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THE FUNCTIONAL PREFACE IN AMERICAN FICTION

DISSERTATION

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

By

Mohan Lal Sharma, M. A., B. A. (Hons.)

****

The Ohio State University
1965

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VITA

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FIELDS OF STUDY

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .......................................................... ii

VITA ........................................................................ iv

Chapter

I  PREFERENCES .............................................................. 1

II  THE SENTIMENTAL, DIDACTIC, AND APOLLOGISTIC PREFACE.... 6

III  THE CHANGING PREFACE ................................................. 16

IV  THE DEVELOPING PREFACE ............................................. 23

V  MORE SENTIMENTAL PREFACES ...................................... 32

VI  THE PREFACE OF DISCRIMINATION ................................ 54

VII  FROM THE POPULAR TO THE ALLEGORICAL PREFACE .......... 65

VIII  THE HORTATORY PREFACE ........................................... 73

IX  THE SIGNIFICANT AND THE BANAL PREFACE ...................... 97

X  THE HUMANITARIAN PREFACE ....................................... 112

XI  THE PROVINCIAL PREFACE ........................................... 120

XII  THE ANTI-SENTIMENTAL PREFACE ................................ 147

XIII  THE ARTISTIC PREFACE .............................................. 159

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: WORKS .................................. 199

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: CRITICISM AND SPECIAL STUDIES .. 212
Chapter I

Prefatory

Although the great American novel is yet to be written, the American novelists' contribution is, nonetheless, extremely significant. Some glimpses of this wonderful House of Fiction can be had even at its door-step. The fictional preface changes its face with the passage of time and moves between poles (to use the Toynbeean formula) of "withdrawal and return" in an artless or artistic design formed partly from within by the nature of the artist and his material and partly imposed from without by Americans' Puritanical-practical ancestry. But it has a gripping story to tell.

The story of the preface is part of the fictional development in America about which a few assumptions and generalizations may not be out of place at the very outset. ¹

As is true of the movies, American fiction began as a form of diversion outside of the pale of serious art, and was for long actively opposed by America's cultural traditions and Puritan mores. It was a pariah, a step-child in literature, a genre with a lower status. Americans, who were haunted by the shadow of the classical epic, dis-

¹The salient points presented here are an inadequate profile of an extremely stimulating and inseminating discussion which took place one morning in a course in American Fiction that I had with Professor Charvat a few years ago.
missed fiction as a "youthful toy," "the rattle-box of sixteen," and classed it with cock-fighting and "stage-shews," or with "sitting cross-legged, straddling, spitting, blowing noses" etc. The Philadelphia Repository and Weekly Register of June 6, 1801 went so far as to stigmatize novels as "the one great engine in the hands of the fiends of darkness." Another factor responsible for devitalizing the fiction that did get past the Puritan block was the Common Sense School of Thought. In the teeth of strong opposition, however, the disreputable early novel continued to grow. Timothy Dwight's statement—"Between the Bible and the novels, there is a gulf fixed"—obliquely shows the strength of this branch of literature which was published even in small towns. Although the form was not respectable, it had its appeal, especially for the feminine consumers, who rented novels of seduction and Gothic tales.

As is true of melodrama, American fiction was largely an importation from Europe, especially England. There naturally arose, therefore, the need for the American novelist to naturalize the form. Several factors—more properly, their combination—conditioned the process of domestication. One was the political fact of independence which "bred a self-consciousness of autonomy and a conviction that the nation was set apart from all others, not only politically and eco-

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1 These are some of the strictures passed on fiction by Noah Webster. A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings... (Boston, 1790), p. 29.

onomically, but philosophically and culturally as well."

Another fact which shaped writing in the new nation was economic. Most of the basic inventions, and many of the improvements for book production, were put to use in America by 1800. From the beginning—and the timing is important—a national literature in America has been connected with the imperious commercial processes of manufacture and distribution. A large distribution meant more than new readers; it meant that a popular book could create a demand for other books like it. The third factor was the acute awareness of the utilitarian doctrine resting on the conviction that imaginative literature must "serve some calculable and purposive mission."

Flatitudinous as it may sound, in most works of American fiction there was explicit or implicit a conflict between the claims of society and of the writer as well as a dichotomy between the life of action and the life of thought, leading to a tension between the public and private elements in the art of fiction. In philosophical terms, this meant a conflict between the writer and the reader centred in opposing conflicts of what constitutes real life or Realia, to use a term of Wallace Stevens. Whereas writers such as Hawthorne and Melville resorted to "make-believe" in all artistic sincerity, the general reader took the phrase in a pejorative sense.

There has been an increasing stratification in taste during the last 150 years, in levels of sophistication from crude mass fiction to avant-garde fiction. Fiction has ceased being merely

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2 Ibid., p. xii.
experimental, although it continues to explore new forms. Again, influences have flowed both up and down in fiction. Journalistic techniques—Hemingway is an example par excellence—have also had an impact on fiction. On the other hand, Cooper uses many of the devices similar to those employed in the dime novel later on.

The public attitude toward the writer of fiction is usually a mixture of hostility, condescension, and awe, leading to an exploitation of the author's personality. To preserve his personality, the writer creates an image of himself. The hunter Hemingway and the drunken Bohemian Poe (or, the "Edgairpo" of Baudelaire) are cases in point. James has a few stories such as "The Death of the Lion" on the subject.

For sheer self-protection, the writer develops strategies and techniques for saying what he wants to say without letting the reader hold him responsible for it. Manipulation of the point of view, ambiguity, irony, humor, symbolism, fable, etc., are examples.

Connected with the writer's defensive and sometimes offensive strategies are prefaces, dedications, prologues, preludes, introductions, notes, advertisements, forewords, explanatory statements, epigraphs, titles, etc. At times, these are designed to throw the reader off; on occasions, to amuse, elicit patronage, acknowledge aid, shake the reader's hand or establish a rapport with him. A few prefaces (those of Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, Howells, and above all James) offer critical theories and even become organic parts of works of fiction.

This study is the first sustained attempt to fully examine the
various strategies and devices which American authors have used in fictional prefaces. I begin my story with the dawn of American fiction and stop with Henry James. As a dedicated artist, James claimed for himself in the last of his prefaces the title of a poet. This I hope to show is not an extravagant claim, since, poets, no less than novelists, have much to learn from the prefaces and works of this "master" (as he was called by Marianne Moore and others in later life).

Written in retrospect, James's prefaces throw light on the art of fiction, as the author saw it in a backward glance. In these he narrated the story of each story, traced the processes of his "fine" mind (in T. S. Eliot's phrase) in particular acts of creation, and as R. P. Blackmur has said, "by insisting on lucidity and intelligence secured something like an ideal vision." ¹ Surely, James's prefaces are a far cry from the early days when the novel of the United States was in its infancy.

CHAPTER II

THE SENTIMENTAL, DIADACTIC, AND APOLOGETIC PREFACE

The early American fictional prefaces were written self-consciously, if not nervously and timidly, against critics who were ever ready to pounce upon the writer with the ferocity of "sharkish harpooners" (Melville's phrase, Moby Dick, Chapter XVIII). Of course, the writer did try to appeal to the readers, most of whom were women, especially young girls and chamber-maids. This is evident from the prefatory statements in the three types of novel which were in vogue in England and America around 1790: the sentimental (or domestic), the satirical, and the Gothic.

When American authors suddenly began to write stories of their own, the first kind to succeed was the sentimental. Its theme, seduction, provided thrills as well as moral lessons which made fiction acceptable. Thus William Hill Brown's The Power of Sympathy (Boston, 1739), usually reckoned the first American novel written on American soil, was addressed "to the Young Ladies of United Columbia." It was "intended to represent the specious causes and to expose the fatal consequences of seduction; to inspire the female mind with a principle of self complacency and to promote the economy of human life." This didactic solicitude prefaces a story of seduction, near-incest, abduction, and suicide, a copy of The Sorrows of Werther lying beside the dead
hero. The secondary plot so obviously exploited a private scandal that Brown had to suppress the book, although his preface formally declared high moral aims:

In Novels which expose no particular vice, and which recommend no particular virtue, the fair Reader, though she may find amusement, must finish them without being impressed with any particular idea....

As the title page makes clear, the story is "founded in truth." But as unfolded it goes counter to the writer's prefatory profession. Between the covers of this sensational first American novel lie the very ingredients against which moralists were inveighing.

In the 1780's and 90's the London Minerva Press maintained a stable of writers, who ground out the 'misery' novel, a species which has continued in radio and television right down the line. Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple (London, 1791), which Leslie Fiedler in Love and Death in the American Novel (New York, 1960) connects with the story of Temple Drake, is a remarkable example of the type. The preface makes the formal declaration: "For the perusal of the young and thoughtless of the fair sex this Tale of Truth is designed."

In Trials of the Human Heart (Philadelphia, 1795), her first American novel, Mrs. Rowson tried a new recipe: interest in America. Modestly and carefully, she begins her preface:

As a person of sensibility...experiences a sensation undescrribably painful, in being necessitated to announce himself...so I feel...whilst...writing a Preface....It is introducing not myself indeed, but what is really the same thing, the offspring of my imagination....

About America, Mrs. Rowson prophetically says: "...the arts are encouraged, manufactures increase, and this happy land bids fair to be...the most flourishing nation in the universe."
One prefatory remark anticipates Cooper's rendering of the character of Leather-Stocking:

In narratives, where historical veracity has no place, I cannot discover why there should not be exhibited a most perfect idea of virtue, not angelical, nor above probability; for what we cannot credit, we shall never imitate....

She claims:

Upon this plan, I have endeavoured to form the "Trials of the Human Heart." My heroine, though not wholly free from error...is not altogether unworthy of imitation....

In the Introduction to Reuben and Rachel: or Tales of Old Times (Boston, 1793) the former Minerva Press novelist says that "prefaces in general are esteemed of so little consequence, that few persons take the trouble to read them." She avows her intention "to awaken in the minds of young readers, a curiosity that might lead them to the attentive perusal of history in general, but more especially the history of their native country."

Similar in its moral aim and allegedly "founded on fact" is Mrs. Hannah Webster Foster's The Coquette (Boston, 1797), the sad story of Elizabeth Whitman, daughter of a trustee of Yale College, and supposedly "a great reader of romances."

Another example of the "elegantly edifying type of fiction" is Caroline Matilda Warren's The Gamesters; or, Ruins of Innocence (Boston, 1305). The preface is notably defensive in tone:

At a period, when the novelist is seldom greeted with a solitary smile of approbation from the whole regiment of literati...it may argue a degree of temerity to produce a work, which bears this "image and superscription."

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She states her object:

'To blend instruction with amusement, and at once to regulate the imagination, and reform the heart' has been the writer's object, and how far she has succeeded, a candid public will determine.

She stresses her moral aim:

Though...the work would not pass unscorched through the fiery ordeal of criticism; yet if it...snatch from the precipice of ruin, one fair fabric of innocence, she will deem herself amply compensated....

She specially addresses the male critics:

Of the ill judging...hypercritic, who views with the jaundiced eye of prejudice, 'every production from a female pen,' she has nothing to ask...believing that the really learned...will approve the intention....

Mrs. Warren makes some parade of her acquaintance with "polite authors," and in a suicide scene substitutes Addison's Cato for Goethe's Werther. Otherwise, there is little that is new in her attempt to "blend instruction with amusement," as the preface professes.

In a somewhat later work by Rebecca Rush, Kelroy (Philadelphia, 1812), the didactic novel, without losing its moralizing tone, shows the influence of the novel of manners and of romance. The opening words of the novel read like a built-in preface:

In all ages...the legends...of that soft passion which pervades creation have ever been cherished with peculiar care. The song of the poet, and the grave pen of the historian have alike been employed to perpetuate its eventful scenes....

The more romantic and less deliberately edifying type of female fiction is represented by The Hapless Orphan, or Innocent Victim of Revenge (Boston, 1793), Cynthia, with the tragical account of the unfortunate loves of Almerin and Desdemona (Northampton, Mass., 1798); The Fortunate Discovery, or the History of Henry Villars (New York,
Moreland Vale, or the Fair Fucquive (New York, 1801); Margaretta (Philadelphia, 1807), etc. Mrs. Martha Read's preface to Monima, or the Beggar Girl (New York, 1802) is typical of the species. At the outset, the author disclaims the use of prefaces:

A preface is of little use...as those who are solicitous to know the fate of the hero or heroine, seldom appropriate any time to the reading of a dull...prelude....

In accents less clear than Howells's the author professes to present the novel as "a very plain picture of life":

This novel is only a very plain picture of life; and those whom this doth not please, can dive into...romance, and...the effusions of fancy of those who have thought nature and truth...dull....

The preface sentimentally defends the low theme of begging:

To those..."deeply versed in mathematics, "a novel which only treats of beggary, must appear insipid...but those who have the tear of pity...let them praise the tale of sorrow....

Just as Defoe in the preface to Robinson Crusoe (1719) had claimed that he, as editor, "believes the thing to be a just history of fact," similarly most of the early American novels are professedly on their title pages, and in their advertisements and prefaces, tales of truth. Mrs. P. D. Manvill, for example, prefaces Lucinda; or, The Mountain Mourner (Johnstown, New York, 1807) with an impressive testimonial letter signed by a number of respectable citizens:

"To The Publick"

We, the undersigned, having perused the book... recommend it to...the American Publick, and particularly to the young and inexperienced, as possessing from its being founded on realities, superior merit to most publications of a similar nature. It contains...incontestable facts, and is well calculated to afford not only amusement, but useful instruction, to any reader of sensibility and reflection.
Elias Gilbert, Min. of the Gospel., Greenfield.
Mark A. Child, Esq., Greenfield.
Ezra Nash, Justice of the Peace.
E. White, Jun., Merchant, Ballston Spa.
Prince Wing,
Noah Weed,
David Duel,
Benjamin Peek,
Members of the Soc. of Friends.
Asa C. Barney, M. D.,
Greenfield.
Charles Deake,
Deacon of a B. C. Greenfield.
Lemuel Smith,
Min. of the Gospel, Canajohane.
(6th ed., Ithaca, 1839)

In the preface to *Emily Hamilton* (Worcester, 1803), Eliza Vicery admits that "novel-reading is prejudicial to young minds, by giving them wrong ideas of the world," a case of a novelist mocking the genre.

A few prefaxes show some awareness of the various issues involved, not so much in artistic as moral and philosophical terms: the view, for instance, that fiction is many steps removed from reality: it deals with what *seems*, not with what *is*. But many prefaxes to these "early faded favorites," most of which are 'misery' novels, and deal with seduction and the "metaphysics of misfortune," are "manifestations of the sentimental mind," and of "the handkerchief-ly feeling." ¹ In such an atmosphere, which is pervaded by mistrust of fiction and imagination, the apologetic preface can neither overtly

introduce artistic considerations, nor pretend to ignore them.
A good example is William Hill Brown's *Ira and Isabella* (Boston, 1807), which has an epigraph from Hugh Blair: "Fictitious Histories might be employed for very useful purposes." In his preface, Brown laments the loss of "fairyism" and of the "Eastern manner" and machinery, in which he could have proved himself "Confucius or Xixzaffou." In the story, the rake Florio urges Ira "to live; not to vegetate," an observation which anticipates Henry James. The lack of coherence, however, foreshadows confusion. As the preface shows, Brown puts too many eggs in his fictional basket, which breaks under the strain.

Meanwhile, the trials of the emerging type of heroine did not meet with universal approval. In *Female Quixotism exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon* (Boston, 1801), Mrs. Tabitha Tenney repeated the attack of Mrs. Lennox's *Female Quixote* (London, 1752) on romances of the Cleopatra type. Addressing all Columbian young ladies, the author stressed the harmful effects of indiscriminately reading too many novels and romances:

I am sensible you will find it a very singular and extraordinary piece of biography...a mere romance, and Hogarthian caricature...But when you compare it with the most extravagant parts of the authentic history of the celebrated...Don Quixote...you will no longer doubt its being a true uncolored history of a romantic country girl whose head had been turned by the unrestrained perusal of Novels and Romances....

A finer job is Charles Brockden Brown's *Jane Talbot* (Philadelphia, 1801), which handles the problem of a sensitive woman entering a loveless marriage with a finesse that anticipates some
of Henry James's stories. Letter I reads as a built-in preface:

I am very far from being a wise girl....Conscience tells me it is folly to wrap my existence in one frail mortal....

Similarly, Clara Howard (Philadelphia, 1801) is a love story posing an ethical dilemma.

Unlike Brown, however, there were many early novelists whose novels "were so flooded with didacticism that no spark of artistic merit could survive." 1 In point of time, The Memoirs of the Bloomsbury Family (Boston, 1790) by the Reverend Enos Hitchcock, D. D. is a good "bad" example of the educational tale. If Mrs. Rowson's Mentor is (Philadelphia, 1794) is a "veritable correspondence-school course in social behavior," 2 Dr. Hitchcock's Memoirs is a crazy-quilt. It was written, the author declared, in answer to pressing requests for his sentiments "on a mode of domestic education, suited to the present society." In his prefatory apology, the author acknowledged the heterogeneity of his book: "It will not be in my power in... epistolary writing, to observe rigid order, on a subject which involves variety...."

Ebenzer Bradford's The Art of Courting (Newburyport, 1795) has the avowed intention of impressing "young people with a lively sense of the love and favor of heaven in granting to the human race the institution of marriage." The moral is enlivened by such inane verses as these compliments from Olivia to Emilius:

The beauties of the blooming spring,
Fresh to mind Emilius bring,
The flowers which give a fragrant smell
Do emulate his virtues well.


2 Brown, op. cit., p. 63.
The satirical form of didacticism which gave rise to a number of eighteenth-century Quixotes is represented in America by Henry Brackenridge's "lively novel" 1 Modern Chivalry. 2 In "The Author's Address to the Reader," it is claimed that "a production in which style, language, and forms of expression are more regarded than matter" has been presented. The author adds: "When I get a man to laugh, I put him in a good humor with himself, and his neighbor." His conclusion is a strategy to throw the reader off: "It may be...there is a moral in the book...Truth is at the bottom of the well, and will remain there unless some one draws the bucket." Brackenridge says that he intended his book for "Tom, Dick, and Harry in the woods"; but the quality of its prose is such as to appeal to the intelligentsia.

Another popular genre of the period is the tale of adventurous travel. James Butler's Fortune's Football (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1797) has the usual didactic preface which claims authenticity:

Having been...acquainted with the hero...I can vouch for the authenticity of the narrative.... If the subjects are not sublime, they have a...tendency to propagate sentiments of virtue....

Royall Tyler's The Algerian Captive (Walpole, New Hampshire, 1797) is openly didactic. The preface begins with a note on the changed literary scene in America:

One of the first observations, the author...made upon his return...was the extreme avidity, with which books of mere amusement were purchased by


2 Published in parts in Philadelphia and Pittsburg, 1792-1815.
all ranks of his countrymen....

Tyler patriotically admits:

While this love of literature...is pleasing... there are two things to be deplored. The first is that... books...are not of our own manufacture... that Novels, being the picture of the times, the New England reader is...taught to admire the levity, and...the vices of the parent country....

He suggests: "There are two things wanted...that we write our own books of amusement, and that they exhibit our own manners...."

Excepting **Modern Chivalry**, none of the early American novels can claim lasting worth. As amateurish exercises, they were written tentatively and apologetically. For example, the "advertisement" to Mrs. Sally Sayward Barrell Keating Wood's **Ferdinand and Elmira** (Baltimore, 1804) has a plea prefixed to the work by her publisher:

The writer of this instructive and amusing work has heretofore published the effusions of her fancy in New England; and...commanded that applause which Genius and Fancy never fail of producing on...minds who will take the trouble to discriminate between the...day-labor of the common English novelist...and the Lady of refined sentiments and...taste, who writes for the amusement of herself, her friends and the public.

The American novel of the day followed the British novel in its "most uninspired and uninspiring period." ¹ No wonder, the attitude of the American authors in their prefaces and writings is mostly apologetic and uncritical.

¹Loshe, *on. cit.*, p. 27.
CHAPTER III
THE CHANGING PREFACE

The sentimental and didactic fiction in the United States, as in England, gave way, gradually, to the new fashion of the time, the Gothic. Accordingly, the tone and tenor of the prefaces began to undergo some change. The first notable name in the new genre is Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810), variously known as "The First American Novelist," "The Father of American Fiction," and "The First American Man of Letters." The first of Brown's novels to be published was Wieland, or The Transformation (New York, 1798). Its announcement is a serious appeal to the reader:

Whether this tale will be classed with the ordinary or frivolous sources of amusement, or be ranked with the few productions whose usefulness secures to them a lasting reputation, the reader must be permitted to decide.

A word on the plot follows:

The incidents related are extraordinary and rare. Some approach as nearly to the nature of miracles as can be done by that which is not truly miraculous....

Next, Brown discusses the credibility of events:

Some...may think the conduct of the younger Wieland impossible. In support of its possibility the writer must appeal to physicians, and to men conversant with the latent springs and occasional perversions of the human mind.

In conclusion, Brown emphasizes authenticity:

...these events took place between the conclusion of the French and the beginning of the Revolutionary War....
Brown's preface, brief though it is, foreshadows the blending of the Gothic method with the intellectual, psychological, and ethical dimensions which may have given Mary Shelley the idea for her *Frankenstein*.

In *Ormond* (New York, 1799), Brown presents an intelligent but unscrupulous member of the Illuminati. In his prefatory remarks, Brown says: "Ormond will, perhaps, appear...a contradictory...being...It was not prudent to unfold all the means by which I gained a knowledge of his actions..." Yet opposite the villain, Brown places the good girl Constantia Dudley regarding whom the preface says: "Constantia, like all the beings made known to us, not by fancy, but experience, has numerous defects." Brown further professes the use of the American social scene which differs from the European:

The distinctions of birth, the artificial degrees of esteem or contempt which connect themselves with different professions and ranks...are but little known among us.

The last sentence vouches for authenticity: "If these details be...unsatisfactory...go and examine for yourself." On the organization of the plot, the preface has a special note: "My narrative will have little of that merit which flows from unity of design. You are desirous of hearing an authentic, and not a fictitious tale...."

*Arthur Mervyn* (Philadelphia, New York, 1799-1800) is a serious study of the problem of yellow fever and stresses civic responsibility. In the preface, Brown "the moral observer" remarks, "The evils of pestilence by which this city has lately been afflicted will...form an era in its history. The schemes of reformation...the change in
manners and population which they will produce, will be...memorable."

_Edgar Huntly_ (Philadelphia, 1799) broke new ground. Its preface makes significant points. After acknowledging his debt to the public for giving a "flattering reception" to _Arthur Mervyn_, Brown shows concern about the theme of Americanism:

America has opened new views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldom furnished themes to the moral painter....The sources of amusement...and instruction...are equally...inexhaustible....

Modestly but prophetically he says:

One merit the writer may...claim; that of calling forth the sympathy of the reader by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors. Puerile superstition and exploded manners; Gothic castles and chimeras, are the materials usually employed...The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of western wilderness, are far more suitable....

Brown's prefaces show that as "a conscious craftsman" engaged in "book-making...the dullest of all trades," he was acutely aware of his position as an American writer. He valiantly tried to use native materials or "American subject matter," ¹ thus opening new "sluices of power," especially in the use of "the incidents of Indian hostility" and "the perils of western wilderness." ²

Strong as Brown's work was in some ways, it did not strike roots. Only George Watterson tried to follow him. The latter's dreary story _The Lawyer, or Man as He Ought Not to Be_ (Pittsburg, 1803) has the prefatory remark:

The following sheets were written...to exhibit the pernicious effects which result from a vicious education...Man is an imitative being.

---


The rest of the preface shows that the novel is more of a tract than a story.

Another writer, who even used the Illuminati, was Mrs. Sally Sayward Barrell Keating Wood. Her first novel Julia and the Illuminated Baron (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1800) proclaims on the title page:

This volume to the reader's eye displays
Th' infernal conduct of an abandoned man;
When French philosophy infects his ways,
And pours contempt on Heav'n's eternal plan;
Reversing order, truth, and ev'ry good,
And whelming the worlds with ruin's awful flood.

In her preface, Mrs. Wood disavows any intention of writing a political story, saying that she detests "female politicians."
The scene of action is mostly Europe, which is unusual in early American fiction.

Brown's scorn of "puerile superstition and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras" was not shared by I. Mitchell whose The Asylum, or Alonzo and Melissa (Poughkeepsie, 1811) was followed by a condensed version attributed to Daniel Jackson. The Poughkeepsie edition has a "Preface comprising a Short Dissertation on the Novel." In later editions such as that of Brattleboro (1824) this preface is reduced to a page and a half statement of good intentions, while maintaining the original aim to inculcate a firm reliance on Providence. The author says that "the story contains no indecorous stimulants; nor is it filled with unmeaning...incidents, sounding on the sense, but imperceptible to the understanding."
The preface also gives credit to C. B. Brown for originality, pays some tribute to Watterson and Miss Warren, and attempts to define the Novel in terms of Romance without making a clear-cut demarcation between the two. This was to come in later prefaces.
Early Historical Novels and Indian Tales

Perhaps the oldest American tale of the Revolution is *Amelia, or the Faithless Briton* (Boston, 1798). It claims in its preface to be "the first of a series of novels from the same source, and intended for public communication...." The revolution "which the historian has neither leisure nor disposition to communicate," is, however, forgotten, while the story treats of seduction, one of the commonest themes of the day.

*Miss McCrea, A Novel of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1784) written in French by Hilliard d'Auberteuil is supposed to be the first novel written and published in America. It is called on the title page a "Roman Historique." Its advertisement professes to show "ce que la guerre a de plus brillant et de plus affreux..." The author says he has given in contrast "la ferocite des sauvages et les vertus de leurs chefs, l'innocence Ameriquaine et les vices de l'Europe." These are themes which anticipate later writers.

A more vigorous tale is the *History of Constantius and Pulchera* (Boston, 1794), recounting the exploits of the hero and the heroine. The adventures of Pulchera are excelled, however, by those of the heroine of the *Female Review* (Dedham, 1797). H. Mann, the author, claims to have "studiously endeavored to ameliorate every circumstance that might seem too much tinctured with the rougher masculine virtues...with a diction softened and comported to the taste of the virtuous female." The preface has a patriotic
Europe has exhibited its chivalry and wonders. It now remains for America to do the same.

The adventures of the "gallantress," Deborah Sampson, an actual person, with Indians ("the infernals") and the enemy are given at length although perfunctorily.

Mrs. Ann Eliza Bleecker's *History of Maria Kettle* (Hartford, 1797) shows Indians as bloodthirsty. Indian abductors are also used by Gilbert Imlay in *The Emigrants* (London, 1793). Imlay's aim is to point out the political questions which were then plaguing Europe, and particularly the effects of laws concerning marriage and divorce. Imlay's tale is thus like the work of so-called "Revolutionary" novelists who use the "machinery of the romance" to air new opinions. 1

C. B. Brown uses Indians in *Edgar Huntly, or the Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*. The preface declares the author's consciousness of different conditions in the New World and the Old. If Brown did not idealize Indians, he saw their picturesque possibilities as savages and cruel wild beasts and turned them into literary assets.

Another writer who uses the Indian in this period is John Davis. According to him, the Indians "want only an historian who would measure them by the standard of Roman ideas..." Again he declares that "in humanity and all the softer emotions the Indians of America will rival the most polished nations of the world."

1Loshe, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

After Davis's Indian tales came The History of the Female American, or the Extraordinary Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield, Compiled by Herself (Vergennes, Vt., 1814). This was followed by Samuel Woodworth's The Champion of Freedom, or The Mysterious Chief (New York, 1816). Regarding this tale of the War of 1312, the author says: "Although termed a Romance...it will...prove to be the most correct and complete history of the recent War which has yet appeared," and that it is "of domestic manufacture and cannot displease the eye of a patriot." In the preface he claims to "have studied the interest of the reader alone," and asserts the moral intent of the book in its concluding remarks: "I will take my leave of the reader, with two lines that I designed as a motto for the title page but which may not be amiss here:

Show here a vicious thought, however brief,
A thought immoral--and I'll tear the leaf.
CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPING PREFACE

The garrulous John Neal, in Randolph (Baltimore, 1823), discusses the literary situation in America, particularly the novels of C. B. Brown, J. F. Cooper, and, of course, John Neal. His preface to The Down-Easters (New York, 1833) also presents his opinions of American literature. He is so disturbed that writers do not portray American speech that he cries out with his customary exaggeration: "...for every phrase of pure New England speech...I will undertake to find a lump of pure gold in the sweepings of the first poorhouse I come to." He further observes:

To judge by our novel-writers...we have...everything...which goes to the groundwork of a third-rate English or Scotch novel, and nothing...whereby a stranger would be able to distinguish an American story from another...if I except a short story or two by Flint--or myself--in our baby-house annuals....

He suggests as remedy: "The first step toward improvement is having our faults made visible to ourselves--and to others."

He quizzically adds:

But perhaps it may be said that I do not give a faithful picture. To which I answer--perhaps I do. And if I do not, how easy to expose me. And if the picture is faithful, I am betraying my country. Be it so....

Neal's performance was, of course, completely overshadowed by that of J. F. Cooper. Cooper's fifty-seven prefaces throw light on many important points concerning fiction. Out of
thirty-one novels, every novel except the first had a preface in
the first edition. For an English edition he wrote twelve prefaces
between 1831 and 1842, and the same number for an American edition,
between 1849 and 1851. There was a preface to the Leather-Stocking
Tales as a whole, and one to the projected Legends of the Thirteen
Republics.

For The Spy (New York, 1821) Cooper wrote five prefaces. Of
prefaces in general, he says in passing: "Nobody looks at a preface
until he is at a loss to discover from the book itself what it is
that the author means." In his third preface he discusses the
suitability of the American character and scene for fictional
treatment:

Common sense is the characteristic of the American
people....The difficulty is only increased in works
of fiction that are founded on the customs of America,
when a writer attempts to engraft the scions of the
imagination on the stock of history....

Then follows the famous passage in the vein of Hawthorne and
James on "the poverty of materials" available to the American
fictionist:

Besides the familiarity of the subject, there is a
scarcity of events....In the dark ages of our history,...
we hung a few unfortunate women for witches, and suffered
some inroads from the Indians; but...there is no opportu-
nity for digression. Then again...a murder is...much more
interesting in a castle than in a corn field. In short,
all that glow, which can be given to a tale...is not avail-
able in this land of facts. Man is not the same creature
as in other countries....

In the last preface to The Spy, Cooper wrote that he chose
"patriotism for his theme," a fact which increased the popularity
of the book considerably.

In the preface to The Pilot (New York, 1823) Cooper draws a
distinction between the historian and the romance writer:

The privileges of the historian and of the writer of romances are very different....The latter is permitted to garnish a probable fiction, while he is sternly prohibited from dwelling on improbable truths; but it is the duty of the former to record facts as they have occurred....

In his other preface to The Pilot, written for the English edition in 1831 and revised for the Putnam edition in 1849, Cooper describes the occasion of writing the work, which was a conversation in 1823 about Scott's novel The Pirate: "The result of this conversation was a sudden determination to produce a work which...might present truer pictures of the ocean and ships than any that are to be found in The Pirate...." Of the audience he added: "The Pilot would scarcely be a favorite with females."

For Lionel Lincoln (New York, 1824-25), which was to be the first of thirteen "Legends of the Thirteen Republics," Cooper wrote two prefaces, one to the book, one to the series. In the preface to the book he denies any debt to others: "He has stolen no images from the deep, natural poetry of Bryant...." He humorously concludes:

In short—he has pilfered from no black-letter book, nor any six-penny pamphlet; his grandmother unnaturally refused her assistance to his labors....

In 1832 Cooper wrote a third preface to Lionel Lincoln for the English edition. It is an important statement on the use of history:

Perhaps there is no other country, whose history is so little adapted to poetical illustration as that of the United States....There is...neither a dark, nor even an obscure, period in the American annals....
He adds:

No pains were spared in examining all the documents.... Lionel Lincoln...was attacked for a supposed indifference... to the laws of nature, because he introduced a moon so often. The critic...overlooked the material fact, that the time advanced from month to month....

In the final remarks to The Last of the Mohicans (Philadelphia, 1826) Cooper addresses the audience, especially women, bachelors, and clergymen:

...he will advise all young ladies, whose ideas are... limited by the four walls of a comfortable drawing room; all single gentlemen...who are under the influence of the winds; and all clergymen...to abandon the design. He gives this advice to such young ladies, because...they will...pronounce it shocking; to the bachelors, as it might disturb their sleep; and to the reverend clergy, because they might be better employed.

In The Prairie (Philadelphia, 1827), Leather-Stocking figured for the third time. Cooper wrote in his preface about him and the scene:

The introduction of one and the same character...in no less than three books, and the selection of a...desert... for the scene of a legend...may need more vindication. If the first objection (to the central character) can be removed, the latter (to the scene) must fall...as it would become the duty of a faithful chronicler to follow his hero wherever he might choose to go.

Cooper offers a moral "vindication":

The author has seen...something sufficiently instructive... in the life of a veteran of the forest, who, having commenced his career near the Atlantic, had been driven by the increasing...advance of population, to seek a final refuge...in the broad...plains of the West, to induce him to hazard the experiment of publication.

He has a short statement on the use of historical facts in fiction:

There is...in the following pages an occasional departure from strict historical veracity....It was enough...that the
picture should possess the general features of the original: in the shading, attitude, and disposition of the figures, a little liberty has been taken. Even this brief explanation would have been spared did not the author know that there is a certain class of learned Thesbans who are just as fit to read a work of the imagination, as they are qualified to write one.

In the first preface to The Red Rover (Philadelphia, 1827-28), Cooper claims authenticity: "Of the positive evidence of the verity of its contents, the book itself is a striking proof." In the third preface, written in 1850 for the Putnam edition, he laments the poverty of American materials for fiction, which compels him "to invent his legend without looking for the smallest aid from traditions or facts."

In the second preface to the London edition of his next novel The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish (Philadelphia, 1829), Cooper dwelt upon its "poetical" differences from other works:

...the writer has departed...from the usual style of novel-writing in this work, his object having been to produce a familiar poem, rather than a common work of fiction....

In The Pathfinder (Philadelphia, 1840) Cooper returned to a story which combined sailors, Indians, the Great Lakes, and above all, Natty Bumppo. He said in the preface:

It is not an easy task...to introduce the same character in four separate works...without incurring a risk of fatiguing the reader with sameness....

About the Indian character Cooper remarked:

The Indian character has so little variety....Its association with the sailor, too, it is feared, will have more novelty than interest.

In his later preface, Cooper spoke out as author-critic:

...though the world will ever maintain that the author is always the worst judge of his own productions, one who
has written much, and regards all his literary progeny with more or less of a paternal eye, must have a... knowledge of what he has been about the greater part of his life....

In both prefaces, Cooper professed authenticity in depicting Lake Ontario and ships. He claimed to have been "one of those who first carried the cockade of the republic on those inland seas."

The preface to *Mercedes of Castile* (Philadelphia, 1840), which is about Columbus's adventures, is without much interest, although Cooper professes to "state-truths with a profession of fiction, while the great moral caterers of the age state fiction with the profession of truth."

In the first preface to *The Deerslayer* (Philadelphia, 1841) Cooper wrote: "The Leather-Stocking Tales now form something like a drama in five acts; complete as to material and design though quite probably very incomplete as to execution."

The *Wing-and-Wing* (Philadelphia, 1842) was a favorite with the author. Its first preface is a significant discussion of Cooper's nautical romance. In his later preface, he repeats: "We acknowledge a strong personal feeling in behalf of this book."

He also admitted fondness for a minor Irving-like character in it.

The preface to *Wyandotte* (Philadelphia, 1843) has a statement on variety in characterization:

...the writer has aimed at sketching several distinct varieties of the human race....The red man had his morality as much as his white brother....The spirit must quit its earthly tabernacle...ere it cease to be influenced by its tints and imperfections.

The preface to the first part of the next novel *Afloat and Ashore*
It is possible that certain captious persons may be disposed to inquire into the *cui bono* of this book.... The knowledge we gain by our looser reading often becomes serviceable in modes and manners little anticipated....

He adds: "All that is necessary is, that the pictures should be true to nature."

One device Cooper uses is that of speaking as editor:

The author—perhaps editor would be the better word—does not feel himself responsible for all the notions advanced by the hero of this tale....

The brief preface to the latter half—*Miles Wallingford* (Philadelphia, 1844)—mainly discusses the American press and politics.

The preface to *Satanstoe* (New York, 1845) opens with an important statement on the value of imaginative writing:

> Every chronicle of manners has a certain value. When customs are connected with principles...such records have a double importance....We see such a connection between the facts and incidents of the Little-page manuscripts....

Cooper adds:

> It is perhaps a fault of your professional historian, to refer too much to philosophical agencies, and too little to those that are humbler....

The rest of the preface concerns the "anti-rent" question as well as New York, "at this moment, much the most disgraced State in the Union."

The preface to *The Chainbearer* (New York, 1845) expatiates on the New England character, while that to the *Redskins* (New York, 1846) discusses New York society, politics, and law. The latter ends on an emphatic note: "Nor is it an apology for anti-rentism...to say that lease-lead tenures are inexpedient. The most expedient
thing in existence is to do right."

Like The Monikins (Philadelphia, 1835), The Crater (New York, 1847) is a "first-person" utopian novel with religious overtones. The preface defends the "probabilities" of the narrative. On style it says: "We have endeavored to imitate the simplicity of Captain Woolston's journal...."

Jack Tier (New York, 1843) seems a re-write of The Red Rover. The preface tells about the title, which stems "from the incidents of the book itself."

The preface to The Oak Openings (New York, 1843) presents Cooper's religious viewpoint:

"We firmly believe...the day...is not distant, when the whole earth is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, "as the waters cover the sea."

Similarly, in the preface to The Sea Lions (New York, 1849), Cooper is deeply concerned about religious and moral notions: "In this book the design has been to portray man on a novel field of action, and to exhibit his dependence on the hand that does not suffer a sparrow to fall unheeded." The novel was favorably reviewed by Melville.

The preface to the last novel, The Ways of the Hour (New York, 1850), speaks of social aims: "The object is to draw the attention of the reader to some of the social evils that beset us; more particularly in...the administration of criminal justice." He concludes on a conservative note:

"There is a tendency...to court change for its own sake.... But the demagogue must have his war-cry as well as the Indian; and it is possible he will...whoop as long as as the country contains minds weak enough to furnish him with dupes."
It is hard to say how rigidly the classification of novels in Cooper's prefaces is applicable to his practice. The first Leather-Stocking Tale, *The Pioneers*, is a "descriptive tale," or novel of manners; the last "aspires to the elevation of romances," according to the preface to the Leather-Stocking Tales. It is also difficult to extract from his prefaces anything like a definite theory of fiction or "pure aesthetic." ^1

Cooper's prefaces clearly show that he was aware of his relationship with his readers. To cite one example, he says in the "Preface to the Leather-Stocking Tales," *The Deerslayer* (New York, 1850): "The Pioneers was published in 1822; *The Deerslayer* in 1841....Whether these progressive years have had a tendency to lessen the value of the last-named book by lessening the native fire of its author, or of adding somewhat in the way of improved taste and a more matured judgment, is for others to decide." Keeping the reader in mind, Cooper hazarded a prediction on the reputation of the Tales: "If anything from the pen of the writer of these romances is at all to outlive himself, it is...the series of 'The Leather-Stocking Tales'...." The general reader in and outside America has endorsed this judgment.

For critics Cooper sometimes used in the prefaces harsh phrases such as "learned Thebans," which shows the cantankerous side of his nature that provoked literary brawling. But Cooper also used in his prefaces such dramatic devices as speaking as an author-critic, or author-editor. On the whole, the fictional preface in his hands became a functional instrument which the author used fairly effectively.

^1Arvid Shulenberger, "Cooper's Theory of Fiction," University of Kansas Publications, Humanistic Studies, XXXII (1955), 37

^2Actually in February, 1823. It was written in 1822.
CHAPTER V

MORE SENTIMENTAL PREFACES

A writer who imitated Cooper was James McHenry. His novels The Wilderness (New York, 1823) and The Spectre of the Forest (New York, 1823) were followed by O' Halloran, or The Insurgent Chief (Philadelphia, 1824). O' Halloran was motivated by patriotism, as is clear from the opening sentence of the preface: "The conspiracy and insurrection of the United Irishmen, were...the most interesting, and...of the most important character of any that ever agitated a country."

A flamboyant contemporary of Cooper, who liked to air his views in prefaces, is John Neal. For example, here is the beginning of his Preface-Dedication to Logan (Philadelphia, 1822):

I hate Prefaces. I hate Dedications. Enough...to say, that here is an American story; that the child of Logan was an American; that he was brave, wicked, and miserable.... And for the...Dedication, I have...no more to say.

Rachel Dyer (Portland, 1328) uses witchcraft to which Neal turned not as a professional writer in search of "copy," but as a genuine student of early American history. Neal tries, as the preface shows, to be objective:

I would call the attention of our novel-writers and our novel-readers to what is...native...in the early history of our Fathers....If they went astray...they went astray conscientiously....
In the introductory chapter, Neal shows belief in witchcraft as natural to man:

...a belief in it is like a belief in the after appearance of the dead...or like the beautiful deep instinct of our nature for worship,—older than the skies....

In True Womanhood (Boston, 1859) Neal has a prefatory word for the reader:

Having long entertained a notion that women have souls— or something of the sort...and that marriage is not always the best thing...I have written this tale to illustrate.

He adds: "Though not properly a religious novel, I trust the reader will find in it enough religious feeling—'none to hurt'— as the man said, when asked if a mutual friend had not grown pious."

Regarding the plot, Neal mentions the use of actual incidents:

Taking advantage of incidents, which occurred in the great commercial paroxysm of 1857-58, and of the phenomena which attended the religious awakening... bursting out like prairie-fires...I have undertaken to set forth what True Womanhood is equal to...under some of the most trying circumstances of life.

Of the writers of adventure stories, the best fitted in terms of experience was Timothy Flint. His first novel Francis Berrian (Boston, 1826) has a prefatory statement on animal magnetism:

The idea...is exploded. I, however, retain my secret belief in the invisible communication between minds, of something like animal magnetism and repulsion....

George Mason (Boston, 1829) opens on a sentimental note:

Widow, who weepest sore in the night...Remember Him.... Life is neither an anthem nor a funeral hymn....

Shoshonee Valley (Cincinnati, 1830) is a strange romance of a white family among Indians. The defensive advertisement says:

I desire not to despise the admonition of those, who... have admonished me, that other themes...more befit my pen....
Whatever other demerit may attach to my writings... they are... free from... a single sentiment, that had not in my view the purest moral tendency.

Flint emphasizes the use of factual material:

In relation to the materials of this tale, I would only remark, that... I had the pleasure to be present, where M. Mackay, the venerable commandant... made one of a company of several travellers, who had each crossed the Rocky Mountains to the Western sea.

He answers his critics:

To those, who find me... prolix... in classical humility I remind them, that Homer is famous for repeating a good thing, verbatim et literatim, seven times. If I am not alike, they will remember, that Homer says

'Aliquando bonus Homerus dormitat.'

A curious mixture of Revolutionary adventure and Scottish peculiarities may be found in Leslie Linkfield (Rochester, 1826) written by a Scotsman, Mungo Coultershoggle. In the prefatory address, the editor and the author hold a conversation. The editor says:

...your story is partly Scotch, and partly American.... At home you have the immortal Waverly.... Abroad you have to compete with a late trans-Atlantic novelist... whom... the French have styled the American Waverly.

A eulogy on America follows: "This is a free and happy country...."

At the end, there is the usual device of finding the manuscript: "Before we parted, he gave me the manuscript of his unpublished novel, which I now present to the reader."

A similar device is used by James McHenry in The Betrothed of Wyoming (Philadelphia, 1830). In the Introduction, a hermit addresses the author:

...since you have discovered these papers, it may be more in your power to make proper use of them, than it is in mine....
Mrs. L. M. Child's *Hobomok* (Boston, 1824) has a preface which respectfully mentions Scott and Cooper: "I did not mean...that my wildest hopes...had placed me within sight of the proud summit which has been gained either by Sir Walter Scott, or Mr. Cooper." A little further on there is an observation on American materials: "Still, barren...as New England history is...there is enough connected with it, to rouse the dormant energies of my soul...."

There is the usual device of showing how the manuscript fell into the writer's hands: "...after I had read my friend's MS. I wrote upon the outside, 'Send it to the Printer.' "

*The Rebels* (Boston, 1825) is concerned with American history and politics. Mrs. Child says in the preface: "America is now vigorous and majestic...but yesterday, none were so poor to do her reverence." She continues:

True, we talk loudly of the battles we have fought...but there are very few among us who duly appreciate the...wisdom...and...firmness of...men who looked on the mighty torrent of English power...and...exclaimed, "Hitherto shalt thou come--but no further."

In conclusion, the author addresses the reader:

Many will complain that I have dwelt too much on political scenes...but I prefer silently to trust this humble volume to that futurity which no one can foresee, and everyone can dread.

*Philothea* (Boston, 1836) is, as the preface says, "purely romance," although "a few kindred spirits, prone to people space with life and mystical predominance," will, according to the author, "perceive a light within the Grecian Temple."

Catharine Maria Sedgwick's first story, *A New England Tale* (New York, 1822) carried a preface according to which "the writer...
has made an humble effort to add something to the scanty stock of native American literature." The preface added that "the original design...was simply to produce a very short and simple moral tale of the most humble description."

In the preface to the second edition (1822), the author answers imaginary charges against her book:

If...the book be considered as a representative of the general character of the people of New-England, it is not sufficiently favorable. In that character no one feels a deeper interest or a higher pride than the writer....

Regarding the organization of the book, the preface says:

It is stated in the preface to the first edition that the book was written without any definite plan....There certainly was no design either in the plan or execution ....Its title was rather inconsiderately adopted at the suggestion of a friend.

Redwood (New York, 1824), her next work dedicated to W. C. Bryant, belongs to the novel of manners. The preface begins with a general assumption:

The elements of human nature and human society remain the same, but their forms and combinations are changing at every moment....

"Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis."

It continues with a discussion of new books:

Everyone knows that new books, and especially new novels, will be sought for and read while those of more ancient date are disregarded. Many read them only because they are new....

It professes to offer amusement combined with instruction:

The love and habit of reading have become so extensive in this country, and the tastes and wants of readers so various, that we cannot but indulge the hope that there will be found some who will derive amusement if not instruction from our humble efforts....
The preface to The Linwoods; or 'Sixty Years Since' in America says that the writer "has aimed to exhibit the feeling of the times, and to give her young readers a true...impression of the condition of their country at the most—the only suffering period of her existence...." Explaining the introduction of "immortal names," especially Washington's, she says: "...whenever the writer has mentioned Washington, she has felt a sentiment resembling the awe of the Israelite when he approached the ark of the Lord." She concludes on a note of optimism concerning the future of American literature: "...the author...is most happy in trusting to the indulgent disposition which our American public constantly manifests towards American literature."

Among the tales of this period is an Indian romance Tokeah, or The White Rose (Philadelphia, 1829) by Charles Sealsfield. In his preface the writer resorts to the familiar device of a chance discovery of the manuscript: "Having...given an account of the manner in which I became possessed of the papers...I...add that, though I disclaim the honour of authorship, yet the fair...reader, as well as critic, may justly allow me some merit, in regard to the dress of 'them papers,' as my friend, the squire termed them."

To this period also belong Hawthorne's Fanshaws (Boston, 1828), and Mrs. S. J. Hale's Northwood (Boston, 1827). Mrs. Hale has a built-in preface in her introductory chapter. Discussing the beginning of a novel and its impact on fast readers, she says:

I consider a good beginning of a novel as having a very important effect on its favorable reception....It is...necessary if the author would secure the approbation of that...class of critical readers, who, perusing...only the first and last pages of a work, content themselves with just skimming the remainder....
She expresses her moral aim and relationship with the reader:

That I am anxious to obtain the approbation of the public, it would be folly to deny....But I wish to be indebted for success...to the delineation of scenes faithful to nature, the...passions the heart must acknowledge, and ...sentiments which virtue will approve.

Bearing in mind Scott's popularity, she remarks:

Knowing...that the...manner of the author of "Waverly" is...popular...I hesitated long whether to begin in the same abrupt, conversational style...but it did not appear in keeping with my plan....I have no titled personages.... Those...who fancy everything noble...is confined to the...distinguished may spare themselves the trouble of reading this humble record....

Another romance, which belongs to the same period, is James Kirke Paulding's Koningsmarke (New York, 1823). Placing his preface in the first chapter, Paulding loses no time in taking the reader into his confidence:

In order that our readers and ourselves may at once come to a proper understanding, we will confess...that we sat down to write this history before we had...arranged the incidents....

He justifies his freedom:

Another principle of ours...is, that it is much better for an author to commence his work, without knowing how it is to end, than to hamper himself with a regular plot.... This we hold to be an error little less than to tie the legs of a dancing master, to make him caper the more gracefully....In short, it is taking away, by a sort of literary felo de se, that...liberty of imagination and invention, which causes us writers to curvet so gracefully in the fertile fields of historical fiction.

Claiming that the author wishes to rid himself of "an abject submission to chronology," Paulding says, "Another determination of ours is, that we shall...endeavour to avoid any intercourse...with that bane of true genius, commonly called common sense...."
On the matter of consistency in characterization, he says:

It shall also be our especial care, to avoid the...error... that either nature or probability is...necessary to the interests of a work of imagination....

He supports his selection of scene and characters:

...we have chosen for our scene of action, a forgotten village, and for our actors, an obscure colony....But with regard to a state of society that is become extinct, it is like painting the unicorn, or the mammoth;—give the one only a simple horn, and make the other big enough, and the likeness will be received as perfect.

He refutes the charge that he mixes history and romance:

Certain cavillers...have...objected to the present fashion of erecting a superstructure of fiction on a basis of fact.... But we look upon this objection as perfectly frivolous.... history is in itself little better than a romance....

Finally, Paulding directly addresses the reader:

Before concluding the introductory chapter...the key to our understanding, we will ask one favor of the reader. It is...if...we...appear somewhat wiser in various matters, than comports with...history, and at other times not so wise...he will in the one case ascribe it to the total inability of authors to refrain from telling what they know, and in the others, to...modesty...to repress the effervescence of knowledge.

The critic, however, often replaces the creator, thus destroying the illusion of the story and going counter to the professions made in the preface and the introductory chapter comments in the manner of Fielding.

The Dutchman's Fireside (New York, 1831) is probably the best of Paulding's novels. According to the Advertisement, the idea of the tale "was conceived on reading...The Memoirs of an American Lady by Mrs. Grant..." The satirical tone is here somewhat under control.
Westward Ho (New York, 1832) has an address "To the Reader":

The devotees of sects and parties are...prone to imagine that every book...is intended to operate in favour of or against their cherished doctrines....Such a rule, applied to fiction, is calculated to put a tyrannical restraint on an author....

Next, Paulding makes a statement on authorial responsibility:

All we conceive a writer justly responsible for...is those sentiments and opinions he puts forth when he appears in his own person, and makes his bow to the reader....

He presents his moral aim:

The great aim of the author has been to combine an important moral, with...a series of incidents, and sketches of scenery, character, manners, and modes of thought and expression, such as he knows...exist...in...the United States....

He gives a warning: "The story professes no connexion with history, and aspires to no special chronological accuracy...."

Like Paulding and other fiction-writers of the day, W. G. Simms (1806-1874) believed that the goal of an artist was to present "moral truth." In the Advertisement to The Partisan (New York, 1835) he asserted that fiction can be useful "only when it ministers to morals, to mankind and to society." He repeated in the Advertisements to Mollichamp (New York, 1836) and Richard Hurdis (Philadelphia, 1838) that any truthful representation of life was in the highest sense moral.

Simms particularly applauded American writers like Paulding, who "never made any concession to...foreign sway," as he put it in the Preface to The Damsel of Darien (Philadelphia, 1839). Still, he held balanced views on the subject.

Simms valued historical and factual accuracy. In prefaces he repeatedly vouched for the authenticity of his historical sources.
But in romance, as distinguished from the novel, he believed in greater freedom for the writer, for as he said in the prefatory letter to *The Yemassee* (New York, 1835), a fine romance "does not confine itself to what is known, or even what is probable. It grasps at the possible."

Simms was against using "unnatural" Gothic effects in fiction such as those Mrs. Shelley employed in *Frankenstein*. Having selected "wild and wonderful" materials, he says in the Prefatory letter to *The Yemassee*, he sought verisimilitude in the use of details, but provided rational explanations for exciting situations. In his preface to *The Yemassee*, Simms appears to have had Aristotle's *Poetics* much in mind. He wanted to conform to the famous Aristotelian dictum: "A probable impossibility is always preferable to an improbable possibility."

Naturally, Sirms seems to have rated invention as the highest faculty in a writer of romance. This "constructive faculty" enabled an author to provide his story with sufficient action, which he regarded as more significant than characterization, as he made clear in the Prefaces to *The Partisan* and to *Confession* published in New York in 1835 and 1841 respectively. In this respect too, Simms was being obviously mindful of Aristotle's rules for tragedy and epic, especially of Aristotle's well known definition of tragedy. In his more psychological studies, however, Simms recognized the importance of characterization.

Simms was averse to too much revision which could deprive the text of "freshness and freedom." He felt that it was "much easier to invent a new story than to repair the defects of an old one," as he
said in the Preface to *The Wigwam and the Cabin* (New York, 1845).

He distrusted publishers' readers and professional critics, and agreed with Scott that unlettered persons are often the best judges of artistic achievements. In the preface to *Richard Hurdis*, he suggested reading one's manuscript to one's cook rather than to the sophisticated reader.

To readers who shuddered at his use of violence in stories, Simms replied by pointing out facts. For instance, he anticipated objections to the violence of *Border Beagles* (Philadelphia, 1840) by commenting in the Advertisement that "Nature has her sports, no less than Art, and it is in her extravagance that Art must find her justification." Yet the fact remains that Simms had a weakness for melodrama, for substituting for the "horrible" the "purely disgusting or repulsive," as Poe put it in *The Literati*.

A writer whose reputation rests on a single book—*Nick of the Woods* (Philadelphia, 1837)—is Robert Montgomery Bird (1806-1854). He exploded the myth of "the noble savage" in his preface:

...the North American savage has never appeared to us the...heroic personage he seems to others. The...fact that he wages war...upon women and children...has hitherto been...a stumbling-block to our imagination....Heroical? Hoc verbum quid valeat non vident.

According to the preface, the experience of Nathan's family is said to have been based on a real case in Pennsylvania history.

Bird loved his region so much that he wrote in the Introduction to *The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow* (Philadelphia, 1835): "We have always held the Delaware to be the finest river in the world." He further called his story "rather a domestic tale, treating of incidents and characters

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common to the...world, than one of which these components can be considered **peculiarly** American." He further observed:

America is a part of the great world, and...has little (that is, suited to the purposes of fiction) which it can call exclusively its own: and how far that little has already been used up, anyone may tell....Some little of that little yet remains; and...we will perhaps...join in the general scramble after it.

In the same Introduction, Bird imagined the novel less as a structure requiring the most attentive designing than as a loose jumble of facts and impressions: "A novel is, at best, a piece of Mosaic-work, of which the materials have been scraped...as often as the pearl in the toad's head, of which John Bunyan discourses so poetically in the Apology for his Pilgrim's Progress."

In the second volume, Bird follows Cooper's "avalanche" technique: the course of a story is comparable to that of a stone rolled down a hill-side; its momentum is "communicated" to other stones, "which increasing in number as they grow in velocity, are at last seen rattling down to the vale below, in a perfect avalanche, as confounding to the senses as it is hurrying to the spirits."(p. 191.) The "avalanche" technique is, however, no more favorable than the "mosaic."

John Pendleton Kennedy (1795-1870) began writing fiction with Swallow Barn (Philadelphia, 1332). Regarding the plot the preface said:"There is a rivulet of story wandering through a broad meadow of episode...with an occasional digression into the plot...." It avowed authenticity: "The country and the people are truly described; although...my book has little philosophy...and much less depth of observation...." The motto on the title page expressed Kennedy's aim:

And for to pass the time, this book shall be pleasant to read in. But for to give faith and believe that all
is true that is contained therein, ye be at your own liberty.—Prologue to the Morte D'Arthur.

Kennedy concluded in the words of the author of the "Seven Champions":

Gentle readers,—in kindness accept of my labours, and be not like the chattering cranes nor Momus' mates, that carp at everything. What the simple say, I care not; what the slyfathful speak, I pass not; only the censure of the conceited I stand unto; that is the mark I aym at, whose good likings if I obtain, I have won my race.

Horse-Shoe Robinson (Philadelphia, 1835), which found a large public, was dedicated to Irving in appreciation of his success in convincing "our wise ones at home, that a man may sometimes write a volume, without losing his character;--and...to the incredulous abroad, that an American book may be richly worth the reading." In his preface—"To the Reader"—Kennedy vouched for authenticity:

"The events...came to my knowledge in the progress of my researches into the personal history of some of the characters who figure in the story." He went on to say:

As yet, only the political and documentary history of that war has been written. Its romantic or picturesque features have been left for that industrious tribe of chroniclers, of which I hold myself to be an unworthy member....

In conclusion, he addressed the reader, hoping he got facts and pleasure:

My reader will perceive that I have been scrupulous to preserve the utmost historical accuracy in my narrative:—and I hope...he may find reason to award me the commendation of having afforded him some pleasure....

Rob of the Bowl (Philadelphia, 1838) had a touch of the historical romance right from the opening sentence: "It is now more than one hundred and forty-four years since the ancient capital of
Maryland was shorn of its honors." In the preface, Kennedy claimed that "he aimed to perform his task with historical fidelity."

A romance, which gained public approval fairly rapidly, was The Green Mountain Boys (Montpelier, 1839) by Daniel Pierce Thompson (1795-1863). In the preface, the author claimed the use of actual incidents:

The following pages are intended to...illustrate a portion of the more romantic incidents which actually occurred in...Vermont, with...little more fiction, than was deemed sufficient to weave them together....

He further vouched for authenticity:

...he has endeavoured to give...the manners and feelings of those among whom the scene is laid...as gathered from the imperfect published histories of the times, from...private papers...and...from the lips of the few aged relics of that period who...participated in the...stirring scenes....

Locke Amason (Boston, 1847) was dedicated "To the Friends of Popular Education and self-intellectual culture in the United States." The author professed that it was "written less with the hope of gaining literary fame, than of...imparting useful hints on an important, and...sadly neglected subject." In spite of the fact that it was a tract with only a rough fictional framework, this work was fairly popular in its time, nine editions of it being published between 1847 and 1892.

Gaut Gurley (Boston, Cleveland, 1857) began with the words:

"God made the country and man made the town." So wrote...Cowper...yet of "those flagrant crimes which stand first in the graduation of human offences"...the country ever furnishes the greatest proportions.

The novel, obviously, illustrates a thesis.

Around 1835, the most talked-about novel in New York was Norman Leslie (New York, 1835) by Theodore Sedgwick Fay (1807-1898). As usual,
The preface stresses the use of facts:

leading incident and career of Clairmont, are founded on fact. The author has availed himself of the license allotted to writers of fiction, and transformed character at pleasure, particularly that of the young lady on whose most mysterious fate the story is founded.

Fay sounds the new note of confidence in the "art of novel-writing," which he asserts, has acquired dignity:

The art of novel-writing, however long associated with heart-broken boarding-school girls, and sentimental chambermaids, is now as dignified as that of Canova, Mozart or Raphel....

He concludes with feigned trepidation:

As an humble student, and peradventure with a feeble hand, he has thrown his groupings on the canvas, and now, like the boy-painter in the "Disowned," stands... behind the curtain, to hear...some erudite Sir Joshua say—"He had better burn it!"

The central incident—a murder charge levelled against a young man from high society—the writer claims to have borrowed from an actual case that "took place many years since in New York."

The heroine's interest in circulation-library books replete with titled characters is made clear. But Fay also praises American scenery and show-places. Besides French phrases, Shakespearean quotations are generously used. One graces the title page. It is not surprising that despite harsh criticism (Poe in his review called it "an inestimable piece of balderdash")\(^1\), the novel remained popular.

Joseph Holt Ingraham's *Lafitte* (New York, 1836) showed a Byronic flavor. In strong contrast to such flashy romances as *Lafitte*, however, Richard Hildreth's novel *The Slave* (Boston, 1836)

\(^1\) *Southern Literary Messenger* (December, 1835), II, 56.
had an earnest purpose. Its Advertisement used the customary device of finding a manuscript:

It is unnecessary to detain the reader, with a narrative of the somewhat singular manner in which the MS of the following Memoirs came into my possession. I received it, with an injunction to make it public.

Regarding the bitter tone of the book, the Advertisement said in the words of the author-editor:

I would not be understood...as...adopting all the author's feelings...for...he sometimes expresses himself with a force and freedom, which...will be thought extravagant. Yet...he preserves...a moderation...never yet...displayed upon the other side of the question.

Using the persona as a mouthpiece, the Advertisement concluded:

As to the conduct of the author...there are...occasions on which it is impossible to approve it. But he has written Memoirs, not an apology nor a vindication. No man who writes his own life, will gain much credit, by painting himself as faultless; and few have better claims to indulgence than Archy Moore.

Long before Uncle Tom's Cabin, The Slave was a strong indictment of slavery. Its opening words set the tone and served as a built-in preface:

Ye who...would learn the limit of human endurance, and with what...anguish and...hate, the heart may swell, and yet not burst, peruse these Memoirs.

The novelist professes to speak as a prophet:

Another soul among the prophets, he prophesies terrible things...stands boldly forth the advocate of human rights.

He concludes rather melodramatically:

Chosen Instrument of Mercy! Illustrious Deliverer! Come! Come quickly!

Eventually, The Slave became a best seller, reaching a seventh edition by 1848. At first, no New York company "dared publish it" and the Boston House which finally printed it chose to remain
anonymous, as is clear from the Advertisement to the second edition (1840).

In 1836 Harper and Brothers wrote Poe: "Readers in this country have a...preference for works (especially fiction) in which a...connected story occupies the whole volume, or...volumes...."

These words perhaps prompted Poe to write The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, of Nantucket (New York, 1833). It was customary in books of this kind to make a claim of authenticity for the adventures, but with his flair for breaking new ground, Poe decided to put "wheels within wheels." He inserted a Preface (alleged to have been Pym's work) explaining that Pym had Poe write about his experiences "under the guise of fiction." Poe observed that the reader did not accept the narrative as fictitious despite the "air of fable" with which Poe had so "ingeniously" clothed it. Accordingly, Pym had himself compiled the rest of his adventures (following the two parts which had come out in the Southern Literary Messenger), and this new part he added to "Poe's" writing—saying with a flourish of naivete that "the difference in point of style will be readily perceived."

By 1842, the year Walt Whitman's Franklin Evans (New York, 1842) was presented to the American public, the novel form was attracting writers who had no talent for it. The Advertisement for Whitman's maiden effort casts a curious side-light not only on the methods of publishers, but also on the average reader whom he sought to interest by it:

Friends of Temperance, Ahoy!

Franklin Evans,

1 Cowie, op. cit., p. 304.
or The Inebriate

A Tale of the Times—By a Popular American Author

THIS NOVEL, which is dedicated to the Temperance Society and the friends of the Temperance Cause throughout the Union will create a sensation, both for the ability with which it is written, as well as the interest of the subject, and will be universally read and admired. It was written expressly for the NEW WORLD, by one of the best Novelists of this country, with a view to aid the great work of Reform, and rescue Young Men from the demon of Intemperance. The incidents of the plot are wrought out with great effect, and the excellence of its moral, and the beneficial influence it will have, should interest the friends of Temperance Reformation in giving this Tale the Widest possible circulation.

On the title page Franklin Evans was designated a "Tale of the Times." The times were surely favorable, for a "Washington Temperance Society" had given momentum to the temperance movement. Two months before Whitman's novel was published, another society, "The Sons of Temperance," which within seven years reached a membership of 300,000, was formed. In the preface entitled "Introductory," Whitman announced that his romance, lacking in "profound reflections, or sentimental remarks" was "written for the mass." It was clearly meant to be useful, since it was founded on facts and carried a fine moral: the virtue of sobriety. Craving indulgence for faults and deficiencies which the critical eye would surely detect, he warned: "Yet my book is not written for the critics, but for THE PEOPLE..."

In his Introduction Whitman claimed that Franklin Evans was a "pioneer in this department of literature." A few months before its appearance, however, T. S. Arthur had already scored a success with his Six Nights with the Washingtonians, based on the "experiences" the author had heard. In 1854, Arthur's Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, And What I Saw There carried a Publisher's Preface according to which the
book "...exhibits the actualities of bar-room life...with a serene simplicity, and adherence to truth, that gives to every picture a Daguerrean vividness."

During the same period, Longfellow wrote Hyperion (New York, 1839) and Kavanagh (Boston, 1849). He called Hyperion "a romance," although the romance gets lost in a series of meditations and apostrophes to the reader. The book begins with a prefatory one:

In John Lyly's "Endymion," Sir Topas is made to say: "Dost thou know what a poet is? Why, fool, a poet is as much as one should say,—a poet." And thou, reader, dost thou know what a hero is? Why, a hero is as much as one should say,—a hero. Some romance-writers, however say much more....Nay...Matteo Maria Bojardo set...church-bells...ringing, merely because he had found a name for one of his heroes. Here also, shall church-bells be rung, but more solemnly.

Kavanagh too has opening sentences which serve as a preface, immediately describing the chief male character, a gentle but ineffectual school-master, and establishing the moral tone for the romance:

Great men stand like solitary towers in the city of God, and secret passages...give their thought intercourse with higher intelligences...of which the laborers of the surface do not even dream.

Some such thought as this was floating...through the brain of Mr. Churchill....To the people...he was the school-master and nothing more. They beheld in his form...no outward sign of the divinity within....

Kavanagh is mostly American in texture, but its author is not chauvinistic. One of the inter-chapter comments concerns this very point:

"We want...a national literature...shaggy and unshorn, that shall shake the earth, like a herd of buffaloes thundering over the prairies."

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"Now, as we are...English under a different sky,— I do not see how our literature can be very different from
"Then you think our literature is never to be anything but an imitation of the English?"
"Not at all, it is not an imitation, but...a continuation."

In the forties, George Lippard wrote sensational fiction. He claimed that his novel, The Quaker City (Philadelphia, 1844), had been "more attacked and more read than any work of American fiction published for the last ten years." In the preface to the new edition Lippard explained the motive which "impelled" him to write the novel. He said that as the only "Protector of an Orphan Sister" he determined to write a book, founded upon the idea that "the seduction of a poor and innocent girl is a deed...as criminal as deliberate murder...."

Lippard vehemently asserted his moral aim:

...my motive...was...as destitute of any idea of sensualism, as certain of the persons who have attacked it without reading a single page, are of...a heart capable of generous emotions.

A semi-apologetic avowal by the author-editor that the book is founded on facts and moral principles follows:

Would to God that the evils recorded in these pages, were not based upon facts...that the experience of my life had not impressed me so vividly with the colossal vices...of this Large City....

The didactic element is again rubbed in:

If you discover a chapter, a page, or a line, that conflicts with the great idea of Human Brotherhood, promulgated by the Redeemer...reject that....

The novel was inscribed to the "Memory of Charles Brockden Brown."

Explaining the origin and the object of the book, Lippard dramatically tells how he was called to the bedside of a dying friend, who entrusted him with some important papers, remarking in a faint voice: "They contain a...terrible development of the Secret Life of Philadelphia...records of crimes that never came to trial...the results of secret
examinations...in relation to atrocities almost too horrible for belief..." The friend solemnly addressed the author:

Have you courage to write a book...devoted to three objects? To defend the sanctity of female honor; to show how...corrupt is that Pseudo-Christianity which tramples on every principle ever preached...by...Jesus; to lay bare vice in high places, and strip gilded crimes of their tinsel....

Only too often, the author intrudes in his introductory comments in chapters. Here is an example of a shrill cry against critics:

Shallow pated critic...we do not want you here....Your...white-kid gloves would be soiled by a contact with the rough hands of Devil-Bug....Pass by delightful trifler...but...do not criticize this chanter. Our taste is different from yours....(p. 253.)

As the preface amply warns, Lippard uses every possible device for creating sensation: torture, murder, seduction, rape, incest, arson, insanity, hallucination, hypnotism, disease, drugs, alcoholism, forgery, blackmail, living inhumation, and the re-animation of a "corpse." He also employs the stock devices of Gothic fictionists: subterranean vaults, trap doors, skeletons, rodents, poisoned potions, mysterious lights, etc.

The preface also shows that Lippard's hatred is directed against the "Lady and Gentleman of Christian Society." He champions the artisan class.

Lippard shows deep concern about the plight of underpaid workers, physical and intellectual. The Prologue to New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million (Cincinnati, 1853) begins on a spectacularly sombre note:

The lamp has gone out in the old familiar room. It used to shine...upon my face as I sat writing there. Oftentimes it shone upon another face which looked over my shoulder, and cheered me in my labor.
Despite his faults, Lippard is a vivid and not just a penny-dreadful writer. His dedication of *The Quaker City* to C. E. Brown is serious. His bow to Cooper—"the greatest Novelist that ever gave a literary name to our country abroad, or enchanted his million-readers at home" (p. 220.)—is genuine. His prefaces abundantly show his evangelical earnestness as well as his artistic deficiencies.

On questions of art, especially on the development of fiction, the preface of the period sometimes shows confidence, but more often diffidence. It is mostly conditioned by the prevailing mores and values. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that its tone is largely apologetic, sentimental and didactic; and its attitude defensive.
CHAPTER VI

THE PREFACE OF DISCRIMINATION

There is a Shakespearean quality about Hawthorne's genius which defies analysis. This is partly the result of his rich ambiguity, which in his prefaces as well as in his fiction serves as a protective weapon for the "Romancer" to defend his imaginative illusion against attack. On the other hand, Hawthorne's uncanny sense of language helps him use his prefaces, introductions, and dedications to make a clear-cut demarcation between the "romance" and the "novel" which goes much beyond anything that had been said by his predecessors. In that important respect, Hawthorne's prefaces are interesting, illuminating, and I may almost say, indispensable statements in the study of the evolution of American fiction.

Hawthorne approached fiction as a romancer dealing with the Actual and the Imaginary, the Possible and the Probable, the Marvelous and the Real, of which Donatello in *The Marble Faun* (Boston, 1860) is perhaps as good an example as any. This viewpoint connected Hawthorne with the early romantic novelists, especially the Gothic. But almost invariably, Hawthorne used incidents for their moral implications. His "moral" was usually an integral part of his art, not a surrogate. Hawthorne spoke to this point in his Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (Boston, 1851). The moral of the book, he observed, is "the truth...that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive
ones, and...becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief." But the moral did not constitute the whole book. The author specially pointed out: "When romances do really teach anything...it is...through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one....A high truth...is never any truer...at the last page than at the first."

With his terrible sense of sin and a "cat-like faculty of seeing in the dark," 1 Hawthorne remains the veritable Columbus of the human soul in American fiction. He consistently presents an incident or a group of incidents to define that indefinable entity called the human identity, whether he writes of the artist vis a vis society, of the Puritan heritage, or of Man's Fall. This preoccupation with self-definition as well as the concomitant alienation from and reunion with society is characteristic of the four romances of Hawthorne's maturity and some earlier tales. Gracefully and picturesquely but unostentatiously, he sets down his habits of thought and fictional viewpoint in his prefaces, which are, consequently, significant statements in the history of American fiction.

Twice-Told Tales, Hawthorne's first book of stories, came in 1837. These tales, he observed in the preface to a new edition of Twice-Told Tales (Boston, 1842), "opened an intercourse with the world," bringing to an end his lonely years of writing and self-communion in Salem. With their delicate shading and pallor, and in the light of the author's guidance given in the preface, the tales bear reading only in "the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere," not in the sunshine. Explaining the title, Hawthorne said that he had told

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1 Henry James, Hawthorne (New York, 1901), p. 96.
his tales twice because nobody cared to listen at a time when the author considered himself "the obscurest man of letters in America."

_Grandfather's Chair_ (Boston, 1841) was written for children. In the preface, Hawthorne spoke about the difficult material he had to handle:

> To make a lively...narrative for children with such unmalleable material as is presented by the somber...Puritans and their descendants is quite as difficult as an attempt to manufacture delicate playthings out of the granite rocks on which New England is founded.

The Introductory chapter, "The Wayside," has a mocking tone:

> I do not know what he means to do with himself after leaving college, but trust that, by dabbling so early with the...seductive business of authorship, he will not be tempted to become an author by profession. If so, I shall be very sorry....

_Mosses from an Old Manse_ (New York, 1846) had a charming introductory chapter entitled "The Old Manse." In the second paragraph, Hawthorne said:

> I took shame to myself for having been so long a writer of idle stories, and ventured to hope...that I should light upon an intellectual treasure in the Old Manse....I resolved at least to achieve a novel that should evolve some deep lesson and...possess physical substance enough to stand alone.

At one point, Hawthorne re-tells a story of the Revolution, which he got from Lowell, of the boy who was chopping wood unmindful of the battle and who dealt a wounded soldier a fatal blow upon the head. Hawthorne's comment shows his interest in the guilty soul:

> I could wish that the grave might be opened; for I would fain know whether either of the skeleton soldiers has the mark of an axe in his skull....Often-times...I have sought to follow that poor youth....This one circumstance has borne more fruit for me than all that history tells us of the fight.

While discussing genius in passing, Hawthorne says: "A work of genius is but the newspaper of a century, or perchance of a hundred centuries." A little further, a river scene elicits aesthetic and
philosophical observations:

...the slumbering river has a dream picture in its bosom.
Which was the most real—the picture, or the original—the objects palpable to our grosser sense, or their apotheosis in the stream beneath? Surely the disembodied images stand in closer relation to the soul.

A modest address to the reader follows:

Mine honored reader...will vilify the poor author as an egotist...How narrow...is the stream...that has been flowing from my pen, compared with the broad tide of dim emotions, ideas, and associations which swell around me....

A self-revealing comment is made next:

So far as I am a man of really individual attributes I veil my face; nor am I...one of those...people who serve up their own hearts, delicately fried, with brain sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public.

In the last but one paragraph, Hawthorne admits:

The treasure...which I hoped to find in our secluded dwelling had never come to light. All that I had to show...were those few tales and essays, which had blossomed out like flowers in the calm summer of my heart and mind...no solid basis for a literary reputation.

He addresses his "few" readers, expressing his fondness for the book:

Nevertheless, the public—if my limited number of readers, whom I...regard rather as a circle of friends, may be termed a public—will receive them....For myself the book will always retain one charm—as reminding me of the river...and especially the dear old Manse....

Taking the reader into his confidence, Hawthorne ambiguously says:

Let the reader...imagine himself my guest...after seating him in an antique elbow chair...I take forth a roll of manuscript and entreat his attention to the following tales—an act of personal inhospitality, however, which I never was guilty of... even to my worst enemy.

Hawthorne calls his novels "romances" and himself a "romancer."

But it has been recognized that he created the first American novel to become a world classic. The essay, "The Custom-House," which serves
as a preface to The Scarlet Letter (Boston, 1850) has deep implications. First, there is the Puritan belief in man's innate depravity. A mild sceptic, Hawthorne was conscious of individual and social guilt (including family guilt) intermingled with the Puritan sense of sin, the two constituting the warp and woof of his fiction. The first Hathorne to reach America, Major William Hathorne, had persecuted Quakers and had had one Quaker woman whipped publicly for denouncing churches and priests. The second, John Hathorne, acted as one of the judges in Salem's witchcraft trials. This was a terrible heritage for a sensitive young man like Hawthorne. Thus we see him praying in one of his tales that the New England rains which "wept" upon the beatings of the Quakers, should "cleanse this cruel blood-stain out of the record of the persecutor's life." Significantly, on graduation, he changed his name from Hathorne to Hawthorne. Much more significant is the famous passage in the prefatory "The Custom-House":

I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them...may be now and henceforth removed.

The history of "The Custom-House" is not clear, but as William Charvat aptly says in his Introduction to the Centenary Edition of The Scarlet Letter, "the essay was no after-thought on Hawthorne's part, nor was it meant to fatten a thin volume." 1 As Fields foresaw, it turned out to be popular. Despite its relaxed tone, however, it was "a serious statement about the writer's place in America, and about the difficulty of writing imaginative fiction in our kind of society." 2 This is how Hawthorne described the hypothetical

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2 Ibid., p. xxiv.
reaction of his forbears toward his literary efforts:

"What is he?" murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. "A writer of story-books. What kind of a business...may that be? Why the degenerate fellow might have been a fiddler."

Hawthorne's alleged discovery of the actual letter worn by Hester Prynne, and of Surveyor Pue's "half a dozen sheets of foolscap summarizing her life, was a traditional device to make fiction seem like fact:

But one...rainy day...I chanced to lay my hand on a small package, carefully done up in a piece of yellow parchment....

The reader willingly suspends disbelief when Hawthorne adds:

But the object that most drew my attention...was a certain affair of fine red cloth....It was the capital letter A....Certainly, there was some deep meaning in it...which...streamed from the mystic symbol....

Hawthorne describes a personal physical and psychical experience as evidence. It is, however, a daringly romantic stroke which invests the "mystic symbol" with a mysterious power of the kind, for example, which has been ascribed to Christ's robe:

While thus perplexed...I happened to place it on my breast. It seemed to me,—the reader may smile—I experienced a sensation not altogether physical, yet almost so, of burning heat....I shuddered, and...let it fall upon the floor.

The story of Hester follows:

In the...contemplation of the scarlet letter, I had hitherto neglected to examine a small roll of dingy paper....I...had the satisfaction to find, recorded by the old Surveyor's pen...several foolscap sheets, containing many particulars respecting the life...of one Hester Prynne, who appeared to have been rather a noteworthy personage in the view, of our ancestors....

Hawthorne asserts "the authenticity of the outline":

The original papers, together with the scarlet letter itself...are still in my possession...I must not be understood as affirming, that, in the dressing up of
Hawthorne had a theory of fiction—if the expression can be used—which can be best stated in his own words in his prefaces. Hawthorne spoke most effectively for his time of differences between romance and the novel, a subject which is still with us, if the writings of Richard Chase, Lionel Trilling et al., are enough evidence of the fact. Hawthorne did not write at length anywhere on the matter, but in prefaces to his romances—what we call his novels—he presents the substance of his ideas. This is what he says in "The Custom-House" Introduction to The Scarlet Letter (Boston, 1850):

It was a folly...to attempt to fling myself into another age; or to insist on creating the semblance of a world out of airy matter, when, at every moment, the impalpable beauty of my soap-bubble was broken by the rude contact of some actual circumstance....The page of life that was spread before me seemed dull and commonplace, only because I had not fathomed its deeper import. A better book than I shall ever write was there....

The Preface to The House of the Seven Gables (Boston, 1851) has a crucial statement on the distinction between romance and novel:

When a writer calls his work a Romance...he wishes to claim a certain latitude...which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter...is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable...course of man's experience. The former—while, as a work of art, it must...subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circum­stances...of the writer's own...creation....He will be wise...to mingle the Marvelous rather as a delicate...flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public.

As usual, Hawthorne adds an ambiguous note which qualifies as well as deepens his true import:

He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime even if he disregard this caution.
He specifically says about *The House of the Seven Gables*:

...the author has proposed to himself...to keep...within his immunities. The point of view in which this tale comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a bygone time with the very present....

On the theme of guilt and the moral of the story, Hawthorne says:

...the author has provided himself with a moral: the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones....

But, in the next sentence, Hawthorne's conscience poses problems, which concern "high truth" *vis a vis* art:

The author has considered it hardly worth his while...to impale the story with its moral as with an iron rod,—or, rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly,—thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly...attitude. A high truth...may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom more evident, at the last page than at the first.

Hawthorne disclaims any slighting of the "venerable town":

The personages of the tale...are really of the author's own making, or...mixing; their virtues can shed no lustre, nor their defects redound...to the discredit of the venerable town of which they profess to be inhabitants.

He hopefully concludes that the book will be accepted as a "Romance":

He would be glad...if...the book may be read strictly as a Romance, having a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex.

On the subject of romance, especially in America, Hawthorne again discourses in the Preface to *The Blithedale Romance* (Boston, 1852), which has the word "Romance" as part of the title:

In the old countries...a certain conventional privilege seems to be awarded to the romancer; his work is not put exactly side by side with nature....Among ourselves...there is as yet no such Faery Land, so like the real world, that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference.... This atmosphere is what the American romancer needs....
Hawthorne repeats the charge against America as a land unfit for romance in the Preface to *The Marble Faun* (Boston, 1860):

No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque...wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad...day-light, as is happily the case with my dear native land.

Hawthorne characteristically adds:

Romance and poetry, ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need ruin to make them grow.

The preface also shows the author's relationship with the reading public and throws light on the custom of writing prefaces:

It is now seven or eight years...since the author of this romance last appeared before the Public. It had grown to be a custom with him to introduce each of his publications with a familiar kind of preface, addressed nominally to the Public at large, but really to...that all-sympathizing critic...whom an author never actually meets, but to whom he implicitly makes his appeal....

On the old practice of preface-writing and his own feelings toward the reader, Hawthorne further says in the same preface:

The antique fashion of Prefaces recognized the genial personage as the "Kind Reader," the "Gentle Reader," the "Beloved," the "Indulgent," or, at coldest, the "Honored Reader," to whom the prim old author was wont to make his preliminary apologies, with the certainty that they would be favorably received. I never...encountered...this representative essence of all delightful qualities....But...I never...concluded him to be merely a mythic character....

Analogously comparing his writings to letters without a definite address, he discusses the reader, especially the neglectful one:

Unquestionably, this gentle...Reader did once exist for me, and (in spite of the infinite chances against a letter's reaching its destination without a definite address) duly received the scrolls which I flung upon whatever wind was blowing....But, is he extant now? In these many years...may he not...have withdrawn to the paradise of gentle readers...

1 Regarding Hawthorne's phrase—"the difficulty of writing a romance about a country..."—James's comment is apt: "There is a phrase in the preface to his novel of Transformation, which must have lingered
to the enjoyment of which his kindly charity on my behalf must surely have entitled him?...

Referring to his egotism (encouraged by the friendly reader) in his prefaces, Hawthorne observes:

I have little heart... (especially, writing as I do in a foreign land...) to presume upon the existence of that friend of friends... whose apprehensive sympathy has so often encouraged me to be egotistical in my prefaces, careful though unkindly eyes should skim over what was never meant for them....

In conclusion, he explains the moral and the limitations of the story:

The author proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral, and did not propose attempting a portraiture of Italian manners and character. He has lived too long abroad not to be aware that a foreigner seldom acquires that knowledge of a country... which may justify him in endeavoring to idealize its traits.

This "haunting care for moral problems," which the prefaces abundantly evince, is central to Hawthorne's fiction. It produces the tension beneath the surface of the smoothly flowing story. Hence his definition of romance in terms of the marriage between the Actual and the Imaginary, the Marvelous and the Real. It is, however, in his psychological insight and rich symbology that Hawthorne comes close to our day. Thus his work—especially The Scarlet Letter—lives in its striking emblems which show that the story is not so much of crime as of expiation and punishment. Always in his prefaces and fiction, this "beautiful, natural, original genius" juggles with imponderable paradoxes and ironical contradictions. He seems to be cautioning the reader that things are not what they seem; that in

in the minds of many Americans who have tried to write novels, and to lay the scene in the Western World." op. cit., p. 41.

\[1\] Ibid., p. 177.

\[2\] Ibid., p. 176.
life, as in dreams, the impossible and the possible, the incredible and the credible are inextricably intermingled.

The Introductory essay to *The Scarlet Letter*, for further example, harks back to the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy*, as being professedly a tale of truth, not an effusion of fancy but a slice of reality on which a thin veil of fiction is carefully cast. Hawthorne once wrote:

A cloudy veil stretches over the abyss of my nature.... God sees through my heart...and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy....But he must find his own way there. I can neither guide him nor enlighten him. It is this reserve...which has given objectivity to my writings. 1

Perhaps, on account of this reticence, or, in spite of it, Hawthorne has left behind him a small but significant body of work. His talent transmuted even "trifles" into art. How much more perceptive and meaningful then are the carefully considered and sensitively written prefaces of this rare genius is not hard to judge. 2

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2. George William Curtis sums it up rather well:

The great interior story he does not tell...but the Introduction to the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, the opening chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, and the Consular Experiences, with much of the rest of *Our Old Home*, are as intimate and explicit chapters of the autobiography as can be found. Nor would it be easy to find anywhere a more perfect idyl than that introductory chapter of the Mosses. Its charm is perennial and indescribable; and why should it not be, since it was written at a time in which, as he says, "I was happy."...So the sketch of "The Custom-House," although prefatory to that most tragically powerful of romances, *The Scarlet Letter*, is an incessant play of the shyest and most airy humor. It is like the warbling of bobolinks before a thunder-burst. How many other men, however unreserved with the pen, would be likely to dare to paint, with the fidelity of Teniers and the simplicity of Fra Angelico, a picture of the office and the companions in which and with whom they did their daily work?... *Literary and Social Essays* (New York, 1894), p. 52.
CHAPTER VII
FROM THE POPULAR TO THE ALLEGORICAL PREFACE

In the half-century that separates the prefaces to Typee (New York, 1846) and Billy Budd, the Melville reader is "astounded into" (to use an expression of the "Epilogue" to Clarel) a startling awareness of Melville's changing professional and literary fortunes, the status of the mass literary market, and the "magazinish" tastes of the public during a crucial period in American fiction. This was the time when the professional writer had really begun to raise his head "above-ground." 2

Melville's early prefaces are direct bids for popularity. With the passage of time and decreasing popularity (or, increasing notoriety), however, Melville's fiction becomes complex and rich. As he sounds creative depths which leave the ordinary reader and even the middle class critic gasping, he perforce resorts to the strategy of the allegorical preface, which wrought wheels within wheels. The author hides himself behind a mask.

To begin with, however, Melville's attitude was one of goodwill toward his reader. That he craved popularity and the reader's indulgence is absolutely clear from the Preface to Typee.

1 Published in 1924.
2 James, op. cit., p. 31.
Melville begins by saying:

No one can be more sensible than the author of his deficiencies...but when...circumstances...are understood...these omissions will be understood.

In very many...narratives no little...attention is bestowed upon dates; but as the author lost knowledge of the days...he hopes that the reader will charitably pass over his shortcomings....

But Melville the sailor-artist is concerned with telling a story of "stirring" adventures:

Sailors are the only class of men who now-a-days see anything like stirring adventure; and many things which to fire-side people appear...romantic, to them seem as commonplace as a jacket out at elbows. Yet...the incidents recorded...have often served, when "spun as yarn," not only to relieve the weariness of many a night-watch at sea, but to excite the warmest sympathies of the shipmates.

He is hopeful that his book will get a good reception:

He has been...led to think that his story could scarcely fail to interest those who are less familiar than the sailor with a life of adventure.

The story purports to be selective:

In his account of the...interesting people among whom he was thrown...he chiefly treats their more obvious peculiarities; and, in describing...customs, refrains...from entering into explanations concerning their origin and purposes. As writers of travels among barbarous communities are very diffuse on these subjects, he deems it right to advert to what may be considered a culpable omission.

Melville claims that he uses Polynesian words in the most comfortable form of orthography. Next, he alludes to his treatment of missionaries:

There are a few passages...which may be thought to bear rather hard upon a reverend order of men....Such passages will be found...to be based upon facts....The conclusions deduced from these facts are unavoidable....

He justifies digressions:

The great interest with which the...events lately occurring at the Sandwich, Marquesas, and Society Islands, have been
regarded...will...justify a few otherwise unwarrantable digressions.

Melville believes that "his anxious desire to speak the unvarnished truth will gain him the confidence of his readers":

There are strange things related in the narrative which will be sure to appear strange...to the reader; but they cannot appear more so to him than they did to the author....He has stated matters just as they occurred...trusting that his anxious desire to speak the unvarnished truth will gain him the confidence of his readers. 1

*Typee* begins with the words which are in "the person-to-person style of the journalist of the forties, which reached its high point in the book beginning 'Call me Ishmael.'": 2

Six months at sea. Yes, reader, as I live, six months out of sight of land, cruising after the sperm-whale beneath the scorching sun...tossed on...the wide-rolling Pacific--the sky above, the sea around, and nothing else....

No wonder, American readers took the adventures described in the book as truth and lovingly labeled the author as the "American Defoe."

In the preface to *Omoo* (New York, 1847), Melville claims that the "present narrative necessarily begins where "Typee" concludes, but has no further connection with the latter work." He admits that "upon several points connected with the history and ancient customs of Tahiti, collateral information has been obtained from the oldest books of South Sea voyages and also from the 'Polynesian Researches' of Ellis." Once again, Melville is concerned about telling the truth:"In every statement connected with missionary operations, a

1 In his "Agatha" letter to Hawthorne (Pittsfield, Aug. 13th 1852) Melville proposes "a skeleton of actual reality to build about with fulness & veins & beauty."

2 William Charvat, "Melville and the Common Reader" Studies in Bibliography, XII, 1959, 42.
strict adherence to facts has...been scrupulously observed....

Nothing but an earnest desire for truth and good has led him to touch upon the subject at all...."

Similarly, Mardi (New York, 1849)—"a necessary laboratory job" (Professor Charvat's phrase) 1—was written according to the preface "to see whether the fiction might not, possibly, be received for a verity." In White Jacket (New York, 1850) the author's aim was "to give some idea of the interior life in a man-of-war." He says in his preface that "wherever statements are made in any way concerning the established laws and usages of the Navy, facts have been strictly adhered to." The novel surely succeeded in fulfilling its aim by bringing to light among other things such abuses as flogging.

By the time Israel Potter (New York, 1855) was published, Melville was a bitter man. The masterly Moby Dick (New York, London, 1851) had not been a popular success 2; Pierre (New York, 1852) had been badly received; and Melville had taken to writing magazine pieces. No wonder then that Israel Potter, in its ironical dedication to the Bunker Hill Monument, expresses Melville's sense of disillusionment regarding reputation in America.

In "The Fiddler" (1853), however, Melville had struck a note of harmony. "Neglected merit, genius ignored, or impotent presumption" were all much the same. Hautboy was able "initially to hit the exact line between enthusiasm and apathy," to see the world pretty much as it [is]." He did not "theoretically espouse its bright side. ...Rejecting solutions, he but acknowledged facts. What was sad...he

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1Charvat, op. cit., p. 48.

2Moby Dick sold only 2,500 copies in its first five years, and less than 3,000 in its twenty, whereas The Scarlet Letter, in identical periods, sold 10,800 and 25,200. Ibid., p. 41.
did not superficially gainsay; what was glad...he did not cynically slur." This was a far cry from the philosophy of sour-grape-ism allegorically expressed later in the story entitled "The Piazza," which served as an introduction to the collection of Putnam's stories published as The Piazza Tales (New York, London, 1856). The concluding paragraphs unambiguously bring out the personal allegory of the author:

"Oh, if I could...get to yonder house, and...look upon...the happy being...that lives there. A foolish thought: why do I think it? Is it that I live so lonesome and know nothing?"

"I, too, know nothing...but, for your sake, Marianne, well could wish that I were the happy one...."

But, every night...truth comes in with darkness. No light shows from the mountains.

But the story, which has an allegorical preface planted in it most effectively, is "Bartleby, the Scrivener. A Story of Wall Street." In this deeply personal allegory, the words--"I prefer not to"--are those of a man who passively, patiently, and pathetically protests against the matter-of-fact world, which is really an insurmountable wall ('Wall Street' in the sub-title is significant). The alienation of a writer (despite the ambiguity of his status implied in the word 'scrivener') is allegorically but strikingly expressed.

The alleged preface to Billy Budd (written between 1838 and 1891 but not published until 1924 in London) says:

The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which...involved a crisis for Christendom....The opening proposition made by the Spirit of that Age, involved the rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs. In France...this was bloodily effected....Straightaway the Revolution itself became a wrong-doer....During these years not the wisest could have foreseen...a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans.
Harrison Hayford and Merton K. Sealts, Jr. have, however, shown that Mrs. Melville, not Melville, is responsible for the preface. This is what they say:

Aside from those genetic matters lying outside the final text of the story Freeman's text itself has three major errors likewise stemming from his inadequate analysis of the manuscript.

They add:

All three of the major errors arose primarily because Freeman failed to recognize the handwriting of Mrs. Melville, which appears at various points in Billy Budd and other late manuscripts of her husband; like Weaver, Freeman mistook all the handwriting for Melville's own (see Freeman, pp. 66-67). This led him—following Weaver in the first major error—to accept three discarded leaves (353-60) as the "Preface." For doing so the only authority either Weaver or Freeman had is a pencilled query on the first of these leaves: "Preface/for Billy Budd?" (See Plate V.) But in fact the handwriting of this query is not Melville's; it is his wife's. Mrs. Melville's query is one of many silent witnesses that after her husband's death she sorted his papers; in doing so she evidently found leaves and recognized them as belonging to Billy Budd, but not realizing that they were superseded leaves, pencilled on them her conjecture that they might be a "preface." Her question mark is fatal to any authority her notation might be supposed to have. And in fact nothing whatever indicates that Melville himself ever intended these superseded leaves to serve as a preface. Freeman (pp. 132, 234) realized that the leaves had originally belonged at the point in the narrative, just after the killing of Claggart, where Vere remarks to the surgeon that the event could not have happened at a worse time. But mistaking the notation for Melville's own, and failing to see that it was Mrs. Melville who had altered the last lines of Leaf 360 in order to complete a sentence that Melville originally continued but canceled on what is now Leaf 233, Freeman followed Weaver in accepting and printing the discarded leaves as the "Preface." Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative) by Herman Melville. Edited from the Manuscript with Introduction and Notes by Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (Chicago, London, 1962), pp. 13-19.

The hanging of Billy Budd, which was based on an actual occurrence, allegorically rehearses the dramatic conflict of good and evil, and brings up the troublesome question: what did the sacrifice of the innocent Billy achieve? Thus Melville's great heart was always restless, his mighty mind always remained inquisitive.
Melville's prefaces and prefatory comments throw light on his extraordinary mind which pierced through its own deep but dazzling darkness. What is more, they show the life-long struggle of this "misunderstood" and "embattled genius" (which he poetizes in "The Kaldive Shark" and "Shelley's Vision") to please the world in spite of "unforgivable affronts and insults" for showing it the "madness of vital truth." "Typee Melville" or "Mr. Omoo" 1 was popular for a time, although Typee and Omoo were dubbed as "vendible," "venomous," and "venereous" by one critic, and advertised as "Books for Little Folks" by a Cleveland bookseller. 2 This popularity, the later prefaces show, Melville could not sustain. In terms of art, his prefaces reinforce the point that his "gift was not for unity, or integrated structure, but for diversity and digression," and that "he took advantage of all of what has been called the 'novel's liberties and privileges.'" 3

One may well ask: is the Melvillean hidden preface a preface? Again, why did the author plant these time-bombs in his stories? The answer in part lies in Melville's paradoxical personality. In an America that was well on her way toward realizing the modern physical Golden Age, this man whose way was not "the merry mythical way," nor one of "armed and crested lies," but one which sought many meanings ("polysensuum") wrote the world's most daringly metaphysical novel. And yet his remarkable genius and philosophical profundity were not fully acceptable in his time. It is not surprising, therefore,

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1 Charvat, op. cit., p. 42.
2 Ibid., p. 41.
3 Ibid., p. 45.
to find that his introductions and dedications do not always take the reader into the author's confidence, but serve as strategies and stratagems. But few and far between as Melville's prefaces are, they remain, in his vibrant phrase in the "Agatha" letter to Hawthorne, "instinct with significance." ¹ No explorer of Melville's achievement can help saying about him after examining these significant statements what he said regarding the mythical artist Lombardo in Mardi: "coppers then, immortal glory now."

The eighteen-fifties and sixties saw a spate of domestic or "social life" novels. Their sales were prodigious. In 1855, Hawthorne referred to their authors as a "d-d mob of scribbling women." Later, W. D. Howells bravely tried to set right the false standards of taste they had generated.

The domestic novel was unabashedly didactic, its thesis being that "true happiness results from submission to suffering"; its characters "existing less as individuals than as carriers of moral or religious sentiment." Under these circumstances, the preface is usually hortatory, sometimes even exclamatory. Its tone is not really apologetic nor defensive, since the novelist (who often comes from a respectable social rank such as the ministry in the case of E. P. Rowe) takes his reading public for granted and offers it what it demands, or perhaps what it deserves.

One of the representative authors of the genre is Susan Warner (1819-1885). In a prefatory "Note to the Reader" affixed to The Old Helmet (New York, 1864) she professes to tell her story on the basis

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2 Cowie, op. cit., p. 413.
The incidents...are drawn from imagination, but reported from excellent authority....

In the preface to Say and Seal (Philadelphia, 1860), the author chats with the reader:

It is a...fact, that this book is somewhat larger than the mould into which most of the fluid fiction material is poured in this degenerate age....

She qualifies her statement:

The book is really of very moderate limits--considering that two women had to have their say in it.

On her relationship with the public the author says:

It is pleasant to wear a glove when one shakes hands with the Public....In this case there are a pair of gloves--which is the right glove, and which the left, the Public will never know.

About public taste she observes:

A word to that "dear delightful" class of readers who believe everything....Well they and the author know, that if the heroine cries—or laughs--too much, it is nobody's fault but her own. Gently they quarrel with him for not permitting them to see every Jenny happily married and every Tom with settled habits. Most lenient readers!--when you turn publishers, then will such books...be written. Meantime hear this.

She claims that her story is based on facts:

In a shady, sunshiny town, lying within bounds--geographical or imaginary--these events...occurred. Precisely when, the chroniclers do not say. Scene opens with the breezes which June, and the coming of a new school teacher...create....

She ends on a teasing note:

But where...the scene may close,—having told at the end of the book, we do not incline to tell at the beginning.

The Wide, Wide World (New York, 1851) had a chapter-head motto which Miss Warner chose from The Merry Wives of Windsor characterizing
much of the filler material not only in this but in many other
domestic novels:

I keep his house...wash, wring, brew, bake, scour, dress
meat, and make the beds, and do all myself. (II, 74.)

That this work which exploits sentimentality to the point of
morbidity was immensely popular is clear from the citations from it
by characters in other domestic novels. 1

Emma Dorothy Eliza Southworth (1319-1899) was another prolific
writer whose output was more than sixty novels. 2 That she was
conscious of her relationship with the public and of her didacticism
is clear from her prefaces. For example, in the preface to The Wife's
Victory; and Other Nouvelettes (Philadelphia, 1854) she says:

The nouvelettes...were written--each to illustrate that
distinct principle of Christian ethics...indicated by the
text of Scripture as its motto.

A note of apology coupled with confidence follows:

That they were the very first productions of the author's
pen...is her apology for their...imperfections. That they
were...welcomed...is her excuse for now collecting...them....

In the preface to The Lady of the Isle: A Romance from Real
Life (Philadelphia, 1859), Mrs. Southworth offers "A Word to the
Reader," saying that "the most remarkable characters and incidents...
are drawn from real life...."

The author makes a similar assertion in her preface to India:

The Pearl of Pearl River (Philadelphia, 1855):

The leading incidents...were suggested by circumstances
in the life of a near relative, long since...in heaven.

1 For instance, Jo March in Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women
(Boston, 1869) spent...the afternoon...crying over 'The Wide, Wide
World'...." (p. 124.)

I have used the novelist's privilege in giving a happier termination to the fiction than is warranted by the facts.

The Coral Lady (Philadelphia, 1867) is the only one of the group written in the first person. A brief preface points out that it was during the author's visit to Paris that she became acquainted with the Coral Lady, and was asked to call for two interviews, from which the story evolved. In order to give the story an air of actuality, the picture of the Coral Lady printed in the book was declared to have been taken from the likeness given the novelist. The last stroke of vraisemblance was a letter purported to have been from the Coral Lady published as the conclusion of the story.

Mrs. Southworth took pains to convince readers through prefaces and authorial intrusions that her stories were true. Speaking of Zuleime's decline in The Curse of Clifton (Philadelphia, 1853), she stated that hundreds died annually of starvation, adding: "I have...seen for myself, and not another." (p. 277.)

In India, she thus vouches for the authenticity of her facts:

Were I writing a mere fictitious narrative, it would be in order now (after the custom-sanctioned manner of storytellers) to describe the cruel opposition the lovers met.... But I am writing a true story.... (p. 242.)

Mrs. Southworth has a built-in preface to Allworth Abbey; or, Eudora (Philadelphia, 1865). First, she refreshes the public's memory:

A few years have elapsed since the public mind was electrified by...crimes...which added a...thrilling domestic drama to those ancient histories...that have long rendered ALLWORTH ABBEY the resort of the curious....

Next, she claims authenticity:

...the effigy of the chief criminal may even now be seen in a certain celebrated "Room of Horrors"....
She professes a purpose: "showing over what pitfalls the most innocent feet may sometimes stray..."

The title pages of some of Mrs. Southworth's novels carried high praise from publishers and editors--"the foremost novelist of America, if not of the world," etc. For example, The Hidden Hand, published serially in The New York Ledger in 1859, was reported in the Ledger of July 21, 1883, as the most popular novel ever printed in its columns. Mrs. Southworth preached Christianity at all times in her novels, which purported to be based on life. She attested to this fact by notes to the readers, prefaces and epilogues, footnotes and parentheses.

Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz (1800-1856) in Ernest Linwood (Boston, 1856) has approximately eighty references to tears. The title page to Rena, or The Snow Bird (Philadelphia, 1851) -- called "A Tale of Real Life" -- carries the lachrymose quotation: "I pray thee let me weep to-night..." In the Introduction--"To the Reader"--the author writes:

In presenting the following pages...I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude for the kind reception given to the former children of my imagination....

Mrs. Hentz calls Marcus Warland; or The Long Moss Spring (Philadelphia, 1852) "A Tale of the South." In the prefatory "Address to the Reader," she says that she has told the story with "an un-prejudiced mind, a truthful spirit, and an earnest...purpose."

She emphasizes authenticity:

...the view of the social institutions of the South presented...is what we ourselves have witnessed; and as no one will accuse us of having set down aught in malice, so we can assert we have in nothing extenuated.
An appeal to the reader's sentiment follows:

Under circumstances of peculiar interest has this work been written. The perusal of its chapters...has beguiled the...painful hours of an invalid husband....We have hoped the work might find its way to the couch of some other sufferer....

In the Preface to The Planter's Northern Bride (Philadelphia, 1854) the writer speaks on the basis of personal observation:

We have...studied...life in Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida....We give it as our honest belief, that the negroes of the South are the happiest labouring class on the face of the globe....

She qualifies her statement:

In the large cities we have heard of families who were cruel...(Are there no similar instances at the North?) But the indignant feeling which any known instance of inhumanity calls forth at the South, proves that they are not of common occurrence.

She cites factual evidence of a sort:

This very morning...our sympathies have been strongly moved by the simple eloquence of a negro woman...."I loved my master and mistress like my own soul...us black folks would 've laid down our lives for 'em...."

She answers an anticipated objection:

If anyone should think the affection manifested by the slaves of Moreland for their master is...coloured, we would refer them to the sketch of Thomas Jefferson's arrival at Monticello on his return from Paris....

Marion Harland, or Mrs. Mary V. H. Terhune (1832-1922), was one of the most productive as well as long-lived of all the domestic sentimentalists. Besides twenty-six manuals on Home Economics, she produced some twenty-five novels, the last, The Carringtons of High Hill, appearing in 1919.

Alone (Richmond, 1854), Miss Harland's first book, has been rated her best. The author's frequently overwrought style may be
guessed from the opening sentence of her "Dedication": "It is meet that those whose sympathy has been dew and sunshine to the nursery plant, should watch over its transportation into the public garden."

Then follows a statement on the author's relationship to the "licensed" critic and the "unlicensed" public as well as on her purpose in writing:

You know...with what misgivings it was entered upon... what fears of the licensed critic's ban, and the unlicensed public's sneer....

A typically sentimental appeal to the reader follows:

Coming as it does from my heart...I cannot but feel that the mission of my offering is to the heart of others....My story is...a simple tale of life...whose merits...consist in its truthfulness to nature, and the fervent spirit which animated its narration.

She begins the "Dedication" to The Hidden Path (New York, Boston, 1855) also in rather ornate diction:

More than a year since...I launched a lonely barque upon the uncertain sea of public opinion....The success of that venture has emboldened me to send a second vessel in the same track.

She then strikes the customary sentimental note accompanied by a disclaimer:

If my former work was a heart-message, this is trebly a token from my soul to yours....I have plunged into no abstruse speculations; or tested the strength of my imagination upon the cloud-capped heights of romance....

Miss Harland takes the reader at once into her confidence in the preface—"To the Reader"—to Sunnybank (New York, 1860):

I have the vanity to believe that many readers of "Alone"... will not be sorry to recognize...an old acquaintance....

Regarding characters, plot, and "adherence to truth," she says:

For the characters, plot, and general machinery of the
story, I am responsible....I have adhered strictly to the truth....

She makes a patriotic peroration:

A Virginian...I have infused nothing of partisan bitterness into the simple record of...home-scenes in the Old Dominion....I have written every line-- to borrow the...immortal words of another--"WITH CHARITY FOR ALL; WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE."

The preface--"Salutatory"--to The Christmas Holly (New York, 1867) best expresses Marion Harland's fictional method and sentimental mood. She begins:

...a certain Christmas Eve...I took a long...walk into the country. That afternoon suited my temper, and both were gloomy.

She adds:

Into the midst of this sunless mood came a surprise.... Right before me...was a clump of dwarf trees....In the centre...arose a holly sapling, brave with leaves of glossy green and scarlet berries....

She concludes in a moralizing vein:

I had conned my lesson....I pray you...learn with me of my holly-tree....Sigh not that

"All hope of spring-time
Has perished with the year.

Ann Sophia Stephens (1813-1886) added a few new touches to the methods and materials used by the writers belonging to the domestic sisterhood. In the preface to Fashion and Famine (New York, 1854) she unmasks the strategy of preface-writing:

What shall I say in this Preface...?...the usual half-sincere, half-affected apology of haste and inexperience, with hints of improvement in future efforts?

An apology and request for forbearance follow:

The book...is...surrendered to the public judgment, asking neither favoritism nor forbearance, save that...favoritism
which deals gently with unintentional error, and that
forbearance which no American ever withholds from a
woman....

The author appeals to the American readers' judgment:

The American people are...just...judges....I have
endeavored to deserve their approbation and to cast
no discredit upon a profession that I honor....

The preface to High Life in New York (Philadelphia, 1873)
expresses facetious notions about a preface:

I...tried to find out what a preface was...."Something
to go before a speech, or a book...to tell what they 're
about." Now if it had said an old hoss leading off an ox-
team with a cart behind, I could have sent the animal at
once...but how to tackle an idea on a book and make it pull,
is more than I am up to....

In the preface to The Old Homestead (New York, 1855) Mrs.
Stephens asserts a factual basis for her story:

Many of the scenes...owe nothing, whatever, to the imagi-
nation. They have been painful realities.

Her reformist zeal comes through in the conclusion:

If this volume...succeeds in creating...sympathy for
those who suffer in our midst...it will have done enough
good to make its author very grateful.

The "Dedication" to The Heiress of Greenhurst (New York, 1857)
opens on a sentimental note:

In dedicating this book to you, I have no choice of words....
From the day when you received me...from the arms of a dying
sister, down to the calm twilight of your...life, I have a
remembrance only of more than motherly kindness....

The built-in preface begins also in a sentimental vein:

It is my mother's story that I am about to write....
I have but done what she would have accomplished, had
she not been trampled down like a broken flower....

The Preface to Fhemie Frost's Experiences (New York, 1874) is
unusual in that it is cast in verse, conveying a moral:

Thistle down, thistle down, cast to the wind
So lightly and wildly, you scarcely can find
A glimpse of it here, or a gleam of it there,
As it trembles, a silvery mist, on the air.

Like the wide thorny leaves, whence the mother root threw
Upon its crown of rich purple, bejewelled with dew,
These feathery nothings, barbed, sparsely, with seeds,
Must struggle for life with the brambles and weeds.

The introduction to The Soldier’s Orphans (Philadelphia, 1866) sketches the life of the poor:

Upwards, from story to story, these helpless had been
forced by that hard taskmaster poverty, till they found
shelter...under the very roof....Above...from window to
window, swinging high in the wind, lines, heavy with wet
clothes, were fluttering dismally, giving forth a sudden
rush of sound...like broken-winged birds....

The preface to The Curse of Gold (Philadelphia, 1869) shows
the author’s sensitivity to adverse criticism:

Of late...my books have been criticised for improbabilities....
Now...the events or characters selected...have been facts...
or portraits drawn from persons well known to myself....

Mrs. Stephens uses considerable detail in the opening scene:

Narrow, pauper cots, furnished with straw beds and covered
with coarse, checkered cotton, were ranged down each side
of the room, with just space enough between to allow a sort
of foot-path in which the nurses could pass....

The sentimental appeal is strong:

Every cot was occupied....Here a young face, so pale...
that your heart ached...was turned sadly toward you...or
a feeble hand would make an effort to draw up the coverlet,
that you might not mark the flush of shame...or...the cause...
which lay nestled in her bosom.

In 1860 Beadle and Co. brought out the first dime novel, Malaeska, by Mrs. Stephens. The blurb proudly announced:

we take pleasure in introducing the reader to the following
romance by Mrs. Ann S. Stephens... It is chosen as the initial volume of the Dime Novel series, from the chaste character of its delineations, from... its fine pictures of border life and Indian adventure, and from the real romance of its incidents. It is American in all its aspects, pure in its tone, elevating in its sentiments.

"Fanny Fern," or, Mrs. Sara Payson Willis Parton (1811-1372), in *Ruth Hall* (New York, 1855), superimposes so much satire on a domestic framework that the result is quite different from the conventional work of her sister writers. The preface—To the Reader—has an unconventional and confident tone:

I present... my first continuous story. I do not dignify it by the name of "A novel."... There is no intricate plot.... I have avoided long introductions and descriptions, and have entered... people's houses, without stopping to ring the bell.... Whether you will like the book at all, I cannot tell.

Fanny Fern avows the didactic burden of the book:

I cherish the hope... it may fan into flame, in some tried heart, the fading embers of hope, well-nigh extinguished by wintry fortune and summer friends.

It is clear, however, that the author's interest lay less in ministering to the "tried heart" of the unknown reader than in expressing her rancour against the cruel world, including her parents and her brother N. P. Willis, who is shown as "a conceited jackanapes, who divides his time between writing rhymes and inventing new ties for his cravat." (p. 26.) The latter half of the book discusses the commercial aspects of contemporary literary life, the peculiar difficulties of unknown women hack-writers, and the reviewers' attitude toward struggling writers.

*Rose Clark* (New York, 1356) uses lisping for comic effects:

Well, now, Mr. Howe, "I am athtonithed," lisped his wife... not having yet accommodated her speech to... her new set of
teeth. "I am thure ha ith the moth elegant...and thivil thpoken young man I ever thaw...." (p. 353.)

In the language of the preface, the story was written to beguile the time:

When the frost curtains the windows...and father...lolls in his arm-chair; and mother..."makes auld claes look amaist as weel as new," and grandmamma draws closer to the chimney corner, and Tommy with his...chestnuts nestles...at her feet; then let my unpretending story be read....

She brushes in some satire especially where editors are concerned:

'We have perused the book; it is unnecessary to state in its title page that it was written by a female hand. The plot is feeble...they who wish for literature, especially female...will look the other side of the Atlantic.

We have read....We ought to say we have tried to read....'

The preface to Fresh Leaves (New York, 1857) shows confidence:

Every writer has his parish. To mine, I need offer no apology for presenting,
First, a new story....
Secondly, the "hundred-dollar-a-column story"....
Thirdly...my late fugitive pieces, which...will cement still stronger our friendly relations.

Mary Jane Hawes Holmes (1825-1907) is especially known for her "lachrymal classic" 1 Lena Rivers (New York and Auburn, 1856). She says in the preface that she does not mean to reveal the secret of her story:

If...a secret is safer in a preface...it would be worse than folly...to waste the "midnight oil," in the manufacture of an article which no one would read....I wot of a few who, with a horror of...humbug, wade...through a preface...hoping...to find the moral, without which the story would...be valueless.

To the 'moral-hunter,' she teasingly says:

...seek no further, for though I claim...a moral--yes, half a dozen morals--I shall not put them in the preface, as I prefer

them sought after, for what I have written I wish to have read.

She emphasizes the use of character and setting she knows:

Reared among the...hills of the Bay State, and... associated with...Yankees...I have aimed to copy from memory, and in no one instance...have I overdrawn the picture.

In conclusion, she addresses the reader:

I have endeavored to make this book a good and interesting one...and such as it is, I give it to the world.... 2

In the preface to Meadow Brook (New York, 1857), Mrs. Holmes modestly claims the use of truth:

In this story...there is...nothing very startling...but it has the merit...of containing more truth than books of the same character usually possess....

She vouches for the depiction of authentic Americans:

The fickle Mr. Clayton and his haughty bride, the unfortunate Herbert, the disappointed Ada, the proud Southern planter, and the gentle...Jessie...represent different varieties of American character....For...Georgia life, I am indebted to a friend....

Regarding her method of using probable incidents she says:

Believing that the world loves better to read of the probable than of the improbable, I have tried to be natural; and if... one friend is added to the number...my labor has not been in vain.

Augusta Jane Evans Wilson (1835-1909) dedicated Inez: a Tale of the Alamo (New York, 1855) to the "Texan Patriots, who wrenched asunder the iron bands of despotic Mexico...." This is a hastily assembled historical novel, a genre, which was not Mrs. Wilson's forte. She went back to the sentimental story in Beulah (New York, 1859). Her most celebrated novel, however, is St. Elmo (New York and

1Lena Rivers sold over 2,000,000 copies. Next to E. P. Roe, Mrs. Holmes was "probably the most popular of American novelists during the period following the Civil War." Dictionary of American Biography, IX, 163.
London, 1367). The title page has a sentimental quotation from Ruskin:

Ah the true rule is—a true wife in her husband's house is his servant; it is in his heart that she is queen. Whatever of the best he can conceive, it is her part to be; whatever of the highest he can hope, it is hers to promise; all that is dark in him she must purge into purity; all that is failing in him she must strengthen into truth; from her, through all the world's clamor, he must win his praise; in her, through all the world's warfare, he must find his peace.

The novel is a synthesis of all the sure-fire devices of the women novelists, especially the use of religion and sex. It is not surprising that it was one of the most popular novels of the day.

H. B. Goodwin (1827-1893), author of Sherbrooke (New York, 1866), makes interesting comments on books and authors, especially Longfellow, Bryant, Richter, Mrs. Browning, Tennyson, Bayard Taylor, and Mrs. Stowe. Her novel has an ornate dedication:

To
The Young Women of our Republic
This Volume
Is most kindly dedicated, with the earnest prayer
That they may learn from its pages
Strength, courage, and patience
And a love for that wisdom which fills the Chambers of the heart with "All precious and pleasant riches."

At one point, Mrs. Goodwin expresses her literary ambition:

I even dared hope that I might leave 'foot-prints in the sands of time,' might make a name worthy of being written on the same page with Mrs. Stowe's, Miss Warner's, and Mrs. Cummins's. (p. 349.)

An author, who had the ear of a large public for almost two decades, as his prefaces show, is Timothy Shay Arthur (1809-1885). In the introduction to Riches Have Wings (New York, 1847) he writes:

Riches have wings. In no country is this more strikingly true than in our own....
He anatomizes the causes like a thesis novelist:

The causes...are various: mainly it depends upon our negation, in the beginning...of the laws of primogeniture and entailment of property....

Arthur is chiefly remembered for his efforts to emphasize the importance of temperance reform. In the preface to *Temperance Tales; or Six Nights with the Washingtonians* (Philadelphia, 1848) he says:

> When these Temperance Tales were commenced, the writer did not anticipate so favorable a reception....His success has been far beyond his expectations.

He emphasizes the use of facts:

> At every step...the writer has felt with the actors....it is because they are not mere fictions that they have any power to awaken a corresponding interest in the mind of the reader.

He says about the choice of the title:

> This title...was suggested...from the fact of the writer's having been present at some of the first experience meetings in Baltimore, only a few months after the formation of the original Washington Temperance Society....

Arthur is somewhat unusual in using the theme of marital maladjustment in the domestic novel. His introduction to *Mary Ellis; or, The Runaway Match* (Philadelphia, 1850) bemoans the people's callousness toward the poor in the immediate vicinity:

> While sympathizing with the far off distress, we forget that want and suffering are all around us.

Similarly, the prefatory remarks to *The Old Man's Bride* (New York, 1853) show concern about marital problems:

> Marriage is too important a contract to be entered into lightly. Those who make it a matter of bargain...commit an error....To set this forth in strong light, is the design of the present volume.

The introduction to *Sketches of Life and Character* (Philadelphia, 1850) presents the author's aim and views on his choice of the
profession:

He has endeavored...to lead the mind to good....
Authorship...was not a matter of choice....He wrote...
because it was a pleasure to write....

The preface to The Lights and Shadows of Real Life (Philadelphia, 1851) makes the generalization: "To all, as they pass through the world, come 'light and shadow.'" In The Two Wives: or, Lost and Won (Philadelphia, 1851), the author says that his story "is intended to show the power of...love, in winning back...a husband whose steps have strayed...." The same year came Off-hand Sketches, a little dashed with humour (Philadelphia, 1851). The moralizing preface says:

Many of the incidents given, are facts embellished by a few touches of fancy....

In Stories for Young Housekeepers (Philadelphia, 1851) the author claims:

...the pictures of life, drawn in the colours of truth by fancy's pencil, may have more than a passing interest.

The preface to The Home Mission (Philadelphia, 1854) shows the influence of home:

If it were possible to trace back...good or evil impulses...the origin would not be found until we had reached the home of childhood....

Shadows and Sunbeams (Philadelphia, 1854) has a moralizing "Word with the Reader":

...we make our own shadow and...sunlight....If we were wise and good, no clouds would obscure our firmament....

The Ways of Providence (Philadelphia, 1852) strikes a religious note in the preface:

Some...think prosperity or adversity are sent as rewards or punishments for well or evil doing. In this, we think, there is an error....this is the doctrine of our book.
The introduction to the Trials and Confessions of an American Housekeeper (Philadelphia, 1854) professes "to embrace the grave and instructive, as well as the agreeable and amusing." Similarly, Home lights and Shadows (New York, 1854) has the prefatory moral: "Love makes the homelights and selfishness the shadows."

The Way to Prosper (Philadelphia, 1855) makes clear in the preface that "the purpose in writing this book has been to show the power of virtue...."

Similarly, True Riches; or, Wealth Without Wings (Boston, 1852) purports in its preface to point out that "true riches can only be laid up in the heart; and that, without these...which have no wings, gold, the god of this world, cannot bestow a single blessing...."

The preface to Our Homes (Philadelphia, 1856) has a sociological approach:

In the homes...good and evil influences originate. The carefully trained...child grows up into a useful citizen...while the neglected child...pushes his way to manhood, a trespasser...and a scourge upon the community....

The introduction to What Can Woman Do? (1856) has a didactic purpose:

Our purpose is to show...what woman can do...the influence she yields in the world's progress upward, as well as her power to mar the human soul and drag it down to perdition when her spirit is darkened....

A feministic follows:

A large proportion of the wrong woman suffers...may be fairly set down as the fault of woman...for the men...are, to a certain degree, either what their mothers have made them or have...permitted them to become....

On the use of real incidents the author says:

...we have endeavored to keep so close a relation between the actual and the ideal that few will see them
Words of Cheer for the Tempted, the Toiling, and the Sorrowing (Philadelphia, 1857) has the usual moralizing preface:

There are words of cheer in the air. Listen...their melody will bring peace to the spirit, and their truth strength to the heart.

In the preface to The Wedding Guest: A Friend of the Bride and Bridegroom (Philadelphia, 1860), Arthur uses the marital theme for sermonizing:

There is no relation...so important...as that of husband and wife. Yet, how rarely...the parties when contracting this relation...know themselves.

The author is evidently sure of a good public response:

May this "Wedding Guest" receive as warm a welcome as we desire.

Woman To the Rescue, A Story of the New Crusade (Philadelphia, 1874) has a poetical preface. The last anti-alcohol stanza goes thus:

"Tell me I hate the bowl,-
Hate is a feeble word;
I loathe, abhor, my very soul
By strong disgust is stirred
Where'er I see, or hear, or tell
Of the Dark Beverage of Hell!

Although T. S. Arthur wrote many prefaces, he had little to say on the art of fiction. His wide range, however, shows the kind of themes that appealed to the contemporary writers and readers.

A novelist who wrote less was Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881). His best and best known novel is Arthur Bonnicastle (New York, 1873). Sub-titled "An American Novel," the story follows the pattern of Dickens's Great Expectations. It has a built-in moralizing preface:

Life looks beautiful from both extremities. Prospect and
As a boy's story, the novel is relatively free from tearful sentiment. Also, it illustrates not so much a "moral" as a theory of life and of education.

The preface to *The Bay Path, A Tale of Adventure and Romance, When New England was a Colony* (New York, 1857) compares fiction to the Christian system:

The Author of the Christian system spake evermore in parables in the illustration of...truth. In fact...the great principle in human nature which called Him into the world, is identical with that on which the claims...of legitimate fiction rest....

A statement on the religious basis of New England, the writer's aim, and the romantic possibilities of treatment follows:

With this view of the...high office of fiction, the following pages were written...with the conviction that the basis of New England character is essentially religious...that the early colonial life of New England...was neither without its romantic aspects nor its heroes....

Regarding the use of history in the plot, the preface says:

Had the writer...not felt that history was a more reliable guide...some portions...which may not be deemed artistic, would have been differently constructed.

The author expresses his aim in high flown language:

...the writer has endeavored to trace, through dim forests of superstition, by the side of life-giving streams of thought, over barren hills of bigotry, among rocks of passion, and across mountain-tops of high resolution...the path over which those influences passed which shaped the policy of the governing power and molded the destiny of the governed.

Last, the writer refers to his cordial relations with readers:

...the writer is conscious of having fallen not only below his ideal, but below the high claims of his subject; yet the extremely...cordial treatment which the public have already extended it...emboldens him to hope for many readers, and...their indulgence.
In 1871, a visit to Chicago just after the great fire had begun to subside gave Edward Payson Roe (1833-1888) the idea for his earliest novel Barriers Burned Away (New York, 1872). In the preface to the first edition, Roe wrote:

About one year ago our hearts were in deepest sympathy with our fellow-citizens of Chicago, and it occurred to me...that even the lurid flames might reveal...the need and value of Christian faith.

Regarding the use of facts the writer said: "Nearly all the scenes introduced are historical...."

The novel got so good a reception that Roe wrote another, Opening a Chestnut Burr (New York, 1874), "to determine whether the amazing success was an accident or the product of a dependable formula." In the preface, Roe wondered about the critics' reaction:

I shall say but few words of preface...I have received...well-deserved criticism from the gentlemen of the caustic pen....How they will judge this simple October story...I leave to the future, and turn to those for whom the book was written.

Roe visualized a favorable reception from his readers:

In fancy, I see them around the glowing hearth of quiet homes...and hope that this newcomer will be welcomed for the sake of those that preceded it....

Rather than claim a factual basis, Roe remarked: "The incidents and characters are mainly imaginary." He added:

...there are many...like my hero, whose condition can be illustrated by the following lines:

Were some great ship all out of stores,
When half way o'er the sea,
Fit emblem of too many lives,
Such vessel doomed would be.

1Dictionary of American Biography, XVI, 84.
He concluded with a qualified eulogy on woman:

...in the sphere of quiet homes— not elsewhere— I believe that woman can best rule and save the world.

The preface to *What Can She Do* (New York, 1901) professes an aim: "This book was...written with a definite, earnest purpose...."

Roe poses the problem in social terms:

As society...depart[s] from primitive simplicity...it... involves a...risk for a woman to be thrown out upon the world with unskilled hands, an untrained mind, and an unbraced moral nature.

He criticises the fiction of the day:

Much of the fiction of our day...is discouraging.... In the delineation of character, some are good, some are bad, and some indifferent....

He strikes a note of faith:

Earthly existence is but the prelude of our life, and even from this the Divine artist can take much of the discord, and give an earnest of eternal harmonies. We are honored with the privilege of "co-working with Him."

He concludes on an eloquently sentimental note:

If I...can...lead one father to retain his children to be more...self-reliant, one mother to teach her daughters a...more heroic womanhood...one country girl from leaving her safe native village for...some great city...one heavy-laden heart to the only source of rest, I shall be well rewarded....

The preface to *A Face Illumined* (New York, 1878) emphasizes authenticity and morality:

The old garden, and the aged man who grew young within it, are not creations, but sacred memories.

That the book may tend to ennoble other faces than that of Ida Mayhew, is the earnest wish of E. F. Roe.

The preface to *From Jest to Earnest* (New York, 1875) refers to prejudice against fiction: "In many minds there is a prejudice against
fiction in any form or with any aim...." he defends it:

I appeal to every fair-minded reader, does the Christian story of today differ from Christ's stories more widely than the modern sermon...from one of Christ's sermons...? Even in respect to form, do we not find as much warrant in the instruction of the model Teacher for the one as for the other?

Roe calls attention to the vogue of fiction:

Too deeply imbedded...is the craving for truth and thought in the narrative form...Ask the librarian...what class of books are chiefly taken out, and the answer will be "fiction."

He believes that fiction should be moral:

If millions...will read fiction, then it would appear a sacred duty in those who love their kind, to make this food of the forming character healthful...in its nature.

He asserts that his story is as good as a sermon:

I do not think I have "abandoned the ministry." This new and simple story...is my sermon as truly as if I stood up and preached it....

He hopefully awaits a kind reception:

from the critics I expect criticism; but in many homes I hope to be received as we welcome old friends--glad to see them with all their faults.

He also refers to "piracy" in the publishing world:

The clearest moral principle is involved; and what has defective law and...custom to do with the matter? In some lands law and custom permit the helpless to be roasted and eaten, but is it right?

The preface to Near to Nature's Heart (New York, 1876) shows Roe's desire for good relationship with the public in the light of his moral appeal:

...these books are written with the...purpose of helping him to do right; and success...is the best reward I crave.

Regarding artistic merit he modestly says:

I do not claim for these books the character of beautiful
works of art....A man who cannot model a perfect statue may yet erect a lamp-post, and place thereon a light which shall save many a wayfarer from stumbling.

On the historical content of the story, Roe remarks:

I have carefully consulted good authorities in regard to those parts which are historical.

Captain Molly has her recognized place in the Revolution, but my leading characters are...imaginary....

A Knight of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1877) has a prefatory moral in the stanzaic form:

He best deserves a knightly crest,
Who slays the evils that infest,
His souls within. If victor here,
He soon will find a wider sphere.
The world is cold to him who pleads;
The world bows low to knightly deeds.

The preface to Without A Home (New York, 1831) expresses confidence:

My reception...has been...kinder than I expected.... Toward indifferent strangers we maintain...reticence, but as acquaintance ripens...there is a mutual impulse toward an exchange of confidences....

On his natural and so-called automatic writing, Roe says:

I have never manufactured a novel....I truly believe that only as I feel strongly will the reader be interested. A book, like a bullet, can go only as far as the projecting force carries it.

Regarding the social questions the story handles, Roe observes:

I have not...attempted to solve them. In our society public opinion is exceedingly powerful. It is the torrent that sweeps away obstructing evils.

Roe emphasizes facts:

I have made my studies carefully....It is a shameful fact that...saleswomen are still compelled to stand... in...the stores. On the intensely hot day...our murdered President was brought to the seaside, I found many girls standing wearily and uselessly....
The preface to *His Sombre Rivals* (New York, 1883) stresses facts:

I have endeavored to portray the battle of Bull Run....
I was in service nearly four years.... I have submitted my proofs to...Colonel Hasbrook....

On the use of sentiment Roe strangely remarks:

...it is scarcely the fashion of the present time to portray men and women who feel very deeply about anything....The heart of humanity is like the ocean: there are depths to be stirred when the causes are adequate.

The Preface to *An Original Belle* (New York, 1885) explains that one of "the purposes...is to illustrate the power of a young girl not so beautiful or so good as many of her sisters...but true to her own nature and conscience...."

Roe says about his material and purpose:

I have sought to reproduce with some color of life and reality a critical period in our civil war....The novel was not written for...scenes or events. They...illustrate character at the time....

He claims to have had access to "authentic sources":

In touching upon the battle of Gettysburg and other historical events...I have carefully consulted authentic sources.

He further declares:

I have consulted "Sketches of the Draft Riots in 1863" by Hon. J. T. Headley, the files of the Press...and other records.

Carl Van Doren has thus described Roe's fictional formula:

First, some topical material...second, characters and incidents from...observation or newspapers; third...nature descriptions with...rural virtues; and fourth, plots concerned...with...wives, fortunes, and salvation.  

Roe's prefaces show his aims, devices, and immense vogue.

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CHAPTER IX

THE SIGNIFICANT AND THE BANAL PREFACE

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), who became the most widely known woman novelist of the nineteenth-century America, is a good example of the kind of novelist whose prefaces are catchalls of the significant as well as the trite.

The preface to The Mayflower; or, Sketches of scenes and characters among the descendants of the Pilgrims (New York, 1843) expatiates on novel reading:

The time was when...novel reading was...as much an interdicted amusement as dancing and card-playing. But since...Miss Edgeworth and Scott have produced so great a change...we can find novels as a part of the clergyman's library....

The author asks questions and answers them herself:

A novel--what is it? Is it merely the highly wrought tale... in two volumes, and called a novel?...by what methods are we to regulate...the reading of works of imagination?...we cannot assume that all "fictitious narratives" shall be excluded, for this would shut out...even the parables and allegories of scripture.

She praises "the exercise of the imagination":

The most elevating...of all amusements is the exercise of the imagination in contemplating the pictures drawn by the sculptor, the painter, poet, and novelist.

She believes that "a successful novelist" is a potential
"public benefactor":

...a person who has the...taste...that qualifies...for a successful novelist...may become one of the greatest of public benefactors, by...providing the healthful aliment that may be employed in supplanting the pernicious leaven.

**Uncle Tom's Cabin, or the Man that was a Thing,** to use the original subtitle (later changed to "Life Among the Lowly") began on June 5, 1851 in the *National Era* and was concluded on April 1, 1852. The preface to the first edition has an eye-catching opening:

The scenes of this story...lie among a race hitherto ignored...whose ancestors...brought with them...a character so unlike the hard...An/lo-Saxon race, as for many years to have won from it only...contempt.

A crusading note follows:

But, another and better day is dawning....

The poet, the painter, and the artist...under the allurements of fiction, breathe a humanizing influence....

She avows her purpose:

The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy...for the African race....

The author emphasizes facts:

In the northern states, these representations may, perhaps be thought caricatures; in southern states are witnesses who know their fidelity....

She hopefully concludes:

...the great cause of human liberty is in the hands of one, of whom it is said:

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged
Till He have set judgment in the earth."

**Uncle Tom's Cabin** was a triumph. Mrs. Stowe's final suggestion that she had taken it in dictation from God, satisfied her in old age. In the preface to the 1878 edition, she acknowledged her debt to Theodore Dwight Weld's tract, *American Slavery As It Is* (1839), admitting
to Weld's wife, Angelina Grimké, that "she kept that book in her work basket by day, and slept with it under her pillow by night, till its facts crystallized into Uncle Tom." Before making these public testimonies, Mrs. Stowe had been inclined to take much of the credit herself, with an assist from Henry Ward Beecher, who promised to scatter her still unwritten words thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa. Or, perhaps, as she believed in 1870, she had been led to write it, "by the necessity of making some income for family expenses."

Nor could she decide exactly where or when she had begun writing and whether the death of Uncle Tom was the first or the last part of the book to be written.

_Dred; A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp_ (Boston, 1856) bears the following lines on the title page:

"Away to the Dismal Swamp he speeds,—
His rath was rugged and sore,
Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,
Through many a fen, where the serpent feeds
And man never trod before.

And when on earth he sunk to sleep
If slumber his eyelids knew,
de lay where the deadly vine doth weep
Its venomous tears, that nightly steep
The flesh with blistering dew."

The preface justifies the choice of the subject:

The reason...is two-fold. First...there is no ground...whose...gloomy shadows...afford to the novelist so wide a scope....Two nations are here struggling...a third has arisen, and the three are interlocked in wild...relations, that evolve every possible combination of romance.

The author calls the subject a mine:

Hence, if the writer's object had been...a work of art, she would have felt justified in not turning aside from that mine whose inexhaustible stores have but begun to be developed.

She stresses "the moral bearings" of her subject:

It is the moral bearings of the subject...which have had
the chief influence in its selection.

God...is now asking the American people, is the system of slavery...right?

She asserts a writer's right to some liberties:

...some anachronisms with regard to...time...have been allowed, for works of fiction must sometimes use some liberties in the groupings of incidents.

She displays her crusading zeal:

But as mere cold art...is nothing, the author hopes that those who now are called to struggle for all that is noble...may find in this book the response of a sympathizing heart.

The Minister's Wooing (New York, Boston, 1859) has a built-in preface. The second paragraph has a chatty ring:

When one has a story to tell, one is...puzzled which end of it to begin at. You have a whole corps of people to introduce that you know and your reader doesn't; and one thing so presupposes another, that whichever way you turn your patchwork, the figures...seem ill-arranged....

Despite an excess of theology, the book appealed to the contemporary reader, and, save Uncle Tom's Cabin, it now is the best known of Mrs. Stowe's works.

We and Our Neighbors (New York, 1875) met with a special honor, that of being reviewed by a first-rate critic. The novel was frankly humanitarian.

1 Indeed even Lowell, as editor of the Atlantic, felt constrained to admonish Mrs. Stowe on this account:

As for "theology"...let it crop out when it naturally comes to the surface, only don't dig down to it. A moral is a fine thing, but in making a story an artist is a traitor who does not sacrifice everything to art....Let your moral take care of itself, and remember that an author's writing-desk is something infinitely higher than a pulpit. C. E. Stowe, Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe (Boston, 18839), pp. 333-334.

2 Henry James, Nation, XXI (1875), 61.
Pink and White Tyranny (Boston, 1871) is described in the preface as "not to be a novel," but "a little commonplace history," "a story with a moral," "a sketch" and "a parable." The last description is apt; and the moral, told like the caption under a cartoon, is that divorce is horrible. "When once marriage is made and consummated, it should be as fixed a fact as the laws of nature" is Mrs. Stowe's premise in the building up of her syllogism. Throughout the novel, she is worried by the French influence on American life.

Mrs. Stowe had always been concerned about the purity of American character. In her very first book, she had told the story of the Pilgrims in Mayflower (New York, 1843) and the paramount value of its moral for young America:

The descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England have been distinguished for their reverence for the Bible, for... good schools, and for...industrious habits. This is the reason why no people in the world have been more prosperous in every kind of business than those in New England; for God... makes those most prosperous who are most obedient to His laws....

The Pearl of Orr's Island (Boston, 1862) stands apart from Mrs. Stowe's other stories, since in it she exploited for the first time the achievements of the New England sailors. The opening pages—a built-in preface—are unusually charming. 1

Agnes of Sorrento (Boston, 1862) is more restrictively personal and provincial than Oldtown Folks (Boston, 1869); and in its lack of historical perspective it is anything other than what its title page professes: "An historical novel of the time of Savonarola."

"We write only as we are driven, and never know exactly where we are going to land," reads a sentence of confession from The Minister's  

1 Sarah Orne Jewett has spoken admiringly of these opening pages in an autobiographical preface to Deephaven (Boston, New York, 1884) for revealing "those who dwelt along the wooded seacoast and by the decaying, shipless harbors." Later, however, Miss Jewett wrote Mrs.
Wooing. Mrs. Stowe did not bother much about using the elementary tools of punctuation and grammar correctly (Howells from his desk at the Atlantic Monthly wrote with gentle frankness of her carelessness). She never did attain artistic mastery or even a disciplined expression. More levels of meaning can be seen in a single story like Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" than in an entire novel by Mrs. Stowe. Only Uncle Tom's Cabin—moving or monstrous—is charged with verbal magic and devices of significant expression.

In Mrs. Stowe's vocabulary and subconscious mind, "fiction" was a repugnant word, with insinuations of frivolity and indecency. She never really forgot that in her youth a favorite subject for written compositions in the schools had been "On the Disadvantages of Novel-reading." Mrs. Stowe's recurrent themes which she justifies in her prefaces show that her distinctions between right and wrong were narrow and her judgments arbitrary. She never imagined that sin and the concept of "the fortunate fall" could also have deeply moral implications. Her sense of dedication, however, shows through her prefaces and practice. To her mind, her stories were not hackwork but "Service." Herein lies her appeal. 1 Like her novels, her prefaces are a mixture of the significant and the banal. There are flashes of genius, 2 but at times her flat expression is deadly.

At any rate, she said nothing profound to further develop the fictional preface in America.

Fields, "Alas, that she couldn't finish it in the same noble key of simplicity and harmony."

1 With such diverse foreign personalities as Leo Tolstoy, T. B. Macaulay, George Sand, Heinrich Haine, M. K. Gandhi, J. L. Nehru writing in her praise, Mrs. Stowe's eminence is undeniable.

John Esten Cooke (1830-1866) struck it rich in producing a variety of the historical romance. His prefatory statement—"To the Reader"—vouches for accuracy, however, in writing Leather Stocking and Silk; or Hunter John Myers and His Times (New York, 1854):

The chief character...had...a real existence....One who knew him well, testifies to the accuracy of the delineation in all its material points.

An appeal to the reader follows:

If the book be found entertaining, and...the spirit of it pure, the writer will be more than satisfied.

The prologue to Hilt to Hilt (New York, London, 1869) shows a strongly defensive attitude:

I am not so vain as to imagine you remember my memoirs.... You must have forgotten their reception by my critical friends....Those...literary Camanches brandished the tomahawk, uttered the war-whoop, and performed a dance of fearful triumph around the prostrate and bleeding victim.

Rebuked by a Boston critic for rhetorical extravagances, Cooke professes authenticity:

I hope the style is not florid; I know the events...are not exaggerated. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the wild romance of that Partisan life of 1864. I have lived in the midst of it....

He humbly adds:

There were one or two...incidents which I designed to relate. I have not related them. I felt that the reader would call me a "sensation-writer."

He respectfully concludes:

Here then, worthy reader, I present you with a brief and fierce episode....

The prologue to Kohun (New York, 1869) opens rather dramatically:

On the wall...are two crossed swords. One is a battered old sabre worn at Gettysburg, and Appomattox; the other, a
Federal officer's dress sword captured in 1863.

A sentimental note follows:

But is it wrong to remember the past?

...in that...drama of 1864-5, I can find something besides blood and tears: even...some sunshine!

Next, Cooke uses the ubi sunt formula:

Where is that pageant today?... Where are the drums and the bugles?... They are silent....

The Last of the Foresters (New York, Cincinnati, 1855) has a rather perfunctory preface:

Perhaps this story scarcely needs a Preface,, but the child of the writer's invention comes to possess a place in his affections, and he is reluctant to send it forth into the wide world, without something in the nature of a letter of introduction.

He describes the aim of the book:

No words can describe the loveliness of...fair fields....

It is in the midst of these scenes that he has endeavored to place a young hunter...and to show how his wild nature was impressed by the new life and advancing civilization around him. This process...is the...aim of the book.

The Virginia Comedians; or, Old Days in the Old Dominion (New York, 1854) was dedicated to "One upon whose head in childhood the hand of Washington was laid." The author declared that "the design of this book will plainly appear from the most cursory perusal...."

The background was avowedly historical:

That strange Virginia of 1765...afforded a broad field for dramatic narrative....England was attacking—the Colonies were resisting...and men's minds were agitated by the breath of a coming storm...which was to swell into the hurricane of the Revolution.

The author professes an aim:

Everywhere the writer has endeavored to preserve the traits of the period...and make his characters flesh and blood. A Herculean labor! For surely it is no slight task to...
delineate that wonderful machine called man....

A sentimental note follows:

If some pages are painful...more...are bright...as life is....

Cooke emphasizes historical accuracy:

...the writer has endeavored to preserve the fidelity of history with the most sedulous care....Imagination has yielded to history; fancy to recorded fact.

He concludes with a statement regarding the evaluation of books which modern readers will not readily accept:

Every book should be judged, first for its purity and healthfulness: afterwards for what it contains of novel, character, incident, or idea. The writer trusts that in the first particular these rages are irreproachable: he is...aware of his deficiencies on the remaining point.

The prologue has a note on romance:

The memories of men are full of old romances: but they will not speak--our skalds....

I endeavor...to summon...stalwart cavaliers, and tender... dames of the...past....

At the end, Cooke lets the cat out of the bag:

Thus far the author of the MS....

The work is now given to the world in obedience to his last request.

The prologue--allegedly by the Author of the Original Manuscript--to the sequel Henry St. John, Gentleman (New York, 1359) repeats the old charge against dry history:

Alas for the historians. They tell us...so little.... We have nothing but the skeleton, when we want the warm blood, the flushed brows, and the flashing eyes.

Bayard Taylor (1825-1878) wrote Hannah Thurston (New York 1863), his first novel, at a "tearing speed." 1 In the dedication to

1 A. H. Smyth, Bayard Taylor (Boston, 1896), p. 163.
George P. Putnam, Taylor remarked:

I am aware how much is required for the construction of a good work of fiction—how much I venture in entering a field so different from those over which I have hitherto been ranging. It is, however, the result of no...whim....

He stressed the value of American material:

I perceived peculiarities...in American life...strikingly adapted to the purposes of fiction, both in...their external manifestation, and the deeper questions which lie beneath the surface.

Admitting a slender plot, he vouches for authenticity:

I do not...rest the interest of the book on its slender plot, but on the fidelity with which it represents certain types of character and phases of society....

Although Taylor disclaimed opinions uttered by the characters, the novel as a whole is a satire on reformers—Sunkers, Grahamites, Cimmerians, spiritualists, prohibitionists, feminists, abolitionists, etc.

Some critics had identified Taylor with Maxwell Woodbury in Hannah Thurston. Critics of this kind, he observed in the prefatory letter of dedication to his second novel, John Godfrey's Fortunes (New York, 1864), would "not fail to recognize him in John Godfrey...." Taylor defends himself in the same preface against "those sensitive readers who protest against any representation of 'American life,' which is not an unmitigated glorification of the same...." The novel is a mixture—hardly a blend—of realism and romanticism which Howells was shortly to produce.

The Story of Kennett (New York, 1867) has flashy fictional devices, but Taylor knows his mis-en-scene. "The lovely pastoral landscapes which I knew by heart," he wrote in the Prologue,"have been copied, field for field and tree for tree...." The Atlantic Monthly
noted that the book was not weighted with "hopelessly unpicturesque" elements like "modern reformerism" or "the scarcely more arrestive details of literary adventure." ¹

In the prologue to *The Story of Kennett*, Taylor had spoken derisively of contemporary writers who chose to deal with "abnormal characters and psychological problems more or less exceptional or morbid." He himself, however, joined their ranks in writing *Joseph and His Friend* (New York, 1870). In general, however, and despite "romantic caches in his stories," ² Taylor was for realism in fiction. "Not what ought to be, or might be, is the proper province of fiction, but what is," he wrote in the Dedication Letter to *John Godfrey's Fortunes*. In this respect and in criticizing the morbid tone of much of the fiction of the eighteen-fifties, Taylor surely anticipates Howells.

Theodore Winthrop (1828-1861) is known for *Cecil Dreeme* (New York, 1861), a blend of a Gothic romance with Hawthornesque fancy, and *John Brent* (Boston, 1862), which opened up the romantic west. The autobiographical device is manifest in the opening words of *John Brent*, which serve as a built-in preface:

_I write in the first person....I am in no sense the hero of this drama. Call me Chorus...._ ¹

_A romantic note follows:_

_It is a healthy...broad-daylight story....There is action enough, primeval action of the Homeric kind...._ ²

_But enough backing and filling. Enter Richard Wade--myself--as Chorus._

¹*The Atlantic Monthly* (June, 1866), XVII, 776.

²Cowie, op. cit., p. 486.
When Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), a typical Boston 'Brahmin' published *Elsie Venner* (Boston, 1861), the vogue of the historical romance and the Gothic tale was rather low, but that of domestic fiction was high. In the preface, at the very outset, Holmes calls his work a romance:

In calling this narrative a "romance," the Author wishes to be sure of being indulged in the common privileges of the poetic license.

He claims to have leavened fiction with science (a rara avis):

Through all the disguise of fiction a grave scientific doctrine may be detected...as a part of the machinery of his story without pledging his absolute belief in it....

On the use of facts he says:

The Author...has received the most startling confirmation of the possibility of the existence of a character like... Elsie Venner.

Regarding Elsie's ophidian character and pre-natal influences, Holmes later says:

She has lived a double being...the blight which fell upon her in the dim period before consciousness...has involved the centres of life in its own decay....(p. 329.)

In the preface, Holmes observes that he does not wish to insist on his theory but rather to use it as "a convenient medium of truth," but the colloquies between Dr. Kittredge and the Reverend Doctor Honeywood show that his convictions regarding human responsibility were deeply rooted. In the doctor's words, Holmes questions the soundness of laying human depravity to old Adam's sin or to weakness of the will:

We are constantly seeking weakness when you see depravity. I don't say we are right...We used to be as hard on sickness as you were on sin. We know better now.(p. 242.)
The Guardian Angel (Boston, 186?) illustrates the notion that "it is by no means certain that our individual personality is the single inhabitant of these our corporeal frames." Rather it seems probable that "this body in which we journey across the isthmus between the two oceans is not a private carriage, but an omnibus." (pp. 22-23.) In the prefatory "To My Readers" Holmes remarks:

Jonathan Edwards the younger tells the story of a...wretch... who was abusing his father, when the old man suddenly cried out, "Don't drag me any further, for I did not drag my father beyond this tree." I have attempted to show...some inherited qualities in...Myrtle Hazard...to be kept in sight by the small class of preface-readers.

Holmes also thinks in terms of non preface-readers:

If I called these two stories Studies of the Reflex Function... I should frighten away all but the professors and the learned ladies...by saying nothing...the large majority...not being preface-readers, will never suspect anything to harm them...

He adds:

If we cannot follow...nature into the mental and moral world...without being accused of laying "all that we are evil in to a divine thrusting on, "we had better return... to...demonology, and reinstate the Leader of the Lower House....

He claims a factual basis for his story:

The question involving...property...finds its parallel in the...De Haro land case....The experiment of breaking the child's will...is borrowed from a famous incident...where a little girl was beaten to death because she would not say her prayers....

He concludes on a note about clergymen:

There are a great many good clergymen to one bad one.... I hope the best and wisest...will like this story...as having been written with a right and honest purpose.

Realizing its miscellaneous character, Holmes calls A Mortal Antipathy (Boston, New York, 1855) a "portfolio." It touches on spiritualism, the evil eye, yellow fever, gynophobia, and aspects of
abnormal psychology which make the book look like the reductio
ad absurdum of Holmes's method of splicing his scientific theory
onto the objective action of his story. The Introduction discusses
all sorts of subjects. Toward the end, Holmes compares an heir to
an old estate in Europe with an American:

If there is any person...to be envied, it is the one...
born to an ancient estate....The American is a nomad....
If I had an ideal life plan for him it would be something
like this:-

His grandfather should be a wise...country minister....
His father should be...a businessman....

He warns Americans against being "dangerously rich":

Our dangerously rich men can make themselves hated....
The safety of great wealth with us lies in obedience to
the new version of the Old World axiom, Richesse Oblige.

The opening chapter entitled "Getting Ready" introduces
further prefatory comments:

Readers of Charles Lamb remember that Sarah Battle insisted
on a clean-swept hearth before sitting down to her...game
of whist.

The narrator wishes to sweep the hearth....He does not
intend to frighten the reader...but...warn him against
hasty judgments....Did he ever see the Siamese twins....
Probably not, yet he feels sure that Chang and Eng existed...?

He points out the need of further brushing off:

...no matter how a story is begun, many...readers have already
shaped its chief actors....These are all to be brushed away....
If a story were so interesting that a maiden would rather hear
it than listen to the praise of her own beauty...still it would
have to be wrapped in some tissue of circumstance....

He warns: "It may not be easy to find the exact locality by
looking into the first gazeteer at hand...."

In the novel, Holmes tries to keep the reader diverted. He
describes his device:

The holder of the Portfolio...would never...have ventured
to come before the public if he had not counted among
his resources certain papers...of the Pansophian
Society...either for the illustration of the narrative,
or for a diversion during those intervals in which the
flow of events is languid, or ceases...to manifest any
progress. (p. 106.)

The candid confession shows Holmes's limitations. But for
his physiological theories and crisp language which enliven his
"medicated" novels to some extent, his prefaces do not take him
very far from the sentimental school. Like Mrs. Stowe's prefaces,
they are mixtures of the significant and the banal.
CHAPTER X

THE HUMANITARIAN PREFACE

The era of Civil War, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation saw
the flowering of fiction which was specially imbued with humanitarian
impulses. This concern is evident in the prefaces of the period. The
opening chapter of Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty
(New York, 1867) by J. W. DeForest (1826-1906) has a built-in preface
which moves from generalizations about the times to particularities
of the plot:

No volcanic eruption rends a mountain without stirring...
mice. It was the southern rebellion which brought Miss
Ravenel and Mr. Colburne into interesting juxtaposition.

The author continues in a satirical vein:

New Boston...is the capital of the little Yankee State of
Barataria. I ask pardon for this geographical impertinence
of introducing a seventh State...so that I may tell my story
freely....

Reviewing the novel, Howells wrote that DeForest's work "forms,
to our mind, strong proof that we are not so much lacking in an
American novelist as in a public to recognize him." He flatly
declared that "so far he is really the only American novelist." He
added that "the heroes of young-lady writers in the magazines have
been everywhere fighting the late campaigns over again, as young
ladies would have fought them." His failure to become popular was inevitable at a time when the readers of novels were mostly feminine. Howells's judgment cannot be gainsaid:

Fine, not stronger workmen succeeded him, and a delicate realism, more responsive to...the feminine oversoul, replaced his inexorable veracity. In the fate of his fiction...it is as if this sensitive spirit had revenged the slight it felt, and, as the habit of woman is, overavenged itself. 2

DeForest's pictures of Negro life were not heightened by sentiment. Similarly, before The Red Badge of Courage (New York, 1895) appeared, DeForest's book showed the horrors of war. Above all, New Boston received no flattering treatment:

New Boston is not a lively nor a social place.... Puritanism...is not only not favorable but is... noxious to social...graces....(p. 14.)

But in the prefatory chapter entitled "Boston Pacificated" in A Lover's Revolt (New York, London, 1893) DeForest pays Boston a genuine compliment:

But why should not Boston succeed...? The stock of the Puritans...had rather gained than lost in... vigor. Moreover, every native-born soul could write, a circumstance without parallel in the mother country, and perhaps...in all arrogant Europe....(pp. 2-3.)

DeForest experimented in several genres. His scattered prefatory comments (not regular) are always lively.

Among the novelists who used the period of Reconstruction as a theme, few were so well equipped to treat the problem understandingly as Albion Winegar Tourgée (1838-1905). Like Mrs. Stowe, he

1 The Atlantic Monthly 20 (July, 1877), 120-122; 29 (March, 1872), 365; 34 (August, 1874), 229.

gave himself first to his matter; consequently, he took structural liberties with the novel form at a time when serious novelists were concerned about technique. He wrote many prefaces, but he did not say much in terms of art. His chief concern is humanitarian. For example, in the preface to A Royal Gentleman (New York, 1881)—first published in 1874 under the title "Toinette"—he says how he saw the evils of slavery:

I saw...that the *conscious* evils of slavery...had been...
disproportionately dwelt upon....At the same time, the *unconscious* evils...had been allowed to drop out of sight....

He adds: "The story is the delineation of a romantic sentiment...through which Slavery still lives and dominates."

Tourgée emphasizes the rich field of America for romantic incident in terms of "opposing forces":

The past quarter of a century has been a remarkable era.... Knowledge and ignorance, slavery and freedom, Northman and Southron, Caucasian and African were the opposing forces....

He says he has used facts:

Finally...this story is in "advocacy" of nothing whatever; it is a picture of facts....Its pages were written because "I looked, and saw, and a voice said 'Write!'" They were published...asking but the favor of

"one moment
Of the busy world's attention;"

which has been kindly accorded in the demand for numerous editions.

Figs and Thistles (New York, 1879) did not reveal the author's full power, yielding, in the words of the Prologue, "a very large growth of thistles, and an exceedingly scanty harvest of figs."

Tourgée calls the novel on the title page "the story of an earnest man," showing his allegiance to the long tradition of sentimental
fiction that preceded him; every sentimental novel of the period, or perhaps of the nineteenth century, was in one way or another the "story of an earnest man."

A Fool's Errand By One of the Fools (New York, 1879), a great popular success, is the narrative of one of Folly's failures," in the words of the preface. It adds: "The hero can lay no claim to greatness. A believing Noah there is in it, a well-built ark, and an indubitable flood. But the waters prevailed, and the Fool went down...The Wise Men looked on and laughed." "The one merit the story claims," the author points out, "is that of honest...portraiture....And even in this...may be found, perhaps, the greatest folly committed by One of the Fools."

The title was a riddle which Tourgée knew might boost the sale of the book: "The writer believed that the form of the title would constitute one of those pleasant literary conundrums which have a distinct market value, and would consequently enhance the sale of the book." His aims, however, were high; otherwise, he would not have written in the letter to the publishers: "The life of the Fool proper is full of the poetry of faith."

The novel evoked a strong response from dissident readers. In January, 1881, appeared William Royall's A Reply to A Fool's Errand By One of the Fools. William Royall set forth his objection in his preface:

I look upon the book...as a wilful...libel upon a noble...people...upon its author as one of the most contemptible

1 Edmund Wilson says: "A Fool's Errand was received as a sensation in its day and it ought to be an historical classic in ours...." Patriotic Lore: Studies in the Literature of the Civil War (New York, 1962), p. 533.

2 Our Continent, V (May 12, 1884), 604.
fellows...not...less contemptible because endowed with intellect.

Tourgée was asked by his publishers to use the same issues in another novel. The result was *Bricks Without Straw* (New York, 1880). The situation is allegorically presented in the foreword entitled "Translation," which begins:

It came to pass that when Pharoah had made an end of giving commandment that the children of Israel should deliver the daily tale of bricks, but should not be furnished with any straw...to make them...that Neoncapos, the king's jester, laughed.

*John Wax* (New York, 1882) focusses on the post-bellum South. Its companion volume *Mamelon, or The South Without the Shadow* (New York, 1882) is written from the Southerner's point of view. "The shadow was over all," the author writes in the preface,"the shadow of Slavery and of its Children, Ignorance, and War, and Poverty. In the Shadow I wrote, contrasting it with the light."

*Hot Plowshares* (New York, 1883), Tourgée's last Reconstruction novel was, according to the preface, "designed to give a review of the anti-slavery struggle by tracing its growth and the influences of the sentiment upon contrasted characters." But it uses the patent nineteenth-century devices--genealogy and the theme of rightful inheritance--which recur in Thomas Nelson Page's *Red Rock* (New York, 1898) and Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict* (New York, 1863). In the preface, Tourgée outlines the aims of his Reconstruction novels:

Many years ago the author conceived the idea that he might aid...his fellow countrymen...to a juster comprehension of...things...by a series of works...in the form of a fictitious narrative....
He adds:

In between his fictional work, he did political articles under all sorts of pseudonyms including Siva. As in his prefaces and his novels, he expressed himself directly... in his journalistic efforts. In his tribute to Cooper, the American "Wizard," he asserted: "If we desire to have a people worthy of Anglo-Saxon ideals...in the American Republic...we can be sure of one thing—that the conceptions of love, truth, and purity found in Cooper's fiction will not smutch it."

The preface to *In Button's Inn*, a Gothic novel, mentions the use of Mormonism:

The whole movement was purely American in character— the American orientalized by Christian tradition....

The author claims intimate knowledge of the movement:

Intimate association with one of the early disciples, and the acquaintance of some very intelligent believers...have given me a strong interest in its origin and...evolution....

Like Mark Twain interested in inventions, he concludes:

The episode of the pin-making machine has been regarded as fanciful, but a well known family in this region long treasured the model herein described as a relic of the inventive genius of one of its most gifted members.

The ethical tone that pervades the book is not new in Tourgée—humanitarianism characterizes all his heroes—but here it is more obvious. Tourgée's most impressive statement of humanitarianism, however, is *Nurvale Eastman* (New York, 1889). In its condemnation of religious cant, it resembles *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (Chicago, 1897) and in its social awareness *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (New York, 1889-1890). Ironically, Tourgée interrupts his story to pass strictures on Howells and other "realists":

You see the 'realist' is always ready to believe anything mean; but anything decent and manly he declares at once to be unnatural. We who see life as it is, know that it is just as silly to premise that all men are bad as that all are good. (p. 166.)
Pactolus Prime (New York, 1890) has a homiletic tone. Although Tourgée's moral intention is Christian, his literary devices—the unity of action, time, place, and the chorus—are modeled on those of the Greek drama. In the preface, the author-editor says that Pactolus Prime "is the Edicus of American fiction," but the novel is really a remnant of the old tragic Reconstruction novels. As Tourgée himself recognized, "when a literary man begins to work over his old 'ads,' by which he won his popularity aforetime, he is certainly on the downgrade." 1

Unlike James who deplored the dearth of "romantic materials" in America, Tourgée took the position that it "offers richer fields for romantic incident than does English or most European society. ..." 2 He liked to reiterate his words carefully put in the preface to A Royal Gentleman that compared with America "scarcely any... nation presents so rich a field of romantic incident...."

Unlike Harris and Page, Tourgée was not content with describing local folkways and traditions, nor with relating a story for its own sake. His fictions are fundamentally social criticism. He is, in effect, one of the pioneers in this field. 3 As Edmund Wilson has suggested, he "is one of the most readable in this second category of writers who aim primarily at social history." 4 Of all the authors who novelized the Reconstruction era, Tourgée was the only one who lived in the South as an adult throughout the entire period. Just

1"A Bystander's Notes," Inter Ocean, August 22, 1891, p. 4.
2Our Continent, I (March 1, 1882), 40.
4Wilson, op. cit., p. 535.
as his fiction is the literary *apologia* of Radical Republicanism, his prefaces are characterized by humanitarian zeal. More often than not they are spirited statements. Only occasionally do Tourgée's prefatory comments show concern about fiction as art.
CHAPTER XI

THE PROVINCIAL PREFACE

The preface to the first edition of The Hoosier Schoolmaster (New York, 1871) by Edward Eggleston (1837-1902) makes notable points regarding local-color and frontier and regional fiction.

It begins by discussing the writer's relationship with the reader:

I am more than pleased with the generous reception accorded to this story....It used to be a matter of no little jealousy with us...that the manners...and feelings of New England country people filled so large a place in books, while our life, not less...romantic...had no place in literature....

Regarding the autobiographical content of the book, it says:

Some...have suggested that the story is an autobiography. But it is not, save in the sense in which every work of art is....Some of the incidents have been drawn from life; none...from my own....

Apropos of the use of dialect, Eggleston remarks:

Professor Lowell's...preface to the Biglow Papers must be the despair of everyone who aspires to write on Americanisms....But while I have not ventured to discuss the provincialisms of the Indian backwoods, I have been careful to preserve the true usus loquendi of each locution.

He says regarding the flowering of regional literature:

The "great American novel"...is appearing in sections.... For some years...my own stories had to themselves the field of provincial realism (if, indeed, there be any such thing as realism) before there came the succession of fine productions which have made the last fourteen years notable.
Regarding the germination of the book, he says:

...in 1871 Taine's lectures on "Art in the Netherlands"... fell into my hands....These discourses are...an elucidation of the thesis that the artist of originality will work courageously with the material he finds in his own environment....

About critics and criticism he observes:

The main value of good criticism lies...in discovering... merit....This is a conspicuous trait of Sainte-Beuve.... But...reviewers in England and America...hold...that the function of a critic toward new-born talent is analogous to that of Pharaoh toward the infant Jewish population.

The author says he owes the book a few grudges:

If anyone, judging by the length of this preface should conclude that I hold my little book in undue esteem, let him know that I owe it more than one grudge....The author of "The Hoosier School-Master" is...not I; I am but his heir and executor; and since he is a more popular writer than I, why should I meddle with his work?...

A second grudge...is that...readers persist in believing it to be a bit of my own life....

He admits faults as well as strong points:

No one knows so well as I the faults...that characterize the book. But...there is what Emerson would have called a "central spontaneity" about the work of a young man that may give more delight...then all the precision of thought and...style for which we strive as life advances.

The preface to The End of the World (New York, 1872) makes a curious complaint regarding prefaces: "My principal complaint is that it is not customary for a book to have more than one...."

After talking about the Preface Sentimental and the High Philosophical Preface, he discusses the Apologetic and Explanatory Preface, and then observes:

But why multiply examples of the half-dozen or more that I might, could, would, or should have written? Since everybody is agreed that nobody reads a preface, I have concluded to let the book go without any.
The Mystery of Metropolisville (New York, 1873) shows new interests and scenes. The preface begins with a generality:

A novel should be the truest of books....It has been objected that I have copied life too closely, but...the work...is to represent the forms and spirit of our own life, and...free ourselves from...imitation of that which is foreign.

The author's aim is to serve the cause of American literature:

I have wished to make my stories of value as a contribution to the history of civilization in America...just now the most necessary function of this kind of literature....

The novel is as inchoate as the Minnesota territory it covers, wherein "Ideas is in the way--don't pay no interest." (p. 13.) The "mystery" in the title receives a belated treatment, but the public showed enough confidence in the author to order 11,000 copies before publication.

Religion, a recurring theme with Eggleston, is prominent in The Circuit Rider: A Tale of the Heroic Age (New York, 1874). The author says in the preface:

Whatever is incredible in this story is true....At the age when other children have fables...my childish fancy was filled with Indians and highwaymen....

The important character is mentioned next:

...neither the Indian nor the hunter is the Centre-piece, but the circuit-rider....How do I remember the...old preachers....Surely I have a right to celebrate them, since they came so near to being the death of me.

Eggleston professes the high aims of a novelist:

I have...shown the rude as well as the heroic side of early Methodism....But no man is worthy to be called a novelist who does not endeavor...to produce the higher form of history....

He disclaims "impertinent preachment":

...this is not a "religious novel."...I have not even asked
myself what may be the "moral." The story of any true life is wholesome, if only the writer will tell it simply, keeping impertinent preaching out of the way.

The *Graysons* (New York, 1887) used Abe Lincoln at the climax, about which Eggleston said in the preface:

> When I undertook...to write a short story...and found it a legendary account of one of President Lincoln's trials...the theme grew...until the present novel was the result. It was written mostly at Nervii...where I could not...have verified the story I had received about 1867 from one of Lincoln's old neighbors....

It is debatable whether Eggleston successfully used one of the hoariest pieces of Lincolniana, a trial scene wherein Lincoln proves with the help of an almanac that there was no moonlight on the night under dispute.

The *Faith Doctor* (New York, 1891) used New York as a setting. Eggleston said in the preface:

> I have essayed to depict phases of the complex society of the metropolis. I use the word society in its general...sense, for in no country has the merely "society novel" less reason for being than in ours.

Regarding the theme he remarked:

> The prevailing interest in mind-cure, faith-cure, Christian science, and...aerial therapeutics has supplied a motive for this story....but the primary purpose is artistic, not polemical....

On the use of facts he said:

> While Miss Bowyer was drawn more closely from an original than is usual in fictitious writing...there are professors of Christian science much superior to her....

Critics have called Eggleston a "frontier realist." He professed in his prefaces that his aim was to present truth. Yet as one critic suggests, "this sort of avowal is *vieux jeu* in prefatory material in American fiction, and it is a poor novelist who cannot
run up some such manner with a degree of plausibility." ¹
Eggleston, however, tried to avoid the extremes of melodrama
and romance. In The Circuit Rider which has the sub-title "A Tale
of the Heroic Age," Morton Goodwin is called "not an epic hero,
for epic heroes act straightforwardly; they either know by intuition
just what is right, or they are like Milton's Satan, unencumbered
with a sense of duty. But Morton was neither infallible nor a devil." ²
(p. 243.)

The Mystery of Metropolisville satirizes at one point the
female reader of sensational literature with its "labyrinthine
plots and counterplots." Similarly, in The Hoosier Schoolmaster
Eggleston addresses an imaginary reader of melodramas:

And you, friend Callow, who have blunted your palate
by swallowing the Cayenne pepper of the penny-dreadfuls,
you wish me to make this night exciting by a hand-to-hand
contest....You can buy trap-doors...dirt cheap at the
next news-stand.(p. 243.)

And yet Eggleston often helped himself to the use of the very
deVICES he condemned. Perhaps Van Doren is generous in drawing a
clear demarcation between him and the writers of penny dreadfuls. ²
Eggleston was, however, fairly consistent in his allegiance to
fiction at a time when it was viewed by many with a hostile eye.
His light sentimental tone was evidently relished by the readers.
For example, he offers an explanation for using a sentimental
device in the preface to The Circuit Rider:

...from the first chapter to the last, there is a love-story.
But it is not my fault. It is God who made love so universal....

¹Cowie, op. cit., p. 553.
²Van Doren, op. cit., p. 119.
Another talented writer of the period is George Washington Cable (1844-1925). The Introduction to *Dr. Sevier* (Boston, 1884), Cable's second novel, endows a New Orleans street with a special personality:

The main road to wealth in New Orleans has long been Carondelet street. There you see the most alert faces....

In 1856 this street was just assuming its present character...the air was laden with cotton quotations and prognostications....

*Dr. Sevier* is about the folly of "poverty-pride," whereas *John March, Southerner* (New York, 1894) is a story of intrigue in a war-torn Southern town during the Reconstruction era. The opening paragraph gives an introductory picture:

In...Dixie...in the heart of what was once the "Southern Confederacy," lies...Suez. The pamphlet of a certain land company...mentions the battle of Turkey Creek as having been fought only a mile or so north of the town...in 1864....

Cable presents a charmingly individualized account of the town:

In the last year of our Civil War Suez was a basking town of twenty-five hundred souls, with rocky streets and breakneck sidewalks, its dwellings dozing...among roses and honeysuckles behind anciently white-washed, much broken fences....

More original and Jamesian in the use of ellipsis and intimation is *The Cavalier* (New York, 1901), followed by a complementary romance *Kincaid's Battery* (New York, 1903). That this is another "history of hearts" in the old sentimental tradition is deftly made clear in the opening sentence:

For the scene of this narrative please take into mind a wide quarter-circle of the country, such as any of the pretty women...might have covered on the map with her half-opened fan.
In the opening words of *The Amateur Gardener* (New York, 1914) Cable remarks:

'A life-long habit of story-telling has much to do with the production of these pages. All the more does it move me because it has always included...a keen preference for true stories....

Similarly, in his Introduction to *Strange True Stories of Louisiana* (New York, 1889), Cable says that true stories are seldom good art until, like rough gems, they have been polished by the craftsmen. Sometimes, he polishes his rough gems so much, however, that they have a false glitter.

*Strong Hearts* (New York, 1839) is made of two stories and a novella. In getting the book ready for publication, Cable added an introductory chapter which insisted that the three stories are one because they illustrate the indivisible twinship of Poetry and Religion.

A special mention may be made of *The Cavalier* which sold a hundred thousand copies in a year. In the prefatory comments Cable claimed only that the book preserved the spirit of history. The author judged the taste of the reading public correctly inasmuch as he subordinated the Civil War to a love affair. The "Julia Marlowe Edition," an attempt to capitalize on the dramatization—what the ex-Puritan called his "theatre business"—was brought out in 1903. For this Cable wrote a preface in which he alleged that R. Thorndyke Smith, banker and under-writer, who chooses to be known as a "memorist" instead of a novelist because he uses true events, was really the author. The statement appears to be truth rather than pretence.
In a letter to Boyesen, Cable once deprecated a story which smelled of its moral as small houses do of the meal being cooked in the kitchen. But in his prefaces he professed explicitly or implicitly that literature must have an underlying moral purpose. For example, in the prefatory remarks to *John March, Southerner*, he thought of the book as an agent for destroying evil, for exposing the blackness of the *Code Noire* and for proving (à la his commencement speech at the University of Mississippi on "Literature in the United States") ¹ that slavery was a "crime against heaven and humanity," whereby the South isolated herself from the world's best thought and literature. But Cable's social vision, mellow art and "tendril-like spread of imagination," ² which are discernible in his fiction as well as prefaces, did not always please the popular fancy.

Unlike most domestic sentimentalists, Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894) was not only an able craftsman who asked meaningful questions—her childhood name was "And why?"—but also a popular writer, particularly with readers of *Harper's*, which published many of her stories.

Instead of using the Victorian type of beginning, Miss Woolson employs the Jamesian technique of communicating an experience in the present. For example, eschewing "inorganic facts," ¹ she begins *Anne* (New York, 1882) with a dialogue between a daughter


²Cowie, op. cit., p. 567.

³The quality of Miss Woolson's fiction at its best illustrates
and her father. By way of a prefatory statement there are two quotations:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy

- Wordsworth.

"It is but little we can do for each other. We accompany the youth with sympathy and... sayings of the wise... but only on strength of his own... he must stand or fall."

- Emerson.

The opening dialogue at once presents the bare facts:

"Does it look well, father?"
"What, child?"
"Does this look well?"

William Douglas stopped playing for a moment, and turned his head toward the speaker, who, standing on a ladder, bent herself to one side, in order that he might see the wreath of evergreen....

"It is too compact, Anne, too heavy...."
"Miss Lois made it."
"Ah... it looks like her work... will last...."

It would be hard to match in the fiction of the day examples of cleverer indirect introduction than Miss Woolson gives here.

In the preface to Rodman the Keeper: Southern Sketches (New York, 1880) Miss Woolson says that she has recorded facts:

As far as they go they record real impressions; but they can never give the inward charm of that beautiful land which the writer has learned to love....


1 Ferris Greenslet, Thomas Bailey Aldrich (Boston, 1923), p. 78.
The Story of a Bad Boy (Boston, 1877) is an important piece of Americana. In the opening passage entitled "In which I introduce myself," Aldrich says:

This is the story of a Bad Boy...I ought to know, for I am, or rather I was, that boy myself.

In his novels, Aldrich goes in for the lived-happily-ever-afterward ending, although in his short story "A Rivermouth Romance," he wrote:

Yet when the average sentimental novelist has supplied his hero and heroine with their bridal outfit...he...saunters off...as if the day's business were over. But we...know better. The business is by no means over: it is just begun. 1

Although Charles Egbert Craddock (Mary Noailles Murfree, 1850-1922) did not write regular prefaces, her novels and stories open with descriptions of rugged natural grandeur. As is true of Hardy's use of Egdon Heath or the Wessex countryside, her descriptive passages set the tone of the novels Phantoms of the Foot-Bridge (New York, 1895), In The "Stranger People's " Country (New York, 1891), The Juggler (Boston, New York, 1897), etc.

Miss Murfree is careful about her facts. The Story of Old Fort Loudon (New York, London, 1899) and A Spectre of Power (Boston, New York, 1903) are documented with the results of her research. In the latter she makes the prefatory claim that "the Indian phrases...are studied from sources as nearly contemporaneous as may be...." In The Ordeal (Philadelphia, London, 1912) she says, at the outset, about a character deeply interested in the Cherokee Language: "His interest in researches into the arcana of old Cherokee customs had

1 T. B. Aldrich, Writings (Boston, New York, 1893-1903), IV, 288.
been revived by seeing the sibyl seated on the ground...wailing and moaning....He had marked the parity...with the Hebraic usage...."

Mention might also be made of The Fair Mississippian (Boston, New York, 1903) wherein Miss Murfree claimed that she based her story on factual childhood memories of planters' lives in a neighboring state. She had once said that the Mississippi River seemed the last surviving Indian. Now she wanted to write a good book about it. This was prefatory wishful thinking, but the book turned out to be readable.

A writer whose reputation was a sudden leap was Bret Harte (1839-1902). "The Luck of Roaring Camp" created a sensation in its day. The author's prefatory comments on a passing and picturesque civilization in The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches (Boston, 1871) are significant:

The author...assumes, as premises already granted by the reader, the existence of a peculiar and romantic state of civilization....These he could only give by referring to the ephemeral records of Californian journals...and the testimony of far-scattered witnesses....

He eulogizes the adventurers:

The faith...and capacity for adventure necessary to this emigration produced...men as strongly distinctive as the companions of Jason....

Harte wishes to record the truth, but as "a realistic idealist," he gives the truth a conventionally ideal twist.

The Introduction to Tales of the Argonauts and Other Sketches (Boston, 1875) throws further light on Bret Harte's contribution:

I propose, by way of introduction, to discourse...on an episode of American life....It is not a pretty story; I do not know that it is even instructive....
He speaks of the "pastoral days" of California:

Yet they were peaceful, pastoral days for California.... Around...the Mission buildings were clustered the huts of the Indian neophytes, who dressed neatly, but not expensively, in mud....

He describes the Argonauts' character:

Character ruled....The social life...was peculiar. Gentlemen made New Year's calls in long boots.... The wife of an old pioneer used to show a chair with a hole...made by a...caller who, sitting down suddenly... had exploded his revolver. The best-dressed men were gamblers; the best-dressed ladies had no right to that title....

He nostalgically adds:

When fine clothes appeared...and people swore less frequently, people began to put locks on their doors.... The old Argonaut brotherhood...was broken up....

He describes the awesome natural background:

Nature is here as rude...as the life. The people seem to have come here a thousand years too soon, and before -- the great hostess was ready to receive them....Nature affects the heroics rather than the bocolics....The lights and shadows are Rembrandtish....

He eloquently describes the adventurers:

There were faces that made one think of Delaroche's Saviour. There were dashing figures...that would have delighted Meissonier....Their hospitality was barbarous.... There were Argonauts...more faithful to their partners than...to their wives....The heroic possibilities of a Damon and a Pythias were always present.

But he adds that they were not mawkish:

...the Argonauts were not burthened with sentiment, and...its more dangerous ally, sentimentalism....

He describes their sense of humor:

The only ethical teaching of those days was through a joke or a sarcasm....
About the Franciscan friar and the Heathen Chinee, he says:

...in the bloodstained and tear-blotted chronicle of early California, there is no more heroic figure than the...self-denying Franciscan friar....

The Heathen Chinee was not an Argonaut....Quiet, calm, almost philosophic...he never flaunted his three thousand years in the face of the men of to-day; he never obtruded his extensive mythology before men who were skeptical of even one god....

He repeats his warning and expresses a wish:

...it is not a pretty story. I should like to end it with a flourish of trumpets, but the band has gone before....

The Introduction to *A Waif of the Plain and Other Tales* (London, 1890) strikes an experimental note, with the reader's interest specially cared for:

The present Volume contains a serial in Three Volumes.... It was my intention to give the consecutive history of one or two characters in...childhood, youth, and maturity...culminating in the death of the hero, or the milder oblivion of marriage. How far the experiment has been successful must be left to the reader to judge....

He ends on a note regarding the future American novel:

In...Clarence I am conscious of making a more serious experiment...to touch upon an episode of American history...rich in dramatic and picturesque material...I shall be...content if I have only offered a suggestion to the coming American novelist who shall enjoy that remoter and more artistic distance.

Like Aesop, Hans Christian Anderson, and the author of *Panchatantra*, Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1903) has a permanent international fame. Critics have justly called Harris the greatest interpreter of the Negro in the period which Uncle Remus has described as "befo' de war, endurin' er de war, an afterwards." His prefaces are important for understanding the essence of his art and the period which is described through the eyes of Uncle Remus.
Harris expresses his sense of joy at having added something to the world's store of happiness in the dedication of the 1895 edition of *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*:

I seem to see...the smiling faces of thousands of children—some young...and some wearing the friendly marks of age.... I seem to hear a voice..."You have made some of us happy."

An examination of the Introductions to the first three volumes of the Uncle Remus series reveals Harris's developing and then waning interest in folklore. In the Introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (New York, 1880) he refers to the correspondence and describes his amazement at the interest displayed in this aspect of the tales. He also tells about his method and aim:

> With respect to the Folk-Lore series, my purpose has been to preserve the legends...in their original simplicity, and to wed them...to the quaint dialect....

> Each legend has its variants, but I have retained that...version which seemed...the most characteristic.... The dialect is...different from that of the Hon. Pompey Smash...but it is...phonetically genuine....

He discounts another opinion:

> Professor J. W. Powell...is of the opinion that they [the stories] are borrowed...from the red-man. But this...is extremely doubtful.

In the Introduction to *Nights with Uncle Remus* (Boston, 1883) the author devotes twenty-nine pages to explanatory details about methods of collection, comparative studies with Kaffir folk-tales, Amazonian myths, plantation proverbs, and South African stories translated by W. H. I. Bleek. He also includes a dialect vocabulary, and the reprint of a French story, which brings out the Creole's use of dialect and the explanation that the Kiss Meadows of the Georgian Negro is Mamzel Calinda of the Creoles. He wrote his publishers: "I think I shall come to Boston to write the introduction, so as to take
advantage of the folk-lore collection in the Harvard Library."

A detailed scrutiny of the changes is revealing. In the

Introduction to the first book, Harris says:

...few negroes...will acknowledge...that they know
anything of these legends; and yet to relate one is
the surest road to their confidence....In this way...
only, have I been able to identify the folk-lore
included in this volume.

In the Introduction to the second book he remarks that the

thirty-four legends in the first volume were easy to verify because

they were the most popular, but many of the stories in the second

volume were known only to a small group "who have the gift of story-
telling,—a gift...as rare among the blacks as among the whites."

He let no opportunity pass that would aid him in the authenti-
cation and verification of stories. For example:

One...occurred...at Norcross....At the station were a
number of negroes....The writer sat next to one of the
liveliest talkers...and told the "Tar Baby" story by-
way of a feeler....

The Introduction to Uncle Remus and His Friends (Boston, New
York, 1892) mentions Harris's sources:

The stories here gathered have been caught for me in the
kitchen. Some...are discoveries, many are verifications
...and others are odds and ends from my notebooks.

Regarding folk-lore he says:

But the folk-lore branch...I gladly leave to those who
think they know something about it. My own ignorance I
confess....In the light of this...the enterprising
inconsequence of the introduction to "Nights with Uncle
Remus" is worth noting....Since that...was written, I have
gone far enough into the subject (by the aid of...Fellows of
This and Professors of That, to say nothing of Doctors of the
Other) to discover that at the end of...discussion Speculation
stands grinning. 1

The introduction to Gabriel Tolliver (New York, 1902) discounts the "idea of art" in Harris's writings:

I can only deal with things as they were....I am powerless to twist individuals and events to suit the demands...of what is called art.

Of the Uncle Remus stories it modestly said:

But there is no pretence that the...poor little stories are...literature....There is nothing here but an old negro man, a little boy, and a dull reporter, the matter of discourse being fantasies.... 2

The Uncle Remus stories appeared as a novelty and a salmagundi of various elements. Harris wrote in the Introduction to Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings:

I am advised by my publishers that this book is to be included in...their humorous publications....its intention is perfectly serious....

There were other good qualities, but outstanding among these was characterization. Harris once said, "What does a story matter, if we do not, somehow, find its characters close kin to us." 3

1Perhaps Harris was "grinnin," at the folklorists, including himself. An excerpt from a letter published in the Critic in September, 1932 is significant:

I am not...well versed in folk-lore, but I presume this collection will possess scientific value....It would be a wonder if any contribution to myth-literature could be made that would not be traced...to the Aryan sun-myth....if it is quackery it is quackery of a very mild kind.

2Mark Twain, however, aptly remarked:"Uncle Remus is most deftly drawn....He and the little boy and their relations with each other are bright, fine literature, and worthy to live." Julia Collier Harris, Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris (Boston, New York, 1918), pp. 169-170.

3Ibid., p. 570.
Besides characterization, the pattern or the frame wherein he placed his portraits, was an artistic conception. The Introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* described the setting:

If the reader...will imagine that the myth-stories of Uncle Remus are told...to a little boy by an old negro...who has nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery...he will find little difficulty in appreciating...the air of affectionate superiority which Uncle Remus assumes.

Harris opens the series by presenting the pair:

One evening..."Miss Sally" missed her little...boy....She heard...voices in the old man's cabin, and...saw the child sitting by Uncle Remus....

The picture of the old man and a little boy is the same in nine of the books. In *Nights with Uncle Remus*, however, the portrait includes also 'Tildy, Daddy Jack, and Aunt Tempy. Still Uncle Remus remains the special attraction—"one of the few original characters that America has added to the world gallery." H. P. L. Pattee, *A History of American Literature Since 1970* (New York, 1915), p. 305.

Harris uses the dramatic monologue as a chief means of revealing Uncle Remus. The venerable fabulist is Harris's embodiment of his aim stated in the Introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* "to present the picturesque sensitiveness—a curious exaltation of mind and temperament, not to be defined by words."
"manner of saying it."  

In *Uncle Remus and His Friends* Uncle Remus takes a bow in the Introduction and announces his intention of retiring from story-telling:

...the old man will bother the public no more....

let Uncle Remus' good-bye be as simple as his stories;

a swift gesture that might be mistaken for a salutation as he takes his place among the affable Ghosts that throng the ample corridors of the Temple of Dreams.

Harris also repeats his aim:

The stories...were...written...because of my interest in the stories themselves...and...because of the unadulterated human nature that might be found in them.

In 1903 Uncle Remus reappeared. The first section in the book, *Told by Uncle Remus* (New York, 1903), is "The Reason Why." Harris says that the reason why Uncle Remus retired was that the little boy had grown to be a big boy. In time, however, he came to have a little boy of his own, "and then it happened...that the little boy's little boy fell under the spell of Uncle Remus...."

One important facet of Harris's art is his mastery of the dialect. He stands among the world's greatest writers of dialect. 


2Some critics say that Harris's achievement rests mainly on his mastery of the vernacular. Walter H. Page wrote in 1881: "I have Mr. Harris' own word for it that he can think in the negro dialect. He could translate even Emerson, perhaps Bronson Alcott, in it, as well as he can the adventures of Brer Rabbit." *Life and Letters*, p. 164.

Thomas Nelson Page, writing in the *Book Buyer* of December, 1895, paid homage to Harris' gift: "No man...has known one-tenth part about the negro that Mr. Harris knows, and for those who...shall wish to find not merely words, but the rural language of the negro...and the habits of all American negroes...his works will prove the best thesaurus." *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.
In *Nights with Uncle Remus* he had said in the Introduction that
"the dialect is a part of the legends themselves." In *Uncle Remus
and His Friends*, he was still conscious of the use of dialect. He
said in the Introduction that "old man Chaucer was one of the earliest
of dialect writers." He added:

> The student of English...will find matter to interest him
> in the homely dialect of Uncle Remus....Dozens of words,
> such as "hit for it, ax for ask, whiles for wiles, and heap
> for a large number of people, will open...the whole field of
> the philology of the English tongue....When Uncle Remus tells
> a little boy that he has a "monstrous weakness for cake what's
> got reezins in it," the pronunciation of reezins uncovers...
> Shakespeare's pun on raisins, where Falstaff tells the prince,
> "If reasons were as plentiful as blackberries, I would give no
> man a reason on compulsion." 1

On the Plantation: A Story of a Georgia Boy's Adventures During
the War (New York, 1892) carried an Introductory Note:

> Some...friends...find...something more than an autobiographical
> touch....That which is fiction pure and simple...bears...the
> stamp of truth, and that which is true reads like a clumsy
> invention....It is not for me to prompt the reader. He must
> sift the fact from the fiction.... 2

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1 One can see why Julia Collier Harris in an article, "Uncle
Remus at Home and Abroad," expresses the opinion about two anglicized
versions of some of the stories that Harris would never have been
happy at the deletion of the dialect,"no matter what compensation
had been offered him." Southern Literary Messenger, II (February,
1940), 35.

The Uncle Remus dialect adapts existing words as well as adds
new (some nonsensical) for pictorial effect and euphony, and it reveals
the delight which the Negro has for "big words." According to C.
Alphonso Smith (Cambridge History of American Literature, II, p. 353.)
the dialect is that of Middle Georgia with some words from Virginia.
Uncle Remus admits he "come from Ferginny." Some common words are
"seegar" and "gyardin." Professor Smith pinpoints a few characteris-
tics: the plurals of nouns tend to be regular, as "foots," "toofies,"
"gooses"; "which" takes the place of the relative pronoun "who"; there
is the tendency to add the "s" to all forms of the verb, as
"I makes."

2 One can deduce Harris's general view of slavery from his
Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922) whose principle was: "Write what you know," gained instantaneous fame with the publication of stories such as "Marse Chan." The preface to In Ole Virginia (New York, 1899) tells the origin of the story:

In...1830, a letter was shown the author....

It was...from a young girl...to her sweetheart. In it she told him...that she loved him...and that she would marry him....Across the blue paper were scrawled these words:"Don't come without a furlough; for if you don't come honorable, I won't marry you."

...her lover fell, and the...comment was,"So he got his furlough through a bullet." The idea took possession of me, and in about ten days I had written "Marse Chan."

The tear-jerking effect of the story was obvious, although the writer professed his aim "to bring about a better understanding between the North and the South, and...lead to a more perfect Union."

Page expressed gratitude to magazine editors and critics:

But for the magazines the literary men of my generation would scarcely have found a public, and at least one...would never have found it.

To the critics I make my best bow....I have been treated quite as well as I deserve.

Page strikes a nostalgic note:

The publication of a uniform edition gives a writer...the opportunity to address the public an Introduction....

Some protest has been made against the writer's habit of picturing...old-fashioned ladies and gentlemen....They comment on Uncle Tom's Cabin:"The real moral that Mrs. Stowe's book teaches is that the possibilities of slavery anywhere and everywhere are shocking to the imagination, while the realities, under the best and happiest conditions, possess a romantic beauty and a tenderness all their own...." Joel Chandler Harris, Editor and Essayist (ed. Julia Collier Harris), Chapel Hill, 1931, p. 117.
belonged to a time when men treated women chivalrously and women relied on men implicitly, when success bore no relation to wealth, and when the seventh commandment was not deemed a proper subject for conversation in mixed company.

The preface to Red Rock, A Chronicle of Reconstruction (New York, 1893) describes its romantic setting:

The Region where the Drays and Carys lived lies too far from the centres of modern progress to be laid down on any map....

It was a goodly land...a rolling country...rich meadows filled with fat cattle; watered by streams, sparkling...over rocks....

Page's attitude is defensive:

Every ass that passes by kicks at the dead lion....

...the phrase "Before the war" is...abused....There is a certain Caleb Balderstonism in speech at times. But for those who knew the old County...even the moonlight was richer..."before the war."

The Preface to On Newfound River (New York, 1906) disclaims any pretense of the story being a novel:

"On Newfound River" does not pretend to be a novel; but is on its face a "Story,"--a Love-Story if you will--in Old Virginia....

The Preface to The Old Gentleman of the Black Stock (New York, 1897) shows Page's popularity and his ability to render an artistic touch:

I hope those who have done me the honor to accept the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock and Elizabeth Dale...will feel that I have tried to add to their history in more ways than one.

It has been a grateful task....The old section...has quite passed away.

Cinderella's Coach comes along only in the Fairy-time of Youth.
The Preface to *Pastime Stories* (New York, 1894) humorously shows Page's cordial relationship with his readers:

It used to be the custom...to address a word to the "gentle reader," a custom which had the double advantage: that the author had his "word," and the reader...was not obliged to hear it....No one will be as sensible of the demerits of these stories as I am....If you ask why, then, I wrote them, I will say...because I was asked....Then why did I publish them? Because I found a publisher.

Page has a purpose:

...if, "gentle reader," I can...make you go back to that...delightful chronicle of old Virginia life, you will owe me a debt of gratitude....

Page's prefaces show that he was not interested in being a "problem novel" writer, or social scavenger or muckraker. He believed with his aunt who once said: "It may require as much genius to paint a pigsty as it does a cathedral; but I prefer to look at the cathedral."

Commenting on George Washington Harris (1814-1869) in his anthology of Southwestern frontier humor, Franklin J. Meine wrote: "For vivid imagination, comic plot, Rabelaisian touch, and sheer fun, the Sut Lovingood Yarns [Nashville 'Union and American,' 1861] surpass anything else in American humor." This judgment is not mere hyperbole, for the combination of virtues found in Harris's writing comes out in his preface:

You must have a preface, Sut....I s'pose the production could no more show itself...without it than a coffin-maker could without clothes....

Smells to me sorta like a burned humbug...like cuttin of the Ten Commandments into the rind of a watermelon...but

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1Franklin J. Meine (ed.), *Tall Tales of the Southwest* (New York, 1946), p. xxiv.
if a author must take off his shoes afore he goes into the public's parlor, I reckon I kin do it without dirtyin my feet, for I has socks on.

He warns his readers:

I doesn't expect this-here production will sit perfectly quiet onto the stomachs of some persons....

He has a word for the critics:

Then there's the book-butchers--awful on killing and cutting up....

Most book-weavers seem to be scary folks, for...they comes to the slaughter pen whinin and waggin their tales, a-saying they 'knows they is imperfect'....I knows the...gift I has for breedin scares among durned fools....

He has an aim:

If any misfortunate devil whose heart is under a millstone; whose ragged children are hungry...if such a one kin find a laugh...atwixt these here covers--then I'll thank God that I has made a book and...got my pay in full.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910) was surely one of the big forces in the American fiction of his day, although he was very little conscious of his part in the evolution of the American novel.

Clemens's prefaces, prefatory notes and remarks show that he was fairly impatient of rules and restraints. For example, the "Notice" in the beginning of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (New York, 1884) warns the reader against looking for a plot on pain of death administered by the author:

NOTICE

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot will be shot.

By order of the Author,
Per G. G., Chief of Ordnance.
A significant note on the use of dialect follows:

Explanatory

In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremist form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; the ordinary "Pike County" dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.

I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

The Author

The preface to The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (London, 1876) claims authenticity in the traditional manner:

Most of the adventures...really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest...of...schoolmates.... Huck Finn is drawn from life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual—he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and belongs...to the composite order of architecture.

The odd superstitions touched upon were all prevalent among children and slaves in the West at the period....

Clemens hopes to capture the attention of young and adult readers:

Although my book is intended for the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to...pleasantly remind adults of what they once were....

The preface to A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (New York, 1889) has a statement about the use of historical facts:

The ungentle laws and customs touched upon in this tale are historical....One is...justified in inferring that whatever one of these...was lacking...its place was filled by a worse one.
The democrat in Clemens is perplexed by the divine right of kings:

The question as to whether there is such a thing as divine right of kings is not settled in this book. It was found too difficult...It is...a thing which ought to be settled.

As the preface promises, the book is emotional rather than critical. Next to humor, sensitiveness to human suffering was the most marked trait of this son of an equalitarian democracy.

The preface to *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (New York, 1894) entitled "A Whisper to the Reader" begins with a quotation from Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar:

“There is no character...but it can be destroyed by ridicule....Observe the'ass...."

A statement in support of legal facts follows:

A person...ignorant of legal matters is always liable to make mistakes when he tries to photograph a court scene with a pen....These chapters are right...for they were rewritten under the immediate eye of William Hicks, who studied law...in Missouri thirty-five years ago....

Clemens confesses in the Introduction to *Those Extraordinary Twins*:

“A man who is not born with the novel-writing gift has a troublesome time of it when he tries to build a novel. I know this from experience....

He further admits:

...as the short tale grows...the original intention...is apt to get abolished....It was so in the case of a magazine sketch...about a prince and a pauper....Much the same thing happened with "Pudd'nhead Wilson."...it was two stories in one....I pulled one...out by the roots...a kind of literary Caesarian operation.

He makes interesting revelations:

When the book was finished...it was awkward all around, but particularly in the case of Rowena....
I finally saw that...I must give her the grand bounce....
I began the chapter with this statistic:

"Rowena went out in the back yard after supper to see the fireworks and fell down the well and got drowned."

I was going to drown some of the others, but I gave up the idea....

At the end he admits:

The defect turned out to be...two stories in one, a farce and a tragedy. So I pulled out the farce and left the tragedy....

The opening paragraphs show the casualness of construction which the Introduction promises:

The conglomerate twins were brought on the stage in Chapter I of the original extravaganza. Aunt Patsy has received their letter applying for board and lodging, and Rowena...insane with joy, is begging for a hearing of it....

Clemens's essay entitled "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," which appeared first in the *North American Review* in July, 1895 (an extension of these remarks, found among Clemens's unpublished manuscripts, was printed in the *New England Quarterly* in September, 1946) stresses among other qualities natural expression. Similarly, his prefaces emphasize directness and naturalness.

Clemens began his literary career by burlesquing the artificiality of fictional types—the domestic, the romantic, and the Gothic—which were in vogue in the fifties and sixties. The prefaces of this "jesting pilot" (implied in the famous assumed name) show that he faced truth with more boldness than the jesting Pilates do. If he lacked art, he had an abundance of courage, sensitivity, and sincerity. In some respects, his work is simple, elemental. So are his prefatory
statements—an emanation from his "explosive, original, and dynamic personality" ¹—and as such they are sui generis.

¹Cowie, op. cit., p. 599.
CHAPTER XII

THE ANTI-SENTIMENTAL PREFACE

The sale of the books of William Dean Howells (1837-1920) was never phenomenally large, for as P. Boynton has pointed out, his writings placed him not in the best-selling but the "best-reading" class. ¹ Howells wrote altogether some thirty-eight novels over a period of half a century. He rarely wrote experimentally or inspirationally, but he had firm beliefs regarding what fiction ought to be. ² His fictional creed may be summarized and judged by reference to his observations in novels, letters, and his statements in Literary Friends and Acquaintances (New York, London, 1901), Heroines of Fiction (New York, 1903), Criticism and Fiction (New York, 1891), and in the light of his prefaces and introductory remarks, which are sanative and anti-sentimental.

¹Percy Holmes Boynton, Literature and American Life (Boston, 1936), p. 748.

²According to Cowie, "the historical, the Gothic, the sentimental ... were ... unthinkable to Howells.... Rather he sought his subjects in the province of "social" affairs.... A certain waggish tendency to satirize the vapid sentiment of very young lovers was disconcerting... but Howells was never the complete misogynist.... Accordingly he kept ... women-readers full of curiosity and he never offended them for long. p. 653.

O. W. Firkins has listed the items which for "reasons of taste and expediency" Howells largely "excluded from his agenda":

In these forty novels, adultery is never pictured; seduction never; divorce once and sparingly ("A Modern Instance");
Howells always was candid and modest. In a built-in preface to *Their Wedding Journey* (Boston, 1872), he expressed doubt of his "fitness for a sustained or involved narrative." In the same novel he gave a profile of his theory of fiction:

As...the true artist will shun the use even of real events if they are of an improbable character, so the sincere observer of man will not desire to look upon his heroic or occasional phases but will seek him in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness....

Twenty years later, he made Shelley Ray in *The World of Chance* (New York, 1893) think aloud:

If he had made a book which appealed to the feeling and knowledge of the great, simply conditioned, sound hearted, common schooled American mass...he had made his fortune. He put aside that other question...whether he would rather please the few who despise the judgment of the many, or the many who have no taste....

This is a qualified version of the democratic theory of art which resembles in some ways the points of view of Defoe, Richardson, Dickens, and George Eliot, and which along with other Howellsian dicta figures in Howells's prefaces and works.

Of the Library Edition of Howells's works, only six were published on July 26, 1911. They were *My Literary Passions and Criticism and Fiction; The Landlord at Lion's Head; Literature and Life; London Films and Certain Delightful English Towns; Literary Friends and Acquaintances and My Mark Twain; and A Hazard of New Fortunes*. The original plan had projected a series of thirty-one or marriage discordant to the point of cleavage, only once and in the same novel with the divorce; crime only once with any fulness ("The Quality of Mercy"); politics never; religion passingly and superficially; science only in crepuscular psychology; mechanics, athletics, bodily exploits or collisions, very rarely. *William Dean Howells, A Study* (Cambridge, 1924), p. 65.
thirty-two volumes. Each volume was to have a preface. Besides
the prefaces to the six published volumes, probably five more
were written in 1909. These are in the Howells Collection at
the Harvard Library.

Both sets of prefaces are "literary autobiography," as
Howells first called them, hardly "bibliographical," as he later
termed them. They are meant for "the reader who is interested in
the most visual sense: the apartments where Howells lived while
writing and revising. Occasionally, one gets an insight into
Howells's technique as artist and his personality.

In the preface to Heroines of Fiction (New York, 1903)
Howells candidly admits:

I had always thought that I knew everything of this subject,
and had...merely to...write of it, or typewrite of it....
I fancied...I had merely to let the ladies...invite them-
selves into my page....But...they refused to come unless
I first paid them a visit in the novels....

He uses the same frankness in talking about the critics:

...the critics knew as little...as I did. Mostly they
had not the enthusiasm...which I had...had not read with
my passion....

Howells charmingly concludes:

The circumstances were favorable to literary work, which
I varied with the wholesome labor of digging in a garden....
Upon the whole my heroines...got on better than my
vegetables....

The preface to Son of Royal Lansbrith (New York, London,
1904) has all kinds of details:

The title...has never satisfied me....

I remember having asked counsel of a friend concerning a
point of ethics...whether...a man's evils should remain
unknown when no specific purpose could be served by their
discovery....There might have been greater theatre in the
more explicit tragedy, but I doubt if there would have been greater drama; and besides, I have always loved the sweet face of Nature, the divine look of Probability.

The preface to *The Shadow of a Dream* (New York, 1890) introduces the Marches:

Mr. and Mrs. March...are the Basil and Isabel...of my first mature fiction, *Their Wedding Journey*...They came to the end of their usefulness by a sort of superannuation in *Their Silver Wedding Journey*...and were mainly retired from active service because...some of my readers did not share my affection for them....

Howells discusses the stories separately:

The first was written...near Cambridge, where we were staying the sad summer of 1880, after the bereavement....The setting of the last was that Western capital where I had passed...my younger manhood. I always find myself...in the streets of Columbus, where I turn its pages....

He says regarding *A Pair of Patient Lovers* (New York, 1901):

I am able to date *A Pair of Patient Lovers* from Forty-eight West Fifty-ninth Street, in 1899, and to trace its suggestion...to my compassion for a poor lady who suffered terribly with asthma in a hotel in the White Mountains....

Similarly, Howells gives the germ of *A Circle in the Water* (New York, London, 1901):

It had long seemed atrocious to me that a man who pays the legal penalty of his crime should not be held by all his fellow-men to have expiated the offence.

The preface to the volume consisting of *The Coast of Bohemia* (New York, London, 1893) and *The Story of a Play* (New York, London, 1893) describes the setting, origin, and the nature of the works:

The novels...are akin in the origination outside of New York and their conclusion in our commercial capital....They have...the unity of place...and...of time, for they were both...written in West Fifty-ninth Street....

I had engaged to write a short novel for *Scriber's Magazine*, which I always spoke of...as the story of a play. When it came to the awful task of naming it, the editor asked,"Why not call
it 'The Story of a Play'?'... I had written one piece and adapted another.... 1

Howells mentions a link with an earlier novel:

The lovers...the...dramatist and his wife...were derived from...The Quality of Mercy....I am not sure that it is well to carry a character from one novel to another....

Howells concludes on the progress of the story:

The story ran glibly from the point of my pen; and...so did The Story of a Play though this ran from the keys of the type-writing machine under my fingers, being entirely composed in that way.... 2

The preface also carried a statement on the relationship between A Traveler From Altruria (New York, 1894) and Through the Eye of the Needle (New York, London, 1907):

The first fable was printed in The Cosmopolitan Magazine... and the first half of the second followed in the next year... 1894....He had always...wished to visit his Utopia....He found that it had not been entirely perfected even in Altruria.

The author pays America a genuine compliment:

This consummation is reserved for the human nature of the American republic, upon which the author...confidently relies for the verification of his brightest hopes.

He humorously adds:

A Traveler was written...in West Fifty-ninth Street, where I lived...for some fifty years....Our inconstant allegiance became the amusement of...J. L. F. 3 who said, he would not mind our moving so much, if we didn't always move into the same place.

1 The allusion is to A Counterfeit Presentment and Yorick's Love.


3 Possibly J. L. Ford, whose Brazen Calf and Great Mirage Howells reviewed.
A Hazard of New Fortunes (New York, 1889-1890), in the author's words, "probably my best," derives its title from a rich passage in King John:

And all th' unsettled humours of the land,
Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries
With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleens,
Have sold their fortunes at their native homes,
Bearing their birthrights proudly on their backs,
To make a hazard of new fortunes here.

In the retrospective preface of 1909, Howells offers an explanatory note:

The following story was the first fruit of my New York life...and I used my own transition to the commercial metropolis in framing the experience which was wholly that of my suppositional literary adventurer...a character whom, with his wife, I have employed in some six or eight stories....It was not till I tried addressing them as March and Mrs. March that they stirred under my hand with fresh impulse....

He then strikes a radical note:

It became...the most vital of my fictions....We had passed through a period of strong emotioning in the direction of the humaner economics....The solution of the riddle of the painful earth...seemed not impossibly far off....Opportune...there was a great street-car strike in New York, and the story began to find its way to issues nobler and larger than those of the love-affairs common to fiction....

Howells emphasizes facts and describes the city in mythological parlance:

There is nothing...with which I amused myself more than the house-hunting of the Marches...and if the contemporary reader should turn for instruction to the pages in which their experience is described I assure him that he may trust their fidelity...in the article of New York house-hunting....From these...let the witness infer our whole massive Hercules...blent of Briareus and Cerebrus, but not so bad a monster as it seemed then to threaten becoming.

In conclusion, he expresses his hopeful attitude about changing conditions and his relationship with the public:

They who were then mindful of the poor have not forgotten them, and...the poor have not forgotten themselves in
violences such as offered me the material of tragedy and pathos in my story.... They tended to give the whole fable dignity and doubtless made for its success... greater favor than any book of his had yet enjoyed....

A novel which is economic—in a double sense—as well as utopian is Through the Eye of the Needle. Subtitled "A Romance," it has an introduction which outlines Howells's utopian project and his concern about America:

Aristides Homos, an Emissary of the Altrurian Commonwealth, visited the United States during... 1893.... He is unable to value our devotion to the spirit of Christianity amid the practices which seem to deny it....

Howells rubs in some social criticism:

That habit of celebrating the munificence of the charitable rich, on which he spends his sarcasm, has fallen from us.... At the tables of our highest social leaders one now meets... persons of interesting minds and uncommon gifts who would once have been excluded because they were hungry... or had not... a dress-suit....

The preface makes a comparison between America and Europe:

... the student of the competitive world would now find European hospitality Americanized, rather than American hospitality Europeanized.... There are now no dark rooms opening on airless pits... for the family, or... dismal basements for the servants....

It says about children:

Children... once almost unheard of, and... unheard, in apartment-houses, increasingly abound.... The elevators are full of them.... Each child has his or her little plot of ground in the roof-garden....

It shows satisfaction regarding America's economic condition:

With the downfall of the trusts, and the release of our industrial and commercial forces to unrestricted activity, the condition of every form of labor has been immeasurably improved....

Howells says about technological progress:

The trolleys now pass unheard... the subway is a retreat for meditation and prayer... the automobile... whirs softly...
"like the sweet South, taking and giving odor." The streets...are now...as clean as they are quiet....

He has a word for and about men-readers:

They are not now the intellectual inferior of our women.... With the multitude of our periodicals and the swarm of our fictions selling from a hundred thousand to half a million each, even our businessmen cannot wholly escape our culture....

He switches back to the Altrurian visitor:

If he could revisit us...he would have still greater reason to congratulate himself on his forbearance, and...profit by the lesson which events must teach all but the most hopeless doctrinaires....

Throwing an aura of vagueness around the whole affair, Howells concludes:

The story...is the story of the Altrurian's love for an American woman....It...however...continues the tradition of all the observers of ideal conditions from Sir Thomas More down to William Morris. Either we have no terms for conditions so unlike our own that they cannot be reported...with absolute intelligence, or else there is in every experience of them an essential vagueness or uncertainty.

Between 1903 and 1913 Howells wrote travel-books, verse-dialogue, and miscellaneous items including My Mark Twain (New York, London, 1910) and New Leaf Mills: a Chronicle (New York, London, 1913), the latter dealing with his boyhood in Ohio. The Leatherwood God (New York, 1916) also recounts early annals of Ohio, but its framework is more obviously fictitious. The story carries a Publisher's Note claiming the use of authentic details:

The author thinks it well to apprise the reader that the historical outline of this story is largely taken from the narrative of Judge Taneyhill in the Ohio Valley Series.... The drama is that of actual events...the story is effectively fiction.

Howells has been called "the father (or grandfather) of modern realism." He used the term freely, but he did not profess to know

1Cowie, op. cit., p. 696.
exactly when it all began: "no one invented realism; it came." 1

In its better phases it implied the rigorous but natural presentation of truth, in the portrayal of "men and women as they are, actuated by the motives and the passions in the measure we all know." 2 Howells's prefaces and collections of essays—**Criticism and Fiction** (New York, 1891), *My Literary Passions* (New York, 1895), *Literature and Life* (New York, London, 1902)—show how and why he incurred the wrath of readers who loved to read stories which presented wonder and beauty in the tradition-drenched terms. He was surely a good influence on the positive side—in encouraging writers who tried truthfully and zealously to use the "familiar" and the "commonplace." 3 But he also laid down a restrictive manifesto:

> Our novelists... concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life, which are the more American.... 4

1 *Life in Letters*, I, 373.

2 *Criticism and Fiction*, p. 104. Lewis Leary aptly comments on Howells's position as a realist:

Howells is sometimes remembered as the "reticent realist" because, though he spoke in critical essays of the necessity for literature to be true to life, his own novels presented nothing more exciting, one of his later contemporaries once said, than the romance of a broken teacup or the thrill of a walk down the block. Recent critics have understood him better, discovering that he had achieved a significant success in the difficult task of representing ordinary and eventful life. *American Literary Essays* (New York, 1960), p. 236.

3 But Howells needed to remember Emerson's dictum: "There is no object so foul that intense light will not make beautiful," which expresses one of the cardinal points of Neo-Platonism and of ancient Hindu wisdom.

4 *Criticism and Fiction*, pp. 123-129.
Between 1832 and 1920 Howells wrote thirty-three prefaces to books by contemporary writers; a thirty-fourth preface appeared posthumously. Some of these prefaces were originally contributions to magazines, some were expressions of Howells's convictions regarding an author or his work. On the whole, the list makes his activity in establishing reputations fairly impressive. From Howells's preferences as we know them in reviews and letters, circumstances might easily have added other names to the list—among Europeans Bjornson, Ibsen, Turgenev, and Valdes; and among Americans Emily Dickinson, and Frank Norris. He missed more Americans than European writers of stature. Yet he was stirred by them; and to many such minor but solid writers as John W. DeForest, Harold Frederick, Henry F. Fuller, and Robert Herrick, he gave sincere and much needed support.

1George Arms, William M. Gibson, Frederich C. Marston, Jr., Prefaces to Contemporaries (Gainesville, Fla., 1957) shows Howells did confront significant critical issues.

In the 1919 preface to Leonard Merrick's The Actor-Manager, we come across the word "microcosm." "One of the conditions of every art," Howells wrote, "is that its created world must be a microcosm ...nothing matters but the effect of reality"—an important statement on the esthetic validity of realism. For instance, he called Tolstoy's Master and Man "the drama of the race, playing itself in a moment, in a corner." Also, he accepted the poems of a minor poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar "as an evidence of the essential unity of the human race, which does not think or feel black in one and white in another, but humanly in all." These excerpts link the concept of the microcosm and the local color with a democratic vision of life. Similarly, in James's Daisy Miller Howells felt "the sense of rich amplitude" leading to a highly articulated experience. In the Verga preface, he spoke of "the poetry that resides in facts and nowhere else."

Howells thought that Tolstoy was frankly didactic in his
"It is the fate of many thinkers," Howells wrote in the first sentence of his first preface, "to make their thoughts so common to all the world that what they have to say seems nothing new to the generations succeeding their own." With realism now sufficiently established to be taken for granted and even rejected, this seems to be precisely a prefiguring of Howells's own fate.

"He teaches...that no one can be happy to or for himself, but in serving another at his need...." Also, Tolstoy deals "with the supreme event of being as simply and as sincerely as with any smallest event of it."

Howells was proudly conscious of the superiority, even supremacy, of American literature in some branches. The Introduction to Shapes that Haunt the Dusk edited by Howells and H. M. Alden bears quotation:

The writers of American short stories, the best stories in the world, surpass in nothing so much as in their handling of those filmy textures which clothe the vague shapes of the borderland between experience and illusion. This is perhaps because our people, who seem to live only in the most tangible things of material existence, live more in the spirit than any other. Their love of the supernatural is...an effect from psychological influences in the past....

Howells's appreciation of James's genius is significant:

Mr. James is not quite the inventor of the international novel, but beyond question, of the international American girl....

No other novelist has approached Mr. James in his appreciation of women, and in his ability to suggest the charm which is never wholly absent from women....Take all the other men that have written novels in English and match their women with his....A few women may vie with him...but their heroines are as much outnumbered by his as the novelists are in every other way surpassed....Mr. James is one of the greatest masters of fiction who has ever lived. It is because he has worked in a fashion of his own, in regions of inquiry not traversed by the herd of adventurers, and dealt with material not exploited before that he is still to the critical Jews a stumbling block and to the critical Greeks foolishness. But time will...care for this unrivalled artist, or this unique psychologist who deals artist-wise with his knowledge of human nature.
Howells's appreciation of the character of Daisy Miller is also meaningful:

The reader...will agree...that never was any civilization offered a more precious tribute than that which a great artist paid ours in the character of Daisy Miller. But our civilization could not imagine the sincerity in which the tribute was offered. It could not realize that Daisy was presented in her divine innocence, her inextinguishable trust in herself and others, as the supreme effect of the American attitude toward womanhood.
CHAPTER XIII

THE ARTISTIC PREFACE

The influence of Henry James (1843-1916) on modern fiction has been tremendous through his criticism as well as by his example. The Aristotle of the genre, he is also the first great writer to deal fully with the problem of the novel. His most important criticism is to be found in the Prefaces which he wrote for the New York Edition. Richard P. Blackmur, whose arrangement of James's "Critical Prefaces" is followed here, aptly says about the Prefaces and the New York Edition in the opening paragraph of his Introduction:

The Prefaces of Henry James were composed at the height of his age as a kind of epitaph or series of inscriptions for the major monument of his life, the sumptuous, plum-coloured, expensive New York Edition of his works. The labour was a torment, a care, and a delight, as his letters and the Prefaces show. The thinking and the writing were hard and full and critical to the point of exasperation; the purpose was high, the reference wide, and the terms of discourse had to be conceived and defined. He had to elucidate and to appropriate for the critical intellect the substance and principle of his career as an artist, and he had to do this—such was the idiosyncrasy of his mind—specifically, example following lucid example, and with a consistency of part with part that amounted almost to the consistency of a mathematical equation, so that, as in the Poetics, if his premises were accepted his conclusions must be taken as inevitable.¹

Leon Edel's statement is also illuminating:

When James decided to issue a definitive edition of his works it seemed to him that some such effort might, to a degree, retrieve lost ground. In writing the prefaces to the edition he took the attitude of the misunderstood author who wishes to explain what he has tried to do, and why. His friends and admirers expected an account of intimate experiences, anecdotes, gossip. They were disappointed: reminiscence soon became criticism, and criticism became theory--Henry James gave, in short, a complete explanation of the methods he had formulated for himself in the creation of his novels. ¹

Bibliographically too, the prefaces are very important. In preparing their bibliography of Henry James's works, Leon Edel and Dan H. Laurence emphasize the importance of the prefaces. They say:

This bibliography tells the story of what happened to the writings of Henry James after they left his busy work-table to be set up in type, and published in magazine and book. The story of their inception is to be found in James's notebooks, and there is a more self-conscious and intricately-woven record in the prefaces which he wrote for the New York Edition. The chronicle of the intermediate stage--the author's descent into the market-place, manuscript in hand, to drive his bargains with editors and publishers--belongs elsewhere. ²

Artistically, however, the Jamesian prefaces are most valuable. A perceptive inaugurator, James had a sense of form that brought him into sharp conflict with what he once disparagingly designated as "the loose and baggy monsters" of Victorian fiction. He effectively employed dramatic dialogue, symbols, indirect revelation, and reflected experience to carry and convey meaning. The sentimental love-triangles or quadrangles are not absent, but they are interfused with other aspects. Thus James has both a technique and a philosophy of fiction.

In effect, he is the one writer whose career supremely illustrates the principle of artistic growth. As the careful records of this process of development, his prefaces are highly significant statements in the history of American and World Fiction.

A brief word on what pre-Jamesian fiction had achieved and what were James's points of departure may elucidate the value of his prefaces. Surely in its short two hundred years of life up to James, the English and the American novel had established a splendid tradition of comprehensiveness: it had been rich in vitality, in vivid characterization, in inventiveness of plot, in humor and in insight. But on the whole (the outstanding exception is perhaps Jane Austen), this traditional novel gave little attention to the particular quality which James considered of paramount importance, namely form, aesthetic concentration, organic unity.

A novel or a short story by James is as symmetrical, as delicately organized around one single situation as a classical play. In The Ambassadors (1903), for instance, the two chief characters exchange places in an exactly symmetrical pattern: Strether, who leaves America to 'rescue' a young compatriot called Newsome from the influence of Paris, discovers himself through such "reflectors" as Maria Jostrey and remains there while Newsome leaves. Every drop of significance is squeezed out of the central situation, which is kept before us on every page, yet not the least irrelevance is allowed to disturb the due subordination of every sentence, of every phrase, to the oneness of the total effect. Everything that could illuminate the situation, the core of the finished work of
art, had to be included, and the sentences are often long, full of buildings up and chisellings down, for James was determined to present nothing less, though nothing more, than the 'stubborn truth'; yet at the same time everything is in perfect proportion, every delicate expansion fits into the preconceived harmony.

In short, what James did as an "addicted" artist and critic, with his brilliant handling of the form, was to show that the novel could be a fine art. What he did was to establish the art novel, which sacrifices comprehensiveness and elasticity with a view to revealing the order in the disorder of life. He established it as an alternative to the traditional chapter-of-life novel, which sacrifices concentration in order to present life directly in all its untidy profusion. Since his time, every novelist has had to choose between these two kinds or attempt some compromise between them.

James referred to the New York Edition as "a sort of miniature Ozymandias of Egypt—look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" It contained only the cosmopolitan and European novels, and only half of his hundred tales. Those writings which he considered hack-writing, written only for money, were excluded. Some of the early works were extensively rewritten and to the edition James retrospectively affixed a series of prefaces defining his theories of fiction. It is extremely hazardous to use excerpts because James's thought is dexterously spun and spelled out. Still, significant statements can be isolated.
At the very outset, James makes a statement which epitomizes his entire endeavor:

The art of representation bristles with questions the very terms of which are difficult to apply and to appreciate; but whatever makes it arduous makes it, for our refreshment infinite....Therefore it is that experience has to organize...some system of observation....Everything counts, nothing is superfluous in such a survey....This is why, reading over, for revision, correction, and republication, the volumes here in hand, I find myself...in presence of some such reading scroll or engraved commemorative table—from which the "private" character...insists on dropping out. These notes represent...the continuity of an artist's endeavour, the growth of his whole operative consciousness and...their own tendency to multiply, with the implication, thereby, of a memory much enriched. Addicted to "stories" and inclined to retrospect, he fondly takes, under this backward view, his whole unfolding.

James then refers to "Roderick Hudson":

"Roderick Hudson" was my first attempt at a novel...and I recall again the quite uplifted sense with which my idea...permitted me at last to put quite out to sea....The subject...figured to me vividly this employment of canvas....Yet it must even then have begun for me too, the ache of fear...of being unduly tempted...by "developments"; which...are of the very essence of the novelist's process....

He says about his time-scheme:

It stared me in the face that the time-scheme of the story is quite inadequate....Everything occurs too punctually and moves too fast....

How boil down so many facts in the alembic, so that the distilled result...should have intensity, lucidity, brevity, beauty...? It didn't help...to remember that Balzac would have known how....It is only by doing such things that art becomes exquisite, and it is only by...becoming exquisite that it keeps clear of becoming vulgar....The eternal time-question is...always there and always formidable....

About his method of treatment he observes:

One's luck was to have felt one's subject right....It
remains in equilibrium by having found its centre, the point of command of all the rest....

The centre of interest...is in Rowland Mallet's consciousness, and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness....

Preface to "The American"

Regarding the germ of the story and its subject, James says:

I recall that I was seated in an American "horse-car" when I found myself...considering...as the theme of a "story," the situation, in another country and an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled...companion: the point being...that he should suffer at the hands of persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilization.... What would he do...?....He would hold his revenge and...feel its sweetness, and...sacrifice it in disgust....

James poses a question and answers it:

But what then...would be the affront...? The affront... done him as a lover...yet not...by his mistress herself, since injuries of this order are the stalest stuff of romance....I...felt that the conception of Paris as the consecrated scene of rash infatuations...belongs in the Anglo-Saxon imagination, to the infancy of art....No, I should make my heroine herself...an equal victim--just as Romeo was not less the sport of fate for not having been interestingly sacrificed by Juliet....I had been plotting arch-romance without knowing it....

James adds a note on reminiscing:

It is a pleasure to perceive how...the shrunken depths of old work yet permit themselves to be sounded or... "dragged": the long pole of memory stirs and rummages the bottom, and we fish up such...relics of the submerged life...as tempt us to piece them together....I have ever... found it difficult to write of places under too immediate an impression....The image has had to be dim if the reflexion was to be...both sharp and quiet: one has a horror...of agitated reflexions.
James discusses the question of "romance":

By what art or mystery, what craft...does a given picture of life appear to us to surround its theme, its figures and images, with the air of romance while another...may affect us as steeping the whole matter in the element of reality.

(The real represents...the things we cannot possibly not know....The romantic stands...for the things that...we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire.)

There have been...many definitions of romance, as a matter indispensably of boats, or of caravans, or of tigers, or of "historical characters," or of ghosts, or of forgers, or of detectives, or of beautiful wicked women, or of pistols and knives, but they appear...reducible to the idea of the facing of danger...a fine formula if it bore examination...but it strikes me as weak and inadequate....

The panting pursuit of danger is the pursuit of life itself, in which danger awaits us possibly at every step....We must reserve vague labels for artless mixtures.

He defines romance:

The only general attribute of projected romance...is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals--experience liberated...disengaged, disembroiled, dis­encumbered...and operating in a medium which relieves it, in a particular interest, of the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state...subject to all our vulgar communities....The balloon of experience is...tied to the earth, and...we swing, thanks to a rope of remarkable length, in the more or less commodious car of imagination; but it is by the rope we know where we are....The art of the romancer is...to cut the cable...without our detecting him. What I have recognized then in "The American"...is that the experience here represented is the disconnected and uncontrolled experience...which romance alone more or less successfully palms off on us.

James focusses attention on Newman's consistency:

My concern...was to...keep Newman consistent....He was to be the lighted figure....He therefore supremely matters; all the rest matters only as he feels it, treats it, meets it. A beautiful infatuation this...the intensity of the creative effort to get into the skin of the creature...the effort of the artist to preserve for his subject that unity, and...that effect of a centre, which must economize its value....
He concludes:

I find on reperusal that I have been able to breathe at last in my aching void; so that, clinging to my hero as to a tall...brother in a rough place, I leave the record to stand or fall by his more or less convincing image.

Preface to 'The Portrait of a Lady'

James gives the story of his story:

...the germ of my idea...must have consisted not...in any conceit of a "plot," nefarious name, in any flash, upon the fancy, of a set of relations, or in any one of those situations that, by a logic of their own...fall...into movement...but...in the sense of a single character...of a particular engaging young woman, to which all the usual elements of a "subject," certainly of a setting, were to need to be super-added. Quite as interesting as the young woman...do I find...this projection of memory upon the whole matter of growth, in one's imagination, of some such apology for a motive. These are the fascinations of the fabulist's art...these necessities of upspringing in the seed...to push into the light and the air and thickly flower there.

After discussing Turgenieff's fictional technique, James says:

Recognizing...the one measure of the worth of a given subject, the question...that, rightly answered, disposes of all others--is it...sincere, the result of some direct impression or perception of life?...There is...no more nutritive or suggestive truth in this connection than that of the perfect dependence of the "moral" sense of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it.... Here we get exactly the high price of the novel as a literary form--its power not only, while preserving that form with closeness, to range through all the differences of the individual relation to its general subject-matter, all the varieties of outlook on life, of disposition to reflect, and project, created by conditions that are never the same from man to man...but positively to appear more true to its character in proportion as it strains, or tends to burst, with a latent extravagance, its mould.

A classic statement on the richness of the house of fiction follows:

The house of fiction has...not one window, but a million....
But...at each...stands a figure with a pair of eyes....
He and his neighbors are watching the same show, but one
seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black
where the other sees white....The spreading field, the
human scene, is the "choice of subject"; the pierced aperture
...is the "literary form"; but they are...as nothing without
the posted presence of the watcher....

James comes back to "The Portrait of a Lady":

The point is...that this single small corner-stone, the
conception of a certain young woman affronting her destiny,
had begun with being all my outfit for the large building....
That is to me, artistically speaking, the circumstance of
interest....Millions of...girls...daily affront their destiny,
and what is it open to their destiny to be...that we should
make an ado about it? The novel is of its very nature an
"ado" about something....Therefore, consciously, that was
what one was in for--for positively an ado about Isabel
Archer.

Mentioning artistic difficulties, James lays down a dictum:

Now to see deep difficulty braved is at any time, for the
really addicted artist, to feel almost even as a pang the
beautiful incentive...verily in such sort as to wish the
danger intensified.

He professes to have applied technical rigor:

So far I reasoned, and it took nothing less than that
technical rigor...to inspire me with the right confidence
for erecting...the...proportioned pile of bricks that arches
over it...a literary monument. Such is the aspect that today
"The Portrait" wears for me: a structure reared with"an
architectural"competence, as Turgenieff would have said, that
makes it, to the author's...sense, the most proportioned of
his productions after "The Ambassadors"--which...has...a
superior roundness....

James shows solicitude for the reader:

I would build large...and yet never let it appear that the
chequered pavement, the ground under the reader's feet, fails
to stretch at every point to the base of the walls. That pre-
cautionary spirit...is the old note that most touches me: it
testifies...to the anxiety of my provision for the reader's
amusement....

The artist in James speaks out high-mindedly:

It is a familiar truth to the novelist...that, as certain
elements in any work are of the essence, so others are only of the form....This is a truth, however, of which he rarely gets the benefit—since it could be assured to him, really but by criticism based upon perception, criticism which is too little of this world. He must not think of benefits...for that way dishonour lies....The artist may...dream of some paradise (for art) where the direct appeal to the intelligence might be legalised; for to such extravagances as these his yearning mind can scarce hope ever...to close itself. The most he can do is to remember they are extravagances.

Preface to "The Princess Casamassima"

James gives the genesis of the story:

...this fiction proceeded quite directly, during the first year of a long residence in London, from the habit...of walking the streets....One walked of course with one's eyes greatly open....

He goes on to say:

I arrived so at the history of little Hyacinth Robinson— he sprang up for me out of the London navement....I had only to conceive his walking the same public show...save indeed for one little difference...so far as all the swarming facts should speak of...knowledge and power, money, opportunity and satiety, he should be able to revolve round them but at the most respectful of distances and with every door of approach shut in his face....

He draws on Shakespeare:

This...I have ever found rather terribly the point—that the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations....but there are degrees of feeling—the muffled, the faint, the just sufficient, the barely intelligent...and the acute, the intense, the complete...the power to be finely aware and richly responsible. It is those moved in this latter fashion who "get most" out of all that happens to them and who in doing so enable us...also to get most. Their being finely aware—as Hamlet and Lear, say, are finely aware—makes absolutely the intensity of their adventure, gives the maximum of sense to what befalls them.
He says regarding intelligence:

The picture of an intelligence appears for the most part... a dead weight for the reader of the English novel to carry, this reader having so often the wondrous property of caring for the displayed tangle of human relations without caring for its intelligibility....

...the wary reader...warns the novelist against making his characters too interpretative of the muddle of fate, or in other words too divinely, too priggishly clever....

Again James presents his favorite point:

But the affair of the painter is not the immediate, it is the reflected field of life, the realm not of application, but of appreciation....what a man thinks and...feels are the history and the character of what he does; on all of which things the logic of intensity rests. Without intensity where is vividness, and without vividness where is presentability....

...clearness and concreteness constantly depend...on some concentrated individual notation of them. That notation goes forward here in the mind of little Hyacinth....

He fully illustrates it:

I should even like to give myself the pleasure of retracing from one of my own productions to another the play of a like instinctive disposition, of catching...that provision for interest which consists in placing advantageously...the most polished of possible mirrors of the subject. Rowland Mallet, in "Roderick Hudson" is exactly such a mirror...and I might exemplify the case through a long list, through the nature of such a "mind" even as the all-objective Newman...through the thickly-peopled imagination of Isabel Archer...down to such unmistakable examples as that of Merton Densher...that of Lambert Strether...and that of the Prince...and the Princess....

He adds:

Nothing would...beckon us on further...than such a chance to study the obscure law under which certain of a novelist's characters...revive...and "walk" round his house of art like haunting ghosts....I mistrust them...in general; my sense of a really expressed character is that it shall have originally so tasted of the ordeal of service as to feel no disposition to yield again to the strain....

He has a note on "notes":

My notes then, on the much-mixed world of my hero's both
overt and covert consciousness, were...my gathered impressions and stirred perceptions...If one was to undertake to tell tales and report...on the human scene, it could be but because "notes" had been...the ineluctable consequence of one's greatest inward energy: to take them was as natural as to look, to think, to feel, to recognize, to remember, as to perform any act of understanding...

He wisely concludes:

What it all came back to was...something like this wisdom—that if you haven't, for fiction, the root of the matter in you, haven't the sense of life and the penetrating imagination, you are a fool in the presence of the revealed and the assured; but that if you are so armed you are not really helpless...even before mysteries abysmal.

Preface to "The Tragic Muse"

James begins with a statement on art:

What I make out from furthest back is that I must have had...the happy thought of some dramatic picture of the "artist-life" and of the difficult terms on which it is...secured...To "do something about art"...as a human complication...must have been for me early a good deal of a nursed intention, the conflict between art and "the world" striking me thus betimes as one of the half-dozen great primary motives....

He describes the novel metaphorically:

I am thus able to...liken it to some aromatic bag of gathered herbs of which the string has never been loosened; or, better still, to some jar of potpourri, shaped and over-figured and polished, but of which the lid, never lifted, has provided for the intense accumulation of the fragrance within....

He says about his subject:

There was my subject this time—all mature....I must long have carried in my head the notion of a young man who should amid difficulty—the difficulties being the story—have abandoned "public life" for the zealous pursuit of some supposedly minor craft....

Regarding treatment he observes:

There is life and life, and as waste is only life sacrificed...
I delight in a deep-breathing economy and an organic form....

If the drama... is... the art of preparations, this is true
only to a less extent of the art of the novel, and true...
in the degree in which the art of the particular novel comes
near that of the drama....

To put all that is possible of one's idea into a form...
that will... express it only by delicate adjustments and an
exquisite chemistry, so that there will at the end be neither
a drop of one's liquor left nor a hair's breadth of the rim
of one's glass to spare— every artist will remember how often
that sort of necessity has carried with it its particular
inspiration. Therein lies the secret of appeal... of the
successfully foreshortened thing, where representation is
arrived at... not by the addition of items... but by the art
of figuring synthetically, a compactness into which the imagi­
ation may cut thick, as into the rich density of a wedding­
cake.

Regarding characterization, James uses Shakespearean examples:

No character in a play... has, for the right expression of
the thing, a usurping consciousness.... The prodigious
consciousness of Hamlet, the most capacious and most crowded
... in the whole range of fiction, only takes its turn with
that of the other-agents of the story, no matter how occasional
.... Wherefore... Miriam's might... be placed on the same footing
.... The idea of the book being... a picture of some of the...
consequences of the art-appetite raised to intensity... the
heavy emphasis falls where the symbol of some of the complica­
tions so begotten might be made... most "amusing": amusing...
in the blest very modern sense.

James concludes thus:

Any presentation of the artist in triumph must be flat in
proportion as it really sticks to its subject.... "His"
triumph... is but the triumph of what he produces.... His
romance is the romance he himself projects; he eats the
cake of the very rarest privilege, the most luscious baked
in the oven of the gods-- therefore he mayn't "have" it, in
the form of the privilege of the hero, at the same time....
I strove in vain... to embroil... this young man (Nick Dormer)
.... There is an awkwardness again in having thus... to point
such features out; but in that wrought appearance of animation
and harmony... "The Tragic Muse" has struck me again as conscious
of a bright advantage.
Preface to "The Awkward Age"
(Volume IX in The New York Edition)

James first presents the germ of the story:

The seed sprouted in...London....It was not...a fine purple peach, but it might pass for a round ripe plum, the note one had inevitably to take of the difference made in certain...houses and for certain flourishing mothers by the sometimes dreaded, often delayed...coming to the forefront of some vague slip of a daughter....This crisis...has to confess itself...the prime propulsive force of "The Awkward Age."

James deplores what he calls "a certain extraordinary benightedness" on the part of the Anglo-Saxon reader:

One had seen good solid slices of fiction, well endowed...with the easiest of lubrications, deplored by editors and critics as positively not, for the general gullet as known to them, made adequately "slick." "Dialogue," always "dialogue," I heard them cry: "We can't have too much of it ....". This wisdom had always been in one's ears; but it had at the same time been equally in one's eyes that really constructive dialogue...is among us an uncanny and abhorrent thing....A comedy or a tragedy may run for a thousand nights without prompting twenty persons in London or in New York to desire that view of its text which is so desired in Paris....

He discusses fictional treatment and one of its aims:

...amusement deeply abides...in any artistic attempt the basis and groundwork of which are conscious of a particular firmness....Being"treated" is never...a mere passive condition ....The dramatist that verily to build, is committed to architecture...at any cost....The central object was my situation...to which the thing would owe its title, and the small rounds represented so many...lamps...the function of each of which would be to light...one of its aspects....

After saying that "the novel, as largely practised in English, is the perfect paradise of the loose end," and discussing the story in dramatic terms, James concludes:

The mere feeling helps us for certain degrees of congestion, but for exact science...for the criticism of "fine" art, we want the notation. The notation, however, is what we lack, and the verdict of the mere feeling is liable to fluctuate....
Preface to "The Spoils of Poynton"
(Volume X in The New York Edition)

James begins with the origin of the story:

It was years ago...one Christmas Eve when I was dining with friends: a lady beside me made...one of those allusions that I have always found myself recognizing...as "germs."...What...comes back to me...is the sense of the inveterate minuteness...of the precious particle....Such is the...truth about the stray suggestion...at touch of which the novelist's imagination winces as at the prick of some sharp point: its virtue is all in its needle-like quality, the power to penetrate as finely as possible. This fineness...it is that communicates the virus of suggestion, anything more than the minimum of which spoils the operation.

He continues the generalization:

If one is given a hint...one is sure to be given too much; one's subject is in the merest grain, the speck of truth, of beauty, of reality, scarce visible to the common eye....Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent value...sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference...is that, while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in his tiny nugget...the very stuff for a clear affirmation....life...is capable...of nothing but splendid waste. Hence the opportunity for the sublime economy of art....

He goes back to the "germ" of the story:

So it was...that when my amiable friend...spoke of such an odd matter as that of a good lady in the north...was at daggers drawn with her only son...over the ownership of the valuable furniture of a fine old house just accruing to the young man by his father's death, I instantly became aware, with my "sense of the subject," of the prick of inoculation ....I saw clumsy Life at her stupid work....

James dwells upon the possibilities of the subject:

Yes, it is a story of cabinets, and chairs and tables... but what would merely "become" of them...seemed to represent a comparatively vulgar issue. The passions...their beauty would, like that of antique Helen of Troy, set in motion, was what, as a painter, one had really wanted of them....Fleda's ingratiating stroke...had been that she would understand; and...the progress...of my tale became...that of her understanding.
James expatiates on Fleda's intelligent consciousness:

I committed myself to making the affirmation...of it my...
"story"; once more, too, with the re-entertained perception
that a subject so lighted...residing in somebody's...concent­
trated feeling about something...has more beauty to give out
than under any other style of pressure....

James answers hypothetical objections and discusses the
significance of fools:

It is easy to object..."Why the deuce then Fleda Vetch, why
a mere little flurried bundle of petticoats, why not Hamlet
or Milton's Satan at once, if you are going in for a superior
display of 'mind'?"...I can only reply that...where a light
lamp will carry all the flame I incline to look askance at a
heavy....Fleda almost demonically both sees and feels, while
the others but feel without seeing. Thus we get perhaps a
vivid enough little example...that the fixed constituents
of almost any reproducible action are the fools who minister,
at a particular crisis, to the intensity of the free spirit
engaged with them....

But James hastens to add:

I recognize that the novelist with a weakness for that ground
of appeal is foredoomed to a well-nigh extravagant insistence
on the free spirit, seeing the possibility of one in every
bush.....

Preface to "What Maisie Knew"
(Volume XI in The New York Edition)

James begins with the small seed of his story:

I recognize again, for the first of these three Tales, another
instance of the growth of the "great oak" from the little
acorn; since "What Maisie Knew" is...a tree that spreads
beyond any provision that its small germ might on a first
handling have appeared likely to make for it. The accidental
mention had been made to me of the manner in which the situa­
tion of some luckless child of a divorced couple was affected
...by the remarriage of one of its parents....I recollect...
thinking that for a proper symmetry the second parent should
marry too....
By way of further analysis James adds:

...Sketchily clustered even, these elements gave out that vague pictorial glow which forms the first appeal of a living "subject" to the painter's consciousness; but the glimmer became intense as I proceeded to a further analysis....At last...I was in the presence of the dramatic spark that glowed at the core of my vision....This precious particle was the full ironic truth—the most interesting item to be read into the child's situation....

James has a note on themes:

...there would be the "full" irony, there the promising theme into which the hint I had originally picked up would logically flower. No themes are so human as those that reflect...the close connection of bliss and bale, of the things that help with the things that hurt, so dangling before us...that bright hard medal...one face of which is somebody's right and ease and the other somebody's pain and wrong....

He explains the selection of Maisie:

...my light vessel of consciousness, swaying in such a draught, couldn't be with verisimilitude a rude little boy; since, beyond the fact that little boys are never so "present," the sensibility of the female young is indubitably...the greater....With the charm of this possibility...the project for "Maisie" rounded itself and loomed large....I think, that the memory of my work preserves for me no theme that...hasn't signally refused to remain humble....Once "out," like a house-dog...it defies the mere whistle....

He eloquently adds:

If the theme had no other beauty it would still have had this rare...one of its so expressing the variety of the child's values. She is not only the extraordinary "ironic centre" I have already noted; she has the wonderful importance of shedding a light far beyond any reach of her comprehension....

James makes a qualification:

Of course...I was punctually to have read to me the lesson that the "mixing-up" of a child with anything unpleasant confessed itself an aggravation of the unpleasantness, and that nothing could well be more disgusting than to attribute to Maisie so intimate an "acquaintance" with the gross immoralities surrounding her.
He has a statement on the clarifying value of muddlement:

The great thing is...that the muddled state too is one of the very sharpest of realities, that it also has colour and form and character, has often...a...rich comicality, many of the signs and values of the appreciable.

Regarding "The Pupil," James says:

The Moreens were...superseded types....I don't pretend really to have "done" them; all I have given in "The Pupil" is little Morgan's troubled vision of them as reflected in the vision, also troubled enough, of his devoted friend....

James has a note on "In the Cage":

The postal-telegraph office in general...had ever had, to my sense, so much of London to give out...that any momentary wait there seemed to take place in...the stiffest possible breeze of the human comedy....

A famous Jamesian view of criticism follows:

To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and make it one's own. The large intellectual appetite projects itself...on many things....

In conclusion, James points out the "scenic" laws:

...the scenic passages are wholly and logically scenic, having for their rule of beauty the principle of the "conduct," the organic development of a scene....The great advantage for the total effect is that we feel...how the theme is being treated. That is we feel it when, in such tangled connexions, we happen to care. I shouldn't really go on as if this were the case with many readers.

Preface to "The Aspern Papers"

James speaks as an explorer:

I delight to recall the first impulse given to the idea of "The Aspern Papers." It is...true that my present mention of it may perhaps too effectually dispose of any complacent
claim to my having "found" the situation. Not that I...
know...what situations the seeking fabulist does "find";
he seeks them....He comes upon the interesting thing as
Columbus came upon the isle of San Salvador, because he
had moved in the right direction for it....

He confesses his love for the past, throwing side-light
on America:

I delight in a palpable imaginable visitable past....It
would take me too far, however, to tell why the particular
afternoon light that I...call intense rests clearer to my
sense on the Byronic age....

I must add, since I...fantasticate, that the impulse had
more than once taken me to project the Byronic age and the
afternoon light across the great sea, to see...whether
association would carry so far and what the young century
might pass for on that side of the modern world where it
was not only itself so irremediably youngest, but was bound
up with youth in everything else. There was a refinement of
curiosity in this imputation of a golden strangeness to
American social facts--though I cannot pretend...that there
was any greater wisdom.

Regarding "The Turn of the Screw" James has a word of praise
as well as criticism on criticism:

...it has the small strength...of a perfect homogeneity,
of being, to the very last grain of its virtue, all of a
kind...least apt to be baited by earnest criticism, the
only sort of criticism of which account need be taken.
To have handled again this so full-blown flower of high
fancy is to be led back by it to...happy recognitions.

He tells the occasion of the story:

...when...I was asked for something seasonable by the
promoters of a periodical dealing in the time-honoured
Christmas-tide toy, I bethought myself...of the vividest
little note for sinister romance that I had ever jotted down.

He has a note on improvisation:

To improvise with...freedom and yet at the same time
without the possibility of ravage...to keep the stream...
on something like ideal terms with itself: that was here
my definite business....
Finally, keeping the reader in mind, James raises questions and answers them:

What...had I to give the sense of? Of their being, the haunting pair, capable...of everything—that is of exerting, in respect to children, the very worst action....

Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough....Make him think the evil...and you are released from weak specifications....

James makes a statement about his short tales:

I am conscious of much to say of these numerous small productions as a family...the poorest of whom I am, in family parlance, for this formal appearance in society, "cutting" without a scruple....

A striking comment follows:

Great for me from far back had been the interest of the whole "question of the short story," roundabout which our age has...heard so vain a babble; but I foresee occasions yet to come when it will...waylay me. Then it will insist on presenting itself but in too many lights....

Preface to "The Reverberator"

James begins with a discussion of the configuration of a work of art:

The face of the work may be small...and yet...may spread...like nothing more noble than an insidious grease-spot. It is of the essence of the anecdote to get itself told as it can—which truth represented...the best chance of life for..."The Reverberator"; but it is also of the essence of the drama to conform to logic....

After what he calls "a vertiginous explanatory flight," James
returns to watch his grease-spot engagingly extend its bounds:

Who shall say thus...where the associational nimbus of the all but lost...chapter of experience shall...stop? That would be possible only were experience a chessboard of sharp black-and-white squares....

Regarding the "international" perspective, James says:

...the "international" light lay thick, from period to period, on the general scene of my observation...an immense resource...from many points of view.

He gives his view of Americans:

...if no particular element...had struck me from far back as receiving so much of the illumination as the comparative state of innocence of...my countryfolk, by that same token everything had a price...that could tend to...vivify the innocence....

Given...my condition of...knowledge, the most general appearance of the American (of those days) in Europe, that of being...unaware of life...had to represent for me the whole exhibitional range...Conscious of so few things...these...creatures...were least...conscious of their deficiences...so that, the grace of youth and innocence aiding, their negatives were converted and became...lively positives and values.

He says about Europe:

It seemed...a living doll....Only there was no more responsibility to a living doll than to a dead...unless indeed the...newspaperisation of any quaint confidence extracted by pressure on the poor doll's stomach...might serve for a rendering of that ideal....

He reverts to America:

It was the so oft-attested American sense of the matter that was...the oddity--the sense on the part of remote...islanders that no custom of give-and-take between their bustling archipelago and the far...continent was thinkable. Strangely enough...the continent was anecdotically interesting to the islands....More than all was it striking that the "naturalness" was all of American making--in spite...of the American tradition to the contrary....

Discussing "A Passionate Pilgrim," James uses the metaphor--

"the international Cerebrus":

"A Passionate Pilgrim"...strikes me today...as sops...thrown
to the international Cerebrus....Cerebrus would have been
...to one's younger artistic conscience, the keeper of the
international "books"; the hovering disembodied critical
spirit with a disengaged eye upon sneaking attempts to
substitute the American romantic for the American real.
To that comparatively artless category the fiction I have
just named, together with "Madame de Mauves" and "The Madonna
of the Future," belong. As American as possible, and to the
pitch of fondly coaxing it, I then desired my ground-stuff
to remain....

At one point, James speaks as a sensitive American:

I had from as far back as I could remember carried in my
side, buried and unextracted, the head of one of those well-
directed shafts from the European quiver to which, of old,
tender American flesh was more...exposed...than today: the
nostalgic cup had been applied to my lips even before I was
conscious of it—I had been hurried off to London and Paris
immediately after my birth...and...I was to feel that poison
had entered my veins....

Preface to "Lady Barbarina"
(Volume XIV in The New York Edition. Containing:
"Lady Barbarina," "The Siege of London," "An
International Episode," "The Pension Beaurepas,"
"A Bundle of Letters," "The Point of View")

As usual, James luminously discusses art:

The thing of profit is to have your experience—to recognize
...it, and for this almost any will do....The artist...has but
to have his honest sense of life to find it fed at every pore
even as the birds of the air are fed....

He brilliantly generalizes:

Behind all the small comedies and tragedies...has...lurked
for me the idea of some eventual sublime consensus of the
educated; the exquisite conceivabilities of which, intellectual,
moral, emotional, sensual, social, political...constitute stuff
for such "situations" as may...make...those of a more familiar
type turn pale. There...in the dauntless fusions to come—is
the personal drama of the future.
Regarding "The Point of View," James says:

"The Point of View"...was but to commemorate...its author's...incurable disposition to interest himself less in his own (always so quickly stale) experience...than in that of...fellow mortals, which might be...refreshingly different...

A mood of inspired reminiscence follows:

Fifty intimate figures and objects flushed with life in the other time had passed away...Only the little rounded composition remained; which glowed...like a swinging...lantern, with a light that brought out the past. The past had been...that...sordid tenement of the current housing of the muse. I had had "rooms" in it....These complacencies of perception swarmed me again while yet no brick of the old temple of the revelation stood on another.

James uses imagery to conclude his point:

I could turn on my finger the magic ring--it was strange how...a mere handful of light persistent prose could act as that talisman. So...I like to date, and...synchronise, these...studies in general....

"The Pension Beaurepas"...looks to me...archaic and...quaint; I ask myself why...I so wasted the precious treasure of a sense that...pre-revolutionary "Europe" had never really been swept out of its cupboards...curtains...mattresses....

Preface to "The Lesson of the Master"
(Volume XV in The New York Edition. Containing:
"The Lesson of the Master," "The Death of the Lion,
"The Next Time," "The Figure in the Carpet," "The Coxon Fund")

James makes comments on the short story and the nouvelle as artistic forms:

For any idea I might wish to express...an offered licence...opened up the millenium to the "short story." One had so often known this product to struggle...under the rude prescription of brevity at any cost, with the opposition so offered to its...becoming a story, that my friend's...
indifference to the arbitrary limit of length struck me... as the fruit of the finest artistic intelligence. We had been at one...on the truth that the forms of wrought things, in this order, were, all...effectively, the things; so that, for the delight of mankind, form might compete with form and...correspond to fitness....Among forms, moreover, we had had...our...blest nouvelle; the...hour for which appeared thus at last to shine. It was under the star of the nouvelle that... such studies...as the best of Turgenieff's, of Balzac's, of Maupassant's, of Bourget's, and...Kipling's, had been...arrived at....It had taken the blank misery of our Anglo-Saxon sense of such matters to organise...the general indifference to this fine type of composition. In that dull view a "short story" was a "short story," and that was the end of it....For myself, I delighted in the shapely nouvelle....

Regarding the pieces in the volume, James claims:

...they deal all with the literary life, gathering their motive...from some...felt embarrassment...of the artist... ridden by his idea or paying for his sincerity. They testify...to no general intention--they minister only...to an emphasized effect....

On the use of irony he observes:

On going over these things I see...why...my animating presences were...ironic....irony...projects the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious....

Justifying his method and answering hypothetical charges, James says:

What does your contention of non-existent exposures, in the midst of all the stupidity and vulgarity and hypocrisy, imply but that we have been, nationally...graced with no instance of recorded sensibility fine enough to react against these things?--an admission too distressing....What better example than this of the high and helpful public and...civic use of the imagination?--a faculty for...which in the interest of morality my esteem grows every hour I live....I have had, I admit, to project signal specimens....I was...committed, always to the superior case....

James pontificates as well as chats with the reader:

Working out economically...is the very life of the art of representation; just as the request to take on trust, tinged with the least extravagance, is the very death of the same....
As for the all-ingenious "Figure in the Carpet," let me... pusillanimously conclude, nothing would induce me to come into close quarters with you on the correspondences of this anecdote...a good example...of the virtue of your taking on trust—when I have artfully begotten in you a disposition.

He comments on the art of appreciation:

I to this extent recover the acute impression that may have given birth to "The Figure in the Carpet," that no truce, in English-speaking air, had ever seemed to me really struck, or...strikeable, with our so marked collective mistrust of anything like close or analytic appreciation.... I came to Hugh Vereker...by this traveled road of a generalization; the habit of having noted for many years how...helplessly, among us all, what we call criticism...is apt to stand off from the intended sense of things, from such finely-attested matters, on the artist's part, as a subject and a form, a bias and a logic, of his own....That is the situation, and "The Figure in the Carpet" exhibits a small group of well-meaning persons engaged in the test....

James discloses how the Coleridge type moved him to write "The Coxon Fund":

The subject of "The Coxon Fund"...was...to have found its interest clinched by my perusal...of Mr. J. Dyke Campbell's admirable monograph on Coleridge. The wondrous figure of that genius had long haunted me...More interesting still than the man...is the S. T. Coleridge type....We can surely account for nothing in the novelist's work that hasn't passed through the crucible of his imagination....

He concludes:

I find myself look at it most interestingly today...in the light of a significance quite other than that just noted. A marked example of the possible scope...and...neatness of the nouvelle, it takes its place...in a series of which the main merit...is the effort to do the complicated thing with a strong brevity and lucidity—to arrive...at a certain science of control....
Preface to "The Author of Beltraffio"
(Volume XVI in The New York Edition. Containing:
"The Author of Beltraffio," "The Middle Years,
"Greville Fane," "Broken Wings," "The Tree of
knowledge," "The Abasement of the Northmores,
"The Great Good Place," "Four Meetings," "Paste,
"Europe," "Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie")

James points out the use of the anecdote:

The form of "The Middle Years" is not that of the nouvelle,
but that of the concise anecdote....It was as an anecdote...
that I was determined my little situation here should figure;
to which end my effort was...to follow it as much as possible
from its outer edge in, rather than from its centre outward....

He enters, however, a qualification:

...yet who...was to pronounce...such and such an idea
anecdote and such and such another developmental. One had,
for the vanity of a priori wisdom here, only to be so constitu­
ted that to see any form of beauty...was forthwith to covet
that form....

After showing that "The Abasement of the Northmores" and "The
Tree of Knowledge" are"developmental with a vengeance," James discusses
"Europe." He compares the short story to a sonnet:

The merit of the thing is in the feat...of the transfusion;
the receptacle (of form) being so exiguous, the brevity
imposed so great. I undertook the brevity...and again arrived
at it by the innumerable repeated chemical...condensations that
tend to make of the very short story...one of the costliest,
even if, like the hard, shining sonnet, one of the most indestruct­
able, forms of composition in general use. I...now seek my
comfort perforce in the mere exhibited result, the union of
whatever fulness with whatever clearness.
Preface to "The Altar of the Dead"
(Volume XVII in The New York Edition. Containing:
"The Friends of the Friends," Sir Edmund Orme," "The
Real Right Thing")

James says about the "lost dead":

The subject of my story is...the exhibition of a case; the
case being that of an accepted, a cultivated habit (the
cultivation is really the point) of regularly taking thought
for them....it was impossible...not...to ask...what may not
become of individual sensibility, of the faculty and the fibre
itself, when everything makes against the indulgence of it
save as a conscious...dead loss.

James says about dying in London:

London was a terrible place to die in; doubtless not so
much...by conscious cruelty...as under the...doom of...
dishumanisation....Monstrous masses are...so impervious
to vibration that the sharpest forces of feeling, locally
applied, no more penetrate than a pin or a paper-cutter
penetrates an elephant's hide....

"The Altar of the Dead"...commemorates a case of...the
individual effort to keep it...tended and watered....
Brutal...the great fact that the poor dead...were nowhere
so dead as there; where to be caught in any rueful glance
at them was to be branded at once as "morbid." "Mourier,
à Londres, c'est être bien mort"....

James makes an easy transition to "The Beast in the Jungle":

To desire, amid these collocations, to place...like with
like, was to invite "The Beast in the Jungle" to stand next
in order.

He says about the protagonist:

He has...been marked and...suffered his fortune--which is
precisely to have been the man...to whom nothing whatever
was to happen....I...grant that any felt merit in the thing
must all depend on the clearness and charm with which the
subject...expresses itself.

Regarding the use of actualities in "The Birthplace," James
says:

If "The Birthplace" deals with another poor gentleman--
of interest as being yet again too fine for his rough fate—here...once more I lay my hand...on the clue of actuality. Beautiful on all this ground...the process by which the small cluster of actualities latent in the fact reported to him was to be reconstituted...It has been liberated...after the fashion of some young draught-horse who may, in the great meadow, have to be...re-broken for the saddle.

Proceeding to "The Private Life," he sensitively remarks:

I find myself...return to ground on which the history even of small experiments may be more or less written. This mild documentation fairly thickens for me...the scraps of records flit through that medium, to memory, as with the ...brush of wings of the imprisoned bat at eventide.

Dramatically discussing a single character, James says:

...to be truly single is to be able, under stress...to be solus, to know...the interlunar swoon of some independent consciousness...Wasn't his potentiality of existence public...to the last squeeze of the golden orange, and when he passed ...into the chamber of mystery what...was on the other side of the door?...only cognizant of the true Robert Browning.

Keeping in view the effect on the reader, James claims:

He has revelled in the creation of alarm and suspense and surprise and relief, in all the arts that practise, with a scruple for nothing but any lapse of application, on the credulous soul of the candid or...the seasoned spirit of the cunning reader....

Regarding the sense of wonderment he says:

What is wonderful in one set of conditions may...fail of its spell in another set....It may seem odd...to try to steer wide of the silly by hugging close the "supernatural"; but one man's amusement is...another's desolation; and I am prepared with the confession that the "ghost-story"...has ever been for me the most possible form of the fairy-tale.... It enjoys...this honour by being so much the neatest--neat with that neatness without which representation, and therewith beauty drops....To begin to wonder...I must begin to believe--to begin to give out...I must begin to take in, and to enjoy that profit I must begin to see and hear and feel....

James speaks from the reader's point of view:

The appreciation at work...would be of certain projected conditions...give me your elements, treat me your subject, one has to say--I must wait till then to tell you how I like them....there is no basis of opinion in such matters without
a basis of vision, and no ground for that...without some communicated closeness of truth....

He artistically claims:

I dare say...that whenever, in quest...of the amusing, I have invoked the horrific, I have invoked it, in such air as that of "The Turn of the Screw," that of "The Jolly Corner," that of "The Friends of the Friends," that of "Sir Edmund Orme," that of "The Real Right Thing" in... aversion to waste and from the sense that in art economy is always beauty.

Discussing the heroines of "Julia Bride," James writes about America's social aspects:

What if she were the silver key...that would unlock a treasure?--the treasure of a whole view of manners and morals, a whole range of American social aspects?

To put the question was to see one's subject swell at its mere touch....How had the prime idea come to me...but as illustrating...that freedom repeatedly to contract for the fond preliminaries of marriage which has been immemorially cherished by the American female young?... "Dramatise, dramatise" one had...said to one's self: then, and not sooner, would one see.

Preface to "Daisy Miller"

James calls "Daisy Miller" the "most prosperous child of my invention":

...my little exhibition is made to no degree whatever in critical but...poetical terms. It comes back to me that I was at a certain hour long afterwards to have reflected...on the characteristic free play of the whirligig of time....

In "Fordham Castle," James speaks as a dramatic poet:

These...are the saving sanities of the dramatic poet's always mad undertaking--the rigours of his artistic need
to cultivate...variety of...experiment, to dissimulate likenesses, samenesses, stalenesses, by the infinite play of a form pretending to a life of its own....

I offer "Fordham Castle," positively for a rare little memento of that truth: once I had to be..."internationally" American, what amount of truth my subject mightn't aspire to was...indicated--which condition...placed it in the time-honoured category; but the range of choice as to treatment...I mean...my pressing the clear liquor of amusement and refreshment from the golden apple of composition, that blest freedom...was still my resource....Any real art of representation is...a controlled...acceptance....The fair flower of this artful compromise is...the secret of "foreshortening"....

James says about "the American world":

...such reflexions had never helped to close my eyes...to all that had come and gone...in the fictive world of adventure more complacently called--the American world, I particularly mean, that might have put me out of countenance by having drawn its inspiration...neither from up-town nor from down-town nor from my lady's chamber, but from the vast wild garden of "unconventional" life in no matter what part of our country.

He poses a question and answers it in terms of the use of the dialect:

Why hadn't so quickened a vision of the great neglected native quarry at large more troubled my dreams...? Well, with many reasons I could count over, there was one that...covered the ground...the birthmark of Dialect...with the literary rein loose on its agitated back and with its shambling power of traction, not to say...attraction....Distinctly that was the odd case: the key to the whole of the treasure of romance independently garnered was the riot of the vulgar tongue....The monument was there...but was one to regret one's own failure to have contributed a stone? Perish...the thought.

At one point, James lays down a dictum regarding the artist's use of freedom:

Those of the smaller sort never use all the freedom they have--which is the sign, exactly, by which we know them; but those of the greater have never had too much...to use--which is the sovereign mark of their felicity....
With regard to "Flickerbridge," James begins on a charming note but ends on one of anguish:

"Flickerbridge"...I verily give up: so thoroughly does this highly-finished little anecdote cover its tracks; looking at me...with the fine inscrutability...the positive coquetry, of the refusal to answer free-and-easy questions....

To have observed that...is to learn to dread reverberation, mere mechanical ventilation, more than Black Death; which lesson the hero of my little apologue is represented as...spelling out the rudiments of....

James contrasts the "romance of labour" with "success":

There is a note or two I would fain add to this; but I check myself with the sense of having...vindicated...the most general truth of many a story-teller's case: the truth...that what longest lives to his backward vision, in the whole business, is not the variable question of the "success," but the inveterate romance of the labour.

Preface to "The Wings of the Dove"

James gives the motive of the story:

The idea...is that of a young person conscious of a great capacity for life, but early stricken...and condemned to die...while also enamoured of the world; aware moreover of the condemnation and passionately desiring to "put in" before extinction as many of the finer vibrations as possible, and so achieve...the sense of having lived....

Next, James the poet-novelist observes:

...the poet essentially can't be concerned with the act of dying. Let him deal with the sickest of the sick, it is...by the act of living that they appeal to him....The process of life gives way fighting, and often may so shine out on the lost ground as in no other connexion. One had had...one's accessory invalids--introduced with a complacency that made light of criticism. To Ralph Touchett...his deplorable state of health was not only no drawback; I had clearly been right in counting it...a positive good mark, a direct aid to pleasantness....
He clarifies his point:

With the clearness I have just noted...the last thing...

it proposed to itself was to be the record...of a collapse....

Such an attitude and such movements...were...the soul of
drama—a catastrophe determined in spite of oppositions.

By young woman would herself be the opposition—to the
catastrophe announced by the associated Fates....

She should be the last fine flower...of an "old" New York

tem...I had from far back mentally projected a certain

sort of young American as more the "heir of all the ages"

than any other young person whatever....To be the heir of

all the ages only to know yourself...balked of your inheritance,

would be to play the part...most becoming....

James admits difficulties:

"The Wings of the Dove" happens to offer perhaps the most

striking example...of my regular failure to keep the appointed

halves of my whole equal....nowhere had I condemned a luckless

theme to complete its revolution, burdened with the...
difficulties...that grow with a theme's development, in

quarters so cramped.

He bravely adds:

Of course, as every novelist knows, it is difficulty that

inspires; only, for that perfection of charm, it must have

been difficulty inherent...not..."caught" by the wrong

frequentations....

James throws light on his indirect presentation:

I note how...I go but a little way with the direct—that is

with the straight exhibition of Milly; it resorts for relief,

this process...to some...merciful indirection: all as if to...
deal with her at second hand, as an unspotted princess is ever

dealt with....All of which proceeds, obviously, from her

painter's tenderness of imagination about her....

Preface to "The Ambassadors"

James gives "the business" of the tale:

Nothing is more easy than to state the subject of "The

Ambassadors."....The whole case...is in Lambert Strether's
irrepressible outbreak to little Bilham..."Live all you can, it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do...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...."

Nothing can exceed the closeness with which the whole fits again into its germ....A friend had repeated to me...a thing or two said to him by a man of distinction, much his senior, and to which a sense akin to that of Strether's melancholy eloquence might be imputed--said...in Paris, and in a charming garden attached to a house of art, and on a Sunday afternoon of summer, many persons of great interest being present.

James is pleased with his performance:

...even among the supremely good--since with such alone is it one's theory of honour to be concerned--there is an ideal beauty of goodness the invoked action of which is to raise the artistic faith to its maximum. Then truly...one's theme may be said to shine, and that of "The Ambassadors"...wore this glow for me from beginning to end. Fortunately thus I am able to estimate this as, frankly, quite the best, "all round," of my productions; any failure of that justification would have made such...complacency publicly fatuous.

He rejoices in "the promise" of his hero:

I rejoiced in the promise of a hero so mature, who would give me thereby the more to bite into--since it's only into thickened motive and accumulated character...that the painter of life bites more than a little. My poor friend should have accumulated character, certainly; or rather would be...possessed of it, in the sense that he would have...imagination galore, and that this yet wouldn't have wrecked him....

He makes his point in artistic terms:

Art deals with what we see, it must first contribute...that ingredient; it plucks its material, otherwise expressed, in the garden of life--which material elsewhere grown is stale....it comes to me again and again...that one's bag of adventures...has been only half-emptied by the mere telling of one's story. It depends so on what one means by that equivocal quantity. There is the story of one's hero, and then...the story of one's story itself....

James pinpoints Strether's peculiar position:

Possessed of our friend's nationality...there was a...probability in his narrow localism....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....

He figuratively illustrates his point:

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...had begun to turn...red...on its way to purple, to black, to yellow....

He explains things a little further:

All of which...is but to say that the steps, for my fable, placed themselves with a...functional assurance—an air...of readiness to have dispensed with logic had I been...too stupid for my clue....

James reverts to Strether and Paris:

The actual man's note...is the note of discrimination, just as his drama is to become, under stress, the drama of discrimination....

There was the dreadful little old tradition...that people's moral scheme does break down in Paris....The likely place had the great merit of sparing me preparations....

He emphasizes the value of one central consciousness:

...yet every question of form and pressure...paled in the light of the major propriety...that of employing but one centre and keeping it all within my hero's compass....It would give me a large unity, and...crown me with the grace to which the enlightened story-teller will...sacrifice...all other graces whatever. I refer...to the grace of intensity, which there are ways of signally achieving and...of signally missing....

James admires composition as positive beauty:

One's work should have composition, because composition alone is positive beauty; but all the while--apart from one's...consciousness too of the dire paucity of readers ever recognizing or ever missing positive beauty—how, as to the cheap and easy...how, as to immediacy and facility, and even as to the common vivacity, positive beauty might have to be sweated for and paid for....

He says about the use of the "first person":

Had I...made him at once hero and historian, endowed him
with the romantic privilege of the "first person"—the darkest... of romance this...when enjoyed on the grand scale—variety, and many other queer matters...might have been smuggled in by the back door. Suffice it, to be brief, that the first person, in the long piece, is a form foredoomed to looseness, and that looseness, never much my affair, had never been so little so as on this particular occasion....

James candidly confesses:

He arrives (arrives at Chester) as for the dreadful purpose of giving his creator "no end" to tell about him—before which rigorous mission the serenest of creators might well have quailed. I was far from the serenest...I couldn't, save by implication, make other persons tell each other about him—blest resource...of the drama, which reaches its effects of unity...by paths...opposite to the paths of the novel....

The "first person"...is addressed...to...readers...by our English tradition...on so scant a presumption of exposure to criticism. Streater, on the other hand...has to keep in view proprieties much stiffer...than any our straight and credulous gape are likely to bring home to him, has...conditions to meet...that forbid the terrible fluidity of self-revelation....

On the value of subsidiary characters such as Maria Gostray, he says:

She is the reader's friend....She is an enrolled, a direct aid to lucidity...in fine...the most unmitigated and abandoned of ficelles. Half the dramatist's art...is in the use of ficelles; by which I mean in a deep dissimulation of them.

Regarding the "scenic" aspect of the novel, James writes:

The material of "The Ambassadors," conforming in this respect to that of "The Wings of the Dove"...is taken...for the stuff of drama; so that, availing myself of the opportunity given me by this edition for some prefatory remarks on the latter work, I had mainly to make on its behalf the point of its scenic consistency.... Everything in it that is not scene... is discriminated preparation...the fusion and synthesis of picture....

James also points out the use of the "non-scenic" elements and praises the novelistic form:

I must attach to my final remark here a different import;
noting...that such passages as that of my hero's first encounter with Chad Newsome, absolute attestations of the non-scenic form though they be, yet lay the firmest hand too...on representational affect. To report...closely...is...to become more or less scenic; and yet in the instance I allude to, with the conveyance, expressional curiosity and...decency are...arrived at under quite another law....It wouldn't take much to make me further argue that from an equal play of such oppositions the book gathers an intensity that fairly adds to the dramatic....I...fail to shrink from that extravagance--I risk it, rather, for the sake of the moral involved; which is not that the particular production before us exhausts the interesting questions it raises, but that the Novel remains still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms.

Preface to "The Golden Bowl"
(Volume XXIII in The New York Edition)

James mentions his use of an intelligent reporter:

I have already betrayed...my preference for..."seeing my story," through the...sensibility of some...detached...though...interested and intelligent, witness or reporter....I have...constantly inclined to the idea of the particular attaching case plus some near individual view of it; that nearness quite having thus become an imagined observer's, a projected, charmed painter's or post's...close...contact with it....Beset...with the sense that the painter of the picture or the chanter of the ballad...can never be responsible enough...I track my uncontrollable footsteps...toward the point of view that...will give me most...to answer for.

Claiming the privileges of a poet, he says:

We see very few persons in "The Golden Bowl," but the scheme of the book...is that we shall really see about as much of them as a coherent literary form permits. That was my problem...my gageure--to play the small handful of values really for all they were worth....

James has a note on the use of decorative "illustrations":

The essence of any representational work is...to bristle with immediate images; and I, for one, should have looked much askance at the proposal...to graft...a picture by another hand on my own picture--this being always, to my sense, a lawless incident. Which remark reflects...on the
"picture-book" quality that contemporary English and American prose appears more and more destined, by the conditions of the publication...to see imputed to it....

He mentions their effect on the reader:

Anything that relieves responsible prose of the duty of being...good enough, interesting enough...pictorial enough, above all in itself, does it the worst of services, and may well inspire in the lover of literature...lively questions as to the future of that institution....

James says about the re-perusal of his final writings:

To re-read in their order my final things...has been to become aware of my putting the process through, for the latter end of my series...quite in the same terms as the...contemporary terms....

He remarks about revision:

The question of the "revision"...had loomed large for me ....

This felt awkwardness sprang...from my too abject acceptance of the grand air with which the term Revision had, somehow, to my imagination, carried itself....I had attached to it, in a brooding spirit, the idea of re-writing....

He speaks as a poet:

The"old"matter is there, re-accepted, re-tasted, exquisitely re-assimilated and re-enjoyed...yet...perforating...a myriad more adequate channels. It is over...such a phenomenon...that I am moved...to linger...to retrace the whole growth of one's taste....The "taste" of the poet is...his active sense of life....It has befallen him most frequently...when the supersessive terms of his expression have happened to be verse; but that doesn't...isolate his case, since...the title we give him is the only title of general application...for those who...cultivate the image of life and the art....The seer and speaker under the descent of the god is the "poet," whatever his form, and he ceases to be one only when his form...is unworthy of the god....

He significantly adds:

The circumstance that the poets...have..."registered" their renewals of vision, attests...the attraction deeply working whenever the mind...is accessible...to the finer appeal of accumulated "good stuff" and to the interest of taking it in hand at all. For myself...the "taking" has been...through the whole process of this re-issue, the least part of the affair:
under the first touch of the spring my hands were to feel themselves full; so much more did it become a question, on the part of the accumulated good stuff, of seeming...to give and give. I have alluded...to...lapses of that munificence...but for the rest the sense of receiving has borne me company without a break....

After speaking of the non-revisionist (who may lie down beside his work even as the lion beside the lamb) and the partial revisionist, James speaks about his works:

I have prayed that the finer air of the better form may sufficiently seem to hang about them and gild them over—at least for readers, however few, at all curious of questions of air and form....

...for myself...the interest of the watched renewal has been livelier than that of the accepted repetition. What has the affair been at the worst...but an earnest invitation to the reader to dream again in my company and in the interest of his own larger absorption of my sense?...

He then speaks for the reader:

The ideally handsome way is for him to multiply...all the possible sources of entertainment—or, more grossly expressing it again, to intensify his...chance of pleasure. (It all comes back to that, to my and your "fun"—if we but allow the term its full extension; to the production of which no humblest question involved, even to that of the shade of a cadence or the position of a comma, is not richly pertinent.) We have but to think...of...the play of representational values...to feel the effect of such a condition....We may traverse acres of pretended exhibitory prose from which the touch that...operates for closeness and for charm, for conviction and illusion...is unsurpassably absent. All of which but means...the reader is, in the common phrase, "sold"—even when, poor passive spirit...he may be but dimly aware of it....

He speaks again in poetic terms:

It is scarce necessary to note that the highest test of any literary form conceived in the light of "poetry"—to apply that term in its largest literary sense—hangs back...from its office when it fails to lend itself to viva-voce treatment. We talk...not of non-poetic forms, but of those whose highest bid is addressed to the imagination, to the spiritual and the aesthetic vision....
James makes his point in philosophical and artistic terms:

All of which amounts...to saying that as the whole conduct of life consists of things done, which do other things in their turn, just so our behavior and its fruits are...one and continuous....To "put" things is...to do them....More than that, our literary deeds enjoy this marked advantage over many of our acts, that, though they go forth into the world and stray even in the desert, they don't to the same extent lose themselves....We are condemned...to...outlive...many vital or social performances....Not so...our really "done" things of this superior and more appreciable order....Our relation to them is essentially traceable, and in that fact abides...the incomparable luxury of the artist.

James's peroration is that of a supreme artist:

It rests altogether with himself not to break with his values, not to "give away" his importances. Not to be disconnected, for the tradition of behavior, he has but to feel that he is not; by his lightest touch the whole chain of relation and responsibility is reconstituted. Thus if he is always doing he can scarce, by his own measure, ever have done....

Henry James assimilated and "absorbed" America (Mark Twain's desideratum) as well as the best of Europe. He understood America, but the body of his work and his prefaces can hardly be called a Defensio Pro Populo Americano (he never forgot to mention 'our silent past, our deafening present,' in a wise way, of course).

In places, the Jamesian prefaces may seem long-spun and even slightly superficial, but there is nothing like them, to the best of my knowledge, in the literary record of any land, Eastern or Western. Of all the eighty-six writers of American fiction that I have discussed in terms of their prefaces, Henry James remains, to my mind, the Aristotle of the genre, an Aristotle withal who could create as well as criticize.

It would be wrong to read James's highly sensitive and
sophisticated prefaces as merely or mainly the sublimation of his own dilemma of the unappreciated artist who refused to be a "crowd-pleaser of art-hungry audiences." They are in essence much more hypostatic--hence much more positively heuristic--than self-criticism and autobiography ever can be. The latter, as George Santayana rightly reminds us in the preface to *The Last Puritan* (New York, 1936), "are far from being naturally truthful. They belong to a peculiarly treacherous and double-dyed species of the subjective."

As the careful recordings of "this unrivalled artist," and "this unique psychologist" (Howells's phrases) on whom nothing valuable was lost, the prefaces of Henry James go beyond countries and cultures, frontiers and barriers, touching poetry in the last preface. James as poet is here making the point that poetry is truer than the muse of history, for fiction, by an avowed artifice, "redresses the balance of selfish illusion and self-deception" (Santayana's phrases).

The fascinating story of America's fictional prefaces and their functional role can never be really completed. Along with fiction, it is a continuous, not a temporary process. It is, surely, a highly significant and rewarding story for it shows, among other things, the "sacred struggles" (to borrow a felicitous phrase from James's note-books) of America's story-tellers.
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212


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