods, the poet has recourse to contrasted emotions, conjured phantoms, philosophical charms, dialogue, and "personae." With this unobtrusive touch, the reviewer added the term "personae" to our critical vocabulary.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


9 Review of the Prisoner of Chillon, and Other Poems, Edinburgh Review, XXVII (December, 1816), 309.


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18 Wordsworth and others had been impressed by Schlegel and many critics followed the assumption that the real Shakespeare could be found expressing his true opinions in the sonnets. See, for example, Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, pp. 246-7, and Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, p. 179.


25 Wordsworth, Note to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). The narrator is described as "a captain of a small trading vessel . . . past the middle age of life . . . retired upon an annuity" and living in a village "of which he was not a native."

26 See, for example, *Biographia Literaria*, II, 78-109.


40 Coleridge, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, I, 37.


42 See, for example, *Lectures on Shakespeare*, I, 80; *Biographia Literaria*, II, 159; and *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, I, 227.


44 Coleridge, *Table Talk*, pp. 213, 294.


51 In his essay "On Shakespeare and Milton," Hazlitt wrote the following tribute to Shakespeare: "He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become. He not only had in himself the germs of every faculty and feeling, but he could follow them by anticipation, intuitively, into all their conceivable ramifications, through every change of fortune, or conflict of passion, or turn of thought. . . . He had only to think of anything in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it." This, Bate argues, touched Keats deeply (pp. 257-8).


54 Ibid., p. 404.

55 Ibid., p. 389.


58 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
CHAPTER V
THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSONA IN VICTORIAN CRITICISM

Victorian critics on the whole did more to advance and analyze the concept of the persona than had the critics of any preceding period. Of course some critics were unconcerned with or oblivious to the concept; with these our study has little to do. But there were also those who asserted the necessity for a basic separation of the author himself from his work and his speakers, who used terminology related to and at times equivalent to "persona," and who employed the term "persona" itself—with contexts and explanations which leave no doubt about the modernity of its meaning. By the end of the era, as we shall see, critics were using and defining the term precisely the way we do now.

The starting point for an awareness of personae is usually found in the notion of distance or separation of the author himself from the speakers or characters in his works. More often than not, Victorian critics insisted on such a distinction.
Perhaps the most often repeated form of this distinction was the one which separated what an author says in his own person from what he says indirectly through the thoughts and feelings of another. As a typical example, one reviewer of Tennyson's early poems wrote that Tennyson performs admirably either in his own person or in the character of some other person or mood or external object. According to this reviewer, Tennyson has herein mastered the art of "masquerading." The reviewer goes on, in a manner reminiscent of Keats, to observe that Tennyson's impersonated speakers represent not merely the meanderings of his own mind, but a form of "transmigration" of his soul, wherein he casts his own "spirit" into a variety of externals—living things, moods, abstractions, and persons. Through this transmigratory process Tennyson shapes and unifies all the attributes ("senses, feelings, nerves, and brain") of these externals, by doing which he demonstrates great artistic talent. This reviewer, then, has isolated two elements of the concept of the persona: separation of the authorial and external voices, and a sense of unity or completeness in the external voice chosen.

Though not as astute in their analyses, numerous other
critics and reviewers separated the author's own voice from that of his speakers—as a sampling of representative instances easily reveals. In 1843 a reviewer praised Scott for his incongruous "mode of speaking"—reflected in his remaining modest while speaking in his own person, but not when speaking through others. In 1850 a northern reviewer—attacking Thackeray for making critical assertions in his own person in the novel Pendennis—apparently assumed that censure demanded distance or disguise. In 1852 Walter Bagehot advocated a fragmentation theory based on the idea that the poet does not reveal his true self in his lyrics, but takes an isolated mood or sentiment and converts it into an "artistically developed impersonation." Unfortunately, however, Bagehot did not analyze the many implications of this theory—except to insist that because of this fragmentation poets should not be judged literally from their poems by biographers and historians. Another attempt to deal with this problem in 1855 resulted in the naming of the opposite sides involved: the author's "own proper person" and his "alter ego." (The same terms were used by Leslie Marchand in 1965.) Another, made in 1860, produced essentially the basic Aristotelian theory that
when an author relates the story in his own person he produces narrative fiction, but when he does so through "fictitious characters" the result is either dialogue or drama. These and other examples demonstrate two things: that the author-speaker distinction had become a standard part of the reviewer-critic's repertoire, and that there was a tendency for these critics to expand their discussion beyond the mere mention of that distinction—to propose, though not to amplify adequately, theories of a broader scope.

Then too, there developed a tendency to employ this distinction as a basis for passing judgment on the artistic merit of both the work and its author. One critic believed that making this distinction was the greatest difficulty of Shakespearean criticism; as he saw it, the crux of the problem lay in the need to discern when Shakespeare speaks in his own person and when in the person of another, and then to make one's critical interpretations accordingly. And most Shakespeareans either tacitly or openly dealt with this difficulty. Some critics, it must be admitted, did not benefit greatly from the author-speaker distinction: two such critics took opposite positions, one
arguing that in the sonnets the speaker is not Shakespeare but the romantic Southampton addressing his lady and the other arguing that Shakespeare is himself the speaker and is shadily addressing a young boy. What is important here is not the acuity of the criticism, but the fact that even such mediocre Victorians began by assuming that the speaker is of primary importance and that the first step of the critic's task is to establish the identity of the speaker.

Not only had the separation of author from speaker become a common critical practice, but also the need to establish the identity of the speaker had become a prerequisite to both criticism and creative writing. Tennyson, for instance, insisted that he was not himself the literal speaker of In Memoriam; Browning pointed to the "many imaginary persons" who were the speakers of his poems, protesting that the utterances in his poems were "not mine." And in his essay on Shelley, Browning separated poets into two categories, depending on whether the voice of a poem is the poet's own (which makes him a "subjective poet") or an external one (which makes him an "objective poet"). Browning is here making some important assumptions: that by speaking in one's own "subjective" person a poet
is following the method which has produced "all the bad poetry in the world," and that by taking on another voice or identity a poet becomes more "objective," more "substantive," and more convincingly "projected from himself and distinct."\textsuperscript{11}

In addition to making the poet-speaker distinction, Victorian critics were fond of noting a separation of the poet from the man. Even Matthew Arnold insisted, for example, that Milton the poet was far different from the Milton of religious and political and domestic life—the poet Milton being modest and devout and admirable, the man Milton being disfigured by acerbity and vanity.\textsuperscript{12} Arnold was willing to admit, however, that sometimes the two overlapped, as in the case of Byron.\textsuperscript{13} Writing for the *Westminster Review* in 1841, G. H. Lewes made the conventional separation of poet from man, then went on to explicitly analyze the meaning of that separation in terms of the nature of art. Admitting that some knowledge about the author may be "profitable," Lewes insisted that such knowledge is "not necessary," for poems must stand upon their own merit, uninfluenced by any knowledge of their author. And realizing that the study of the man can be "pleasing,"
Lewes considered it nonetheless "a very secondary object" for any critic to bother with. In a manner anticipating the New Critics and I. A. Richards, Lewes not only separated the man from the poet but also severed the poet from the work, defining the poet's role as almost wholly extrinsic to the work and implying that the critic's primary concern lies with the intrinsic elements of a literary work.

Some critics, going beyond the separation of the poet from the man, distinguished between the real or historical author and the apparent author. Some merely denied that the apparent author was the real one. But gradually terms like "ostensible" and "suppositious" and "fictitious" came to be applied to the apparent author, and critics began to argue that this figure represents either someone apart from the real author or an essential feature of the artistic work itself--one which can greatly add to or detract from the merit of the work as art.

The importance which critics attached to this apparent author can be seen in many instances, two of which are illustrative of the general type. Whitwell Elwin, in a review of Thackeray's *The Newcomes*, termed Pendennis the
"ostensible writer" and the "fictitious author" of the book, then demonstrated that the book's greatest flaw is Pendennis himself, who is inadequate and unbelievable as the book's author. The implication is not that Thackeray should not have used a "fictitious" author, but that this author-figure as he stands is unconvincing; and beyond this, that any apparent author has to be believable and thoroughly delineated if the work in which he appears is to be considered an artistic success. A decade later Leslie Stephen offered a similar theory about the function of a "suppositious author" used by a real author: Defoe very frequently employs the device of separating himself from such authorial figures, then discrediting them—a practice which heightens the artistic effect of his works by creating convincing illusions and by disarming the readers, making them privy to the apparent author's weaknesses. By making this distinction between the real man who wrote the work and the apparent author who narrates it and by strongly admiring the effective use of such fictitious authors, these critics reveal their awareness of elements which we associate with the concept of the persona.
Another element which we associate with the concept, indirectness, found widespread support among Victorian critics. Although there obviously were critics who admired the direct appearance of the genuine author in the work and writers who practiced the technique, an increasing number of influential critics came to oppose the practice of directness, particularly in the form of obvious exhortation and intrusive moralizing. The most cogent criticism of directness came from an anonymous reviewer: "obtrude your moral, and you repel your reader. Dogmatize directly, and directly you disgust him." He added that directness is an inferior method because it fails to move its readers; it chills their responses, and therefore it cannot effectively reach them. And in this judgment, numerous other critics concurred. Going beyond this psychological objection, Leslie Stephen added an artistic one: not only are direct authorial exhortations annoying, but also they constitute a "very rough device" which is both ineffective in reaching the reader and fraught with "artistic blemishes." Agreeing with this judgment, J. H. Stack argued that although Thackeray is a genius, his habit of interrupting and preaching in his novels is "simply fatal to all re-
cognition of them as works of art." Although representing only a few of the many attacks against didacticism and directness, these observations demonstrate the psychological and formal criteria upon which critics basically anchored their opposition.

Critics of a constructive bent, who affirmed the value of indirectness, did so more for artistic than for psychological reasons. Among these, G. H. Lewes provides the most vivid case for indirectness to be found in the whole era. Discussing what he calls the "principle of Economy" in fiction, he theorizes that the construction of fiction should not seem mechanical, but "organical"—that is, the artist must be so careful that his technique remains secret rather than visible. In keeping to this principle, Lewes concludes that the author "must not permit us to see the strings and pulleys of his puppets" because if he does our illusion will vanish. A similar fault in artistic construction results whenever the author digresses from his characters and indulges in reflections in his own person; when this happens the author has violated the principles of both "Economy" and "Selection," meaning that he has made his characters say things which do not "spring from their
minds, but from the author speaking through them, making them his mouthpieces for the nonce." Either by carelessly allowing the mechanics of his fiction to show directly or by using his characters as his own direct mouthpieces, an author violates Lewes's primary principles of art.  

In a similar vein, H. A. Page insisted that indirectness and distance constitute the main criteria of artistic quality. The greater the distance between the artist's own personal world and that of his work, the better for art; and the more "indirectly" the artist incorporates his own views and experiences into his work, the purer the art. It is only the "half-artists" who reveal themselves directly; true artists always keep themselves apart from the situations and characters and attitudes portrayed in their art.  

And in much the same way, Leslie Stephen admired and advocated distance and indirection. He had a hearty respect for the Shakespeare who disappears so gracefully and who so completely hides himself behind his characters, sympathizing impartially with an enormous range of personalities. And he strongly admired the Scott who is able to keep himself in the background and to describe both
situation and character from an external vantage point, without letting himself get in the way. Conversely, Stephen ranked as inferior any author who is unable or unwilling to retire behind his characters or who allows himself to appear directly. To illustrate this theory, Stephen contrasts Shakespeare, who is very much present in his plays but who never lets his audience know it, with Fielding, who is "incapable of hiding" behind his personages and who cannot help being visible to his audience. Only inferior artists expose themselves.

Drawing on the organic metaphor, a reviewer for the Bentley's Miscellany perhaps best illustrates the superiority of the indirect: any didactic bent or direct intent must be "disguised" carefully and "subordinated" to all else, "like the pulse of health through a living organism."

In addition to the favorable climate they created for indirectness in art, Victorian critics were fond of certain critical terms which are related to the concept of the persona. Many of these terms had been around for centuries: speakers, masks, characters, voices, mouthpieces, impersonations, personages, actors, etc. But the Victorians used
them more effectively and in a more theoretical context—as we shall see by examining three of them in detail: characters, speakers, and masks.

"Character" was probably the most often repeated and the most important of the terms. Like the others, including "persona," it was used for all three major genres. Overshadowing the Aristotelian supremacy of plot, "character" came to be viewed as the primary element in fiction: as Whitwell Elwin asserted, it is in "characters" that the writer and the work exist, and as an anonymous critic argued, "characters" constitute the highest form of "genuine poetic creation."

We can see critics approximating the concept of the persona in their rigid specifications for the construction of characters. As one reviewer concluded, the novelist must make his characters reveal themselves completely through what they themselves say and do. Jane Austen, for one, was held to be a model creator of character because she kept her machinery concealed, possessed unapproachable dramatic power, and allowed her characters to operate only within their own frame—not allowing them to step beyond their proper functions and not stepping
impetuously herself into their roles. By doing so, she produced in her characters a strong "impression of reality." But the novelist who interposes his own views or who relies heavily on description to develop his characters was considered by most critics to be ineffective and inferior. Some such novelists were attacked for not allowing their characters sufficient autonomy, some for allowing them to flutter inconsistently, and some for creating characters incapable of standing on their own. Fielding's characters, for example, were often dismissed as insufficiently developed and too shallow. Dickens' characters were often thought to be too narrow and incomplete to represent humanity or to speak convincingly for themselves; one critic judged them to be "not characters, but personified characteristics." And much the same sort of charge was applied to the characters of Byron and Tennyson.

A "character" becomes more closely allied to a persona when it appears in the role of the narrator, a function normally filled by the author himself. Those critics who wished to depreciate the author's presence typically praised works wherein a "character" appeared as narrator. One critic
placed Goldsmith above Thackeray because of their differing technique in this regard: Thackeray spoke too often in his own person, whereas Goldsmith had the good sense and skill to put his words into the mouths of his characters and narrators. And Stephen lauded the ability of Samuel Richardson to convey his meaning through his characters, without having to appear himself in his novels. He found merit in Defoe for the same practice and—in an important comment on the practice itself—equated the technique of "assuming a character" with that of "putting on a mask." Either of these phrases translates, in our terms, into using a persona.

Indeed, one of the reasons often given for using personae—to provide a writer with latitude and protection—was seen by Victorian critics to be one of the desirable effects of using characters for narrative functions. One Lionel Tollemache observed that Tennyson's habit of putting opinions not unlike his own into the mouths of narrating characters allowed him the benefit of not committing himself eternally to those opinions, provided him with a "convenient covering" against abuse, permitted him a wider range of subjects and attitudes, and protected him from
being discovered behind the scenes—even though, to Tolle-
mache's frustration, it prevents us from labeling Tennyson
with the usual liberal and conservative tags. And an
anonymous critic found the same situation with regard to
Browning who, because he uses characters and seldom speaks
in his own character, "impersonates a thousand characters"
and thereby creates poetry of great genius and remarkable
objectivity.

Next in both frequency and importance is the term,
the "speaker." It is the speaker in whom the functions of
both narrator and character are combined, and it was the
speaker that became the object of much Victorian critical
attention. Speakers were thought to have a number of
functions, among the most prominent of which were: they
add a sense of realism to literature, they make it more
dramatic, they have a purely artistic value, and they
function rhetorically to produce certain effects upon the
audience.

Speakers were thought to have the power of creating
realistic illusion, of making a work appear to be the
genuine experiences and ideas of someone who had actually
undergone what the work described—as is the case, say,
with a Lemuel Gulliver or a Moll Flanders. Of course, when the device of using speakers failed in a work, when—as one critic put it—the speaker does not have the "garb of reality" about him, the illusion disappears and the work fails. Such was the case, for instance, with Adam Bede, whose central speaker—and all the characters, for that matter—sounded to one critic too much like the author in his study.

The use of speakers was also thought to carry with it dramatic power. Browning, for example, explained that any story told by an actor or speaker other than the author himself is by its very nature more "dramatic." Browning's own dramatic speakers, being strong and effectively conceived, were widely praised. Tollemache spoke of the "dramatic" force which Tennyson achieved by putting words into the "mouths" of convincing speakers. Conversely, the speaker's being weak and indistinguishable causes the work in which he appears to assume a "pseudo-dramatic quality."

In addition to being realistic and dramatic, the use of speakers was thought to have a purely artistic value. Fragmentary or unconvincing speakers were inevitably
attacked as examples of bad art, of a poet's unsuccessful mastery of his medium. And the greatest artists were thought to be those who could embody in "the image of the speaker" a thorough and convincing representation of passions, classes, situations, or moral characters. Any writer of genius, it was assumed, would never allow his speaker to disintegrate into inconsistency or to become indistinguishable from himself. 46

The speaker, finally, was thought to have a pragmatic or rhetorical dimension. As James F. Stephen asserted, the value of a work of fiction depends largely upon the "confidence" which the readers have in the authority of the speaker. 47 In a pragmatic sense, this means that the effect of the work upon its audience is highly dependent upon their attitude toward the speaker; and in a rhetorical sense, this implies that an author of a successful work must create stable, complete, and sincere speakers who can persuade and move and convince the audience. The relation between speakers and personae should at this point be fairly obvious: what is true of speakers is essentially true of personae--they stand in the same relationship to the author, have the same sort of function within the work,
and exercise the same kind of influence on the audience. In short, personae and speakers—though not synonymous—are intimately interrelated; without much of a gap in logic or use, what Victorians called "speakers" we now call "personae."

Although related to both "speaker" and "character," the term "mask" adds a connotation of obliqueness or even deceptiveness—something not necessarily present in the other two terms, but essential to the full meaning of personae. Victorian critics held the "mask" to be deceptive, dramatic, and artistic. Recognition of its deceptiveness can be seen in numerous observations, such as Leslie Stephen's belief that the mask has an essentially "delusive" appearance and effect, R. W. Buchanan's assertion that Browning's masks were "disguises" put on in hopes of deceitfully hiding his identity, and H. A. Page's conclusion that at bottom masks constitute an adventitious and immoral "trick." Its dramatic quality was recognized by a critic who stated that the mask Landor created to cover his own visage added a strong dose of the "dramatic" to his writing, and by another critic who argued that Thackeray hides his didacticism behind the
"dramatic" masks which abound in his novels. Recognition of the mask's artistic value can be seen in the American J. R. Lowell's insistence that masking must be thorough, that it means much more than merely parading "different-coloured dominos" before the reader, and that being an artist implies, by definition, having broad power to create believable masks. Much the same can be observed in Lionel Tollemache's succinct doctrine that "a poet, as a poet" can never put off his poetic mask, for in dropping it "he ceases to be a poet." To the Victorian critic, creating a good "mask" partook of the essence of art.

Masks, speakers, and characters are significant because all these terms—and the concepts which underlie them—involves the same basic characteristics: distance or separation, completeness, drama, indirection, machinery, realism, autonomy, narration, artistic skill and technique, illusion, persuasion, obliqueness or delusion, and often some disguised didacticism. This interrelated critical vocabulary, as we shall see, takes on added significance in its interchangeability, wherein eventually the term "persona" could be and was used in place of the other three.
None of these three terms, however, is linguistically related to the concept of the persona; but one further set of terms definitely is. These are the forms of "personate," "impersonate," and "personify." To personate, according to many critics, meant to create speakers capable of conveying varied points of view. Shakespeare was thought to have "truly personated" two types of villains when he created Macbeth and Iago; further, by personating them, Shakespeare created two subtle masks and avoided direct moralizing on the nature of evil. The same process was followed by W. S. Landor, who in his Imaginary Conversations undertook "to personate" such historical "speakers" as Plato, Bacon, and Shakespeare. And finally, one reviewer advanced the theory that a skillful writer's powers of personation extend to a broad spectrum of speakers: "anything from an angel to a grasshopper." Generally this process for personation was thought to be the representing of something outside the author's own person, and to personate seems to have meant to go beyond the literal, into the external and imaginative. As Lewes explained, to personate the thoughts and feelings of another the author need not be limited to his own views and ideas
and experiences, but is free to express in many forms and from many sources "imaginative truth." 59

In using this device, an author was thought to demonstrate another aspect of personation: the power of so "going out of himself" that, as David Masson explained, he could get away from his own habits and circumstances and personality, put on his "dreaming-cap," and float off to any distance he desired. 60 This created the "distinctness" between the author himself and his impersonations which kept those impersonations from becoming mere mouthpieces for the author's own idiosyncrasies— or so critics seemed to think. 62

The creations of this process of impersonation were variously described. Stephen saw them as personations of moods or as representations of differing stages of development through which the author had passed. 63 The Spectator reviewer thought them to be the forceful and concrete rendering of differing "points of sight" perceived by the poet. 64 The North British Review offered the theory that they were expressions of some real or fictitious mood of the author. 65 Walter Bagehot viewed them as the impersonations of a "personified ideal" rendered, according to the
skill of the artist, into either caricatures (like Falstaff and Pickwick) or characters (like Hamlet and Lear). And he saw them as having their origin not in the author himself, but in a "distillation" of the most characteristic and generic of his moods and attitudes. Finally, a Westminster reviewer held that such personages were the assumed or imagined concoction of habits and passions to be found in the characters of real men, which had been extracted and reconstituted to form the characters and speakers of fiction. Although disagreeing about the precise nature of these creations, all looked upon them as artistically advantageous.

Using a vocabulary filled with verbal affinities to the term "persona," Victorian critics developed a complete theoretical system: the author, following a process (variously termed "impersonation," "personification," "personation"), created speakers ("impersonations," "personifications," "personages") of a highly imaginative nature, both distinct from himself and complete in themselves, who had definite functions to perform (usually persuasive or artistic), who were drawn from attributes of real or imagined persons but who constituted distilled or compacted forms
or expressions of those attributes, who served as mouthpieces for points of view unlimited in scope and independent of their creator's, and who were prime manifestations of their creator's skillful artistic indirectness. Such speakers, as any modern critic can easily see, exhibited strong similarities to our personae. The theoretical basis for our concept was being laid by Victorian critics as they probed the increasingly complex relationships of author and speaker and work and audience.

By the middle of the Victorian era, critics and reviewers were quite well aware of the creator-process-product structure which is basic to the concept of the persona. Perhaps the most succinct description of this structure came from the pen of Bulwer Lytton, who theorized that the "personator" invents a fable wherein he "personates" some imaginary narrator or character. Once this basic structure emerged, refinements on each of the three parts developed: the personator no longer was thought to be the poet in propri a persona, the process of personation did not necessarily imply either an imitation of the outer or the objective world or a clear expression of the inner or the subjective one, and the created speaker or character was
referred to by a number of similar and synonymous terms—
as well as by the specific and oft-repeated term, the "persona."

Just as Coleridge had taken the term "persona" from dramatic criticism and applied it to the criticism of poetry, so the Victorians habitually performed a similar sort of transfer: they regularly shifted the phrase *dramatis personae* from its conventional association with drama to a new referent, the novel. In the period between 1850 and 1860 this shift occurred in more than twenty-five critical books, articles, and reviews—far more than the previous two thousand years had seen.

At first the shift involved merely the substitution of the higher-sounding *dramatis personae* for the somewhat overworked word, "characters." One essay, for instance, referred to the characters in Thackeray's novels as the "dramatis personae." Similarly, another reviewer freely mixed the terms "dramatis personae," "persons," and "characters"—with all three being defined as what the writer employs to "represent" men and women. One further critic explicitly equated "our favorite characters" in Dickens and Thackeray with the "dramatis personae" who appear in their
books—obviously presenting the terms as having the same meaning. Finally, another anonymous critic employed the terms interchangeably, but then—in addition to linking "character" and "dramatis personae"—he also defined both of them as being separate from the author and as constituting "the person speaking." Although most of these substitutions and interchanges of terminology imply very little regarding personae, instances like the last one add important theoretical implications: explicit linkage, separation from author, and naming of the role performed.

In addition, there was a wealth of discussion of dramatis personae which attempted to define the concept and to explain its artistic merits. George Eliot, for one, theorized that art is primarily focused in "dramatic power," which consists of an "intensified expression" of the numerous possible states of the human mind. This "dramatic power" depends mainly, she contended, upon the delineation and development of character or dramatis personae. Indeed, the basis of her own art lies, as she explained, in "my psychological conception of the dramatis personae." To her, art was essentially dramatic, and this drama found its expression primarily in the dramatis
personae used by the author. And like Eliot, numerous critics and reviewers voiced the same opinions throughout the era.  

Significant as these developments are, however, the concept of the "second self" and the appearance of the term "persona" by itself, without the "dramatis" prefix, constitute the greatest contributions of Victorian critics and reviewers and are the most 'modern' elements of Victorian usage and theory.

The conception of the "second self" stands out strikingly because it connects explicitly the notions of character and *dramatis personae*, on the one hand, to the main elements of the modern theory of the persona, on the other. As explained by an anonymous critic in 1858, the author "creates a second self among the *dramatis personae* of the story" and in so doing he creates a medium for comment upon and within his fictional world, allowing him both the distance and the vehicle necessary to avoid the directly personal dissertations used by many inferior novelists. The critic who made these distinctions in authorial method added a great deal to the developing theory of the persona:
he noted the two types of authorial intrusion into a work, he posited a particular relationship between the author and his personae in a given work, and he singled out one of these *dramatis personae* as having a special and particular relationship to the author—related yet distinct from his true self, able to operate as a "medium" of indirection.  

This concept was developed further by Edward Dowden, who noted later that the dominant personality in a novel by George Eliot is not the "real George Eliot," but is "that second self who writes her books, and lives and speaks through them." He added that this "second self" is more substantial than any human personality and that it stands apart from the author's historical self, which is thereby protected from impertinent notice and criticism. These concepts of the second self are not very distant from the modern theories about the second selves of Swift and Twain and Thackeray, among others. Dowden and the *North British* reviewer posit the existence of a "second self" among the fictional devices available to the writer, a "self" which is semi-autonomous, substantial, protective, indirect, observant, non-historical—a speaker existing in and emerging through a work of art.
It is of greatest significance that critics began to drop the word "dramatis" from the phrase "dramatis personae" and to use only the term "personae." Charles Lamb, for one, wrote of bringing his "personae" on and off the stage of his books.79 A Bentley's reviewer noted and praised the ability of Browning to "make his personae speak out."80 And Lewis admiringly observed Jane Austen's power to "speak through her personae."81

Some critics, furthermore, went on to explain the term which they singled out. Bentley's reviewer thought the use of personae to be a union of "subjective reflectiveness" and "objective life and vigour," a medium whereby an author can express his thoughts in a "masked" or "unrecognised" form.82 Browning, who protested that he did not put himself into his personae, published a volume in 1864 entitled Dramatis Personae and insisted that all of the speakers he created were "so many imaginary persons," not himself.83 And G. H. Lewes, in what is clearly the most complete definition given to the concept of the persona by anyone in the Victorian era, one which touches upon practically every aspect of the concept which we have discussed, thought that the "real secret" of Jane Austen's
success was her effective use of personae. These he analyzed: her genius lies in her dramatic power and her created characters, and as long as she speaks "through personae" the quality of her work is unsurpassed even by Shakespeare, but when she stoops to description and "speaks in her own person" her works disintegrate and become commonplace: she loses her hold on her art and her audience whenever she "ceases to speak through personae." This analysis leaves little doubt about the nature and significance of personae or about the fact that the concept itself had become an effective part of the Victorian critical vocabulary and literary orientation.

Although the Victorians had paid less attention to the process whereby a poet creates his personae than had the Romantics, they had employed the concept and its cognates in a very effective manner. They had created a critical climate which insisted on the impersonality and objectivity of the author and had attacked repeatedly the inartistic obtrusion of the author into the work. They had developed the theory of separation, of distance, and of indirection. They had adopted the old terms--character, speaker, and mask--and had applied them analytically
to the relationship between the author and his art. They had repeatedly resorted to the concept of *dramatis personae* but had broadened its scope to include its application to both poetry and fiction—and in so doing they had dropped the modifier and used *persona* by itself. And they had clearly defined and applied the isolated term. All these, with the addition of the theory of the second self, had been combined to form a theory of personae which, not in its entirety but in its essential definition and usage, has constituted the conceptual basis of all discussions of personae for the past century.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V


5 "Mr Thackeray and his Novels," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXVII (January 1855) 89.


7 "Shakespeare and his Sonnets," Quarterly Review, CXV (April 1864) 438.

8 Ibid., p. 450.


10 Robert Browning, "Preface" to Dramatic Lyrics.


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17 "Of Novels Historical and Didactic," *Bentley's Miscellany*, XLVI (1859) 139.

18 Ibid., p. 142.

19 Stephen, "Richardson's Novels," *Cornhill*, XIII (January 1868) 52-3.

20 J. H. Stack, "Mr. Anthony Trollope's Novels," *Fortnightly Review*, XI (February 1869) 196.


23 Stephen, "Fielding's Novels," *Cornhill*, XXXV (February 1877) 156.


26 "Of Novels Historical and Didactic," pp. 137-145.


28 "Wit and Humour," *Westminster Review*, XLVIII (October 1847) 47-9. Interestingly enough, George Eliot, who wrote for this review somewhat later, believed that characters were the most important features of fiction.


31 Ibid., p. 21.


33 G. H. Lewes, "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," Fortnightly Review, XVII (February 1872) 146. These are not the views of Lewes, but of others whom he quotes.

34 See, for example, "Mr. Tennyson's Poetry," North British Review, LIII (January 1871) 425; and "Shelley," Westminster Review, XXXV (April 1841) 314.

35 "Pendennis -- The Literary Profession," p. 344.


38 Lionel Tollemache, "Mr. Tennyson's Social Philosophy," Fortnightly Review, XXI (February 1874) 226.


40 "A Triad of Novels," Fraser's Magazine, XLII (November 1850) 577.


42 Browning; Letter to Wilfred Meynell, "The Detachment of Browning," Athanaeum, 4 January 1890.

43 See, for example, the comments by Forster in the New Monthly Magazine, p. 308.

44 "Mr. Tennyson's Poetry," pp. 392-3.

46 "Wit and Humour," pp. 30-1.


52 "Novels -- Geoffry Hamlyn and Stephan Langton," North British Review, XXXI (November 1859) 387.


54 Tollemache, p. 225.


56 "Landor's Works," p. 64.

57 Ibid.

58 "Robert Browning," Contemporary Review, IV (February 1867) 140.


62 J. R. Lowell, p. 357.

63 Leslie Stephen, "Some Words about Scott," Cornhill, XXIV (September 1871) 292.

64 Unsigned review, The Spectator, XLI (December 1868) 1464-6.


68 "Shakespeare," Westminster Review, XXVI (October 1836) 34.


71 "Fielding and Thackeray," North British Review, XXIV (November 1855) 197.

72 "Pendennis and Copperfield: Thackeray and Dickens," North British Review, XV (May 1851) 77.


75 George Eliot, II, 299.

76 See, for example, these anonymous articles: "Bulwe Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXVII (February 1855) 226; "Modern Novelists -- Great and Small," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXVII (May 1855) 563; "Of Novels, Historical and

77 "Novels by the Authoress of John Halifax," North British Review, XXIX (November 1858) 469.


80 Unsigned review, Bentley's Miscellany, XXXIX (January 1856) 64.


82 Unsigned review, Bentley's Miscellany, XXXI (November 1856) 64-5.


85 Generally speaking, the movement in criticism toward the distancing and objectification of the speaker from the poet was complemented, as Robert Langbaum has demonstrated in The Poetry of Experience (New York, 1957), by a similar movement in creative literature. All poetry since the Enlightenment, according to Langbaum's thesis, has involved the artist "projecting himself" into externals--objects, characters, experiences--and poets have developed a "role-playing or projective attitude" in and toward their works, leading to the death of subjectivism and emphasizing literary forms (like the dramatic monologue) wherein they could "objectify and dramatize their essentially subjective and lyrical impulse." (pp. 125, 160) This direction has
been the primary one for the major poets—Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Eliot, Pound, and Yeats—whom Langbaum classes as Romanticists, whose "movement toward objectivity" has resulted in such things as Yeats' notion of the mask which serves not as the poet but as his opposite, Pound's use of the intensified dramatic lyric spoken by a "character I happen to be interested in at the moment" (Pound, Letter to W. C. Williams, 21 October 1908, Letters 1907-1941, ed. D. D. Paige (New York, 1950), pp. 3-4.), and Eliot's creation of speakers like Prufrock and the voices of Gerontion and the Journey of the Magi and his objectified theories of the poet as catalyst, as well as numerous other examples of externalization of the self of the poet among poets of the last century.
The basic theory of the persona in its modern sense reached its full development only a century ago. Yet, as any student of literature knows, the practice of using personae had been followed since classical times. We can scarcely believe that the hundreds of poets who relied on the device were unaware of what they were doing. But for many reasons they did not write about it. When approaching it they seldom, until the nineteenth century, went much further than Chaucer's Sir John, who defended himself by insisting that "Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne."

In the twentieth century, however, discussions of the persona both as a concept and as a device abound in books and periodicals. Although they vary widely in application, they tend to be quite uniform in their basic assumptions and elements and they add surprisingly little to the basic theory achieved a century ago. Thus a critic writing in 1927 defined personae as "genuine personalities, speaking for the most part their own thoughts" and doing so in their own voices, separated from their author's "own person,
created by "disguise," and aptly termed "characters."¹ In the mid-sixties, similarly, personae continued to be defined as masks, persons, characters, speakers, voices, and spokesmen—all detached or distanced from their creator by some sort of obliqueness or indirectness.²

Agreeing in essence with the theory of the persona developed in Victorian times, modern critics have become embroiled in controversy over its application. The more conservative critics, like Irvin Ehrenpreis and the biographical and psychological theorists, argue that the term has been badly abused by being applied too widely and insist that its use should be restricted; while the more liberal sort of critics, like George Wright and the formal and "new" critics, tend to find personae of some sort in nearly every character or work they examine.

Although admitting that a persona involves a mask and that it is distinguishable and different from the real author, Ehrenpreis thinks that the constant effort of critics to fragment the author's person and to deal with those fragmented manifestations as personae has led them away from "the issue" of literature. And he believes that
critics should distinguish the "helpful" from the "misleading" applications and explanations of the concept of the persona.³

Among the "misleading" applications of the term, he is most upset by those which treat personae as "full, interesting characters" rather than as masks or disguises that are intended to be seen through. He believes, for instance, that it does little good for a critic to demonstrate that "Huckleberry Finn is not Mark Twain, who is not Samuel Clemens."⁴ Such criticism only obscures the connection between the author's "sensibility" and his masks, and serves mainly to blur the communication and dull the effect of the work upon the reader, for it makes art too impersonal and destroys much of its meaning. For Ehrenpreis, understanding of a literary work demands that the reader be in tune with the author's "inner being" and that the work be viewed as an indication of "what the author believes and is."⁵

Further, Ehrenpreis attacks modern critics for "multiplying entities so literally"—attributing a work's attitudes to its speaker alone, detaching him from the author, and treating the speaker as an independent entity.⁶ Instead
of isolating each attitude and terming its spokesman a persona, critics should see each attitude as part of the author's whole pattern of thought and belief. Then, instead of dividing up Swift's works, for example, among a hundred separate personae, they ought to view each disguise as merely that—a disguise meant to be penetrated; and they ought to see each single disguise as an aspect of the total entity of Swift himself—the real Swift who in his works is merely posing, trying out roles and putting on masks which continually displace one another and which, taken together, combine not to hide but to reveal the genuine person and beliefs of their creator. Rather than multiplying and separating, critics should unify and consolidate an author's personae.

To Ehrenpreis, the villains of modern criticism are those who advocate impersonal art and employ structural and rhetorical analysis. These critics fallaciously assume that the pure self can be isolated and idealized, that such a self fragments easily into personae, and that personae automatically improve the merits of a work. Such critics, he observes, begin a study of an Augustan by emphasizing his use of masks and—disregarding any evidence
to the contrary—end by showing that the poem demonstrates Augustan impersonality. Or a typical structural analysis announces the implicit purpose of a poem, demonstrates the appropriateness of the persona to that purpose, asserts that the persona advances that purpose and no other, and concludes that the poem is great because its persona has sentiments appropriate to its purpose. The circularity of such reasoning on the part of critics is obvious, but even more damaging is the assumption that the mask or outer appearance is the reality, with no essential core behind it. So for Ehrenpreis, behind the persona there is a poet—and not very far behind at that. Through his works, as Ehrenpreis put it, the poet "defines—not hides--himself." Among those sharing the belief that the persona is the author himself speaking are numerous critics and scholars. Wayne Booth, who assumes that an author gives his reader fairly direct guidance and that the artwork conforms to the author's intention, has posited—in his theory of the "reliable narrator"—an extremely simplified type of persona with limitations in application similar to those of Ehrenpreis. The biographical theorists represent yet
another type of limited-application critics: Gilbert Highet in his analysis of Juvenal's satire, for instance, often holds the speaker to be Juvenal himself—and the tone of the satires constitutes for him a reflection of Juvenal's own personal attitudes—as in the sixth satire, wherein the tone results from the fact that Juvenal had married a proud and pretentious Roman lady and had found her intolerable.13 And a third type of conservative critic might be called the spiritual descendants of Carlyle—who see the work as a "window" through which the man himself can be viewed; one, Donald Howard, insists that there is a "real and living presence" in the works of Chaucer and that our interest in those works and their fictitious narrators derives primarily from the fact that "in and behind them lies Chaucer the man."14 Generally speaking these three points of view are the ones most akin to the conservative position of Ehrenpreis.

Most modern definitions and applications of the concept of the persona, however, are—to use Ehrenpreis's term—more "liberally" inclined. The more liberal critics—including George Wright, Maynard Mack, Robert C. Elliott,
Alvin Kernan, Ronald Paulson, Elder Olson, Leonard Feinberg, Cleanth Brooks, and Walker Gibson—follow the basic definition which has persisted for a century and find wide application for the concept of the persona: they find personae everywhere.

Probably the most explicit and "liberal" of them all is George Wright, who in his book *The Poet in the Poem* concludes that "in all poems it is a persona, not a poet, who speaks" and that "the poet is not present in the poem." He even argues that a given persona may have its own personae and that these can be categorized. Underlying Wright's broad conclusions, however, is a very conventional definition of personae: speakers adopted and molded by the poet; constituting masks, persons, roles, points of view, or mouthpieces; clearly separated from the poet himself; representing a deliberate attempt by the poet to "place a distance" between himself and his art; and functioning as an indirect "fundamental literary device," whose purpose is primarily rhetorical and persuasive.

Wright's method is strikingly simple: he merely carries to their logical outcome theories that had been advanced and discussed for centuries. Beginning with a
basic separation of the man from the poet, he goes on to
distinguish between the poet and his speaker or persona.
Then he observes that the detached poet becomes an external
"artistic intelligence, a disembodied consciousness" not
present in the poem, but standing outside it and saying in
effect to the reader, "Look what I have made." Thus the
poet exists only outside the work—as shaper, creator, and
molder (Jonson's word was "maker"); whereas the persona
exists only within the work, serving as both a literary
device and an "embodied representative of the poet." Or
in more traditional terms, there is the "living poet him­
self" and there are his personae, the "speakers" or "char­
acters" who convey the actual words of the poem. Poetry
is created by authors and spoken by their personae; to
Wright it is as simple as that. And literature is a form
of communication wherein the poet employs the device of
personae in order to achieve his rhetorical end of affect­
ing his readers and his artistic end of demonstrating skill­
ful technique. Even a poem is a persona.

Other modern critics are somewhat less extreme than
Wright. One of them, Maynard Mack, defines the persona
conventionally as a "speaker" or "assumed identity," but
insists that the relationship between personae and their authors is "extremely oblique, not to say antithetical." Further, personae have a rhetorical purpose—the creation of the necessary ethos—and have highly individualized and distinguishable "voices."\footnote{21} Another, Alvin Kernan, thinks that the merit of the work of art inheres, in part at least, in the "distancing" of an author from his personae and laments the fact that modern criticism and scholarship are bedeviled by what he terms the "persistent identification" of an author with his personae.\footnote{22} Modern authors are, he asserts, quite aware that they must "detach" themselves from their spokesmen or personae, and modern critics ought to be aware equally of this separation and detachment. Finally, in a publication devoted to probing the nature of personae, entitled \textit{Symposium: The Concept of the Persona in Satire}, a widespread group of modern critics, scholars, and teachers—more than twenty in number—define and discuss the concept, arriving at conclusions essentially traditional in definition and liberal in application.\footnote{23}

Modern theories of the persona, whether conservative or liberal, owe a great deal to the critics and theories
of the past. The purpose of this essay has been to sketch the critical background of the concept of the persona, to trace its emergence as a critical theory and tool, and to analyze the development of its basic defining elements. What one critic currently refers to as the "now-overworked business of persona" had elsewhere than in our century its setting: the concept of the persona came to us via a long and complicated critical tradition stretching from Plato to the late nineteenth century. And when we encounter typical twentieth-century commentaries on the persona—such as W. F. Cunningham's statement that personae are "stances or poses" taken by a writer in order to "detach" himself from his speaker or mask,25 or Austin Warren's assertion that the modern poet cannot allow himself to be identified with the "I" of his poems because that "I" is "a persona, a mask,"26 or Robert Elliott's belief that the worst misunderstanding of works of art results from the "identification" of an author's speaker with the actual author himself,27 or John C. Gerber's anatomizing of Mark Twain into seven different masks,28 or Norman Knox's conclusion that "every artistic utterance is to some degree a mask as well as a revelation"29—when, I say, we encounter
such commentaries, we ought to view them not only as marks of the brilliance of our own age, but also as insights made possible by our English critical heritage. Long before the critical controversies of our times there had developed a substantial body of theory wherein our controversial concept had had its elemental origin and had undergone its development into its present form as both critical concept and tool.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VI


3 Ehrenpreis, "Personae," p. 34.

4 Ibid., p. 29.

5 Ibid., pp. 37, 31.

6 Ibid., p. 36.

7 Ibid., pp. 35-6.

8 Ibid., p. 29.

9 Ibid., pp. 31-2.


11 Ehrenpreis, p. 33.


14 Donald Howard, "Chaucer the Man," *PMLA*, LXXX (1965) 337.


17 Ibid., p. 55.

18 Ibid., p. 50.

19 Ibid., p. 59.

20 Ibid., p. 22.


22 Alvin Kernan, *The Plot of Satire*, pp. 11-12.


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