FIRST WORDS: THE AUTHORIAL PREFACE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

By

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Abstract

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"First Words: The Preface in English Literature," defines the genre of the preface and argues that it is, above all, an occasional form in which the writer addresses a specific audience and thereby establishes an authorial voice. The first chapter opens with an overview of paratextual and genre criticism and then turns to the specific qualities of the authorial preface that distinguish it from related material, such as forewords, fictional prefaces, and epigraphs. Paratexts cannot be defined by their content, but only by their relationships to other texts.

The next three chapters each take as their subject one preface and its writer, focusing both on the preface's reception and the relationship of the preface to primary texts. The second chapter examines Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, countering Coleridge's reading of it as a separate, theoretical document. This chapter focuses on Wordsworth's attempt, through a combination of sophisticated rhetoric and "rustic" subject matter, to define poetry as a way of knowing philosophical truths. The third chapter analyzes Henry James's strange preface to *The Ambassadors*, which downplays most traditional sources of narrative interest, such as plot, location, and character. This preface is not a transparent guide to the process of composition, but James's way of directing the reader towards a different kind of fiction: a drama of what he calls "precious distinctions," in which the protagonist's (and by extension the reader's) visual perception

leads directly to aesthetic revelation. The fourth chapter takes as its subject the relationship between Shaw's polemical preface to *Man and Superman* and the structure of this famously unperformable play. For Shaw, however, the problems lie not with the play, but with the audience. The preface to *Man and Superman* is not concerned with introducing the play, but with converting the individual reader to Shavian positions by setting them against the standard ideas of the day. The final chapter examines the interplay of authorship and authority in the prefaces to four nineteenth-century novels: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, and Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*.

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To My Parents,

Al and Lucy Duba.

With love and thanks.

The Preface

An authorial preface is a text that appears before a work in an edition of that work, written by the same author, in which the author addresses a readership as author of the work to which the preface is attached.

To define the authorial preface is to describe its perimeters: it is to establish the *form* but not the content. But this is a necessary failing, for prefaces are texts that exist only in relation to other texts. Theoretically, anything could be a preface, and a cursory glance at a few prefaces reveals the divergent approaches taken to the form by different authors. In the preface to his *Poems* (1876-89), Gerard Manley Hopkins offers only a guide to the unique stress system he employs in his verses while his near-contemporary, Oscar Wilde, in his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, supplies the reader with a series of aphorisms on art and life. Prefaces can be short, as in both of these cases, or almost as long as the works they introduce, as is the case of some of George Bernard Shaw's many prefaces. At times they argue for the appropriateness of certain subject matter, as in Anthony Trollope's preface to his novel of a "fallen woman," *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, which defended his choice of such a heroine. Others, written in retrospect, attempt to reconstruct the history of a work's composition, like Mary Shelley's 1831 preface to *Frankenstein*. While most authorial prefaces openly announce the identity of the author, some, such as those to the *Waverley* novels of Sir Walter Scott, play elaborate games with the author's actual identity, creating fictional provenances for the works they preface.

Historically, prefaces have served two purposes. First, they have functioned as guarantees of authenticity, much like the artist's signature in the corner of a painting. The

first book of *Don Quijote*, released in 1605, was a popular success and spawned many imitators who took it upon themselves to add to the adventures of the man of La Mancha. In response, when he published the second book of *Don Quijote*, Miguel de Cervantes added a preface in which he stated that the attached work was the one and only true Book Two of *Don Quijote*, of which he, Cervantes, was the one and only author. The admission of authorship is inherent in the form; by attaching an authorial preface to a work, one stakes a claim to it. But prefaces have another major role: they are the first word on the identity of a particular work. The preface is, in short, a genre about genres.

In a preface, the author speaks to an audience not as *an* author, but as *the* author of a work. By standing in front of and speaking about his or her work, the author assumes an authority different from that of the narrator. The specific tone of that authority varies from author to author; from Henry James's Old Master looking back, to Bernard Shaw's street-corner Fabian, to William Wordsworth's poet/philosopher. Writers address their audiences differently, and these differences, in turn, help to determine the different approaches with which their audiences read them.

All of these effects fall within the domain of rhetoric. Perhaps the most apt image of the prefatorial situation is to think of a preface as a sermon delivered from the pulpit, for like sermons, prefaces are essentially an occasional form. They are written in and for a specific moment in time, with attention paid to the time and place of their reception. Some prefaces, such as those of James, were undeniably written with one eye on posterity, but even these prefaces address the social and critical climate in which they were conceived. Like the best political speeches, prefaces may seem to be meant for eternity, but they are very much addressed to a living, breathing audience.

Prefaces are too often treated as though they are inert, as though they have nothing to do with the interchange between the writer and the modern reader. We are not the ones spoken to directly; we overhear the discourse in prefaces from a distance. As readers of prefaces of English literature of the past, we eavesdrop on things said by an author who no longer exists to an audience long since departed. From our vantage point, the specific battles fought by the preface writers can seem petty, pointless, and sometimes absurd. When Dickens argues, as he does in the preface to *Bleak House*, that spontaneous human combustion is not only possible, but has been documented on many occasions, we read it differently than his contemporaries would have. For us (at least most of us), the question is settled, it is not possible, and it is an example of Dickens's—or perhaps the mid-nineteenth century's—softheadedness when it came to science. Yet for Dickens, and by extension for his audience, the matter is of the utmost importance: Dickens, an author conscious of his own lack of university education as well as the accusations of improbability leveled against his novels, is claiming that his works do deal with the real, albeit, as he says, 'the romantic side of familiar things.'

Of course, not all prefaces are equally interesting or uniform in quality. Just like the different works that they are attached to, prefaces vary in quality. Some prefaces are poorly written, while others simply give a poor impression of the author. John Keats's preface to *Endymion*, for example, which pleads for gentle treatment from critics, retains its somewhat whiny quality to this day. Yet we still read it, because it is the preface to *Endymion*. One of the truisms of secondary forms—such as the preface, the letter, the diary, and the journal—is that they are valued by the reader because of who wrote them more often than for any internal merit of their own. Stylistically, Dickens's prefaces may

not differ much from those of many other authors of his era, but his prefaces are important principally because Dickens wrote them and attached them to his novels.

Prefaces, in short, are a dependent form. Sometimes they are interesting in and of themselves, as in the cases of James and Shaw. But even such interest cannot, or should not, obscure that when read as prefaces, these works are primarily important because of their relationship with another work. Wilde's preface to *The Picture of Dorian Grey* is, above all, the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Grey*: without the novel, it is merely a series of aphorisms.

The best, most memorable prefaces are those that attempt to convert the reader, those that take an almost adversarial stance by indicating an author's sense that the work to follow needs explanation. These prefaces use the potential of the prefatory form to its fullest: they engage readers, guiding not only their reading of the text at hand, but also attempting to alter their beliefs concerning literature in general. It is in prefaces such as these—the great prefaces of Wordsworth, James, and Shaw—that one can most clearly hear an authorial voice.

First, however, one must step away from the images and cultural detritus that have developed around these works. For all three of the major authors mentioned above, their prefaces have detached themselves from their immediate contexts and become emblematic of the authors. The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* is read as Wordsworth's early treatise on poetry, not as a preface to a group of poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Similarly, Henry James's prefaces to the New York Edition, once read as templates for writing the great modernist novel, are now understood biographically, as sketches of the great man in the sunset of his life. Shaw's prefaces, even in his long lifetime, came to be

known as separate performances by a revolutionary who was unable to turn down any opportunity to mount his soapbox. Reading them as part of the "paratext," to use Genette's awkward yet accurate term, allows us to return these prefaces to their liminal status.

In my examination of the three major preface writers central to my dissertation, I have attempted to show how and why these prefaces have tended to frustrate even their best readers. In assessing Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, I start from the premise that while the preface implies a poetics, it does not fully explain that poetics, relying instead on the persuasive power of both the prose of the preface and the poetry that follows it. Since so much in Henry James relies on what remains unsaid, my reading of the preface to *The Ambassadors* deals with the preface's insufficiency as a guide to the novel. The silence of the preface is intentional; by directing the reader's attention away from the obvious elements of the text, James tries to change the reader's habits of apprehension not through instruction but by example. Shaw's preface to *Man and Superman* is an even more extreme example: in long, digressive sections, the author's attention wanders from the relations between the sexes to current world affairs to music—straying into many subject matters but not that which is central to the play *Man and Superman*. Again, as with his predecessors, Shaw's misdirection functions as a way of making the reader uncomfortable with traditional ways of reading and thinking about texts.

For all three writers, prefaces are also essentially aesthetic documents. In them, Wordsworth, James, and Shaw tell us both how to read their work and how to read in general. Admittedly, most prefaces do not have such grand ambitions. In my final

chapter, I examine the prefaces to four works—Scott's *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*, and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. In each of these cases, an author's identity and relationship to the text is established in the prefatory matter, which does not attempt shape the audience so much as to respond to that audience's demand for an authorial presence.

In Jorge Luis Borges's story, *Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote*, the narrator is amazed at how the banal pieties of the sixteenth-century Spaniard are transformed into revolutionary metaphysical statements when uttered by a twentieth century writer. The joke is of course that we forget that novels and stories do have authors and that works of literature become banal when we no longer feel that the author's thoughts and philosophy are of any relevance. Prefaces remind us that texts have authors and that those authors not only want to be read: they want to be understood.

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Chapter One

The Authorial Preface

Prefaces are experiencing a resurgence of interest among critics. George Bernard Shaw's have been collected into a three-volume edition, Henry James's have reentered the critical discourse as both disguised autobiography and frame narratives, Gerard Genette has anatomized the form in *Paratexts*, and Alasdair Grey has compiled an anthology of English language prefaces in *The Book of Prefaces*. The debates about the significance of specific prefaces are often debates about how to read them: is Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads* a mediocre assessment of his own poetry or a manifesto for Romantic poetry? Are Henry James's prefaces autobiographies or a guide to "The Art of Fiction"? How does one read Shaw's polemical prefaces, which seem to deal with everything from Shakespeare to how to avoid aging? Can Sir Walter Scott's prefaces truly be called authorial when they implicitly and explicitly deny his authorship?

These are not simply questions concerning how one should interpret the content of these prefaces: they are questions of form. Any study of the preface has to start by examining the relationship between a preface and the text it prefaces. This does not exclude reading them as autobiographies, critical essays, or manifestoes, but simply means that when a preface is read as a preface, it must be read in relation to another text.

Almost any type of work, from cookbooks to scientific textbooks to novels, can have a preface and prefaces can be written either by the author or a third party. However, to put all of these different prefaces in the same category obscures some of the basic differences between them. Prefaces written by the same author as the work to which

they are attached, that is, authorial prefaces, possess the authority of the author and help to construct his or her authority. The preface written by Joseph Conrad for *Nostromo* has a different, and closer, relationship to the text of *Nostromo* than the critical introduction included in the latest Penguin edition of that novel.

In works of non-fiction, the difference between the author speaking in the preface and in the body of the work is not as clearly defined. Most prefaces to works of non-fiction are overviews of the material at hand or introductions to the subject area, and the voice in the preface is not significantly different from the voice in the rest of the work. In works of poetry, drama, and fiction, on the other hand, the preface is often the only place where the author speaks *ex cathedra* to his or her audience.

Categorically, the preface can be grouped with those other texts that surround a central text, such as footnotes and epigraphs, as examples of what Gerard Genette terms paratexts. Genette's *Paratexts* separates the paratext into two distinct categories: the peritext and the epitext. The peritext is located with the work in an edition; the epitext is found outside the pages of any specific edition of the work and includes such texts as interviews, letters, and commentary. In Genette's formulation, the outside perimeters of the peritext are quite clear, but his definition of the epitext contains no such boundaries. Although Genette is very careful to limit the subject of his study mainly to sources that originate from the author or his publisher,[1] he also states in the beginning that paratext is a way of talking about context: "we must remember that, in principle, every context serves as a paratext."(7) Thus the epitext, in Genette's system, can consist of all the texts that influence a reading.

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[1] "By definition, something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it, although the degree of responsibility may vary" (9).

This way of organizing material possesses certain advantages: it fits into Genette's larger mission of creating a schema which encompasses all potential texts and also focuses the reading of contextual material around a central text.[2] In essence, Genette's system subordinates all other texts, as potential paratexts, to a particular reading of one or another text. However, Genette's system blurs distinctions between the paratext and the context. For example, one can say that the text beginning "Nothing is more easy than to state the subject of 'The Ambassadors'" is the preface to Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, but one cannot make the same claim about any single piece of Henry James's correspondence.[3] Prefaces and other peritexts such as footnotes all can be said to belong to a specific work, whereas letters and other epitexts cannot. The relation of an epitext to a text is always mediated by its status as an independent utterance by an individual speaking to an audience that is different from that of the work. One can—and should—read Henry James's letters in relation to his novels, but the letters lack the authority of a statement placed within an edition of one of his novels. For the purposes of my discussion, the word paratext refers only to those texts that are printed along with a work, in an edition that is itself a primary source.

While bringing potentially every other text into the orbit of a central text, Genette's definition, since functional, often encroaches on the boundaries of the central text. The first chapters of many works of fiction function as the reader's introduction to the world of that novel (taken even further, I once had a professor who claimed that one

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[2] One example of the usefulness of the peritext/epitext debate concerns the identification of forgeries. Barbara Schaff, in a talk entitled "Faked Authorship in the 18th to 20th Century," points out that it is when a fiction contained in the peritext (such as the misattribution of authorship) is continued in the epitext (interviews, letters, etc.) that a literary conceit becomes forgery. In other words, *Ossian* is a forgery while *The Castle of Otranto* is not because James Macpherson, when questioned, did not retract his claims that the prose poem was merely translated by him.

[3] However, one could, following Genette's system, confusingly claim that *The Ambassadors* is part of the epitext of a particular piece of James's correspondence.

can tell much about a work from the first and last sentences of a work). Yet to call first chapters paratextual enlarges the doorway at the expense of the vestibule: we are already inside the house of fiction.

In a similar vein, the placement of one text before another does not necessarily mean that it is the preface to the later work. In the Everyman edition of Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Shamela*, for example, *Shamela* precedes *Joseph Andrews*. *Shamela* functions as an excellent introduction to *Joseph Andrews*: it gives the reader an idea of some of the attacks that *Joseph Andrews* makes on Richardsonian morality, and even introduces a few of the characters. However, to say that *Shamela* is a paratext of *Joseph Andrews* would be wrong. Even saying that *Shamela* functions like a paratext would be wrong, because that would imply that paratexts have a discrete set of functions that *Shamela*, when placed in the same book as *Joseph Andrews*, replicates. What can be said is that *Shamela*, when placed in the same volume as *Joseph Andrews*, can function as an introduction[4] to *Joseph Andrews*.

Defining the preface and other paratextual forms based on their functions leads to confusing and overlapping formal definitions. Genette's matrix of the different types of preface is based on the identity of the sender (the author, a character, a third party) and the authenticity of the person (a real person, a fictional person, a real person who "is invalidated by some paratextual sign" [179]).[5] This system creates a field of nine

[4] Here, and when I return to it, I use the word "introduction" to imply a functional relationship. This does not mean that if something is labeled an introduction it is therefore not a preface. Part of the problem in defining the paratext is that authors themselves have not adhered to any strict system of labeling. For the sake of precision, I use the word "introduction" to talk about the function of a work and preface to describe a formal relation between two texts.

[5] "I am not sure that the difference between fictive and apocryphal has universal relevance, but it seems to me useful in the area we are dealing with now, and we will henceforth use it in this sense: fictive applies to a preface attributed to an imaginary person, and apocryphal to a preface attributed falsely to a real person" (Genette 179).

potential prefatory situations. Not all of these situations, however, are truly paratextual. A fictional preface, such as John Ray Jr.'s to *Lolita*, is part of the text, not separate from it in the same way that Vladimir Nabokov's 1956 afterword is. Similarly, T.S. Eliot's foreword to Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* does not have the same relationship to the text as an actual preface by Djuna Barnes would have.

The matrix presented by Genette of potential prefaces defines prefaces not in terms of their relationship with a primary text but in relation to other potential prefatory situations. His interest lies not in the actual, textual relation between preface and text, but rather in the interpretive framework that has historically been associated with that relationship.[6] Genette's definition of the paratext as that which "enables a text to become a book"(1) is ultimately a functional and not a categorical definition of the paratext. Therefore, in order to make it possible to define prefaces and other paratexts categorically, I would define the paratext as thew material that surrounds a text in an edition, specifically an edition that itself possesses the authority of the author.[7] Elements such as epigraphs, prefaces, and postfaces can all be defined as paratextual elements, as

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[6] Genette defines the authorial preface in terms of its various functions, starting with what he calls the original assumptive preface, which he defines as a preface written for a first edition of a work, in which the author, implicitly or explicitly, claims responsibility for the work. This definition of the preface is dependent on the idea that a preface functions as a way of pre-empting any potential criticism of a work. Works, however, do not reach a public in a pure state: they go through a series of drafts, and in the case of a collection of poems or a play, often have their public debut before they exist in any kind of book form. The standard nineteenth-century practice of publishing novels in serial form before they became books meant that many novels of the time were read all the way through, and subjected to much criticism, before they were ever bound into book form. Although most prefaces to first editions may seem like they are intended to ensure the proper reading of the work, the pre-publication history of any work of literature suggests that it is impossible to think of a preface to a work as entirely pre-emptive. The preface is, by nature, a delayed form.

[7] I want to distinguish between the paratext and the critical apparatus of editions such as the Norton Critical editions. Footnotes and prefaces that appear in such editions do have bearings on individual readings, but they do not have the same relationship to the text that footnotes and prefaces either written or approved by the author do.

they all share a paratextual relationship to the text—that is, they are all discrete texts that are read in relation to another text to which they are subordinate and contiguous.

A categorical definition of the preface also allows one to replace Genette's nine prefatorial situations with three categories: those prefaces which are part of the text, prefaces that carry the authority of the author, and prefaces written by third parties, which, following Fowler's suggestion in *Modern English Usage*, I term forewords.[8] Of these three forms, only those texts that carry the authority of the author are true prefaces. The rest are either part of the text or part of the context.

Since paratextual forms such as the preface are defined in terms of their positions in relation to other texts, and not in terms of their contents, simplycalling a text a preface or a footnote does not make it one. Just because Swift labels a section of *Tale of A Tub* the "Preface" does not mean it is a preface.[9] Instead, Swift's 'preface' is a fictional device that mimics the conventions of the preface, just as the letters in *Clarissa* are not real letters, sent from one person to another, but fictional devices that mimic the form of letters. In order to read *Clarissa*, or any other epistolary novel, we need to recognize the conventions of the letter form, but if we believe epistolary novels to be composed of real letters, then we are reading such novels not as works of fiction, but as collections of letters.

The difference between paratext and text is the difference between commentary and work. If a specific element is integral to the world of the work, then it is part of the

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[8] "*F*[oreword] is a word invented fifty years ago as a SAXONISM by anti-latinists, & caught up as a VOGUE-WORD by the people who love a new name for an old thing. *P*[reface] has a 500-year history behind it in English, &, far from being antiquated, is still *the* name for the thing....A decent retirement might be found for *f.* if it were confined to the particular kind of preface that is supplied by some distinguished person for a book written by someone else who feels the need of a sponsor"(188)

[9] This is even more obvious when one looks at "The Author's Preface" in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, which is placed in the twentieth chapter of the third book. Although labeled a preface, both its placement and its contents make it clear that it is part of the work itself.

work. For example, the footnotes in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* are formally footnotes and contain the insights of Hugh DeSelby. Yet Hugh DeSelby is a character in *The Third Policeman*, and the notes that describe his experiments in material philosophy are components of that fictional world and are therefore not paratextual.

Although it is not part of the work of fiction (or poem or drama) to which it is attached, the paratext does not have to be truthful. Whether the paratext gives reliable or true information is irrelevant to any definition of the form.[10] The most obvious example of the potential unreliability of the paratext is the standard twentieth-century disclaimer, inserted in front of many works, with varying degrees of appropriateness, but made in order to avoid libel, that 'any resemblance to real people, alive or dead, is purely coincidental.' Some paratexts, such as Walter Scott's prefaces are, in fact, outright fictions. This does not invalidate their status as paratexts, because they are still read in relation to a work, not as part of it. Paratextual forms are not defined by their content, but by their relationships with other texts. When considering the genre of the preface, for example, one must look not at the tropes common to most prefaces, but at the relationships that all prefaces share.

Since one cannot determine anything about the content of the preface based on its form, prefaces are not a genre in the same way the epic or the Gothic novel is. Traditional accounts of genre assign particular works to genre by virtue of their content. That genres exist, however, is not disputed. When *x* says that *Frankenstein*, for example, is a horror novel, and *y* says it is not, they are not disagreeing that a category of works

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[10] Obviously, certain kinds of statements will indicate that a text that is labeled a preface is not, in reality, a preface. For example, the existence of Hugh DeSelby in both the footnotes and the text of *The Third Policeman*, and his non-existence in this world make it obvious that the footnotes to *The Third Policeman* do not constitute a paratext. However, although certain types of content can determine whether or not a text is a paratext, this does not mean that the content defines the genre.

called 'horror novel' exists, but on a definition for that category. Even when DeMan argues, in "Autobiography as De-Facement," that autobiography is a figure of reading, not a genre, he is not disputing the existence or relevance of genres, but arguing that autobiography is not a genre.

Any definition of genre must simultaneously account for the different critical approaches to genre, the common experience of reading works generically, and the existence of a distinct set of paratextual genres. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, the history of genre criticism has been dominated by two approaches to genre: prescriptive and descriptive (456). The prescriptive model, which values individual objects in terms of how they fit a particular generic model (as in "that was a bad science fiction novel" or "that was a good Greek tragedy"), has been out of critical favor since the end of the eighteenth century (456), but still enjoys popular currency. The descriptive model defines a genre in terms of the texts that constitute it. Ultimately both approaches are normative and depend on a definition of genre outside any individual work.

Although a genre cannot be defined by individual works, it plays an important part in the reading of works, as Heather DuBrow illustrates in *Genre: The Critical Idiom.* "Assume," she asks the reader, "that the following paragraph opens a novel entitled *Murder at Marplethorpe*:"

> *The clock on the mantelpiece said ten thirty, but someone had suggested recently that the clock was wrong. As the figure of the dead woman lay on the bed in the front room, a no less silent figure glided rapidly from the*

> *house. The only sounds to be heard were the ticking of that clock and the loud wailing of an infant.*
>
> Now read it through again, this time pretending that it appears under a title like *The Personal History of David Marplethorpe* and represents the first paragraph of a *Bildungsroman*, the genre that traces the maturation and education of its hero (1).

DuBrow's point is clear enough: when the reader is told what genre a particular work belongs to, he or she experiences the passage according to the norms of that particular genre. Both of the readings she describes are dependent on the reader's knowledge of both the title and genre of the work. However, one can imagine an ambiguous title for the work, such as *Marplethorpe Hall*, or an ambivalent one, such as *The Strange Case of David Marplethorpe*. Although neither of these titles functions as a strong generic marker, the reader would still make generic assumptions about the work—based on prior works by the same author, the book jacket, and knowledge of different genres.

DuBrow's example shows the role that genre plays even in the reading of the first paragraph of a work. Generic readings, or readings-as, are different from generic categories. If, for example, the opening to the Marplethorpe story quoted above were followed by one hundred pages detailing the life of a young man growing up in the remains of a palatial estate somewhere in the South, haunted by his family's past, one might be inclined to then call it a cross between a *Bildungsroman* and a Southern Gothic novel. Although the reader encounters elements of the work in a linear fashion, generic categories apply to the work as a whole, not just to part of it, and generic decisions made during a reading are contingent. Assigning a genre to a work demands that a reader make

judgments about the work as a whole in relation to previous information. Genre criticism therefore deals with how individual genres are constituted by their readers.[11] Tzvetan Todorov, in *The Fantastic*, describes the act of defining a genre:

> We actually deal with a relatively limited number of cases, from them we deduce a general hypothesis, and we verify this hypothesis by other cases, correcting (or rejecting) it as need be (4).

In order to read Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk* as a Gothic novel, one must first have an idea of the gothic novel as a genre. When one next encounters Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, one must decide whether its lack of supernatural forces precludes it from being a gothic novel. If not, then the law, or rather the norm, of genre that dictates that a gothic novel must feature supernatural forces must either be rejected or modified. This traditional model of genre does not fit paratexts. Unlike traditional genres, which are constantly in flux, what makes a preface a preface or a footnote a footnote does not change from reading to reading.

Not only do traditional generic categories have no fixed definitions, many works seem to belong to more than one genre simultaneously. *The Monk* may seem pretty clearly to be a gothic novel to most readers, but what about Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*? It can be read as a parody of the gothic novel, as a novel of sentiment, or as a novel of manners. Each of these readings of Austen's novel emphasizes different elements of the text, and all would seem to be valid. We must conclude that one assigns a genre to a reading of *Northanger Abbey*, but not to *Northanger Abbey* as text. Two readings of the same copy of *Northanger Abbey* can diverge generically, but they still

[11] One important school of genre criticism focuses on how the tropes common to a genre reveal the ideological underpinnings of the narrative form, as in Georg Lukacs's *The Historical Novel* or, more recently, Thomas Beebee's *The Ideology of Genre*.

refer to exactly the same text. Similarily, many prefaces can be read as belonging to different genres. Most often, for example, prefaces are read as being autobiographical. In any case, the generic distinctions that govern the reader's experiences of these texts exist within the reading of the text, not in the text itself.

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye, claiming the authority of the ancients, particularly Aristotle, separates literature into four generic categories: the epic, the lyric, the drama, and the novel. Genette disputes Frye's model, claiming that these are modes and what Frye terms modes are in fact genres.[12] The problem for Genette is that the four genres proposed by Frye and his predecessors overlap with the three major modes of literature: poetic, prosaic, and dramatic. Frye confuses the matter a bit further by stating

> the basis of generic distinctions in literature appears to be the radical of presentation. Words may be acted in front of a spectator; they may be spoken in front of a listener; they may be sung or chanted; or they may be written for a reader....The basis of generic criticism in any case is rhetorical, the sense that the genre is determined by the conditions established between the poet and his public (246-7).

Here, Frye defines genre in terms not of the work itself, but in terms of the conditions established between a writer and his or her public. Frye does not, however, mean the *actual* presentation of the work: "the generic distinctions are among the ways in which literary work are *ideally* presented, whatever the actualities are" (247). In other words, what makes a poem a lyric is not whether it is sung with the accompaniment of a lyre, but

[12] "To my knowledge, Northrop Frye is the only—or nearly the only—modern literary theorist who maintains (in his own way) the distinction between modes and genres. Even so, he names *modes* what we ordinarily call genres (myth, romance, mimesis, irony), and *genres* what I would like to call modes (dramatic; narrative [*narratif*]—oral, or *epos*; narrative [*narratif*] written, or *fiction*; sung to oneself, or *lyric*)" (Genette, Architext 70n).

whether it refers back formally and thematically to this ideal mode of presentation. Although his generic categories differ from Todorov's and Genette's, they all describe forms that exist in, and are altered by, history.

The idea that genres are historically formed poses some problems for the consideration of paratexts as genres. One can trace the preface back to the advent of the printing press, and look at early examples of prefaces in English literature in translations of the bible into English, and then examine the first few authorial prefaces of the sixteenth and seventeeth centuries. However, although historicizing a paratextual genre can give an account of what have traditionally been considered important components of that paratextual genre (as in Anthony Grafton's account of the role of the footnote in the development of historiography in *The Footnote*), it cannot define that paratextual genre.

The related question of what can and cannot be considered a genre is best illustrated by the debate between Philippe Lejeune and DeMan over autobiography. From the perspective of the common reader, the idea of "autobiography" as a genre exists. When we read an autobiography, we expect to get a portrait of the author as an individual, we expect a certain truthfulness, and we are suspicious when certain parts of a life are glossed over or described in overabundant detail. Moreover, autobiographies are read often in relation not only to the life of the subject of the work but also in relation to other autobiographies. This experience of reading autobiographic works is summed up by Lejeune's definition of its generic form: "[a] retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality" (4).

However, as DeMan argues, as soon as this definition is examined, problems arise. For DeMan, autobiography cuts across genres, possesses no generic form of its own, and to call it a genre leads to "distressingly sterile" (68) discussions of autobiography and genre. Autobiography, for DeMan, "is not a genre or a mode but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts" (70). Both LeJeune and DeMan make valid points. Any work can be read autobiographically, but still one is inclined to say that a work such as *Speak, Memory* is read as generically different from *Ada*, even though both are by the same author and both are arguably works of fiction.[13] The image of Nabokov as emigré writer, struggling in his work to reclaim both a lost language and a destroyed world can be read into either work. However, *Speak, Memory*, unlike *Ada*, claims to tell the story of the author's life. When it is read, it is read in relation not only to Nabokov's life but also in relation to other autobiographies.

The confusion over genres and modes, between figures of readings, comes from the attempt to make generic distinctions genealogical distinctions. Frye's system, like DeMan's insistence on the difference between genres and modes, is based on the concept that literary criticism can and should behave like taxonomy. However, a genre is not a genus: it does not contain a discrete set of members, with features that remain constant. Both the members and definitions of traditional genres are in constant flux. Texts themselves do not contain generic distinctions, but instead make claims to be read as belonging to one genre or another.[14] Generic distinctions do not exist at the level of the

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[13] Lejeune's distinction in "The Autobiographical Pact(Bis)" between the autobiography (a noun which designates a category of works) and the autobiographical (an adjective which refers to a way of reading) (124-5) is very useful in determining the difference between a 'trope of reading' and a genre. Both distinctions occur at the level of reading, but to read something as a autobiography means not only to read it in relation to the writer's life but also in relation to the norms of the genre of autobiography.

[14] Although he does not talk directly about genre and literature, one of the best and most interesting works on the role categories play in aesthetic judgments is Kendall Walton's essay "Categories of Art". In this

text, but instead at the level of the reading. When one reads a work generically, one reads it categorically.

To read a text generically is to read it in relation to a set of norms outside the work in order to group it with other texts and decide on interpretive strategies. Although theories of genre may claim that generic distinctions exist only on one level of magnitude or another, this claim does not fit the common experience of genre. We all read generically, both in the broadest sense—novel versus epic—and in the narrowest sense—gothic novel versus horror novel.

The existence of a set of norms outside any individual work makes defining specific genres problematic. The traditional, or content-based, genre is both cumulative and historical (and as the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* points out, ultimately hermeneutically circular); it fits the Todorov model given above. One reads a work in terms of a set of pre-existing standards that can also be altered by the reading of the text in question. Texts can correspond to generic norms, alter them, or even violate them. The act of discerning genre in this formulation is the act of defining genre. A paratextual genre, on the other hand, contains texts defined not in terms of their content, but in terms of their subordinate relation to other texts. The paratext, as what surrounds the text, has no existence as paratext without a central text. As with traditional genres, the generic reading is based not on the content of the text, but on something outside the work: in this case, a fixed relation to another work. The best, and perhaps earliest,

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essay, which has greatly influenced my thinking on the matter, Walton argues that works of art must be understood categorically if they are to be understood at all. He also sets forth a series of four "circumstances [that] count toward it being correct to perceive a work, *W*, in a given category, *C*: (i) The presence in *W* of a relatively large number of features standard with respect to *C*....(ii) The fact, if it is one, that *W* is better or more interesting or pleasing aesthetically, or more worth experiencing when perceived in *C* than it is when perceived in other ways....(iii) The fact, if it is one, that the artist who produced *W* intended or expected it to be perceived in *C*, or thought of it as a *C*....(iv) The fact, if it is one, that *C* is well established in and recognized by the society in which *W* was produced" (357).

example of a paratextual genre is scriptural commentary. These writings, which have various authors, do not stand on their own, but are read in relation to scripture. They are not part of the scripture itself, but are positioned around the text of the scripture (often literally so). Their authority and importance are determined not by their own content but instead by their relationship to scripture.

Scriptural commentary can also be defined in terms of its content: that is, as medieval Jewish commentary on the Pentateuch or Mumon's commentary on the Zen text *The Gateless Gate*. As traditional genres, the religious identity of both text and commentary is of primary importance. If only a relationship is being described, however, the contents of either the paratext or the text itself are irrelevant to the definition of a paratextual genre. As soon as one starts making statements such as 'Roman Catholic biblical commentary tends to be typological,' one is no longer defining a strictly formal relationship, but is instead talking about the form in terms of its content. Since this tendency towards typological readings of the bible is a purely historical phenomenon, this definition of the genre of Roman Catholic biblical commentary is conventional, not paratextual. Similarly, the genre of the authorial preface[15] in English literature exists as both a traditional genre and a paratextual one. Before one can consider the traditional genre, however, one must first define the paratextual genre.

The authorial preface, as a paratextual form, is read in relation to another text. There are many different kinds of texts that are called prefaces, but an authorial preface is something quite specific: a prefatory statement made by an author in any or every edition

[15] It could be argued that by adding the word 'authorial' to preface that I am no longer, in my own terms, defining a paratextual genre. However, in the case of prefaces, 'authorial' describes the relationship between the preface and the text to which it is attached, and not the content of one or the other.

of a work that is addressed to the audience of that work.[16] The authorial preface can be distinguished from other texts that are called prefaces by its location and relation to a text. As a paratextual genre, its form can be defined by a series of statements that describe its relationship to a primary text.

The following points represent my attempt to define the authorial preface, and will serve as the basis for the rest of this study:

An authorial preface is written by the same author as the work to which it is attached and it is written by the author as author. The preface carries the authority of the author speaking directly to his or her audience. Therefore, the statements made by an author in a preface reflect directly on the authority of the author. When John Keats, in his preface to *Endymion,* writes: "The first two books [of *Endymion*], and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;—it will not: the foundations are too sandy," he undermines his own voice in the poem. Many of Keats's critics open their attacks by quoting and mocking his preface to the poem.[17]

Third-party prefaces call attention to the distance between the preface writer and the work. In the case of prefaces written by well-known writers, they are often of more interest to readers of those writers than to readers of the works to which they are attached.

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[16] It does not matter if it is labeled a preface, a foreword or an introduction. At different times and places, these names might indicate a difference in tone, but they all occupy the same position in relation to a text and an audience.

[17] Croker, writing in the *Quarterly Review*, opens his review of *Endymion* by mocking Keats' preface: "Mr Keats, however, deprecates criticism on this 'immature and feverish work' in terms which are themselves sufficiently feverish; and we confess that we should have abstained from inflicting upon him any of the tortures of the 'fierce hell' of criticism, if he had not begged to spared in order that he might write more; if we had not observed in him a certain degree of talent which deserves to be put in the right way, or which, at least, ought to be warned of the wrong; and if, finally, he had not told us that he is of an age and temper which imperiously require mental discipline" (qtd. in Schwartz 130-1).

Thus, when Arnold states that ballads are a lower form of poetry in his introduction to an edition of Wordsworth,[18] he is fitting Wordsworth into *his* system of poetry. Arnold's preface does not bear the same relationship to Wordsworth's poetry as Wordsworth's own prefaces do, for the reason that it represents a judgment of, not an argument for, Wordsworth's poetry.

An author is the only one who can say truthfully, in a preface, 'I wrote this.' The ability to make this statement—even if it is not made—gives the author an authority in the preface that a third party cannot possess. The preface does not have to be signed by the author, nor does the author have to claim authorship by name in the preface for it to be authorial. Prefaces to anonymous works, in fact, such as those to Scott's *Waverley* novels, cannot, by definition, have the signature of the author. These prefaces, like those written for works that purport to have been found, create narratives of provenance in order to establish the authenticity and authority of the tale. Although these prefaces are fictions, they are not part of the narrative of the work itself, but part of the apparatus.

A Preface is attached to an already existing work; the work pre-exists the preface. A text cannot be considered an authorial preface until it actually *prefaces* a work. Prefaces cannot pre-exist a work. Even if an essay was intended to be a preface, it is not a preface until it is published with the work that it prefaces. For example, Yeats's "A General Introduction for my Work"[19] was intended to preface an edition of Yeats's poetry that never appeared. Without the corresponding edition of Yeats's poetry, this is simply an account of Yeats's feelings about poetry and his place in the world of poetry—

[18] "Some kinds of poetry are in themselves lower kinds than others. The ballad kind is a lower kind; the didactic kind, still more, is a lower kind." Preface *to Poems by William Wordsworth*, chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold, 1879. (*Complete Prose* IX: 49)

[19] This essay was written in 1937 and published in 1961 in *Essays and Introductions*.

no different from any other essay he could have written on the subject. A true authorial preface is both a dependent and published form.

The publication history of Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its preface[20] perhaps best illustrates the difference between authorial prefaces and texts that call themselves prefaces. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was first published in the July 1890 issue of *Lippincott's*. Critical reaction to the novel was quick and, for the most part, negative. Wilde responded by addressing the critics directly in several letters to different magazines and newspapers. Then, before the novel came out in book form, he published the "Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" in *The Fortnightly* of March 1891. This document was then attached to the first book edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which was substantially different from the work printed in *Lippincott's*.

A reader could (and undoubtably many did) pick up a copy of *The Fortnightly* and read the "Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" without reading the novel. However, without the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which tells a specific tale about art, audience and morality in ways that resonate with the language of the preface, the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not a true authorial preface, but merely a series of statements on art, audience, and morality. The text, although labeled a preface when it is printed in *The Fortnightly*, does not become a preface until it is attached to the novel. Even then, it is a preface to the book edition, not to the earlier, magazine version of the novel. The fact that it does not become a true authorial preface until it is attached to the later edition of the work did not, however, preclude people from reading the text as printed in *The Fortnightly* as an introduction to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

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[20] I am relying on Richard Ellmann's biography of Oscar Wilde for information concerning the publication history of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

A Preface is not part of a work, but part of an edition of a work. This point is complementary to the previous one. If a preface must be published with a work, it is equally true that is not part of the work itself, but part of an edition. There are some cases, such as George Meredith's preface to *The Egoist*, in which the preface is not attached to a specific edition of the work, but is part of all editions of the work. The preface remains part of the apparatus, and therefore part of the edition of the work, not part of the work itself.[21] The difference between a text that is part of the edition and one that is part of the work is the difference between preface and first chapter. For example, both the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady* and its first chapter introduce the narrative of *The Portrait of a Lady*. The latter, however, is also part of the narrative, as it begins the story. One could read the novel without the preface, which tells the story of the genesis of the plot, but not without the first chapter, which begins the action.

Occasionally first chapters seem to function as prefaces. Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* contains a series of first chapters (one for each book) that serve, like many prefaces, as a guide to the reading of the text, informing the reader of the underlying artistic concerns of the narrator, and directly addressing the reader as reader. The narrator, by comparing the role of the author to that of "one who keeps a public Ordinary" promises to provide the reader with a "Bill of Fare":

> As we do not disdain to borrow Wit or Wisdom from any Man who is capable of lending us either, we have condescended to take a Hint from these honest Victuallers, and shall prefix not only a general Bill of Fare to our whole Entertainment, but shall likewise give the Reader particular

[21]This is true of prefaces to individual poems as well. The preface to Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, for example, is not part of any single version of the poem, but is part of the apparatus of some editions of the poem.

> Bills to every Course which is to be served up in this and the ensuing Volumes (25).

These introductory chapters do not contribute to the action of *Tom Jones*, but comment on it. However, unlike the contents of true prefaces, the material that makes up the first chapters of *Tom Jones* cannot be separated from the rest of the novel. The narrator is not outside the work, but is a companion to the reader while he or she reads the work. As Wayne Booth argues in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, the presence of the narrator, or "Fielding" in *Tom Jones* constitutes an important element of the narrative of *Tom Jones* (215-8). Booth demonstrates the difference between Fielding and "Fielding" by quoting from the last of the prefatory chapters:

> "For however short the period may be of my own performances, they will most probably outlive their own infirm author, and the weakly productions of his abusive contemporaries." Was Fielding literally infirm as he wrote that sentence? It matters not in the least. It is not Fielding we care about, but the narrator created to speak in his name (96).

Booth's commentary on the last appearance of "Fielding" reveals the difference between authorial digressions and prefaces. Authorial digressions in works of all sorts, from George Eliot's *Adam Bede* to Byron's *Don Juan*, are direct addresses to the reader by the narrator inside the confines of the narrative structure. A preface, on the other hand, is outside of the narrative structure, and the voice of the preface is that of the author speaking directly to his or her audience.

Although the distinction between text and paratext is quite clear in the case of *Tom Jones*, some works, particularly in the eighteenth century, blur the categories.

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, for example, contains a preface that claims the entire novel is truthful and that only the language was slightly cleansed to make it more palatable for the reading public. Although Defoe is lying, his lies are not necessarily transparent.[22] If one reads the preface as authorial, the claims that Defoe makes to the truthfulness of the narrative are obviously false, and therefore, they probably represent, along with the moralizing claims made by the author, an attempt to avoid the censors. On the other hand, the preface can also be read as an outright lie, and an attempt to pass off a fictional narrative as a truthful one. In both of these cases, the boundary between the text proper and the paratext is blurred.

A Preface is a direct address to the readership by the author. In a preface, the author is positioned in front of the text, addressing the reader from outside the narrative structure. The preface writer addresses a readership, not an individual reader. The direct address is not to all readers of the text, as in digressions, but to readers of that edition of the work. The assertions of authorship made by Dickens in his various prefaces to *The Pickwick Papers*, for example, make sense only when one is aware of the other half of the story—namely, the insistence of the widow of the novel's original illustrator, Mrs. Robert Seymour, that the original idea and most of the characters of the novel were the intellectual property of her late husband. Without this information, the increasing concentration on the genesis of *The Pickwick Papers* in the prefaces sounds shrill and defensive, indicating that Dickens, after all, might have something to hide.[23]

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[22] The complex layering of lies in this and other Defoe prefaces is detailed in John Vignaux Smyth's *The Habit of Lying*.

[23] The Penguin Classics edition of *The Pickwick Papers* contains the 1837, 1847 and 1867 prefaces. Instead of the single preface that a purchaser of one of these three editions would have, the modern reader has three prefaces that cover much of the same ground, but also seem to grow more involved in the issue of the genesis of *The Pickwick Papers*.

There is a spectrum of possible addresses to the audience, ranging from the "To my father" of the simple dedication, to the "Dear readers" of many prefaces. Often, the only difference between dedicatory letters and prefaces is this change in addressee. True dedicatory letters do exist and in these, the reader is not addressed but is instead reading over the addressee's shoulder. Furthermore, some authors attach an addressee to a preface in order to adopt a more personal tone with his or her larger audience. George Bernard Shaw's Epistle Dedicatory to *Man and Superman*, for example, is addressed to Arthur Bingham Walkley and contains allusions to various conversations between Shaw and Walkley. Yet Walkley's role in the letter is mainly rhetorical; his name provides Shaw with the occasion to bring up certain subject matter, such as the reasons behind his writing a Don Juan play. In this case one can read the address of Walkley as a case of misdirection: the primary addressee is Shaw's readership.

A Preface comments on the work to which it is attached. If a preface exists in relation to another text, it follows that there must be some relationship between the content of the preface and the content of the text. Since a preface is not integral to a text, it cannot in any way alter it.[24] The content of the commentary in prefaces varies widely, from Coleridge's story concerning the inspiration for *Kubla Khan* to Gerald Manley Hopkins's instructions on how to read the stress marks to his poems. Although this commentary, by definition, carries the authority of the author, it does not necessarily represent an interpretation or explanation of the text to which it is attached.

It can be argued that prefaces are exercises in other forms—for example, Henry James's prefaces can be read autobiographically, but to read them as such is not to read

[24] This is another reason why the first chapters of the different books of *Tom Jones* are not true authorial prefaces. Removing them from *Tom Jones* would change the novel.

them in relation to the texts to which they are attached. Of course, prefaces may contain elements of autobiography, of theory, of criticism, and other genres, but to read them as primarily autobiographical moments or as manifestoes is not to read them in relation to the texts to which they are attached. To call an object a preface is to make a decision as to how it should be read. Although a formal definition of the preface may not determine the content of any individual preface, it does define the relationship of the preface to the text. Prefaces can be other kinds of objects—autobiographies, essays in criticism, dedicatory letters, manifestoes—but when a preface is read as a preface, it is read as a commentary on a specific text by its author.

A Preface exists between the work and its readership. A preface is a text in which an author stands in front of another text and introduces it to an audience. Janus-like, the author comments on both the text and its reception. Both of these elements are important for a preface to be understood as a preface. Just as the defense of spontaneous human combustion found in the preface to Dickens's *Bleak House* would be irrelevant without an occurrence of spontaneous human combustion in the text of *Bleak House*, it would also not make sense without the attack on the possibility of spontaneous human combustion made by the many critics and readers of Dickens's time. As a reader of prefaces, the modern critic has to be aware not only of how prefaces construct audiences, but also how these audiences determine the context in which a preface is written.

Prefaces are an occasional genre. Since they are not part of the work, but part of an edition of the text, prefaces cannot exist as prefaces outside of that edition of the work. The 1818 preface to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was written for an edition of that work which, along with its audience, no longer exists. In the rest of my study, I will connect

specific prefaces with their authors and their times, examining both how the prefaces were written and how they were (or in some cases, should have been) read.

Chapter Two

Sober Pleasures: The Creation of the Reader in The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

Lyrical Ballads and a few other Poems first appeared in 1798, published by Joseph Cottle, Coleridge's publisher.[25] Consisting of 23 poems, it opens with *The Rime of the Ancyent Mariner* and closes with *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey.*[26] Neither Wordsworth's nor Coleridge's name appears anywhere in the volume. The "Advertisement," written by Wordsworth, refers repeatedly to the author as a single person, suggesting that the entire volume was the work of one poet. This anonymous 'poet' of the 1798 Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* claimed responsibility for both *Tintern Abbey* and *The Rime of the Ancyent Mariner*, for both *The Nightingale* and *We are Seven.*

The *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 was a radically different body of poetry. Although it incorporated the bulk of the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads* into its first volume, a second volume consisting entirely of poems by Wordsworth was added. More importantly,

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[25] In my account of the contents of all three versions of *Lyrical Ballads*, I rely on R.Ll. Brett's and A.R. Jones edition of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* along with their notes on the various variants. For the information on the canceled passage concerning Christabel in the 1800 Preface, I rely on W.J.B. Owen's edition of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. The short biographical sketch of the relationship between Coleridge and Wordsworth is based mainly on three biographies: Stephen Gill's 1989 *William Wordsworth—A Life*, Kenneth Johnston's 1998 *The Hidden Wordsworth*, and Richard Holmes' two-volume biography of Coleridge—*Early Visions, 1772-1804*, published in 1989, and *Darker Reflections, 1804-1834*, published in 1998.

[26] Between these bookends, the volume also included the following poems: *The Foster-Mother's Tale, Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, The Nightingale, a Conversational Poem* (or, in a few early editions, *Lewti*), *The Female Vagrant, Goody Blake and Harry Gill, Lines written at a small distance from my House, and sent by my little Boy to the Person to whom they are addressed, Simon Lee, the old Huntsman, Anecdote for Fathers, We are seven, Lines written in early spring, The Thorn, The last of the Flock, The Dungeon, The Mad Mother, The Idiot Boy, Lines written near Richmond, upon the Thames, at Evening, Expostulation and Reply, The Tables turned; an Evening Scene, on the same subject, Old Man travelling, The Complaint of a forsaken Indian Woman*, and *The Convict.*

Wordsworth's name appears on the frontispiece, and he defines, in the preface, the differences between the poems written by him and those written by a friend:

> For the sake of variety, and from a consciousness of my own weakness, I was induced to request the assistance of a Friend, who furnished me with the Poems of the ANCIENT MARINER, the FOSTER-MOTHER'S TALE, the NIGHTINGALE, and the Poem entitled LOVE. I should not, however, have requested this assistance, had I not believed that the Poems of my Friend would in a great measure have the same tendency as my own, and that, though there would be found a difference, there would be found no discordance in the colours of our style; as our opinions on the subject of poetry do almost entirely coincide [Capitals Wordsworth's] (242).

Wordsworth has unilaterally changed Coleridge's role from collaborator to assistant. In a remark Coleridge would later object to, Wordsworth states, almost in passing, that their "opinions on the subject of poetry do almost entirely coincide" (242).

The new volume of poems, although by no means mainly ballads[27], added many of the poems most commonly associated with *Lyrical Ballads*, such a *Michael*, *Nutting*, and the *Lucy* poems.[28] If these poems did not actually represent any new 'experiments'

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[27] According to Kenneth Johnston in *The Hidden Wordsworth*, it was neither Wordsworth's nor Coleridge's intention that the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* bear that name. However, due to a series of circumstances, not the least of which was the publisher's refusal of Wordsworth's preferred title, the name *Lyrical Ballads* was retained (Johnston 722-3).

[28] The full list of the poems, in the order printed, is as follows: *Hart-leap Well, There was a Boy, &c., The Brothers, a Pastoral Poem, Ellen Irwin, or the Braes of Kirtle, Strange fits of passion I have known, &c., The Waterfall and the Eglantine, The Oak and the Broom, a Pastoral, Lucy Gray, The Idle Shepherd-Boys, or Dungeon-Gill Force, a Pastoral, 'Tis said that some have died for love, &c, Poor Susan, Inscription for the Spot where the Hermitage stood on St. Herbert's Island, Derwent-Water, Inscription for the House (an Outhouse) on the Island at Grasmere, To a Sexton, Andrew Jones, The two Thieves, or the last stage of Avarice, A whirl-blast from behind the Hill, &c., Song for the wandering Jew, Ruth, Lines written with a*

on Wordsworth's part, they gave the volume as a whole a more pronounced sense of place than the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. The sequence of poems entitled "Poems on the Naming of Places" sets the tone for the entire volume, locating the poet as a person 'resident in the Country', specifically the Lake District.

The most important addition to the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* was the lengthy preface. The advertisement of the original volume was gone, but its contents were salvaged, and entire paragraphs from it appear at key junctures in the preface. This preface, with the addition of three hundred and fifty lines, as well as a few other minor and mainly stylistic revisions, became the preface of 1802. After an edition in 1805, *Lyrical Ballads*, as a discrete body of poetry, disappears from Wordsworth's collected poems. The poems that make up the two volumes of *Lyrical Ballads* were integrated into Wordsworth's various editions of his work and constantly revised, sometimes drastically, sometimes only by the addition or subtraction of a word. Starting in 1815, Wordsworth began to organize his poems according not to the date of original publication but instead to the subject matter and type of poems. The preface, as an autonomous document—although not as a true authorial preface—lived on, appendiced to the various editions of poems Wordsworth published during his lifetime.

Although the 1798 volume may seem, in retrospect, the most revolutionary, the later editions of *Lyrical Ballads* contain the longer prefaces and it is also these two editions—the 1800 and the 1802—that were the more widely read by contemporaries. Of

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Slate-Pencil upon a Stone, &c., Lines written on a Tablet in a School, The two April Mornings, The Fountain, a conversation, Nutting, Three years she grew in sun and shower, &c., The Pet-Lamb, a Pastoral, Written in Germany on one of the coldest days of the century, The Childless Father, The Old Cumberland Beggar, a Description, Rural Architecture, A Poet's Epitaph, A Character, A Fragment, Poems on the Naming of Places (I *It was an April Morning: fresh and clear*, II *To Joanna*, III *There is an Eminence, - of these our hills*, IV *A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags*, V *To M.H.*), and *Michael, a Pastoral.*

the two prefaces, the 1802 is the most fully realized and it is also the one that most readers and writers have engaged. The first thorough assessment of the preface (hereafter the Preface) came thirteen years later, in *Biographia Literaria*, and Coleridge's reading of Wordsworth's Preface is so influential that, as Don H. Bialostosky argues, it has determined the critical framework in which the Preface has been discussed:

> Coleridge's rhetoric has been so effective that it has not merely refuted the Preface but re-created it. His argument has drawn the bulk of subsequent critical commentary to the question of poetic diction, though that topic is subordinate in Wordsworth, and has even led respectable critics, Wordsworthians and Coleridgeans alike, to mistake the theses it attacks for those Wordsworth defends. The many critics who read Wordsworth through Coleridge seem unable to inquire what the Preface is about without finding something wrong with it (912).[29]

In the same essay, Bialostosky examines Coleridge's reading of the Preface in depth, revealing its inaccuracies and carefully disguised misreadings of individual passages. Bialostosky does not, however, dispute the grounds on which Coleridge reads Wordsworth. Wordsworth's preface, in his view, is still an essentially flawed theoretical document and Coleridge's attack on it results from the theoretical differences between the two poets:

> Coleridge's refutative interpretation of the Preface has obscured from many subsequent critics not only these apparent agreements between what Wordsworth believes and what Coleridge asserts against him but also the

[29] Perhaps one of the reasons, aside from its rhetorical brilliance, that Coleridge's reading of the preface has been so successful is that it is an important moment in literary history: it is a model example of the critic knowing better than the poet the exact import of the poems.

> real disagreements between them. If we can approach Wordsworth's Preface afresh and reconstruct the view it is struggling to embody, we will see, I think, that Coleridge had much more interesting reasons for objecting to it than those that he directly addresses to it in the *Biographia* (923).

Even in this sympathetic reading of Wordsworth, the Preface itself is seen as having fallen short of its goals, as "struggling to embody" a "view." The preface remains, in this reading, separate from Lyrical Ballads. Even those critics who call attention to Wordsworth's statement within the preface that the preface is not a fully developed poetical theory see this as operating within a larger theoretical and ideological framework, as in Thomas Pfau's 1993 essay, "'Elementary Feelings' and 'Distorted Language': The Pragmatics of Culture in Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*":

> A fully developed theory of poetry, Wordsworth notes, would mandate an inquiry into the extent to which the poetic sign is determined by the intellectual resources of the writer and by the hermeneutic frame of reception espoused by its specific audience. ...[ellipses mine]Wordsworth's ostensible humble, formal-technical investment in poetic technique visibly understates the political as well as the metaphysical efficiency of (any) discursive technique, professing to bring into focus merely the differential and potentially contingent empiricity of a "poetic diction" which, the Preface claims, has come to erode the criteria for aesthetic value, the poet's spiritual authority, and poetry's cultural efficiency (129).

Wordsworth's refusal to claim his preface as a fully developed theoretical document is, according to this reading, evidence of the theory and ideology represented by the preface.

The modern reader of the Preface may no longer be beholden to Coleridge's reading of the Preface, but she or he is still reading it in Coleridge's terms as a discrete document representing an aesthetic. However, Coleridge's assessment of the Preface is intertwined with his own role in the writing and publication of *Lyrical Ballads*. In order to understand Coleridge's reading of the Preface, one must first understand his relationship with *Lyrical Ballads* as a whole.

If *The Prelude* is the story of the growth of the poet's mind, the story of *Lyrical Ballads* is that of the friendship between Coleridge and Wordsworth. Although biographers and critics disagree on which party was more to blame for the rupture between the two, the facts of the matter are mostly agreed upon. The story of this friendship has been told many times, most recently in Kenneth Johnston's *The Hidden Wordsworth*[30] and Richard Holmes in *Coleridge: Darker Reflections 1804-1834*, and an understanding of the arc of their collaboration and estrangement contextualizes Coleridge's influential criticism of the Preface in *Biographia Literaria*.

The 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* was unmistakably a joint venture. Coleridge, in fact, played the central role in getting *Lyrical Ballads* printed by convincing his publisher and friend, Joseph Cottle, to publish the original 1798 text. Although 19 of the 23 poems were written by Wordsworth, Coleridge's poems were an integral part of the work. In particular, *The Rime of Ancyent Mariner* was central to a definition of what exactly a lyrical ballad was: the medievalisms of the poem connected the folk forms of Wordsworth's poems with the idea of a tradition of English poetry stretching back to

[30] *The Hidden Wordsworth* does not tell the full story of their friendship, as it only covers the Wordsworth's career up till 1805 and his completion of *The Prelude*. For a fuller account of the Wordsworth/Coleridge friendship from Wordsworth's perspective, see Stephen Gill's 1989 *William Wordsworth: A Life*.

Chaucer and beyond, as well as to the more recent forgeries of Macpherson and Chatterton.

The 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was originally planned in the same collaborative spirit as the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. Up until October of 1800, *Christabel* was intended for inclusion in the second volume, and Wordsworth even refers to it in a canceled passage of the preface as one of the major reasons behind the publication of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*.[31] As the year went on, it became clear that Coleridge would not add any more sections to *Christabel*, and Wordsworth rejected it: instead a lesser poem, *Love*, was added to the first volume, replacing Wordsworth's early and embarrassing *The Convict*. According to Holmes, Coleridge then insisted "the collection...be published under Wordsworth's name alone" (*Early Visions* 283).

Coleridge's partial withdrawal from the project was matched by Wordsworth's increased editorial control over the two volumes. Wordsworth rearranged the order of poems in the first volume,[32] removing *The Rime of the Ancyent Mariner* from its position of honor at the front of the volume, and replacing it with the didactic *Expostulation and Reply*. The *Rime*, meanwhile was placed second to last, and in a note added to the 1800 edition, Wordsworth enumerated the defects of the poem:

> I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe

[31] The canceled passage reads as follows: "For the sake of variety and from a consciousness of my own weakness I have again requested the assistance of a Friend who contributed largely to the first volume* and who has now furnished me with the Poem of Christabel, without which I should not yet have ventured to present a second volume to the public."

[32] In addition to rearranging the poems, *Old Man travelling* was retitled *Animal Tranquillity and Decay, a Sketch and Lines written near Richmond, upon the Thames, at Evening* was separated into two poems—*Lines written when sailing in a Boat at Evening* and *Lines written near Richmond, upon the Thames*. Besides these changes, the removal of *The Convict*, the alteration of the order, and a few line changes to the poems themselves, the first volume of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* was the same as the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*.

> their pleasure in some sort to me; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. The wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the controul of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural: secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon: thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated (276).

Wordsworth ends the note by listing the virtues of the poem. *The Rime of the Ancyent Mariner* was the only poem out of the entire two volumes that Wordsworth defended by first enumerating its defects and then noting its virtues.[33]

The Preface is itself another indication that the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* was no longer a joint effort. By writing the Preface and establishing his authority as a poet within it, Wordsworth asserted his poetic independence from Coleridge,[34] and presented himself as the mind behind *Lyrical Ballads*. Their friendship would endure—Wordsworth addressed *The Prelude* to him and Coleridge still critiqued Wordsworth's poems in manuscript form for another twelve years—but their collaboration as poets

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[33] Wordsworth was, according to most biographers, convinced that *The Rime of the Ancyent Mariner*, especially at the front of the volume, had alienated readers from the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*.

[34] Interestingly, Coleridge at first did not view the preface as Wordsworth asserting his independence from Coleridge. Within ten days of being sent a draft of the preface, Coleridge wrote to a friend, stating that "The Preface contains our joint opinions on Poetry"(Coleridge, quoted in Early Visions 284). However, this was before Wordsworth had decided to keep *Christabel* out of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*, and while Coleridge was still Wordsworth's greatest, and, at least in public, least critical admirer.

ended in 1800. Although the causes of the slow breakup of their friendship were more personal than philosophical, the personal differences finally made it easier for Coleridge to assert his independence from Wordsworth the thinker, if not from Wordsworth the poet. From early on, Coleridge did not believe *Lyrical Ballads* to be truly representative of the potential greatness of William Wordsworth the poet. What Coleridge expected from Wordsworth was a poetry that expressed a philosophic system. When Wordsworth finally did attempt such poems, and Coleridge saw them, he was sorely disappointed. The basic problem was, as Stephen Gill succinctly puts it, that "Wordsworth was not, and could not become, the Poet of Coleridge's imaginings"(146).

By 1815, when Coleridge started to write *Biographia Literaria*, his and Wordsworth's lives had taken decidedly different paths. Wordsworth had just published another volume of his poems, this time employing a new classification system, and although he was not entirely financially comfortable, he had a reputation as a major poet, with a large body of work to his name. Coleridge, on the other hand, had not published any significant poetry since *Lyrical Ballads*. He had, it is true, published a magazine, had a play produced, written for newspapers, and conducted a few series of lectures, but although he was always promising to write various books, he had not yet done so.[35]

In writing *Biographia Literaria* one of Coleridge's intentions—and he had many—was to combine a defense of Wordsworth's poetry with a demonstration of the proper principles of criticism:

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[35]*Biographia Literaria* began as an introduction to Coleridge's first volume of poems in over 20 years, *Sybilline Leaves*. It soon became apparent to Coleridge that the material he had planned to use as a preface had grown far larger than the confines of the form as he perceived them. Unlike Wordsworth, who did not present a coherent system because he claimed that he could not do so in the space allowed by a preface, Coleridge chose instead to present the coherent system instead of the preface.

> Long have I wished to see a fair and philosophical inquisition into the character of Wordsworth, as a poet, on the evidence of his published works; and a positive, not a comparative, appreciation of their characteristic excellencies, deficiencies, and defects. I know no claim, that the mere opinion of any individual can have to weigh down the opinion of the author himself; against the probability of whose parental partiality we ought to set that of his having thought longer and more deeply on the subject. But I should call that investigation fair and philosophical, in which the critic announces and endeavors to establish the principles, which he holds for the foundation of poetry in general, with the specification of these in their application to the different classes of poetry. Having thus prepared his canons of criticism for praise and condemnation, he would proceed to particularize the most striking passages to which he deems them applicable, faithfully noticing the frequent or infrequent recurrence of similar merits or defects, and as faithfully distinguishing what is characteristic from what is accidental, or a mere flagging of the wing (379).

In other words, criticism should attempt to define the principles behind poetry in general and then use these principles to read the poems themselves. An analysis of an individual poet should therefore determine what kind of poetry the poet is writing and then rely on an analysis of exemplary passages. This process is in opposition to the dominant critical model of quoting an infelicitous line or two and attacking the poet on the basis of

personality. Coleridge's criticism, on the other hand, would strive to be both 'fair and philosophical'.

Coleridge states that most criticism of *Lyrical Ballads* was based not on an assessment of the work as whole, but on a magnification of the faults of the volume, and could have been avoided with "the omission of less than one hundred lines."[36] *Biographia Literaria* examines how the theory presented in the Preface manifests itself (or does not) in Wordsworth's poems—both those of the two-volume *Lyrical Ballads* and others—and how the logic of the Preface works internally. By attempting to determine the theoretical principles inherent in the Preface and apply them to Wordsworth's entire corpus of poetry, he essentially removes the Preface from *Lyrical Ballads*.

When Coleridge starts analyzing the Preface, he treats it like a philosophical treatise, made up of a series of empirically verifiable statements:

> Here let me be permitted to remind the reader, that the positions, which I controvert, are contained in the sentences—"a selection of the real language of men'; —'the language of the men (i.e. men in low and rustic life) I propose to myself to imitate, and as far as possible to adopt the very language of men.' Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition, there neither is, nor can be any essential difference.' It is against these exclusively, that my opposition is directed (343).

Coleridge's major objections to Wordsworth's Preface are to the arguments Wordsworth makes about poetic language—that the language of poetry and prose are 'no different' and that poems should 'imitate' the language of men in low and rustic life. As theory, Coleridge believes these to be empty claims, in that they cannot be said to be true of all

[36] Wordsworth himself thought that most of the criticism and public dislike, real or imagined, for the original *Lyrical Ballads* could have been avoided with the omission of a little over 650 lines—Coleridge's *Ryme of the Ancyent Mariner*.

poetry, and even in the limited, Wordsworthian sense, they are only true insofar as they are truisms:

> My own differences from certain supposed parts of Mr Wordsworth's theory ground themselves on the assumption, that his words had been rightly interpreted, as purporting that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings. My objection is, first, that in any sense this rule is applicable only to certain classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not applicable, except in such a sense, as hath never by any one (as far as I know or have read) been denied or doubted; and lastly, that as far as, and in that degree in which it is practicable, yet as a rule it is useless, if not injurious, and therefore either need not, or ought not to be practiced (334-5).

The rest of Coleridge's critique of the Preface follows this model, and claims first that the theory is wrong when interpreted in the most general sense, and second that it is not properly backed up. Coleridge's methodology relies on the premise that the Preface should be read as a theory of William Wordsworth's poetry, that it can be reduced to a set of logical statements equally derivable from both the Preface and the poetry independently. This reading of the Preface drains it of any connection to the *Lyrical Ballads* and operates on the assumption that statements in the Preface should be read as claims made about poetry in general first and as introductory remarks to a specific collection of poems second, if at all.

Throughout his reading of the Preface, Coleridge addresses the theoretical implications of the argument without also examining the evidence of how Wordsworth supports his claims in *Lyrical Ballads*. When he attacks Wordsworth's claim that he uses the language of rustics, he does so without providing to a single example of exactly how Wordsworth uses this language:

> *'The language too of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appears to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike and disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because from their rank in society, and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social vanity, they convey their feeling and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions.'* To this I reply; that a rustic's language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far reconstructed as to be made consistent with the rules of grammar (which are in essence no other than the laws of universal logic, applied to psychological materials) will not differ from the language of any other man of common sense, however learned or refined he may be, except as far as the notions, which the rustic has to convey, are fewer and more indiscriminate (341).

As Bialostosky indicates, Coleridge's criticism "misleadingly distinguished between what the Preface can be legitimately taken to mean and what it probably does mean"(912). Coleridge does not respond to what Wordsworth is actually claiming—that the language used in composing the poems included in *Lyrical Ballads* is "a rustic's

language" and that a reader should approach the poems with this intention in mind. Instead, Coleridge treats this passage as if its major claim is that "such men [rustics] hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is derived."

The more substantial complaint made by Coleridge concerns Wordsworth's idealization of the character of the rustic. In both the 1800 and 1802 prefaces, the rustic is portrayed, by virtue of his work, as being more in touch with basic human emotions than are people removed from nature. Coleridge's objections are important; they reveal a response to Wordsworth that is aware of and alarmed by the anti-intellectual implications of Wordsworth's position:

> I am convinced, that for the human soul to prosper in rustic life, a certain vantage-ground is prerequisite. It is not every man that is likely to be improved by a country life or by country labours. Education, or original sensibility, or both, must pre-exist, if the changes, forms, and incidents of nature are to prove a sufficient stimulant....Whatever may be concluded on the other side, from the stronger local attachments and enterprising spirit of the Swiss, and other mountaineers, applies to a particular mode of pastoral life, under forms of property, that permit and beget manners truly republican, not to rustic life in general, or to the absence of artificial cultivation. On the contrary the mountaineers, whose manners have been so often eulogized, are in general better educated and greater readers than men of equal rank elsewhere. But where this is not the case, as among the

> peasantry of North Wales, the ancient mountains, with all their terrors and all their glories, are pictures to the blind, and music to the deaf (336-7).

The subjects of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, however, were neither Swiss nor Welsh, but principally the observed and imagined inhabitants of the Lake District. Wordsworth, in fact, repeatedly brings the locations of his poems and characters to the attention of the reader, through the descriptions of scenes and characters and the naming of places. By 1815, identification of Wordsworth (and Coleridge, for that matter) with the Lake District was common knowledge. Wordsworth's claim that in rustic lives, "the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can achieve their maturity," may be a statement about rustic life in general, but its immediate context is the 1800 and 1802 *Lyrical Ballads* and the specific observations and examples presented in those two volumes. This point was not lost on at least one earlier reviewer of *Lyrical Ballads*, John Stoddart, who wrote in a footnote to his review of the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* that

> The vicinity of the Lakes in Cumberland and Westmoreland (the scene of most of his Poems) is chiefly inhabited by an order of men nearly extinct in other parts of England. These are small farmers, called in that part of the country, *Statesmen*, who cultivating their own little property, are raised above the immediate pressure of want, with very few opportunities of acquiring wealth. They are a mild, hospitable people, with some turn for reading; and their personal appearance is, for the most part, interesting (Brett 330-1).

Coleridge is silent concerning the character of the rustics who were the subject of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, and instead concentrates on two places that are not even

mentioned therein, the references to Switzerland and North Wales resonate with another work of Wordsworth's. Switzerland and North Wales are the locations of the trips in which the poet, in Books Six and Thirteen of the 1805 *Prelude*, sets out to encounter the sublime. Although *The Prelude* remained unpublished until after Wordsworth's death, Coleridge had been familiar with it since 1805. Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, applies the theory presented in the Preface not only to the poems included in the *Lyrical Ballads*, but to Wordsworth's poetry in general.

Throughout *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge reads the Preface in relation to Wordsworth's entire body of work. The Preface, for Coleridge, misrepresents Wordsworth's poetry, and in the middle of one of his attacks on the Preface, Coleridge pauses to:

> reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who possesses, as Mr Wordsworth, if ever a man did, most assuredly does possess,
>
> *The vision and the faculty divine* (346-7).

This moment of both frustration with and veneration for Wordsworth re-enacts in miniature Coleridge's critique of the preface as a whole: Wordsworth's poetry is so great that it manages to survive the attempts of its creator to construct a theory that encompasses it. Again, however, Coleridge lumps all of Wordsworth together: the quotation is not from *Lyrical Ballads*, but from *The Excursion*, and shows Wordsworth at his most philosophical. In short, the poet whose reputation Coleridge is attempting to save, and whose poetry he is analyzing, is not the same poet as the *Lyrical Ballads* poet.

Throughout his critique Coleridge ignores the special relationship between the Preface and *Lyrical Ballads*.

A little later in the same chapter, Coleridge does come close to an analysis of how the preface functions as a preface:

> What then did he mean? I apprehend, that in the clear perception, not unaccompanied with disgust or contempt, of the gaudy affectations of a style which passed too current with too many for poetic diction, (though in truth it had as little pretensions to poetry, as to logic or common sense) he narrowed his view for the time; and feeling a justifiable preference for the language of nature, and of good sense, even in its humblest and least ornamented forms, he suffered himself to express, in terms at once too large and too exclusive, his predilection for a style the most remote possible from the false and showy splendour which he wished to explode (365).

Here, although he does not attach the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, he does connect it with the audience of the time. For a moment, Coleridge appears to realize that the Preface itself must be read in its context, that it was not the product of a confused critical mind, but of a master rhetorician addressing and creating his audience.

Near the opening of the Preface, Wordsworth asserts that the Preface itself represents a compromise with his friends:

> Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems, from a belief that, if the views with which they composed were indeed realized, a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind

> permanently, and not unimportant in the multiplicity, and in the quality of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory, upon which the poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, because I knew that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because, adequately to display my opinions, and fully to enforce my arguments would require a space wholly disproportionate to the nature of a preface (242-3).

Throughout the Preface, Wordsworth takes the position that although he does not have the space to relate it, his poetry is based on theoretical arguments not fully represented in the Preface. Similarly, Wordsworth states repeatedly that he is not attempting to *reason* the reader into approving the poems included in the two-volume *Lyrical Ballads.* Instead, Wordsworth repeatedly states that the poems he has included represented a new kind of poetry. However, the novelty of the poems in Lyrical Ballads is as much a function of the rhetoric of the preface as it is of the actual contents of Lyrical Ballads. As John Jordan writes, the contents of Lyrical Ballads shared much with other volumes of poetry issued around the same time:

> It appears, therefore, that Lyrical Ballads' coming out as it did and when it did was commonplace: it was part of a flood of verse, often juvenile and confessedly trivial, against which Wordsworth's claims of novelty must be judged. Even those claims had an element of the commonplace about

> them, since innovation was in the air. But his claims were insistent and generally accepted, both in approval and in condemnation—with how much justice is another question (127).

Whether or not the poetry included in *Lyrical Ballads* truly represented a break with the past, Wordsworth cast himself and was seen as a revolutionary.

In the 350-plus line passage added in 1802, Wordsworth, while discussing the difference between the enjoyment produced by poetry and that by mere hobbies, such as "as taste for Rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry" (257), states that "Aristotle, I have been told, hath said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing" (257). This second-hand information, probably from Coleridge, is incorrect: nowhere does Aristotle actually say poetry is the most philosophic of all writing.[37] This might seem like a minor point—misquoting and misattribution did not begin with Wordsworth, and he did not read the Greeks at Cambridge. Yet this passage is not a simple error or an oversight; the very phrasing calls attention to the tenuousness of the quotation. Wordsworth invokes the authority of Aristotle while emphasizing his unfamiliarity with Aristotle. Had the Preface been a critical treatise, this would have been one of the points at which Wordsworth would have been most open to attack: if he cannot get his Aristotle correct, what then can he get right?

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[37] According to Duncan Wu, who relies on W.J.B. Owen, in *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*, Wordsworth himself probably received his incorrect information from Coleridge, as he probably did not read the *Poetics* before writing the Preface (156). Perhaps Wordsworth is remembering i a garbled account of sections from part IV of the Poetics: "Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. 2. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood,,...[ellipses mine]and through imitation he learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. 3. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience. Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. 4. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers, but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited.

Wordsworth's casual mention of Aristotle has the same effect as his dismissal of writing a sustained defense of his theory of poetry: it directs the reader away from a rational, ordered argument and towards his concept of poetic authority. What Wordsworth claims that Aristotle said is not important because Aristotle said it, but because it is, according to Wordsworth, the truth:

> Aristotle, I have been told, hath said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal (257).

The argument is circular: the truth which is the object and content of poetry is a general truth that appeals to and is created by the heart. Poetry, as described by Wordsworth in this passage, is not part of a philosophic system, but is a philosophical system unto itself. The Preface opposes the authority of the poet to that of the philosopher, or scientist, who although also in pursuit of both truth and pleasure, "seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor," and not as a means of immediate connection with man and nature.

In order to show what poetry is, Wordsworth quotes poets at length three times in the Preface. All three times, the claims that he makes about the poems are not supported by sustained arguments. Instead, he asserts that certain lines and poems are better than others. This can best be seen by turning to the Gray sonnet, "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West" and Wordsworth's commentary on it:

"In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire;
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain."

It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics; it is equally obvious, that, except in rhyme and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose (252-3).

Wordsworth's argument rests on the boldness of his rhetoric. He does not need to say that personification is bad poetry; by this point he has already said so repeatedly. The italics direct the reader's eye towards good poetry, or at least those lines closest to the poetry included in *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth is arguing by assertion. Wordsworthian

authority insists on the superior vision of the poet and demands that the reader assume a passive role, and read *Lyrical Ballads* with "a heart/That watches and receives"("The Tables Turned," lines 31-2).

For Wordsworth what the poet sees is important, but equally important is his perspective. The Preface distances the poet from the forms and folk that inhabit many of the poems. Wordsworth identifies himself, in the 1800 and 1802 *Lyrical Ballads*, with the landscape of the Lake District, but as being of the land, but not of the people. The Preface emphasizes the distance between the poet and his subjects:

> The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions (245).

Wordsworth may celebrate the simplicity of others, but he is not himself a simple man. He "has chosen" the language of low and rustic life, and improved upon it. The poet is not one of "these men" and neither, for that matter, is the implied reader, but "such men" and their "feelings" are the vehicles for his experiments.

For all of the distinctions that the 1802 Preface makes between poetry and science, the process of writing poetry as set forth in the Preface has the air of the laboratory about it. The poems in the collection are "an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection

of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavor to impart" (241). The experiment proposed here has perimeters, an objective, and a standard of measurement. Wordsworth is attempting the production of an amount of pleasure that is both classifiable and quantifiable. This yoking of the forms of empirical measurements to poetry is also present in Wordsworth's account of the creation of poetry:

> I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind (266).

The poetic process is structured as a chemical reaction, where the presence of a reagent, contemplation, causes a seed, emotion, to expand and replace a solution, tranquillity. On the surface, this appropriation of scientific discourse is at odds with Wordsworth's opposition of poetry to matters-of-fact, and scientist to poet, but this is not a true opposition: it is an appropriation. The poet is not incapable of rational reasoning, but his authority supersedes it. Poetry is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge: it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science" (259), and therefore the superior form of knowledge.

While Coleridge connects Wordsworth's refusal to oppose poetry and prose to "his predilection for a style the most remote possible from the false and showy splendour which he wished to explode" (365), the Preface explicitly connects this refusal to

Wordsworth's opposition of poetry to science. In a footnote to his discussion of the essential sameness of the language of poetry and prose, Wordsworth says this explicitly:

> I here use the word "poetry"(though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis; because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even if it were desirable (254).

The formal distinction between poetry and prose, then, obscures the philosophical one between poetry and science. This playing down of the difference between poetry and prose allows Wordsworth to concentrate on a definition of poetry that is based not on its constituent parts, but on its objectives. Poetry, in the Preface, is not a way of stating things, but a way of knowing things.

In *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth uses four distinct terms to refer to his readership and the larger world:

The reader

Readers

The Public

Mankind.

These four terms can be further split into two pairs. The reader, whom Wordsworth is trying to convince of the value of these works, is paired with mankind—their ultimate

beneficiary. Wordsworth opposes to this pair the public, whose tastes tend to poems "materially different" (243) from those included in *Lyrical Ballads*, and readers—used once—who will probably find much in the volume ludicrous. In the Preface, Wordsworth addresses the individual reader, allowing him to disparage public taste while implying that the individual reader does not partake of it. The elitist positions that the Preface espouses align the reader with the poet against the larger public, and are therefore meant to include, not exclude, the reader. The Preface, in short, invites the reader in, while keeping the public out. This position, reminiscent of Milton's hope that *Paradise Lost* "fit audience find, though few" (VII, 31) or the huckster's description of his merchandise as 'not for everyone,' allows Wordsworth to appeal to the reader's sense of self worth. Like the tailor in the fable of the Emperor's new clothes, Wordsworth argues that those who are not able to see the beauty in quieter forms—specifically his poems—are less enlightened:

> For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability (248-9).

The Calvinist doctrine of predestination[38] implicit in this passage appeals to readers as individuals, who, although they might be willing to commit the majority of the public to damnation, are never quite ready to see their own future in the same terms. When reading this passage, one's inclination is to position himself or herself with the elect—that is, with those who are able to appreciate the beauty of Wordsworth's poems.

[38] In many ways, the Preface as a whole is an act of self-election by Wordsworth to the position of poet.

The passage that opens with the famous question "What is a Poet?" works in a similar fashion: it sets up, at least at first, a difference not in kind between the poet and his audience but of degree:

> What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them (255-6).

Wordsworth, while echoing the language of many of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, especially "Tintern Abbey" and "Nutting"[39], forces the reader into an act of self definition. The passage begins by stating that the poet has a more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness—qualities that most readers would ascribe to themselves. As this lengthy sentence unfolds, the clauses increase in complexity, but they still describe emotional responses, such as "rejoic[ing]...in the spirit of life that is in him," common to all humankind. Wordsworth moves beyond the ordinary idea of reflection and towards a definition of the poet as a person capable of an act of imaginative creation only in the final clause, as he defines the poet as "habitually impelled to create them [the volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe] where he does not find

[39] The "disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present" is refigured in both of these poems as a haunting of a present location by presences from the past.

them." Though this act differs in kind from the rest of the qualities enumerated, the structure of the sentence gives no indication of this difference, and the reader is inclined to therefore accept this quality as being no different than the ones that precede it: that is, common to all mankind, but more intense among the elect. The next sentence, which lists the abilities of the poet, elaborates on the final clause of its predecessor.

> To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves; whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate excitement (256).

This sentence, like its predecessor, makes a distinction in intensity but not in type between how the poet experiences the world and how the rest of humanity experiences it, and, like the last clause of the previous sentence, it defines the nature of the poet by implicitly redefining humanity.

Similarly, Wordsworth's experiment concerning how much pleasure can be created by a certain type of poetry redefines the word pleasure. In the Preface, pleasure and its verb form 'to please' are connected to poetry and the poet: it is the poet and the

poem that please, and it is the reader who is pleased. This definition is essentially tautological, and defines pleasure as that which is produced by poetry, which has as its goal the production of pleasure. The repetition of this formula, in various forms throughout the Preface, works on the reader as a subliminal suggestion: the words pleasure and poetry appear so often in close quarters that their physical proximity reinforces their syntactical connection in the text. However, not all pleasure in the Preface is equal, a point Wordsworth most clearly makes in the 350-plus line passage added in 1802. The pleasure produced by true poetry is superior to the sort of pleasure associated with hobbies or mere interests:

> But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who deems himself justified when he substitutes excellences of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavors occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a taste for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for Rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry (257).

"Idle pleasure" and "unmanly despair" are the products of dilettantism on the part of the reader, or the poet's sentimentality. Wordsworth dismisses those who view poetry as an amusement as not truly understanding either poetry or the role of the poet. The true poet operates

> under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer or natural philosopher, but as a Man (257-8).

True pleasure is figured by Wordsworth as an act of communication between two individuals, as individuals. If the occupation of the individual reader is not important, then it follows that the occupation of the subject of the poetry is equally secondary to the purpose of poetry. Here, again, poetry is described not as a vocation, such as science, but as a calling:

> It [the necessity of producing immediate pleasure] is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe,[...]a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure[...]. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone (258).

If pleasure is, as Wordsworth argues, that which is created by poetry, the logical conclusion is that poetry is what makes us human and humane, and that to be a complete person means that one should get pleasure from poetry. However, the passage above gains its power through rhetorical strength and repetition of its central assertion: it is not a defensible theoretical point of view in itself.

The poems that make up *Lyrical Ballads* are given scant attention in the Preface, and only one poem receives more than passing notice, "Goody Blake and Harry Gill,"

> which is one of the rudest of this collection. I wished to draw attention to the truth that the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce changes even in our physical nature as might almost appear miraculous. The truth is an important one; the fact (for it is a fact) is a valuable illustration of it. And I have the satisfaction of knowing that it has been communicated to many hundreds of people who would never have heard of it, had it not been narrated as a Ballad, and in a more impressive metre than is usual in Ballads (267).

Wordsworth focuses on two seemingly contradictory elements of the poem's composition. First, he points out the commonness of the poem itself, its rudeness. Next, he avers that it is a true story, illustrative of the principle that the physical and imaginative world are not separate and that the imagination has power over the physical world. Finally, he proclaims the poem's technical brilliance, pre-empting criticism from those who would see the tale as mere superstition while calling attention to the element of the poem most easily passed over—the amount of effort that went into its composition.

The only other time that specific poems are brought up occurs a little earlier in the Preface. Again, the poems are described in terms of their "purpose":

> I have said that each of these poems has a purpose. I have also informed my Reader what this purpose will be found principally to be: namely to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement. But, speaking in language somewhat more appropriate, it is to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature (247).

This is Wordsworth as clinician, presenting the reader with case histories. The value of "The Idiot Boy" and "The Mad Mother," for example, is in their tracing of "the maternal passion through many of its more subtle windings"(247). The list itself, which contains ten poems, has no overriding logic or order.[40] It is neither short enough to be exemplary nor long enough to be exhaustive. Many poems that would have fit in equally as well, such as "Anecdote for Fathers," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," or "The Thorn" are left out. Wordsworth insists that the purpose of the list is to draw the reader's attention to the emotions depicted, not to the situations described:

> I will not abuse the indulgence of my Reader by dwelling longer upon this subject; but it is proper that I should mention one other circumstance which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is

40 The full text of the passage dealing with individual poems is as follows: "This object I have endeavoured in these short essays to attain by various means; by tracing the maternal passion through many of its more subtle windings, as in the poems of the Idiot Boy and the Mad Mother; by accompanying the last struggles of a human being, at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society, as in the Poem of the Forsaken Indian; by shewing, as in the Stanzas entitled We Are Seven the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion; or by displaying the strength of fraternal, or to speak more philosophically, of moral attachment when early associated with the great and beautiful objects of nature, as in The Brothers; or, as in the Incident of Simon Lee, by placing my Reader in the way of receiving from ordinary moral sensations another and more salutary impression than we are accustomed to receive from them. It has also been part of my general purpose to attempt to sketch characters under the influence of less impassioned feelings, as in The Two April Mornings, The Fountain, The Two Thieves, etc. characters of which the elements are simple, belonging rather to nature than to manner, such as exist now, and will probably always exist, and which from their constitution may be distinctly and profitably contemplated" (247-8).

> this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling (248).

Wordsworth, as he explains in the next paragraph, does not mean to say that the situations themselves are not important, but that the situations are subservient to the emotions contained in the poems. In between these two points, Wordsworth directs the reader's attention to two previously unmentioned poems: "My meaning will be rendered perfectly intelligible by referring my Reader to the Poems entitled *Poor Susan* and *The Childless Father*, particular to the last Stanza of the latter Poem" (248).

Since Wordsworth points the Preface reader towards these two poems, they are worth examining. The first of them, "Poor Susan," is set in London and tells the story of a country girl living in the city:

> At the corner of Wood Street, when day-light appears,
> There's a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
> Poor Susan has pass'd by the spot and has heard
> In the silence of morning the song of the bird.
>
> 'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
> A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
> Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
> And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.
>
> Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
> Down which she so often has tripp'd with her pail,

And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,

The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in Heaven, but they fade,

The mist and the river, the hill and the shade;

The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,

And the colours have all pass'd away from her eyes.[41]

This is a spot of time set in a life left undescribed and the melodramatic potential of the story remains latent. Wordsworth does not relate how Susan ended up in the city or how she is employed. Her narrative is submerged under the moment of transcendence, but enough of its traces remain that the reader is aware that Susan *must* have a story, one the poem implies but refuses to relate. Instead, by contrasting Susan's mental landscape to her physical surroundings with her memory of an idyllic country scene, Wordsworth gives the latter a restorative power: for a moment, "her heart is in heaven." This poem serves as a guide to the many other poems with more developed narratives, such as "The Brothers" or "The Female Vagrant": the reader's attention is directed towards the emotion depicted and away from the story itself.

"The Childless Father" reverses the situation of "Poor Susan": Timothy's suffering is mental and emotional, and not a matter of his physical environment:

Up Timothy, up with your Staff and away

Not a soul in the village this mourning will stay;

[41] The poem contains a fifth stanza, omitted in 1802 and thereafter, which reads: "Poor Outcast! Return - to receive thee once more/The house of thy Father will open its door,/And thou once again, in thy plain russet gown,/May'st hear the Thrush sing from a tree of its own." By removing this stanza, with its reference to both Susan's situation—outcast—and the inhabitant of the cottage in the vision, Wordsworth takes out the skeletal elements of narrative and leaves the reader with a scene instead of a story.

The Hare has just started from Hamilton's grounds,

And Skiddaw is glad with the cry of the hounds.

—Of coats and of jackets grey, scarlet, and green,

On the slopes of the pastures all colours were seen,

With their comely blue aprons and caps white as snow,

The girls on the hills made a holiday show.

The bason of box-wood,[42] just six months before,

Had stood on the table at Timothy's door,

A Coffin through Timothy's threshold had pass'd

One Child did it bear and that Child was his last.

Now fast up the dell came the noise and the fray,

The horse and the horn, and the hark! hark away!

Old Timothy took up his Staff, and he shut

With a leisurely motion the door of his hut.

Perhaps to himself at that moment he said,

"The Key I must take, for my Ellen is dead"

But of this in my ears not a word did he speak,

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[42] "In several parts of the North of England, when a funeral takes place, a bason full of Sprigs of Box-wood is paced at the door of the house from which the Coffin is taken up, and each person who attends the funeral ordinarily takes a Sprig of this Box-wood, and throws it into the grave of the deceased." [Wordsworth's note]

And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek.

As in "Poor Susan," the last stanza makes an imaginative leap. In this instance, however, it is not Cheapside and the country or the past and the present, but the distance between two minds. The quote in the last stanza is the narrator imagining Timothy's thoughts. It presents the reader with a moment of empathy on the part of the narrator, of feeling *as* another person, not feeling *for* them. The preface is set up to encourage the reader to identify and feel with the poet, and by extension, with the subjects of the poems. The distance between the poet (and reader) and the subjects of the poems in the Preface makes this bridging of the gap an active, and moral, decision on the part of the poet and reader. "The Childless Father" is not a poem about a lonely man but a poem that depicts and communicates a sense of loss.

Subject matter is important in the Preface, but in a negative sense: gross and violent stimulants, although part of the national scene, dull the reader's senses:

> For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies (249).

Not mentioned, but looming in the background, is the French Revolution. It is even possible to see in this passage a reference to the Enclosure Acts, and the transformation

(by this time a *fait accompli*) of England from an agrarian to an industrial society. Yet these are only allusions. Nowhere in either the body of *Lyrical Ballads* or the Preface does Wordsworth explicitly address national events. To do so could overwhelm the poems and create sympathy instead of empathy.[43] This refusal becomes clearer after Wordsworth attacks the literature of the time as unworthy of the great English patrimony of Milton and Shakespeare:

> When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble effort with which I have endeavored to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible (249-50).

The war described here internalizes external political and military conflicts of the Romantic era: in the Preface, the essential battle is a literary battle, waged between the "outrageous stimulation" of much of contemporary literature and life and the "powerful emotions" generated by great works of literature and the human mind itself. What the later have in their favor according to Wordsworth is a permanence that the former can never possess.

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[43] Wordsworth deals directly with the difference between these two emotions in "Simon Lee", where the narrator realizes that his sympathetic act, cutting down the tree for the old huntsman, reminds Simon of his own impotence in old age. However, the words sympathy and empathy, although apt, are not Wordsworth's, and he does not delineate between the two words. Therefore, it is perhaps more correct to say, as I have earlier, that there is a difference between feeling for and feeling as, between, in the words of the poem "The Old Cumberland Beggar", those who would "deem...this man useless" and those who see in him a reminder "that we have all of us one human heart".

The refusal to address national events is clearest in "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798," a poem that, by virtue both of its placement at the end of the first volume of Lyrical Ballads and its style, occupies the central position in the two volume Lyrical Ballads. First, the subtitle. By now, everyone is aware that even though the poem itself contains not a single mention of the importance of the date, the dating of the poem one day before the anniversary of Bastille Day would not be lost on the original readers of the poem. In the past forty years, two major lines of criticism have evolved. The first line of criticism follows Harold Bloom's reading in *The Visionary Company*, emphasizing the role of nature in the poem as the medium through which the poet connects to humanity:

This mature love for Nature leads to love for other men, to hearing the still, sad music of humanity. The soul of a man's moral being, its inwardness, is Nature once the the earlier relation between man and Nature, where no meditation was necessary between perception of natural beauty and the deep joy of the perceivers response, is in the past. The meditation of the later stage, the time of mature imagination, brings vision and joy together by linking both with the heart's generosity toward our fellow man (137).

The New Historicist readings of the poem have concentrated on the erasure of history that takes place in the poem

> At the poem's end we are left only with the initial scene's simplest natural forms...[ellipsis mine] Everything else has been erased—the abbey, the beggars and displaced vagrants, all that civilized culture creates and destroys, gets and spends....Thus the poem concludes in what appears to be an immense gain, but what is in reality the deepest and most piteous

> loss. Between 1793 and 1798 Wordsworth lost the world merely to gain his own immortal soul (McGann 88).

In support of these two positions, critics have turned to outside sources. Marjorie Levinson, in her attempt to show what Wordsworth left out of his description of the Abbey and its surroundings, cites Gilpin's guide to the district, which Wordsworth was known to have in his possession, as well as other contemporary accounts of the countryside surrounding Tintern Abbey:

> The evidence of all the passages [from Gilpin and other authors] would strongly suggest that Wordsworth and his readers were alike cognizant of the contrast between Abbey and town, inwardness and industry, and all the attendant emotional, historical, economic and intellectual complexities (31-2).

More recently, David Bromwich has suggested that Tintern Abbey represents, at least in part, a reaction to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*:

> The *Reflections*, in its argument against republican innovation, had spoken of monks and monasteries as fit objects of natural piety; and by the end of the decade, the very idea of dedicating a poem to a place like Tintern Abbey would be felt by readers as an homage to what Burke had called (in praise) "our sullen resistance to innovation...the cold sluggishness of our national character" (79).

As with Levinson and previous critics, Bromwich looks outside the text in order to explain the presence of the Abbey in the title. However, one major source has been largely overlooked by modern critics: the Preface. As the Preface makes clear, it is not that these national events are without importance, but that a focus solely on them blunts

one's sensibilities and results in a feeling *for* others and not a feeling *as*. "Tintern Abbey" does not retreat from human affairs: it pares down outside stimuli until only what is primal remains. The poem enacts what the Preface preaches: namely, that emotion associated with a location is what gives a place its importance, not the reverse.

Similarly, the poem's use of 'pleasure' resonates with the Preface. In "Tintern Abbey," the word pleasure takes on special significance. The mature "sober pleasure" of the poet is opposed to the "coarser pleasures" of his boyhood days. The difference between the two forms of pleasure is not mere maturity. The "coarser pleasure" is synonymous with an un-self reflective involvement with nature, while "sober pleasure" treats nature not as an object of worship, but as a conduit for what it means to be truly human—in other words, it is exactly the same as the pleasure that, according to the Preface, poetry produces:

> --feelings too
> Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
> As may have had no trivial influence
> On that best portion of a good man's life;
> His little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love. (31-6)

The syntactical equation of pleasure with "acts of kindness and of love" is emphasized by the repetition of the word "unremembered." The landscape reminds the poet of his connection with humanity: these "acts" are of communion not with nature, but with mankind.

"Tintern Abbey" combines the forms of empathy that Wordsworth directs the reader's attention to in "Poor Susan" and "The Childless Father." Like "Poor Susan," the first part of the poem concentrates on the restorative powers of the mental scene:

> Though absent long,
> These forms of beauty have not been to me,
> As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
> But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
> Of towns and cities, I have owed to them, I
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
> And passing even into my purer mind
> With tranquil restoration: (23-31)

As the Preface states, the details are secondary to the fact that the remembered landscape connects the narrator not only with a past but also with "unremembered pleasure."[44] The reader who has been prepared for this passage by a reading of both the Preface and by the glance forward to "Poor Susan" that the Preface recommends, will recognize in this passage that the poet is "be[ing] affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present" (256).

Like "The Childless Father," the poem ends on a note of empathy with another human being. About two thirds of the way into the poem, the poet addresses a companion:

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[44] The use of the word "unremembered" is connected to the difference that Wordsworth sets out in the Preface between the emotion depicted and the scene. Paradoxically, the word seems to diminish the feeling—how important can an unremembered pleasure be? —while simultaneously drawing attention to its importance apart from the original 'situation' that gave birth to it.

For thou art with me, here, upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister! (116-22)

This poem, as well as others in *Lyrical Ballads*, alludes to domestic relationships, but the 'you' precedes any specific referent for the pronoun. The reader is aware that someone is with Wordsworth before that person is identified as the poet's sister, and her role as sister is subordinated to that of companion in whom Wordsworth reads his own past self. The emotional bond, in short, precedes the filial one. When the second person is identified as the poet's sister, this reader is not suddenly excluded. The three become one: the reader, encountering the poem; the sister, viewing the scene for the first time; and the poet, seeing the scene in his sister's eyes. This act of communion is, for Wordsworth, a way of knowing.

Reading the poems included in *Lyrical Ballads* in relation to the Preface focuses attention on the collection's treatment of empathy individuals. In the poems, empathy can take place between characters (as in the case of the narrator and his sister in "Tintern Abbey") and between the reader and the subject of the poem (as in "The Childless Father"). In both of these cases, the empathetic connection functions as a way of knowing the world, of understanding the connection between individuals and their

physical and temporal surroundings. The Preface celebrates the power of the imagination to make leaps across time and between people, and calls attention to this when it occurs in the poems themselves. Poetry, according to the Preface, is not just a way of ordering words. Neither, however, is it the telling of stories: it is the narration of emotions in order for the individual reader to experience them.

Chapter Three

"The Story of One's Story": Henry James's Preface to *The Ambassadors*

On 30 July 1905, Henry James wrote his American publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons, suggesting that a revised and collected edition of his work might give his output a form as a whole and renew interest in the individual novels and stories. At the end of his letter, he raises the subject of prefaces:

> Lastly, I desire to furnish each book, whether consisting of a single fiction, or of several minor ones, with a freely colloquial and even, perhaps, as I may say, confidential preface or introduction, representing, in a manner, the history of the work or the group, representing, more particularly, perhaps, a frank critical talk about its subject, its origin, its place in the whole artistic chain, and embodying, in short, whatever of interest there maybe to be said about it. I have never committed myself in print in any way, even so much as by three lines to a newspaper, on the subject of anything I have written (Edel 367).

After making his case for the inclusion of prefaces, James blurs the subject and returns to a discussion of the edition as a whole:

> I am moved in the whole matter by something of the conviction that they will gain rather than lose by enjoying for the first time--though a few of the later ones have in some degree already partaken of that advantage—a form and appearance, a dignity and beauty of outward aspect, that may bespeak consideration for them as a matter of course. Their being thus

> presented, in fine, as fair and shapely will contribute, to my mind, to their coming legitimately into a "chance" that has hitherto rather withheld from them, and for which they have long and patiently waited (Edel 367).

Although this passage begins by considering the purpose of the prefaces, by the end James is no longer referring merely to the prefaces, but the New York Edition as a whole--the prefaces, the works, the revisions. The implication is that all of these aspects will contribute towards the texts "coming into a 'chance' hitherto rather withheld from them" —an argument for the stories having their own perfection within themselves—a form of fictional entelechy. From their inception, as part of this plan, the prefaces have a split allegiance: they are both elements of the New York Edition and are directly connected to individual texts, or group of texts.

This split is reflected in their form: the individual prefaces form a series that begins with *Roderick Hudson* and ends with *The Golden Bowl*. As a set of texts, however, they also share distinct features unrelated to their serialism. The majority of the prefaces begin with a description of the idea and location that gave birth to the particular work that they preface:

> "Roderick Hudson" was begun in Florence in the spring of 1874 (3).[45]
>
> "The American," which I had begun in Paris early in the winter of 1875-1876 (20).
>
> "The Portrait of a Lady" was, like "Roderick Hudson," begun in Florence, during three month spent there in the spring of 1879 (40).[46]

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[45] Page numbers are from *The Art of the Novel*, R.P. Blackmur, ed. Even though I feel that each preface should be read alongside the work that it prefaces, I have chosen to use *The Art of the Novel* for page references because it is the standard and accepted collection of James's prefaces.

The formal similarities are not limited to the beginnings; the prefaces mainly tend to follow the same basic plan, starting with the genesis of the work, following it through its development, digressing occasionally on the nature of fiction, and referring to the works of other authors.

From their beginning as elements of the New York Edition, the prefaces were both connected to individual works and part of a series of masterfully casual missives from James to the ideal reader. Unlike the layered prefaces of Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*, where each subsequent preface reveals a different relationship of an author to his audience and a single work, the prefaces to the various volumes of the New York edition were written by James over a relatively small period of time. This serialism results in two important qualities of the preface. First, the prefaces are the product of the late James, the man who had already moved from the 19th century conventions of *Roderick Hudson* and into the rarefied representations of consciousness of *The Ambassadors* and *The Golden Bowl*. Therefore, as Sharon Cameron states, there is often a disjunction between the prefaces and the individual works they preface:

> For how the Prefaces *describe* the novel's consciousness and, more to the point, "where" they locate it differ from how the novels *represents* that same consciousness. ... [T]he Prefaces attempt to revise, in the sense of redetermine, the reader's understanding of the central consciousness in the novel that follows (36).

James manipulates, as Cameron suggests, the delayed nature of his prefaces in order to present his current (1905-7) opinions concerning such issues as consciousness, narration,

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[46] These three examples are from the first three prefaces written for the New York Edition. Considered as a group, the earlier prefaces tend to be slightly more formulaic than the later ones.

and form. Yet this distance between preface writer and novel writer is true of almost all prefaces: they do not necessarily reflect the individual who writes the work but are instead the product of the one who prefaces it.[47] However, as Sharon Cameron observes, the prefaces do not narrate this distinction; they claim to present *the* story of the story, not *a* story of the story. That narration itself serves as a reminder that the prefaces are unsatisfactory explanations of the works to which they are attached, as Julie Rivkin explains in her article "The Logic of Delegation in *The Ambassadors*":

> More strikingly, the preface does not simply rewrite but reenacts the logic it describes, serving as ambassador for the authority of the text it introduces. Like all Jamesian prefaces, then, this one occupies the classic position of a supplement—purely additional and yet forever reminding us, in James's words, "that one's bag of adventures, conceived or conceivable, has been only half-emptied by the mere telling of one's story." (Art 313). The preface ostensibly completes the project, telling the story that has not been told. But its effect is clearly the opposite: in telling us more, it reminds us of that which is absent; the preface reminds us of an incompleteness that the novel half disguises (820).

Rivkin's formal argument complements Cameron's interpretive reading of James's prefaces: in both cases, the claim is that the prefaces do not quite explain or clarify the texts to which they are attached.

The inexact fit between preface and novels has influenced how James's novels are both read and taught. In his article "Reading James's Prefaces," Paul Armstrong writes:

> Whenever I teach a work from the New York Edition, I tell students not to read James's Preface until after they've finished the novel. That is unsurprising advice to anyone familiar with the prefaces, but it indicates how peculiar they are as texts (124).

Paul Armstrong's students—his "naïve readers"(124) of Henry James—find the prefaces to be unsatisfactory, even frustrating, introductions to the texts, and Armstrong finally comes to the conclusion that the prefaces are important, but that they speak to the general terms of James's practice and that as introduction to individual texts they are less than completely useful:

> The final paradox of the prefaces is that they provide the most useful preparation for reading James to the extent that they are independent of the texts they introduce. This paradox is once again evidence of the contradictory educational project the prefaces undertake, disciplining the reader's attention (as rigorous theoretical conceptualization can) while encouraging its free, unpredictable exercise (by leaving open the application of the theory and the explorations of its precise, concrete implications) (136-7).

Armstrong's argument is in essence that the prefaces teach the readers how to read, but only in the most general sense: the preface to *The Ambassadors*, for example, may educate the reader as to the nuances of the Jamesian reading, but it is not a reliable guide to a reading of *The Ambassadors*. For Armstrong, as for Rivkin and Cameron (among others), Henry James's prefaces are insufficient introductions to the novels that they

preface. By concentrating on the inadequacies of Henry James's prefaces as introductions, these readings do not focus on Henry James's prefaces as prefaces.

Any consideration of the prefaces has to begin with the actual circumstances of their publication. The New York Edition was sold by subscription from 1907 through 1909. It consisted of twenty-four volumes, of which two were published at a time. Of these twenty-four volumes, eighteen had prefaces. The remaining volumes were the second volumes of six longer novels—*The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Tragic Muse*, *The Princess Cassamassina*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Golden Bowl*. Of the remaining eighteen volumes, nine contain more than one work. The prefaces to individual novels deal exclusively with the works that they preface; those to collections of stories concentrate on each work in the order that it is presented, considering the collection as a whole only in passing. The preface to volume VII of the New York Edition, for example, starts off with a detailed description of the "germ" of *The Spoils of Poynton*, and then moves on to deal with the other works in the volume, *A London Life* and *The Chaperon*, separately. There is very little overlap between these sections of the preface, except for one paragraph in the first part of the preface, which also contains one of James's occasional references to the New York Edition as a whole:

> I may perhaps speak of it as noteworthy that this very volume happens to exhibit in two other cases my disposition to let the interest stand or fall by the tried spontaneity and vivacity of the freedom. It is in fact for that respectable reason that I enclose "A London Life" and "The Chaperon" between these covers; my purpose having been here to class my reprintable productions as far as possible according to their kinds. The

> two tales I have just named are of the same "kind" as "The Spoils," to the extent of their each dealing with a human predicament in the light, for the charm of the thing, of the amount of "appreciation" to be plausibly imputed to the subject of it (130).

In this passage, James makes both a local observation on the contents of volume VII and an allusion to his principles of organization throughout the New York Edition.[48] This split extends to the idealized audience addressed by the prefaces: as subscribers to the New York Edition, they would have been, James believed, interested in James as an author, but as readers of individual volumes, they are reading specific prefaces in relation to specific texts.

The financial failure of the New York Edition came as a shock to James and very few others. The cost was prohibitive for all but the most dedicated reader. The price for a single volume was two dollars, expensive enough, but one had to subscribe to the whole edition; it could not be bought piecemeal. This immediately shut out the curious reader, who, having read one or two of Henry James's novels, or perhaps having merely heard of him, wanted to read just one of his works. Even if the New York Edition had succeeded on James's terms, its readership would have been small, self-selecting, and familiar with James's work. In the prefaces, James appeals to re-readers, positioned, as he himself was, in front of a series of already familiar texts. Unlike Wordsworth's preface to Lyrical

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[48] The organizational principles of the New York Edition as a whole, and especially the decisions made in placing the shorter fictions together, are dealt with in Stuart Culver's essay, "Ozymandias and the Mastery of Ruins: The Design of the New York Edition," pp. 39-57 *in Henry James's New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, David McWhirter, ed. In this essay, Culver examines both James's rationale for bulking fictions together, as presented in the New York Edition, and the critical work concerning these decisions. Ultimately, he finds James's explanation to be unsatisfactory, but still he claims that James did have a design behind the New York Edition, and that the edition is "yet another performance of the artist in his later manner, one that exploits the limits of the ready-made format of the deluxe edition in its effort to make the sea of Jamesian fiction itself emerge, and to redefine its author as a presence that always exceeds efforts to enclose or commemorate its achievements."

Ballads, the prefaces also assume that the reader does not have to be convinced of the merits of the texts to which they are attached.

The secondary audience of the New York Edition was posterity. As a whole, the edition does, as James desired, give his work a "dignity and beauty of outward aspect," and the existence of the edition places James in the dual role of writer and editor. All of the work included in the New York Edition underwent revision, but the amount of revision varied from text to text. The earlier works such as *Roderick Hudson* and *The American* were changed substantially, while the alterations made to the later novels, such as *The Ambassadors*, were minimal, often merely addressing the mistakes of previous editions. The revision that went into the New York Edition was intended to fix the meanings and potential readings of his novels:

> To expose the case frankly to a test—in other words to begin to re-read—was at once to get nearer all its elements and so, as by the next felicity, feel it purged of every doubt....To revise is to see, or to look over, again—which means in the case of a written thing neither more nor less than to re-read it....I had attached to it, in a brooding spirit, the idea of re-writing, with which it was to have in the event, for my *conscious* play of mind, almost nothing in common. [...] On the other hand the act of revision, the act of seeing it again, caused whatever I looked at on any page to flower before me as into the only terms that honourably expressed it; and the "revised" element in the present Edition is accordingly these terms, these rigid conditions of re-perusal, registered; so many close notes, as

> who should say, on the particular vision of the matter itself that the experience had at last made the only possible one (338-9).

In this passage from the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, James seems to align himself with the reader, or rather, the re-reader, of the novel, and his tone parallels that of his letter to Scribner's—re-reading and re-writing give a work a "chance that has hitherto rather withheld from them". The alignment of reader and writer, however, is only partial. Part of the re-reading process, according to James, is the narrowing down of the potential visions of "the matter itself" into the "only possible one." The prefaces, as records of James's re-visions, pre-empt any attempt by the reader to narrow down the meaning on his or her own. James's position as ideal reader prohibits the reader from claiming that position for him or herself.

The experience of reading the prefaces in their proper form is no longer a possibility for the common reader—outside of the few subscribers at the beginning of the century to the New York Edition, the experience never truly existed anyway. Many of the qualities inherent in the serial nature of these documents—the way the preface to *Roderick Hudson* reads like a beginning and that to *The Golden Bowl* reads like a farewell, as well as the way James groups individual works—are only accessible second hand, by actively attempting to reconstruct a lost monument. James himself suggests that the prefaces were meant as much to adhere to the individual works as they were to the edition as a whole in a letter of 1913, written to a friend who wished for a list of his works to recommend to a mutual acquaintance:

> [T]he following indications as to five of my productions (splendid number—I glory in the tribute of his appetite!) are all on the basis of the

> Scribner's (or Macmillan's) collective and revised and prefaced edition of my things and that if he is not minded somehow to obtain access to *that* form of them, ignoring any others, he forfeits half, or much more than half, my confidence. So I thus amicably beseech him—! I suggest to give him as alternatives these two slightly different lists:
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> 1. Roderick Hudson.
> 2. The Portrait of a Lady.
> 3. The Princess Casamassima.
> 4. The Wings of the Dove
> 5. The Golden Bowl.
>
> 1. The American.
> 2. The Tragic Muse.
> 3. The Wings of the Dove.
> 4. The Ambassadors.
> 5. The Golden Bowl (683).

Both lists contain works early and late, that is, both works that were minimally and those that were substantially revised. James's implication in this letter is that it is the prefaces can and should be important to readings of individual novels.. We may miss the grandeur, the sustained immersion over a period of a few years in James's life work, but if we do not want to lose, in James's words, "more than half [his] confidence," the prefaces should be read in relation to the individual works. In his 1993 essay,

"Deconstructing *The Art of The Novel*," Hershel Parker calls for critics to return the prefaces to the New York Edition:

> What strikes me as most to be desired right now is almost too obvious to mention—a reading of the prefaces the way the purchasers of the New York Edition were privileged to read them—one at a time, prefaced to individual novels and to groups of shorter fictions. The simple idea of reading all the prefaces as prefatory has not figured much in James criticism (303).

John Pearson implicitly takes up Parker's request for a new look at the prefaces of Henry James in his 1997 *The Prefaces of Henry James*. He reads the prefaces as prefaces, as James's "attempt to create the modern reader" (13). For Pearson, the

> prefaces attempt to accomplish this diminution of distance by taking the work as the object of an idealized and authorized reading which they present; the reader is encouraged, sometimes manipulated, to adopt wholly the terms of James's writerly reading and transform the work into text by making it a methodological field. The prefaces describe James's method, in other words, and the prefaced narratives illustrate this method. In this way reading becomes at least in part a didactic experience—indoctrination. (14)

James's prefaces, for Pearson, 'indoctrinate' the reader, a quality that Pearson connects with the "totalitarian" aesthetic vision of the prefaces, one that "cannot tolerate competing versions of the truth" (38). This position is implicit in James's own claims of fictional entelechy, of his stories finding their true form in the new edition.

Pearson turns to painting for a metaphorical account of how one should read James's prefaces. In Pearson's structuralist account of the New York Edition, the prefaces function as the literary equivalent of frames in painting for the individual volumes, and function in a fashion similar to the frame of triptych for the edition of a whole:

> Each panel [of a triptych] could be understood individually, with no broader semiotic field determining meaning, just as any one of James's novels might be read independently of the other works, but the physical bond achieved by the frame prevents such an isolating gesture and encourages an intertextual reading that depends upon a conceptual frame of reference that does not exist in any one panel in the frame itself, but as a consequence of the entire semiotic structure (22).

The comparison to religious triptychs ignores another, more relevant context for reading James's prefaces: the prefaces to standard editions.[49] Prefaces are not frame narratives; they do not surround a text, but instead introduce that text to an audience.

The confusion surrounding how James's prefaces should be read is at least in part the fault of Henry James. Outside of the letter of 1913 quoted above and the prefaces themselves, James's writings provide very few hints as to how he intended the prefaces to be read. One of these few suggestions, a letter to William Dean Howells, resonated with Blackmur when he came to construct his collection of James's prefaces, *The Art of The Novel*. Blackmur envisioned the prefaces as a "sustained piece of literary criticism", and

[49] One author who does compare James's prefaces to those of a contemporary is Vivienne Rundle, whose 1995 essay, "Defining Frames: The Prefaces of Henry James and Joseph Conrad," examines how these near-contemporaries addressed and constructed their audiences differently.

his collection of them has remained the accepted edition of them since then. In *his* preface, as justification for his collection, he quotes James's letter of 1908:

> They are, in general, a sort of plea for Criticism, for Discrimination, for Appreciation...They ought, collected together, none the less, to form a sort of comprehensive manual or vademecum for aspirants in our arduous profession. Still, it will be long before I shall want to collect them together for that purpose and furnish them with a final Preface. (qtd in *Art* viii)

This projected volume of prefaces, with a final preface, was never written. Instead the prefaces were first collected by R.P Blackmur in 1934. His preface, or rather foreword, quotes this letter as a rationale for his volume of the prefaces, *The Art of the Novel.* Blackmur's foreword essentially tries to appropriate the place that James's preface would have occupied.

Blackmur reads the prefaces as records of the obstacles overcome by James in the writing of his novels. To him, the prefaces narrate the author's struggle to create a work out of an autobiographical moment:

> There is the feature of autobiography, as a rule held to a minimum: an account of the Paris hotel, the Venetian Palace, the English cottage, in which the tale in question was written. Aside from that, there is often a statement of the anecdote and the circumstances in which it was told, from which James drew the germ of his story. There is the feature of the germ in incubation, and the story of how it took root and grew, invariably developing into something quite different from its immediate promise.

> Then there is an account—frequently the most interesting feature—of how the author built up his theme as a consistent piece of dramatization (x).

Blackmur reads James's prefaces with full faith that James is telling the story in the only way that it can be told. But his description raises more questions than it answers, as when he states that autobiography is kept to a minimum. This implies that there is a certain amount of autobiography needed in a preface, and James gives only this much and no more. A cursory glance at a few prefaces by different authors reveals that autobiographical content varies from preface to preface. Mary Shelley's preface to *Frankenstein*, for example, is almost all autobiography, while Oscar Wilde's preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* contains absolutely none. In both cases, the amount of autobiography included is a function of the kind of authority the writer creates in the preface.

When Blackmur addresses the technical contents of the prefaces as a group, it is similarly in service of the larger picture of James the master:

> Again and again James emphasizes the necessity of being amusing, dramatic, interesting. And besides these, almost any notation, technical, thematic, or moral, brings James eloquently back to the expressive relation between art and life, raises him to an intense personal plea for the difficulty and delight of maintaining that relation, or wrings from him a declaration of the supreme labour of intelligence that art lays upon the artist. For James it is the pride of achievement, for the reader who absorbs that pride it is the enthusiasm of understanding and the proud possibility of emulation (xi).

Blackmur presents the prefaces as containing the basic tenets of James's theory of fiction. This presentation removes the individual prefaces from their specific contexts: it illuminates the art of the Jamesian preface at the expense of revealing how James's individual prefaces interact with the specific texts to which they are attached.

Blackmur's separation of a preface from the text that it prefaces can best be seen in the one preface he treats in depth: the preface to *The Ambassadors*. Blackmur devotes an entire section of his foreword to a synopsis of this preface:

> James describes how he accounted for Strether, how he found what led up to his outburst in the garden. Where has he come from and why? What is he doing in Paris? To answer these questions was to possess Strether. But the answers must follow the principle of probability. Obviously, by his outburst, he was a man in a false position. What false position? The most probable would be the right one. Granting that he was American, he would probably come from New England. If that were the case, James immediately knew a great deal about him, and had to sift and sort. He would, presumably, have come to Paris with a definite view of life which Paris at once assaulted; and situation would arise in the interplay or conflict resulting (xxxiv).

Just as a synopsis of a novel cannot capture the nuances of meaning in the text, Blackmur's reading of this preface glides over many potentially contentious points. The entire novel, in this reading, is reduced to a logarithm. Once the initial variables were set for James, Blackmur shows how, for James, the details fell into place:

> These steps taken in finding his story gave it a functional assurance. "The false position, for our belated man of the world—belated because he had endeavoured so long to escape being one, and now at last had really to face his doom—the false position for him, I say, was obviously to have presented himself at the gate of that boundless menagerie primed with a moral scheme which was framed to break down on any approach to vivid facts; that is to any at all liberal appreciation of them (xxxiv-v).

Blackmur, following James, describes the narrative decisions, such as setting it in Paris, in terms of their functionality:

> There follows the question, apparently the only one that troubled James in the whole composition of the book, of whether he should have used Paris as the scene of Strether's outburst and subsequent conversion. Paris had a trivial and vulgar association as the obvious place to be tempted in. The revolution performed by Strether was to have nothing to do with that betise. He was to be thrown forward rather "upon his lifelong trick of intense reflexion," with Paris a minor matter symbolising the world other than the town of Woollett, Mass., from which he came. Paris was merely the likely place for such a drama, and thus saved James much labour of preparation (xxxv).

James's denial of the importance of setting is accepted unquestioningly. Blackmur's reading of the prefaces, in short, lacks resistance to their arguments. To read James's prefaces demands that one takes them as seriously as the texts they preface. One should

listen to what James says in the prefaces, but not passively; the prefaces are meant to persuade, and for that, they need a reader attuned to argument.

In the case of *The Ambassadors*, this means someone aware of the plot of the work as a whole. The opening of the Preface addresses a readership already familiar with *The Ambassadors*: "[t]he whole case, in fine, is in Lambert Strether's irrepressible outbreak to little Bilham on the Sunday afternoon in Gloriani's garden, the candour with which he yields, for his young friend's enlightenment, to the charming admonition of that crisis" (307). A reader coming across this sentence without having read *The Ambassadors* would be lost. James's ideal reader for this preface, as a reader of the New York Edition, is a re-reader, a reader who comes to the text with certain preconceived notions concerning the nature of the narrative. The position of the implied reader as re-reader allows James, in the preface, to argue against certain misreadings of the novel. The preface, or as Henry James calls it, "The story of one's story" (313), is as much an argument against other readings as it is a reading in itself.

The plot that James expected the reader to be familiar with is not, in its roughest outline, particularly complex: *The Ambassadors*, first published in 1903, tells the story of Lambert Strether, an older gentleman from New England. He is dispatched by a rich New England matriarch, Mrs. Newsome, to "save" her son, Chad, from dissolution in Paris. Upon his arrival in England, Lambert Strether meets Maria Gostrey, his on and off companion for the rest of the novel. After making the trip across the Channel, Strether finds Chad and integrates himself into his social circle. As time goes by, Strether finds himself more and more drawn out—seduced by both Paris and the people surrounding him. Meanwhile, back in Woollett, Massachusetts, Mrs. Newsome has grown doubtful

about Strether's ability and willingness to complete his mission, and sends her daughter and her husband to check up on both Strether and Chad. One day, Strether stumbles upon Chad meeting illicitly with a mutual acquaintance, Madame de Vionnet. Soon after, Strether challenges Chad to behave responsibly toward Madame de Vionnet. Chad doesn't and succumbs to the pull of Woollett, his mother, and her money. The novel ends with Strether about to return to America, no longer as Mrs. Newsome's agent or potential husband, but as his own man.

The preface to *The Ambassadors* (hereafter the Preface) has an anomalous beginning. Unlike the bulk of James's prefaces, it opens with the subject instead of the origin of the novel:

> Nothing is more easy than to state the subject of "The Ambassadors," which first appeared in twelve numbers of The North American Review (1903) and was published as a whole the same year. The situation involved is gathered up betimes, that is in the second chapter of Book Fifth, for the reader's benefit into as few words as possible—planted or "sunk," stiffly and saliently, in the centre of the current, almost perhaps to the obstruction of traffic. Never can a composition of this sort have sprung straighter from a dropped grain of suggestion, and never can that grain, developed, overgrown and smothered, have yet lurked more in the mass as an independent particle (307).[50]

[50] Page numbers for the Preface to *The Ambassadors* are keyed to the *Art of The Novel.*

Starting with the opening word, James insists on his command over his subject matter: "nothing is more easy,"[51] "Never can a composition of this sort," and a little later in the preface, "[n]othing can exceed the closeness with which the whole fits again into its germ." The tone is that of the Master, assuredly going over familiar material. Yet, the use of the negative suggests something darker: an attempt not to state the meaning but to control it, to shut out other potential interpretations.

The Preface to *The Ambassadors* allows James to assert his authority over both the reader and the novel. While James assumes the role of dramatist, or creator, throughout the Preface, he also positions both Lambert Strether and the reader in the role of observers. The author, in this formulation, is different in type as well as degree from the reader. Thus, although art has its roots in what is perceived by the artist, it is the subsequent process that transforms the perception into a work of art:

> Art deals with what we see, it must first contribute full-handed that ingredient; it plucks its material in the garden of life—which material elsewhere grown is stale and uneatable. But it has no sooner done this than it has to take account of a *process*—from which only when it's the basest of the servants of man, incurring ignominious dismissal with no "character," does it, and whether under some muddled pretext of morality or on any other, pusillanimously edge away. The process, that of the expression, the literal squeezing-out, of value is another affair—with which the happy luck of mere finding has little to do....[ellipses mine] It's

[51] This phrase strikes me as particularly perverse on James's part: to state that nothing is more easy than to declare anything about any of his novels requires James to be willfully blind to the difficulties of reading his work. In any case, this opening does serve to differentiate the reader's perspective from that of Henry James: the subject of *The Ambassadors* is easy for Henry James to state because and only because he has the authority of the author over the text itself.

> all a sedentary part—involves as much ciphering, of sorts, as would merit the highest salary paid to a chief accountant (312).

The artist is not simply one who perceives; he is, above all, a company man, engaged at a high salary to perform a set of complex but mundane calculations. The image of the artist as accountant (among the least Romantic of metaphors) implies expertise and mastery over one's material. The accountant is dispassionate: he is a man not concerned with sentiment, but with numbers. The creator of the work of art is in the Preface a professional, whether the actual image used is that of the accountant, the dramatist or the scientist, at the service of his subject:

> All of which, again, is but to say that the steps, for my fable, placed themselves with a prompt and, as it were, functional assurance—an air quite as of readiness to have dispensed with logic had I been in fact too stupid for my clue. Never, positively, none the less, as the links multiplied, had I felt less stupid than for the determination of poor Strether's errand and for the apprehension of his issue (315).

This is not a description of an artist receiving divine inspiration, but of one making calculations. When James comes to describe how Paris acted upon the character of Strether, he uses the language of the chemist:[52]

> He had come with a view that might have been figured by a clear green liquid, say, in a neat glass phial; and the liquid, once poured into the open cup of application, once exposed to the action of another air, had begun to

[52] Interestingly, both James and Wordsworth resort to scientific languages in their prefaces, but for divergent reasons. For Wordsworth, the use of language usually associated with natural philosophers allows him to reveal the knowledge of the poet as superior to that of the scientist, whereas James appropriates the language of the scientist for the air of dispassionate observation that hangs about it.

> turn from green to red, or whatever, and might, for all he knew, be on its way to purple, to black, to yellow (314).

The decisions involved in constructing the narrative are, in the Preface, functional decisions. Similarly, the characters are required by the demands of the novel. In other words, the characters lack potentiality, as they cannot act other than they do, and the reader is here warned that these characters will behave, like known reagents, in a predictable fashion. The Preface essentially depopulates the novel, destroying not only its characters, but also any importance that could be attached to their interactions, focusing the reader's attention on the one character who is not like the others—Lambert Strether.

Much of the rhetorical power in the Preface is created by James's insistence that many of the most vivid elements of the novel are not integral to the story, but convenient solutions to problems that arose in the process of writing. The Preface subordinates the Paris of the novel to the development of Strether's character, claiming that it is where Strether is:

> ...thrown quite with violence upon his lifelong trick of intense reflexion: which friendly test indeed was to bring him out, through winding passages, through alternations of darkness and light, very much *in* Paris, but with the surrounding scene itself a minor matter, a mere symbol for more things than had been dreamt of in the philosophy of Woollett. Another surrounding scene would have done as well for our show could it have represented a place in which Strether's errand was likely to lie and

> his crisis to await him. The *likely* place had the great merit of sparing me preparations (316),

Paris serves as the backdrop for Strether's moral crisis, a "mere symbol for more things than had been dreamt of in the philosophy of Woollett." This relegation of Paris to scenery jars any reader familiar with the novel. James is saying that Paris, in essence, exists to call Woollett, Massachusetts into question. Yet, a bit earlier in the Preface, James declares that Woollett itself was merely a convenient solution:

> Possessed of our friend's nationality, to start with, there was a general probability in his narrower localism; which, for that matter, one had really but to keep under the lens for an hour to see it give up its secrets. He would have issued, our rueful worthy, from the very heart of New England—at the heels of which matter of course a perfect train of secrets tumbled for me into the light (314).

Lambert Strether's New England origins are merely an easy way for James to provide Strether with a prefabricated moral code, one already familiar to both James and his readership. The implication here is that neither Paris nor Woollett are integral to the novel, and are not part of the story. This claim directly contradicts the experience of reading the novel: *The Ambassadors* is unimaginable without either Paris or Woollett. However, the Preface states that Paris and Woollett are only important to the plot of the novel as exterior representations of Strether's interior mental and moral states.

Even though he, too, is shown in the Preface to be at the mercy of his creator, Strether is made of different material than the rest of the characters. The other characters that are mentioned more than in passing in the Preface are all dismissed as constructions,

subservient to narrative demands. They are relegated to the roles of *ficelles*, characters who are not so much actors as they are reflectors of the main character. To call a character a *ficelle* is to inform the reader that this character has no import as a *character* in the narrative, but rather as a *construct* that moves the narrative forward:

> It may definitely be said, I think, that everything in it that is not scene (not, I of course mean, complete and functional scene, treating *all* the submitted matter, as by logical start, logical turn, and logical finish) is discriminated preparation, is the fusion and synthesis of picture. These alternations propose themselves all recogniseably, I think, from an early stage, as the very form and figure of "*The Ambassadors*"; so that, to repeat, Miss Gostrey, pre-engaged at a high salary, but waits in the draughty wing with her shawl and smelling-salts (323) .

James distinguishes between those elements of the narrative that are part of the scene and those that help the reader prepare for the scene. Here, James dismisses what seems like the second most important character and potential 'partner' for Strether as a mere hired hand. The other main *ficelle*, Waymarsh, is dismissed even more quickly:

> Waymarsh only to a slighter degree belongs, in the whole business, less to my subject than to my treatment of it; the interesting proof, in these connexions, being that one has but to take one's subject for the stuff of drama to interweave with an enthusiasm as many Gostreys as need be (322).

The entire Newsome clan, from Chad to Mrs. Newsome to Mamie Pocock, is treated only in passing by James. When they are mentioned, it is to reveal James's satisfaction in his ability to compose a scene:

> the pages in which Mamie Pocock gives her appointed and, I can't but think, duly felt lift to the whole action by the so inscrutably-applied side-stroke or short-cut of our just watching,...[ellipses mine]—these are as marked an example of the representational virtues that insists here and there on being, for the charm of opposition and renewal, other than scenic (326).

Often, as above, James addresses the reader from the double position of both reader and writer, of one both appreciating and taking pride in his compositional powers. What this passage does, however, is assert that the (non-scenic) scene has nothing to do with the character of Mamie Pocock, but instead an opportunity for the to appreciate how well James has constructed her character.

By relegating all of the minor characters and the setting of the novel to the status of backdrop, the Preface downplays the traditional moral element of the drama. For a reader familiar with *The Ambassadors*, with its contrast between the new and old worlds, and their divergent senses of propriety, the decisions and actions of Strether are signs of a man questioning his own sense of morality. The Preface acknowledges this, but goes on to present this moral conflict as entirely internal to Strether. The Preface diminishes the world of the novel.

This interiorization of the plot directs James's, and by implication the reader's, interest in the narrative by pointing it away from the interpersonal conflicts in the novel.

Thus, even though the novel ends with Lambert and Gostrey, we are given to understand that although this is the dramatic conclusion of the story, it is not the heart of it. Since the reader is told in the Preface that the cast of characters surrounding Strether is there to assist in the telling of his story, the reader is turned away from readings of the novel that are centered on the relationship between characters. Maria Gostrey, for example, is explicitly a *ficelle*, 'employed' to assist in the telling of Strether's story, and not his potential partner. Gostrey's responses are important solely because of what they reveal of Strether's character, as opposed to what they say about any relationship between them. The difference between interpretations that concentrate on the inner workings of Strether versus the relationship between him and Gostrey is perhaps most marked at the end of the novel, when Strether takes his leave of Gostrey:

> She thought. "But with your wonderful impressions you'll have got a great deal."
>
> "A great deal"—he agreed. "But nothing like you. It's you who would make me wrong."
>
> Honest and fine, she couldn't greatly pretend she didn't see it. Still she could pretend just a little. "But why should you be so dreadfully right?"
>
> "That's the way that—if I must go—you yourself would be the first to want me. And I can't do anything else."
>
> So then she had to take it, though still with her defeated protest. "It isn't so much your being 'right'—it's your horrible sharp eye for what makes you so."

"Oh but you're just as bad yourself. You can't resist me when I point that out."

She sighed it at last all comically, all tragically, away. "I can't indeed resist you."

"Then there we are!" said Strether (345).

The Preface suggests that this scene is centered not on the interplay between two characters, and the implications this has for their relationship, but on Strether, and on Gostrey's validation of his character. In essence, this scene is a monologue with commentary and not the dialogue it appears to be.

The mingling of the scenic and moral elements of the drama is at the center of Strether's conflict and *The Ambassadors* as a whole:

> The remarks to which he thus gives utterance contain the essence of "*The Ambassadors*," his fingers close, before he has done, round the stem of the full blown flower; which, after that fashion, he continues officiously to present to us. "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what *have* you had? I'm too old—too old at any rate for what I see. What one loses one loses; make no mistake about that. Still, we have the illusion of freedom; therefore don't, like me to-day, be without the memory of that illusion. I was either, at the right time, too stupid or too intelligent to have it, and now I'm a case of reaction against

> the mistake. Do what you like so long as you don't make it. For it *was* a mistake. Live, Live!"[53] (307-8).

Strether's "remarks" are essentially the Jamesian equivalent of a soliloquy. For Strether, the idea of living life means asserting one's self. Strether's mistake is that he has been, for too much of his life, the ambassador, or agent of others (and James reminds the reader in the Preface that the presence and influence of Mrs. Newsome are felt throughout the novel), and the novel, *The Ambassadors* charts his gradual movement toward agency. The last scene of the novel dramatizes this decision to accept and insist on his own individuality:

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[53] Even though James treats this as an exact quotation from *The Ambassadors*, it is not. Instead, it is an abridged version of Strether's actual comments. It contains the essence of what Strether says, but I think it is important to print the entire section of Strether's speech, if for no other reason to show that James is not the transparent recorder of the process of writing that Blackmur claims.
"It's not too late for *you*, on any side, and you don't strike me as in danger of missing the train; besides which people can be in general pretty well trusted, of course—with the clock of freedom ticking as loud as it seems to do here—to keep an eye on the fleeting hour. All the same don't forget that you're young—blessedly young; be glad of it on the contrary and live up to it. Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what *have* you had? This place and these impressions—mild as you may find them to wind a man up so; all my impressions of Chad and of people I've seen at *his* place—well, have had their abundant message for me, have just dropped *that* in my mind. I see it now. I haven't done so enough before—and now I'm old; too old at any rate for what I see. Oh I *do* see, at least; and more than you'd believe or I can express. It's too late. And it's as if the train had fairly waited at the station for me without my having had the gumption to know it was there. Now I hear its faint receding whistle miles and miles down the line. What one loses one loses; make no mistake about that. The affair—I mean the affair of life—couldn't, no doubt, have been different for me; for it's at the best a tin mold, either fluted and embossed, with ornamental excrescences, or else smooth and frightfully plain, into which, a helpless jelly, one's consciousness is poured—so that one 'takes' the form, as the great cook says, and is more or less compactly held by it: one lives in fine as one can. Still, one has the illusion of freedom; therefore don't be, like me, without the memory of that illusion. I was either, at the right time, too stupid or too intelligent to have it; I don't know quite which. OF course at present I'm a case of reaction against the mistake; and the voice of reaction should, no doubt, always be taken with an allowance. But that doesn't affect the point that the right time is now yours. The right time is *any* time that one is still so lucky as to have. You've plenty; that's the great thing; you're as I say, damn you, so happily and hatefully young. Don't at any rate miss things out of stupidity. Of course I don't take you for a fool, or I shouldn't be addressing you thus awfully. Do what you like so long as you don't make my mistake. For it was a mistake. Live!..."
The omissions from this passage when reprinted in the Preface serve to make it a more general and less specific statement. The longer passage is explicitly addressed to Little Bilham, a young artist, in a garden in Paris, but the revised speech eliminates all reference to him and also removes all of the metaphorical images from the passage. James, in effect, gives the reader of the preface the generalized moral statement and not an accurate quote.

> "There's nothing, you know, I wouldn't do for you."
>
> "Oh yes—I know."
>
> "There's nothing," she repeated, "in all the world."
>
> "I know. I know. But all the same I must go." He had got it out at last. "To be right."
>
> "To be right?"
>
> She had echoed it in vague deprecation, but felt it already clear for her. "That, you see, is my only logic. Not, out of the whole affair, to have got anything for myself" (344).

To have "got anything for myself" would imply that he was connected to and in the debt of another character and would compromise his agency. The conflict remains *within* Strether.

This conflict is restated, or rephrased, at the end of the Preface's first paragraph:

> *Would* there yet be time for reparation?—reparation, that is for the injury done his character; for the affront, he is quite ready to say, so stupidly put upon it and in which he has even himself had so clumsy a hand? The answer to which is that he now at all events sees; so that the business of my tale and the march of my action, not to say the precious moral of everything, is just my demonstration of this process of vision (308).

About halfway through the Preface, James returns to the same point, to state it even more succinctly, in describing the character of Strether: "The actual man's note, from the first of our seeing it struck, is the note of discrimination, just as his drama is to become, under stress, the drama of discrimination" (316). Discrimination is an important word for *The*

Ambassadors, as it connects the visual with the aesthetic. To be able to discriminate means to be able to distinguish, and to be a man of discrimination is to be able to make the proper judgments based on one's observations. For James, the drama of Strether is not that of external events, but of the process of discrimination that begins with seeing and ends with thought, one that he calls the "process of vision." This can be seen in James's treatment of Strether's accidental discovery of the exact relationship between Chad and Madame de Vionnet. Here, the tension, as usual, is entirely inside the mind of Strether:

> Chad and Madame de Vionnet were then like himself taking a day in the country—though it was as queer as fiction, as farce, that their country could happen to be exactly his; and she had been the first at recognition, the first to feel—for it appeared to come to that—of their wonderful accident. Strether became aware, with this, of what was taking place—that her recognition had been even stranger for the pair in the boat, that her immediate impulse had been to control it, and that she was quickly and intensely debating with Chad the risk of betrayal. He saw they would show nothing if they could feel sure he hadn't made them out; so that he had before him for a few seconds his own hesitation. It was a sharp fantastic crisis that had popped up as if in a dream, and it had had only to last the few seconds to make him feel it as quite horrible (308).

This passage narrates the process of discrimination, of Strether becoming aware of what he is seeing, but also the implications of what he sees. But this is only the half of the scene; the rest of the scene reveals reaction, both internal and external:

> He hereupon gave large play to these things, agitating his hat and his stick and loudly calling out—a demonstration that brought him relief as soon as he had seen it answered. The boat, in mid-stream, still went a little wild—which seemed natural, however, while Chad turned round, half springing up; and his good friend, after blankness and wonder began gaily to wave her parasol. Chad dropped afresh to his paddles and the boat headed round, amazement and pleasantry filling the air meanwhile, and relief, as Strether continued to fancy, superseding mere violence. Our friend went down to the water under this odd impression as of violence averted—the violence of their having "cut" him, out there in the eye of nature, on the assumption that he wouldn't know it (308-9).

In Strether's reactions, the physical process of making out the figures flows into the realm of the aesthetic act of discrimination. His action upon seeing them is based on how he can best make it through the scene that confronts him, while avoiding any awkwardness for anyone involved. Strether's major fear is not that they would see him or jump to the wrong conclusion, but that he would place them in the position of acting rudely towards him.

> After the initial sighting, the interest in this scene is located entirely within Strether's mind, or rather the insight into his mind provided by the novel, as James is careful to remind the reader that there is a distance between the story of the novel and Strether's story. One of the main problems James found in first person narratives is the lack of distance between the story and the main character:

> It may be asked why, if one so keeps to one's hero, one shouldn't make a single mouthful of "method," shouldn't throw the reins on his neck and, letting them flap there as in "Gil Blas" or in "David Copperfield," equip him with the double privilege of subject and object—a course that has at least the merit of brushing away questions at a sweep. The answer to which is, I think, that one makes that surrender only if one is prepared *not* to make certain precious distinctions (321).

The main of these distinctions is between the novel as a whole and Strether as a character.

Although *The Ambassadors* is essentially the story of Strether's emerging abilities of discernment, the Preface differentiates between Strether's story and the story of the novel:

> There is the story of one's hero, and then, thanks to the intimate connexion of things, the story of one's story itself. I blush to confess it, but if one's a dramatist, one's a dramatist, and the latter imbroglio is liable on occasion to strike me as really the more objective of the two (313).

Strether's story and the story itself are, in short, related, but distinct: the latter contains the former, but the two are not the same. Strether himself is "encaged" by the narrative—he is the object of it, but also subordinate to it. Strether's story is subsumed, in the Preface, by the story of James the dramatist.

To be a dramatist, as it is worked out in the Preface, is not to create a work as if it were to be presented on stage. Instead, it means to use the scene as the major organizing

principle behind the construction of the work. Yet James's definition of what constitutes the scenic is made in terms of functionality:

> It may definitely be said, I think, that everything in it that is not scene (not, I of course mean, complete and functional scene, treating *all* the submitted matter as by logical start, logical turn, and logical finish) is discriminated preparation, is the fusion and synthesis of picture (323).

The comic precision of these qualifications aside (with James, though, the qualifications can never be completely forgotten—they are part of a pattern of discrimination connected with both the art of writing and that of seeing), this passage focuses attention on how scenes should be read as much as it describes how they are written. A scene is for James what it is for Shakespeare: a series of moments with temporal and spatial continuity within a larger work that does not possess the same degree of continuity. However, James here points the reader toward the elements of scene that are on its margins: instead of reading a scene only as dialogue, James suggests it should be read also as containing pauses, delivery, and introspection, all the matter necessary for it to function as a scene. The passage also echoes the Preface's description of the last scene in the novel: both place the scene at the service of an idea that the scene dramatizes. Since this is a work with Strether at its center, the scenes should be read as dramatizations of his character, as external representations of interior states.

Later in the same paragraph, James refers the reader to an exemplary scene, the one in which Strether relates to Maria Gostrey the entire back story of the plot:

> Let my first point be here that the scene in question, that in which the whole situation at Woollett and the complex forces that have propelled my

> hero to where this lively extractor of his value and distiller of his essence awaits him, is normal and entire, is really an excellent standard scene; copious, comprehensive, and accordingly never short, but with its office as definite as that of the hammer on the gong of the clock, the office of expressing all that is in the hour. (323)

The scene occurs in the first chapter of the second book, very near the beginning; accordingly, it serves as a model for how to read scenes and also how to divide the novel into scenes. As a piece of prose, it is a remarkable passage; it manages to convey Strether's history while constantly moving forward and revealing the increasingly ambiguous emotions of Strether concerning his mission. Read merely as a finely crafted piece of plotting, as a way to get the back story in unobtrusively, what is missed is the dramatic tension created by Strether's constant pauses, qualifications, omissions, and confessions, all of which reveal Strether as a character developing toward something. Throughout the scene, Strether is constantly discriminating and qualifying his replies:

> "You mean she's an American invalid?"
>
> He carefully distinguished. "There's nothing she likes less than to be called one, but she would consent to be one of those things, I think," he laughed, "if it were the only way to be the other."
>
> "Consent to be an American in order to be an invalid?"
>
> "No," said Strether, "the other way round" (46).

The pivotal word in this passage is "distinguished": it saves the exchange from mere waggishness by transforming it into a careful consideration of character. However, it is also an element of the conversation that is one-sided: it is the reader who has access to

the fact that Strether is making a distinction, not Gostrey. As a whole, the lengthy scene is filled with such moments that reveal where the reader's interest should be placed: not in Strether's interactions, but in how his actions, his external reactions, his ability to discern the reactions of others, and the occasional introspective moment define his character.

Famously, this is also the passage in which Strether refuses to reveal the Newsomes' line of business to Maria, describing it instead in vague terms:

> "But above all it's a thing. The article produced."
>
> "And what *is* the article produced?"
>
> Strether looked about him as in slight reluctance to say, but the curtain, which he saw about to rise, came to his aid. "I'll tell you next time." But when the next time came he only said he'd tell her later on—after they should have left the theatre; for she had immediately reverted to their topic, and even for himself the picture of the stage was overlaid with another image. His postponements, however, made her wonder—wonder if the article referred to were anything bad. And she explained that she meant improper or ridiculous or wrong. But Strether, as far as that went, could satisfy her. "Unmentionable? Oh no, we constantly talk of it; we are quite familiar and brazen about it. Only, as a small, trivial, rather ridiculous object of the commonest domestic use, it's just wanting in—what shall I say? Well, dignity, or the least approach to distinction. Right here, therefore, with everything about us so grand—!" In short he shrank.
>
> "It's a false note?"

"Sadly. It's vulgar" (47-8).

The discussion of the object produced by the Newsome clan continues for another few paragraphs, in which Strether, although he refuses to identify the object, does reveal that the source of Chad's money comes instead from his grandfather who made it engaged in practices that were "not particularly noble" (49). At no other point in the novel does Strether or any other character elaborate on the Newsome family businesses. This refusal to name the object leads to two possibilities: first, that the article produced is truly so "vulgar" that even to name it would be an endorsement, in a sense, of its vulgarity, and second, that the reader, like Maria, should guess as to the article's identity. The Preface provides the reader with some direction as to how to resolve this impasse: Maria Gostrey's description of the object as being "the false note" resonates with the Preface's description of Strether's moral position:

> *The* false position, for our belated man of the world—the false position for him, I say, was obviously to have presented himself at the gate of that boundless menagerie primed with a moral scheme of the most approved pattern which was yet framed to break down on any approach to vivid facts; that is to any liberal approach to them. (7)

The false note provided by the Newsomes' product and the false position of Strether are directly connected: the first leads into the second, both economically and morally. To extend the guessing game that Maria Gostrey begins when she guesses, incorrectly, that the product might be clothes-pins, salertus, or shoe polish (48), is to give into to the vulgarity of the enterprise itself. Simultaneously, the desire to know is a natural and predicable response on the part of the reader. The introduction of the possibility of

speculation is both an invitation to speculate, and a warning that speculation on this point would be to give both the Newsomes and their wealth a solidity that the Preface refuses them.

This scene also reveals how James directs the reader's attention away from the expected. This is a scene set in a theatre where the performance on stage is secondary to that in the audience or, more accurately, to the performance of one member of the audience: Strether has center stage during the entire scene. The Preface's concentration on Strether prepares the reader for the primacy of Strether's perception of the events over the events themselves. As readers, we are not so much watching Strether acting as we are watching him watching and thinking, as in the scene where Strether and Gostrey attend a performance at the Français, the companion to the earlier scene at the English theatre. At the theatre, they discuss, in fairly oblique terms, the relationship among Strether, Chad Newsome, and Chad's friend, Little Bilham. Unlike the previous scene set in a theatre, however, this one does not focus on Strether's past but on his future:

> It represented, this mute ejaculation, a final impulse to burn his ships. These ships, to the historic muse, may seem of course mere cockles, but when he presently spoke to Miss Gostrey it was with the sense at least of applying the torch. "Is it then a conspiracy?"
>
> "Between the two young men? Well, I don't pretend to be a seer or a prophetess," she presently replied; "but if I'm simply a woman of sense he's working for you to-night. I don't quite know how—but it's in my bones." And she looked at him at last as if, little material as she yet gave

> him, he'd really understand. "For an opinion *that's* my opinion. He makes you out too well not to."
>
> "Not to work for me to-night?" Strether wondered. "Then I hope he isn't doing anything very bad."
>
> "They've got you," she portentously answered.
>
> "Do you mean he *is*—?"
>
> "They've got you," she merely repeated. Though she disclaimed the prophetic vision, she was at this instant the nearest approach he had ever met to the priestess of the oracle (87-8).

This scene highlights Gostrey's role as a *ficelle*; her reactions arrive at the reader already filtered through Strether's consciousness. When read through the Preface, what one is aware of is a change in Strether's power of perception. It is he who "sees" the change in Gostrey, where she becomes a prophetic figure for him, even as she explicitly denies this power. Even the climax of this scene—Chad's entrance into the booth—is mainly given through Strether's internal reactions to his entrance.[54]

Perception is at the heart of the drama of Strether. What changes in Strether is that, as the Preface states, "he now at all events sees; so that the business of my tale and the march of my action, not to say the precious moral of everything, is just my demonstration of this process of vision" (308). The implication here, and throughout the Preface, is that seeing is the virtue that encompasses all others. And, in *The Ambassadors*, as in many of James's works, seeing is active. This is, of course, the virtue that James would like to communicate to his readership: not to guide them in their own

[54] This scene, which limits the action and dialogue to the box from which Strether and the rest are watching the play is a perfect example of James's usage of the conventions of drama.

efforts to write, but to induce them to exercise the same powers of vision and discernment as Strether in reading the scenes that make up *The Ambassadors*.

The Preface asserts that the internal and external worlds, or the mental and physical ones, are not of equal value. It is in the Preface, which demolishes many of the other characters and denies the importance of both particular moral schemes, that the reader is taught to see like a Jamesian character, valuing not so much what is seen, but how it is perceived and how that vision is part of a process. The re-education of the reader corresponds to James's own explication of the construction of the novel as a process that begins with a moment and then works that out. By placing this account in the Preface, ready for the reader's discernment, James readies his readership for *The Ambassadors*, and for its always-qualifying syntax. For the Jamesian reader, as for Strether, the act of seeing, of perception both discerning and discriminating, is at the heart of the aesthetic experience.

Chapter Four

"The Genuine Pulpit Article": Shaw's Preface to *Man and Superman*

The single most prolific writer of prefaces in the English language, George Bernard Shaw not only prefaced everything he wrote, he also prefaced much of what his friends wrote. From the publication of his first plays, Shaw was interested in the reception of his work and the potential of prefaces to control that reception. In his early prefaces, he objected to the idea that his plays, or for that matter any plays, should stand on their own, that the author should let the work speak for itself:

> I really cannot respond to this demand for mock-modesty. I am ashamed neither of my work nor of the way it is done. I like explaining its merits to the huge majority who dont know good work from bad. It does them good; and it does me good, curing me of nervousness, laziness, and snobbishness. I write prefaces as Dryden did, and treatises as Wagner, because I *can*; and I would give half a dozen of Shakespear's plays for one of the prefaces he ought to have written. I leave the delicacies of retirement to those who are gentlemen first and literary workmen afterwards. The cart and the trumpet for me (I: 72).[55]

In this early preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*, Shaw argues that he writes prefaces in order to educate his audience. The prefaces are subordinate to the plays to which they are attached, and serve the purpose of making the import of those plays clear to the reader.

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[55] All page references for individual prefaces are to *The Complete Prefaces*, volumes 1-3, Bernard Shaw, Laurence and Leary, ed.

Almost thirty years after writing this preface, when he serialized his prefaces for *John O'London's Weekly* in 1928, Shaw's explanation of the relationship between preface and text had changed drastically:

> Those who are unacquainted with the oddities of literary tradition may ask how it is possible to separate the prefaces from the plays. Nothing is easier. The only connection between the prefaces and the plays is that they have hitherto kept company within the same book covers. Most of the prefaces were written long after the plays had been performed. The practice of attaching polemical pamphlets to plays as prefaces has persisted from the days of Dryden and Molière to those of Victor Hugo, Dumas *fils*, and myself. A playwright who deals with human nature instead of artificial "plots" is like a shipwright who finds, when he has built his ship, that he has a store of material left, rejected as unsuitable or superfluous for the ship, but sound and useful for, say, housebuilding. If he is master of the two trades, he builds a house after building the ship. I happen to have the two trades at my fingers' ends; and I hate to waste good material. These prefaces are the houses; and you can inhabit them without having ever seen the ships, just as you can travel in the ship without knowing anything about the house (II: 583).

Instead of his earlier insistence that prefaces help a writer communicate his or her intentions to an audience, Shaw now states that a preface is built from the same material as a work, and that is its *only* connection to that work. The passage is also somewhat less than straightforward when it states that "most of the prefaces were written after the plays

had been performed": many of the prefaces to his most well-known works were written before general public performances of the play in question, most notably the prefaces to *Heartbreak House* and *Man and Superman.*[56] Yet, some semblance of relationship remains: preface and text are built of the same material, and are products of the same moral and dramatic impulses behind the works.

Shaw soon disavowed even this tenuous bond. Six years later, when he published his selected prefaces, he supplied that volume with a preface of its own. The tone of this preface is almost elegiac; Shaw reflects on both his prefaces in particular and his career as a whole. He opens by stating that his prefaces are "still rather ahead of the times," and that

> many of their new readers will conclude that I am a daring young innovator of eighteen instead of what I am in fact: a sage of seventyeight who, having long ago given up his contemporaries as hopeless, looks to future generations, brought up quite differently, to make a better job of life (III: 214).

Shaw laments that mankind is immune to any of the wisdom found in prefaces or even literature in general, that, in spite of the teachings of Jesus, the prefaces of Fielding, and the novels of Dickens, mankind, as a whole (or at least an English-speaking whole) has learned nothing. This leads him to state "that these prefaces of mine are no more out of date than the Gospels, or Utopia, or Tom Jones, or Little Dorrit, or even the plays of Aristophanes and Euripides and the Socratian dialogues of Plato"(III:215). For Shaw,

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[56] Often, plays were performed by societies before they were performed for the larger public in order to secure the copyright of that particular work. As Shaw grew more famous and his plays became more in demand, they did tend to be performed before they were printed. However, this was not always true. The preface to *Heartbreak House*, for example, deals at length with why the play was not performed before it was published.

works of literature remain important and alive because their moral and social visions have not been realized. As to why he writes prefaces, Shaw's explanation lacks the arrogance of his earlier self, as well as his usual verve for self-explanation: "You may well ask why, with such examples before me, I took the trouble to write them. I can only reply that I do not know. There was no why about it: I had to: that was all" (III:215).

Shaw does not fully disavow the relationship of preface to primary text, but it is secondary to the relationship between his prefaces and other works of literature. Even here, as he claims kinship with the great writers and thinkers of the past, he is creating a canon of works, an idea of literature that does not end with non-fiction, but includes everything from religious and philosophical texts to novels. Shaw implicitly emphasizes the didacticism inherent in fiction and the narrative nature of philosophy and religion: they are all stories that contain a worldview.

The preface ends with a caveat, cautioning against reading prefaces in relation to a primary text:

> I hope it is not necessary for me to remind critics unversed in literary tradition that the prefaces to my plays have nothing to do with the theatre. Most of them were written long after the plays to which they are attached had been repeatedly performed. The practice of weighting volumes of plays with political and philosophical disquisitions dates back to Dryden; and I have kept it up in a simple desire to give my customers good value for their money by eking out a pennorth of play with a pound of preface. It has ended, as you see, in this volume, which is all preface and no play (III: 215).

Dryden, as both an early preface writer and as a polemicist, remains the constant for Shaw, but this later definition of prefaces focuses on their existence as discrete political or philosophical tracts. Shaw's position directly contradicts his earliest writings on the relation between preface and text, where he compared their relation to that of title and picture:

> There is a foolish opinion prevalent that an author should allow his works to speak themselves, and that he who appends and prefixes explanations is likely to be as bad an artist as the painter cited by Cervantes, who wrote under his picture, This is a Cock, lest there should be any mistake about it. The pat retort to this thoughtless comparison is that the painter invariably does so label his picture. [...] The reason most playwrights do not publish their plays with prefaces is that they cannot write them, the business of intellectually conscious philosopher and skilled critic being no part of their job (I: 70-1).

Shaw is letting his reader know that the very fact that Shaw is able to write prefaces reveals him to be a playwright for whom philosophical and critical issues are of primary importance. By 1934, however, sage and playwright had parted ways, and were merely two roles played by the same man.

For Shaw, the question of relationship of preface to text was always secondary to a question of how his prefaces addressed an audience. The statements that he makes concerning the form of the preface must therefore be understood in the context of where and when these individual prefaces were first published. The preface to the serialization of his prefaces in *John O'London's Magazine*, for example, appeared in 1928. By this

point, most of Shaw's well known plays were behind him, and he speaks from the position of an elder statesmen, whose plays and politics would have been familiar to the vast majority of the reading public. This preface is addressed to magazine readers; the analogy of the ship and the house emphasizes that the serialized prefaces are the work of the same author responsible for the plays. It is essentially a way of saying that many of the qualities that have made his plays so famous can also be found in their prefaces, thus giving the magazine reader a reason to read them. Distancing the prefaces from the plays also gives the reader a reason to read the prefaces detached from their original context.

His final preface, to his selected prefaces, written in 1934, is an argument for the continued relevance of the works contained in the volume, based on the observation that literary attempts to enact social and moral change have failed:

> Take up Henry Fielding's Tom Jones. It is divided into several sections; and every section has an admirable preface.[57] For all the effect they have had on the British Constitution or the Church of England they might just as well never have been written. Fielding might have been the great-grandfather of Dickens, whose books, though classed as novels and duly hampered with absurd plots which nobody ever remembers, are really extraordinarily vivid parables. All the political futility which has forced men of the calibre of Mussolini, Kemal, and Hitler to assume dictatorship might have been saved if people had only believed what Dickens told them in Little Dorrit. And Dickens might have been Mussolini's grandfather or my father (III:214-5).

[57] The first chapters to each section of *Tom Jones* are not, of course, technically prefaces.

Claiming, as Shaw does, that literature is timeless because its moral pleading has gone unheeded is a very convenient argument for an author who is reprinting a series of works written for specific occasions and audiences. The prefaces included in this 1934 text are mainly prefaces to plays. They all share the quality of referring to the moment in which they were first written. Thus, the early prefaces, such as those to *Plays Pleasant* and to *Plays Unpleasant*, which contain large sections concerning the censorship system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, are of only limited relevance in 1934. The system remained in place, but a different man now occupied the Lord Chamberlain's office, and Shaw was definitely not in the same position in relation to this office. Still, these prefaces are reprinted. This preface, in short, makes an argument for reading Shaw's prefaces as a series of polemics, and not as prefaces written in and for specific moments. This presentation not only obscures the qualities the prefaces have in relation to the texts to which they were originally attached, but also implies that Shaw himself had a fixed relationship to the prefatorial form, a position further reinforced by the division of the prefaces included into thematic categories, instead of a chronological presentation. Like Wordsworth's first collected poems of 1813, this system replaces a narrative of authorial development with one of static exposition. Through his arrangement of the prefaces, Shaw positions himself outside of time: he is simultaneously an old man looking back on a career and still essentially 'a daring young innovator of eighteen.' This ordering of the prefaces gives the appearance that his prefaces are part of a fully realized program as opposed to a series of occasional texts.

These later explanations of the relationship between preface and text must be understood as the opinions of the George Bernard Shaw who collected the prefaces in the

late 1920s and early 1930s, and not of the Shaw who wrote them earlier in his career. By then, Shaw's prefaces had assumed a different form from the prefaces of the first part of Shaw's career as a playwright, as Laurence and Leary point out in their foreword to his collected prefaces:

> The earliest of the play prefaces—*Widowers' Houses, Plays Unpleasant and Pleasant, Three Plays for Puritans, Mrs Warren's Profession*—have the immediacy and unbroken flow of epistolary essays and are essentially autobiographical. With *John Bull's Other Island* and after, the emphasis shifts to an argumentative, journalistic style, dramatized by capitalized subheadings as in newspapers (I: vii).

The formal shift in Shaw's preface is connected to his own maturation as a playwright and his changing relationship with his public. The earlier prefaces use an epistolary form often in order to appropriate for Shaw an authority that the later prefaces assume he already possesses.[58] In his early prefaces, the autobiographical mode dominates. In the first paragraph of his preface to *Plays Unpleasant*, for example, Shaw announces himself a socialist, an Irishman, and a humanist. The preface proceeds to give an encapsulated version of Shaw's earlier career.

Yet these statements are not made to a public unaware of his personal attributes. They constitute a reintroduction, an attempt to control an already partially formed image.

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[58] The preface to *Pygmalion*, for example, consists of a discussion of linguistics. Shaw uses his authority as a playwright as a basis for this lengthy digression. In a similar vein, the preface to *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* gives the reader Shaw's opinion on the question of the true author of Shakespeare's plays. In both of these cases, as in many others, Shaw uses the occasion of the preface as an occasion to expound on the topic at hand. Shaw reverses the usual formula associated with prefaces: instead of using the preface to establish his authority as a playwright, Shaw uses his authority as a playwright to advance his arguments in fields where he is an amateur at best.

The tone throughout the early prefaces assumes a familiarity with the reader, one appropriate to a man already known as a political agitator and columnist:

> It was at this bitter moment that my fellow citizens, who had previously repudiated all my offers of political service, contemptuously allowed me to become a vestryman: me, the author of Widowers' Houses! Then, like any other harmless useful creature, I took the first step rearward. ...[N]ow I listened to the voice of the publisher for the first time since he had refused to listen to mine. I turned over my articles again; but to serve up the weekly paper of five years ago as a novelty! no: I had not yet fallen so low, though I see that degradation looming before me as an agricultural laborer sees the workhouse. So I said "I will begin with plays. I will publish my plays" (I: 27).

The irony in this passage is addressed to a readership acquainted with Shaw, and his history. Here, as in all three of Shaw's prefaces to collections of his plays published between the years 1898 and 1901, Shaw's presentation of himself to an audience is grounded in an identification of himself with his plays—he is first and foremost in this passage, as the appositive suggests, a playwright.

As Laurence and Leary state, it is with the preface to *John Bull's Other Island*, or the *Preface for Politicians*, as it is titled, that Shaw begins using what will become his most common form in his longer prefaces—the separation into subsections, the digressions into material that seems only tangentially related to the play. Still, the preface contains much that is familiar to the reader of the earlier prefaces, as in the following description of Shaw's ancestry:

> My extraction is the extraction of most Englishmen: that is, I have no trace in me of the commercially imported North Spanish strain which passes for aboriginal Irish: I am a genuine typical Irishman of the Danish, Norman, Cromwellian, and (of course) Scotch invasions. I am violently and arrogantly Protestant by family tradition; but let no English Government therefore count on my allegiance: I am English enough to be an inveterate Republican and Home Ruler. It is true that one of my grandfathers was an Orangeman; but then his sister was an abbess; and his uncle, I am proud to say, was hanged as a rebel (I: 196).

Shaw retains the mock confessional mode of his earlier prefaces, dexterously piling contradictions upon contradictions to make a political point. This passage would not be out of place in the preface to *Plays Unpleasant*, but it would have been incongruous in some of the later prefaces, such as the preface to *Back to Methuselah*.

Shaw's attitude toward the preface passes through three different, but related, positions: one, that the prefaces guide our understanding of the playwright's intentions in the play; two, that the prefaces are continuous with the play, and give the playwright an occasion to expound on the same ideas expressed dramatically in a non-dramatic form, and three, that prefaces are merely a way of giving the reader an unexpected but welcome polemic. No clear biographical divisions exist; the changes are gradual and more dependent on local factors than on any overarching vision of the preface sustained throughout his career. Shaw's career starts with the belief that prefaces can and should provide an interpretive frame for the works to which they are attached and ends with an equally sincere disavowal of any but the most accidental relation between preface and

text. In between these two biographical poles, his practice indicates that his view of the role of the preface varied.[59]

The prefaces return repeatedly to one topic: the problem of the performance of plays. The question of whether or not his plays would be fully understood by a theater-going public, who expect entertainment when they should hope for philosophic enlightenment, is either implicit or explicit in all of his prefaces. From the start, his prefaces possess a didactic quality; they are meant to create an audience fully ready to appreciate Shaw's plays and their ideological implications.

Any critic who examines Shaw's prefaces is faced with an excess of choices and riches. In Shaw's hands, the preface is flexible; it can be the occasion for a lecture on censorship or linguistics, or a reading of the play. His prefaces can correct current views on medicine or history or merely provide a short note on the play. What they share is an address to an audience that demands they be read. Therefore, in choosing a preface to examine, I have been guided by a principle of inclusivity, of trying to find the preface that most fully represents the entire body of Shaw's work. The preface to *Man and Superman*, written at the height of his intellectual powers, most fully incorporates the autobiographical qualities present in many of the prefaces with a social and literary vision. In addition, it combines many elements of both early and late prefaces, and is exemplary in the way in which it addresses an audience. In the preface to *Man and Superman* (hereafter the Preface), as well as throughout the rest of his prefaces, Shaw

[59] The relationship between preface and text is, as I have argued, independent of an individual writer's feelings or opinions concerning that relationship. In the case of Shaw, the tangentially quality of the later prefaces is consistent with a reading of those plays in which the characters are secondary to the subject matter of the play. To take an extreme example, the preface to *The Showing up of Blanco Posnet* focuses the reader's attention on the play as a piece of performance art, as Shaw's attempt to reveal the absurdity of the censorship system to his public.

uses a discussion of tangible, concrete concerns as the basis for an attempt to convert the reader. The play between metaphysical truths and social concerns that is at the heart of Shaw's entire oeuvre finds its most comprehensive treatment here, in both play and preface.

Five years before the publication of *Man and Superman*, in his preface to *Plays Unpleasant*, Shaw, bemoaning the lack of attention paid to printed editions of plays, argued that the printing of plays was too often a mere transcription of dialogue, that playwrights did not avail themselves often enough of the potential of publishing to create a distinct art form:

> The case, then, is overwhelming not only for printing and publishing the dialogue of plays, but for a serious effort to convey their full content to the reader. This means the institution of a new art; and I daresay that before these two volumes are ten years old, the bald attempt they make at it will be left far behind, and that the customary brief and unreadable scene specification at the head of an act will have expanded into a chapter, or even a series of chapters. No doubt one result of this will be the production, under cover of the above arguments, of works of a mixture of kinds, part narrative, part homily, part dialogue and (possibly) part drama: works that could be read, but not acted (I: 37-8).

The text, in other words, gives the reader an ideal version of a performance, with Shaw constructing, in essence, a production of the play. In the Preface, Shaw wishes for "a pit of philosophers; and this [*Man and Superman*] is for such a pit." It is in the Preface that Shaw creates and molds that audience.

The preface, however, is only part of the elaborate apparatus surrounding *Man and Superman*, through which Shaw insinuates himself into every element of the play. Even the stage directions overflow with Shavian insight, as in his description of the setting of the fourth act:

> The garden of a villa in Granada. Whoever wishes to know what it is like must go to Granada to see. One may prosaically specify a group of hills dotted with villas, the Alhambra on the top of one of the hills, and a considerable town in the valley, approached by dusty white roads in which the children, no matter what they are doing or thinking about, automatically whine for halfpence and reach out little clutching brown hands for them (Act IV).

These stage directions are not exacting, in the fashion of Samuel Beckett, but evocative: they remind the reader that the play is the product of George Bernard Shaw, and must be read as such.

With the exception of the third act, the form of *Man and Superman* was easily recognizable to its audience. Acts one, two, and four of Shaw's *Man and Superman* make up a three-act drawing-room comedy with a modernist manipulation of time and space: they take place at lunch time, early afternoon and early evening respectively, but on different days at different locations. The plot of this exterior play relies on a combination of red herrings and reversals for its humor: Jack Tanner, a revolutionary, is appointed guardian of Ann Whitfield. His co-guardian is Roebuck Ramsden, a man of once-radical ideas who has, along with those ideas, become respectable. Once set up, however, the will-plot concerning Ann's inheritance and her education goes nowhere,

just as the romantic love of Jack's friend Octavius for Ann leads only to disillusionment, as Ann has already decided that Jack shall be her husband. None of the standard obstacles of the stage exist to this match; only Jack's fear of Ann in particular and of womankind in general. When Jack finally realizes that Ann wants him for a mate, he flees to Spain, where, in a garden, he finally submits to Ann and the "life force." The subplot concerns the secret marriage of Violet Robinson, an Englishwoman, and Hector Malone, an American. Both Violet and Ann behave ruthlessly; they use their wits and social conventions to secure a mate of suitable genetic material and property. They, not the men, propel and control the action of the play, and coerce their chosen partners into the security of a suitable marriage.

Jack Tanner's capture by bandits calling themselves "revolutionaries" and his subsequent rescue by Ann and the local police bookend the third act. The bulk of the act consists of the 'Don Juan in Hell" dream sequence. Set in the afterlife, it is a "Shavio-Socratic dialogue" between the devil, 'played' by the bandit-chief Mendoza and Jack Tanner in the role of his ancestor, Don Juan. Roebuck Ramsden, in the role of the statue, and Ann as Dona Ana function mainly as the interlocutors in Socratic dialogues: they question and goad Don Juan and the Devil into elaborating and explaining their perspectives. The dream ends with the ascension, by act of will, of Don Juan into heaven and Dona Ana's cry for "a father for the Superman!"

The preface to *Man and Superman*, at first glance, appears to fail one of the major tests of the authorial preface: it is not addressed to the reader, but to a drama critic, Arthur Benjamin Walkley, whose comments occasioned both the Preface and the play.[60]

[60] Walkley's actual review of the play does not address the preface, but deals instead with the first public performance of the play [without the third act] at the Court Theater. Walkley's review is largely negative,

However, the Preface does not so much address Walkley as it creates out of him a figure of mockery:

> The fifteen years have made me older and graver. In you I can detect no such becoming change. Your loves are like the loves and comforts prayed for by Desdemona: they increase, even as your days do grow. No mere pioneering journal dares meddle with them now: the stately Times itself is alone sufficiently above suspicion to act as your chaperon (I: 140-1).

Walkley's perceived inability to evolve intellectually or critically into the twentieth century is, of course, logically irrelevant to the validity of his opinions, but this does not diminish the rhetorical power of Shaw's ridicule. Shaw phrases Walkley's complaints in such a fashion that they rebound to Shaw's favor:

> The question is, will you not be disappointed with a Don Juan play in which not one of that hero's *mille e tre* adventures is brought upon the stage? To propitiate you, let me explain myself. You will retort that I never do anything else: it is your favorite jibe at me that what I call drama is nothing but explanation (I: 141).

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he admits a few minor brilliancies in the construction of minor characters, the general excellence of the cast, and the inherent interest in any work created by Shaw, who is, in his estimation, a failed dramatist, and although he is "more entertaining than any other living writer for the stage. But that is because he is bound to be an entertaining writer in any art-form—essay or novel or play.... There is waste, because Mr. Shaw neglects, or more probably is impotent to fulfil, what Pater calls the responsibility of the artist to his material."

Walkley locates the essential problems with the play in those elements that owe the most to the Preface—the 'idea-plot.' Although he claims that it is not the business of a drama-critic to present a critique of Shaw the philosophical thinker, Walkley mocks the shallowness of the ideas presented by the characters in the play, particularly Tanner who "has steeped himself in those fragments of the newest German philosophy which find their way into popular English translations, and he spends his time—mark, the *whole* of his time—in spouting these precious theories." Since the review proceeds shortly to describe Tanner as essentially a stand-in for Shaw, this can be—and was probably meant to be—a description of the playwright as much it is one of Tanner.

Shaw takes a valid argument against viewing *Man and Superman* as a Don Juan play—namely, that the character of Don Juan is not, by nature, a monogamous character, and twists it so that it reflects negatively on its maker. No longer is it a question of whether Shaw's play is truly a Don Juan play, but instead it is a question of whether it has enough erotic content for Walkley's taste.

By opposing Shaw's opinions to Walkley's, the Preface constructs both the argument of the Preface and the argument against the argument. At the end of the Preface, the choice between these arguments is personified, as Shaw turns once again to address Walkley directly.

> Now if I am to be no mere copper wire amateur but a luminous author, I must also be a most intensely refractory person, liable to go out and to go wrong at inconvenient moments, and with incendiary possibilities...All this you will understand; for there is a community of material between us: we are both critics of life as well as of art; and you have perhaps said to yourself when I have passed your windows 'There, but for the Grace of God, go I' (I: 143).

This split between luminous author and dull critic spills over into the play. It opens with Roebuck "sitting at his writing table, he has on his right the windows giving on Portland Place. Through these, as through a proscenium, the curious spectator may contemplate his profile as well as the blinds will permit." (Act I) Octavius' arrival is announced and, within minutes, Tanner joins them. In both play and the Preface, a man of the past is confronted by the man of the future. The rhetorical pulling of the reader over to Shaw's side is complete.

The character of Don Juan undergoes a Shavian transformation in the Preface. Shaw reads the dynamism of Don Juan as Promethean and proletarian:

> Philosophically, Don Juan is a man who, though gifted enough to be exceptionally capable of distinguishing between good and evil, follows his own instincts without regard to the common, statute, or canon law; and therefore, whilst gaining the ardent sympathy of our rebellious instincts (which are flattered by the brilliancies with which Don Juan associates them) finds himself in mortal conflict with existing institutions, and defend himself by fraud and force as unscrupulously as a farmer defends his crops by the same means against vermin. (I: 143)

The concentration on Don Juan as transgressor, as the enemy of God makes him, in the Preface, the equivalent of Goethe's Faust—except that while Faust dealt with the limits of human knowledge, Don Juan is concerned with relations between the sexes. For Shaw, the question of the roles of men and women is the representative question of the theater in general, and the Don Juan play in particular. In *Man and Superman*, and its Preface, his comments on women are both general and typological, as demonstrated by his insistence that "every woman is not Ann; but Ann is Everywoman"(I: 158).[61]

[61] The medieval morality play *Everyman*, cited by Shaw as inspiration for his creation of Ann, is an allegorical account of what man takes with him when he faces God. When approached by death, Everyman turns first to his Fellowship or friends, then to his Kindred, and finally to his Goods—all of which refuse to accompany him. He tries to find his Good Deeds, but they are buried in the ground, and finds he must turn to Strength, Beauty, Knowledge, Confession, Discretion, and his Five Wits in order to raise his Good Deeds. As he dies, only Good Deeds remains with him on his journey to face God. Interestingly, sin itself does not play any role in this morality play. The character Everyman is mankind reduced to what constitutes the human condition—earthly friendships and family, doubts, fears, and his senses. Ann, as his descendent, is the female condition, purified into what Shaw sees as essential to woman's position, both social and spiritual. Another way of viewing Ann and Jack would be to see them as Shaw's versions of William Blake's Los and Enthitharmon, respectively incarnations of male and female creativity.

The Don Juan narrative illustrates Shaw's belief that "the ordinary man's main business is to get means to keep up the position and habits of a gentleman, and the ordinary woman's business is to get married"(I: 142). Shaw contrasts his own aims to the typical plays of the era that are "really void of sexual interest, [and] good looks are more desired than histrionic skill." Sexual interest is essentially an evolutionary by-product, created by the "woman's need of him[man] to carry on a Nature's most urgent work..., a purpose that far transcends their mortal personal purposes"(I: 150). Femininity is defined not in terms of spiritual purity, but as a biological function of nature. Yet masculinity fares no better, if not worse: it is at one remove from necessity; a reaction and ultimately doomed attempt to escape evolutionary destiny: "men, in order to protect themselves against a too aggressive prosecution of the women's business, have set up a feeble romantic convention that the initiative in sex business must always come from the man"(I: 149). Social conventions may favor men, but are a reaction against the ultimately superior position of women.[62]

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[62] Whether or not Shaw's depiction of women can be called feminist or not is a matter of debate among critics. In the case of *Man and Superman*, much of the discussion has focused on the character of Ann. J. Ellen Gainor, in *Shaw's Daughters*, points out Shaw's "absolutism...about woman's purely biological versus man's progenitive and cultural functions (209)." The feminist critique of *Man and Superman* extends back to the first reviewers of the play. J. Ellen Gainor cites Beatrice Ethel Kidd's review of the play in 1904, in which Dona Ana's cry for "A father! A father for the Superman!" is answered by the critic's own cry: "Room—room for the Superwoman!"(209).

However, Shaw's female characters, in particular Ann, do not lack vitality and strength. The premise of the play—a huntress instead of a hunter—places women in a relative position of power compared to the men in the play. In fact, throughout the play, it is the women who act and the men who sit around talking. The setting of the play itself, in the high society world of London, at the turn of the century, cannot be forgotten: it, as well as the conventions of drawing room comedies, is what constrains and contextualizes the actions of the individual characters. Barbara Bellows Watson, in *A Shavian Guide to the Intelligent Woman*, argues that Ann's character "transmutes the bitterness of some of the general maxims into the delightfulness of one particular vital genius. Furthermore, it has the less obvious effect of making Jack Tanner look like a dilettante, and his socialism a comparatively shallow doctrine (60)."

The body of work concerning Shaw's depiction of women is large, and *Man and Superman*, with its focus on the relations between the sexes, has generated more than its fair share of this work. Mark Sterner's article, "Shaw's Superwoman and the Borders of Feminism: One Step over the Line?," contains an overview of critical responses to Shaw's treatment of women and womankind in *Man and Superman*. However, the extent and nature of Shaw's commitment to feminism are secondary to the concerns of my

The Preface prepares the reader to identify Shaw with the character of Tanner. Not only do they share many of the same opinions, but Tanner's voice in the play echoes Shaw's in the Preface. When the subject of woman's role in life is brought up in the Preface, Shaw says:

> It is assumed that the woman must wait, motionless, until she is wooed. Nay, she often does wait motionless. That is how the spider waits for the fly. But the spider spins her web. And if the fly, like my hero, shews a strength that promises to extricate him, how swiftly does she abandon her pretence of passiveness, and openly fling coil after coil about him until he is secured for ever! (I: 151).

Tanner, in talking about Ann, hits many of the same notes:

> Tanner: Yes, [fulfillment] of her purpose; and that purpose is neither her happiness nor yours, but Nature's. Vitality in a woman is a blind fury of creation. She sacrifices herself to it: do you think she will hesitate to sacrifice you?

Tanner speaks with Shaw's voice, allowing the reader to sympathize with Tanner even when the action of the play reveals him to be a fool. Tanner, like Shaw, is without illusions, although not necessarily without delusions; he, as well, is "liable to go out and go wrong at inconvenient moments" (I: 165). Both Tanner and Don Juan are avatars of George Bernard Shaw—incarnations of the revolutionary man in dramatic realms, not perfect—in fact often more talk than action,[63] but also often right.

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argument; what is important is that the character of Ann was meant to reveal the hypocritical and condescending notions of femininity that he believed were prevalent in both society and the theater.

[63] "It is obvious that Shaw deliberately makes him [John Tanner]—among other things—an ineffectual chatterbox" (Bentley 55).

The Preface covers a range of subjects: the nature of a Don Juan play, the state of the English populace, politics, the relations between the sexes, and the enduring value of art. Shaw's use of the epistolary form allows him to yoke these disparate matters together and creates an ideological and artistic framework for a reading of *Man and Superman*. Unlike preface writers such as James and Wordsworth, who center their prefaces on a discussion of the works that they preface, Shaw's Preface uses the occasion of the play to lecture on a series of topics seemingly only tangentially related to the play, arguing for an explicitly moral literature. He rejects Shakespeare's plays as models, stating that, among other faults, his heroes are neither believable nor noble:

> You cannot say it, for instance, of The Pilgrim's Progress. Put your Shakespearian hero and coward, Henry V and Pistol or Parolles, beside Mr Valiant and Mr Fearing, and you have a sudden revelation of the abyss that lies between the fashionable author who could see nothing in the world but personal aims and the tragedy of their disappointment or the comedy of their incongruity, and the field preacher who achieved virtue and courage by identifying himself with the purpose of the world as he understood it. The contrast is enormous: Bunyan's coward stirs your blood more than Shakespear's hero, who actually leaves you cold and secretly hostile (I: 161).

Shaw condemns Shakespeare's characters, who have no aims beyond themselves, whose tragedy is merely personal, because as products of Shakespeare's art they are not supported by a coherent moral philosophy. In the valuation of Bunyan over Shakespeare, Shaw creates a line of descent for his work, aligning it not with the

traditional English stage but with allegories of morality, in which ideas are brought into conflict. The differences between "artist-philosophers" of different ages may appear to be great on the surface, but are in essence merely formal:

> Bunyan's perception that righteousness is filthy rags, his scorn for Mr Legality in the village of Morality, his defiance of the Church as the supplanter of religion, his insistence on courage as the virtue of virtues, his estimate of the career of the conventionally respectable and sensible Worldly Wiseman as no better than the life and death of Mr Badman: all this, expressed by Bunyan in the terms of a tinker's theology, is what Nietzsche has expressed in terms of a post-Darwin, post-Schopenhauer philosophy; Wagner in terms of polytheistic mythology; and Ibsen in terms of XIX century Parisian dramaturgy. Nothing is new in these matters except their novelties; for instance, it is a novelty to call Justification by Faith 'Wille', and Justification by works "Vorstellung'. The sole use of the novelty is that you and I buy and read Schopenhauer's treatise on Will and Representation when we should not dream of buying a set of sermons on Faith versus Works (I: 162).

The Preface esteems works of literature insofar as they contain a moral vision of the world and the role of the individual in it, regardless of the nature of that moral vision: "the main thing in determining the artistic quality of a book is not the opinions it propagates, but the fact that the writer has opinions" (I:163). By lumping together grand opera, religious allegory, philosophy and theater, Shaw focuses on what these particular

works have in common—they are all works in which ideas and ideals are brought into conflict.[64]

These socially involved writers are also placed in opposition to the prevailing morals of their time, an important element of their works, one that Shaw insists is too often forgotten by the public:

> books are admitted to the canon which confesses their greatness in consideration of abrogating their meaning; so that the reverend rector can agree with the prophet Micah as to his inspired style without being too committed to any complicity in Micah's furiously radical opinions (I: 163).

Style trumps content for the reader, a notion deeply disturbing to Shaw, who is at pains to point out that his opinions are radical, and that they should shock:

> instead of exclaiming "Send this inconceivable Satanist to the stake'" the respectable newspapers pith me [that is, eviscerate my spirit or substance] by announcing "another book by this brilliant and thoughtful writer." And the ordinary citizen, knowing that an author who is well spoken of by a respectable newspaper must be all right, reads me, as he reads Micah, with undisturbed edification from his own point of view (I: 163).

The vision of society and literature posited in the Preface is an intentional affront to the established beliefs of his time. The preface reminds the reader that *Man and Superman* is not merely a three-act drawing room comedy with a dream sequence tacked on; it is an

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[64] In *Shaw's Moral Vision*, Alfred Turco, Jr. argues that the central conflict is "between the man who commits himself to working for what he believes to be life's larger purpose and the man who, seeing skeptically and perhaps rightly, concludes that there is no cause to think that existence has meaning and hence that any effort expended on its behalf is futile (169)." This summation of Shaw's position reveals the central role that faith plays in the theology Shaw creates in the Preface.

intentionally provocative re-telling of the Don Juan story, one that exposes the falsity of romantic notions of love, and reveals the economic and evolutionary principles at work under the guise of romance. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, Shaw's stated intention is to give society a reflection of its own true nature.

The reference to Micah suggests one of the major differences between the prophetic writing and writers of earlier eras and Shaw. Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, "was presumably one of the common people, one who felt himself called on in that age of turmoil to speak out in the name of Israel's God against evils that were no longer tolerable." The book of Micah, however, is not the work of one author, but the received word of the prophet Micah, adapted to the needs and situations of following generations. One of the most important aspects of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible is that they are

> the biblical word, in the mind of those who preserved and developed biblical traditions, was not dead, said for one time, but a living word that could continue to inspire the faith community in which it had been engendered to further insights into the mind of God (Metzger 518).

The book of Micah, in other words, is primarily the word of God, and the work of an individual prophet, Micah, second. Shaw's claim that only terminology and time stand between him and many of his models assumes that faith is an historical phenomenon, a position antithetical to writers such as Micah and Bunyan, who believe that they are revealing or explicating eternal truths.[65] In other words, Shaw sees the prophetic

[65]The case for the Preface to *Man and Superman* being in the tradition of Old Testament prophecies is complex. On the one hand, it is, like the books of the prophets, a liminal document mediating between historical reality and an ideal world. In addition, Shaw's language is, like that of the prophets, "luminous and explosive, firm and contingent, harsh and compassionate, a fusion of contradictions" (Heschel 7).

tradition as part of the flux and flow of history and not a repudiation of that impermanence. Shaw's opinions are not, as in the case of the prophets, the received word of a higher power, but merely opinions, ones that will eventually be disproved:

> My contempt for *belles lettres*, and for amateurs who become the heroes of the fanciers of literary virtuousity, is not founded on any illusion of mine as to the permanence of those forms of thought (call them opinions) by which I strive to communicate my bent to my fellows (I: 164).

Suspicion of literary virtuosity is directly connected in this passage and throughout the Preface with the insistence on beliefs, or faith, as the basis for the literary value. However, the particular assertions that make up the ideological message of *Man and Superman* will be disproved, as "all the assertions get disproved sooner or later; and so we find the world full of a magnificent debris of artistic fossils, with the matter-of-fact credibility gone clean out of them" (I: 164). Shaw, in short, believes in believing, but actual beliefs are suspect, doomed to extinction.

Instead of faith in God, Shaw has a faith in the potential of Man,[66] one that he later terms Creative Evolution, or the potential of individuals mentally and morally to transcend their evolutionary position. In *Man and Superman*, this belief system is most fully set forth in the Don Juan in Hell dream sequence. Since this is the most radical element of the play, both formally and ideologically, one might expect that the Preface would deal with it at length, and give some kind of rationale for its inclusion. Shaw is

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However, Shaw is, unlike the prophets, definitely not the vehicle for a higher power, as he himself repeatedly points out.

[66] Shaw's description/definition of God in an interview perhaps best bears out this belief: "God is really impotent, and cannot achieve anything alone. He works through the hands and brains of men, who have to destroy or repair what is evil. In His groping after a perfect world God has created the tiger, and man must kill it. He has created cancer, epilepsy, and typhoid microbes, and man must fight them. Thus it is only through man that the full power of God is brought to light, and only by a tremendous output of human effort can God become really God, when he will become embodied in man perfected (*Shaw* 103)."

strangely evasive when it comes to this sequence, and he chooses to excuse rather than defend the entire episode:

> And yet I have not the heart to disappoint you wholly of another glimpse of the Mozartian *dissoluto punito* and his antagonist the statue. I feel sure you would like to know more of that statue—to draw him out when he is off duty, so to speak (I: 147).

Shaw draws the reader's attention away from Don Juan and towards the statue—the representative of traditional morality. This is another one of his jabs at Walkley: the statue is literally the voice of traditional morality, and he is counting on the reader, as one not swayed by mere pyrotechnics and cant, to be aware of this contradiction.

Shaw's explanation of the role of the dream sequence in the larger play is on the surface inadequate, as it treats the inclusion of the Don Juan sequence as a purely commercial decision on Shaw's part:

> I have resorted to the trick of the strolling theatrical manager who advertizes the pantomime of Sinbad the Sailor with a stock of second-hand picture posters designed for Ali Baba. He simply thrusts a few oil jars into the valley of diamonds, and so fulfills the promise held out by the hoardings to the public eye. I have adapted this easy device to our occasion by thrusting into my perfectly modern play a totally extraneous third act in which my hero, enchanted by the air of the Sierra, has a dream in which his Mozartian ancestor appears and philosophizes at great length in a Shavio-Socratic dialogue with the lady, the statue, and the devil (I: 147).

The analogy falls apart upon even the most cursory of analyses. Ali Baba and Sinbad the Sailor are both stories found in *1001 Arabian Nights*; they differ in subject matter, but not in kind. The third act of *Man and Superman*, on the other hand, contains a sequence unlike anything else in the entire play.

This passage must be understood in relation to its multiple audiences. As a set of instructions to the reader, it succeeds in telling the reader how the Don Juan passage should be approached—as a Shavio-Socratic dialogue, while diffusing the potential criticism of the act as violating dramatic form. More importantly, this passage gives producers dispensation to stage the play without the third act. Shaw distinguishes, in other words, between *Man and Superman* as a play—that is, a piece of writing designed to be acted out by a troupe of professionals under the guidance of director—and *Man and Superman* as text—a work published in book form along with an apparatus[67]. The dream sequence may not be, as Shaw admits "the essence of the play," but it contains the essence of the work.

In a postscript to the Preface, dated 1933, Shaw states that the evolutionary theme of the third act of *Man and Superman* was "resumed by me twenty years later in the preface to Back to Methuselah, where it is developed as the basis of the religion of the near future." But the preface to *Back to Methuselah* is perhaps, like the plays to which it is attached, Shaw's strangest: it is a direct assault on Darwinian fatalism and the division

[67] The removal of the bulk of the third act does, as many have pointed out, alter the structure of *Man and Superman*, "leaving only a basic Shavian comedy—granted, no small accomplishment—but not the first great play of the twentieth century" (Berg 145). However, the Don Juan in Hell scene is about 90 minutes long, and Don Juan was not performed with this scene until ten years after its debut. Shaw is quite aware that most audiences, especially those in London at the beginning of the twentieth century would rather watch a "basic Shavian comedy" than "the first great play of the twentieth century".

between science and religion. Shaw traces his own pairing of these two concepts back to the Preface:

> Accordingly, in 1901, I took the legend of Don Juan in its Mozartian form and made it a dramatic parable of Creative Evolution. But being then at the height of my invention and comedic talent, I decorated it too brilliantly and lavishly. I surrounded it with a comedy of which it formed only one act, and that act was so completely episodical (it was a dream which did not affect the action of the piece) that the comedy could be detached and played by itself (II: 429-30).

Shaw's insistence on the removability of the third act echoes his comments in the Preface, and anticipates his own statement in 1934 that his prefaces are easily detached from their original context. In the next sentence, he again distinguishes between play and work, placing Don Juan and the Don Juan in Hell sequence at the center of the work:

> Also I supplied the published work with an imposing framework consisting of a preface, an appendix called The Revolutionist's Handbook[68], and a final display of aphoristic fireworks. The effect was so vertiginous, apparently, that nobody noticed the new religion in the centre of the intellectual whirlpool (II: 430).

Man and Superman, as published in 1903, is a work focused around the concept of evolution by act of will, and its relationship to evolution by advancement of the species.

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[68] *The Revolutionist's Handbook* is a curious text: it is ostensibly written by John Tanner, and not by Bernard Shaw. This gives the character of John Tanner more substance—the audience is not only told that he has written a pamphlet, but is also shown its contents. However, it also distances both Shaw and the reader from the content of the handbook. Unlike the preface, which mediates between the world of the drama and the real world, *The Revolutionist's Handbook* belongs entirely to the fictional world of John Tanner. Therefore, its more outrageous claims are muted by its almost throwaway quality.

The seemingly extraneous elements, such as the preface and even the rest of the play, are part of the vortex of that whirlpool; intended to prepare and lead the reader towards the culmination in the Don Juan in Hell segment. Shaw claims that in the play, and by implication in the Preface, he is ultimately unsuccessful in his goal if not in his rhetoric:

> Now I protest I did not cut these cerebral capers in mere inconsiderate exuberance. I did it because the worst convention of the criticism of the theatre at that time was that intellectual seriousness is out of place on the stage[...]in short, that a playwright is a person whose business it is to make unwholesome confectionery out of cheap emotions. My answer to this was to put all my intellectual goods in the shop window under the sign of *Man and Superman*. That part of my design succeeded. By good luck and acting, the comedy triumphed on the stage; and the book was a good deal discussed. But as its tale of a husband huntress obscured its evolutionary doctrine I try again with this cycle of plays that keep to the point all through (II: 430).

Taken together, the five plays in the play-cycle *Back to Methuselah* constitute a history of mankind that arcs towards a form in which Shaw's characters are transformed physically and mentally to the point where they are no longer human. In these plays, the larger canvas allows Shaw to eliminate the gap between message and form. However, the complaint against the reception of *Man and Superman* reveals Shaw's distrust of his chosen genre. Plays are a narrative form, and by complaining, as Shaw does, that the story obscures the philosophic point, reveals the essentially ideological nature of the Preface to *Man and Superman*: it directs the reader away from traditional narrative forms

and towards an interplay of ideas on both the stage and in the mind of the reader. Shaw uses the Preface to discount his own narrative advances, to instead claim that they are ideological and social advances. For Shaw, ideal citizens make ideal readers. The reader of the Preface is not being trained to read the play and to comprehend its value, but is instead being proselytized to become a Shavian. Conversion does not occur with the reading of the play: it precedes it.

In the Preface, Shaw refers to his need to explain himself and to convert the reader as being based on the fact that he has a conscience,

> the genuine pulpit article: it annoys me to see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable; and I insist on making them think in order to bring them to conviction of sin. If you dont like my preaching you must lump it. I really cannot help it (I: 141).

Speaking unpleasant truths flatters people who believe themselves ready to hear those truths. Given the choice, individuals will identify with the select, not with the masses, a fact Shaw himself makes in an earlier preface, to his *The Perfect Wagnerite*:

> Not that I like the average German: nobody does, even in his own country. But then the average man is not popular anywhere; and as no German considers himself an average one, each reader will, as an exceptional man, sympathize with my dislike of the common herd (I: 275).

Here, and elsewhere, Shaw addresses his reader as an individual, capable of reading on a higher level than the mob. This kind of rhetoric shapes an audience by positioning everyone in it against what they are told everyone else thinks. At the premiere of his first play, *Arms and the Man*, Shaw, happy neither with the performance of the actors nor

the audience reaction, found himself confronted with applause. His response is described in the first volume of Michael Holyrod's biography:

> stepping out before the curtain after the first performance of Arms and the Man, Shaw addressed his short speech to a solitary man who in a wildly cheering audience had uttered a loud 'Boo!' 'My dear fellow,' he exclaimed, 'I quite agree with you, but who are we against so many?' (298).

Shaw's protestations of misunderstanding are typical of his attitude towards his audience. By addressing one person, and flattering his insight at the expense of the crowd, Shaw forces the members of the audience to view themselves as members of a group, and then contemplate their relation with that group, daring them to see themselves as exceptional.

This appeal to the potential of the individual, not to the interests of large groups, is a cornerstone of Shaw's version of Fabianism. Fabianism held that agitation without hope of a political victory is pointless and the best policy is to simultaneously court all political parties while converting individuals from all backgrounds to a vision of a more equitable and just society. Doctrinally, it lacks the cohesion of most political movements, and Shaw's own brand of Fabianism constantly returns to the idea that people are not ready for socialism, that any form of change in government would still result in the same imperfections in society found today:

> Give these people the most perfect political constitution that benevolent omniscience can devise for them, and they will interpret into mere fashionable folly or canting charity as infallibly as a savage converts the

> philosophical theology of a Scotch missionary into crude African idolatry (I: 155).

The only possible outcomes are

> We must either breed political capacity or be ruined by Democracy, which was forced on us by the failures of the older alternatives....Plutocratic inbreeding has produced a weakness of character that is too timid to face the full stringency of a thoroughly competitive struggle for existence and too lazy and petty to organize the commonwealth co-operatively. Being cowards, we defeat natural selection under cover of philanthropy: being sluggards, we neglect artificial selection under cover of delicacy and morality (I: 155).

The idea that significant social changes will not happen until the peoplethat make up society evolve into a higher form of life is developed by Shaw most fully in *Back to Methuselah.* This two-track approach to a program of gradual social change, accompanied with appeals to personal potential, results in a socialism that is always making itself obsolete as its political aims are determined as much by what is possible as they are by any overarching ideal. What is important, for Shaw, is not as much the particulars of his argument, but the force and energy with which he makes it:

> he who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none: he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry him. Disprove his assertion after it is made, yet its style remains (I:164).

This idea of drama is based not on characters but on the interplay of ideas. The drama itself carries the two levels of action that one is trained to look for by the Preface. First, and most obviously, one is confronted by the story of the battle between the sexes and the advancement of human life. Shaw refigures the traditional fable of Don Juan, changing the focus from Juan's philandering to the story of Ann searching and entrapping the best husband. In the play itself, Shaw mostly adheres to the basic tenets of the drama of his time, with adjustments he dismisses as slight: the dream sequence, the disjunctions of time and space. The Preface, however, also argues for an idea of drama based on ideal essences, on the conflict between self-improvement and improvement of the species, between incrementalism and revolution.

Chapter Five

Authors and Audiences

In 1614, a second volume of Don Quijote's adventures was published. There were some major differences between it and the first volume; the Quijote of the second work was a "windbag, a vulgar lunatic with none of his forbear's saving dignity" (Byron 499). The author of this second Quijote did not hide in anonymity; his preface claims that the character of Quijote and his comrades are public figures, and that by continuing Quijote's adventures, he was not infringing on the rights of Cervantes:

> Let no one be shocked that the Second Part comes from a different author, for it is nothing new for different people to continue a tale. How many have told of the loves of Angelica and her adventures? The Arcadias have been the work of various writers; Diana is not all by the same hand (Avellaneda qtd in Byron 498).

Avellaneda's appropriation of Cervantes characters was, as he argued, far from unique. Yet it was combined with attacks on Cervantes himself that made it, in essence, a personal assault on Cervantes' right to continue *Don Quijote*.

When he published his second part of *Don Quijote*, Cervantes added a preface that responded to Allevaneda's work. This preface is an occasional work, referring to the false Don Quijote while simultaneously establishing its own authenticity as the preface to the one true second book of *Don Quijote*:

> Oh Lord, distinguished (or even plebian) reader, how you must be eagerly awaiting this prologue, expecting to watch me take revenge on, laugh at and spit in the face of whoever wrote that second Don Quijote, the one

> they say was conceived in Tordesillas and born in Tarragona! But the the fact is, I'm not planning to give you any such satisfaction: it's true, insults may make even the humblest hearts thirst for vengeance, but the rule will have to make an exception. You want me to call him an ass, tell him he's a liar, and impudent, but the idea has never so much occurred to me: his own sin can punish him, he can eat it with his bread, and that's that (360).

Cervantes' defense is indirect: he responds by stating that he will not respond. His wit is present throughout the preface, and he claims only to take offense at Allevaneda's mocking of him for being old and one-handed:

> It hurts, of course, that he calls me "old," and "one-handed," as if I could have stopped Time and kept it from affecting me, or I'd lost my hand in some tavern brawl, rather than in the noblest battle ever seen by past ages, or this age, or any age still to come (360).

Cervantes's reminder to the reader of his service to his country connects his authority as a writer with his defense of the motherland. Insulting Cervantes, the preface implies, for being old and one-handed is essentially insulting Cervantes for serving his country.

Cervantes's preface to the second book lacks the desire to redefine literature present in the prefaces of Wordsworth, Shaw, and James. Instead, the preface confirms his identity as the one and true author of *Don Quixote*. He does this through echoing in the preface the tone of gentle wit familiar to the reader from the first Quixote. By identifying him both formally and stylistically as the author of *Don Quijote*, the preface functions as Cervantes's signature.

In this chapter, I have chosen to look at four major nineteenth-century novels, all of which have prefaces that in some way attempt to construct a basic authority over a text. In the case of the two prefaces for *Frankenstein*, one can see the different positions of an anonymous and named author introducing more or less the same novel to two distinct audiences. Charles Dickens's three prefaces to *The Pickwick Papers* reveal the extent to which an author's public image helps decide not only how a preface is read but also how it is written. Charlotte Brontë's preface to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, although not truly authorial, shows how an extratextual relationship can be used to lend authority to a third-party preface. Finally, Sir Walter Scott's preface to *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* is an example of how a preface can be simultaneously fictional, anonymous, and authorial.

In all four of these cases, although the prefaces do deal with issues of authority over the texts that they preface, the prefaces are much more concerned with establishing authorship *of* the work: they establish authority over a work instead of trying to convince the reader of the importance of the work itself.

Frankenstein's Two Prefaces

Frankenstein, Mary Shelley's novel about Victor Frankenstein and his monster, exists in two versions. The first version was published in 1818, anonymously, with a dedication to Mary Shelley's estranged father (and Percy Shelley's one-time political mentor) William Godwin. Not a small part of the attention the work commanded centered around its connection to Lord Byron, who had recently left England in a state of disgrace. The preface to this work addressed its readership by arguing for the

plausibility of the tale and its literary antecedents, while offering tantalizing suggestions as to the circumstances of the work's composition, including an allusion to Byron's presence during the genesis of *Frankenstein.*[69]

When *Frankenstein* was republished, in the authorized Standard Novels edition of 1831, Mary Shelley had been the acknowledged author of the work for about 12 years.[70] By 1831, both Byron and Percy Shelley were dead, and their age already seemed to be far removed from the world of 1831. Mary Shelley herself had become both a writer of fiction and non-fiction as well as the executor (and editor) of Percy Shelley's literary estate and guardian of his reputation. Her 1831 *Frankenstein* contained numerous revisions—some small, involving individual words, and some involving the addition or omission of entire sections of the novel.

In addition, Mary Shelley attached an entirely new preface to the work.[71] Despite Mary Shelley's claims in the 1831 preface to have "changed no portion of the story nor introduced any new ideas or circumstances," substantial differences exist between the two editions of the novel. As Anne Mellor argues in her essay "Choosing a Text of *Frankenstein* to Teach," "[I]n the 1831 edition, Mary Shelley replaces her earlier organic

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[69] "If we mistake not, this friend was a Noble Poet." *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1818

[70] In his preface to *The Vampyre* (1819), John Polidori gives an overheatedly Romantic version of the famous evening in the Swiss Alps, with Lord Byron's recitation of "Christabel" causing Percy Shelley to break out in a cold sweat. However, he does attribute, in a footnote, *Frankenstein* to Mary Shelley. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first public, printed attribution of the work to Mary.

[71] The 1818 preface to *Frankenstein* does not, from the vantage point of the 21st century, seem to satisfy one of the conditions of the authorial preface—it is not written by the author as author, but by a third party, Percy Bysshe Shelley. After Mary Shelley's assumption of authorship and the attribution of the 1818 preface to Percy Shelley, the 1818 preface cannot be termed authorial. For the biographical critic, attempting to reconstruct Mary Shelley's frame of mind as she wrote *Frankenstein*, it has approximately as much relevance as Polidori's preface to the *Vampyre*. However, Percy's 1818 preface would have been read by the original audience as authorial, as nothing in the 1818 edition of the work or in its reception would have made readers think that the preface was written by anyone other than the author of the attached novel. Imagine, for example, a new manuscript coming to light indicating that the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* was written by Coleridge, and not by Wordsworth. Although this would definitely change the entire approach to both *Biographia Literaria* and the criticism of Wordsworth's own literary criticism, it would not alter the basic relationship of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

conception of nature with a mechanistic one." The changes begin, Mellor contends, with the preface of 1831:

> In the "Author's introduction" added to the novel in 1831, Mary Shelley presents herself as she now represents *Frankenstein*, as a victim of destiny. She is "compelled" to write (Rieger 222); her imagination "unbidden" "possessed" and guided her (Rieger 227). Thus in the final version of her novel, Mary Shelley disclaims responsibility for her hideous progeny and at the same time insists that she has remained passive before it, "leaving the core and substance of it untouched" [Rieger 229] (*Frankenstein* Hunter, ed. 166).

Yet the passivity inherent in the 1831 preface coexists with Mary Shelley's final and authoritative claim of authorship and control over the text of *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley may be "disclaiming responsibility for her hideous progeny," but she is also insisting that *Frankenstein* is fully hers as well. This mixture of pride in accomplishment and disavowal of responsibility for the work itself echoes Dr. Frankenstein's own response to his creation within the novel.

Readings of the 1818 preface, on the other hand, have concentrated on how it seems not quite to fit with the text of the novel. In an article published in *English Language Notes*, Regina Oost argues that the 1818 Preface is an attempt to downplay *Frankenstein*'s "subtle radicalism"(34) in order to market it to a conservative public (34). She also claims that the detached tone of the 1818 preface "guards against the charge that Mary Shelley was anything other than a 'proper lady,' to use Mary Poovey's term"(33-4). Oost's account of the preface locates it in relation to the book market of the time—that is,

the body of *potential* readers for Frankenstein. This reading of the work, while instructive, does not directly discuss how the preface interacts with the text when read by *actual* readers of *Frankenstein*. When the two prefaces to Frankenstein are compared with an eye to how they suggest readings of the novel, they reveal an author in two different positions in relation to two distinct audiences.

The myth of creation that accompanies *Frankenstein* is known to most modern readers before they even open the book: Percy Shelley, Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, and his physician, Doctor Polidori, were reading ghost stories one particularly uncongenial and wet summer in the Swiss alps, when one night Lord Byron suggested that they all write ghost stories. Of the four, only one was fully up to the task—Mary Shelley. This version of the composition of *Frankenstein* has as its source the 1831 preface or author's introduction, to *Frankenstein*. According to Mary Shelley, the purpose behind the new preface is to give the reader an exact account of the circumstances that led to the writing of *Frankenstein*:

> The publishers of the Standard Novels, in selecting *Frankenstein* for one of their series, expressed a wish that I should furnish them with some account of the origin of the story. I am the more willing to comply, because I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so very frequently asked me. 'How I, then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea?' (5).

The 1831 preface gives an official recounting of the events leading to the writing of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley implies, in order to satisfy the readership's curiosity. Whether or not this account was informed by the plot of the novel, the placement of a

creation narrative in front of another narrative of creation invites the reader to see a parallel between the two stories. This parallel between the two stories—that of Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein* and Frankenstein and his monster—emphasizes Mary Shelley's authority over what she terms her "hideous progeny."

The secondary purpose of the 1831 preface is to establish Mary Shelley's own authority over the text, to formally limit and explain Percy Shelley's role in the creation of *Frankenstein*:

> At first I thought but a few pages—of a short tale; but Shelley urged me to develop the idea at greater length. I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for his incitement it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world. From this declaration I must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him (10).

While claiming authorship for the novel *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley does not fully distance herself from the first preface. She is not, in other words, attempting to give a full and complete history of *Frankenstein*, but is instead interested mainly in proving her authority over the text of the novel. The story of the novel's creation, as recounted in the preface, establishes the text's provenance, and Mary's role as the one true author of Frankenstein.

Elsewhere in the 1831 preface, Mary Shelley allows that the ideas that gave birth to the novel were suggested by the conversation of Lord Byron and Percy Shelley. In this version, the talk of the experiments functions as a pre-dream suggestion for her story, and she herself does not directly participate in Lord Byron and Percy's Shelley's discussion:

> Of the experiments of Dr Darwin (I speak not of what the doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him), who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion....Night waned upon this talk, and even the witching hour had gone by, before we retired to rest. When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think....I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together (8-9).

The idea of reanimation functions in 1831 as a Jamesian germ and locates the genesis of the novel within the imagination of Mary Shelley. When the novel was first published, in 1818, the narration of its composition was less descriptive, and more matter of fact:

> It is a subject also of additional interest to the author, that this story was begun in the majestic region where the scene is principally laid, and society which cannot cease to be regretted. I passed the summer of 1816 in the environs of Geneva. The season was cold and rainy, and in the evenings we crowded around a blazing wood fire, and occasionally amused ourselves with some German stories which happened to fall into our hands. These tales excited in us a playful desire of imitation. Two other friends (a tale from the pen of one of whom would be far more acceptable to the public than any thing I can ever hope to produce) and myself agreed to write each a story, founded on some supernatural occurrence (6).

In the 1818 preface, the author possesses a detachment from her creation. The language of the preface is more precise than the later version:

> The event on which this fiction is founded, has been supposed, by Dr Darwin, and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence. I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it has the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of specters or enchantment. It was recommended by the novelty of the situation which it develops and however impossible as a physical fact, affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield (5).

From the opening sentence, the 1818 preface presents *Frankenstein* as a novel of ideas, of philosophic and literary speculation. In Mary Shelley's 1831 preface, the work's literary and scientific antecedents recede in favor of a focus on the personal circumstances that led to the writing of the novel.

These differing accounts of the creation of *Frankenstein* in 1818 and 1831 serve as generic markers, but for different genres. The 1818 preface, with its emphasis on the rational basis for the creation of the monster, suggests *Frankenstein* is a proto-science fiction novel, in which the extrapolation of certain contemporary scientific theories form the basis for "delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than

any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield." The subject matter remains humanity and human passions, a fact emphasized by the works cited as influences on *Frankenstein*:

> I have thus endeavored to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations. *The Iliad*, the tragic poetry of Greece—Shakespeare, in the *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*,—and most especially, in Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, conform to this rule (5).

The insistence on the realistic core of *Frankenstein* was noted by the critics, who even used some of the same terms to describe it, as in the following anonymous review from *Edinburgh Magazine*: "There never was a wilder story imagined, yet, like most of the fiction of this age, it has an air of reality attached to it, by being connected with the favourite projects and passions of our time" (*Frankenstein* Hunter, ed. 191) In this reading of *Frankenstein*, the monster, although fantastic, exists to demonstrate and react to behavior both recognizably extreme *and* human.

The 1831 preface, on the other hand, does not emphasize *Frankenstein*'s position in a literary or scientific canon that deals directly with human behavior. In the later preface, the inspiration of German ghost stories, mentioned in passing in the 1818 preface, is expanded:

> There was the tale of the sinful founder of his race, whose miserable doom it was to bestow the kiss of death on all the younger sons of his fated house, just when they reached the age of promise. His gigantic, shadowy form, clothed like the ghost in Hamlet, in complete armour, was seen at

> midnight, by the moon's fitful beams, to advance slowly along the gloomy avenue. The shape was lost beneath the shadow of the castle walls; but soon a gate swung back, a step was heard, the door of the chamber opened, and he advanced to the couch of the blooming youths, cradled in healthy sleep. Eternal sorrow sat upon his face as he bent down and kissed the forehead of the boys, who from that hour withered like flowers snapt upon the stalk. I have not seen these stories since then; but their incidents are as fresh in my mind as if I had read them yesterday (7).

In this passage, Mary Shelley's language takes on the fragmented, irrational qualities of the short stories it is describing, just as the preface as a whole is 'haunted' by the reminiscence of *Frankenstein*'s creation. Overall, this preface emphasizes the supernatural and inhuman qualities of both the novel *Frankenstein* and its genesis. If the 1818 preface defines *Frankenstein* as the descendant of literary greats and as based on the scientific experiments of the age, the 1831 preface defines it as essentially a superstitious work, based on imaginative, not speculative, literature and part of a gothic tradition.

Although the 1818 preface does not contain the long nostalgic reminiscence of the summer of 1816 that occupies the majority of the 1831 preface, it does trade on the fame of one of Mary Shelley's summer companions. The 1818 Preface, in retelling the circumstances of the novel's composition, contains a fairly transparent allusion to Byron: "two other friends (a tale from the pen of one of whom would be far more acceptable to the public than any thing I can ever hope to produce) and myself agreed to write each a story, founded on some supernatural occurrence." That friend, was, as one reviewer put it, "a Noble Poet." In 1818, when *Frankenstein* was first published, Byron's fame was

much greater than any of the other members of their group. The reference to Byron encourages an identification of both *Frankenstein* and his monster with the Byronic hero, allowing some of the reflected glory of Byron to fall upon the work, and seemingly promises that the work will contain elements of the *roman a clef*.[72] In addition, the 1818 Preface, while protecting Mary Shelley's respectability, as Regina Oost suggests, also flirts with the identification of Percy Shelley as the author. Many elements of the paratext—the dedication, the epigraph—allude to Percy Shelley's own political and poetic concerns. The description of the parties involved in writing ghost tales also could potentially misdirect the reader into ascribing the work to Shelley. In the 1818 version, the number of people who decided to take up the challenge to write a ghost story is three, of whom one is a "Noble Poet." Contemporary readers would have likely identified the other two as Percy Shelley and Dr Polidori. Neither Mary Shelley nor her half sister would have made probable candidates, if only because Percy Shelley was already a published author and Mary Shelley a woman of less than twenty years of age who had, to the public's knowledge, not produced any writing up to this point.[73]

For the modern reader, the mimicry of Mary Shelley by Percy Shelley in the 1818 preface can overwhelm interest in other differences between the prefaces. Although this is an interesting story in its own right—that of Mary Shelley's assumption of control in the 1831 preface—it is one which occurs within the preface. Prefaces are not, as a rule, serial documents. The narrative of Mary Shelley claiming the mantle of author

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[72] The 1818 preface obliquely invites comparison of the two protagonists of this tale not with Percy Shelley, but with the more well known Byron, whose writings set himself up in the image of Milton's Satan, that is, an agent of opposition, an image which was reinforced by the story behind his departure from England just prior to the journey to the alps. Like Victor Frankenstein, in pursuit of his monster, Byron himself was a world traveler, both in real life and in his alter ego, Childe Harold.

[73] Claire Clairmont is left out of both prefaces to *Frankenstein*. However, she is mentioned in the preface to *The Vampyre*, although it is made clear that she did not participate in the story-writing contest.

masks the change in the presentation of the novel, the repackaging of the 1818 novel of philosophical speculation and exploration as a narrative of nostalgia.

The Multiple Prefaces of Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*

The Pickwick Papers originally appeared as a serial in the *Monthly Magazine* in 1837. From almost the first installment, the picaresque adventures of Mr Pickwick, his servant and teacher, Sam Weller, and his fellow club members were a success. The serialized stories were subsequently published (and prefaced) in three authorially approved editions during Dickens's lifetime, in 1837, 1847, and 1867. The first preface, for the 1837 edition, defends and explains the overly episodic nature of the work. This preface argues that the necessities of issuing the novel first in serial form and then publishing it as a whole led to its episodic structure, and that this lack of an overarching plot, although an accidental by-product of the serial form, results in a greater verisimilitude than is usually seen in novels:

> It is obvious that in a work published with a view to such considerations, no artfully interwoven or ingeniously complicated plot can with reason be expected. The author ventures to express a hope that he has successfully surmounted the difficulties of his undertaking. And if it be objected to the Pickwick Papers, that they are a mere series of adventures, in which the scenes are ever changing, and the characters come and go like the men and women we encounter in the real world, he can only content himself with the reflection, that they claim to be nothing else, and that the same

> objection has been made to the works of some of the greatest novelists in the English language (41).

Dickens admits the faults of the work, observes they are no less than the faults of life itself, and those of "some of the greatest novelists in the English language." The preface pre-empts those who would complain that the last section of the novel is overly melancholic:

> The following pages have been written from time to time, almost as the periodical occasion arose. Having been written for the most part in the society of a very dear young friend who is now no more, they are connected in the author's mind at once with the happiest period of his life, and with its saddest and most severe affliction (41-2).

By associating his mood while writing the work with the death of a "dear young friend," Dickens deftly places the potential critic in the position of insulting the memory of his dead companion and, by implication, Dickens's right to mourn that loss.

In the 1837 preface the story of the 'hiring' of Charles Dickens to write *The Pickwick Papers* is the narrative of a writer who, although acquiescing at first to the vision of others, gradually comes into his own power:

> Deferring to the judgment of others in the outset of the undertaking, he adopted the machinery of the club, which was suggested as the best adapted to his purpose: but, finding that it tended rather to his embarrassment than otherwise, he gradually abandoned it, finding it a matter of very little importance to the work whether strictly epic justice were awarded to the club, or not (41).

Dickens does not identify the names of any of his illustrators or of the magazine or the editors who gave him the assignment. The focus is entirely on the young author coming into his own powers, of a work of an individual appearing out of a collaborative medium. In the space of one sentence, Dickens moves from 'deferring' to the judgment of others to abandoning their plans soon after inception. In the space of this one sentence, Dickens provides the reader with a *künstlerroman* in miniature. The circumstances surrounding the beginning of *The Pickwick Papers* become, in this preface, merely another set of obstacles overcome by the young author in the course of writing the novel.

In 1847, Dickens' treatment of the genesis of *The Pickwick Papers* is more precise than the earlier version, and is delivered in the tones of a man trying to present the matter as honestly and as truthfully as the over 15 year gap between the events and their remembrance will allow:

> The idea propounded to me was that the monthly something should be a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by Mr Seymour; and there was a notion, either on the part of that admirable artist, or of my visitor (I forget which), that a 'Nimrod Club,' the members of which were to go out shooting, fishing, and so forth, and getting themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity, would be the best means of introducing these. I objected....[ellipses mine] My views being deferred to, I thought of Mr Pickwick, and wrote the first number; from the proof sheets of which, Mr Seymour made his drawing of the Club, and his happy portrait of the founder (44).

In this recounting, Charles Dickens presents himself as being deferred to from the beginning, instead of gradually assuming control over the characters of Mr Pickwick and his friends. He is careful not to assign responsibility for ideas that did not originate with him. Thus, either his publisher or Mr Seymour could have been responsible for the name "The Nimrod Club'; Dickens is sure only that the name was not his idea. In any case, this version of the genesis of *The Pickwick Papers* assumes a readership already familiar with the novel's picaresque narrative. In the 1847 preface, the major concern is that the audience understand that Dickens was primarily responsible for the novel's content and not whether or not that content could rightfully be called a novel.

The 1867 preface copies the 1847 preface, with one major addition: a direct rebuttal of the accusation that Dickens 'stole' the idea and essence of *The Pickwick Papers* from its original illustrator, Mr Seymour:

> With the moderation that is due equally to my respect for the memory of a brother-artist, and to my self respect, I confine myself to placing on record here the facts:
>
> That Mr Seymour never originated or suggested an incident, a phrase, or a word, to be found in this book. That, Mr Seymour died when only twenty-four pages of this book were published, and when assuredly not forty-eight were written. That, I believe I never saw Mr Seymour but once in my life, and that was on the night but one before his death, when he certainly offered no suggestion whatsoever. That I saw him in the presence of two persons, both living, whose written testimony to them I possess (51).

Read serially, as they are presented in the Penguin Edition, these three prefaces appear to attest to an increasing paranoia on the part of Dickens concerning his own authorship of *The Pickwick Papers*. It is, in a sense, the opposite of what one would expect from Dickens: as his popularity and importance increases, his own seemingly petty focus on the issue of inspiration of his first major work takes up more and more of his prefatory comments.

Instead of representing Dickens's evolving understanding of the relationship of *The Pickwick Papers* to his oeuvre, these three prefaces all respond to debates current when they were written. The issue of Mr. Seymour's authorship gains in importance because of Dickens's own increasing reputation: Seymour's widow, to whom Dickens had given some money, was impoverished and her complaints of artistic theft increased as Dickens's status as public figure and author did.[74] The concern of the 1837 preface is mainly to distance the end product, *The Pickwick Papers*, from its humble beginnings, to excuse its faults, such as the serial construction of the narrative and the serious turn, by claiming the limitations of the form and the personal factors behind it. Simultaneously, this preface argues for the idea that the work transcends those limitations. Thus, the actual story of the production of *The Pickwick Papers* is secondary to the narrative of Dickens arguing for its acceptance as a novel in its own right. Dickens is assuming authority over a text whose means of production made it seem like a collaborative work.

The 1847 preface has a different agenda: it refutes the argument, placed before the public by Seymour's family, that the text was inspired by the images. Dickens presents himself as a reluctant participant in the original scheme, who was only made

[74] The Penguin edition of *The Pickwick Papers* contains an excellent retelling of the controversy surround Mr Seymour's contribution to the novel.

amenable when he was able to have a voice in shaping the story. The attack on Seymour's claims is indirect; Dickens deals entirely with the intermediaries, thus keeping above the fray. The events immediately preceding the 1867 publication of the novel—the renewed claims of the Seymour family—form the context for the carefully detailed claims in this text. What appears to be, to the modern eye, an increasing focus on the issue of an already settled question—authorship—is in fact its opposite. By placing the specific account of the events surrounding his relationship in print, Dickens gives them the full force of legal opinions. In these later prefaces, Dickens writes as an established author; and it is his public position that gives his statements their authority.

Wuthering Heights: Authority and the Third-Party Preface

Charlotte's Brontë's 'preface' to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, although not authorial, possesses much of the authority associated with the authorial preface. The preface's authority over the work is directly connected to the particular circumstances and context under which the novel was republished. The novel was originally published, to decidedly mixed reviews, in 1847, under the pseudonym Ellis Bell. This led many critics to assume that the three sisters—Charlotte, Emily, and Anne—were in fact one writer, who represented him/herself as, varyingly Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Three years later, after Emily's death, the pseudonyms still led critics to confuse the authors. One review in particular, by Sydney Dobell in the *Palladium*, according to Janet Barker, seems to have both encouraged and perturbed Charlotte Brontë:

> This anonymous review was the first to enthuse seriously about Wuthering Heights, though its author, Sydney Dobell, refused to believe that it was not an early work by Currer Bell. 'Not a subordinate place or person in this novel, but bears more or less the stamp of high genius', Dobell had declared. 'It is the unformed writing of a giant's hand; the "large utterance" of a baby god.' Jane Eyre exhibited all the same qualities brought to maturity. ...He urged 'Currer Bell', in her next novel to ignore the critics and remember as far as possible the frame of mind in which he had sat down to write Wuthering Heights; maturity would prevent her making the mistakes which had marred her earliest work (653-4).

Shortly after this review appeared, Charlotte agreed to the publication of a cheap edition of her sisters' works, to which she added a biographical notice and preface, as well as the first public attribution of authorship of her sisters' works. This book commemorated her sisters while revealing to the public the separate identities of all three writers. Charlotte's preface to *Wuthering Heights*, by virtue of assigning these works to her sisters Anne and Emily, is as much a document in which Charlotte denies authorship as it is one that assigns authorship.

The 1850 book, as it reached its readership, was a collection of different works, and not a single work in itself. It contained both *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, a preface to each written by Charlotte Brontë and a biographical notice, as well as several poems by the two writers. What it did not include was Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which Charlotte Brontë described in a letter as

> hardly desirable to preserve. The choice of subject in that work is a mistake – it was too little consonant with the character – tastes, and ideas of the gentle, retiring, inexperienced writer. She wrote it under a strange conscientious, half-ascetic notion of accomplishing a painful penance and a severe duty (qtd. in Barker 654).

In this letter, Charlotte Bronte is already establishing the tone that she will use throughout her biographical notice and preface. Charlotte's personal position as flesh and blood sister to the two dead authors lends force to her own often damning opinions concerning the merits of their works. In effect, Charlotte Brontë is as often speaking for her sisters as she is speaking about them. Thus, when *Wuthering Heights* was mistaken for the early output of the author of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte describes her and her sister's reaction as one:

> The immature but very real powers revealed in Wuthering Heights were scarcely recognized; its import and nature were misunderstood; the identity of its author was misrepresented; it was said that this was an earlier and ruder attempt of the same pen which had produced Jane Eyre. Unjust and grievous error! We laughed at it at first, but I deeply lament it now. Hence, I fear arose a prejudice against the book. That writer who could attempt to palm off an inferior and immature production under cover of one successful effort, must indeed be unduly eager after the secondary and sordid result of authorship, and pitiably indifferent to its true and honourable meed. If reviewers and the public truly believed this, no wonder that they looked darkly on the cheat (33).

This passage reveals a thread of anxiety present in both the biographical notice and in the preface: if the critics believed these two works to be by the same author, that implied they saw stylistic and thematic connections between the more polished narrative of *Jane Eyre* and the 'ruder' *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte's preface locates the difference in maturity not between the two novels, but between the two sisters, and between their visions of the craft they both practice. *Wuthering Heights*, in short, is less polished than *Jane Eyre* because Emily Brontë was less sophisticated than Charlotte Brontë. In the preface, Emily Brontë is described by her sister as immature and unexposed to the world:

> I am bound to avow that she had scarcely more practical knowledge of the peasantry amongst whom she lived, than a nun has of the country people who sometimes pass her convent gates....Though her feeling for the people round was benevolent, intercourse with them she never sought; nor, with very few exceptions, every few exceptions, ever experienced. And yet she new them; knew their ways, their language, their family histories; she could hear of them with interest and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but *with* them she rarely exchanged a word (38).

Like the landscape surrounding her, Emily's knowledge is based on an empathetic connection with her subject. In describing her sister's naiveté, Charlotte implicitly defines herself as the more self-aware artist of the two, the one who is able to evaluate affectionately but accurately Emily's imaginative power and its limitations:

> Her imagination, which was a spirit more somber than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed

> these beings, she did not know what she had done. If the auditor of her work, when read in manuscript, shuddered under the grinding influence of natures so relentless and implacable, of spirits so lost and fallen; if it was compained that the mere hearing of certain vivid and fearful scenes banished sleep by night, and disturbed mental peace by day, Ellis Bell would wonder what was meant, and suspect the complainant of affectation (39).

This measured praise is doled out by a Charlotte Brontë conscious of her own duties as a writer, to both morality and reality. Emily Brontë, as commemorated both in the 1850 edition as a whole and in the preface, is an innocent, a Wordsworthian wild child, who has no sense of self separate from her own creation and surroundings. Charlotte Brontë's preface ends with an extended metaphor that returns to this idea, literally setting in stone the differences between her own carefully crafted novels and her sister's rougher work:

> Wuthering Heights was hewn in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials. The statuary found a granite block on a solitary moor: gazing thereon, he saw how from the crag might be elicited the head, savage, swart, sinister; a form moulded with at least one element of grandeur—power. He wrought with a rude chisel, and from no model but the vision of his meditations. With time and labour, the crag took human shape; and there it stands colossal, dark, and frowning, half statue, half rock; in the former sense terrible and goblin-like; in the latter, almost beautiful, for its colouring is of mellow grey, and moorland moss clothes

> it; and heath, with its blooming bells and balmy fragrance, grows faithfully close to the giant's foot (41).

The metaphorical creation is "half statue, half head," and covered in moss and heath. The slow labor and lack of models external to the form itself suggest not a classical sculptor with exacting chisel strikes and finesse but the power of the elements to shape the rocks and crags of the landscape so that they appear to assume an anthropomorphic form. This metaphor allows for no distance between artist and art; the wind that shapes a landscape has that same landscape as its visible sign. Charlotte's use of symbolic language blurs any difference between artist and work of art so that they both become one natural phenomena. *Wuthering Heights* is not so much the product of Emily Brontë's imagination as her imagination is the genius loci of *Wuthering Heights*, its pervading spirit.

Sir Walter Scott: The Pseudonymous Preface

In 1814, Walter Scott anonymously published *Waverley*, a novel of Scotland during the Jacobite uprising of 1745. *Waverley* was an immediate success, and over the next 18 years he wrote almost 30 novels, most of which, like *Waverley*, took as the backdrop for their narratives specific historical periods and events. Until 1827 Scott maintained a mask of anonymity.

The anonymity was nothing unique or even uncommon—many novels of the time were published without the author's name on the title page[75]. However, *Waverley* was an

[75] In Faking Literature, K.K. Ruthven points out that anonymity and hidden authorial identity were commonplace in the 18th and early 19th centuries (101-102).

international success and arguably a new kind of work: the historical novel. The identity of any work's author was the subject of some speculation and the author of *Waverley* was not just anonymous; he was an anonymous international celebrity.

Scott himself, who had some reputation as a poet and collector of ballads, neither denied nor claimed authorship. He did review the *Waverley* novels in a surprisingly balanced article in the *Quarterly Review* in 1816—although it too appeared anonymously. Most readers, however, did have a good idea it was Scott. For example, the novelist Maria Edgeworth addressed a letter to the author of *Waverley* with the following motto: *aut Scotus, aut Diabolus* (Hayden 75). Either Scott or the devil.

The form in which the novels reached the public encouraged speculation as to the identity of the author. They are prefixed with prefaces, dedicatory epistles and fictional frame narratives, all of which allude to both the idea of authorship and the identity of the author. Scott's fascination with paratextual forms and metatextual references allowed him to maintain an authorial presence in the apparatus of the *Waverley* novels. In these prefaces and dedicatory epistles the subject of authorship is always near the surface. The author of *Waverley* possessed a voice without possessing a name and became known as "The Great Unknown."

As Scott's career as a novelist progressed, these games became more baroque. The preface to the 1823 *Peveril of the Peak* consists of a dialogue between one character, the Reverend Doctor Dryasdust, and the author of the *Waverley* series that is then mailed to a third character, Captain Clutterbuck. For the uninitiated reader, these later prefaces are hard to read: their context is not so much the novels to which they are attached, as it is the relationship of the still anonymous Scott to his readership. When a Frenchman in

the preface to *Quentin Durward* insists that Scott is the author of the *Waverley* novels, this is not an admission of authorship, but another carefully planted clue (or red herring) offered up to an established readership.

Of particular interest within the larger frame of the *Waverley* novels is the smaller grouping of publications in the *Tales of My Landlord* series. The conceit behind the *Tales of my Landlord* is that Jedediah Cleishbotham, a pedantic schoolmaster, has published the manuscripts of his deceased assistant, Peter Pattieson, who gathered them from tales told by travelers stopping at a local inn. These framing devices, reminiscent of Cervantes's claim to be working from a translation of a tale originally told in Arabic, did not fool the readers of the time, and the series was quickly identified as the work of the author of *Waverley*. One critic even claimed that he could do so by merely glancing at the title page of one of the volumes.

The Heart of Mid-Lothian, the middle publication in this series, like Scott's other novels, contains many elements associated with ballads and them in specific social and historical contexts. The story opens with the Porteous riots in 1730s Edinburgh. After dramatizing the mob action against the imprisoned head of the guards, the novel shifts scenes and tells the story of two sisters, Jeanie and Effie Deans. Because her sister refused to lie for her, Effie Deans has been found guilty of infanticide after the disappearance of her baby. To save her sister, Jeanie Deans makes a trek to London to gain the Queen's pardon. The scene in which Jeanie petitions the Queen is emblematic of Scott's intermingling of the historic and romantic: Jeanie Deans is overawed by the presence of her monarch, and the granting of the pardon itself seems to partake, for her at least, of some of the godly grace associated with royalty. From the Queen's perspective,

this meeting with a subject affords an opportunity for political maneuvering: it allows her to do a favor for a nobleman, the Duke of Argyle, whom she would like to cultivate as an ally.

The Heart of Mid-Lothian, then, is a historical novel in which a combination of events and the political and religious allegiances of the past are integral to the movement of the narrative itself. The narrative interest is not in the eventual fates of these greater political parties, but in the story of the two sisters. This central narrative is also based on historical sources—the story of Helen Walker, which Scott gives in a note to the 1830 version of the novel. As originally published, the novel opens with a preface, addressed to the reader, and written by Jedediah Cleishbotham (and since Cleish meant paddle, and he was a school master, he was a particularly transparent fictional proxy). From the first sentence, the preface calls attention to its own artifice:

> If ingratitude comprehendeth every vice, surely so foul a stain worst of all beseemeth him whose life has been devoted to instructing youth in virtue and in humane letters. Therefore have I chosen, is this prologomen, to unload my burden of thanks at thy feet, for the favour with which thou hast kindly entertained the Tales of my Landlord (7).

This voice is clearly not Scott, or more accurately, clearly not the anonymous author. Yet the sentiment here is authorial: he is thanking his readership for enjoying his works. In essence, the preface contains, as Scott himself later would say, "Many a true word [is] spoken in jest." The preface essentially tells two different stories--Jedediah harvests the fruits of his poor, dead assistant's transcription of Scottish tales while the author, speaking through Jedediah's voice, establishes his right to tell the story of Jeanie and

Effie Deans. This deferral of the source of the story gives the narrative a history itself—a provenance. By having the text pass through so many social classes and physical locales—from the story of the traveler (an elderly gentleman, recounting a story he heard in his youth) to the account of Peter Pattieson to the text printed by Jedediah Cleishbotham, the story gains in authenticity by the fact that the multiple 'authors' of the text represent a cross-section of Scottish society. The story is not simply written by one character or another, but it is instead generated by its provenance.

In the preface, Jedediah states that the tale was written only out of gratitude for the enjoyment that his previous tales created and

> With this sole purpose, and disclaiming all intentions of purchasing that pendicle or pofle of land called the Carlinescroft, lying adjacent to my garden and measuring seven acres, three roods, and four perches, that I have committed to the eyes of those who thought well of the former tomes, these four additional volumes of the Tales of my Landlord. Not the less, if Peter Prayfort be minded to sell the said pofle, it is at his own choice to say so; and, peradventure, he may meet with a purchaser: unless (gentle reader) the pleasing pourtraictures of Peter Pattieson, now given unto thee in particular, and unto the public in general, shall have lost their favour in thine eyes, whereof I am in no way distrustful (7-8).

The money received by Scott upon the publication of the first series of *Tales of My Landlord* allowed him to expand Abbotsford, his country home. Some readers, aware of Scott's new-found money, might have made the connection. Even those unaware of Scott's windfall would have probably read this as a thinly veiled reference to the

anonymous author's increasing success as an author and its earthly reward. Scott, in essence, is writing for a readership scouring the preface for what amounted to clues as to the identity of the author.[76] The comic, almost tongue-twisting quality of this passage also reminds the reader that Jedediah's income comes at the expense of the series 'true' transcriber, Peter Pattieson—as does the proliferation of P's echoing Peter's name. That irony is quickly discarded by the narrator in favor of returning to the question of his own identity. The preface alludes to reports that the author of the *Waverley* novels is the author as well of these works, a charge he assures the reader he will refute when the reader joins him for a drink and a glimpse at his manuscripts at his home at Carlinescroft:

> It is there, O highly esteemed and beloved reader, thou wilt be able to bear testimony, through the medium of thine own senses, against the children of vanity, who have sought to identify thy friend and servant with I know not what inditer of vain fables; who hath cumbered the world with his devices, but shrunken from the responsibility thereof (8).

This fairly complex passage does not actually state that Jedediah is not the author of the *Waverley* series as well as *The Tales of my Landlord* series. Instead, it invites the reader to his country estate, where they will view evidence that contradicts the accounts of those who would identify him, Jedediah Cleishbotham, with the author of certain other works, without actually offering that evidence or identifying those other works or that other author. In other words, the reader is invited to a fictional estate where a fictional author will show him proof that he is not another, unidentified but real author. Post Watergate, this would be termed a non-denial denial.

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[76] The combination of an anonymous author and a popular work usually piques an audience's curiosity. Consider the recent furor in the U.S. over the author of *Primary Colors*.

The next sentence addresses the issue of the author's identity with the same legalistic precision and pompous tone:

> Truly, this hath been well termed a generation hard of faith; since what can a man do to assert his property in a printed tome, saving to put his name in the title-page thereof, with his description, or designation as the lawyers term it, and place of abode (8).

On the surface, this is a transparent and obvious lie: Jedediah Cleishbotham is not the author of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*. Within the fictional frame of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, he is not even its transcriber: the work is that of his tenant, Peter Pattieson. Although the title page does contain all of the patently false information concerning the fictional Jedediah Cleishbotham, it is in the preface that Walter Scott, as the author of the *Tales of My Landlord* series, has hidden his place of abode, as well as his designation, his signature. The constant games of this preface as well as the complex provenance echo the earlier prefaces, and the patently fictional content of the preface functions as a signature of the author.

Scott's presentation of himself as an impartial judge of the past is complicated by his anonymity. As the preface suggests, attacks on identity are attacks on authority, on the author's right to tell the story:

> These cavillers have not only doubted mine identity, although thus plainly proved, but they have impeached my veracity and the authenticity of my historical narratives!...It has been demanded of me, Jedediah Cleishbotham, by what right I am entitled to constitute myself an impartial judge of these discrepancies of opinion [between competing versions of

> Scotland's past], seeing (as it is stated) that I must necessarily have descended from one or other of the contending parties, and be, of course, for better or for worse, according to the reasonable practice of Scotland, to its dogmata or opinions, and bound, as it were, by the tie matrimonial, or, to speak without metaphor, *ex jure sanguinis*,[77] to maintain them in preference to all others (8-9).

Historical matters, as Scott indicates, are matters of current concern. For the historical novel to be a successful recounting of a fictional occurrence in a real past, the author must possess the reader's trust as a writer of fictions and as an historian. The author cannot come across as a partisan for any particular cause or side in the battles of the past. Scott addresses these charges, but in character. Jedediah's defense, against those who doubt both his identity and the authenticity of his tales, is to rely on his own authority and his own ancestors, to

> Claim a privilege to write and speak of both parties with impartiality. For, O ye powers of logic! when the prelatists and Presbyterians of old times went together by the ears in this unlucky country, my ancestor (venerated be his memory!) was one of the people called Quakers, and suffered severe handling from either side, even to the extenuation of his purse and the incarceration of his person (9).

Jedediah's claim is Scott's as well-- he too had a Quaker ancestor. When he finally admitted authorship, in fact, his note to the "prologomen" or preface consisted of a family tree, emphasizing his Quaker ancestors. Jedediah's family tree and his concerns are

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[77] The use of legal language and legalistic precision is perhaps another clue offered to his audience that Sir Walter Scott is the true author of the novel.

essentially a fictionalized version of Scott's. The voice then, is comedic, but the matter is serious.

In the *Tales of My Landlord* series, the archetypal characters inhabiting the frame (the pedantic schoolmaster, the earnest scholar who dies young, the travelers telling stories at the inn) generate the stories included in the series. By introducing these fictional provenances into the apparatus of his novels, the folk tradition is allowed to coexist (both structurally and contentwise) alongside an author who has created those characters and who is, because of his anonymity, a textual construct similar to the characters inside the frame. The repeated deferral of the actual assumption of authority by Scott, along with the echoes of folk tradition outside and within the narrative, lends the historical accounts contained therein their power.

In the preface to *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, as well as throughout the novels in the *Waverley* series, Scott plays a serious game with his readership, one that parallels his literary project. Since he has chosen to remain anonymous, the only avenue he has to defend or explain his choice of material or address his readership is through a series of masks. His readership is aware of this fact and no matter how tedious and clumsy some of them might have found the prefaces—a fact Scott himself seems to have realized, as he wonders in his unsigned review as to why the *Tales of my Landlord* were so entitled (as they seem to be the tales of nobody's landlord)-- it is in the prefaces and the related texts that information concerning the identity of the author could be found. Scott adheres to a pattern throughout the preface: although the particulars and voice are not his own, the matter of what is said is mainly true. Scott's profits from the first *Tales of My Landlord* series did enable him to increase his property, he did desire to write impartially about a

past whose battles were still being fought, and he was the descendant of a Quaker. The reader who correctly reads the preface is well prepared to read the historical novel that follows: it too is a fictionalized account in which Scott has attempted to tell an essentially true history of the past.

Afterword

The most significant preface to a work of British poetry after the Romantic era, Matthew Arnold's preface to the first edition of his poems, echoes Wordsworth in its concern for the proper subject of poetry. Unlike his predecessor's predilection for "simple and unelaborated expressions" (245), Arnold states that the matter of poetry should itself be grand:

> The poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent? Those certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of times. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also. (*Selected Prose* 44)

The diction is borrowed from Wordsworth, but Arnold directly opposes his poetry to that produced by the Romantics:

> We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes; we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time; yet I fearlessly assert that Hermann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, the Excursion, leave the reader cold in comparison with

> the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the Iliad, by the Oresteia, or by the episode of Dido (*Selected Prose* 44).

The impulse to separate oneself from one's predecessors, to create a poetry that is both true to poetry's eternal nature and suited for one's time—these themes are lifted, either conscious or unconsciously, from the preface to *Lyrical* Ballads. Even as Arnold opposes his poetry to that of the Romantics, he does so on Wordsworth's terms. In the end, Arnold's preface is overshadowed by the work of his predecessor: the reader hears the echoes of Wordsworth in Arnold's preface and not the voice of Arnold.[78]

The nineteenth century does see a rise in one particular subset of authorial prefaces: the prefaces to revised editions and reprints of original works. The nineteenth century novels examined in chapter five, for example, all underwent multiple editions, and each edition of the work featured a different apparatus. Thus, when Sir Walter Scott printed his novels in a collected edition, he added new prefaces and lengthy notes concerning the historical sources for his stories. Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* made him a celebrity in 1837, but Dickens's final preface to *The Pickwick Papers* was not written until thirty years after its original publication as a novel (and thirty one years after the beginning of its run as a serial).

The practice of attaching prefaces to a revised and collected edition of one's work reached its apogee with Henry James. Before Henry James, the idea of multiple editions of a work and deluxe editions was commonplace: successful works were reprinted, usually in updated editions. The New York Edition was a financial failure and thus not a very encouraging model for publishers to follow. Our deluxe editions, and Library of

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[78] See Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.

America editions, are reserved for dead, esteemed authors. Second editions of novels do not usually mean more than an alteration of the cover design, if even that.

Henry James's prefaces, like Shaw's, flirt with escape velocity: they have not stayed closely associated with the texts that they preface. As Swift observed in his mock-preface to *The Tale of A Tub*, the preface is a repository for an excess of personality. In Swift's parody, the preface does not tell the reader anything of importance about the work to which it is attached, but it does reveal the 'author' to be an unpleasant, longwinded fellow. James's prefaces have puzzled critics because the aesthetic theories they imply and the practice describe often seem to be at odds with the novels they preface. Instead of reading through that resistance, most readers have, by canonizing the prefaces, removed them from their original contexts. Similarly, Shaw as a preface writer cannot seem to help himself: his opinions, politics, his very personality, fill the prefaces. They digress from the texts they introduce because their aim is the same as the texts they preface: they are attempts to convert the reader. His prefaces, like the texts they preface, are means, not ends. In an age in which the critical and aesthetic impulse was to examine a text as a discrete work of art, authorial presence, such as that found in prefaces, was decidedly not in fashion. In those cases where it did appear—in Shaw, in James, and a few others—the critical tendency was (and still is) to read the preface as separate from the text it prefaces.

This tendency of prefaces to outlast or separate themselves from their original contexts is inherent in the form: the authorial voice in the preface simultaneously links the preface to a text and distances the preface from that text. Prefaces not only suggest ways of reading texts, they also construct an image of the author independent from the

text. The stronger the voice in a preface, the more it creates an image of an author separate from the text it prefaces.

Although not as common as they once were, the authorial preface and related paratextual forms are not completely dead or forgotten. Most often, the authorial preface appears in front of reprinted juvenilia, and serves as a way to control the reader's experience of that work. The British poet Philip Larkin, for example, uses the preface to his *White Ships* to claim Yeats as an influence and pre-empting criticism of those who would see Larkin's early poetry as derivative. By admitting his faults, and by reminding the reader that this is an early work, he refigures the poetry included therein so that it is not judged on its own merits but is instead to be read as filled with promise of the author's later works. In a similar case, Thomas Pynchon's preface to the collection of his juvenalia, *Slow Learner*, assumes a critical distance from his early works, constructing a narrative of an apprentice author, practicing his craft in the wake of the Beat authors, particularly Jack Kerouac. Pynchon's preface is as interesting for the connections it does not make. Although Pynchon studied at Cornell, in the period after Nabokov had become famous, and his early work is contemporaneous with the great experimental novelists and satirists of the late fifties such as John Hawkes, John Barth, and Joseph Heller, none of these writers appear at all in this preface. Instead, Pynchon aligns his work with that of Jack Kerouac and with the distinctly American vein mined by the Beats. The preface, in other words, emphasizes Pynchon's American roots while downplaying is place in the early postmodernist pantheon.

With the exception of juvenilia, writing a preface to a work of fiction or drama or poetry is no longer a generally accepted practice. Today, writers have many other ways

of speaking to their audience: they read their work in public, they submit to interviews, they write critical essays or letters to the editor. However none of these forums fills exactly the same space as the authorial preface. Only in a preface can an author speak, uninterrupted and unimpeded, to his or her audience. Only prefaces have the ability to shape us into readers while giving shape to an author.

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