Authorial Introductions: Presentations of the Self as Author in Prefaces and Autobiographies. (Volumes I and II).

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Authorial introductions: Presentations of the self as author in prefaces and autobiographies. (Volumes I and II)

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Authorial Introductions: Presentations of the Self as Author in Prefaces and Autobiographies

Volume I

A Dissertation

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in

The Department of English

by

Laurie Frances Leach
B.A., University of Virginia, 1986
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AUTHORIAL INTRODUCTIONS:
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Volume I

Acknowledgments ii
Abbreviations iv
Abstract v
Introduction vii

PART ONE
"Within These Limits":
Prefaces as Permissible Autobiography 1

Chapter One: Bringing Oneself Forward in Print 2
Chapter Two: "My Dreams Were All My Own": Mary Shelley's Assertion of Authorship 25
Chapter Three: Nathaniel Hawthorne: "A Man of Letters" 50

PART TWO
"Centered . . . on Literature":
Prefaces and Autobiographies as Stories of Authorship. 91

Chapter Four: Vladimir Nabokov: "A Doubly Obscure Novelist with an Unpronounceable Name" 92

Notes to Volume I 134

Volume II

Chapter Five: Swan Songs of a "Persistent Novelist": Ellen Glasgow's A Certain Measure and The Woman Within 174
Chapter Six: Henry James: "A Man of Imagination and Taste" 212

PART THREE
"Tell All The Truth But Tell It Slant":
Prefaces to Autobiographies 261

Chapter Seven: "A Personal Note in the Margin of the Public Page" 262
Chapter Eight: Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy: Writing, Lying, and Confrontation 291

Conclusion 325

Notes to Volume II 335
Works Cited 371
Vita 406

iii
### Abbreviations

**Works by Shelley**
- Frk *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*

**Works by Hawthorne**
- AN *The American Notebooks*
- BR *The Blithedale Romance*
- "C-H" "The Custom House, Introductory to *The Scarlet Letter*"
- "CE" "Consular Experiences"
- EN *The English Notebooks*
- MF *The Marble Faun*
- MOM *Mosses from an Old Manse*
- "OM" "The Old Manse: The Author Makes the Reader Acquainted with his Abode"
- OOH *Our Old Home*
- SG *The House of the Seven Gables*
- S-I *The Snow-Image and Other Twice-Told Tales*
- SL *The Scarlet Letter*
- TTT *Twice-Told Tales*

**Works by Nabokov**
- BS *Bend Sinister*
- CE *Conclusive Evidence*
- IB *Invitation to a Beheading*
- LATH *Look at the Harlequins!*
- PF *Pale Fire*
- SM *Speak, Memory: an Autobiography Revisited*
- SO *Strong Opinions*

**Works by Glasgow**
- BG *Barren Ground*
- CM *A Certain Measure: An Interpretation of Prose Fiction*
- EGRD *Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts*
- WW *The Woman Within*

**Works by James**
- Art *The Art of the Novel*
- AS *The American Scene*
- "MY" "The Middle Years"
- NHJ *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*
- NSB *Notes of a Son and Brother*
- SB *A Small Boy and Others*

**Works by Conrad**
- CP *Collected Prefaces*
- PR *A Personal Record*

**Works by McCarthy**
- MCG *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*
- HIG *How I Grew*
Abstract

This dissertation examines the prefaces and autobiographies of creative writers as "authorial introductions," textual spaces in which writers present themselves to their readers as authors. It consists of three main parts. Part One concerns autobiographical prefaces by two writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Mary Shelley, who did not write autobiographies and who were defensive about the autobiographical content of their prefaces. Both writers were ambivalent about authorship and hesitant about bringing themselves "forward in print," but within the limits of their prefaces, they were able to speak autobiographically and portray themselves as authors.

Part Two examines the autobiographies and prefaces of three prolific novelists as "stories of authorship." The lives of Vladimir Nabokov, Ellen Glasgow, and Henry James were all "centered on literature." Their autobiographies and prefaces reveal their pride in authorship and their ambivalent relationships with their readers, whose responses sometimes gratified, but more often frustrated these writers. For these three authors, the conviction that they were great writers was accompanied by a sense of being set apart from the mass of humankind. Their prefaces and autobiographies are attempts to bridge the gap between author and reader without sacrificing the privileged stance of the author for whom literary creation is its own reward.

Part Three focuses on prefaces to autobiographies. A
theoretical chapter addresses two questions. First, what prompts an autobiographer, who is already addressing the reader in the first person, to step outside the text in a preface? Second, what effect does the presence of a preface have on the autobiography? The final chapter discusses two autobiographies which not only begin with prefaces but include prefatory interchapters: Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* and Lillian Hellman's *Three*. In both autobiographies the elusiveness of truth becomes a central issue, largely because of these interchapters and the authors' awareness of themselves as writers which is manifested there. These autobiographies are contrasted with McCarthy's *How I Grew* and Hellman's *Maybe*, less successful autobiographies in which the consciousness of a dual role as storyteller and autobiographer, which the use of interchapters encouraged, is lost.
Joseph Conrad's mildly deprecating reference to his autobiography, *A Personal Record*, seems an apt way of characterizing not only autobiographies but prefaces as well. If the totality of a literary work represents "the public page," then the preface takes the position of the marginal personal note, and as such, according to Victor Hugo, is "usually of very little interest to the reader" ("Preface" to *Cromwell* 354). In Hugo's view, the reader inquires concerning the talent of a writer rather than concerning his point of view; and in determining whether a work is good or bad, it matters little to him upon what ideas it is based or in what sort of mind it germinated. One seldom inspects the cellars of a house after visiting its salons, and when one eats the fruit of a tree, one cares but little about the root. (354) Hugo probably underestimates the extent of the typical reader's interest in the mind or "point of view" of the man or woman behind the text. Nathaniel Hawthorne, for instance, believed that it was his genial prefatory notes that drew readers to his "gloomy" novels, and despite his
deprecations, Hugo himself admits that his prefaces have after all attracted the scrutiny of critics. They expose him when he intended they should shield him (355).

In fact, Charles W. Eliot, the editor of *Prefaces and Prologues to Famous Books*, a collection in which Hugo's essay is reprinted, claims that precisely what fails to interest Hugo's hypothetical reader--"in what sort of mind [the work] germinated"--will fascinate the reader of his collection:

No part of a book is so intimate as the Preface. Here after the long labor of the work is over, the author descends from his platform, and speaks with his reader as man to man, disclosing his hopes and fears, seeking sympathy for his difficulties, offering defence or defiance, according to his temper, against the criticisms which he anticipates. It thus happens that a personality which has been veiled by a formal method throughout many chapters, is suddenly seen face to face in the Preface; and this alone, if there were no other reason, would justify a volume of Prefaces. (*Prefaces and Prologues to Famous Books* 3)

Although they differ on whether such a preface will be of marginal or primary interest to the reader, Hugo and Eliot agree on the essentially personal content of the preface and its marginal relation to the rest of the book. For
Hugo the preface is the cellar of the house of fiction (or, in this case, the house of drama); for Eliot, writing the preface is not part of "the long labor of the work," but is produced, presumably effortlessly, after the work is finished.

Only insofar as a preface can escape being defined as a personal note in the margin, either by refusing to be contained in the margins of the text it prefaces or by appearing to transcend the "personal," has it traditionally aroused more than marginal interest on the part of literary critics. Examples of the former would be the prefaces to Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. "Democritus Junior to the Reader," which occupies not the cellar but at least the entire first floor of Burton's treatise, grew with each new edition Burton published and is the portion of the book most frequently read and criticized. Indeed, for many readers "Democritus Junior to the Reader" is the Anatomy.

If Burton's preface thrusts itself into the critical eye partly through sheer expansiveness, Hawthorne's "The Custom House" takes a more subtle approach. Hawthorne employs a different architectural metaphor to describe this essay; his preface is not a cellar, but a foyer: "The Custom-House is merely introductory--an entrance hall to the magnificent edifice which I throw open to my guests" (Letter 428, 16: 308). Hawthorne suggests the importance of his introduction at the same time that he insists on its
marginality, for it is "merely introductory." In the preface to the second edition of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne even disingenuously claims that "the sketch might perhaps have been wholly omitted, without loss to the public or detriment to the book" (SL 1).

As long as critics accepted this comment at face-value, "The Custom-House" was dismissed or deplored by critics as an unfortunate appendage; juxtaposing the somber narrative and the "good-humored" sketch appeared as ill-conceived a plan as Hawthorne's original intention of issuing shorter tales in the same volume in order to alleviate its gloomy tone. Only when critics, building on Hawthorne's metaphor, began to see the possibilities raised by viewing "The Custom-House" as an entrance hall through which one must necessarily pass in order to gain admittance to the rest of the house, did "The Custom-House" receive serious and sustained criticism.

Such criticism is quickly attracted by the kind of preface which lays claim to being more than a personal comment on a writer's own work. When a writer uses the preface as a platform to engage in literary criticism and to formulate and publicize his or her theories, the critic's attention is quickly arrested. Wordsworth's "Preface" to The Lyrical Ballads and Hugo's "Preface" to Cromwell, literary manifestos advocating respectively a new kind of poetry or drama, are two well-known examples. And as John Bayer points out, it is the part of "The Custom-
House" in which Hawthorne sets out his theory of the romance which has attracted the most criticism. But this narrow focus does not do justice to the richness of Hawthorne's preface, nor can *The Art of the Novel* be adequately discussed solely in terms of Henry James's technical pronouncements on point of view in the novel. As Murray Krieger has argued, criticism is a "secondary art." Any evaluation of prefaces which considers them exclusively for their value as literary criticism or theory sets them apart from "literature," in effect marginalizing them as literary texts. Appreciation of prefaces as criticism precedes and quite likely forestalls appreciation of them as literary works in their own right.

If prefaces suffered critical neglect insofar as their autobiographical content was dismissed as merely personal, then it is interesting to note that autobiography, too, has only comparatively recently been accorded literary status and become the subject of serious academic criticism. Traditionally it has been the practice of not only critics but writers themselves to regard explicit autobiography as a kind of footnote to the "true" autobiography of one's collective works. The novels, poems, stories, or plays that the author has produced constitute both the "public page" and the true portrait of their author, beside which a more direct account of the writer's life seems superfluous, and perhaps egotistical or self-indulgent. Thus, autobiographies are seldom included in collected editions,
and indeed are frequently written after them. It is as if, like the preface in Eliot's comment above, the autobiography is completed after the author's real labor—writing his or her "literary" works—is finished. While autobiographies are frequently used as sources for the early chapters of literary biographies, critical studies of particular authors often ignore them.  

As numerous critics have remarked, autobiography's status as a marginal genre can no longer be taken for granted. In 1980 William C. Spengemann noted that in the previous five years he had "seen autobiography move from the border-lands of literary study to a place much nearer the privileged center traditionally occupied by fiction, poetry and the drama" (xi). The revolution in the status of autobiography heralded by Spengemann and Olney ("Autobiography and the Cultural Moment") at the threshold of the 1980's shows no signs of reversing itself as we enter the last decade of the twentieth century. Indeed the explosion of critical studies of autobiography continues unabated, although a proposed special session for the 1990 MLA convention specifically cites autobiography as a form of "Boundary Literature: Forms on the Margins of Canon and Genre." The apparent contradiction between the volume of critical attention to autobiography and continuing reference to it as a marginal genre can be resolved if we recognize that part of autobiography's interest for critics lies in its marginal status, particularly for those critics.
with an orientation toward deconstruction.

In *The Private Self*, Shari Benstock suggests that "the most interesting aspect of the autobiographical" is "the measure to which 'self' and 'self-image' might not coincide" (15). Autobiography is compelling for Benstock because it "reveals gaps . . . [A]utobiography reveals the impossibility of its own dream: what begins in the presumption of self-knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction which covers over the premises of its construction" (*Private Self* 11).

Christopher Norris's account of Jacques Derrida's interest in marginal genres sounds very similar to Benstock's account of her interest in autobiography:

[D]econstruction is the vigilant seeking-out of those 'aporias,' blindspots or moments of self-contradiction where a text involuntarily betrays the tension . . . between what it manifestly means to say and what it is nonetheless constrained to mean. [Deconstruction involves] seizing on precisely those unregarded details (casual metaphors, footnotes, incidental turns of argument) which are . . . passed over by interpreters of a more orthodox persuasion. For it is here, in the margins of the text . . . that deconstruction discovers those same unsettling forces at work. (19)

Because a preface, as a kind of preliminary appendage to
another text, assumes an inherently marginal position, it is not surprising that prefaces also attracted the interest of deconstructionists, most notably Derrida himself.\(^5\) Derrida's "Hors-livre," printed as a preface to *Dissemination*, is a sustained theoretical meditation on prefaces, which serves as a point of departure for subsequent critics. Prior to this essay, criticism of prefaces as a genre was confined to overviews written by the editors of collections of prefaces, such as Clara Gebert's "Introduction" to *Elizabethan Dedications and Prefaces* and Herbert John Clifford Grierson's "An Introduction on the Introductions," written for *The Personal Note, or First and Last Words from Prefaces, Introductions, Dedications, Epilogues*.

Derrida discusses in particular prefaces to philosophical works by Hegel and Marx and suggests that prefaces have the structure of a *magic slate*. They seem to be composed "in view of their own self-effacement" (9). They present to the reader what he or she is going to read and then must be forgotten in order for the reader not to experience a sense of redundancy in encountering the text proper. But a mark or trace of reading the preface remains and is added to the subsequent text. The preface works to set up a framework or context in which the text that follows can be understood.

The need for prefaces, despite their apparent redundancy, is determined "by an inadequation between the
form and content of discourse or by an incommensurability between the signifier and the signified" (20). The preface "must be written so that it can be integrated, so that its text can be erased in the logic of the concept which cannot not presuppose itself" (35).

In an essay published in Romanic Review, "Dico Vobis: Préface, pacte, pari," Ora Avni continues to explore the questions raised by Derrida. She wonders how prefaces can be used to assert the truth of a text and argues that accepting the assertions of the preface as authoritative requires a leap of faith, a "wager" (pari). The preface tries to eliminate doubt, but succeeds in exposing it. The preface functions as a bridge between author and reader, between the text and silence, but it also calls attention to the fissure that it spans.

Cary Nelson also acknowledges a debt to Derrida's work in "Reading Criticism," a PMLA article in which Nelson discusses the self-consciousness that appears in the prefaces literary critics write for their books. Most recently, L'Esprit Créateur has devoted an entire issue (Fall 1987) to the genre of prefaces.

Thus both prefaces and autobiographies have increasingly become the subject of practical and theoretical literary criticism, but scant attention has been paid to the similarities between the two genres. They share more than their apparent marginal status with respect to literature. The following list of characteristic
features could, with equal pertinence, refer to either prefaces or autobiographies: a first person authorial voice, which is presumed to represent (and to present) the author of the work; a claim to present "truth" or rather to be what Herrnstein Smith calls "natural discourse"; a chronological gap leading to a conscious split in perspective between the narrator and the protagonist, though both are designated by the first person pronoun; an inclination to theorize or be self-reflexive, a proclivity for multiplication or expansion, and a tendency on the part of the narrative voice to be apologetic or defensive.

My point of departure is yet another point of intersection between the two genres: autobiographies and prefaces are both "authorial introductions," textual spaces where the author presents the self as writer, where he or she introduces himself or herself to the reader in the role of author. In prefaces this seems obvious enough: the author speaks to the reader directly about the work he or she has produced, acknowledging authorship and often providing autobiographical details as well. The same occurs in autobiography except that the priorities may well be reversed, with the "autobiographical details" apparently eclipsing the importance of the story of authorship.

All autobiography, except for some ghost-written pseudo-autobiographies, is on some level the story of authorship. The autobiographer gives an account of the development of the self, of how he or she came to be the self who now writes.
Thus, even an autobiographer who is not primarily a writer by profession or personal vocation, becomes a writer in the act of writing the autobiography.

But because this study is concerned with what we might call "literary autobiography"—the autobiographies of professional creative writers—the life-narratives discussed tend to be shaped around the experience of perceiving the world with the eye of the artist and of writing or preparing to write. While their accounts often conclude before the autobiographical subject’s literary production amounts to anything more than isolated pieces of juvenilia (Glasgow’s hymn, Nabokov’s summerhouse poem, McCarthy’s prize-winning essay on the Irish); these accounts are still double stories of authorship. They are at once the story of becoming the author of the autobiography and the story of the developing artistic consciousness which eventually produced the works wherein their formal claim to authorship lies.

Yet these writers do not appear to take their authorial roles for granted. For various historical, cultural, and psychological reasons the decision to assume the role of author causes them to react defiantly, defensively, or apologetically. For these writers, and perhaps for any writer, the creative impulse can be both a gift and a curse. The experience of authorship both empowers and alienates the writer, and the resulting ambivalence is manifested, confronted and sometimes
mastered in prefaces and autobiographies.

II

The three key terms of this study: autobiography, preface and authorship all require definition or qualification. The difficulties inherent in defining the genre of autobiography have been discussed by several critics, including Philippe Lejeune, James Olney and Elizabeth Bruss. Rather than attempt an exhaustive definition, it seems to be best for the critic merely to describe the attributes of the kind of autobiographical text with which he or she will be concerned. Thus while I do not presume that these examples even begin to exhaust the possibilities of the genre—for certainly autobiographies can be written by people who are not creative writers—I have chosen to limit myself precisely to this group, and beyond that to modern, western autobiographies (in fact all the autobiographies treated at length are written in the twentieth century by American novelists and dramatists) written in prose by a single author and intended to be read as natural discourse concerning the life of the author. "Life" here does not generally correspond so much to outward events as to inner developments. These autobiographies emphasize the growth of the writer's imagination, his or her emerging artistic consciousness.

While critics endlessly confront the dilemma of defining autobiography, the same rigor has not been
expended in an effort to define prefaces as a genre. In fact, prefaces, forewords, dedications, introductions, and afterwords tend to become conflated. While one might object that there are meaningful distinctions to be drawn between a preface and an afterword and a preface and a dedication—distinctions to which I shall return in a moment—the other terms seem more or less interchangeable. It would be possible to attempt a kind of taxonomy of these different forms, to postulate that forewords are prefatory statements written by someone other than the author, and that introductions have an elucidative emphasis while prefaces are more personal, but the authors under consideration do not observe such distinctions. The texts I designate as prefaces are all prose statements, composed by the author of the work at some time subsequent to the composition of the work, in which the writer acknowledges authorship of the work and may also comment on his or her aims or intentions in writing it, the success or failure of those intentions, the success or failure of critics and readers in interpreting the work, and the circumstances surrounding its composition. Yet Nabokov calls his prefatory texts "Forewords," Henry James calls his "Prefaces," and Conrad calls his "Author's Notes." Hawthorne's prefatory texts pose as everything from "familiar prefaces" to introductory essays to dedicatory letters.

In defining prefaces in this rather limited way, I
would not be understood as saying that there are no other types of texts that can legitimately be called prefaces. The introductory essay composed by the editor of a critical edition of a novel is of course a preface. So in a sense are "fictive" prefaces, such as the preface to *Moll Flanders* or to *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. But I am not concerned with the former—which I will call the editorial preface—because though the editor of the book may call attention to himself or herself as author of the preface, he or she is not claiming to be the author of the work that follows. And I am not concerned with the latter because they represent fictive rather than natural discourse, and as such are comparable to fiction rather than to autobiography. The preface to *Moll Flanders* is a representation of an editorial preface while the preface to *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* is a representation of an authorial preface, the kind on which this study focuses. Pym introduces himself as author of the narrative, and explains how he came to write it and to allow Poe to write part of it. But since Pym is a fictional character created by Poe, the preface must be considered part of the novel's fiction.

A more questionable use of the word "preface" is a metaphoric one, designating an instance of writing completed prior to some later work by that same author which in hindsight is seen to have been either a necessary preliminary attempt at articulating the later work or an
experimental working through of certain issues, themes, or literary techniques which were then discarded or modified in the subsequent and presumably greater work. For instance, William Goetz refers to James's prefaces to the New York Edition collectively as a "preface . . . to the more formal autobiography James was to begin writing a few years later" (84). And Patrick Parrinder writes of James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a "prelude" to "the more comprehensive edifices of Ulysses and Finnegans Wake" (72).

The rationale for using the word "preface" (or one of its cognates) in this way is apparently related to the positioning of the preface at the beginning of a work, where the reader's initial encounter with it may provide background information on the text and tends to influence or shape the reading that follows. By the same token, the reader's acquaintance with or ignorance of the preliminary text affects the reader's interpretation of the major work to which the earlier one serves as a metaphorical preface.

But it strikes me that this analogy is faulty, for it ignores the retrospective quality of prefaces. Prefaces are written after the work is completed, (Derrida 7; Grierson 1; Avni 120), and this is why they can be so easily conflated with afterwords. The only significant difference between forewords and afterwords is that one precedes and the other follows the text of a work. Of course the location does make a difference. A person's
response to a movie review and its influence on the interpretation and appreciation of the film will differ depending upon whether the review is encountered before or after the movie is viewed, but the review itself does not change. In a similar manner, whether a retrospective authorial comment is placed before or after a text affects the reader's interpretation both of the text and the comment. (The afterword cannot affect the initial reading of the text, but a re-interpretation of some sort in light of the afterword generally occurs, even if the text is not literally re-read.)

An example of the effects of positioning is provided by Nabokov. One of the reasons Nabokov's afterword to *Lolita* does not seem so arrogantly off-putting as many of his "forewords" is that it appears after the text. The reader has already enjoyed the novel on his or her own. Now, after exposure to Nabokov's own reading, the reader is invited to re-enter the text with Nabokov's list of "favorite hollows" and "byroads" in mind. In the case of Nabokov's forewords, on the other hand, readers are bombarded with information which cannot be properly understood or assimilated before the text has been read and find their role as readers partly pre-empted by an author who calls on them to notice certain things and avoid certain interpretations before they have ever encountered the text. Despite these differences, both the forewords and the afterword are authorial introductions, and thus...
afterwords or postscripts will be considered along with prefaces when appropriate.

A final distinction needs to be drawn between prefaces and dedications. The two are separate entities that nevertheless sometimes overlap. A dedication is an inscription prefixed to a literary production which offers the work as a tribute to a particular person or group. When the inscription evolves into a letter which includes a message in which the author talks about his or her authorship and intentions, the dedication also becomes a preface. Thus "To Véra," the concise dedication to each of Nabokov's books, is not a preface, but the letter to Horatio Bridge which precedes Hawthorne's *The Snow-Image* is both a dedication and a preface. The audience for the letter is of course not only Bridge, but all the readers of the collection.

The third important term of this study is the simplest to define. By "authorship" I mean simply the fact of writing and publishing literary texts. My concern is with the ways these writers view the authorial role and present it to their readers, the ways they assume this role in prefaces in order to engage in autobiographical discourse and the ways in which the fact of authorship shapes the self-image of the writer in both autobiographies and prefaces.

The term "authorship," however, is associated with two different strains of literary criticism: one concerned with
authorship as a profession and as such a social, economic, and historical reality and the other with a deconstruction of the role of the author. This dissertation fits into neither category, but is influenced by and indebted to both. The pioneering work in the former category is William Charvat's *The Profession of Authorship in America*, in which he provides an overview of the book-publishing trade in nineteenth-century America and the gradual emergence of the professional man of letters. Other books in this tradition include studies of particular authors, like Michael Anesko's account of James's "Friction with the Market" and Nina Baym's tracing of *The Shape of Hawthorne’s Career*. David Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance* which accounts for some of the other entries in the literary marketplace, popular works which traditionally have been overlooked by literary critics and historians, is also in this tradition. In these books we see Hawthorne, James and other major American writers in relation to their audiences, their publishers and their contemporaries. These works provide a context in which to evaluate the statements about and images of authorship presented in prefaces and/or autobiographies.

Another view of authorship, exemplified by Peggy Kamuf's *Signature Pieces on the Institution of Authorship*, takes a deconstructive approach and is related to the privileging of marginal texts as sites of gaps and contradictions. Proponents of this approach are not
concerned with the real life conditions of authorship, but with exposing the fiction implicit in the author's writing of a preface. Derrida points out in "Hors-livre" that a preface functions as:

the word of the father, assisting and admiring his work, answering for his son, losing his breath in sustaining, retaining, ideolizing, reinternalizing and mastering his seed. The scene would be acted out if such were possible, between father and son alone; autoinsemination, homoinsemination, reinsemination. (44-45)

But such a scene is not possible, because once published, the book, the author's child, is delivered over to a third-party, the reader. The author is never quite alone with his or her work again and can never "master" it because of the impossibility of controlling all possible interpretations. Derrida concludes that the preface "opens the 'literary game' in which . . . the figure of the author finally disappears" (56).

What is meant by this authorial disappearance is articulated in Roland Barthes's oft-cited essay, "The Death of the Author." Barthes makes three main points. First he criticizes the concept of the author as parent of the work, existing prior to and apart from the work and then creating the work in its parent's own image. Second, he points out that "a text is . . . a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original,
blend and clash" (146). And finally he argues that writing is composed of a multiplicity that focuses on the reader, rather than the author (148).

Barthes expresses his first point in a rejection of the "tyranny of the author," the fascination with the idea of the person behind the work which encourages biographical criticism to the exclusion of attention to the work itself:

The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us.

(143)

Barthes's complaint seems to echo the contentions of Wimsatt and Beardsley in the "Intentional Fallacy."

Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that poetic interpretation must not be confused with either author psychology or literary biography, and that a poem (or play or novel) must be interpreted on the basis of internal evidence alone.

Herrnstein Smith reminds us that "fictive discourse is defined by the suspension of the assumption that the speaker means what he says" (111). Thus an interpretation of a poem, for instance, in which the meaning of the poem is inferred from circumstances in the poet's life at the time of the composition of the poem would impoverish the poem by limiting its meaning, ignoring its status as fictive discourse.
But if Barthes were merely warning us against the intentional fallacy, then his caution would not seem particularly applicable to this book. After all, it is the authors themselves who are committing the intentional fallacy insofar as they use their prefaces to convey their intentions to their readers. This study focuses not on their overt fictions but their authorial introductions, in which the "allegory" is presumably dispensed with and readers seem justified in assuming that the "voice of a single person, the author" is confiding in them.

But Barthes and his successors would find that a naive assumption. Actually Barthes's critique of the tyranny of the author is more radical. He argues that the voice of the author which can apparently be heard in a literary work actually does not exist independently of the work at all. Writing is not an act of recording or representation but:

designates a performative, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and the present tense) in which the enunciation has no other content . . . than the act by which it is uttered. (146)

Barthes intends his words to apply to all writing, not just fictive discourse. Therefore the "I" of an autobiography or a preface is exposed as just as much a verbal construct as that of a character in a consciously created fiction. Critics of autobiography who follow Barthes see the genre as one in which the individual self is "de-faced" rather
than portrayed, and they proclaim "the end of autobiography" much as Barthes proclaimed the "death of the author." 14

Between "the death of the author" and "the end of autobiography," it would seem that we have arrived at something of a dead-end. Perhaps the only thing to do is to back up. 15 I would argue that the concept of authorship, of the author as creator of literary works which express his or her unique talent, was very much alive for these writers and still evokes a response in many readers today. The concept of selfhood, of personal identity, fictitious as it might be shown to be on one level, nevertheless appears necessary for day-to-day human functioning. The prefatory and autobiographical texts of these writers, it seems to me, demand to be read as assertions of authorship, self-hood and individuality. 16

But we cannot discard the insights of the deconstructive approach. The efforts to assert authorial control by the writers under consideration are frequently marked by anxiety over the question of originality or over the tendency of readers to misinterpret their works. Thus they come up against the limits of authorial control outlined by Barthes in his essay.

These writers are also aware that they are creating the selves they present to the reader through language. Hawthorne is quite frank about his authorial persona being a genial disguise beneath which his "inmost" self remains
veiled. Nabokov discusses using his interviews to construct a pleasing self-portrait. James constantly calls attention to his dilemma as an autobiographer. He is faced with swarms of memories and must compose them in some kind of order. Finally both Glasgow and James experience a kind of alienation when confronted with their early works, which cause them to implicitly question the unity of the portrait of a single artistic self being drawn in their collected prefaces.

III

My dissertation consists of three parts. In the first section I discuss the preface as permissible autobiography. My subjects are two nineteenth century writers, Mary Shelley and Nathaniel Hawthorne, who each wrote prefaces but did not write more explicit autobiographies. In the first chapter I explore the probable factors behind the decision of these two writers to bring themselves "forward in print" by writing prefaces. In the next two chapters I discuss the authorial introductions of Shelley and Hawthorne in turn.

In the middle section, I turn my attention to prefaces and autobiographies as "stories of authorship." The three writers discussed: Vladimir Nabokov, Ellen Glasgow, and Henry James have four things in common. Each was primarily a novelist, each wrote both an autobiography and numerous prefaces late in his or her career, each was convinced of his or her own greatness as an author and was to some

xxix
extent dissatisfied with either the critical or popular response to his or her work, and each lived a life that was "centered on literature." Thus despite the declared or implicit intention of keeping autobiography out of the prefaces, and discussion of their literary productions (presumably the province of prefaces) out of their autobiographies, these intentions almost inevitably fail. The life is inextricably bound up with the writing, and the self is presented as writer.

In the final section, I close by examining what happens when the autobiographer includes a preface, and the two genres are allowed to merge. In this last section I treat authors who not only wrote prefaces for their autobiographies, but who either used the preface to explore the theoretical issues involved in writing autobiography or in authorial self-presentation or who deliberately merged the preface and the autobiography by assuming the prefatory stance, by means of italicized interchapters, throughout the work. Chapter Seven approaches the question of prefaces to autobiographies theoretically and includes a brief discussion of statements about the nature of autobiographies and their prefaces in prefaces to autobiographical works by several writers, including Michel Leiris, Joseph Conrad, and Edmund Gosse. The final chapter compares and contrasts the autobiographies of Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy with particular attention to the role of the prefatory interchapters in these books and to
the way the problem of lying is linked to the profession of authorship.
Part One
"Within these Limits": Prefaces as Permissible Autobiography

It is true that I am very averse to bringing myself forward in print; but as my account will only appear as an appendage to a former production, and as it will be confined to such topics as have connection with my authorship alone, I can scarcely accuse myself of a personal intrusion.

Mary W. Shelley
1831 "Author's Introduction,"
Frankenstein

... we may prate of the circumstances that lie around us, and even of ourself, but still keep the Inmost Me behind its veil. To this extent and within these limits, an author, methinks, may be autobiographical, without violating either the reader's rights or his own.

Nathaniel Hawthorne
"The Custom-House,
Introductory to
The Scarlet Letter."
Chapter One
Bringing Oneself Forward In Print

When Mary Shelley professed her aversion to "bringing myself forward in print" in her Introduction to Frankenstein, she was echoing in public a reluctance she had already expressed many times in private. In 1822, she admitted to Byron, "It is a painful thing to me, to put forward my own opinion" (Letters 1: 288). In 1826, she asked that her "habit of withdrawing my name from public notice" be respected (Letters 1: 533). And in December 1829, less than two years before writing the introduction, she insisted to Edward Trelawny that "it would destroy me to be brought forward in print" (Letters 2: 94). If her aversion to publicity is consistent, however, her willingness to address the public in 1831 appears anomalous. Her need to affirm publicly her desire for privacy in the opening paragraph of her introduction, to quickly excuse her "personal intrusion" before she can accuse herself of it, attests to her awareness of the apparent contradiction involved in her decision to write a preface. For to write a foreword, is precisely to bring oneself forward in print. It is to bring the authorial "I" to the fore, to put one's own opinions forward, to insist that the reader attend to the author's own word on the text before encountering the text itself. It is, at least in Nathaniel Hawthorne's view as implied in "The Custom-
House," a kind of presumption, that if not carefully kept in bounds may impinge on the privacy of either author or reader.

Shelley's obsession with withdrawing her name from public notice—even to the extent of refusing to provide her autograph—was not shared by Hawthorne. Though he did begin his career with anonymous and pseudonymous publication, Hawthorne began putting his name on his title pages in 1837 and eventually showed a professional concern for keeping his name before the public eye. Unlike Shelley, he grew quite fond of the prefatory autobiographical sketch, noting in a letter to James T. Fields toward the end of his career that "If the public like that sort of stuff, I too find it pleasant and easy writing and can supply a new chapter of it for every volume—and that moreover without infringing upon my proper privacy" (Letter 1285, 18: 612). But his need to insist, as he does in almost every preface, on the preservation of that privacy, as well as the genial modesty with which he undercuts possible accusations of egotism, attests to a certain defensiveness about "bringing [him]self forward" which resembles Shelley's. The opening of "The Custom-House" provides some parallels to the "Author's Introduction" to Frankenstein:

It is a little remarkable, that—though disinclined to talk overmuch of myself and my affairs at the fireside, and to my personal
friends—an autobiographical impulse should twice in my life have taken possession of me, in addressing the public. ("C-H" 3).

Both authors insist on their characteristic reserve and excuse this apparent departure from their typical reticence by a gesture of passivity: Shelley is complying with her editors' wishes and responding to her readers' curiosity, while Hawthorne is "possessed" by an autobiographical impulse that is all the more remarkable because it has appeared once before. Both then proceed to assure the reader that no "personal intrusion" is involved. Both writers will observe the rules of propriety and speak only about the origins of the work they present to their readers. Shelley promises to confine herself to matters pertaining to "authorship alone," while Hawthorne makes such information his "main purpose" and begs to be allowed a "few extra touches" of autobiography ("C-H" 4).

It does seem "quite remarkable" that the autobiographical impulse should seize two such avowedly private, almost reclusive people, and that the preface, which so pointedly calls the reader's attention to the author of a literary work, should be the textual space chosen for such self-revelation.

Letters or journals might seem to provide a better vehicle for self-expression for one, like Mary Shelley, who does not wish to speak publicly. For Shelley, however, both these resources remained rather limited. First, they
did not succeed in eradicating the specter of public scrutiny. Shelley was twice blackmailed by opportunists threatening to publish letters she or her husband had written—though in one case they were forgeries—and she also worried about biographers making use of them to air matters she wished kept private. The privacy of the journal was equally threatened. She originally shared it with Percy and was also conscious of other potentially prying eyes, the servants' or Claire Clairmont's. Accordingly her journals of 1816-22 are quite laconic, consisting mostly of brief comments on reading, writing, health and comings and goings. Occasionally Shelley's quest for privacy leads her to abandon words in favor of secret symbols. Only after Percy Shelley's death in 1822 does her journal become a place to pour out her heart.

But even with the constraints gone, Shelley had difficulty in expressing her emotions directly. "I will trust thee [the journal] fully, for none shall see what I write. But can I express all I feel? Have I the talent to give word to thoughts & feelings that as a tempest hurry me along?" (429). The answer seemed to be no. She complains, "writing this is useless—it does not even soothe me" (485). Shelley also protested repeatedly that she lacked talent for writing letters, complaining that she wrote "nonsense" and "idle gabble" and contrasting her lack of skill with Claire's talent (Letters 1: 507; 3: 48). One of her ostensibly self-deprecating comments becomes suggestive
when coupled with a much later journal entry. In both she recognizes that her literary talents are poorly represented by her letters and journals.

In the journal Shelley reflects:

It has struck me what a very imperfect picture (only no one will ever see it) these querulous pages afford of me --this arises from their being the record of my feelings and not my imagination. (542)

She adds, rather defensively, "little harm my imagination has done me and much good!" (543), but since, as she reminds herself, no one will see her journal, she appears to be trying to convince herself of the value of her imagination, which had recently lain "dormant." Her current "occupation," writing biographies of famous writers, "somewhat supplies her [imagination's] place," but Shelley remains dissatisfied with both the journal and her current writing tasks, which do not allow her to exert sufficiently her imaginative powers and thus present an "imperfect picture" of her.

In the letter, Shelley confesses:

The truth is that though I can rein in my spoken words--I find all the woman directs my written ones & the pen in my hand I gallop over fence & ditch without pity for my reader. (Letters 1: 495)

At this time Shelley was working on The Last Man, and the
quoted passage seems an apt description of Shelley's perception of the process of writing fiction. Without "pity" for her reader's ideas about feminine decorum or displeasure at the author's macabre subject matter, Shelley as "authoress," as she identifies herself earlier in the letter, allows her imagination free rein to invent what it will. The exuberance of the equestrian imagery, no ladylike trot but a "gallop over fence and ditch," seems to emphasize a desire to shake off the constraints imposed on her gender by society. In context, however, the passage refers not to her fiction but to her letters, and what could have been an expression of feminine authorial power--"all the woman directs my written ones"--is instead a perpetuation of a negative stereotype--the woman as garrulous gossip, unable to control her own use of language. She does not guide the horse but allows it to run away with her.

Perhaps the problem is again one of genre. Shelley suggests that when she attempts to "rein in" her literary powers, to confine them to the domestic (and traditionally feminine) forms of letter or journal, the result is a profusion of nonsense or "trash." Shelley thus implicitly recognizes that her literary talents require the free exercise of her imaginative and intellectual powers that writing fiction provides.

Though Hawthorne's journals are more elaborate than Shelley's, he too was ultimately dissatisfied with them as
a literary form and took even less satisfaction than she in writing letters. Like her he was concerned with the possibility of public exposure, and frequently asked correspondents to burn or to keep private his letters. Before going to England he burned his wife Sophia's "maiden correspondence" with him (AN 552), and before embarking for Italy he left his journals with a friend with instructions not to publish them until 1900, should he never come back to claim them (Letter 996, 18: 105). He called his journal "too full and free ever to be published" (Letter 975, 16: 71), and on another occasion "much too good and true ever to bear publication" (Letter 878, 17: 493). When published after his death, his letters and notebooks underwent extensive editing by his wife Sophia. What remains does not give the impression, as Henry James observed, that Hawthorne was in the habit of taking "his notebook into his confidence" (qtd. in Edel "Introduction: Colloquies" x).

Rather than as primarily an outlet for personal emotion, Hawthorne seems to have regarded letter writing as a tiresome social obligation and journal keeping as a substitute for more imaginative writing. "I quite sympathize with your hating to write," he wrote to Fields, who was nevertheless a frequent correspondent (Letter 697, 18: 166), and he confided to his sister Louisa that he "abominate[d] letter-writing" (Letter 256, 15: 660). After his marriage he deputized his wife to attend to much of his correspondence. He even put off responding to
literary friends, preferring to devote his pen to fiction or sketches. He wrote to Longfellow, "I should have responded to your letter sometime since; but am very busy with the pen and hate to ink my fingers more than necessary" (Letter 259, 15: 664). It was only absence from Sophia which prompted him to write regular letters. (This circumstance also twice led him to keep a more faithful journal record of his daily life so that she might read it on her return.) But even to her he insisted that "thy husband is not a good letter writer" (Letter 188, 15: 522).

Letter writing, then, remained for Hawthorne a tedious form of literary activity to which he was sometimes compelled to resort when he would rather be inking his fingers in the course of composing fiction or even "scribbling" the literary hackwork for which he at least received payment. Journal keeping, however, was a preparatory step in the writing of fiction, and often the only available substitute for imaginative writing when the obligations of his non-literary occupations broke into his literary concerns. Hawthorne sometimes uses the notebooks to record his inner fantasies, but they appear in the guise of notes for future stories of which "something could be made." Aside from these ideas for plots, themes and morals to be used in later fiction, which appear most frequently in the American Notebooks, Hawthorne, especially while travelling abroad, recorded the places and people he encountered, often in minute detail. This material, as he
observed in the dedicatory letter to Our Old Home, was "intended for the side-scenes, and backgrounds, and exterior adornment, of a work of fiction" (OOH 3-4). Even the rather tedious accounts of his children at play found a literary use in The Scarlet Letter, where little Pearl's elfish behavior is modeled on Una's. Writing in his journal was thus a means to an end, a step toward the creation of marketable fiction which he hoped might bring fame, money, or both.²

Hawthorne's main reason for dissatisfaction with letters and journals was that they were, in a way, too intimate. Revealing one's inner thoughts to one other person, as in an intimate letter, leaves one vulnerable to misunderstanding. As Hawthorne explained by way of encouragement to an aspiring writer:

[T]here is less indelicacy in speaking out your highest, deepest, tenderest emotions to the world at large than to almost any individual. You may be mistaken in the individual; but you cannot be mistaken in thinking that somewhere among your fellow creatures, there is a heart that will receive yours into itself. (Letter 435, 16: 325)

Rather than personal letters to individuals, Hawthorne preferred to address the "world at large" through his published writing. "My tales and essays were letters that I wrote . . . and by some miracle, they have found their way to the very friends for whom they were intended"
A journal, more intimate even than a personal letter, might be described as "the written communications of a solitary mind with itself," precisely what, in the Preface to *Twice-Told Tales*, Hawthorne insists his book is not. He expresses some doubt about the worth of his sketches, for if they had been "the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart," then "they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable" (*TTT* 6). Yet "obscurity of expression" and "abstruseness of idea," the distinguishing features of the communications of the solitary writer with himself, hardly seem positive. The attempt, even if "imperfectly successful" to "open an intercourse with the world" seems a laudable one (*TTT* 6). Again fiction is implicitly valued over journals or letters.

Since both Hawthorne and Shelley chose fiction as a preferred means of self-expression, it is not surprising that critics have detected biographical conflicts in their novels, stories and sketches.³ That "Mary's novels and stories were largely autobiographical" is an axiom for Shelley's biographers (Jane Dunn 47), and biographical interpretation of her fiction is the rule rather than the exception.⁴ The "biographical impulse" proved likewise irresistible to Hawthorne's critics, as William C. Spengemann has observed.⁵ Some critics go farther than the adjective "autobiographical"; the masterpieces of both writers have each been classified as autobiography.⁶
But the fiction of neither is transparently autobiographical. Shelley can safely long to see her work in print without fearing to expose herself there. She may use *Frankenstein* to dramatize her psychic conflicts (Smith 43), but she transforms and disguises them. She does not tell her own story in her own voice, and insists that her private associations have "nothing to do" with her readers (*Frk* 10).

In his sketches and some of his tales, Hawthorne employs a nameless first person narrator who seems to suggest Hawthorne himself, but this narrator is usually a peripheral figure who often takes no responsibility for the tale he presents to the reader and who serves as a decoy to deflect the reader's attention from the true autobiographical significance of the tale.\(^7\) Hawthorne scattered traits of his personality, his doubts, fears, obsessions and significant incidents from his life among diverse fictional characters, and thus any reader who hopes to "detect any of his essential traits" must "look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil" (*S-I* 4).

Readers who did try to infer the characters of Shelley and Hawthorne from their fictions composed somewhat unflattering pictures. According to her critics, Shelley must be morbid or cold-hearted. She was unfeminine and was afflicted with a diseased imagination. Hawthorne's imagination struck his readers as scarcely less somber, and
he was repeatedly moved to protest that a more cheerful book (than The Scarlet Letter, for instance) would better reflect his personality. Throughout his entire career he complained of his inability to infuse "cheerfulness" into his work, protesting that "an evil and unhappy spirit gets into my inkstand and can only be exorcised by pensfull at a time. In my personal self, I am not a melancholy man" (Letter 1133, 18: 334).

Dissatisfied with the picture of themselves that their fiction presented to the world, neither Hawthorne nor Shelley sought to correct it by writing an autobiography in the traditional sense. Shelley considered the genre doubly inaccessible to her by virtue of her femininity and her desire for privacy, as exemplified by her refusal of the The Ladies Museum's request for a memoir midway through her writing career:

It has been my constant endeavor to withdraw myself personally from public notice--and I flatter myself that I have so far succeeded as to be sure that the portrait of so insignificant a person would possess no attraction for the numerous readers of the Magazine. As to a memoir, as my sex has precluded all idea of my fulfilling public employments, I do not see what the public has to do with me--I am a great enemy to the prevailing custom of dragging private life before the world, taking the matter generally--
and with regard to myself there be no greater annoyance than in any way to be brought out of my proper sphere of private obscurity. (Letters 2: 22)

It is not clear from Shelley's letter whether she was to write the memoir in question, or whether the journal was merely seeking her cooperation for a biographical piece they wished to run, but in any case, Shelley had many of the same objections to biography as to autobiography. In Shelley's view, both genres demanded the absolute literal truth about a person's life, and therefore constituted an intolerable invasion of privacy.

Shelley apparently failed to recognize the autobiographer or biographer as a creative artist possessed of the same power of "seizing on the capabilities of a subject" and "moulding and fashioning ideas" suggested by it that she attributes to the novelist in her introduction to Frankenstein (8). Rather, she appears to have made a rigid distinction between fiction and non-fiction, which not only precluded an autobiography but delayed her work on intended biographies of her husband and father.

Justifying her decision to abstain from discussion of the poet's private life, she declared in her preface to the 1839 edition of Percy Shelley's poetry: "This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth" (xlix). Unlike Thoreau who, preferring artistry to literal accuracy would condense his two
separate sojourns at Walden Pond into a single account of a year's stay, Shelley anxiously asks her publisher if it would be acceptable to write about two separate journeys in her travel book (Letters 3: 97). Despite her realization of the continuity between the two journeys ("After all they are one--the last is but the continuation of the first") Shelley does not appear to consider allowing herself any poetic license in "moulding and fashioning" these materials. Her insistence on scrupulous truthfulness made her wary of personal writing that dealt with any but "light" and "amusing" subjects like her "Twelvemonths tour" (Letters 3: 96).

Shelley's natural diffidence about self-exposure was compounded by the fact that her youth had been scandalous according to Victorian standards, and she had been repeatedly plagued with malicious rumors and blackmail threats. She worried that the revival of old rumors could prejudice her son's career and social chances (Letters 3: 281), and after 1824 she was under threat of losing her meager allowance from Shelley's father if she brought the family name before the public (Letters 1: 444; 2: 86, 198, 221, 299). The temporary suspension of her allowance caused by the mention of her name in reviews of her anonymously published The Last Man attests to the reality of this threat for Shelley (Neumann 208-09).

Fear of scandal cannot explain Hawthorne's aversion to autobiography, for in contrast to Shelley, he seems to have
led a fairly quiet life. His fiction never horrified his readers as Shelley's did, and on those occasions when public opinion threatened to turn against him—when accusations of malfeasance on his part surfaced in regard to his dismissal from the Custom-House, and when he was warned that dedicating Our Old Home to the unpopular General Pierce would hamper its sales—Hawthorne responded by pointedly bringing the controversy to public attention.

In fact, the idea that he rejected autobiography must be qualified. Intimate personal details must of course not be revealed, and, if a characteristic of the genre is that one can find in it the "creative impulse that was uniquely" its author's (Olney, "Theory" 3), Hawthorne would deny that he ever wrote autobiography:

Almost nothing is even tinctured with any quality that makes it exclusively my own. . . . So far as I am really a man of individual attributes, I veil my face. ("OM" 32-33).

Nor would he acknowledge an inclination to attempt the "enterprise" Rousseau resolved upon in his famous Confessions, to "display . . . a portrait in every way true to nature whose subject was himself" (17). For Hawthorne did not share Shelley's scruples in regard to truth-telling in non-fictional genres. Observing "how seldom a fact is accurately stated, . . . though the narrator be the most truth-seeking person in existence," he proposed that truth might be merely "a fantasy which we are to pursue forever
and never grasp" (Letter 194, 15: 538). He freely mingled real events like his dismissal from the Custom-House with invented ones like the discovery of Surveyor Pue's manuscript. He claimed that "there is no harm, but, on the contrary, good, in arraying some of the ordinary facts of life in a slightly artistic and idealized guise" (S-I 4), a belief that shaped his theory of romance and gave him the liberty to write his prefaces.11

Thus Hawthorne repudiates the confessional mode. Scorning "people who write about themselves and their feelings" for serving up their hearts "as a repast for the public" (AN 253), Hawthorne emphatically denies that he is such a writer:

Nor am I, nor have I ever been, one of those supremely hospitable people, who serve up their own hearts delicately fried, with brain sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public. ("OM" 33)

The metaphor itself is so unpalatable that the reader, reluctant to become a cannibal, is almost inclined to accept Hawthorne's assurances that he has confined himself to "his external habits, his abode, his casual associates and other matters entirely on the surface" (S-I 4). But while he is never explicit, Hawthorne's prefaces are a form of autobiography, and in them he does write about himself and his feelings and reveal something about his unique creative spirit.

Their prefaces gave both Shelley and Hawthorne the
liberty of being autobiographical without apparently being egotistical. It was in the role of author that the two writers found themselves able to address the public comfortably. But while Shelley allegedly confines herself to "such topics as have connection with my authorship alone" (Frk 5) and Hawthorne insists that "a desire to put myself in my true position as editor or very little more . . . this and no other, is my true reason for assuming a personal relation with the public ("C-H" 6), they both manage discreetly to talk about themselves at the same time.

For instance, in complying with the publishers' request for an account of Frankenstein's origins, Shelley seizes the opportunity to explain how she, "then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea" (Frk 5). Thus the emphasis subtly shifts from the story to the author. One of the burdens of the introduction is to soothe those readers who were alarmed that a woman, and a young one at that, could write something so hideous. Shelley presents herself throughout the preface as a dutiful daughter, wife and mother, who puts "cares of a family" before writing and is not personally anxious for fame (6). She seems anxious to show that though she is an authoress she remains a "proper lady."12

Hawthorne, too, has some public misconceptions to disperse. At the most obvious level he wants to tell his
side of the affair of his dismissal from the custom-house. And so he manufactures a link between Hester's story and the custom-house, claiming to have discovered the original letter and Surveyor Pue's notes in the upper story of the building. Because this sketch is, as he insists in the preface to the second edition, marked by "frank and genuine good humour," it serves to supply the "sunshine" lacking in *The Scarlet Letter* and counteract any impression his tales may give of his having a somber, melancholy nature. In thus presenting the author as a good-natured, self-effacing, yet friendly man, "The Custom-House" continues a practice perhaps more evident in "The Old Manse," Hawthorne's previous autobiographical excursion. In "The Custom-House" Hawthorne includes repeated allusions to the earlier preface so that readers will associate his present persona with the genial guide who took them rowing on the Assabeth and on a tour of his house and grounds before ushering them into his study to read his tales.

But this discreet self-presentation is only one aspect of these prefaces. Ultimately, I think neither writer is primarily using the role of author as a socially acceptable means of speaking about the private self. Instead the prefaces serve to introduce them to the reading public in the role of author, enabling them to influence further readings of their novels, present their own theories of fiction, and simply take credit for their literary productions. In other words, Shelley and Hawthorne use
their prefaces to claim the role and authority of authorship, to define themselves publicly as writers. Both, however, show a certain diffidence or ambivalence about doing so.

Shelley's assertion of authorship, as I will explain in the next chapter, was complicated by two factors. She had to reconcile her unconventional subject matter with her society's notions of femininity and she had to declare her literary independence from other writers with whom she was closely connected. There is no record of Hawthorne's response to *Frankenstein*, but judging by his reaction to the publications of Fanny Fern and Julia Ward Howe, one suspects that if he did read the novel he probably responded, like so many of Shelley's readers, with mingled admiration and horror—admiration for the novel itself, horror that, as a woman, she could so "throw off the restraints of decency" to write it. Such prejudices against the woman writer complicated Shelley's professional development, but they were overshadowed by her personal situation, which both encouraged and inhibited her literary endeavors. The daughter of two writers, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, and the wife of a prominent Romantic poet, Percy Shelley, Mary Shelley was encouraged, even expected, to write. However, she was to remain a minor talent. Asserting herself as an author was difficult for Shelley because she saw it as an act of rebellion against her father and husband.
Hawthorne had his own troubles with rivals and ancestors, but his were very different from Shelley's. Rather than literary ancestors his were Puritans and sea-captains on the paternal side and on the maternal side businessmen and fruit-growers. To his Puritan ancestors, Hawthorne felt he had to prove the worth of imaginative literature; to his practical-minded relatives he had to prove that literature could be a gainful profession for him. As some critics have pointed out, he projected the hostility he imagined these ancestors and relatives to have toward literature onto his audience, as becomes especially clear in the prefaces and in his short story "Main Street." In the thirties and forties when Hawthorne was struggling to launch his writing career, economic and publishing conditions were such that "relying for support upon my pen," as young Nathaniel once proposed to his mother to do (Letter 19, 15: 139) was all but impossible (Charvat 285-88). But by the 1850's conditions had improved, and while Hawthorne's works sold modestly, the works of sentimental female novelists like Maria Cummins achieved brilliant financial successes. These then were the rivals Hawthorne had to face, writers whom he believed to be his inferiors, but who were yet more successful with the public.

Hawthorne found himself in a double bind. Popular and financial success was necessary to justify his choice of profession, to prove he was not merely an "idler," but such
success was problematical because it would imply he had compromised his art in order to appeal to the vulgar public taste. He complained, "I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash--and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (Letter 779, 18: 304). While in England, his pleasure in seeing copies of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* "at all the book-stalls and shopwindows" was diminished by the proximity of Cummins' *The Lamplighter* and "still more trashy books" in those same shopwindows (EN 74, Aug. 24, 1854).

While his repugnance toward female authorship probably stemmed in part from his resentment of the "d----d mob of scribbling women" (Letter 779, 18: 304), his strongest reservations appear in discussions of the writing of women whose work he admired. He is repeatedly shocked into admiration at these women's acts of self-exposure. He believed that most women wrote "trash" or produced feeble imitations of masculine writing, but those who daringly cast off the veil of reserve that Hawthorne is so assiduously preserving succeed in producing worthwhile novels or poetry: "When they throw off the restraints of decency and come before the public stark naked as it were--then they are sure to possess character and value" (Letter 781, 17: 308).

Hawthorne, as we will see in Chapter Three, could not face exposing himself in this way, nor could he shake the
conviction that his refusal to do so deprives his work of "character and value." If for Shelley the science of letters was god-like, for Hawthorne it was virtually diabolical. His prefaces are full of disparagements of his writing as tame and trivial, which seem in part a criticism of himself for not daring to write entirely as if possessed by the devil and in part a smokescreen intended to prevent his readers from seeing the traces of diabolicalness in what he has produced.

Shelley resolves her ambivalence toward authorship more decisively than does Hawthorne. Despite his many prefaces, Hawthorne never makes so emphatic an assertion of authorship as Shelley does in the single preface to *Frankenstein*. Perhaps this was because Hawthorne did not have to fight the external threats to his authorial status that Shelley faced. No one suggested that Sophia had actually written *The Scarlet Letter*; no relative (at least not during his lifetime) assumed a right of editorial control over his work, though Hawthorne exercised such control over his sister Elizabeth's writings; and no one questioned the propriety of Hawthorne's decision to become a *man* of letters. Another possible reason was that while economic necessity forced Shelley to continue publishing professionally after Percy's death, financial considerations had quite the opposite effect on Hawthorne, forcing him temporarily to abandon authorship on more than one occasion. Finally, Shelley, at least with
Frankenstein, achieved a popular success that was denied Hawthorne. This discrepancy may go a long way toward explaining the difference between Shelley's proud claim to be the "author of Frankenstein" and Hawthorne's tentative claim to be a "man of letters."
Chapter Two
"My Dreams Were All My Own": Mary Shelley's Assertion of Authorship

"Every thing must have a beginning," writes Mary Shelley in her 1831 introduction to the third edition of *Frankenstein*, "and that beginning must be linked to something that went before" (8).¹ As Henry James would search in his prefaces for the "germ," or the "mere grain of subject matter" from which his novels blossomed, so Shelley searches in her "Author's Introduction" for the origin of *Frankenstein*, only to find no definite starting point, no absolute source. Elaborating on the brief account given in the preface to first edition (1818), Shelley explains that *Frankenstein* began as an effort in a friendly short story competition, inspired by reading a volume of tales of the supernatural. But unlike the other competitors, Shelley struggles to find a subject. It is only after an episode of insomnia, marked by a terrifying vision of a young scientist frightened by the creature he has brought to life, that Shelley begins her story with "a transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream* (9). Locating the novel's beginning in her "waking dream," Shelley still suggests that the story is not rooted in her own psyche and is certainly not a product of her own volition. The apparent beginning in her nocturnal fantasies is linked both to the volumes of German ghost stories that she and the other houseguests at the Villa
Diodati set themselves to imitate, and, more directly, to an overheard conversation on "the nature and the principle of life" (Frk 10, 7, 8). Yet before the end of her introduction she will claim *Frankenstein* for her own.

As Shelley specifically downplays her responsibility for an idea that led to what, well before her own appellation of "hideous progeny," a contemporary reviewer rebuked as "that monstrous literary abortion," she also seems to diminish the concept of authorial power generally. She depicts writing as a derivative act, one of collation and imitation rather than original creation. Any absolute claim to originality, "it must be humbly admitted," is untenable (8). Yet her admission is not so humble after all. Shelley does not deny that "creation" is involved; she merely acknowledges that "creating out of void" is impossible. Instead, "invention," the visionary power of writer and dreamer, "consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it" (8). Shelley's diction here—"seizing," "power," "capacity," and "moulding"—suggests an active authorship that belies the passivity implied by her constant pointing to others as instigators of her writing, including Percy Shelley (6), Byron (7) and even the Publishers of the Standard Novels, who suggested she write this "account of the origin of the story" (5). In her account of *Frankenstein*'s origin, then, Mary Shelley displays an ambivalent attitude toward her
This account of origins, of beginnings, is itself a beginning: for Mary Shelley in her own reading of the novel, for the reader of Frankenstein who encounters it before the 1818 preface or the novel proper, and for me in my exploration of Shelley's authorial ambivalence. The introduction is the logical starting place for such an exploration, since in it Shelley not only confronts her ambivalent feelings about the power, presumption, and responsibilities of authorship, but does so publicly. What came before this rare instance of Shelley's "bringing [her]self forward in print," as we saw in the first chapter, are myriad instances of her refusal to do so: the anonymous publication of the novel in 1818—when it was already mediated by Percy Shelley's editing; her submission of her second and third novels, Mathilda (written in 1819) and Valperga (1823), to her father's editorial control, resulting in the complete suppression of Mathilda and the substantial alteration of Valperga; and her repeated refusal to have her name appear in print, including the decision to sign her later novels only as "The author of Frankenstein," even after her authorship was widely known. Yet these years also include many private expressions of pride in authorship and the publication of three other novels. Her preface to one of them, The Last Man, prefigures the more emphatic assertion of authorial
independence she makes in the 1831 introduction to

_Frankenstein._

Shelley's private remarks on her authorship in her letters can provide a context for the public accounts of authorship in her prefaces. The former manifest much of the same ambivalence but also show her increasing desire to assert herself. When Sir Walter Scott reviewed _Frankenstein_, speculating that Percy Shelley was the author, Mary did not hesitate to correct him (Letters I: 71). Her letter's tone is quite modest. She had concealed her name, she wrote, on behalf of "those persons from whom I bear it." Out of respect for their superior literary creations, she refrained from acknowledging her own "juvenile attempt." Only the embarrassment to Percy ensuing from Scott's mistake induces her to reveal her authorship.

Shelley's humility appears disingenuous. At the very least, her letter indicates that she believed her work contained the "promise of better things hereafter," but given that Scott's review was favorable, Mary probably also realized that contrary to Percy's expectations she had in fact produced something "worthy of notice," and she wanted to insure that she, not he, received the credit due her (_Frk_ 6). Her comments to Leigh Hunt on her second published novel, _Valperga_, again sound the promising-young-author theme. The novel "is merely a book of promise, another landing place in the staircase I am climbing," she
claims, adding that she hopes to write another novel soon that will be "better worth your criticism and more pleasing to you than this" (Letters I: 361).

Shelley seemed to find that depicting herself as a "young beginner" in need of "a little encouragement or criticism" was an excellent way of fishing for compliments without seeming guilty of "an author's vanity" (Letters I: 322). But with very close friends like the motherly Maria Gisborne, she could admit even to that: "I have sent my novel to Papa—I long to hear some news of it—as with an author's vanity I want to see it in print and hear the praises of my friends" (Letters I: 218). It was to Gisborne that Shelley dared confide her literary aspirations, taking care, however, to undercut them modestly with a doubtful question: "I would write—and when settled I may . . . I shall be happy if any thing I ever produce may exalt and soften sorrow, as the writings of the divinities of our race have mine. But how can I aspire to that?" (Letters I: 254).

The success of Frankenstein, beginning with Scott's review, must have encouraged Shelley's aspirations. When she returned to England in 1823, in order to promote her work more aggressively, she was agreeably surprised to find herself famous as the author of Frankenstein, and amused by a dramatic presentation of her story (Letters I: 378). When an allusion to Frankenstein is made during a Parliamentary debate, Shelley records the fact with pride
(Letters I: 417). By June 1825, Mary Shelley could refer to herself in a letter as an author without adding the protective qualifier of "novice" (Letters I: 494).

In her journal, which since the death of Percy Shelley in 1822 had become a space for private writing, Shelley likewise traces an upward arc of increasing confidence in her literary powers, though this confidence can easily be shaken. In her first entry in the "journal of sorrow" begun shortly after her husband's death, Mary describes herself as condemned to literary labors, forced to seek "for the food of my life in my intellect alone" (431-2, Oct 2, 1822). But just a few days later she records that she "cannot write" (435, Oct 7, 1822). By November 10th, the situation had improved: "I have made my first probation in writing & it has done me great good" (442), and Mary notes in the same entry that she is "allowed to have some talent" (443). However, she soon wavers again. She repeatedly laments the loss of Percy Shelley's guidance and encouragement and attributes an experience of writer's block soon after she started working on The Last Man to this loss (476, May 14, 1824).4

Her journal entries show a belief in her own "genius" threatened by two fears: that she cannot produce without Percy's guidance and inspiration and that she will not find a sympathetic audience. As she explained while writing The Last Man:

I write--at times that pleases me--tho' double
sorrow comes when I feel that Shelley no longer reads and approves of what I write—besides I have no great faith in my success—Composition is delightful, but if you do not expect the sympathy of your fellow creatures in what you write, the pleasure of writing is of short duration. (482-83)

Unfortunately for Shelley, her fears were not groundless. While her imagination rose to the task without Percy Shelley's inspiration, her novel suffered from the absence of Godwin's editing and it did meet with many an unsympathetic response. Nevertheless, it was a landmark for Shelley. The Last Man was the first complete novel she wrote after Percy's death, the first over which she retained complete editorial control and the first for which she assumed responsibility for arranging publication, having decided that Godwin was unreliable. The writer marked her new assertion of authority with an introduction that both illustrated her aspirations and voiced her anxieties.

This introduction appears to be Shelley's first use of the authorial "I." In Frankenstein there is neither an omniscient narrator nor a voice that can be identified as Mary Shelley's, but three male voices which both confront and complement each other.\(^5\) The voice of the 1818 preface, itself notably reticent, is, by a sort of literary ventriloquism, not her own, but her husband's idea of what
the author of *Frankenstein* wanted or needed to say to her readers.

In an early draft of her next work, *Mathilda*, which remained unpublished during her lifetime, Shelley does experiment with a feminine narrator who might be loosely identified with herself, but no authorial assertion is involved. This narrator has suffered a loss at Rome (Shelley's son William had just died there) and in the past experienced a vision of "grim terror" (presumably *Frankenstein*) to which she was led by a fairy (91). Significantly, the narrator proves to be only the transcriber, not the author of Mathilda's tale, and *Frankenstein* is likewise attributed to a source outside herself. In the final version this framework is discarded, and Mathilda writes her own story as a death-bed letter to her friend Woodville. Thus Shelley again assigns herself no fictive role in presenting the story to the reader (such as editor or discoverer of Mathilda's manuscript) nor does she step outside the work to discuss her authorship in a preface.

The "Author's Introduction" to *The Last Man* then, is an unprecedented instance of Shelley's putting herself forward as the author of her work. While she is still consciously fictionalizing the source of her terrifying visions, she is also beginning to assert her own creative powers. Shelley claims that she and her "friend," (a figure for Percy), boldly discovered the cave of the
Cumaean Sybil on a visit to Naples. Her companion, rather than Shelley herself, leads this penetration of the Sibyl's cave, which is entry into a forbidden territory since the guides try to dissuade them and refuse to accompany them (2). The two explorers are rewarded with the discovery of leaves and fragments of leaves covered with writing in various languages, and again the friend takes the initiative, intuiting that the leaves contain the Sybil's prophecies. Shelley observes that the languages included both modern and ancient dialects, "some unknown to my companion" (3), but says nothing about her own linguistic knowledge. The fact that she, after the loss of her companion, becomes the solitary interpreter of the leaves, suggests that languages unknown to her companion are decipherable to her. Shelley subtly asserts her literary talent.

In transforming the prophecies into the novel, Shelley was "obliged to add links, and model the work into a consistent form" (3-4). While she modestly admits that the leaves "have suffered distortion and diminution of excellence in my hands," she also suggests that "obscure and chaotic as they are, they owe their present form to me their decipherer" (4). The work bears the stamp of "her own peculiar mind and talent" and has been an exhilarating experience of "imagination and power," despite her gloomy subject (4). She concludes by wondering whether her apology for the imperfect nature of translation was really
necessary. She is content to rest on her achievement of "giving form and substance to the frail and attenuated leaves of the Sibyl" (4).

In the introduction Shelley traces her experiences as a young female author, acknowledging her debt to predecessors, and to the guidance of her male editors, Percy Shelley and Godwin, who initiate her into the experience of authorship. The pleasure she takes in her imaginations "daring flights," her pride in creation, and her insistence on her own original contribution, attest to Shelley's growing confidence in herself as author, while her defense of the pleasure she took in describing misery, her use of the adjective "daring," and her overall modesty indicate continued anxiety (3-4). Five years later she would tell another story of authorship which would be at once more powerful and more anxiety provoking: more powerful because the story of authorship would provide a dramatic parallel to the story of monstrosity it introduced, and more anxiety-provoking because Shelley finally spoke in her own person. For this uncharacteristic act of self-assertion, she had to atone by pretending it wasn't her idea. But it was she, not the "Publishers of the Standard Novels" who wanted her readers to know how she came to write the story (Letters II: 129).

II

For Shelley herself, more is involved in writing the introduction than supplying an ostensibly factual account
of origins." To dismiss this story of creation as "an almost total fabrication," as James Rieger does (461), is to overlook the way the introduction escapes from its proclaimed role as a mere "appendage to a former production" to become a part of the novel it purports to explain. Her introduction is in effect a reading of her own novel placing herself simultaneously in the role of author and interpreter. As author she gives birth to the novel, but the "moulding and fashioning" involved seem to relate more to the rearing of a child than to giving birth to it, more to the revising of a novel, than to inscribing the original inspiration. Margaret Homans suggests that the use of childbirth imagery is an effort "to domesticate her hideous idea" and thus make "her busyness with story writing . . . somehow congruent with, not in conflict with, her 'busier' life as wife and mother" (147). Motherhood, indeed, does serve Shelley as metaphor which can make female authorship acceptable to society. But motherhood only begins with birth, and in fulfilling her other maternal duties toward her literary offspring (duties whichVictor Frankenstein, who manufactures a living creature and then flees from its ugliness in horror, neglects) Mary cannot hide behind passivity but must become an assertive, if not aggressive, author. The maternal metaphor--like the novel itself (Veeder 3)--allows Mary Shelley at once to be both subversive and conservative.

Paradoxically, it is the passive aspect of her
metaphor that is presented most aggressively. The introduction dwells on the conception, not the gestation, on the birth of the monstrous story in Shelley's mind, but not on the work of writing (rearing) the child/book. As for launching the child into society, that is "presenting the book to the world," Shelley tells us that her husband, not she, originally handled this task. But the introduction itself is a return to these duties after thirteen years, a reassumption of those parental duties she had abdicated. Thus while the introduction establishes a link with Victor, it also works to subvert it.

In the introduction Shelley links dramatically the creation of Frankenstein, the novel, and Victor's creation of his monster. Both her novel and Victor's creature appear monstrous, and the act of writing is analogous to Victor's transgression. In creating life, Victor usurps the role of Nature or God; by implication, in creating a literary text Shelley usurps the prerogative of the male author. The double identification with Victor--of the acts of creation, literary and biological, and the products of creation, novel and monster--is a central theme of Shelley's introduction. Before her nightmare, she envisions the kind of story she wants to write as "one which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror"--exactly the response which the monster inspires in Victor (8). Shelley determines to "describe the spectre" of her waking dream; thus "the
hideous phantasm of a man" which she has imagined serves as both subject and inspiration of her story. When she calls the novel her "hideous progeny," however, she takes this identification one step further. The novel is equated with the monster. Both are the hideous offspring of the artistic mind, for Shelley refers to the character who will become Victor as an artist (9).

Several critics have commented on these parallels. Barbara Johnson points out that Shelley describes her decision to transcribe her nightmare in terms similar to Victor's description of his discovery of the principle of life (7). Shelley writes, "Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke in upon me," while Victor, recounting the story of his secret labors to create life, tells the impressionable Walton that "from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me" (Frk 10, 52). Paul Sherwin notes that inclement weather and the influence of reading are implicated in both creations; Shelley reads the book of German ghost stories, while Victor turns to Cornelius Agrippa (898). Finally, as David Ketterer suggests, Shelley's description of the process of invention is analogous to the processes Victor must pass through in creating the monster (Ketterer 13-15). According to Shelley:

Invention . . . does not consist in creating out of a void, but out of chaos; the materials must in the first place be afforded: it can give form
to dark shapeless substances but cannot bring into being the substance itself (8). Victor's creation is likewise constrained by the materials at hand, many of which he must reject as too minute. It is only after months of "collecting and arranging [his] materials"—a process analogous to Shelley's "moulding and fashioning of ideas"—that he can begin the "inconceivable difficulty and labour" of preparing the creature's body to receive the animating spark of life (53-4; 8).

Shelley's writing, an instance of "creating . . . out of chaos," is linked to the scientist's "frightful" endeavor, which serves "to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" (8, 9). Since the idea of blasphemy is not an explicit theme of the novel but an 1831 "superimposition" of Shelley's (Baldick 4), we should not be surprised if her own act of blasphemy can also be dated 1831 rather than 1818. Without deliberate intent, Victor commits blasphemy on two levels: rivalry and mockery. In creating his own race of beings he usurps God's generative role and enters into a rivalry with Him. "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me" (54). When Victor fails, he falls from rivalry into mockery. He has not created the happy, excellent and wonderful human being he had hoped for, but a clumsy imitation of one. Shelley's progress inverts Victor's fall. By the success of Frankenstein, she rises from potential mockery to potential
rivalry.

As her letter to Sir Walter Scott indicates, Shelley indeed feared that her "juvenile attempt" would be perceived as a clumsy mockery of the works which had earned her parents and her husband their "literary celebrity." It was her first literary production, likely to contain the faults of a novice and stitched together from various literary sources including the works of Godwin, Percy Shelley, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Contrary to her "first thought" of a "short tale," she had allowed her vision to grow into a novel, as Victor's creature "contrary to [Victor's] first intention" grew into a monstrous giant (10; 54). She defends herself from this charge by insisting on her "respectful submission," by concealing her name, and by allowing Percy to amend the novel's faults and to write its preface.

Although Shelley might have accused herself of unwitting mockery, it is difficult to see an act of usurpation in the writing of Frankenstein. After all, she has not stolen literary power but been expressly invited to try to exercise the "god-like science" of language (Frk 112). However, the domain of her potential achievement is limited. She is not urged to attempt an illustrious poem, but a mere ghost story. She is not supposed to be capable of producing anything "worthy of notice" but only of showing promise (6). As long as she remains the dutiful and modest writer-in-training, she need not be taken
seriously as a rival. But even without writing a preface that challenges the authority of the one her husband penned so many years earlier, this new edition automatically compromises Shelley’s position as non-threatening apprentice and potential bungler. For the fact that it is the third printing and that it is being published as a "standard novel" proves that it has indeed been deemed worthy of notice.

There are two ways that Shelley could use the preface to avert her blasphemous rivalry. She could belittle her success by deprecating her work, or she could disown her success by giving the credit to her rivals. (Of course, if she chooses both courses, as she seems to in the first half of the introduction, the "credit" becomes suspiciously like blame). Given the horror with which Victor, the "author" of his own misfortunes (101), and his prototype in Shelley’s dream react to their creations, one would expect the author of Frankenstein to profess a like repugnance. As the young scientist wants to extinguish the spark he has "communicated" and consign it to the "silence of the grave," so it would seem that Shelley would consign her book to oblivion (9). Instead of the immortality for which most writers hope, she too should wish a "transient existence" upon her creation (9). Yet bringing out a new edition insures the opposite result, indicating that the identification with Victor is not as complete as it seems.

III
While Victor and the scientist of Shelley's dream are disgusted and terrified by their success, Shelley's reaction is more ambivalent. Her repeated application of the adjective "hideous" to her novel stems more from an awareness of societal expectations than from her own feelings. She writes of the novel in terms of hidden, unconscious fantasies. It will "speak to the mysterious fears of our nature" and "give form to dark, shapeless substances" (8). It is the articulation of a nightmare, "a hideous phantom" which she can no longer repress, but must exorcise by writing (10). According to Shelley's account, this sudden expression of her fantasies in writing followed not only years of silence during which "travelling and the cares of a family" kept her too busy for writing, but also years in which she refrained from "putting down the suggestions of my own mind" (6, 5). Instead she imitated others and wrote in a "commonplace style." Her true creative powers went into her "waking dreams...[which] were at once more fantastic and agreeable" to her than her writings (5). It is only with *Frankenstein* that she dares commit such a "waking dream" to writing, and this daring is met with disapproval.

It was with the publication of *The Last Man* in 1826, after the gender of "The Author of *Frankenstein*" was widely known, that a storm of public disapproval descended on Shelley from reviewers who responded with polite shock, dismay or outright disgust at this apparent confirmation of
the "ghastly" channels the author's literary imagination seemed determined to explore. While The Morning Chronicle praised the novel, its admiration was clearly blended with a horrified fascination. "Mrs Shelley" it observed, "by a strange tendency for a woman, seems fascinated by ghastly events. . . . When once the reader is in her thrall, it is not easy to escape from the oppressive and startling horrors with which her pages teem" (Lyles 151). The Ladies Monthly Museum or Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction was more direct in expressing its dismay at Shelley's unladylike choice of subjects. "We should be better pleased to see her exercise her powers of intellect on subjects less removed from nature and probability" (Lyles 174). But this "polite" disapproval paled in contrast to the positive repugnance expressed by The Monthly Review or Literary Journal. After first disposing of The Last Man as "the offspring of a diseased imagination--and of a most polluted taste," it goes on to condemn Shelley's whole literary career. "The whole course of her ambition has been to portray monsters which could have existed only in her imagination" (Lyles 175). It is not difficult to detect in this review and other public references to her novels as abortions, one source of the designation of the novel as her "hideous progeny" (Lyles 137, 143).

The introduction is partly prompted by a wish to pacify her disapproving critics by providing them with an
answer to "the question, so very frequently asked me—how I, then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea" (5). Shelley quickly defends herself against this question's implied accusation of impropriety with the excuse that, due to her parentage, her writing is natural. "It is not singular that, as the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity, I should very early in life have thought of writing" (5). Throughout the first half of the introduction she is on the defensive, beginning with an apology for seeming to make a "personal intrusion" and insisting that she is "very averse to bringing myself forward in print" (5). Although she is "willing to comply," Shelley makes clear that she writes the introduction at the request of the publishers and that it was her husband who was "forever inciting me to obtain literary reputation" (5, 6). Mary assumes a passive role—"my imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me" (9)—and constantly defers to Percy. She sits as a "devout but nearly silent listener" to many long "conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley" (8). The latter passes judgment on her writing, urges her "to develop the idea at greater length," and shapes the work into "the form in which it was presented to the world" (10). Mary Poovey concludes that "by 1831, Shelley wants to apologize for her adolescent audacity" (PMLA 333).11

It would be more accurate, I would argue, to say that
what the "mature Mary Shelley" (Poovey, *Proper Lady* 104) wants to apologize for is her adolescent *timidity*, her almost unquestioning acceptance of Shelley's editorial emendations. Poovey's argument resists the implications of Shelley's decision to write an "Author's Introduction," thus reclaiming the position of author she had ceded to her husband by permitting him to provide the preface for the first edition. Speaking in his wife's voice, Percy informs us that the novel was begun in a "magnificent region" during a season of inclement weather--a suitably sublime atmosphere--but soon "the weather . . . suddenly became serene; and my two friends left me on a journey among the Alps, and lost, in the magnificent scenes which they present, all memory of their ghostly visions" (14). In Percy's version Mary is left rather forlornly behind amid "serenity," while he and Byron exchange "ghostly visions" for the magnificent reality of the Alps and the sublime literary creations such scenery fosters in them. By implication, although he begins by claiming it is more than a "mere tale of spectres," Mary's novel is a relatively trivial production, to be classed with the abandoned ghost stories rather than with *Childe Harold* or *Mont Blanc* (13).

Since Shelley herself seems to accept her husband's judgment, contrasting the "platitude of prose" and "the machinery of a story" with "the radiance of brilliant imagery . . . and the music of . . . melodious verse" (?),
it is not surprising that critics such as Poovey and Devon Hodges have been dismayed by her introduction. Yet the passage where she draws these contrasts is an ironic echo of the views Percy attributed to her in his preface. Mary corrects the earlier account by introducing the figure of Polidori, the fourth participant in the contest, who provides her with a viable target for satire. "Poor Polidori had some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady . . . [but] he did not know what to do with her and was obliged to dispatch her to the tomb of the Capulets" (7-8). Shelley does not mock either her husband or Byron directly but her next sentence links them with the inept doctor. "The illustrious poets also . . . speedily relinquished their uncongenial task" (8). All three of the male competitors fail to complete their narratives. They are guilty, like Victor, of abandoning their creations.

Shelley, by contrast, affirms hers. Beneath her apparent retraction is an affirmation of authorship. Near the end of the introduction, Shelley writes:

I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for his incitement it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world. From this declaration I must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him. (10)

The first part of the above statement is a bold assertion of
authorship, while the second half seems to undermine it. Yet, Mary credits Percy with only the form, perhaps meaning no more than his encouragement to turn her original short story into a full-length novel. The only part of the novel she is willing to give her husband credit for is the preface, the very part which she now supersedes with her introduction. She is effacing Percy's contribution by changing the form of the novel while "leaving the core and substance of it untouched" (11).

With the addition of the introduction, Shelley duplicates the narrative structure of the novel proper. Two first person narratives (Mary's and Percy's) precede an inner core: the novel itself. In Frankenstein, the monster's narrative, which celebrates the positive power of language, is enclosed within Victor's account. Victor in effect retells the monster's story so that the creature is not an innocent victim of Victor's curiosity and egotism, but a fiend. Finally, Walton's narrative encloses Frankenstein's. As Peter McInerney explains, since Walton must surrender his original quest, his mission becomes the recording of Victor's story. Within the novel proper, Walton stands in Shelley's place as the author of "the literary 'creation' Frankenstein" (McInerney 457). Once the narrative has passed to Walton, Frankenstein does not allow him absolute control over his story, but edits Walton's account:

Frankenstein discovered that I made notes
concerning his history: he asked to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places, but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy (210).

Victor gives "life and spirit" to Walton's version of his story, Percy incites Mary to develop her story. Victor tries to impose his view of the monster on Walton; Percy's introduction puts forward his own view of his wife's novel. Both Percy and Victor function as editors. However, Mary and Walton have the last word.

Although Shelley identifies with Victor as the creator of something monstrous, she is more profoundly linked to Walton, who is not only a writer, but a preserver of communication. For Shelley writing is a potentially, but not inevitably transgressive act, just as the creature was not inherently evil, but became so through Victor's negligence. The figure of Walton illustrates the benign possibilities of writing. Walton is initially a responsible correspondent, writing regularly to his sister. Despite the coincidence of the initials, Margaret Walton Saville, as recipient of her brother's letters, represents not Shelley the author but Shelley's readers. Margaret embodies the values of society and domesticity which Shelley respected and wished not to offend. Just as there is a great psychological as well as physical distance between Robert and Margaret, so a gulf separates Shelley
from her readers.

Walton strives to overcome that distance by placating his sister's fears and explaining his dreams, although he objects that she does not really understand him and cannot fulfill his need for a friend. Shelley too longs for a sympathetic audience but, not finding her ideal reader, tries in the introduction to explain her apparently aberrant aspirations. For a time Walton neglects the communicative function of writing and starts recording the story for his own future reading pleasure, but at the end of the novel Walton returns to his letters. If he does not set them off as such, at least the last few pages are full of direct addresses to his sister and the entry for September 2nd even begins with a salutation and the words "I write to you" (212). While Victor repeatedly fails to correspond with his family, Walton never neglects his sister.

Another link with Shelley is that Walton's ambition is a literary one; it is inspired by books (including accounts of sea voyages and poems like "The Ancient Mariner") and is partly a displaced desire to achieve fame as a poet (17). Once resolving upon a life at sea Walton serves out an apprenticeship, at the end of which he rejects an offer to be second-in-command in order to take over his own ship (17). After serving her literary apprenticeship, Shelley is no longer content to remain in her subordinate status as the hidden author of *Frankenstein*. She too wants to exert
her independence and to take command of her own book.

Shelley finds that her independence cannot be maintained without compromise. She must bow to the dictates of society in accepting the label of "hideous" for her more imaginative work, and she must appeal to her readers' true interests, as she strives to do in *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), an historical novel, and *Lodore* (1835), a tale of two young lovers' struggle against familial and financial hardships. Walton also yields to the necessity of compromise. Compelled to relinquish his dream because he cannot force his men to follow him into danger, he does not condemn either quest, Frankenstein's or his own. He turns from exploring to writing again, no longer for the purpose of "obtaining a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated," but for the purpose of communication (17).

Like Walton at the end of the novel, Shelley concludes her introduction in the role of author, commenting on the changes she has made. While claiming to have become indifferent to literary fame (6), she does not condemn the impulse which led her to produce her "hideous progeny." Far from being apologetic, Shelley's use of the phrase indicates that despite the world's condemnation of her "hideous idea," she will not disown it. Unlike Victor she can accept responsibility and feel affection for her creation. Like the waking dreams of her childhood, *Frankenstein* is "all [her] own."
Chapter Three
A Man of Letters

I

Hawthorne's most famous letter was a scarlet one, edged with gold, for which he named the novel that would finally afford him a "solid basis for a literary reputation" ("OM" 34). Ostensibly signifying "Adulteress," the letter comes, in the novel, to stand for "Able" or "Angel." For many critics, the letter implicitly signifies "Art" or "Artist" as well, with either Hester or Dimmesdale representing the artist struggling against the hostility of an unappreciative and uncomprehending society.1 From this reading it is but a simple step to see Hawthorne prefiguring his own similar struggle in "The Custom-House," in which he rejects the values of the Salem custom-house and takes up the "A" of "Authorship" by writing *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).2 Upon dismissal from the Surveyorship Hawthorne makes "an investment in ink, paper and steel pens," reopens "his long-disused writing desk" and becomes again a "literary man" ("C-H" 43).

But this time he is not "the writer of idle stories" he was before ("OM" 4). Writing his masterpiece has enabled Hawthorne to affirm his own identity as a man of letters. While at the end of "The Old Manse" (1846) Hawthorne declares his intention to abandon literature "unless I could do better," he closes "The Custom-House" on a more confident note. He declares his intention to
abandon not literature but Salem where he has never found "the genial atmosphere which a literary man requires in order to ripen the best harvest of his mind" ("C-H" 44). In new surroundings Hawthorne is sure that he will "do better" ("C-H" 45).

Yet it is difficult to see "The Custom-House" as an unequivocal turning point for Hawthorne, for doubts about his writing resurface in later prefaces. Hawthorne seems to have been haunted throughout his career by the fear that his writings were insignificant or would be judged so. His unimaginative readers seemed destined never to recognize the latent power, "for good and for evil," of his written words (AN 280). Thus all his prefaces, except those to the three American romances, sound a definite note of resignation which becomes strongest toward the end of Hawthorne's writing career.

What is curious, however, is that it is Hawthorne himself who voices this belittling opinion of his own work. The image of the artist implied by his fiction—a powerful, subversive figure, or else an isolated, alienated one—scarcely fits the image of the writer presented in his prefaces. The man of letters is inoffensive, not subversive. Hawthorne apologizes for the somber aspect of many of his tales, in a genial manner intended to help lighten the mood. One wonders if perhaps all the emphasis on the triviality of his literary productions is intended to render them innocuous in the reader's eyes, to disguise
Hawthorne's intuition that *The Scarlet Letter* was "a hell-fired book" or that by "burrowing into the depths of our common nature for the purposes of psychological romance" (*S-I* 4), he might be committing a "literary crime" (*SG* 1) analogous, if not to Ethan Brand's callous probing, at least to Coverdale's cold-hearted meddling and spying.³

Hawthorne's epistolary metaphor for his literary compositions—and its extended development in the preface to the third edition of *Twice-Told Tales* (1851)—suggests an attempt to span the isolation which separates the writer from his society and implies that he did consider alienation a serious problem for the artist. His works were "letters that I wrote, in my solitary chamber" which "by some miracle . . . have found their way to the very friends for whom they were intended" (Letter 278, 16: 9). Hawthorne's prefaces, even more so than the tales and novels, are really such letters. And it is in these "letters" that Hawthorne explores what it means, in nineteenth-century America, to be what, despite his sojourns in two custom-houses and his years at the U.S. Consulate in Liverpool, he insisted was his true identity: a "man of letters."

II

Hawthorne himself used the phrase in a self-deprecating way to describe his status as an author in the preface to the third edition of *Twice-Told Tales*.

The Author of *Twice-Told Tales* has a claim to
one distinction, which, as none of his literary brethren will care about disputing with him, he need not be afraid to mention. He was, for a good many years, the obscurest man of letters in America (TTT 3).

Despite the deflationary superlative, this designation of his profession is one of the more dignified Hawthorne permits himself. Though he does use the neutral terms "author" and "writer" frequently, he is the author of "idle weeds and withering blossoms" ("OH" 34) and "a writer of story-books" ("C-H" 10). He nearly always expresses dissatisfaction with the works he presents to the public. Repeatedly failing to produce the ideal work, he presents himself as "an idler" ("C-H" 10), "a fiction-monger" (S-I 5), "a scribbler by profession" (Letter 84, 15: 270), and "an inoffensive man of letters," whose only claim to official favor is "his pitiful little literature" (Letter 409, 16: 264).

These last two quotations come from private letters, but they are characteristic of the way Hawthorne presents himself as author in his many prefaces. To be a man of letters, is then to be a person of little importance, harmless perhaps but in no way essential to the rest of the world, which could do "just as well without him" ("C-H" 47). In "The Custom-House" Hawthorne stresses the insignificance of what he does in the eyes of most of his fellow men:

It is a good lesson . . . for a man who has
dreamed of literary fame and of making for himself a rank among the world's dignitaries by such means, to step aside out of the narrow circle in which his claims are recognized and to find how utterly devoid of significance, beyond that circle, is all that he achieves and all that he aims at. ("C-H" 26-27)

Hawthorne dissociates himself from those writers who dream of fame--"I know not that I especially needed the lesson, either in the way of warning or rebuke" ("C-H" 27), thereby seeming to imply that he was already convinced of the insignificance of literature or at least of his own literary efforts in the larger scheme of things. Yet there is an unmistakable implication that this indifference to literature on the part of his fellow Custom-House officials is blameworthy, and the fact that Hawthorne is becoming like them in that "literature, its exertions and objects, were now of little moment in [his] regard" ("C-H" 25-6) is a sign of his degeneration. As a result of his stint in the Custom-House, his "gift" for imaginative writing becomes "suspended and inanimate" (26).

Referring to his literary talents as a "gift" introduces a far more positive view of his art than that implied by the supposed reactions of his Puritan ancestors or the disparaging characterizations presented in "The Old Manse." In fact, "The Custom-House" as a whole suggests the superiority of the literary life over the political
one. The objections formerly applied against literature or authorship on the grounds of triviality or idleness are turned against the men of the Custom-House. The officers "spent a good deal of time...asleep in their accustomed corners, with their chairs tilted back against the wall" ("C-H" 17), and when they do awaken it is only to tell old jokes or reminisce about yesterday's breakfast. It is the man who holds public office rather than the writer who truly "does not share in the united effort of mankind" ("C-H" 41). While "a man of thought, fancy and sensibility...may at any time be a man of affairs" ("C-H" 26), the reverse is not true. Indeed working in the Custom House almost causes Hawthorne to lose his imaginative powers forever.

Though Hawthorne is intrigued by Hester Prynne's story, his imagination does not at once rise to the task. He feels himself mocked by the characters of his narrative who fix him with a "ghastly grin of contemptuous defiance":

"What have you to do with us?" that expression seemed to say. "The little power you might have once possessed over the tribe of unrealities is gone! You have bartered it for a pittance of public gold. Go, then and earn your wages! ("C-H" 34-5).

Thus the warning or rebuke he really needed was not against overvaluing himself as a man of letters, but against undervaluing his literary gift. Despairing of intellectual
gold, Hawthorne pursues "a pittance of public gold" in its stead, entering the custom-house determined "to gather from it whatever profit was to be had" ("C-H" 25). That Hawthorne found it tragic that he "had ceased to be a writer of tolerably poor tales and essays, and had become a tolerably good Surveyor of Customs" indicates some esteem for the literary profession. He would prefer to be a "literary man" than a surveyor, even if his position as a man of letters remains humble.

III

In fact despite exhibitions of his characteristic authorial modesty, Hawthorne is much less humble about his work in the introductory essay to *The Scarlet Letter* than in his earlier autobiographical sketch, "The Old Manse." There, as in "The Custom-House," Hawthorne invokes the spectre of Puritan disapproval of his literary activities. His arrival marks the first time "the old Manse had ever been prophaned by a lay occupant," and the thousands of sermons the previous tenants had written while resident there are a silent rebuke to the trespassing scribbler:

I took shame to myself for having been so long a writer of idle stories, and ventured to hope that wisdom would descend upon me . . . and that I should light upon an intellectual treasure in the old Manse. . . . In the humblest event, I resolved to achieve at least a novel, that should evolve some deep lesson and should possess
Whether Hawthorne really believed that such a novel would be a humble achievement is open to question. In the garret library he examines the kinds of books collected, valued, and presumably written by the previous tenants and finds no "treasure" in them. He adds that "books of religion . . . seldom really touch upon their ostensible subject, and have therefore so little business to be written at all" (19). A novel may better embody the "enduring and vivacious properties of human thought" and thus be more worthy of an author or reader's time than a religious treatise. In any case, Hawthorne's first action upon settling into the study is to banish the Puritan divines whose portraits hang on the smoke-blackened walls and to freshen the latter with a cheerful coat of paint. He seems to feel little apprehension about "profaning" the Manse with his secular literature.

But despite his resolve, humble or not, despite the Edenic pastoral surroundings, and despite being furnished with a "delightful little nook of a study" in which to write, Hawthorne fails to produce his novel. He openly admits this failure:

The treasure of intellectual gold, which I had hoped to find in our secluded dwelling, had never come to light. . . . All that I had to show, as a man of letters, were these few tales and essays. . . . These fitful sketches with so little of
external life about them, yet claiming no profundity of purpose,—so reserved, even while they sometimes seemed so frank,—often but half in earnest, and never, even when most so, expressing satisfactorily the thoughts which they profess to image—such trifles I truly feel, afford no solid basis for a literary reputation. (34)

But if Hawthorne "truly" believes his tales are worthless trifles, why does he insist on "offer[ing] the bouquet" of "idle weeds" and "withering blossoms" to readers for whom he persistently professes friendly feelings (34)? The resolve never to do so again, which Hawthorne seems to offer as justification for his metaphorical "act of personal inhospitality"—that is for his presuming upon his friends' kindness by inflicting his writings on them—is all well and good, but it hardly seems to account for his treating his "circle of friends" as he would not treat his "worst enemy" (34-35).

The only logical answer is that Hawthorne did think that at least some parts of Mosses from an Old Manse were "worthy of notice" by his readers, as an equivocal letter written just prior to the composition of "The Old Manse" confirms. Of the proposed collections of tales Hawthorne writes:

I have grace enough to be utterly dissatisfied with them . . . not but what I see the degree of
merit they possess. If they were merely spring blossoms, we might look for good fruit hereafter; but I have done nothing but blossom all through the summer. I am ashamed and there's an end.

(Letter 334; 16: 140)

While preparing a second edition a few years later, he is even harsher on the book yet continues to maintain that it has some merit:

Upon my honor, I am not quite sure that I entirely comprehend my own meaning in some of these blasted allegories; but I remember I always had a meaning --or at least, I thought I had. I am a good deal changed since those times; and to tell you the truth, my past self is not very much to my liking as I see myself in this book. Yet certainly there is more than the public gave me credit for... But I don't think myself worthy of very much more credit than I got. (Letter 716, 17: 201)

What is interesting is that in both letters Hawthorne undercuts his self-criticism only to immediately come back and undermine the retraction. In the first letter he damns his sketches with faint praise that he will echo in "The Old Manse" and in the preface to The Snow-Image (1851). In the second he qualifies his rebuke of his readers. If they were too stingy in their praise, their critical judgment was only slightly off. He does not after all deserve "very
much more credit" than the public gave him.

His disappointment and dissatisfaction, then, were real. His tales and sketches plainly did not measure up to the anticipated novel. But as his letters indicate, Hawthorne felt there was more merit in the collection than he acknowledged in the preface. And though eight years later he claims no longer to be able to comprehend himself, at the time he first presented them to the public he "had a meaning." I would suggest that the tales in the collection which had the deepest significance for Hawthorne were not the trifles for which the blossom metaphor seems appropriate, such as "Buds and Bird Voices" or "The New Adam and Eve," whose benign influence would presumably result in "a little more honey in the world, to allay the sourness and bitterness which mankind is always complaining of" ("OM" 14). Instead, the tales which carried Hawthorne's meaning were analogous to the "crooked-necked winter squashes" and "monstrous" cabbages cultivated in his garden, which gave him a feeling that "something worth living for had been done" ("OM" 15).

These "winter squash" tales fall into two groups. In the first we can include "Roger Malvin's Burial" and "Young Goodman Brown," two early tales which were excluded from *Twice Told Tales*, and which explore evil and guilt and permit more ambiguity than most of those published in his first collection. The other group includes tales featuring alienated artist figures, written at a time when
Hawthorne was struggling (and failing) to validate his identity as a literary artist by writing a novel. Taken together Hawthorne seemed to feel that these stories suggested a picture of himself as artist that he found necessary to repudiate in his letter eight years later and which at the time of composing "The Old Manse" he found necessary to cover over with a portrait of the artist as a genial host, who seems to want nothing more than mildly to entertain his readers or even to lull them to sleep.

Hawthorne's only explicit metaphors for his writings in the essay are floral ones. His more recent efforts, products of "the calm summer of my heart and mind" are dismissed as "idle weeds" and "withering blossoms" while the earlier tales are "old faded things, reminding me of flowers pressed between the leaves of a book" (34). If referring to one's books as flowers is not in itself derogatory, it at least suggests that the literature he creates is merely ornamental and ephemeral, a suggestion underscored by the fact that his blossoms are "withering" and his flowers are faded. Thus his efforts at authorship seem to teach the same lesson as do the clergyman's books, which prompt Hawthorne to "muse deeply and wonderingly upon the humiliating fact, that the works of man's intellect decay like those of his hands" (19). But Hawthorne holds out the possibility that the fault is not with books generally but with books of religion and notes that "there yet lingers with me a superstitious reverence for
literature of all kinds" (21).

Hawthorne speaks of books as potential repositories of powerful magic. "A bound volume has a charm in my eyes. . . . I imagine that every new book, or antique one, may contain the 'Open Sesame'--the spell to disclose treasures, hidden in some unsuspected cave of truth" (21). This view of literature echoes an undated notebook entry: "Words, so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them" (AN 280). Words or letters are insignificant, but the author, the man of letters, is omnipotent. It is he who knows how to combine them, for good or for evil. Herein lies the dilemma, for the charmed book can either be a sacred text or a diabolical book of enchantment, and the kind of writing Hawthorne found most powerful as a reader and as an author was that which he characterized as devilish. Each time he set out to write a "cheerful book," "the very devil himself" seemed to take possession of his inkstand (Letter 1090; 18: 272).

Thus literature can either be beautiful but ephemeral and inconsequential or, by incorporating the ugly and the diabolical, it can become like a crooked-necked winter squash, something "real and tangible" (15). While Hawthorne appears to opt for the winter squashes he is not explicit about it, and on the surface he claims that all of his productions are innocuous blossoms. One must read the
passages on his vegetable garden and the Concord river metaphorically even to argue that he valorizes a kind of literature which he does not claim to write. This kind of literature overleaps "the squeamish love of the Beautiful," delights in the "variety of grotesque shapes" found in Nature (including human nature) and need not deny the slimy, sluggish depths of the Concord in order to "appreciate its loveliness" ("OM" 15, 12, 7).

Two of the tales in the volume seem to suggest Hawthorne's dissatisfaction with the production of literary trifles: "The Artist of the Beautiful" and "The Birthmark." Within each tale opposing views of the artist-protagonist are offered. Owen is ridiculed by the townspeople but ultimately praised by the narrator in the tale's triumphant final sentence; he seems to have passed from the flawed world of everyday life into the spiritualized realm of the Beautiful, a passage which suggests Hawthorne's musing on whether the world of disembodied images reflected in the Assabeth were not more real than the "objects palpable to our grosser senses" ("OM" 22). On the other hand, Alymer is praised by his dying wife for having "aimed loftily" and "done nobly" (MOM 55), but the narrator is persistently contemptuous of Alymer, as becomes especially clear in the passage on his journal. After reading the journal Georgiana worships her husband "more than ever," but the reader has learned that Alymer's "most splendid successes were almost inevitably
failures, compared with the ideal at which he aimed" (MOM 49). This criticism echoes Hawthorne's comments on his own work, his dismissal of his tales as trifles, "never . . . expressing satisfactorily the thoughts which they profess to image" ("OM" 34).

Both characters are flawed because their aspirations are marred by a "squeamish love of the Beautiful" such as Hawthorne rejects. Both retreat from the imperfections of human existence, and both produce an art that is insignificant and vulnerable to destruction. Both are cut off from sexual love, and full participation in human experience.12

But characters who are less squeamish do not necessarily fare better. To seek out sin, imperfection, and corruption--as do Ethan Brand, Roderick Elliston and Young Goodman Brown--tends to isolate one as much or more than seeking to conceal or deny their existence. Furthermore, these men become contaminated and are implicated in the evil they set out to experience or discover. Elliston can detect the snake in another person's bosom because of his own gnawing serpent. Goodman Brown is awakened to apparent knowledge of secret evil because of his own guilty night in the forest. Fearful of comparable self-exposure, of his interest in secret guilt implying that he harbors his own guilty secret, Hawthorne cautions his readers not to take his tales too seriously. They were only "half in earnest" ("OM" 34).13
Hawthorne refuses to present himself openly as a serious writer in "The Old Manse." As James Cox observes, "He knew that he was an artist . . . yet he feared the identity of being an artist" ("Reflections" 157). It is only in "The Custom-House," as he holds the scarlet letter to his breast and is unexpectedly seared by it, that Hawthorne suggests to his readers that he is serious about authorship. When he lifts the "rag of scarlet cloth," which "strangely attracted him," and places it on his chest (31), Hawthorne briefly pushes aside the veil of genial blandness behind which he has hidden his artistic aspirations:

[I]t seemed to me, then, that I experienced a sensation not altogether physical, yet almost so, as of burning heat; and as if the letter were not of red cloth, but red-hot iron. I shuddered, and involuntarily let it fall upon the floor. (32)

Hawthorne responds instinctively to the letter. It mysteriously attracts him. When he tries to approach it casually, taking it for a "decoration" and "happen[ing]" "to place it on [his] breast," he is forced to acknowledge its mysterious power. At first he shudders and drops it, just as his imagination at first refuses the task of telling Hester's story. But the scarlet letter remains in his possession (33), and The Scarlet Letter is written and offered to the public. Hawthorne's imagined gesture and response link him to both Hester and Dimmesdale and hint at
once at passion, guilt, defiance of a repressive community, cathartic confession, and finally identification with the larger community of flawed humanity. In this scene, Hawthorne brands himself as an author and an artist.

IV

The four prefaces that follow Hawthorne's awakening as a literary man in "The Custom House" form an interesting pattern. In the prefaces to the longer works, The House of the Seven Gables (1851) and The Blithedale Romance (1852), Hawthorne, with the triumph of The Scarlet Letter behind him, appears as a confident author. Without a qualm he identifies himself as a "writer" and an "American Romancer" and proceeds to inform the reader (in a good-natured way) of how he wishes his work to be read. He claims "a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material" in composing his romance and insists on his right to construct "castles in the air" (SG 1, 3). While his denial of autobiographical content in The Blithedale Romance and his insistence on the imaginary nature of his characters and settings (BR 1-2; SG 3) might suggest a continuing fear of self-exposure through writing, it also seems a kind of affirmation of his imaginative powers. The writer of romances is not constrained by probability and need not subdue his own imagination in order to copy characters and scenes from life, but is free to present his story "under circumstances . . . of the writer's own choosing or creation" (SG 1).
Certainly Hawthorne is not trivializing his work by contrasting it with the novel. In fact he suggests that in writing his romances he has surpassed his old aim of a novel which would evolve a deep moral. It is the novel, which is pinned down by having to aim "at a very minute fidelity . . . to the probable and ordinary course of human experience" which now appears trivial beside the romance which aims loftily at "the truth of the human heart" (SG 1). And though Hawthorne acknowledges his moral, he protests against being asked "relentlessly 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 and unnatural attitude" (SG 2).

But the capable romancer has not vanquished the humble man of letters. Hawthorne cannot bring himself to banish this old persona, who reappears in the prefaces to his collections of stories and sketches, Twice-Told Tales and to The Snow-Image and Other Twice-Told Tales. At first glance the apologetic tone of these prefaces is consistent with the idea that Hawthorne, successful romancer, has now left behind the struggling writer of tales. He denigrates his early work as too timid, almost half-hearted. Nevertheless he is constrained to republish these early efforts at his publisher's urging and for his own pecuniary profit. Indeed, the tone of the preface to the Snow-Image is acutely embarrassed, as if Hawthorne blushed to
capitalize so blatantly on his current success by recycling work he knew to be largely inferior despite his promise that there would be no more such collections.

This explanation of the discrepancy in tone between the prefaces to the romances and to the collections of tales relies upon a sharp distinction between his present and previous work which Hawthorne makes in neither preface. While the phrasing of Hawthorne's claim to have been "for a good many years, the obseuest man of letters in America" implies that this time of obscurity has passed, the final picture we are left with suggests that the author is no more than halfway out of obscurity. Having criticized his work for being tame, devoid of passion, and lacking in flesh and blood characters, Hawthorne then gently defends his effort "to open an intercourse with the world" (TTT 6) and thanks those few kindly souls who responded warmly. Yet he implies that they have been responding to a fictitious persona:

the Author . . . came to be regarded as a mild, shy, gentle, melancholic, exceedingly sensitive and not very forcible man . . . He is by no means certain, that some of his subsequent productions have not been influenced and modified by a natural desire . . . to act in accordance with the character assigned to him; nor even now could he forfeit it without a few tears of tender sensibility. (7)
Among the "subsequent productions" in which Hawthorne cultivated the image of the "mild, shy, gentle" author one must include this very preface. While Hawthorne seems on the brink of bidding farewell to both this image and this style of writing (and to his former obscurity) he plainly does not sever the connection. The preface ends with his seeking shelter in the foliage of his youthful dreamland and pronouncing his satisfaction with the happiness the Twice-Told Tales have brought him, which is "far better than fame" (7).

In the preface to The Snow-Image Hawthorne acknowledges his increased fame but indicates that he expects it to be fleeting. He is only enjoying "a transitory gleam of public favor" (S-I 5). In his heart he is still not writing for a popular audience but to a special circle of friends, and the "strangers" mingling with his accustomed audience are no better than eavesdroppers or interlopers (3). Hawthorne insists again on the lack of public recognition, and his own concurrence with the public's assessment of his work including the present volume. However, the preface includes a startling assessment of his fiction. Hawthorne claims to have been "burrowing, to his utmost ability, into the depths of our common nature, for the purposes of psychological romance" (4). Having admitted to penetrating this "dusky region" in his fiction, Hawthorne implies that that information about himself can be gleaned from a careful study of all of his
fiction. But as if to assure that no one will bother, he presents his work as "various trifles" and suggests his disappointment that "the ripened autumnal fruit tastes but little better than the early windfalls" (6). Thus his recent novels are either ignored or classed with the unsatisfactory ripened fruit. The preface ends with an assurance that positively no more old tales will be resurrected, but once more Hawthorne has declined to bury the image of himself as a writer of trifles.

V

The wistful tone in the prefaces to the tales deepens into a sense of failure in the prefaces to Hawthorne's two remaining literary efforts. The confident author of the romances disappears, as if Hawthorne has allowed the "A" of authorship to fall from his grasp. As Hawthorne's authorial self-confidence decreases, he seems to move in opposite directions in the prefaces to The Marble Faun (1859) and to Our Old Home (1863). In the former he declares his intention to abandon his "familiar kind of preface" while in the latter he indulges the autobiographical impulse at greater length than at any time since "The Custom-House." William Charvat's theory can explain the pattern though at first Hawthorne seems to deviate from it.

Charvat suggests that authors tend to write longer prefaces during the early stages of their careers while they are trying to establish a relationship with their
readers, or at "crucial points" in their development when
they are uncertain about their work (209). As the writer
becomes more confident in regard to both work and audience,
the prefaces become shorter. Finally, when the writer's
status "whether high or low, has become established, [the
author] stops writing prefaces altogether" (Charvat 209).

At first glance, Hawthorne seems to follow this
pattern quite closely.14 His first two prefaces, "Mosses
from an Old Manse" and "The Custom-House," are his longest
and most personal. The prefaces to The House of the Seven
Gables and The Blithedale Romance are much briefer and
have a more confident tone. But while the prefaces
considered thus far fit the pattern more or less neatly,
the preface to The Marble Faun does not. By the time
Hawthorne wrote what would be his final romance, his
literary reputation, "whether high or low," presumably
should have been settled, obviating the need for a
preface. But in fact Hawthorne could not decide exactly
what his status was with regard to fame. His journal
clearly shows his divided mind.

Perhaps the most famous entry of the English notebooks
is the account, on October 5, 1855, of a recurrent
nightmare. Hawthorne dreams that he is still at college
"and there is a sense that I have been there unconscionably
long, and have quite failed to make such a progress in life
as my contemporaries have" (EN 98). Hawthorne is
particularly puzzled by the timing of the dream: "How
strange that it should come now, when I call myself famous and prosperous! when I am happy, too!—still that same dream of life hopelessly a failure!" (98).

As many critics have noted, this dream seems to indicate that Hawthorne felt his success as an author was either not enough or the wrong kind. If his three romances were garnering favorable reviews on both sides of the Atlantic, and his name had become illustrious enough that it could help to get a book by an unknown writer published, Hawthorne was still unable to support himself through his writing and had to rely on a more successful former classmate, Franklin Pierce, to provide him with a means of earning a steady income as American consul in Liverpool. The note of embarrassment at a prolonged apprenticeship sounded in his early prefaces is echoed here. He is still struggling to prove himself; he still has made no progress; he is still beset by "the uncertainties of a new author" (Letter 1030, 18: 164). The dream reflects Hawthorne's sense that by going back into civil service, he has regressed. He has again abandoned his writing desk and will have to prove himself again when he returns to authorship.

His insistence in the dream entry on his current fame betrays an uncertainty evident in other entries. Hawthorne was certainly enjoying fame of a sort at this point in his career. His English notebooks contain many humorous accounts of his lionization at the hands of British
society. While he is gratified by the attention, he also seems discomfitted. One admiring English lady tells him she so enjoyed *The House of the Seven Gables* which she had read thirteen years before, approximately nine years before it was published! (EN 313). Another admirer praises "The Red Letter A." Hawthorne comes to suspect that the praise of "London literary society" is not worth much after all, and that many of those who speak most admiringly of his work have perhaps not even read it (EN 269, 292, 311).

After being somewhat embarrassed by the effusive praise of Leigh Hunt, Hawthorne is moved to assert that he does not after all require an appreciative audience for his writing:

> I will not say that my heart does not expand a little toward the man who rightly appreciates my books . . . But I am of somewhat sterner stuff . . . and the dark seclusion--the atmosphere without any oxygen of sympathy--in which I spent all the years of my youthful manhood--have enabled me to do almost as well without as with it" (EN 255-56).

Inundated with praise he felt to be excessive or false, Hawthorne returns to the image of himself presented in the prefaces to *Twice-Told Tales* and *The Snow-Image* as well as in "the haunted chamber" letters to Sophia and Longfellow: that of the solitary author, toiling in seclusion without the comfort of public sympathy. Perversely, since
Hawthorne had claimed he wished to become a man of society rather than to remain "a person in retirement," he now seems inclined to stress his essential solitariness and his indifference to fame. Quite possibly the image of himself as a lonely artist was more in keeping with his idea of the serious author, while the fawning attention of the English smacked of popular success. After all, if *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of The Seven Gables* were displayed in English shop windows, offered alongside them were *The Lamplighter* and "still more trashy books" (EN 74). As Hawthorne said of the American reading public, as long as "public taste is occupied" with popular novels by women authors he would be "ashamed" to succeed too well with the same audience (Letter 779, 18: 304).

Hawthorne had ambivalent feelings about more than just his literary reputation. His letters to Fields express his uncertainty about the worth of the romance he had "been trying to tear out of [his] mind" by shutting himself up in his study for an hour or two daily:

As for my success ... I only know that I have produced what seems to be a larger amount of Scribble than either of my former Romances, and that portions of it interested me a good deal while I was writing them, but ... the story has developed itself in a very imperfect way. ... My brain is tired of it just now ... so I shall throw aside the Romance and take it up next
August. (Letter 1029, 18: 160-61)

These uncertainties were compounded by his sense of exile and his awareness of how many years had passed since he had published his last romance. If three years in the Custom-House was long enough to threaten Hawthorne's intellect and imagination, what pernicious effect might nearly five years in the Liverpool consulate of the United States have on his literary abilities? How would the public receive him, having in the meantime greedily devoured the works of "scribbling women"?

From Rome Hawthorne wrote to Fields, "I am afraid I have staid away too long, and am forgotten by everybody," but nevertheless he temporarily abandoned work on two planned romances. "It is a pity; for I really have a plethora of ideas, and should feel relieved by discharging some of them upon the public" (Letter 1025, 18: 150-51). Soon after, having resumed work on the romance that would become The Marble Faun, Hawthorne again confessed his doubts: "I feel that I shall come before the public after so long an interval, with all the uncertainties of a new author" (Letter 1030, 18: 164).

By the time Hawthorne came to write his preface he was virtually convinced that the book would be judged harshly and that his small circle of friendly readers had forgotten him. Accordingly he feels that the "familiar kind of preface" in which he addressed his readers personally is no longer appropriate. But he cannot simply begin with
theorizing about the Romancer’s art and "stating a few particulars about the work, which is here offered to the Public" (MF 2) as he did in the prefaces to The House of the Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance. Instead his uneasiness compels him to stumble awkwardly onto the stage in order to explain why he does not belong there anymore.

Hawthorne begins by stressing the time elapsed since he last addressed his reade: and explains that in writing his familiar prefaces, he was only following the "antique fashion of prefaces." Nevertheless he insists that although there was no evidence of his ideal reader’s existence, Hawthorne never "concluded him to be merely a mythic character" (MF 1). Yet the piling up of epithets to the point of absurdity suggests that this reader is just a convention: "Unquestionably, this Gentle, Kind, Benevolent, Indulgent and most Beloved and Honoured Reader, did once exist for me" (MF 2). This ideal reader was not a living person but a creation of Hawthorne’s mind to whom he addressed not only his prefaces, but also his romances. While The Marble Faun still addresses that reader, the preface addresses the indifferent general public.17 Like Santa Claus, this mythical reader exists only so long as one has faith that he does. Now that Hawthorne has lost that faith, he has "little heart or confidence" to talk about himself, and moves on to the particulars of his current work.

But he shows little confidence here as well. At the
time of writing "The Custom-House" Hawthorne found ample
inspiration in the American past and even hoped that the
commonplace life of the custom-house might at some future
date be found to have "a deeper import" worthy of "a
better book." Now he complains that in America "there is
no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and
gloomy wrong, nor anything but a common place prosperity,
in broad and simple daylight" (MF 3). Hawthorne displaces
his frustration with the American audience to the American
setting, but his complaint also shows a decrease in
confidence in his imagination's power to create its own
mysteries. And Hawthorne characterizes his work in terms
that echo the diffidence of "The Old Manse" rather than
the confidence of his later prefaces: "the author proposed
to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a
thoughtful moral, and did not purpose attempting a
portraiture of Italian manners and character."18 In
writing this fanciful story rather than a novelistic
portrait, Hawthorne seems to be confessing his limitations
rather than choosing the art that will let him exercise
his imagination most freely as in the prefaces to the two
previous romances.

While Hawthorne did in fact "correspond through the
post" with a "Gentle Reader" of The Marble Faun (Letter
1082, 18: 256), he was essentially right in thinking that
the majority of readers would fail to appreciate the
book's "essential excellencies" (Letter 1077, 18: 251).
These readers insisted that Hawthorne clear up the book's mysteries, and so Hawthorne bowed to their demands, but in his own way. While his publisher suggested explanatory information be added to the preface, Hawthorne had his own idea. He would instead provide "a conversation between the author, Kenyon and Hilda" (Letter 1072, 18: 242).

This distinction is important. In the preface, he would have to speak as the real author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, but the "author" of the postscript is the narrator of the story, who like Hilda and Kenyon, lives in Hawthorne's fictional world. This author does not know the information Hawthorne's readers seek and armed with his readers' curiosity pronounces himself willing to "pry into several dark recesses of the story" (MF 464). But most of the answers he receives only rebuff the reader. On some matters Hilda and Kenyon reply with amused impatience that the information was already there, and on others leave the reader, and quite possibly their questioner as well, as much in the dark as before.

The first page of the postscript, before the author identifies with the reader by admitting his own curiosity, serves to align the author with Hawthorne. Even this fictional narrator shares Hawthorne's resentment of the "demand for further elucidations respecting the mysteries of the story" (MF 463). By having his narrator make such a point of his reluctance to comply with this demand, and then making him appear obtuse to Hilda and Kenyon,
Hawthorne indicates that he is mocking rather than appeasing his readers. As Dejong has so wittily expressed it, through the postscript "Hawthorne says NO in fog" (367) and in a sense turns his back on his readers.

VI

Since The Marble Faun was the last of Hawthorne's romances, and since Hawthorne calls the book a failure and takes refuge in his editorial pose in the postscript, one might assume that he had now resolved to stop writing letters to his Gentle Reader in the guise of either prefaces or works of literature offered to the general public. But in fact Hawthorne continued to attempt to fashion a romance about an American claimant to an English estate. His final published work, Our Old Home, was not a romance, however, but a collection of sketches, salvaged not from youthful manuscripts but from passages in his notebooks. The collection is prefaced, like The Snow-Image, with a literal letter to a friend in which Hawthorne acknowledges his failure to produce the proposed "work of fiction." Even more so than the postscript to The Marble Faun, this preface shows Hawthorne's conviction that he has lost his audience.

Hawthorne claimed that his general practice was to write a familiar preface "addresed nominally to the public at large, but really to . . . one congenial friend" (MF 1). Here that situation is reversed. Though General Pierce is nominally the addressee, the real audience is
composed of readers known to be hostile. Two thirds of the preface is spent defending his sketches from charges of chauvinism and unbecoming asperity with regard to the English or defending his friendship with Pierce. In the other third he apologizes for having produced only these sketches instead of the romance he had planned. For the first time since "The Old Manse" Hawthorne presents current work with a confession of failure. Overcome by "The Present, the Immediate, the Actual," Hawthorne finds no room for the imagination. He has lost "even my desire for imaginative composition" and holds out no hope of recovering it. The "abortive project . . . has been utterly thrown aside, and will never now be accomplished" (OEH 4).

In the face of this failure of the imagination and his apprehensions about the hostility of his audience, Hawthorne literalizes the metaphor of writing to a particular friend. But Pierce is emphatically not his "Gentle Reader," for the sketches "are not of a kind likely to prove interesting to a Statesman in retirement" (OEH 3). General Pierce is part of the world of politics which Hawthorne had hoped to have left behind in Salem. He is no substitute for an appreciative public.

The prefatory letter expresses Hawthorne's conviction that he lacked an appreciative audience, but more importantly it suggests what the book's other preface, the autobiographical account of his "Consular Experiences,"
shows poignantly: Hawthorne's sense of the failure of his imagination. Although he did in fact receive some favorable criticism of The Marble Faun, Hawthorne's overall experience with his longest novel did little to quiet the apprehension, prompted by his inability to complete his planned English Romance, that he was suffering a diminution of imaginative power. Given this lack of confidence and sense of having to start over, Charvat's model might suggest a return to a longer preface rather than no preface at all. And with "Consular Experiences" Hawthorne returns to the mode of "The Old Manse" and "The Custom-House."^20

Having always believed that "The Custom-House" was what "gave the Scarlet Letter its vogue" (Letter 470, 16: 398), Hawthorne expected "Consular Experiences" to affect his readers in a similar way. He purposely held the sketch back from publication in the Atlantic Monthly in order to reserve it as the introduction for readers of his book. Somewhat cynically he explained his reasoning to Fields:

The article has some of the features that attract the curiosity of the foolish public, being made up of personal narrative and gossip, with a few pungencies of personal satire. . . . [I]t seems to me quite essential to have some novelty in the collected volume, and if possible, something that may excite a little discussion and remark. (1250, 18: 560)
So in "Consular Experiences," as in "The Custom-House" Hawthorne provides the reader with a "sketch of official life" (SL 1), but this time he anticipates the "excitement" which he claims surprised him in the case of "the Custom-House." The tone of both sketches is "good-humored" and modest, and both involve satirical portraits of others over whom Hawthorne exercises a kind of benevolent paternal authority. A criticism of the American system of political appointments and of the American tendency to become too dependent upon the government forms a part of each. In both Hawthorne finds himself in uncongenial surroundings in which he cannot write, but in which he nevertheless remains until officially relieved. As "The Custom House" serves as "the entrance hall" to The Scarlet Letter, so the consulate in Liverpool, "a most convenient and admirable point to get away from," serves as the starting point for the excursions to the "famous localities" of England which Hawthorne records in Our Old Home. Finally, in both Hawthorne is defensive about his use of the autobiographical mode and insistent that the "I" of the preface is not really himself at all.

When we examine "Consular Experiences" closely, however, we find that the many similarities are but superficial, while the subtle differences are truly significant. A telling example can be found in the passages on his failure during each tenure of office to
attempt a "different order of composition" ("C-H" 39), one that would confront the "Actual" as represented by Custom-House or Consulate. In "Consular Experiences" Hawthorne tells us that he "once thought of writing a pamphlet on the subject" of the abuse of seamen by the officers of American ships, but he quitted the Consulate before finding time to effect my purpose, and all that phase of my life immediately assumed so dreamlike a consistency that I despaired of making it seem solid or tangible to the public. And now it looks distant and dim, like the troubles of a century ago. (OOh 33)

This seems to be a confession of a double failure. Not only has he failed to put his writing to a use which could have benefitted mankind, but he admits to imaginative failure as well. For what has he done in The Scarlet Letter and some of his historical tales but made the troubles of the past seem "tangible" to his readers, not indeed through verisimilitude but through an appeal to the common experiences of the human heart? The possibility of reaching the public not through a pamphlet but through a tale or novel does not seem to occur to Hawthorne. The transformation of grim reality into "so dreamlike a consistency" does not give him a sense of power over it.

In "Consular Experiences," as in "The Custom-House," Hawthorne dismisses his time spent in government service
as unreal, but there is no sense of having triumphed over it.

As soon as I was out of office, the retrospect began to look unreal. I could scarcely believe that it was I, that figure they call a Consul, but a sort of double Ganger [who] went through his shadowy duties with a tolerable show of efficiency, while my real self had lain as regarded my proper mode of being... in a state of suspended animation. (OOH 38)

This is reminiscent of the distinction between the literary man and the Surveyor in the Custom House, but there we see the "real self" sitting at a newly supplied writing desk while here it is in a state of "suspended animation." It is no less true that his imaginative faculties were suspended while he was Surveyor, but in "The Custom-House" we have evidence of their revitalization in The Scarlet Letter and in the preface itself, both of which are the productions not of the Surveyor but of the decapitated Surveyor, reincarnated as the literary man.

In "Consular Experiences" Hawthorne seems to want to make a similar distinction between the narrator, author of Our Old Home, and the Consul, but does not quite succeed. As narrator, Hawthorne refuses to reveal anything significant about the "portion" of his life "congenial with my nature, which I am living now" (39). That the
only "real incidents" in his life were talks about "literature and life" with a "literary amateur" is not reassuring (39). We are reminded of Hawthorne's willingness, while under the spell of the Custom-House, to content himself with occasional "literary intercourse" on the subject of Napoleon or Shakespeare with the Naval Officer or casual talk over books with the junior clerk, rumored to be an amateur poet ("C-H" 27). While *The Scarlet Letter* was a meaningful result of escape from the Custom-House, the sketches merely "comprise a few of the more external and therefore readily manageable things that I took note of, in many escapes from the imprisonment of consular servitude" (39). But if the only fruits of his release are these "external things," these humble sketches, Hawthorne must doubt whether he has really escaped, not from consular servitude, but from the state of suspended animation it produced.22

There are other hints that he has not. After briefly telling the story of the old man who longed to get back to Ninety-second street, Philadelphia, Hawthorne notes:

The poor old fellow's story seemed to me almost as worthy of being chanted in immortal song as that of Odysseus or Evangeline. I took his case under deep consideration, but dared not incur the moral responsibility of sending him across the ocean. . . . So I contented myself with giving him alms (15).
On the practical level Hawthorne's decision is a wise one. But there is also a possibility that Hawthorne has dismissed him too readily from his imagination. The man's tale, "strange and sad" as it was, fails to inspire Hawthorne's imagination. And perhaps in failing to write his tale, Hawthorne is shirking his "moral responsibility" as an author.

The same thing happens in Hawthorne's encounters with various American claimants. We know from the unfinished manuscripts published after Hawthorne's death that this was an idea that had taken hold of his imagination. It lends itself to psychological romance in that "the cause of this peculiar insanity lies deep in the Anglo-American heart" (18). And Hawthorne notes that "he might fill many pages with instances of this diseased appetite for English soil" (20). But he succeeded in producing for publication only these few pages which treat the subject humorously and "externally." Hawthorne claims that the "foolish kind of pathos" entangled with this incident impresses him now "more forcibly than it did at the moment" (15). At the time he merely found the claimants pathetic:

There is no estimating or believing, till we come into a position to know it, what foolery lurks in the breasts of very sensible people. Remembering such sober extravagances, I should not be at all surprised to find that I myself am guilty of some unexpected absurdity. (20)
Just as the Hawthornian characters who probe for the secret sins of their fellow men end by exposing their own sinfulness, there is an implication that if Hawthorne explores "the Anglo-American heart" in order to get at the cause of "this peculiar insanity," he will end by proving himself "guilty of some unexpected absurdity."

Perhaps the failure to produce his novel is a retreat prompted by the old fear of self-exposure. A letter to Fields written in the last year of his life as he made one final attempt to write his romance seems to support this view.²³

There is something preternatural in my reluctance to begin, I linger at the threshold and have a perception of very disagreeable phantasms to be encountered if I enter. I wish God had given me the faculty of writing a sunshiny book. (Letter 1281, 18: 604).

Hawthorne shrank from encountering those phantasms. Unable to bare his soul before the reader, unable to plunge again into the depths below the gleaming surface, Hawthorne at the end of his career hung back from cultivating any more "crooked-necked winter squashes."²⁴

VII

Hawthorne's career as an author was framed in letters. As a young man at school he wrote home to his mother that he proposed to become an author; as an old man in failing health he wrote bitterly to his publisher that
he would never finish another Romance. The first of these letters suggests several of the conditions that would make Hawthorne’s career as an author problematic. He begins by rejecting the ministry as "of course out of the Question," foreshadowing the sense, expressed in his early prefaces, that to choose to become an author is to defy his Puritan ancestors (Letter 19, 15: 138). He rejects law because of an overabundance of lawyers, but ironically he will come to believe that an overabundance of inferior authors whose books the public prefers to his own is responsible for keeping him (had he relied exclusively on his pen) close to the "state of actual starvation" he feared the pursuit of law would bring him (139). He rejects medicine because "I would not like to live by the diseases and infirmities of my fellow Creatures" (139), yet some of his stories at least seem to suggest that writers do live by probing into the psychological diseases and moral infirmities of one’s fellow men. Finally he proposes "becoming an Author, and relying for support on my pen" (139). But if to become an author entails supporting oneself exclusively through writing, then Hawthorne never realizes his intention to become a man of letters25.

The true test of authorship is the production of literature, however, and Hawthorne’s 'letters' to the world, from Twice-told Tales to "Consular Experiences" readily identify him as an author. But Hawthorne also wanted to be read and understood and the pathos of his
farewell to authorship stems from his sense that no audience exists before which he can take his final bow.

I hardly know what to say to the Public about this abortive Romance . . . I shall never finish it. Yet it is not quite pleasant for an author to announce himself . . . as finally broken down as to his literary faculty. . . . Say to the public what you think best though I really don't believe that the public will care what you say, or whether you say anything. (Letter 1302, 18: 640-41)

In the preface to Twice-told Tales, Hawthorne blamed the public's "total lack of sympathy" for the scantiness of his publication (3). Now the conviction of the public's indifference returns and extinguishes his desire to address them. While exhaustion and advancing age can help to explain Hawthorne's inability to finish his romance, he chooses not to write one last letter to his readers, for he does not know what to say or whether they will care. But though this letter expresses Hawthorne's inability to continue writing and seems to admit that the hoped for "intercourse with the world" remains an "imperfect success," Hawthorne's previous achievements as a writer remain for posterity. Hawthorne refused to "announce himself" publicly as "finally broken down as to his literary faculties" nor did he seek to publish the fragmentary manuscripts that would have revealed this
breakdown. Thus to the last, Hawthorne protected his
claim to be a man of letters.
Part Two
"Centered . . . on Literature"
Prefaces and Autobiographies as Stories of Authorship

My life, I wouldn't call it boring . . . but it has been so . . . it has been centered so much on literature, on writing.
Vladimir Nabokov (qtd. in Field, VN)

If I were to deny my life as a writer, it would mean the denial of all that to me has represented reality.
Ellen Glasgow (CM vii)

To live in the world of creation--to get into it and stay in it--to frequent it and haunt it--this is the only thing.
Henry James (NHJ 62)
More than a century after Nathaniel Hawthorne laid claim to the "distinction" of having been "the obscurest man of letters in America" (TTT 3), Vladimir Nabokov, who considered Hawthorne "a splendid writer" (SO 64), proclaimed his own literary obscurity. In response to an interviewer's question about the disadvantages of his present fame, Nabokov explained that "Lolita is famous, not I. I am an obscure, doubly obscure, novelist with an unpronounceable name" (SO 107). By "doubly obscure" Nabokov meant that he was an obscure figure in two languages and literatures, his native Russian and his adopted English. But he cultivated another sort of double obscurity: professional and personal. Professionally, he posed as a master craftsman or magician, creating works inaccessible to all but the few privileged readers capable of deciphering his intricate patterns or following his sleights of hand. Personally, he insisted that he was a "private person" with "no public appeal" (SO 175, 3), and that his writing had no meaningful connection with the events of his personal life, which were (or should have been) of no interest to his readers.

Ironically, Nabokov chiefly presented himself as a deliberately obscure author in precisely those genres
associated with self-revelation: the preface, the autobiography and the interview. A preface offers the writer a chance to address the audience directly, to explain himself or herself to the reader. An autobiography presumably offers the reader a glimpse into the writer's private life, and an interview allows the author to air private opinions and discuss his or her life and work with the reading public. A tension exists then between generic conventions and Nabokov's use of them. Nabokov uses public, self-revelatory genres to insist on his inaccessibility.

The inaccessibility that Nabokov flaunts functions for him as a sign of his absolute artistic control, and it is this control that Nabokov really wishes to emphasize. He stresses the absence of naiveté in his approach to writing both autobiography and fiction. Reality is subjective; therefore the novelist is free to manufacture his own world and the autobiographer can allow his artistry free rein without inevitably distorting "truth." Nabokov would agree with Roy Pascal that the apparent conflict between design and truth which shapes autobiography is reconcilable. The inevitable existence of design or "story-structure" does not impose "regrettable limitations" on the truthfulness of autobiographies; rather the design or structure is the autobiography's "mode of representing truth" (Pascal 187). Throughout his autobiographies, Nabokov continually and confidently plays up his artistry.
Yet Nabokov can not escape awareness of certain limits to his control which his autobiographies and prefaces force him to confront. In *Speak, Memory* and *Conclusive Evidence* Nabokov must bow before the realities of death, exile and aging even as his art resists them. In his prefaces, his very efforts to shape his readers' encounters with his works attest to the readers' independent existence. Authorial control is not absolute; his books are liable to misreadings.

It is in his collection of interviews, *Strong Opinions*, that Nabokov is best able to maintain this control and present himself as the doubly obscure author, but he is able to do so primarily by bending the rules of the genre.¹ Nabokov agreed to grant interviews only if the questions would be submitted to him beforehand in writing, allowing him to produce written answers that he insisted be reproduced verbatim (*SO xi*). He felt free to dismiss flippantly any question he felt was too personal, too tedious or too disagreeable. As editor of the *Strong Opinions* he removed the narrative portions of the interviews he reproduced, thus coming as close as possible to making himself sole author of the image of "Nabokov" he presented to the world. Yet this image is still filtered through the questions of the various interviewers, whose constant presence never allows Nabokov to forget the existence of the curious public, eager to pry into his personal life, or of aggressive critics, ready to impose
their own interpretations on his works. Still Nabokov manages to meet the interviewers on his own terms and uses the interview not to reveal himself but to insist on his obscurity.

II

The professional obscurity with which Nabokov sought to cloak himself should not be confused with the more literal obscurity under which Nabokov labored for much of his literary career. Nabokov saw himself as a victim of undeserved neglect which he both joked about and subtly resented. After the Bolshevik Revolution relieved him of his independent means and before the success of Lolita brought him unexpected financial rewards, Nabokov had been unable to make his living through writing alone. In Berlin, he supplemented his literary income through tutoring and giving tennis lessons; in America he worked as a teacher and an entomologist. During his years as V. Sirin, the rising young star of the circle of Russian émigré writers in Berlin, he once ruefully wrote to his mother that although he had just been called a great writer by The New York Times, he could not afford a decent pair of pants (Field, His Life in Part 197). While Sirin was acknowledged as a writer to be reckoned with in émigré circles, in his adopted country Nabokov’s work was virtually unknown. One former Cornell student notes that "those of us who took his courses in the early ’50’s didn’t have the vaguest notion he’d written a single word of
fiction" (Ross Wetzsteon 241), and another confirms this widespread ignorance among undergraduates (Alfred Appel, Jr., "Backgrounds" 18). But the problem was not confined to students. Once Lolita had brought Nabokov to the attention of American literary critics, Nabokov still complained that none of them had "read my Russian books and thus every appraisal on the strength of my American ones is bound to be out of focus" (Lolita 318).

Claiming to be "indifferent to the convulsions of fame" (SO 133), Nabokov approached the question of this side of his professional obscurity with humor, self-confidence and patient reminders of the existence of his previous literary achievements. For instance, he responded to Lucie Léon Noel's speculation that as "a young writer still on the threshold of fame and acclaim" he might have been intimidated upon meeting the "world renowned author" James Joyce (Noel 219), with an amused reminder of his own literary stature:

She pictures me as a timid young artist; actually I was forty, with a sufficiently lucid awareness of what I had done for Russian letters preventing me from feeling awed in the presence of any living writer. ("Anniversary Notes" 292)

But by 1966, when he made the quip about his fame belonging only to Lolita, Nabokov was well on his way to changing that situation. Lolita's success not only brought him a larger audience for his subsequent novels, but also enabled
him to embark on the eventual publication of all his Russian novels in English translation together with prefaces or, as he usually called them, "English forewords." The notoriety of Lolita brought interviewers to his hotel in Switzerland, giving Nabokov a welcome opportunity to expound on other aspects of his work, touch up his public image and proclaim his aesthetic principles. As he explains in the Foreword to Strong Opinions: "My fiction allows me so seldom the occasion to air my private views that I rather welcome, now and then, the questions put to me in sudden spates by charming, courteous, intelligent visitors" (xii). Finally, Nabokov's increasing fame probably provided the impetus for his decision to issue a second, revised and expanded, English version of his autobiography in 1966.5

The dramatic increase in opportunities for self-expression throughout the sixties offered Nabokov a platform from which to draw attention to a kind of professional obscurity which he found more congenial. The absence of popular acclaim and the frequency of unfavorable reviews were for him marks of distinction, a sign that he wrote not for "dunderheads" (SO 196) but for the Miltonic "fit audience . . . though few." His obscurity was proof of his independence, of his resistance to the banal. Nabokov never tired of repeating that he did not "write for groups" or for critics who demanded socially relevant novels, and he claimed to be indifferent to criticism. "My
inventions, my circles, my special islands are infinitely safe from exasperated readers" (SO 241). But Nabokov's diction illustrates his possessive and protective feelings about his works. His anxiety to keep them "safe" from critics who would trivialize them, extract morals from them or otherwise attempt to use them in the service of their own interpretations of "reality," led Nabokov to stress that his novels were inventions, not mimesis. They were self-enclosed circles without reference to the dull world of average human reality. Nabokov's metaphor implies that the sea of his creative genius separates critics on the mainland of mediocrity from the "special islands" that are his works.

The small number of readers who possessed the "talent and originality" to build bridges to these islands had to be willing to work for their aesthetic pleasure: "Art is difficult. Easy art is what you see at modern exhibitions of things and doodles" (SO 115). Unlike the "amorphic and limp creature known as 'the general reader'" (SO 148), Nabokov's readers have to be almost as imaginative and intelligent as Nabokov himself. In fact, they should be as much like him as possible.

I don't think that an artist should bother about his audience. His best audience is the person he sees in the shaving mirror every morning. I think that the audience an artist imagines, when he imagines that kind of thing, is a room filled
with people wearing his own mask. *(SO 18)*

Nabokov's ideal readers must submerge their own identities to assume a mask created and worn by Nabokov in his fiction.

Nabokov is gratified by the efforts of his "best readers, minds that are closest to mine," and enjoys the "ripple of almost human warmth, a sense of harmony and satisfied logic" when his works are properly appreciated by a reader he admires *(SO 10, 53)*. While his response to these readers seems not much different from Hawthorne's gratitude for the kind words of "a native or foreign critic who would gratify his instincts of authorship with unexpected praise" *(TTT 6)*, Hawthorne admits to having aimed at a wider audience which Nabokov would scorn. Nabokov never wanted "to open an intercourse with the world" *(TTT 6)*, which expression he would have dismissed as "a meaningless formula since a creative artist makes his own world or worlds" *(SO 18)*, and his works are emphatically not open to just "anyone who will take up the book in the proper mood" *(TTT 6)*. Rather as G. M. Hyde has put it, his works are "verbal citadels" to which critics and readers try to gain admission by "exegetical ingenuity" *(17)*. For Nabokov, "art at its greatest is fantastically deceitful and complex" and readers who would assume the challenge of entering the private worlds of Nabokov's novels must be prepared "to make fierce efforts' *(SO 33, 183)*.
III

If Nabokov insisted somewhat paradoxically that his published works remain private worlds, it is not surprising that he was even more determined to keep his personal life private. Fiercely protective of his privacy, as his biographer Andrew Field discovered to his chagrin, Nabokov loudly insisted that a writer's personal life was of no interest to the reading public. "I can quite understand people wanting to know my writings, but I cannot sympathize with anybody wanting to know me" (SO 157). In fact, he claimed that erroneous autobiographical interpretation of his fiction was one of the two things which could provoke him into responding to criticism: "I do get annoyed when people I never met impinge on my privacy with false and vulgar assumptions" (SO 146). Nevertheless he enjoyed giving interviews as long his conditions—which assured him virtually absolute control over the process—were met. As he explained to an interviewer:

What I really like about the better kind of public colloquy is the opportunity it affords me to construct in the presence of my audience the semblance of what I hope is a plausible and not altogether displeasing personality. (SO 158)

An interview, which theoretically gives readers an intimate glimpse of the subject, is for Nabokov just another verbal performance which he orchestrates to a particular effect. Words such as "construct," "plausible" and "semblance"
stress the artifice involved. While Nabokov's insistence on personal privacy indicates he might well have accepted Hawthorne's ideas about the indecorum of too explicit autobiography, he also suggests that any attempt at presenting his essential self, what Hawthorne called the "inmost Me," would result only in the production of a substitute, a plausible imitation behind a seemingly more transparent veil ("C-H" 4). Nabokov's well-known skepticism about the authenticity of biography, expressed most imaginatively in *The Real Life of Sebastien Knight*, seems to apply to autobiography as well.®

But just because life is a subjective affair, inevitably reshaped in the telling, the transformation of life experience is a perennial temptation for the novelist. In fiction, the ideal would be a novel such as Fyodor contemplates in *The Gift* in which he would:

- so shuffle, twist, mix, rechew and rebelch everything, add such spices of my own and impregnate things so much with myself that nothing remains of the autobiography but dust--the kind of dust which makes the most orange of skies. (376)

But this same impulse also finds expression in "straight" autobiography. Even the most meticulous adherence to fact--and in the forewords of both *Conclusive Evidence* and *Speak, Memory* Nabokov insists on his scrupulous regard for truth--does not eliminate the shuffling and remixing, the
perception and creation of patterns. According to Nabokov, "the following of . . . thematic designs through one's life should be . . . the true purpose of autobiography" (SM 27). The challenge of turning personal life experiences into art without reducing them to a kind of "dust" that intensifies aesthetic pleasure without being traceable to its source provides Nabokov with the ultimate test of his artistic abilities. It is in his autobiography, as much as in his fiction, that Nabokov strives for the "final dictatorship over words" for which Fyodor longs (The Gift 376).

It was a challenge that Nabokov did not set himself early in his career. Instead Nabokov characteristically employed three methods of covert self-expression within his novels: autobiographical borrowing, "literary impersonation" and "auto-criticism." In fact these methods span his entire writing career from his first novel, Mary (Mashenk'a), which contains a clear instance of extended autobiographical borrowing, to his first English novel, The Real Life of Sebastien Knight, which contains several passages of auto-criticism, to his last novel, Look at the Harlequins!, a tour de force of literary impersonation. These kinds of self-expression were all in keeping with his notions of obscure authorship. By revealing himself in a covert way, he problematized attempts to link life and art, and constantly reminded the reader of his artistry while demanding a high degree of attentiveness.

Autobiographical borrowing involves the use of
autobiographical incident or imagery in a fictional context and is probably the method closest to the shuffling, mixing and rechewing process proposed by Fyodor in The Gift. In Nabokov's first novel the hero, a Russian émigré living in Berlin, recalls a youthful love affair, which closely corresponds to Nabokov's own early romantic experience. In other words, Nabokov "loans" his own memories to his fictional character Ganin and surrounds them with other fictions. The plot of the novel--in which Ganin discovers that the long absent wife of his fellow lodger (whose arrival from Soviet Russia is at last imminent) is his former girlfriend, plans to intercept her and renew their affair, and relinquishes his plans without seeing her—is Nabokov's invention, but Ganin's recollections rather than his abortive plans for seduction are the real center of interest. In the "Foreword" to Mary, Nabokov acknowledges that he had succumbed to "the beginner's well-known propensity for obtruding upon his own privacy by introducing himself...into his first novel" (xi). The faithfulness of the fiction to "personal reality" is remarkable here; Ganin's "Mary is the twin sister of [Nabokov's] Tamara" (Mary xi-xii). Nabokov notes that "the ancestral avenues are there, the Ordezh flows through both books" (Speak, Memory and Mary), and in Speak, Memory records delight in having preserved an actual love letter he had received by including it in Mary.

But Nabokov's suggestion that having once gotten rid
of himself in the first novel he could then move on to better (presumably non-autobiographical) things fails to take note of the concealed autobiographical content of his later books. Even if we credit his claim that in his second novel, *King, Queen, Knave* (*Korol’, dama, valet*), Nabokov eschewed autobiographical content in favor of a "dream of pure invention" which exploited "the lack of emotional involvement and the fairytale freedom inherent in an unknown milieu" (viii), his third novel, *The Defense* (*Zashchita Luzhina*), includes several autobiographical borrowings and his fourth, *Glory* (*Podvig*) is, like Sebastien Knight’s *Lost Property*, the most autobiographical of his works (*RLSK* 6).10

The borrowings in *The Defense* were mostly incidental: "I may as well confess that I gave Luzhin my French governess, my pocket chess set, my sweet temper, and the stone of the peach I plucked in my own walled garden" (*Defense* 11). In *Glory* the borrowings are quite extensive, but it would still be impossible to call it an autobiography, as Nabokov's preface to that novel makes clear:

If Martin to some extent can be considered a distant cousin of mine (nicer than I, but also much more naive than I ever was), with whom I share certain childhood memories, certain later likes and dislikes, his pallid parents, *per contra* do not resemble mine in any rational
sense. *Glory* xi)

Nabokov further separates himself from Martin by stressing that the fictional character is not a writer, or indeed any kind of artist (xiii). What Nabokov consistently returns to in these prefaces is the idea that the autobiographical content of his novels is not valuable or interesting in itself, but only insofar as it is distorted, scattered, and reshaped to produce art. Thus even in apparently direct borrowings such as Ganin's memories of his first love, there are "superimposed inventions" (*Mary* xii) which signal Nabokov's artistic transformation of his personal reality.

But as the identification of his "likes and dislikes" with Martin's suggests, Nabokov imported more than people, places, and things from the world of his daily existence into the worlds that he created. He also made his characters into unlikely partial spokespersons for his opinions. As V. said of Sebastien Knight, Nabokov has the "queer habit of endowing even his most grotesque characters with this or that idea, or impression or desire that he himself might have toyed with" (*RLSK* 114). Thus the odious Kinbote, despite the fact that his approach to Shade's poem is a classic example of a critic detecting his own footprint in an artist's creation, shares Nabokov's contempt for Freud and psychoanalytic critics and approves heartily of John Shade's approach to teaching, which is strikingly similar to that described by Nabokov in interviews.11 Nabokov even occasionally incorporates his
literary productions into his works. The novel that Shchyogolev proposes in *The Gift* (198) sounds like an embryonic version of *Lolita*, and in *Look at the Harlequins!*

Vadim Vadimyvich seems to have produced a counterpart to nearly all of Nabokov's novels. Of course, the interesting point is that like the incidents from Nabokov's life, these borrowed literary productions are also transformed and distorted. Much of the humor in *Look at the Harlequins!* stems from the confusion caused by the similarity of Vadim's books to those of some other émigré author.

Vadim's *Tamara* is referred to as *Mary*, and his *Kingdom By the Sea* is mistaken for an "obscene novelette about little Lola or Lotte" (*LATH* 218).\(^{12}\)

While Nabokov's novels fairly teem with writer figures and others who seem to hold some of Nabokov's opinions, or possess aspects of his creative genius, these characters typically remain mere "literary impersonations," incidental figures created solely to embody some particular aspect of Nabokov's philosophy or creative urge. When they are fully developed figures, the additional details of their characterization serve to distinguish them from the author. Nabokov cautions us against ignoring these distinctions and identifying "the designer with the design" (*The Gift* 9). Just as Nabokov distributes bits and pieces of his biography among his fictional characters, so he gives out only "odds and ends" of his literary talent and opinions.

Thus Douglas Fowler's thesis that Nabokov's novels
habitually include a central character capable of having written the work in which he appears needs qualification. First it is in the "incidental" characters, like Vladimirov and Koncheyev in *The Gift* or the émigré novelist to whom Hermann addresses his work in *Despair*, that Nabokov is willing to recognize part of himself, while he insists that he is not to be identified with Fyodor Gudunov-Cherdyn'tsev and that he would not have written the biography of Chernyshevsky as Fyodor did (*The Gift* 9; Field, *Nabokov: His Life in Part* 30). More importantly, Nabokov never entirely subordinates himself to his fictional characters so that even in ostensibly first-person narratives the narrator is never quite capable of having produced the multiple meanings his narrative generates for Nabokov's readers. Neither Humbert Humbert nor John Ray, Jr recognizes that Vivian Bloodmark is an anagram of Vladimir Nabokov, and Kinbote's puzzlement over "why our poet chose to give his 1958 hurricane a little used Spanish name (sometimes given to parrots) instead of Linda or Lois" amuses the reader, who is reminded that the author of *Lolita* is also the author of the novel which contains Kinbote's commentary (*PF* 243). Nabokov's impersonators include all those characters like Vivian Badlook in *King,* *Queen,* *Knave,* the famous Swiss author Mr. R, in *Transparent Things,* the sincere entomologist Vladimir Vladimirovich in *Pnin* and the "anthropomorphic deity" of *Bend Sinister,* who by virtue of their names, hobbies, nationalities or
intrusions into the narrative serve to remind us of Nabokov's authorship.

The inclusion of writer figures who have written works similar to his own also allows for the possibility of what Andrew Field calls "auto-criticism" (*Nabokov: His Life in Art* 29). In *The Real Life of Sebastien Knight*, through the narrator's discussion of the works of his novelist brother, Sebastien Knight, Nabokov comments obliquely on his own writing (Field 28). Aside from the obvious affinities between Nabokov's works and Sebastien's that Field and others have noted, critics have repeatedly applied V.'s assessment of Knight's use of parody to Nabokov: "He used parody as a kind of springboard for leaping into the highest region of serious emotion" (91). And as already noted, Sebastien's habit of giving versions of his own desires or opinions to his characters is shared by Nabokov. In *The Gift* Fyodor's poetry and his biography of Chernyshevsky share certain affinities with Nabokov's own youthful poetry and his later irreverent biography of Gogol, which he was perhaps already contemplating at the time he wrote *The Gift*. While the auto-criticism of *The Real Life of Sebastien Knight* is predominantly positive, Konchyev's assessments of Fyodor's faults, from an "excessive trust in words" to an overreliance on puns and a tendency to "sometimes say things chiefly calculated to prick [his] contemporaries," seem to constitute Nabokov's acknowledgment of minor defects in his writing, thus pre-
empting external criticism and categorizing these problems as trivial flaws which he is working to either eradicate or develop into "special virtues" in future works (*The Gift* 351-352).  

Finally, *The Gift* also contains a concise portrait of an "obscure" author which foreshadows the self-portrait Nabokov later painted in his interviews and prefaces. The subject of the portrait is the transparently named Vladimirov who had already written "two novels--outstanding for the force and swiftness of their mirror-like style" at the tender age of twenty-nine. As a conversationalist Vladimirov was singularly unattractive. One blamed him for being derisive, supercilious, cold, incapable of thawing to friendly discussions--but that was also said about Koncheyev and about Fyodor himself, and about anyone whose thoughts lived in their own private house and not in the barrack room or a pub. (*The Gift* 333)  

While the physical description of Vladimirov which precedes this is satirical, the young novelist ultimately emerges as a superior figure aloof from the vulgarity of barrack rooms and pubs, the domain of hack writers and ignorant critics.  

IV  

Because his fiction is so rich in these forms of covert self-expression, which also serve to illustrate Nabokov's recognition that all self-presentation involves
artifice, the turn to formal autobiography and to prefaces during the "fourth arc" of his career comes as something of a surprise. What is distinctive about Nabokov's auto-criticism is precisely the fact that it occurs as part of the fiction, not in "separate essays and reviews" and that Nabokov "not only explains but also evaluates his own writing" (Field, Life in Art 29). In his authorial commentaries, beginning with "Vladimir Nabokov on a book entitled Lolita," Nabokov speaks directly to his readers in a voice set apart from the narrative and not identified with any of the "literary impersonators" therein. Nabokov had played with the possibilities of forewords before (the presence of John Ray, Jr.'s "Foreword" to Lolita compels Nabokov to present what would have been his own preface as an afterword) and would do so again in Pale Fire, but in these cases he assumes a persona. What is more important is the status of these fictional foreword writers in regard to the literary works--Lolita, or the Confession of a White Widowed Male and "Pale Fire": a poem in heroic couplets--which they present to the public. Neither Charles Kinbote, nor John Ray, Jr., even within the fictional worlds of the novels, is the author of the poem or confession for which he writes a foreword. They are merely editors and commentators striving for "the last word" (PF 29) by getting in the first word, instructing their readers in how to approach the work that follows.

When Nabokov wrote his afterword to Lolita, he placed
his name prominently at the head of the essay, as if to alert readers from the very beginning that this time it was the author speaking. Nabokov is acutely aware of his reader's probable mistrust of this apparent attempt to cast off all fictional disguises and even uneasily shares it:

After doing my impersonation of suave John Ray, the character in *Lolita* who pens the Foreword, any comments coming straight from me may strike one--may strike me in fact--as an impersonation of Vladimir Nabokov talking about his own book. A few points however, have to be discussed; and the autobiographic device may induce mimic and model to blend. (*Lolita* 313)

Ironically, far from recognizing the Ray "impersonation" and expecting another, few readers were in a position to be struck as forcibly as Nabokov himself by the oddness of this attempt to speak in his own voice. Unfamiliar with his Russian works or his three previous English novels, readers of the Olympia Press edition were apt to take Ray at face value. If, because of the way threads of the fiction are interwoven throughout the Foreword, the reader could not assume that Ray was a real person, many took his comments to represent Nabokov's own defense of his work. This misperception was the principal point that Nabokov felt he needed to "discuss" with his readers.

The verb "discuss" makes Nabokov's intentions sound more egalitarian than they are. As he would later indicate
in essays and interviews, he is not particularly interested in engaging in dialogue with critics about his work. His care in distinguishing his own voice from that of his persona stems from the effort to find not an objective voice with which to talk about his work so much as an authoritative one. Throughout his career Nabokov was skeptical of claims to objectivity. His novel Despair involves a man whose pretense of objectivity, his claim to possess "an outside view of himself," completely blinds him to the glaring flaws in his "work of art," a "perfect crime" which goes disastrously wrong. Ray's objective assessment of Lolita, complete with statistical support for the prevalence of pedophilia, leads him to praise it as an ethical book whose aim is to serve as a warning to "parents, social workers, educators" (Lolita 8), a conclusion which neither of its authors, Humbert and Nabokov, would have supported.

If neither author nor commentator is capable of an objective evaluation, the author nevertheless has certain privileges in speaking about his or her work that the critic does not share. In fact what convinces Kinbote of his unique qualifications for editing and interpreting Shade's poem is certainly not any expertise in English or American poetry but his belief that he has inspired the poem, that he had in fact given Shade his theme and story and was thus a kind of co-author of the poem. When the textual evidence against this becomes too overwhelming,
Kinbote fights back first by drafting a couple of variant lines and then by embedding his own story in the commentary, despite the fact that he must manufacture points of connection between it and Shade's poem. Thus by the time he comes to write the foreword, Kinbote can take the authoritative tone that his authorship of the commentary—without which "Shade's text simply has no human reality"—permits him to assume (PF 28).

The evaluations Nabokov makes, then, are not objective but personal. Nabokov tenderly evokes those scenes, "certain points, byroads, favorite hollows" which give him the greatest sensation of aesthetic bliss. Nabokov first stresses the private nature of this pleasure:

Every serious writer . . . is aware of this or that published book as a comforting presence. Its pilot light is steadily burning somewhere in the basement and a mere touch applied to one's private thermostat instantly results in a quiet little explosion of familiar warmth. (317)

This comfortable familiar pleasure is related to the "ecstatic moans" of rediscovery Nabokov and his uncle experience in Speak, Memory when they comes across beloved children's books, unread for many years (76). But in recalling Lolita, the pleasure of authorship is added to the pleasure of reading. Nabokov remembers creating these scenes as well as responding to them and feels a kind of serene satisfaction in contemplating this literary
achievement. Some of these key scenes are cherished in part because of personal associations which have little to do with the novel. For instance, one favorite passage is that depicting "the tinkling sounds of the valley town coming up the mountain trail (on which I caught the first known female of *Lycaeides sublivens* Nabokov)" (*Lolita* 318). But aside from these personal associations the passage is an important one because it is at this point in the novel that Humbert begins to comprehend that he has robbed Lolita of her childhood. By referring to these scenes as "secret points, the subliminal coordinates by which the book is plotted," Nabokov again stresses their inaccessibility to the casual reader or to the foolish ones who "begin reading the book under the impression that it something on the lines of *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*" (*Lolita* 318).

Nevertheless, though the reader is denied the warm glow of satisfied authorship, he or she is not left freezing in the cold. At the same time that Nabokov stresses his artistry, pointing out that he has plotted this intricate secret design and has spent "a month of work" in creating the portrait of the Kasbeam barber, he also counters the apparent coldness and moral indifference of the claim that his art is concerned with aesthetic pleasure only, not with morality, by stressing his warm personal feelings about the book and offering to share the essential scenes with the reader, scenes which are not specifically sexual ones.
Nabokov, then, invites the readers of his preface to follow his lead and construct a reading of the book which does not center around its alleged pornographic features. The very trouble he takes in listing his key scenes while noting that "these and other scenes will be skimmed over or not noticed" by many readers suggests that he wants to call his readers' attention to them, that he believes that his interpretation should influence how the book is read. Although he seems to mock the traditional literature teacher's question about the author's purpose in writing a book and to despair of ever providing an intelligible explanation of the book's "origin and growth" (313), he commits the "intentional fallacy" without a qualm and spends almost the whole preface explaining himself to the reader. He notes indignantly that "although everybody should know that I detest symbols and allegories . . . an otherwise intelligent reader . . . described Lolita as "Old Europe debauching young America" (316). The interesting point is not whether this particular interpretation is a valid one, but the implications of Nabokov's rebuttal. He argues that from a known piece of information about an author (that he detests symbols and allegories) we can infer his intentions (he did not deliberately employ any symbols in his work) and from these intentions dismiss as ludicrous any interpretation not consonant with them.

Nabokov's intention in the prefaces seems to be the opposite of what Field claimed it was in the internal auto-
criticism of his novels. He is concerned less with
evaluation than explanation. His primary concern is to
correct misinterpretations and explain what the work means
to him, in order that his own interpretation may be
accepted as the definitive one.

To do this he needs to present himself as the author
of his work, something that Nabokov could not do without
feeling like he was donning a mask, stepping into a public
role. Nabokov claims to have signed *Lolita* after
"realizing how likely a mask was to betray my cause" (315).
This is even more true in the case of the afterword. The
more readily we recognize the "Vladimir Nabokov" of the
preface as a persona, mimicking his author, the quicker we
are to mistrust that voice and reject Nabokov's own reading
of his novel. One of the ways in which Nabokov aims to get
around this difficulty is by resorting to the "autobio-
graphic device," revealing a little of his personal life to
the reader, creating the kind of "human reality" which
would help his readers to believe in him as a person so
that they could accept his authority as an author. Despite
Nabokov's acknowledgment that his self-revelation is a
"device," part of a strategy, he succeeds in commanding the
reader's respect and sympathy.18

V

The *Lolita* afterword was not the first time that
Nabokov openly turned to autobiography. *Conclusive
Evidence: A Memoir* appeared in 1951. Much of its contents
had been previously published, but in magazines like The New Yorker and The Atlantic Monthly where, as with Mary McCarthy's memoirs, the reader was implicitly invited to "[take] them for stories" (Memories of a Catholic Girlhood 3). But Nabokov, like McCarthy, wanted these stories to be recognized as truth. Thus he prefaced the collection with a brief "Author's note" which, though it acknowledges the previous appearance of "versions" of the chapters (and that additions had been made to some of them in order to complete the book) principally serves to claim autobiographical truth:

This account of the author's European past is as truthful as he could possibly make it. If there are any lapses, they are due to the frailty of memory, not to the trickery of art.

The careful reader will notice that Nabokov does not disavow the "trickery of art" in this memoir; he merely claims that it is not responsible for the lapses from historical truth. Nabokov has maintained that all great art involves deception, and though the original title suggests cold, hard facts, Conclusive Evidence mingles enough artistic trickery with its documentation of Nabokov's life to qualify as art. For instance, the trickery of art leads Nabokov to mention truthfully that of all the Russian émigré writers in Berlin in the 1920's and 30's he was most interested in Sirin without explaining that "Sirin" was his own pen name. When Nabokov recreates
Mademoiselle's first sleigh ride to Vyra through the "stereoscopic dreamland" of the Russian landscape, it is the trickery of art that invites us to believe that we and Nabokov are present there, only to have Nabokov remind us that he is imagining the scene on a walk through the New England snow. "The snow is real, though, as I bend to it and scoop up a handful, forty-five years crumble to glittering frost-dust between my fingers" (CE 61). Again it is only through Nabokov's art that the snow and the vivid picture of the winter landscape, rather than the intervening years, become the reality.

The difference between autobiography and fiction for Nabokov is not that the trickery of art is present in one and not in the other, but that memory has a different role to play, which in turn places some constraints on the writer's freedom to employ the trickery of art. According to Nabokov, "imagination is a form of memory . . . an image depends on the power of association, and association is supplied and prompted by memory" (SO 78). In a creative writer imagination is the dominant form of memory. The factual memory, our capacity for retaining names, dates and other historical details, or the ability to sort recollected incidents into chronological order, is comparatively frail, which can lead to "lapses" especially when the imagination intrudes to impose a pattern on the amorphous past. For instance, throughout Conclusive Evidence Nabokov gives his age as being one year younger
than it actually was because of "the inclination in retrospect to equate my age with that of the century" (SM 13). Autobiography differs from fiction in that it requires the factual memory to assert itself against the imagination, something that Nabokov finds difficult.  

But Nabokov makes another distinction between different kinds of memories: there are brittle, "intellectual rather than emotional" recollections and then there are "permanent, immortal" memories to which one is passionately attached (SO 12). The true task of autobiography is the re-collection of such important recollections into a pattern which illuminates their true significance and preserves it. Thus in Chapter Five of the autobiography, which was the first that Nabokov wrote, he explains his autobiographical impulse in terms of redeeming such precious memories from the artificial world created by his imagination:

I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on the characters of my novels some treasured item of my past it would pine away in the artificial world where I had so abruptly placed it. . . . [I]ts personal warmth, its retrospective appeal had gone and, presently, it became more closely identified with my novel than with my former self. . . . The man in me revolts against the fictionist and here is my desperate attempt to save what is left of poor Mademoiselle. (SM 95)
In his autobiography Nabokov stops viewing his memories as raw materials for his art and turns to them instead as jewels to be treasured, a kind of "intangible property" or "unreal estate" through which he can possess again the loved people and places lost through death and exile (SM 40). As in the afterword to Lolita there is a sense that the real audience is Nabokov himself, that the book is written to recapture that lost "personal warmth," in which the reader does not share. Yet the autobiography was intended for publication, and in it Nabokov seems to drop his guard before the reader in a way that he had never previously dared.

It is almost as if Nabokov wants to humanize his image. If he did not share Hawthorne's fear that authorship made one a cold-hearted analytical observer, he was aware that even his earliest critics found him unfeeling. As Mary Shelley's critics pondered what diseased mind could have created Frankenstein and his creature, so Nabokov's reviewers wondered about the man who located his fictions "in an asylum of tortured grotesques, frequently homosexual and mad to one degree or another" (Roth, "Toward the Man" 51). Nabokov jokes that his first English translator of Despair quit disapprovingly after one chapter because he suspected the book to be a "true confession" (Despair 7), but many readers were ready to suspect Nabokov of some kind of secret perversity.

Nabokov discusses his sense of the inadequacy of
critical response to his work in relation to Sirin:

His work kept provoking an acute and rather morbid interest on the part of his critics . . . the mystagogues of émigré letters deplored his lack of religious insight and of moral preoccupation. . . . Conversely, Sirin's admirers made much, perhaps too much of his unusual style, [and] brilliant precision . . . [They] were impressed by the mirror-like angles of his clear but weirdly misleading sentences. (CE 216-17; SM 287-88)

Both kinds of critics were unsatisfactory, although Nabokov obviously preferred those who could appreciate his imagery and style to those who dismissed even that because of the perceived moral emptiness of his fiction.24 For the critics who praised his brilliant verbal patterns also tended to find him sterile. Nabokov did not write didactic fiction (as he repeatedly insisted) but that did not mean that his works were without meaning or void of human emotion. He once spoke of Invitation to a Beheading and Bend Sinister as indictments of totalitarianism and in the afterword to Lolita associated the state of aesthetic bliss with "tenderness" and "kindness" as well as "curiosity" and "ecstasy" (SO 156; Lolita 317). In the autobiography we see that tenderness again and share Nabokov's most loved memories.25

But we cannot simply take the autobiography to be an
extended revolt of the man against the fictionist, for the presentation of the man is simultaneously a presentation of the fictionist or rather the creative artist.\textsuperscript{26} Not only is the subject matter of the autobiography frequently concerned with the sources and development of his artistic consciousness (Chapters Two and Thirteen), his first literary creations (Chapter Eleven) and his theories of fiction (Chapter Fourteen), but throughout he is conscious of the autobiography as a work of art. He begins Chapter Eight by proposing to "show a few slides" and Chapter Fourteen by calling attention to a metaphor which transforms the major dislocations of his life into a smooth pattern, "a colored spiral in a small ball of glass." The purpose of autobiography is "the following of thematic designs through one's life" (\textit{CE 9; SM 27}) and if one has to juggle chronology to do this, so be it.

I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another. Let visitors trip. (\textit{CE 92; SM 139})

His concession to factual memory then does not extend to adherence to a linear pattern in relating his life story, nor is he troubled by the inevitable distortions of detail which might creep into his recollections. As he later told an interviewer, "the distortion of a remembered image may not only enhance its beauty with an added refraction, but provide informative links with earlier or later patches of
the past" (SO 143). The distortion is redeemed both by the "aesthetic bliss" it provides (its beauty is enhanced) and by the way it contributes to the overall pattern of the autobiography by suggesting "informative links" to other patches of the past.

VI

In the revised version of the autobiography and in the prefaces, Nabokov continues to stress the fictionist rather than the man. In the prefaces especially, he begins to cultivate the image of the obscure author creating private universes where visitors are likely to trip. There are only a few personal revelations and these are undercut by exaggeration and circumspection or balanced by an emphasis on artistry. For instance, at the end of the Lolita afterword, Nabokov laments his "private tragedy" of having to abandon his native Russian for "a second-rate brand of English" (318-319). Yet the very poetry of the language he uses to describe his supposed limitation, complaining that his English is devoid of "the baffling mirror, the black velvet backdrop, the implied associations . . . which the native illusionist, frac-tails flying, can magically use to transcend the heritage in his own way," makes it difficult for a reader to believe in the seriousness of Nabokov's lament. So at the point of a seemingly important personal revelation, the reader is triply disappointed. The poignancy of the loss is undercut by the reader's suspicion that Nabokov is indulging in false modesty; Nabokov's rich,
natural idiom remains tantalizingly inaccessible to the reader (who is presumably unable to read Russian); and the reader is warned that this private tragedy "cannot, indeed should not be anybody's concern" (318).

Nabokov's prefaces to the English editions of his Russian works are full of such tantalizing references, usually relating to his experience of exile. In the forewords to The Gift and The Eye Nabokov tries to explain Russian émigré society in Berlin to the American reader, who knows nothing about it because bunches of pages have been torn out of the past by the destroyers of freedom ever since Soviet propaganda . . . misled foreign opinion into ignoring or denigrating the importance of Russian émigration (which still awaits its chronicler). (The Eye 8)

But despite his evidently strong feelings on this issue, Nabokov seems to again feel his "voice rising to a much too strident pitch" (Lolita 318). After all, he is not a "serious" writer; his books are "blessed by a total lack of social significance" (The Eye 9). So he turns from history back to his fiction. The characters he mockingly describes and the trivial details he lists as "tips" for the reader are hardly calculated to make the reader realize "the importance of the Russian emigration." He claims that his characters are not representative Russian expatriates in any meaningful way, for "they might just as well have been Norwegians in
Naples" (*The Eye* 7).

In *The Gift* he returns to the subject and for one paragraph seems to express real sorrow at the loss of a community of Russian intellectuals, real frustration at being misunderstood and underappreciated by "American intellectuals (who, bewitched by Communist propaganda, saw us merely as villainous generals, oil magnates, and gaunt ladies with lorgnettes)" (*The Gift* x). But Nabokov immediately moves to a position of artistic detachment, which he finds possible because the world of *The Gift*, though once bound up with Nabokov's actual experience, is now "as much of a phantasm" as the worlds he created in other novels (x). Nabokov proceeds to sketch the ways in which the masters of Russian literature are woven into his novel and then comments on the difficulties of translation. The reader is again made aware of the barrier of language (and in this case cultural experience) separating him or her from Nabokov. 29

Nabokov's prefices follow the *Lolita* afterword in refusing to make any intimate revelations about the author's personal past, but there is another autobiographical possibility open to Nabokov. He can use the preface to express his intentions in writing the book. The prefices are accordingly full of statements of theme and purpose, yet Nabokov seems wary that such pronouncements might leave him open to the charge of having "a moral in tow" after all (*Lolita* 318). Therefore he spends comparatively more time
talking about what the books are not meant to do and to be, and when he talks about his intentions he prefers to concentrate on formal and stylistic effects rather than thematic ones. Because Nabokov sometimes makes exaggerated claims for his rhetorical brilliance (as in the preface to *The Defense*) and manages to be both pretentious and modest at the same time (as in the foreword to *Glory* where he shifts into the third person before praising the "mastertricks on the part of the wizard who invented Martin" [xii]) the whole prefatory exercise threatens to become self-parody. We do begin to harbor a suspicion that, after all, these forewords are only "an impersonation of Vladimir Nabokov talking about his own book" (*Lolita* 313).³¹

The "Introduction" to *Bend Sinister* strikes me as paradigmatic. It begins with a breezy autobiographical account of the writing of the novel, composed in the midst of a harrowing schedule that seems much less conducive to writing than anything Hawthorne had to endure at the Custom House. Apparently since his days were filled with lepidoptery and teaching, Nabokov wrote the book at night, pacing around the apartment, pencil in hand, "under an old lady with feet of stone and above a young woman with hypersensitive hearing" (xi). Despite subsisting on four hours of sleep, supplemented with four packs of cigarettes daily, Nabokov's "health was excellent." His humorous tone and his obvious relish for the feverish pace of his life—he calls his laboratory a paradise and refers to this period
of his life as "cloudless and vigorous"—prevent the reader from feeling real sympathy for Nabokov's plight. Instead the opening paragraph serves as a light-hearted reminder of Nabokov's dedication to authorship at a time when the readers of his adopted country failed to appreciate his merits. Perhaps there is an implied reproof that his American readers were not up to working as hard as he was, and thus for want of energetic appreciation, the novel landed with a "dull thud."

Now on the second time around Nabokov prepares to take these lazy or indifferent readers by the hand and introduce them to his important novel. He begins with the title, telling us what he meant it to suggest, but quickly moving on to how he expects people will interpret it:

This choice of title was an attempt to suggest an outline broken by refraction, a distortion in the mirror of life, a sinistral and sinister world. The title's drawback is that a solemn reader looking for "general ideas" or "human interest"... in a novel may be led to look for them in this one. (xii)

Because this book is not a translation of a Sirin novel previously reviewed by Russian émigré critics and because it was not widely reviewed when published in 1947, it is not burdened with a critical heritage. Nabokov thus has the opportunity to preempt his future critics and dictate how they will read his novel. But he is so attuned to the
possibilities of misreading that he immediately jumps from explaining his intentions to denying emphatically intentions that were not his.

As Nabokov launches into a tirade against discussions of "general ideas" in relation to fiction, he makes a curious statement: "The purpose of this foreword is not to show that Bend Sinister belongs or does not belong to 'serious literature.'" (xii). Dismissing the concept as "a euphemism for the hollow profundity and the ever-welcome commonplace," Nabokov implies that he is above such concerns and, given his views about didacticism, allegory, and "what is called the literature of social comment," to consider for a moment that Bend Sinister could aspire to such a dubious distinction is preposterous. Yet because fully a third of the preface is devoted to distancing Nabokov and his novel from such literature, the reader must acknowledge that to establish such distance is one purpose of the introduction. The idea that Lolita was pornography seemed preposterous to Nabokov as well, yet he still had to refute that charge in his afterword. Much as he would have liked to, Nabokov could not ignore these preposterous misreadings, and it is a repeated function of his prefaces to refute them.

If one purpose of the preface is to argue that Bend Sinister does not belong to "serious literature," another purpose is to argue that it is serious literature in a non-pejorative sense. Nabokov had long been convinced that he
was a major writer, and now that the public stood poised to confirm his stature, Nabokov was concerned first to demonstrate that he was not a writer of vulgar best-sellers, and then to show just what made his writing important. Because his fiction is something of an acquired taste, which appeals to only the "superior" reader, Nabokov cannot rely on a general audience to discover his genius. Instead he is forced to highlight it for them in the preface. So Nabokov spends the rest of the preface painstakingly explaining himself to the reader, pointing out everything from his pervasive puddle imagery to such fugitive allusions as a "famous American poem" in Chapter 12, composed from scattered fragments of *Moby Dick*. Nabokov admits that most readers will not find these "delicate markers," but when he asks "who will notice" a half-dozen more of them, the answer is that the reader of the preface will. Nabokov reinforces his "obscure author" image (since "most people will not even mind having missed all this") and at the same time attempts to create an admiring audience.

The trouble is that in theory, Nabokov's ideal readers should not need such hints. The fact that he has to explain himself implies that he is appealing to "dunderheads" in spite of himself. Nabokov gets around this by ostensibly addressing his explanatory comments to "hack-writers," "Freudians," "human-interest seekers," and other undesirables. The explanatory forewords are "elementary"
(The Defense 10), designed for those unsophisticated readers, like the unskilled chess players mentioned in Speak Memory, who are apt to oversimplify and thus miss the beauty of the deceptive design of the novel or chess problem. Nabokov addresses these people because he knows that he cannot prevent them from reading and writing about his books and he wants to minimize the damage. At the same time, he invites those rare discerning readers, those who will "jump up ruffling their hair" after reading Invitation to a Beheading (8) to laugh with him at the follies of the plodding general readers.

But does the discerning reader exist? Reading the prefaces as a group, one cannot help noticing how formulaic they become. Nabokov rather contemptuously acknowledges his repetitions: "In the Prefaces I have been writing of late . . . I have made it a rule to address a few words of encouragement to the Viennese delegation" (The Defense 10). In another preface he jokes that "as is well known . . . my books are myth proof" (The Eye 9). Perhaps readers should know better, but evidently they do not. The obsessive themes endlessly repeated in the prefaces— that Nabokov was not influenced by any other writer, that his writings have no relation to psychoanalysis, social problems, the outside world, or his epoch, and that Nabokov is the sole creator and deity over his fictional worlds which consist in ingenious verbal patterns— all stress Nabokov's absolute control. But his constant repetition of them stresses that
there is one element he cannot control: the reader.

Despite his frequent use of the game metaphor to describe fiction writing in prefaces, autobiography, and interviews, Nabokov rejected it as an all-encompassing metaphor because of the existence of that one independent variable:

I'm not interested in games as such. Games mean the participation of other persons; I'm interested in the lone performance—chess problems, for example which I compose in glacial solitude. (SO 117)

Nabokov implies that the pleasure of composition is all that matters, that "in the long run...it is only the author's private satisfaction that counts" (BS xvii). The proud warmth this satisfaction generates will compensate for the bitter cold of the "glacial solitude" during composition. Thus the novel for which Nabokov professes to feel "the most esteem" is also the one he terms a "violin in a void," appreciated by almost no one but its creator (IB 7). The "almost" is important. Nabokov has to continue to believe in at least a few discerning readers for if none exist "then there is no sense in writing poems, or notes to poems or anything at all" (PF 207).

VII

Pale Fire was one of two books that Nabokov published in the midst of bringing out English editions of his Russian books; the other was Speak, Memory. If Pale Fire
expresses Nabokov's frustration with his misreaders, *Speak, Memory* salutes the discerning few for whom Nabokov's books are intended. While Kinbote's index frustrates the reader, refusing to divulge the hiding place of the Crown Jewels, the jewels in Nabokov's index lead back into the autobiography, drawing the reader's attention to the subtle patterning of the narrative and to the "vivid patches of the past" that are Nabokov's treasures. Nabokov knows "vulgar" readers will not stay away. Publishers and little old lady readers respond unimaginatively to his titles, and his preface complains of having to point things out to his critics. Nonetheless, the derisive voice of many of his other prefaces is not present in *Speak, Memory*. While in the prefaces he found himself writing for the very audience he professed to be indifferent to, in the autobiography he is writing for himself. In the prefaces he is revealing the "wayside hidden theme" and thus depriving it of its charm for the reader who is not allowed to discover it for himself or herself. In *Speak, Memory* he is discovering patterns, making connections, and sharing them, some openly, some more unobtrusively, with readers willing to work for the pleasure of finding them. That careless reviewers missed his vicious snap at Freud is a minor point compared to the aesthetic bliss that awaits the discerning reader in the obscure constellations of the index.

All the excursions into self-revelatory genres during the "fourth arc" of his life--prefaces, autobiographies and
interviews—can be seen as Nabokov's belated attempts in spite of his cherished obscurity, "to open an intercourse with the world." In the interviews and especially in the prefaces, Nabokov tried to extend his artistic control to encompass the reader as well, with frustrating results.\(^3\) But it was in *Speak, Memory* that Nabokov learned to do what Kinbote ultimately could not, "to trust the reader" to "appreciate the strangeness" and "enjoy" himself or herself in the obscurity of Nabokov's art (*PF* 207, 149).
Notes to Volume I

Notes to the Introduction

1 A letter to his publisher, J. T. Fields, indicates that Hawthorne's preference was for publishing *The Scarlet Letter* without the accompanying tales, but that he doubted the public would purchase such a somber book (Letter 428, 16: 307). The "Custom-House," he hoped, would throw a little sunlight over the "hell-fired story," thereby attracting more readers (Letter 430, 16: 311).

2 As late as 1961 the tendency to dismiss "The Custom-House" from interpretations of *The Scarlet Letter* was apparently prevalent enough for *College English* to publish an article by Sam Baskett advocating the desirability of reading and teaching "The (Complete) Scarlet Letter." Five years later Marshall Van Deusen opened his discussion of the preface by refuting critics who failed to find a significant connection between it and the novel (61). For a listing of other articles which address this issue, see Chapter One, note 13.

3 According to James Olney, "a theoretical and critical literature about autobiography ... began, in effect, in 1956, which is not even yesterday but only about an hour ago as such matters must be judged" ("Autobiography and the Cultural Moment" 7). George Gusdorf's "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" constitutes that beginning.

4 Further evidence of autobiography's marginal status as literature can be adduced from the fact that although
literary biographers generally discuss the composition of their subject's other literary productions, as Paul John Eakin observes, "writing an autobiography is not usually itself presented as a major event in the life of a biographical subject" ("Henry James's 'Obscure Hurt'" 676).

5 Benstock's interest in marginal texts also extends beyond autobiography. In "At the Margins of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text," she briefly mentions prefaces as "inherently marginal, not incorporated into the text, but appended to it" (204).

Despite the resemblance of their titles Barbara Herrnstein Smith has rather different concerns in her book On the Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature to Language, published five years before Benstock's article. Her marginal texts are those, like greeting cards, proverbs and advertisements which straddle the border between "natural" and "fictive" discourse. Natural discourse includes utterances, whether spoken or written, of "real persons on particular occasions in response to particular sets of circumstances" (15). Fictive discourse involves the representation of natural discourse (24). The greeting card verse is not natural discourse when it is written, but people purchase it to give to someone as an expression of their own feelings, and thus it functions as natural discourse in that context.

For Herrnstein Smith an autobiography or a preface is not marginal but an example of natural discourse. However,
individual works that are sometimes read as autobiographies (and thus as natural discourse) could also be read as a representation of a possible autobiography and thus as fictive discourse (48). Herrnstein Smith's point is that we must choose one or the other in order to determine how to read the work. "[T]he classification one chooses will differentially direct, or be directed by, one's experience of the work and the manner in which one interprets it" (48).

Critics of Henry James seem inclined to recognize this resemblance at least implicitly. William Hoffa sees the autobiography as "The Final Preface" while Millicent Bell sees the prefaces as "a sort of autobiography of his creative growth" ("Henry James and the Fiction of Autobiography" 465) and thus a preliminary version of the history of the imagination which comes to fruition in the autobiography. Mutlu Blasing reads the prefaces as "autobiographical literature" in The Art of Life: Studies in Autobiographical Literature.

Olney ("Psychology") and Grierson suggest that autobiographies and prefaces fulfill some of the same functions and thus that autobiographies do not require prefaces. Only Albert Stone has observed that "autobiographers commonly commence not with chapter one but with an introduction or preface," required or not (265). The question of the role of prefaces to autobiographies will be the focus of Chapter Seven.

My designation of the autobiographies of creative
writers as "literary autobiography" should not be confused with Willis R. Buck's distinction between psychological and literary autobiographizing. According to Buck we are all psychological autobiographers in that "the human mind seems to have a need to construe itself even though the constructed identity, a formalization, is something other, something fundamentally at odds with the heterogeneous activity at the center of mental life" (478). All acts of 'self-contemplation' constitute a form of autobiographizing (482). Literary autobiographers are people who repeat this psychological writing on paper, and attempt to fashion a unified self through language (483). Thus anyone who writes an autobiography would be a literary autobiographer.

8 See Lejeune (Le Pacte autobiographique 14-15), Olney ("Autobiography and the Cultural Moment" 3-5), and Bruss (Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre 1-2) on the difficulty of defining autobiography. In "Autobiography as De-facement," Paul de Man suggests that the only way out of this impasse is not to consider autobiography a genre at all but a "figure of reading" (920-922).

Feminist critics charge that most critical definitions of autobiography, such as the paradigm of autobiography set out by Georges Gusdorf, have tended to exclude texts written by women, both because of an emphasis on individuality and the privileging of public over private forms. See Susan Stanford Friedman's essay in Benstock's
The Private Self and Benstock's introduction to the collection. Benstock observes that Gusdorf excludes "random reflections on self and society, such as diaries, journals and letters" from the category of "self-conscious autobiography" (15) and suggests that "these are the forms women are more likely to use for writing about the self" (173).

Although personal letters, diaries and journals are certainly instances of writing about the self, I do not consider them as "autobiography" here because they lack the public dimension in which I am interested. The autobiographies I examine in this dissertation are attempts to articulate the private self for the public, attempts to present or introduce oneself to the public. And some women do write such "authorial introductions," although Shelley could do so only in a preface and Glasgow could do so only with the stipulation that it be published posthumously.

9 Derrida considers "prefaces, along with forewords, introductions, preludes, preliminaries, preambles, prologues and prolegomena" (9). Grierson's introduction to his collection subsumes the "prefaces, introductions, dedications and epilogues" of the title under the category of introductions.

10 Roger Chartier's work fills a parallel role in the study of French literature.

11 Other works of this type include the monographs on James by Anne T. Margolis and Marcia Jacobsen.
Barthes saw himself as articulating insights about the nature of writing that, influenced by surrealism and the practice of poets like Mallarmé who attempted to resist the "tyranny of the author," were already becoming common. He claimed not to be presenting a radical theory but reviewing what "we now know" about the nature of writing and authorship (146).

Michel Foucault also makes this point ("What is an Author?" 129-30). He further suggests that writing has completely lost its expressive function (116). "The quibbling and confrontations that a writer generates between himself and his text cancel out the signs of his particular individuality" (117). This obviously creates difficulties for autobiography when viewed as the expression of an individual self through writing.

See Paul de Man, Michael Sprinker, Louis Renza, Paul Jay and Willis Buck. In "Unity Identity Text Self" Norman Holland, without discussing autobiography explicitly, argues that identity is a kind of theme constructed from the heterogeneous "data" of the self. He posits an analogy: the self is comparable to a literary text and the identity attributed to that self is comparable to the unity a reader finds in the literary text in order to perceive meaning. The authorial self is not the only fictional construct implicit in a written text. Walter Ong observes that the audience implied by any written text is "always a fiction" constructed by the writer.
Even some deconstructionists feel this urge to back out of a dead-end street. After outlining a procedure for reading autobiography deconstructively and proceeding to apply it, Buck suggests that such a reading is unethical because it ignores the intentions of the author, who is after all doing through writing what all people do psychologically: superimposing a unified identity on a heterogeneous subjectivity.

Eugene Goodheart argues that despite the dominant view of the self as a "fictional construction" rather than a natural fact, the opposite is actually the case:

> The ordinary experiential self is a natural fact, . . . [W]e intuitively, instinctively experience a sense of identity, or at least of continuity of our identities . . . without it . . . we would suffer a radical sense of fragmentation, discontinuity, emptiness. (452)

See also Olney on the continuing fascination of critics with the concept of the self even while they are in the process of denying it ("Autobiography and the Cultural Moment" 23).

In "Roland Barthes, Autobiography and the End of Writing," J. Gerald Kennedy argues that Barthes himself, toward the end of his life, felt the need to revise his view of writing as "a game without players" (383). Barthes became conscious of a personal need to write and to communicate with readers through writing (384).
Kamuf admits that "the institution of authorship has shown a remarkable capacity to return even after being pronounced dead" (15).

Notes to Chapter 1

1 See Letters 79, 317 and 421 (15: 259, 16: 104, 365) for examples of Hawthorne's willingness to oblige autograph seekers. In a letter to George Ticknor dated March 4, 1859, Hawthorne worries about losing the reputation, the name he has acquired for himself with the reading public, by too long a silence, and thus appearing as "a new Author" (Letter 1030, 18: 164).

2 One exception would seem to be the uncharacteristically long introspective entries on his mother's death, in which Hawthorne appears to be writing in order to sort out his feelings about his relationship to his mother and his reaction to her death, rather than making notes for future fictional use.

The English Notebooks are more discursive, and they provide not preliminary notes as much as a first draft of many passages in the essays of Our Old Home. But as Hawthorne suggests in his dedication, Our Old Home was itself a substitute for the novel he would have liked to write, but found himself unable to complete. This prefatory dedication will be discussed in Chapter Three.

3 In an early study of self-portraiture in Hawthorne's fiction, Amy Reed claims that Hawthorne was not motivated to write fiction by a desire for self-revelation or "self-
expression in any real sense" (40). My claim that fiction was the preferred means of self-expression for these two authors does not imply a serious disagreement with Reed. I am not claiming that "self-expression" was the only or even a principal reason they wrote fiction, but only asserting that their fiction did have an autobiographical element and that they, especially Shelley, seemed to prefer this indirect form of self-expression to any more direct form.

Recent biographies which examine the intersections between Shelley's life and work are Jane Dunn's, Bonnie Neumann's and Muriel Spark's. For some biographical readings of Frankenstein see U. C. Knoepflmacher, Ellen Moers, Susan Harris Smith, Margaret Homans, Janet Todd, and Gilbert and Gubar. Recent-book length critical studies with a strong biographical emphasis include William Veecher's Mary Shelley: The Fate of Androgyny and Anne K. Mellor's Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters.

For a survey of biographical criticism of Hawthorne's work through the mid-seventies, especially The Scarlet Letter, see Spengemann's "Bibliographical Essay" in The Forms of Autobiography (237-44). Recent biographically-oriented book length studies include Philip Young's Hawthorne's Secret (in which he argues that incestuous desire for—or perhaps even incest with—his sister Elizabeth is the secret sin behind Hawthorne's work and that the "The Custom-House" is a kind of coded confession whereby the worst may be inferred) and Gloria C.
Erlich's *Family Themes in Hawthorne's Fiction: The Tenacious Web*.

6 Spengemann (132-165) reads *The Scarlet Letter* as an attempt at "poetic autobiography," that is, a writer's use of fictive, rather than biographical materials to discover "some ground on which conflicting aspects of the writer's own nature might be reconciled in complete being" (132), while Barbara Johnson identifies Victor's transgression, "the desire for resemblance, the desire to create a being like oneself," as "the autobiographical desire *par excellence*" (4). Johnson then reads Shelley's guilty identification with Victor in the preface as stemming from her analogous indulgence of this autobiographical desire, not in the preface, but in the novel itself.

7 Let us take one example from a text, *Our Old Home*, which purports to be a collection of more or less factual observations culled during the author's visit to England, and in which the narrator is thus implicitly Hawthorne himself. In the chapter, "Outside Glimpses of English Poverty," Hawthorne recounts a visit to an English workhouse where a dirty, diseased orphan took a fancy to one of the party and followed him about, begging to be picked up and caressed. Torn between pity and disgust, the man is able to conquer his aversion just long enough to take up the miserable child. The narrator watches "the struggle in his mind with a good deal of interest" and solemnly draws a moral:
No doubt the child's mission in reference to our friend was to remind him that he was responsible, in his degree, for all the sufferings and misdeemors of the world in which he lived, and was not entitled to look on a particle of its dark calamity as if it were none of his concern. (301)

What the text slyly conceals, Hawthorne's journal reveals: "our friend" was Hawthorne himself.

This little episode makes a nice analogy for a feature of Hawthorne's prefaces which I will discuss in Chapter Three. Hawthorne's description of the man whom the child singled out echoes his criticism of himself as a writer in several of the prefaces: "shy of actual contact with human beings, afflicted with a peculiar distaste for whatever was ugly, and furthermore accustomed to that habit of observation from an insulated stand-point which is said . . . to have the tendency of putting ice in the blood" (300-301). Yet just as he is cautious about claiming responsibility for tales or novels that may touch what is ugly or shunned by society, he refuses to confess openly that it was he who embraced the wretched child.

Philippe Lejeune's definition will suffice to describe what I mean by traditional autobiography: "a retrospective prose narrative of his own existence by a real person, emphasizing his individual life and particularly the story of his personality (Le Pacte autobiographique 14, my translation).
What made autobiography more problematical than biography was the egotism of the first person, the "one large capital 'I'" (Letters 2: 48).

In fact Hawthorne claimed that "of all things I delight in autobiographies" in reference to Autobiography of an Actress; or Eight Years on Stage by Anna Cora Odgen Mowatt (Boston: Ticknor, Reed and Fields, 1853), which he called "an admirable book" (Letter 697, 17: 166). Hawthorne does not say whether Mowatt served her heart up to the public, a phrase he used to ridicule writers who were too eager for intimacy with their readers, but the women writers who won his admiration were usually those he accused of indecent self-exposure. I will take this idea up again at the end of the chapter.

Of course reading someone else's autobiography is one thing and writing one's own is another.

Timothy Dow Adams ("To Prepare a Face") discusses the blurred line between truth and fiction in both prefaces and autobiography and Hawthorne's willingness to play with the meaning of "truth."

The phrase "a proper lady" is Mary Poovey's. In her view the central function of the preface is to demonstrate that Shelley is such a lady. I will further discuss her reading and my own divergences from it in Chapter Two.

It is this aspect of the preface, his knowledge
that he is expressing a personal grievance that presumably could be "wholly omitted without loss to the public or detriment to the book" (*SL* 1), which causes much of Hawthorne's defensiveness. As he writes to his publisher, "I was rather afraid that it might appear absurd and impertinent to be talking about myself, when nobody, that I know of, has requested any information on that subject" (Letter 428, 16: 307).

The original controversy about whether the preface was extraneous or had a meaningful relationship to the novel has been largely decided in favor of the latter point of view. Sam Baskett, Daniel Cottom, Frank MacShane and David Stouck stress thematic connections between the novel and the introduction, while Berner cites structural parallels. John Bayer, James Cox (*"The Scarlet Letter"*), Daniel Hoffman, Dan McCall (*"Design"*) and Marshall Van Deusen focus on how "The Custom-House" works to create a receptive reader for *The Scarlet Letter*. I quite agree that "The Custom-House" has become an integral part of *The Scarlet Letter* (as Shelley's "Author's Introduction" has become part of the novel *Frankenstein*). But my point here is that on the surface level Hawthorne does use the preface to tell the story of his unjust dismissal from government employment, a story that has nothing to do with the novel and is thus a kind of personal intrusion. As Cox puts it Hawthorne has "displaced the narrative of [Hester's] original sin with his Custom-House narrative of himself"
("Reflections" 146). Then, on a deeper level he turns the story of his dismissal into a much more significant story of his rediscovery and ultimate realization of his literary powers. The "first story" of the book is not so much a political narrative, but a story of authorship. Hawthorne "displaces what had happened between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale in the forest with his fictive discovery and conception of the fiction." (Cox, "Reflections" 142).

14 It was Fanny Fern who, in Hawthorne's eyes, cast decency aside to write *Ruth Hall*. Hawthorne professes to admire the book and its author, but notes that Fern writes "as if the devil was in her" and comes "before the public naked as it were" (Letter 781, 17: 307-08). Hawthorne wrote of Howe's *Passion Flowers*, "What a strange propensity it is in these scribbling women to make a show of their hearts upon your counter for anybody to pry into that chooses." Yet he praises her: "I esteem her beyond comparison for the first of American poetesses" (Letter 704, 17: 177).

15 See Nina Baym's *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (63-4), and Gloria Erlich's *The Tenacious Web* (12).

16 For more information on these popular female novelists see Baym's *Woman's Fiction* and Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs*.

17 In fact, in "The Custom-House," though the fiction is fairly transparent, Hawthorne pretends to be "the editor or very little more" rather than the author of the novel.
See Harry C. West and Mary Dejong for a discussion of Hawthorne's use of the "editorial pose" throughout his oeuvre. Bayer (253) and Christine Brooke-Rose discuss its use in "The Custom-House."

Sophia's disavowal of literary ambitions was apparently part of her charm for Hawthorne. Although he admitted her skill in travel writing (Letter 972; 18: 64), Hawthorne would not, as he confided to a friend, have tolerated a "literary rival at bed and board" (Letter 1052; 18: 204). Fortunately for all concerned, Sophia rejected an invitation to become a contributor to The Atlantic and seemed content to have human progeny exclusively (Letter 1051; 18: 202). Hawthorne announced the birth of his third child with the notation that "Mrs. H. has published a new work" (Letter 498; 16: 462).

Notes to Chapter Two

1 Begun in 1816, Frankenstein was completed in May 1817. Shelley's husband Percy made several editorial emendations to the manuscript, and the book was published anonymously in 1818 with a short unsigned preface. The preface, though it purports to be the author's, was actually written by Percy. A second unrevised edition of the novel was printed in 1823. For the third edition, Shelley revised the novel and added the "Author's Introduction," but retained the earlier preface as well.

2 The Literary Magnet or Modern Journal of Belles-Lettres N. S. 1 (Jan 1826), 56. Cited in Lyles 143. Mary
Farret's Bakhtinian reading of the novel links the multiple origins of the novel in the introduction to the multiple voices of the novel which she reads in terms of subversion of narrative authority.

On June 2nd, 1822, Mary was writing to Maria Gisborne complaining that both novels had apparently disappeared in Godwin's hands, though she trusted that *Valperga* at least would be published: "I have not even heard of the arrival of my novel; but I suppose, for his own sake, Papa will dispose of it to the best advantage--If you see it advertized, pray tell me--also its publisher &c &c" (*Letters 1: 237*). On April 10, 1823 she admitted her dislike of the changed title (from *Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* to *Valperga: Or, the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*) in a letter to Jane Williams, adding that "all alterations that have been made since I read it to you in my little room at Pisa have been made by my father" (*Letters 1:331*). In her edition of Shelley's letters, Betty T. Bennett also quotes Godwin's letter informing Mary of the impending publication and the "great liberties" he took (*Letters 1: 323n*).

As for Shelley's anonymity, although *Frankenstein* was published anonymously in 1818 and early reviewers assumed male authorship, the French translation of 1821 (*Frankenstein ou le Prométhée moderne* 3 vols. J. S. trans. Paris: Corréard) attributed authorship to "Mme. Shelly [sic]. A pirated American edition of 1833 (Philadelphia:
Cary, Lea and Blanchard) listed "Mary W. Shelly" [sic] as author, and Shelley signed her 1831 introduction with the initials M.W.S. According to P. D. Fleck, Mary Shelley's authorship of *Frankenstein* was known to most members of the Shelley circle who agreed to keep it a secret (240).

Reviews of *Valperga* establish that the author's gender was known, and reviews and advance notices of her later novels, beginning with *The Last Man*, frequently mention "Mrs. Shelley" as the author. All bibliographic information comes from Lyles.

4 On the other hand, according to her introduction, Shelley also experienced writer's block when she did have Shelley's encouragement: "I felt that blank incapability of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship, when dull Nothing replies to anxious invocations" (*Frk* 8).

5 James P. Carson, Devon Hodges, Anne K. Mellors, Barbara Johnson and Mary Poovey discuss the novel's narrative structure as a means of authorial self-effacement.

6 See Sandra Gilbert's "Literary Paternity" for a reading of the introduction as a myth of a feminine equivalent to "literary paternity," the use of male sexual imagery to describe the creation of a literary work (197-198).

7 James Rieger and John Clubbe debate the reliability of the introduction in regard to providing the facts of the novel's genesis.
In a discussion of the Frankenstein myth, Chris Baldick argues that the series of reinterpretations of the novel including film versions, parodies, allusions, and "plain misreadings" cannot be dismissed as "just a supplementary component of the myth; it is the myth" (4). In a more profound way, Shelley’s preface is not just "an appendage to a former production" but becomes part of that production. Although, in the hands of critics, readers, and adapters, the Frankenstein myth, like Victor’s monster, exists independently of its creator and her intentions, the text of the novel is still subject to its author’s control. Because of her privileged position as author of the novel, Shelley is able to enlarge it to incorporate into it her experience of authorship and her interpretation of its meaning.

While Shelley did make actual revisions in the text in 1831 (see Mellors, Chapter Nine and Poovey, Proper Lady 95-106), I am arguing that her preface itself constitutes the most important revision, extending its influence over later generations of readers and critics. Unlike Margaret Homans, who is wary of readings "unduly influenced by the superimpositions of the introduction" (147), I think readings shaped by the novel as revised in 1831 are no less valid than those which see the novel as the literary creation of the teenaged Mary, expressive of her experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, the death of loved ones, parental and social rejection, guilt and so on. In
the former group I would put the interpretations of Richard Dunn, Farret, Fleck, Hogle, Homans (despite herself), McInerney, Mellors, and Veeder. In the latter I would put the readings of Moers, Todd, Bowerbank, and Gilbert and Gubar.

Assigning categories is difficult—especially since one thing Shelley's introduction does is read the novel as the literary creation of the teenaged Mary—and probably useless. For when I speak of Shelley as "reading" or interpreting her novel through her introduction I am not implying that she is "reading in" things that were not there originally, but that with the passage of years, Mary has inevitably distanced herself from the experiences associated with the writing of *Frankenstein* in 1816-17 and has grown from her original status as a neophyte in the literary world into an established author. Therefore, turning back to her novel in 1831, Shelley makes new associations and emphasizes different aspects of the novel; most notably artistic production (especially literary) now overshadows reproduction as the primary analogue for Victor's monstrous creation, though the two metaphors were always linked and are still in 1831.

Mary Shelley neglected this maternal role only in regard to her fiction. With regard to her surviving child, Percy Florence, she emphatically refused financial help which would depend on her surrendering contact with the child and allowing someone else to raise him. In so doing
she defied male authority in the person of Sir Timothy Shelley and was able to take this defiant stand only because of her success in bring her literary efforts, if not her self, forward in print. (See Letters 1: 314, 315, 316-18).

10 There is a more subtle, yet more aggressive sense in which Shelley's works can be taken as mockeries. Veeder, Mellors, Randel, and Fleck discuss ways in which Frankenstein undercuts, revises, challenges, or parodies tenets of Romanticism or Percy Shelley's philosophy.

11 Poovey's argument, both in her original PMLA essay and in her revision in Proper Lady, is similar to mine in many respects, but we ultimately come to opposite conclusions about the implications of the introduction. Poovey admits that Shelley does not entirely reject her authorial role (Proper Lady 103-4) and even acknowledges that the introduction seems to sanction the very self-dramatization and assertion Shelley purports to regret ("PMLA 333). However, she argues that "the mature Mary Shelley is able to countenance the creation of Frankenstein . . . only because she can interpret these creations as primarily the work of other people and of external circumstances" (Proper Lady 104). Although I admit that Shelley never entirely eschews her humble tone, continues to prefer not to assert herself in public, and consistently takes a conservative view of the proper role of women, I think she does manage to reconcile her apparently
conflicting roles as woman and as author. And she ultimately does this not by apologizing for her creation, but affirming it, by identifying herself not with Victor, but with Walton.

12 See Mellors, Chapter Three for a discussion of these changes and Letters 1: 42 for Shelley's carte blanche to Percy.

13 Leaving Mary at home strikes me as an effort to domesticate her. The same goes for Percy's insistence that his wife's aim was to exhibit the "amiableness of domestic affection" which seems in line with the advice of The Ladies Monthly Museum and of Leigh Hunt who praised the passage about the cottagers as the novel's best. It is interesting that Percy, in the preface he wrote for her, has Mary withdraw and deny the intent to advocate any opinion or criticize any philosophical doctrine. Considering Mary Shelley's insistence in later life on not being a person of opinions, one wonders whether Percy was echoing a tendency already evident in Mary, or setting up a model of feminine behavior for her to follow.

14 Carson suggests that this passage is an obscure way of attributing the real act of authorship to Percy, since Mary credits him with the form of the novel and has previously explained that the act of authorship consists in "giving form to dark, shapeless substances." Carson argues that Mary Shelley is presenting a version of authorship that is non-assertive and non-possessive. She does not claim
"absolute property" in her work (445-6).

I would raise two objections. First, Shelley presents herself in the preface as the primary moulder and fashioner of the tale and seems to undercut Percy's contributions. Second, Carson's claim that Shelley's version of authorship eschews self-assertion and the concept of individual creativity goes against the tone of the passage in question. Shelley is possessive and self-assertive here. She clearly implies that she does not owe her husband any significant debt for the composition of *Frankenstein*.

To reproduce the structure exactly would seem to require both a foreword and an afterword. However, the opening on the far side seems appropriate since *Frankenstein* dies before he can finish his narrative by killing the monster, and, as Farret notes, Walton never closes his letter (4). The monster, the narrator of the supposedly fully enclosed narrative, reappears at the end and is permitted to escape. While I have argued earlier that the preface, like the encircling narrative frames, does tend to influence future readings of the story, an opening still exists for opposing readings. Hogle argues that Shelley anticipates this possibility as she hands the narrative over to future readers to "prosper" among associations that have nothing to do with her own (22, 43).

Mellors also notes this parallel between Mary's relation to Percy and Victor's relation to Walton (59).
I do not find any textual justification for Farret’s idea that Margaret Saville is an authorial figure, who in lieu of Walton (who seems to disappear at the end without taking leave) presents the completed narrative to the reader.

See Neumann’s account of Shelley’s attempts to write less "controversial" fiction which would please both herself and a conservative audience (215-17, 227, 235). Carson observes that there was a dispute between the Shelleys over an author’s obligation to make his or her works accessible to the public. Mary Shelley struggled to reconcile her respect for Percy’s works with her desire to edit them so that they would have greater popular appeal (Carson 434, 450).

My positive reading of Walton is shared by Poovey, J. M. Hill, and Peter McInerney, but for a persuasive conflicting view, see Veeder. Richard Dunn, Peter Brooks, and David Seed stress the failure of communication between Walton and Frankenstein and take a darker view of Shelley’s attitude toward language and writing.

Notes to Chapter 3

Critics who suggest an interpretation along these lines include Sam Baskett, Daniel Cottom, Carlanda Green, Dan McCall ("Design") and Rosemary Stephens.

See especially Paul John Eakin ("Hawthorne’s Imagination") and James Cox (both Hawthorne essays).

McCall is also suspicious of Hawthorne’s self-
criticism and argues that after plumbing the depths of the human heart, Hawthorne sometimes wants "to soften or disguise what he found there" ("Familiar Kind of Preface" 424). Frederick Crews notes that "rival passages" exist in Hawthorne's writing which, in contrast to Hawthorne's frequent denigration of his efforts in his prefaces, imply an awareness of his "special province as a writer" (11).

4 Frederick Newberry also makes this point (165).

5 For comparisons of "The Old Manse" and "The Custom-House" or discussions of the relationship between them, see Cox (The Scarlet Letter), Gloria Erlich (17, 22-24), Newberry, Teresa Toulouse (161), and Roberta Weldon.

6 See Neal Doubleday on Hawthorne's opinion of his early tales. John Willoughby claims that in "The Old Manse" Hawthorne is suggesting that, depending on one's point of view, his work both is and is not nonsense (57). He points to the use of the metaphors "weeds" and "blossoms" to describe his work as an illustration of Hawthorne's ambivalence (50).

7 In The Shape of Hawthorne's Career Baym suggests that Hawthorne withheld many of the tales for which he is most praised today (including these two and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux") from his first published collection because they did not fit the concept of authorship he had adopted in order to please the public. During the "Old Manse" period Hawthorne grew more confident, and after he entered his major phase with The Scarlet Letter he
condemned his earlier authorial timidity in the preface to The Twice-told Tales. I find her thesis provocative, though I think he remains more ambivalent than she allows even during his "major phase." Doubleday and John McDonald both discuss Hawthorne's principles of selection in choosing pieces for the collection.

8 See Bell Hawthorne's View of the Artist, Chapter Two. Edgar Dryden discusses Hawthorne's view of writing as a kind of enchantment in Chapter Four.

9 David Reynolds calls such literature Subversive and discusses the ways in which Hawthorne and other major writers used elements of the Subversive genres which fascinated them to create literary ambiguity. "In some of their best works, they explore the fluidity between virtue and vice, the subtle process by which the Conventional slides into the Subversive" (113). In "The Old Manse" Hawthorne seems to disguise the Subversive nature of some of his tales by depicting them as Conventional trifles.

10 Almost every book on Hawthorne touches on his view of the artist but for extended treatments of the subject see Millicent Bell's book and articles by Baxter, Carabine, Fairbanks, Gupta, Shinn, and Way. Gupta differs from most critics in her assertion that Hawthorne is not ambiguous in his treatment of the artist, but uniformly positive. She supports this view by dismissing characters like Coverdale and Holgrave as dilettantes rather than "true artists" and refusing to consider scientists like Alymer as artist
figures. But as Brian Way argues, Hawthorne seems not to have made such a rigid distinction between scientists and artists (14).

11 Baym also takes note of the discrepancy between the view of Owen Warland implied by the narrator and that warranted by the tale (Shape 110).

12 Aspects of this link between Alymer and Owen Warland are explored by Bell (51-58), Roy Male (Chapter Five), and Hugh Moore (279). On the other hand, Shinn sees Alymer as a failed artisan but maintains that Owen is a triumphant artist (133-34), while Simon Lesser maintains that despite Hawthorne's exposure of his follies, Alymer remains the "hero of the tale" (53).

13 Cox argues that "Hawthorne could never . . . quite wish to exempt himself from the implications of guilt and responsibility involved in having written the story. His refusal to exempt himself is one of his great distinctions as a writer" ("Reflections" 143). He adds that Hawthorne also felt shame in the act of publication, for making the products of his solitary chamber public (146).

14 The authors in Part Two of this study, on the other hand, defy Charvat's model. They wrote their prefaces after they had already attained "a certain measure" of critical or popular success.

15 See Erlich (7).

16 The publisher's of Delia Bacon's book, which proposed that Sir Francis Bacon wrote the plays attributed
to Shakespeare, insisted on a preface written by Hawthorne as a condition of publication.

17 Noting the frequent use of the pronoun "we" in The Marble Faun, Dejong argues, "As he composed the romance Hawthorne apparently wished to raise up the 'Gentle Reader' whose obituary would appear in the preface" (366).

18 McCall also notes this contrast ("Familiar Kind of Preface").

19 Male argues that Hawthorne "teases" his readers in The Marble Faun by providing clues that seem to provoke the kinds of inquiry he deplores in the postscript (158).

20 See Pauly (288-90).

21 Lisa Hodgens also compares "The Custom-House" with Hawthorne's response to the similar challenge of his final years.

22 Hawthorne wrote The Marble Faun after his years at the Consulate, and this seems to prove that his literary powers were no more exhausted by his Liverpool experience than they had been by the Salem Custom-House. But Hawthorne makes no mention either in the prefatory letter or "Consular Experiences" of the novel, perhaps because of his displeasure at the way it was received. In any case the uncertainty that plagued Hawthorne while he was writing the Marble Faun continues to be a factor. And since that novel grew out of his experiences in Italy, it cannot assuage his sense of failure in regard to his inability to create a novel from his consular experiences.
Among the many critics who suggest that some sort of fear of self-exposure or an unwillingness or inability to confront his buried feelings or psychological conflicts affected Hawthorne's writing are Crews, Dryden, Erlich, and Rudolph Van Abele.

It seems hardly fair to dismiss *Our Old Home* as an "idle weed." Certainly Hawthorne's descriptions of English workhouses and street life, squalid Scottish towns, brutal sea captains, and grotesquely obese English ladies indicate no "squeamish love of the beautiful." As a book of journalistic sketches *Our Old Home* merits praise. The chapter on Delia Bacon is sympathetic and insightful, "Outside Glimpses of English Poverty" is moving and "Civic Banquets" is at times quite funny. Arnold Goodman suggests that the book should be read as "less a romance substitute than that 'wiser effort' and resolute search for understanding of a previously unwritten common humanity and Hawthorne's relation to it" (152). But as Goodman acknowledges, Hawthorne did not conceive of his project this way but embarked upon it with "a sense of failure, human and artistic" (150). Hyatt Waggoner offers what seems to be a just appraisal of *Our Old Home*. According to Waggoner the book "showed that Hawthorne could still write trenchantly and beautifully on subjects that did not demand exploration of the depths of his imagination" (7). It is the failure to explore those depths that disqualifies the book as a "winter squash."
Using the criterion of whether they were able to rely for support upon their pens one would have to deny that Irving, Poe, Melville, and Dickinson, to name just a few, were authors as well. According to Charvat from 1800-1870, between 60 and 75% of American male authors held office or tried to get one. But he also notes that for writers like Hawthorne and Irving, who took their jobs seriously, official duties interfered with their writing, rather than providing the economic freedom to write as they pleased (294-95).

Notes to Chapter Four

1 Philippe Lejeune discusses the interview as a form of authorial self-presentation in which the control of the writer being interviewed is limited. Imprisoned by the mass media, "the writer can scarcely invent and shape the image which he intends to give of himself. At best . . . he can exploit to his advantage the figures permitted by a game in which he has no power to change the rules" (Je est
an autre 104, my translation). But Nabokov does assume this power. The rules of the interview are, according to Lejeune, the response to questions, the intention to speak for a public represented by the questioner, and quasi-immediate publication (105). While Nabokov does address the public, he does not submit to the dictatorship of the interviewer's questions but chooses which to answer; rather than allow his spontaneous utterances to be published, he introduces a delay in which he carefully composes and
writes out his answers. In live radio or TV interviews (with which Lejeune is primarily concerned) Nabokov would have had to forfeit such control, which explains his general avoidance of them.

2 Lejeune notes that some interviewers go beyond the view of themselves as questioners representing the public and adopt a listening and interpretive stance, prompting the subject to expound at length on his or her work and life. In this instance the writer enters into an autobiographical pact with the public while the interviewer is transformed into a critic who evaluates and "renders intelligible" the author's vision of himself and his work (109).

3 Nabokov's attitude toward the public in Strong Opinions might be compared to Hawthorne's in the "Postscript" to the Marble Faun, where while ostensibly accommodating his readers he refuses to give them the answers they seek and mocks their desire to know.

Augustus Kolich, in reference to Philip Roth, terms modern interviews with authors "forums of obfuscation" in which the author appears not as a "real" person but as a "literary object, an extension of his fiction" (160, 162). This assessment also seems appropriate to Strong Opinions.

4 Phyllis Roth's introduction to Critical Essays on Vladimir Nabokov offers a useful overview of the history of critical response to Nabokov's work.

5 As Nabokov explains in the foreword to Speak,
Memory: An Autobiography Revisited, the book was a "re-Englishing of a Russian re-version of what had been an English retelling of Russian memories in the first place" (12). Jane Grayson summarizes the variations among Nabokov's three versions of his autobiography (Conclusive Evidence, Drugie berega and Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited) and argues that the changes reflect Nabokov's awareness of a changed perception on the part of his American readers in regard to his literary stature. In Conclusive Evidence, she argues that he was writing primarily as a representative Russian intellectual, while in Speak, Memory he consciously presents himself as a famous author "whose family history, his hobbies, his writing habits, even his insomnia and his dreams are all good copy" (141). See Lejeune on the development, beginning in the first half of the 19th century, of this concept of the "grand écrivain" as a public personality and the accompanying general biographical interest in authors (Je est un autre 105).

The British edition of Conclusive Evidence was entitled simply Speak, Memory, but its content does not differ from Conclusive Evidence. The title Speak, Memory and abbreviation SM as used in this chapter refer to the 1966 book.

6 Nabokov welcomed such activity, praising the "brilliant results" achieved by those who "added their erudition to my inspiration" (SO 192), as long as critics
did not take things too far and begin transforming his works into their own inferior creations. That is he welcomed critical responses focused on illustrating his verbal mastery, responses which drew attention to his wordplay or pointed out his allusions rather than those which sought to interpret his novels through discussing symbolism or "meaning."

7 See Nabokov: His Life in Part and Field's follow-up volume VN: The Life and Art of Vladimir Nabokov.

8 In this particular case, Nabokov was objecting to John Updike's suggestion that Ada was a figure for Nabokov's wife. The other thing that Nabokov admitted could provoke him to respond to his critics was an attack on his scholarship (SO 146, 241). However, Nabokov's many prefaces and his indignant review of William Woodin Rowe's Nabokov's Deceptive World (SO 304-307) should put to rest the idea that Nabokov was as indifferent to his critics as he pretended.

9 Elizabeth Bruss compares Lolita to Speak, Memory in an essay which sees the former as a parody of autobiography subject to all the shortcomings of the genre, and R. Victoria Arana reads Despair as Nabokov's rejection of the Romantic tradition of confessional autobiography. More so than either of these, Nabokov's last novel Look at the Harlequins! makes his reservations about autobiography explicit. It purports to be the memoirs of Vadim Vadimyч N., a Russian-American writer whose literary career closely
parallels Nabokov's, but whose personal life is marked by some obvious differences. For instance Vadim has four marriages to Nabokov's one, and while Nabokov has a son, Vadim has a daughter who inspires incestuous feelings. The reader is constantly teased into identifying Vadim with his creator (after all "in rapid Russian speech longish name- and patronymic combination undergo familiar slurrings: thus . . . the hardly utterable tapeworm-long 'Vladimir Vladimirovich' becomes colloquially similar to 'Vadim Vadimych'" (LATH 249)) while being warned against it by learning such details as Vadim's ignorance of butterflies and his dislike for "the fluffier night-flying ones" (LATH 34).

H. Grabes, who points out that the book presents the kind of life one would have expected Nabokov to have led had the plots of his fiction truly been derived from the events of his life ("Parodistic Erasure" 281), aptly characterizes the book as a "satire on the unity of life and art" (Fictitious Biographies 106). Thus the reader must distrust Vadim's claim that the true value of the "oblique" autobiography lies in its revelation of the real life sources of his fiction. But there are several hints that Vadim possesses a Nabokovian awareness of the artifice and artistry involved in writing an autobiography, including the title, which shows him willing to take the advice of an invented grand-aunt and "invent reality," and his refusal to "adulterate reality" by narrating the personal details
of his life with his final lover (whom he may or may not have married).

10 See Grayson, Appendix D (227-231) for a listing of parallel passages between Speak, Memory and various novels. The acknowledgement of this incidental autobiographical borrowings seems also intended to distract the reader from a more meaningful kind of autobiographical reading which would seek to identify and explore characteristic themes and images that might give the reader greater insight into Nabokov's inner life. Roth laments the lack of this kind of autobiographical criticism ("Toward the Man").


12 The confusion of Vadim's book, not with the real Lolita but with the distorted version of the novel some of his more incompetent readers have imagined without bothering to read the actual text, is a quintessentially Nabokovian touch.

13 However, elsewhere Nabokov spoke approvingly of this biography and seemed to blur the line between himself and Fyodor (SO 156).

14 Since Fyodor has imagined this conversation it is, for him too, a form of auto-criticism.

15 The term "fourth arc" is an extension of Nabokov's division of his life in Chapter 14 of his autobiography into three arcs (childhood in Russian, young manhood in Europe, and middle-age in America) and has been used by
several critics to refer to the final two decades of his life which were spent in Switzerland. (Cf. Nicol and Rivers "Introduction" xi-xii).

Nabokov claims that it is his general practice not to respond to critical studies of his fiction, in part because he could not do so and remain an "objective reader" ("Anniversary Notes" 284). In Strong Opinions Nabokov implies that criticism may reveal something about the critic, but does not teach the writer anything about his own work or abilities (95).

One critic who does this is Diana Butler, who uses these subliminal points to work out an extended metaphor by which Humbert's passion for Lolita is compared to Nabokov's for butterflies. Her attempts to make this comparison comprehensive drew Nabokov's criticism (SO 96), as if in constructing an elaborate pattern of lepidopterial references she was invading his own territory, assuming an authoritative interpretation.

Donald Morton theorizes that the aestheticism of the postscript balances the moralism of Ray's foreword and mirrors the aestheticism/moralism duality of the novel proper (80). I would argue that Nabokov rejects Ray's interpretation completely and wants readers to accept the postscript as an authoritative comment on the novel rather than as a part of the novel or a frame for it.

In fact, before Conclusive Evidence was published, the chapter had appeared in a collection of Nabokov's short
stories, *Nine Stories*, and it, along with the chapter on his playmate Colette, was reprinted in another such collection, *Nabokov's Dozen*, in 1960. According to Andrew Field, Nabokov's planned sequel to *Speak, Memory* was to include two "short stories" (VN 285-7). Clearly the line between fiction and autobiography was not a rigid one for Nabokov. See Carol Schloss's reading of the artifice in the autobiography and the text's covert message about "the need for more flexible methods of the classification of texts."

20 Charles Kemitz reads *Speak Memory* as primarily Nabokov's struggle to reconcile his sense of personal history (memory) with the temporal sequence of objective public history.

21 At other points, especially toward the end of the book, the audience seems to be his wife and son, but in any case the impression of intimate audience rather than a public one is there.

22 Gleb Struve discusses how Russians tend to fault Nabokov for lacking "love for one's fellow human beings" which has always been "a salient feature of Russian Lit" (54). See also Ludmilla Foster's essay.

23 Perhaps the best example is the letter from two anonymous parents of a Cornell student who claimed to be in fear "for any young girl who consulted [Nabokov] at a private conference or ran into him after dark on campus!" Cited in Field, *Nabokov: His Life in Part* 277).
As Roth ("Introduction") suggests, the debate over whether Nabokov was a heartless esthete concerned primarily with verbal ingenuity and game-playing rather than a "full-fledged novelist" (Q. Anderson 12) has been a central one for Nabokov criticism. Most critics have recognized that the image of Nabokov the "fabulist" does not exhaust the possibilities of his work; many object to certain novels, such as Pale Fire, as being thin on significant content, while praising others as "compassionate" or "morally significant." See Clancy, Stegner and Quentin Anderson. Ellen Pifer and David Rampton both read Nabokov as in some sense a realist writer whose works do have a moral significance. On the other hand, Alfred Appel concentrates almost exclusively on elucidation and annotation of Nabokov's verbal puzzles and David Packman sees Nabokov as a writer of metafiction, but neither would accept Anderson's implication that Nabokov's writing is therefore a lesser achievement than that of realist writers. Robert Merrill's article is the best discussion of the debate and the issues involved.

David Shields contrasts the warmth and love of Nabokov's attitude toward his characters in the autobiography as opposed to his "cool and witty" approach to his fiction. Page Stegner contrasts the "intellectual coldness" of Pale Fire to the "evocation of beauty and tenderness" in Nabokov's "absorbing, moving memoir." Stegner sees Nabokov as a "deeply compassionate man who
tries to obfuscate that emotion by means of a brilliant style" (135). Stegner's comments evoke the tone of the autobiography better than Field's claim that the characters are mere "puppets of memory" which allow Nabokov to "evoke the past while leaving Nabokov's intimate life and family untouched" (VN 255). There is more warmth and love in Speak, Memory than Field allows, yet Nabokov's self-conscious artistry does hold the reader at a distance.

26 Roth ("Toward the Man") and Dabney Stuart discuss the issue of artistic control in Speak, Memory at greater length. See also L. L. Lee on the spiral metaphor from Chapter 14 of Speak, Memory, D. Barton Johnson on Nabokov's "alphabetic games" in Speak, Memory and elsewhere, and Janet Gezari on the chess problems metaphor.

27 Cf. The Tragedy of Sebastien Knight, Mr. Goodman's biography, which is also disappointing in its failure to reveal anything significant about the inner life of its subject.

28 There is a similar passage in the Foreword to Glory (xii).

29 Simon Karlinksy has written an article discussing, in part, just how much the non-Russian reader is likely to miss in The Gift (90-91).

30 As the earlier discussion of "autobiographical borrowing" demonstrated, Nabokov's prefaces call attention to the use of autobiographical elements in his works only to emphasize how these elements are artistically distorted.
Except for Morton and Butler on the Lolita afterword and an incredibly intricate argument by David Sheidlower linking the "Introduction" to Bend Sinister, chess problems, Chapter 14 of Speak, Memory, and Nabokov's last minute flight from the Nazis to an interpretation of Bend Sinister, only passing critical attention has been given to the prefaces. Clancy finds the foreword to The Defense "rather preening" and that to Invitation to a Beheading "acidulous." Hyde refers to prefaces collectively as "frequently misleading" (34) and Rampton would agree. They note that in his desire to assert the autonomy of his art, Nabokov exaggerates his isolation both from the "real world" of politics and social problems and from the works of other artists (Rampton 11-13). Both Rampton and Phyllis Roth note the aggressive, defensive quality of Nabokov's rhetoric as he lays down "strictures on how to read" (Rampton vii; Roth "Introduction"). Roth compares the prefaces to "shark-infested castle moat[s]" which contribute to the reader's or critic's discomfort in approaching the work ("Introduction").

Noting that for Nabokov prefaces had become a "mini-genre," John Pilling begins his reading of Speak Memory with a brief analysis of the "problem" of the autobiography's foreword (103-4). According to Pilling, the foreword is at once "informative and elusive." It seems concerned with facts, but we soon realize that even these facts are colored in "an imaginative and distinctive way" (104).
The foreword offers us a glimpse of Nabokov's methods and themes in the autobiography proper, especially the denial of time as a stable entity. (105).

32 See Stuart.

33 See Field on *Strong Opinions* (VN 365). Despite Nabokov's professed desire to engage in "the better kind of public colloquy" and to present an appealing verbal self-portrait, he frequently appears rude, pretentious, and resistant to any sense of intimacy with the interviewer or the reading public.
Authorial Introductions:
Presentations of the Self as Author
in Prefaces and Autobiographies

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Chapter Five
Swan Songs of a Persistent Novelist
Ellen Glasgow's *A Certain Measure* and *The Woman Within*

I

By the early nineteen-forties, Ellen Glasgow had become something of a "literary institution" (Fred McDowell 7) in Southern letters. Within the space of a decade two deluxe collector's editions of her work had been published to deferential and appreciative reviews, and her last novel, *In This Our Life*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in May 1942. But Glasgow—who had been bitter about the failure of an earlier and better novel, *The Sheltered Life*, to win the prize a decade before—could not simply accept this belated tribute to her fiction as the crowning triumph of a literary career that had produced nineteen novels and spanned forty-five years. Conscious that ill-health had prevented her from doing her best work on *In This Our Life*, Glasgow tried to gather her strength for a sequel, which she ultimately failed to complete before her death in 1945.¹ But her final literary efforts were not centered exclusively on fiction. At a time when a failing heart forced her to face her own mortality, much of her remaining strength was devoted to the completion of two assessments of her life and work as a novelist, which were intended to ensure that her literary reputation would live on: *A Certain Measure*, a collection of prefaces, and *The Woman Within*, her autobiography.

¹74
Both books were long in the making. The ultimate source of several of the essays eventually published in *A Certain Measure* dates back to articles written in the late twenties and early thirties. The germ of five of the chapters of *A Certain Measure* lies in the brief prefaces written in 1929 and 1933 for Doubleday's *Old Dominion Edition*, which included eight of Glasgow's novels. That edition was superseded by Scribner's twelve volume *Virginia Edition of the Works of Ellen Glasgow* in 1938, necessitating several new prefaces and expanded versions of the others. In particular the *Virginia Edition* prefaces placed additional emphasis on the idea of Glasgow's oeuvre as a social and economic history of Virginia, a view of her work for which James Branch Cabell claimed credit.

With a few final adjustments and the addition of a foreword and an essay on *In This Our Life*, the twelve prefaces were collected in a single volume for publication under the title *A Certain Measure* in 1943, though apparently Glasgow, with Cabell's encouragement, had been planning to collect the prefaces into a book on the craft of fiction (À la Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*) almost from the moment she agreed to prepare them for the *Virginia Edition*.

Though Glasgow was flattered by Scribner's request to bring out an edition of her works and welcomed the "opportunity to ramble over [her] mental universe" (*Letters 328*) which the project afforded her, she nevertheless found writing the prefaces a difficult and uncongenial task.
Remembering Cabell's encouraging words about her prefaces to the *Old Dominion Edition*, she requested and received editorial assistance from him, assistance she never publicly acknowledged. Once the work was behind her Glasgow was pleased with both the individual prefaces for the *Virginia Edition*, into which she had "put so much of myself" (*Letters* 236) and the book based on them, her "swan song," a "valediction" which brought her "praise and a very cordial appreciation" (Letter to Cabell, qtd. in Godbold 294). Discreetly attempting to ensure a favorable review of the *Virginia Edition*, Glasgow admitted that "this edition means more to me than anything I have ever had" (*Letters* 239), but *A Certain Measure* would come to mean more.

Afraid the book would be dismissed as a mere "book of prefaces," Glasgow insisted first that it was "a volume of literary criticism" (*Letters* 297), and later defined its genre more precisely as "a mingling of autobiography and literary criticism" (*Letters* 326). The book indeed was a special sort of autobiography, a story of authorship in which Glasgow presented herself as a "persistent novelist," an "honest craftsman," a "wilful author" and a "natural writer" (*CM* vii-viii) in contrast to the amateurish "modern novelists" who appear eager "to discredit the art they have attempted to practise" (*CM* 53).

According to Glasgow, *A Certain Measure* treated her books and "methods of writing" with "complete candor" (*WW*
270), while in *The Woman Within* she strove "to make a completely honest portrayal of an interior world and, of that one world alone" (*WW v*). Her autobiography, like her "book of self-criticism" as she sometimes referred to *A Certain Measure*, "was written in great suffering of mind and body" (*WW v*) and has an almost equally long history. In 1935 Glasgow enthusiastically declared her intention of turning her literary talents toward autobiography in letters to her publisher Alfred Harcourt and to a friend, Bessie Zaban Jones (*Letters* 184, 194). Although she at first expected the autobiography to be her last book, other projects intervened and in 1938 she confessed to Jones that "the autobiography has been put aside in the first rough draft" (*Letters* 236). According to her literary executors, F. V. Morley and Irita Van Doren, Glasgow began her autobiography in 1934 and worked on it intermittently in 1936, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1942 and 1943 (*WW viii*). In 1944 she resigned herself to leaving the work unfinished:

> It is too late now to revise or rewrite what I have written. Though I should live for years, I could not find the strength or the courage to go over these rough pages. (*WW v*)

Yet if, in her letter to her literary executors, Glasgow realizes the work must remain unfinished, she does not resign herself to its remaining unread. The executors are not to destroy it. Rather they are to edit and publish it, or failing that, to preserve it in "some safe place"
until, "in some happier age, an interest may revive in the life of the solitary spirit" (v). In 1954, nine years after her death, Glasgow's wish to have her autobiography appear posthumously was honored.

The strength of Glasgow's fervent desire to have her autobiography published may be gauged by her willingness to have her work appear in an unfinished form. As Glasgow herself points out in *A Certain Measure*, she was scrupulous about revising her work before presenting it to readers and was not above making critical alterations to the galleys (*CM* 263). "Every correction is important to me and vitally so," she instructed her publisher, "and if anything seems obscure, or appears to be an unconscious slip, will you instruct the proofreader to ask me what I meant [?]."

(*Letters* 177). For Glasgow, "It is the act of scrupulous revision (the endless pruning and trimming for the sake of a valid and flexible prose style) that provides the writer's best solace" (206). Each novel customarily involved three separate drafts and in the one case when her health prevented the third draft she was not able to overcome a sense of lingering dissatisfaction (*CM* 263, *WW* 291-2). But though *The Woman Within* never progressed beyond the "rough draft" stage, it was vitally important to Glasgow that it be published. For she believed that "my autobiography, even if it requires rather drastic editing in certain chapters, may be the best that was in me" (*Letters* 312).
II

Taken together, Glasgow's two self-assessments pose a problem for critics. For if both accounts are truthful reflections of how Glasgow viewed herself and her work, how are we to reconcile the different personalities that emerge from the two books, short of positing schizophrenia? The Ellen Glasgow of *A Certain Measure* is confident and proud, secure in the belief that she has made a lasting contribution to literature. To cite a typical passage:

> As a very youthful author, heartened by moderate success, I made several resolutions. . . . I resolved that I would never compromise with success. . . . I have had disappointments; . . . I have had resentments; but these were all as ephemeral as they were futile. . . . [T]hey were never strong enough to overcome the force of my original determination. . . . [T]hese past resolves . . . have helped me . . . to conserve my vitality as a writer. . . . For my spirit has not yet seemed to decline. Ideas are still thronging; and "something tells me," as beguilingly as this same ageless "something" told me in my youth, that my mind and pen are now engaged on a masterpiece. (*CM* 108-110)

By contrast, in *The Woman Within* Glasgow paints a very different picture of the role of certain resentments and disappointments in her life:
Though it is true I was a born novelist, . . . I flung myself into my work as desperately as a man might fling himself into a hopeless battle. For I was young; I was ardent for life; . . . I was wounded and caged. Recognition . . . might have saved me. . . . But I waited and worked and watched the inferior exalted for nearly thirty years; and when recognition came at last, it was too late . . . to make a difference in living.

(WW 152)

How then are we to reconcile the conviction of undepleted authorial vitality, the note of serene confidence of A Certain Measure, with the wounded and caged soul of The Woman Within, whose resentments, far from being ephemeral, are so deep that even the recognition she once craved cannot assuage them?

Cabell's solution to this dilemma was to postulate that Glasgow defensively assumed the confident air of A Certain Measure because at some level she was aware of the limitations of her literary talent (224). Others have suggested that Glasgow's account of anguish and suffering in The Woman Within is exaggerated. Glasgow-the-novelist overpowers Glasgow-the-novice-autobiographer and casts herself in the mold of one of her fictional heroines. In fact, Glasgow's claim to candor is attacked from all sides. McDowell suggests that she has "somewhat embellished the plain facts" (10), while Richard Meeker likens A Certain
Measure to "a guided tour in which certain rooms and lingered in too long and others kept suspiciously closed" (7).

Cabell is her most vocal critic, accepting her contention that The Woman Within contains some of her best work, but undercutting its claim to truth. He describes the autobiography as "that beautiful and wise volume which contains a large deal of [Glasgow's] very best fiction" and alleges that although he knew her better than anyone else did during the last twenty years of her life, he never encountered in her "quite the personage depicted in Ellen Glasgow's autobiography" (217). It is perhaps fitting that this most famous challenge to the truth of Glasgow's autobiography should come from the man who spoke, with tongue in cheek, of A Certain Measure as being "all Ellen Glasgow" (qtd. in MacDonald 86). For he believed that her intellectual autobiography was also a fiction—inspired by himself—a kind of novel about a young Southerner's plan to compose "in the more freely interpretive form of fiction, a social history of Virginia from the decade before the Confederacy" (CM 3).

But Cabell's enthusiasm for the project—he once confessed to Glasgow that "after all, though, I tend to forget it is your book" (Jan 9, 1941 qtd. in MacDonald)—and his justifiable resentment of her refusal to acknowledge his aid, blind him to the true aims of Glasgow's book. When Glasgow objected to the title A
Certain Measure, suggested by Cabell, because it sounded like the title of a novel, Cabell replied:

As to the title of the collected prefaces, I stay gravelled: I still think a title which might be the title of a novel is better than one which might be the title of a textbook. (July 28, 1941 qtd. in MacDonald 82)

But Glasgow, seeking critical rather than popular acclaim, wanted to appeal to a more elite audience than those readers who frequently made her novels best sellers. She wanted to reach "the small minority who read critical essays" (Glasgow to Cabell July 3, 1941 qtd. in MacDonald 82) and, to this end, might not have minded sounding like a textbook. (The titles she considered were *Life and the Novel* or *Life in the Novel.* ) She had proven that she could write successful novels. What she wished now to establish with *A Certain Measure* was that she was a conscientious, dedicated writer who could theorize intelligently about fiction. She wanted recognition of her critical voice in order to enhance her stature as a novelist.

Thus Glasgow's grudging adoption of Cabell's title (MacDonald 83) does not imply that she accepted the narrative he suggested as the controlling one for her book. That narrative (Glasgow as social historian) is a subordinate theme, enabling her to distance herself from Southern sentimentalists who produced "perennial romances" of the Confederacy, depicting the war as "a romantic
conflict between handsome soldiers in blue uniforms and Southern ladies in crinolines" (CM 11-12). Insofar as she rejects these myths and resolves to write of real life as experienced by the people of Virginia amid the social and economic changes wrought by the experience of the war and its aftermath, she is glad to accept Cabell's label of social historian. But this is a limited conception of her work as a novelist, which she largely abandons by the middle of *A Certain Measure* as she reaches the mature novels of which she is most proud: *Barren Ground* (1925), *Vein of Iron* (1935) and *The Sheltered Life* (1932).  

*A Certain Measure* instead records the struggle of a "born novelist" (192), amid familial and social disapproval and the indifference of an undiscriminating public, to realize her destiny as a writer. It depicts her determination to perfect her craft and claim her place in the world of letters, not as a regional novelist of the South, but as a writer of universal merit.

That same story, that of an imaginative young woman struggling to form herself into an artist, is told in *The Woman Within*, but its triumph is buried in an avalanche of self-pity. It is as if *A Certain Measure* were turned wrong side out, so that the suffering takes precedence over the success. The apparent message of *The Woman Within* is that although Ellen Glasgow was a successful novelist and a gracious southern lady, she was also a victim of enormous suffering and pain which she kept hidden from the world.
In *The Woman Within*, Glasgow presents her life as permeated with "an air of tragedy" (100), from the moment that baby Ellen is "stabbed . . . into consciousness" by a terrifying vision of a bodiless face, "round, pallid, grotesque, malevolent," staring in through the windowpanes at the child in her cradle (*WW* 3). Lacking words, little Ellen cannot convey to her mother and mammy the cause of her distress. Glasgow presents this scene of wordless terror as her earliest memory, but though she would mature into a writer, she never seems to surmount this feeling of helpless inability to make herself understood.

As the years pass, the causes of misery multiply: her father was oppressively cruel; one by one the people she loved died and left her alone; deafness further isolated her and robbed her life of joy. Yet, she cultivated a mask of gaiety and no one really understood her suffering.

The publication of the autobiography shocked Glasgow's living friends.¹⁰ No one had guessed that such bitterness lived in the heart of the lively lady they knew as Ellen Glasgow, a woman of whom one critic had written that "her personal story has been one of the quickly won and continuous success" (Louise Field 3). Her friend Marion Canby's reaction seems to second Cabell's contention that the real Ellen Glasgow is not represented by the persona of *The Woman Within*:

It seemed she had no philosophic acceptance of tragedy to help her through. . . . [H]er daily
life was filled with devoted care and, being indulged, she indulged herself in sorrow—perhaps! I don't know—but somehow *The Woman Within* seemed to me in many ways a different person from the Ellen I knew. (qtd. in Rouse, *Letters* 372)

But Glasgow not only admits, but emphasizes, that the self she showed to the world was not her real self: "I was still a child when I learned that an artificial brightness is the safest defense against life" (*WW* 67). Secure in the knowledge that the book would not be published in her lifetime, Glasgow dares to cast aside that protective defense in the autobiography. For instance, though she could not bear any reference to her deafness while she lived, she makes the approach of the "secret wolf of deafness," the inexorable closing in of the "wall of silence," a central theme of the autobiography (*WW* 120, 195).

Adept at concealing her inner pain from others with a "wall of deceptive gaiety" (*WW* 139), Glasgow also managed at times to deceive herself, as a few passages of her autobiography make clear. After entitling the section of her book devoted to her twenty-year romance with "Harold S." (Richmond lawyer Henry W. Anderson) "The Years of the Locust," after depicting him first as a shallow social-climber and finally as a pathetic old man, "chas[ing] in circles after immature persons" in a vain effort to retain his youth (*WW* 244), Glasgow assures the reader that her
account is "innocent either of mockery or malice" (246) and insists that she has never been able to feel more than a momentary sense of hostility or dislike for anyone (245). Glasgow seems entirely unaware of the obvious hostility The Woman Within vents at Harold, Glasgow's older sister Emily, and, most intensely, at her father. Elsewhere in the autobiography Glasgow makes the incredible claim that she "was not disposed by temperament, to self-pity" (113). Clearly in The Woman Within, which offers ample evidence to contradict both of these self-assessments, Glasgow paints a "truer" portrait of herself than even she realizes.

Yet passages from the first and last chapters demonstrate that despite her emphasis on candor, Glasgow made no simplistic claim to provide an accurate factual record of her existence. In discussing her horrific first memory she muses, "I cannot, even now, divide the aftergrowth from the recollection" (WW 4). And she closes the autobiography with a question: "How can one tell where memory ends and imagination begins?" (281). But, as Godbold argues, if the autobiography is sometimes malicious, occasionally vague and chronologically inexact, and often borders on the melodramatic; . . . it is always a brutally frank expression of her inner feelings toward herself and her acquaintances and a rare exercise in self-analysis (vii).

Glasgow repeatedly insists that her book is psychologically
and emotionally honest (WW 161, 214). It is Glasgow's attempt to dispense with evasion in order "to attain a clearer vision of my own dubious identity" (WW 130).

On the surface this attempt appears to be frequently sidetracked by verbal hand-wringer, and indeed, what McDowell labels the "annoyingly shrill tone" of Glasgow's autobiography can lead readers to see in it little more than a pathetic account of personal suffering (McDowell 28). But though Estelle Jelinek cites *The Woman Within* as a characteristically self-effacing feminine autobiography in which the autobiographer fails to mention her professional achievements (9), Glasgow's quest for a vision and an identity leads her to an affirmation of her authorial role. The vision she finds is a pattern of loneliness and suffering; the identity she establishes is that of a serious author:

At the age of seven my vocation had found me. the one permanent interest, the single core of unity at the center of my nature, was beginning to shape itself and to harden. I was born a novelist, though I formed myself into an artist. Looking back on my life I can see the a solitary pattern has run through it. . . . Always I have had to learn for myself, from within. Always I have persevered in the face of an immense disadvantage. (WW 41)

The theme of solitariness echoes Glasgow's claim in *A*
Certain Measure to have made her own way in the world of letters, while her emphasis on her personal suffering is consistent with the implication, running like a dark thread through the patchwork of *A Certain Measure*, that a great writer is peculiarly sensitive to suffering. Louis Auchincloss observes that as Glasgow "conceived of her personal suffering as more intense than anyone else's, so did she conceive of herself as a novelist on the Tolstoian scale" (40). Rather Glasgow claims to have been great in suffering in part to bolster her claim to great literary achievement.

Glasgow's portrait of herself in *The Woman Within* as a long-suffering victim, a martyr to the ideal of Southern womanhood like the eponymous heroine of *Virginia*, does not contradict the confident authorial self-portrait of *A Certain Measure*; rather it fills out the darker side of her authorial identity. As Linda Wagner argues, "the two accounts--one ostensibly of her life and her life and the other of her art--dovetail into a collage that gives us . . . [a] view of Ellen Glasgow, woman writer" (15). Glasgow's story of authorship fills two volumes, and we must read both in order to understand the implications and importance of the authorial role for Ellen Glasgow.

III

That this role is central to *A Certain Measure* is evident from the book's "Foreword." Not in the least timid about bringing herself "forward in print," Glasgow scorns
any suggestion that she should be humble or apologetic, but, "without excuse," offers this account of the "method" of a "persistent novelist" to the reader:

It would appear, from the best examples, that the proper way of beginning a preface to one's work is with a humble apology for having written at all. But . . . to disparage an art one has attempted to practise since the age of seven cannot but seem a gesture wholly theatrical. What honest craftsman . . . would squander a lifetime upon work that did not contain for him a certain measure of achievement? (CM vii)

Glasgow immediately seeks to establish herself as such an "honest craftsman" by a forthright rejection of the "hypocritical virtue" of humility (vii). At the same time, she portrays herself, in what has always been a favorite self-image, as a rebel casting off a stagnant tradition. She will not observe the forms of the "ancient tradition of prefaces" (even to parody them like Hawthorne or to assert herself in spite of them like Shelley). Thus she does not beg the indulgence of the "Gentle Reader" though her prefaces and her fiction, as much as Hawthorne's or Nabokov's addresses an ideal audience. Instead, just as she implies that she persists in writing, "regardless alike of the appraisal of critics and the indulgence of readers," because of her own sense of her achievement, she indicates that she offers this book in the knowledge that it will be
"important to at least one writer": herself (viii).

Yet, Glasgow, unlike Nabokov, does not replace humility with arrogance.\(^{16}\) She has "attempted to practise" the art of fiction; her own judgment is that she has succeeded in a "certain measure," and she implicitly invites her readers to assent to this claim. She will let them judge for themselves and will aid them by honest self-assessment. But if like Hawthorne and Shelley, she is willing to criticize her early novels, she never accepts the role of amateur and insists that, to borrow Hawthorne's terminology, in her case, the "ripened autumnal fruit" far exceeds the early windfalls.\(^{17}\)

Glasgow's identification of herself as author thus appears free of equivocation in a way we have not yet seen. "If I were to deny my life as writer," she asserts, "it would mean the denial of all that to me has represented reality" (CM vii). Instead of denying she affirms, and the terms she uses to designate herself in this affirmation are significant. She presents herself as a "natural writer," a "wilful author" and a "persistent novelist," and each term names an important aspect of Glasgow's conception of authorship.

Glasgow's designation of herself as a "natural writer" suggests that she viewed her literary talent as an instinctive part of her personality, a gift that was hers from birth or from a very young age. In both The Woman Within and A Certain Measure she recalls making up her own
bedtime stories about the adventures of an imaginary
friend, Little Willie (WW 23-24; CM 192-194). In A Certain
Measure Glasgow reflects that the youthful engagement of
her imagination with Little Willie's adventures taught her
much about being a novelist:

He showed me that a novelist must write, not by
taking thought alone, but with every cell of his
being, that nothing can occur to him that may not
sooner or later find its way into his craft... I
learned, too, ... that ideas would not come
to me if I went out to hunt for them. (CM 193-94)

The story (told only in The Woman Within) of her first
literary creation, a hymn composed when she was seven,
illustrates this principle of unconscious composition. The
child, playing outside one summer day, finds herself
"singing aloud in time with the wind in the leaves" (WW
36). She realizes she has invented the words and rushes to
write them down, rejoicing that she has created "po'try."
Thus, as these two stories of early compositions
illustrate, even as a child Glasgow learned to trust her
novelist's "intuition" and to absorb the experiences of
everyday existence in order to transform them, through her
creative imagination, into art: "Whatever happened to me or
to Mammy Lizzie happened also, strangely transfigured, to
Little Willie" (CM 193-94). Throughout A Certain Measure
Glasgow presents as an axiom the idea that great art comes
from experience, transfigured or "illuminated" (13-4) by
the creative imagination of the born novelist.

In order to illuminate that experience the novelist must be able to recognize the "deeper realities" underlying "the life of accepted facts" (CM 14, vii). Glasgow stresses that this enhanced imaginative capacity is the mark of the "predestined artist"; it is not a skill which can be learned. To be a "natural writer" is to have an acutely responsive imagination, and to have senses attuned to the "strangely valid life of the mind" (CM vii). Thus, for Glasgow Vein of Iron was "woven . . . of blended sounds, of ringing, of murmuring, of harmonious, and dissonant sounds," while "The Sheltered Life was shot through with scents and colors" (CM 183-84). Where the ordinary person would hear only the sound of the wind, the natural writer hears poetry.

Since as a natural writer Glasgow possessed "a ear for cadences" (CM 179) and a "natural ear for rhythm" (58), she felt that her deafness was particularly devastating. It was a bitter irony to Glasgow that she "who was winged for flying, should be wounded and caged!" (WW 139). But there is a certain symmetry in the idea that having been privileged with the gifts of the "natural writer," including her ear for cadences and rhythms, Glasgow should find her ears unfitted for normal human intercourse. If Glasgow is isolated by her deafness, she also shows herself as isolated by her preference for the interior world of her imagination. According to Glasgow, "All writers who are
born and not made are condemned" to "a strange exile" (WW 37), and Glasgow is made to feel this exile even in early childhood. Her first experience of authorship ends not in pride but in humiliation. After her older sister makes fun of her hymn, she begins to write in secret and "to live two lives twisted together" (WW 38). According to Glasgow this is the fate of every natural writer. While the writer outwardly continues to exist in the external world, "with his deeper consciousness he continues to live that strangely valid life . . . which is related to the essence of things in themselves and to the more vivid world of the imagination" (CM vii-viii). Since no one else can understand or penetrate the more important interior world, the writer is inevitably alienated.

One of the implications of the special perceptiveness of the "natural writer" is that such a writer will be acutely sensitive to suffering. In an early letter to her publisher Walter Hines Page, dated December 26, 1902, Glasgow contrasts The Deliverance with "popular romances," and born novelists like herself with the authors of "sugared romance":

It will always be the quiet happy souls who will turn out the popular romances, and we others, who have never been able to forget our Gethsemane and our cross, will continue to inflict upon our publishers the books that go down into the heart of things and appeal to those few who have been
there before us. And so I have begun upon another big, deep human document which no one will understand because it is wrung from life itself—and not from sugared romance. (41)

It is these "happy quiet souls" who refuse to look beneath romantic idealisations to the "sharp realities" underlying them. Thus they wrote of the Civil War as a mere "romantic conflict" between Northern officers and Southern belles (CM 11-12). But such romances of reconciliation were popular, Glasgow felt, because most readers were unwilling to "go down into the heart of things." Thus Glasgow implies that not only does great suffering make great art, but that great artists are doomed to find few appreciative readers.

The link between suffering and artistic achievement remains implicit in A Certain Measure. In one passage, which echoes a letter from 1935 to Bessie Zaban Jones (Letters 171-72), Glasgow notes that her artistic inspiration has seemed to keep pace with her capacity for suffering. "Time has not lessened either [her] interest or [her] enthusiasm" for writing, but neither has "each passing year tone[d] down the edges of over sensitive nerves" as she had hoped. Yet Glasgow seems almost to take pride in her increased "capacity for vicarious suffering" (CM 111). As the autobiography amply demonstrates, Glasgow was also acutely sensitive to suffering that was not vicarious. But she shies away from discussing this aspect
of her life in *A Certain Measure*:

I have not been happy (what creature with imagination could be in a suffering world?); I am concerned, however, not with my life as a complete personality, but with the separate path which led . . . in the direction of a single artistic endeavour. (CM 104)

In *The Woman Within*, however, Glasgow was free to discuss both her personal and vicarious suffering, emphasizing the former in her narrative but finally insisting that she "had always felt the vast impersonal anguish of life more deeply than I have felt my own small--yet vast, too--personal misery" (*WW* 295-6). The opening section of the book, in which Glasgow "become[s] a writer," is a study in both kinds of suffering. Glasgow's account of childhood includes bouts with illness that left her unable to run and play with other children, a terrifying experience of school (because of the young Glasgow's acute shyness rather than anything objectively horrible), the loss of the family farm, the loss of two beloved dogs, her painful separation from Mammy Lizzie when she and her sister Rebe grew too old for a nursemaid, and a later separation from her mother and Rebe that left her feeling permanently estranged. When Glasgow was not experiencing suffering first-hand she was steeped in her mother's tragedies: the loss of a son when Ellen was a baby, and a nervous breakdown when Ellen was about ten.
Finally, Glasgow identifies two early memories to illustrate her assertion that "pain could cut deeper than pleasure" (WW 8). One is a memory of a crowd of children throwing stones at a frightened dog; the other is of an old man being forced to enter an almshouse. In both cases, Glasgow remembers identifying with the victim. "Why" Glasgow asks herself, "does pain flash up so often from the lower depths of memory?" (WW 10). The autobiography implies that the answer is because Glasgow is a born novelist, acutely sensitive to suffering.

IV

Aware that her definition of the "natural writer" might seem to imply a certain passivity on the part of the novelist, Glasgow balances her view of herself as a born artist with that of herself as a "wilful author." As an adjective, "wilful" has two senses, both of which are applicable to her authorial self-presentation. First, "wilful" carries connotations of obstinacy or stubbornness, which relate to Glasgow's lifelong image of herself as a rebel. As she puts it near the close of A Certain Measure, "I am still obstinately facing the wrong way. For I have wished to do honest work, and I have found to do honest work, I must begin by not taking advice" (CM 177).

Significantly, the section of her autobiography which covers the first half of her literary career is entitled "On Not Taking Advice."

For Glasgow, to write novels which did justice to her
artistic gift by "going down into to heart of things" was to be forever in a posture of rebellion against those who looked upon literature as a business (CM 104), those who preferred "sugared romance" to realism, those who believed it indecorous for a woman, especially a well-bred southern woman, to write anything other than glorifications of the "genteel tradition" (CM 9-10), and finally, those modern literary "barbarians" who prefer sensation to truth (CM 15). In this sense, then "wilful author" is an equivalent of "the persistent novelist," the third facet of Glasgow's authorial identity, which will be discussed at greater length in the next section.

But "wilful" has another sense, implying an act of deliberate intention, which is more relevant for the contrast Glasgow suggests between "wilful author" and "natural writer." As Glasgow explains in The Woman Within, she was "born a novelist," but she had to form herself "into an artist" (41). The novelist's instinctive gifts are not enough by themselves, one must dedicate oneself to perfecting one's technique. "[J]ust as a child must learn to talk and to walk naturally, so even the instinctive writer must acquire the simple first principles of his craft" (CM 8). From her vantage point at the end of her career, Glasgow dismisses many of her early novels as "youthful failures" (CM 9). They are incompletely realized because they "were the result of intuitive understanding alone" (CM 27). Throughout her long career as a "wilful
author" Glasgow would discover that there is "no single easy step in the practice of this deliberate art" (CM 8).

Thus Glasgow is careful to explain that despite her belief that "the true novel . . . is . . . an act of birth, not a device or an invention" (CM 190), she is not suggesting that "the craft of fiction" is a "form of mental inertia" (CM 196). Instead, "the actual writing " proves to be "the hardest work in the world" (CM 196). Once the writer has given birth to "living matter" (the product of the writer's unconscious being and heightened imaginative perceptions) "the structure, shape, nature, and external lineaments must be formed, either intuitively, . . . or by a deliberate act of the will" (CM 180).18 Thus Glasgow details her struggles to find the right form, style, and point of view for each of her novels.

Glasgow's wilful authorship, her long "apprenticeship" to the craft of fiction (CM 53), is contrasted with the proliferation of amateur writers who, in Glasgow's view, were cluttering up the literary scene (CM 105-6). Though she tends to avoid naming names when deprecating modern authors, one guesses that she included Hemingway, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald in this group:

Of late it has become the fashion to disparage artistry; but that may be because there is, nowadays so little among us. . . .[W]e have taken both the short cut and the easiest way. . . . [M]odern novelists spring up to discredit the
art they have attempted to practise, [and boast] that they are able to excel in pursuits that have nothing to do with the profession of letters (CM 53)

Glasgow is indignant that "to have won acclaim as a pugilist or a stevedore or a ditch-digger or a bullfighter . . . would seem to be the best introduction to modern literary success" (CM 54). Even if these modern authors are "natural writers," and Glasgow has her doubts, they are not real artists because they lack the necessary respect for and devotion to their art to become "wilful authors."20

Glasgow's only consolation is her firm belief that these literary amateurs will fail the test of time while her own works, the product of years of dedicated labor, will continue to live.

How many contemporary works, applauded as masterpieces for a season, have dwindled to mere literary accidents when they are reviewed against the long procession of letters! Even as a beginner . . . my hope had been not to write one successful book and retire but to leave behind me, whether it was recognized or neglected, a solid body of work. (CM 117)21

Her collected editions and this book of prefaces attest that Glasgow has left behind a substantial body of work, and thus A Certain Measure is characterized more by a sense
of satisfaction than of indignation. And her rejection of "the cult of the amateur" allows her to depict herself again as literary rebel. "At sixty," Glasgow writes, "I find the barbaric fallacy of the present as alien to my mood as I ever found, at twenty, the sentimental fallacy of the eighteen-nineties" (CM 54).

Thus, both as a "natural writer" and as a "wilful author" Glasgow "stood alone" (WW 144). Her isolation, like Nabokov's obscurity, is a mark of distinction. Yet Glasgow complains of at least one aspect of this isolation. Lacking a teacher or a guide, she has had to rely on the critic within herself (CM 52; WW 41). Again and again, Glasgow returns to variations on the idea that she is self-taught. In both A Certain Measure and The Woman Within she tells the story of teaching herself to read by spelling out the letters of Old Mortality (CM 166; WW 24). In her autobiography, she describes the ambitious program of reading she embarked on in late adolescence, in defiance of her father and older sister Emily, but with the approval and encouragement of her sister Cary and her brother-in-law Walter McCormack. (As if to underscore Glasgow's isolation once again, McCormack commits suicide, and Cary dies of cancer.) In almost every preface in A Certain Measure, Glasgow stresses that she had had limited exposure to good fiction and no exposure to theories of fiction when she began to write. Glasgow complains that her solitary struggle was unnecessary (CM 54) and that "to teach oneself
is to be forced to learn twice" (WW 41).

Yet her struggle turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Glasgow learned self-reliance and thus avoided the pitfalls of imitation. To complain of having had to teach yourself how to write is to assert the originality of your writing. Furthermore, this lonely struggle gave Glasgow another chance to prove her dedication to her art. Her perseverance, despite the absence of a "sympathetic and tolerant teacher" (CM 51), is an example of her literary persistence. In both The Woman Within and A Certain Measure, Glasgow demands the reader's respect as "a persistent novelist," a person who surmounted unusual obstacles in order to pursue a literary career.

V

As a persistent novelist, Glasgow had to overcome many different obstacles. Some of them, like her deafness and "frail health," were personal:

Slowly, and with infinite patience, in spite of frail health . . . which placed any thought of a systematic education beyond my reach, I set myself to overcome problems of technique and to feel my way, step by step, while I was learning to write. (CM 52)

Aside from a few rare allusions, as in the passage quoted above, Glasgow generally left the discussion of these personal obstacles to the Woman Within. In A Certain Measure she turns her attention to obstacles that were
mainly cultural, stemming from the fact that she began her literary career as a woman in the turn-of-the-century South.

Glasgow's preface to "The Miller of Old Church," the central chapter of *A Certain Measure*, takes as its starting point the dearth of good literature in the nineteenth-century South and attempts to come up with reasons for it. Glasgow argues that the South was characterized by an "agreeable social order, so benevolent to the pleasure seeker and so hostile alike to the inquirer and the artist" (135). In this environment there was no encouragement for the serious writer and no opportunity for the "literature . . . of protest" (135).

Here, as elsewhere expression belonged to the articulate, and the articulate was supremely satisfied with his own fortunate lot. . . . Only the slave, the "poor white," or the woman who had forgotten her modesty, may have felt inclined to protest; and these negligible minorities were as dumb and sterile as the profession of letters. (135-36)

There is an echo here of Glasgow's theory that great suffering makes great art; because the educated Southern gentleman lived a contented agreeable life, there was no impulse to write. Meanwhile those who suffered were inarticulate. In *The Woman Within*, Glasgow first presents herself as inarticulate, but she, with the advantage of
literacy (acquired, according to her account, largely through her own efforts), persists in her efforts to express her suffering and discontentment in art.23

This Southern inhospitality to "the profession of letters" is a principal reason for Glasgow's lack of mentors or models to guide her literary development. As she complains, "I had always done both my reading and my intimate thinking alone. I had known intimately, in the South at least, few persons interested in books (WW 216). In both her prefaces and her autobiography she repeatedly attacks the South for its cultural barrenness and its failure to recognize the importance of literature. For instance, she claims in The Woman Within that an older sister carelessly destroyed her manuscripts and letters and wonders "whether that particular incident could have occurred anywhere except in the South, where, throughout the centuries . . . innumerable interesting diaries and letters have been treated as so much waste paper" (278). She claims that when she determined to publish her first book, she had no idea how to go about it because "Southerners did not publish, did not write, did not read" (WW 105). And once published, "there were no visible Southern critics" to evaluate her work, though "had there been, they would have repudiated any novelist who attempted to pierce . . . the sentimental fallacy" (CM 11).24

It was in revolt against this fallacy that Glasgow began her literary career; her stance as a "social
"historian" is in opposition to those writers who enshrined a dead myth. According to Glasgow, not only Southern literature, but Southern life was characterized by "evasive idealism," which made people "insensitive" and blind to the injustice, cruelty and suffering that was nevertheless a part of their world (WW 103-4). The Civil War and intensified this tendency, and "to defend the lost became the solitary purpose and the supreme obligation of the Southern novelist" (CM 139).

When Glasgow rejected this "obligation" in favor of the exploration of "deeper realities," she provoked disapproval. In A Certain Measure Glasgow embodies this disapproval in the voices of friends and relatives who comment on her books:

"But it is incredible," declared one of my elderly kinsmen, in the face of all English literature, to say nothing of Abraham, "that a well-brought up Southern girl should know what a bastard is" (9).

"If you must write, do write of Southern ladies and gentlemen," urged my near and distant relatives, approving of decorum (50).

"Do you really think my child, . . . that a young girl could be inspired to do her duty by reading Virginia?" (84)

Glasgow appears to invite the reader to laugh with her at these old-fashioned attitudes, but the amusement masks frustration. Much of this disapproval implicitly suggests that Glasgow's fiction was less acceptable because it came from the pen of a woman, and in The Woman Within Glasgow records that her gender was initially an obstacle to being
taken seriously as a writer. Her first effort to secure a literary agent results in sexual harassment from a man who tells her she is "too pretty to be a novelist" (96). A few years later her efforts to find a publisher for The Descendant are stymied when an amicable "final critic" for Macmillan takes her to lunch without having read her manuscript and advises her "to stop writing, and go back to the South and have some babies" (108).

Nevertheless, Glasgow did succeed in getting her first novel published (though when it was accepted, the publishers did not know that its author was a young woman from the South) and persisted in building a literary career despite the disapproval or skepticism of relatives, publishers, or Southerners in general. Looking back over her literary career in A Certain Measure, Glasgow believes that an early fear that her Southern background would make it difficult to win recognition has not proved groundless (Letters 27). The last kind of persistence her career demanded was in the face of neglect. But Glasgow transforms this hardship into victory. "[F]ew persistent novelists, I suppose, have ever received in one lifetime, so generous a measure of benevolent neglect" (CM 177). Lack of recognition "provided [her] with adequate space in which to take root and grow, without artificially grafting onto more popular stock" (CM 177). Now facing the end of her career, Glasgow seems confident that her forty years of endeavor were worthwhile. The disapproving voices have
dwindled to a "faint continuing echo" among "an inconsiderable minority of readers" (CM 261). Critics are finally reading her later novels in ways that she approves. Most satisfying of all, though she claims to have "few illusions concerning posterity," she admits to "an instinctive feeling that books 'live' because of their intrinsic merits," and thus a conviction that her books will be among those that win permanent rather than "temporary acclaim" (CM 108-9, 117).

VI

Yet posterity has hardly made the correction that Glasgow never stopped anticipating. Her work continues to attract occasional attention from feminist scholars and those interested in Southern literature, but certainly there are Americanists who know little or nothing of it. Meanwhile, William Faulkner, whom Glasgow implicitly assigned to the "Raw-Head and Bloody Bones" school of sensational and (she hoped) short-lived Southern fiction has become a canonical figure, not only in Southern literature but in twentieth century literature generally. But if Glasgow's view of her place in literary history seems extravagant, she nevertheless clung fiercely to her own conception. Possessing arguably the least talent, and certainly the least prestigious current reputation of any of the authors examined here, Glasgow makes a claim to literary greatness which equals or surpasses those made by the others.
But while I think Cabell is wrong in his suggestion that Glasgow harbored doubts about the merit of her works and thus compulsively sought to shore them up by her own exaggerated claims and by persuading her friends to produce glowing reviews, I think he is right to detect something amiss in Glasgow's bitter autobiography (224-228). Glasgow mistrusted not her own talent, but the critical acumen of her readers, though her letters to Cabell show that late in life she experienced occasional depression with the thought that her literary powers might be waning. But if she was secure in her identity as a "born novelist," and if the pain she experienced served to reinforce her conception of herself as a suffering artist, this identity was not sufficient to compensate for the suffering. As Cabell argues, "the consciousness of being a literary success" was not enough to make Glasgow happy (223).

At the close of The Woman Within Glasgow struggles to sum up her life and career on a triumphant note:

Yes I have had my life. I have known ecstasy. I have known anguish. I have loved and been loved.

. . . It was enough and it is now over. . . .

Yet, I have never stolen either the ponderable or imponderable material of happiness. I have done the work that I wished to do for the sake of that work alone. And I have come at last . . . into the steadfast . . . accord without surrender of the unreconciled heart (296).
These, the last words of the book, close the Epilogue which celebrates three things, the "thrilling discovery" that death is "another aspect of life" and thus something to be accepted, not resisted or feared, and the "two things that have never failed [her]: [her] gift of friendship and [her] sense of laughter" (WW 282, 288, 284). All three are problematic. The first involves a surrender of the role of rebel which has so often sustained Glasgow in the past. Though she experiences "a sudden uplifting sense of inward peace, of outward finality" (283), Glasgow also discovers "that there was nothing to be done about either my own life or the world in which I lived . . . I had fought all my life and changed nothing" (283). Thus if her life has been "enough" for her, it is enough in the sense that she can endure no more, not in the sense that it has been satisfying.

Her other two compensations, friendship and gaiety, are precisely what the autobiography has persistently exposed as inadequate antidotes to the painful "life of the solitary spirit" (v). She has constantly depicted her loneliness and the inability of friends to penetrate the wall of isolation which surrounds her. And that wall is composed in part by a deceptive, defensive gaiety. If she has loved and been loved it has been an experience that brought more pain than pleasure and left her cynical and bitter. And if she rejoices that her gaiety never deserted her (295), she also claims never to have known
happiness.

Glasgow presents herself as having managed to live with out happiness; she presents one of her heroines, Dorinda of *Barren Ground*, as having "learned to live without joy" (*BG* viii) or, as she later elaborated, having learned "to live gallantly, without delight" (*CM* 155). Glasgow delighted in Dorinda and identified with her struggles: "We had changed and developed together. We were connected, or so it seemed, by a living nerve" (*CM* 162-63). Glasgow saw the novel as "a complete reversal of a classic situation . . . the betrayed woman would become the victor instead of the victim" (*CM* 160). And in writing this story of a woman who falls out of love and "triumph[s] over circumstances," Glasgow herself had a comparable experience. As she observes in *The Woman Within*:

Creative energy flooded my mind, and I felt . . . that my best work was ahead of me. I wrote *Barren Ground*, and immediately I knew I had found myself. Recognition, so long delayed, increased with each book. . . . [F]alling out of love could be blissful tranquility. (243-44)

The writing of *Barren Ground* is presented in both *The Woman Within* and *A Certain Measure* as a crucial point in Glasgow's career when she both comes into her own as an artist and begins to receive critical recognition.

Yet receptive as critics were and have since been to the novel, they have frequently hinted at one failing.
Dorinda's triumph does not seem as convincing to most readers as it does to Dorinda herself or to Glasgow, given the evidence of her prefaces.\textsuperscript{28} As a girl Dorinda vowed to escape the hardships of farm life, but instead farm labor becomes almost her sole activity, so that when she looks back on her life she "could remember nothing but work" (346). Her financial and agricultural successes bring her no joy; they are meaningless except as a means of avenging herself on Jason, her former suitor, whose run-down farm she buys up and restores. However, sunk in dissipation, he is oblivious to her victory. Worse still, Dorinda isolates herself from the community and rejects not only sexual love but almost any kind of meaningful human companionship. At the end of the novel, Dorinda, having buried the man who had jilted her three decades earlier, briefly faces the emptiness of her life: "More than thirty years of effort and sacrifice--for what? . . . She was suffocated, she was buried alive beneath an emptiness." (BG 518-521).

Yet the next morning "her courage had revived with the sun!" (BG 525). Heartened by a sympathetic identification with the land, Dorinda tells herself:

"Though in a measure destiny had defeated her, for it had given her none of the gifts she had asked of it, still her failure was one of those defeats, she realized which are victories. . . . The best of life, she told herself, was ahead of her." (525)
Many critics, particularly Rubin and Raper, have suggested that Glasgow seems not to recognize Dorinda's limitations because of an over-identification with the character. Because Glasgow's own unhappy personal experience was fruitful, in that it led to the creation of *Barren Ground* and Glasgow's further blossoming as a novelist, she imposes her own experience on the novel where it does not fit. Glasgow's best work may be ahead of her in 1925, but when she has Dorinda assure herself that "the best of life" lies ahead for her as well, the reader must be skeptical.

That same skepticism is triggered at the end of Glasgow's autobiography. Here, Glasgow knows that "the best of life" is behind her, and though she pronounces it "enough" she can find no happiness in her life and shudders at the prospect of reliving it (296). Though her work contained, for Glasgow, a large "measure of achievement," it seems equally true on the evidence of the autobiography, that her life contained more than "a certain measure" of defeat. Glasgow's last words seem to be an admission that the attitude of serene resignation she tries to assume throughout the Epilogue is as much a pose as the mask of gaiety she wore so often in life. She bows to death and to the reader with an "unreconciled heart," unreconciled to both the meagerness of her literary fame, and the tragedy of her life (296).
Chapter Six
Henry James: "A Man of Imagination and Taste"

In 1909, struggling to explain to George Bernard Shaw why he had written a one-act play called *The Saloon*, (a dramatization of his early short story, "Owen Wingrave"), Henry James fell back upon a response that echoed his stance in the recently completed prefaces to Scribner's *New York Edition* of his fiction:

I do such things because I happen to be a man of imagination and taste, extremely interested in life, and because the imagination, thus, from the moment direction and motive play upon it from all sides, absolutely enjoys and insists on and incurably leads a life of its own. (*Letters 4: 512*)

As in the prefaces, an attempt to provide a "colloquial" account of the origin or history of one of James's literary productions quickly gives way to the presentation of himself as "a man of imagination and taste." James's discussion of the particular work becomes subordinate to his defense of the role of the artist as he sees it.

Two aspects of this passage attract the reader's attention. First, in the midst of a letter that is hyperbolic, courteous and charming, James seems suddenly to become serious and shift to a defensive posture. Since he begins by confessing, "I fear I can meet you at very few
points," James clearly does not expect to change Shaw's opinion of his play (510). But here he seems to suggest that Shaw may be incapable of appreciating the subtleties of his art. James's "I happen to be a man of imagination and taste" may imply that his correspondent cannot make a similar claim.

Prior to this passage James had used an amusing image to contrast himself and Shaw:

You strike me as carrying all your eggs, of conviction, appreciation, discussion etc., . . . in one basket, where you put your hand on them all with great ease and convenience; while I have mine scattered all over the place--many of them still under the hens--and have therefore to rush about and pick one up here and another there.

(510-511)

James seems to mock himself in this humorous image of rummaging frantically for his scattered eggs, but receptivity to a variety of stimuli is the hallmark of the artist for James. Furthermore, "the great ease and convenience" Shaw enjoys does not appeal to an artist like James, who is attracted by difficult cases requiring "great ingenuity and expertness" (512). Shaw, by limiting himself to one basket, insisting on pure "socialistic" or "scientific" drama, is exhibiting his limitations as an artist. Thus James discreetly asserts his own superiority here as well.

Another striking attribute of James's justification
for doing "such things" is the mixture of passive and active images in his description of himself as a man of imagination. On the one hand, James appears at the mercy of his imagination. He just "happens" to be a man of imagination; this imagination is "incurable" and stubborn and leads a life of its own. On the other hand, who or what supplies the "direction and motive" which play upon the imagination? And as James reminds Shaw, imagination is a dynamic attribute, providing the impetus behind "half the beautiful things that the benefactors of the human species have produced" (512). Finally, as a man of imagination James is not aloof or indifferent, but "extremely interested in life."

James's book-length portraits of himself as an author, that is as a man of imagination, gathering eggs "of conviction, appreciation, discussion" wherever he goes (Letters 4: 512) include the prefaces to the New York Edition (collected in 1934 by Richard P. Blackmur in The Art of the Novel), the two completed volumes of James's autobiography, A Small Boy and Others (1913) and Notes of a Son and Brother (1914), and, to a lesser extent, James's account of his impressions on a lecture tour in America, The American Scene (1907). The last, which James considered calling "The Return of the Novelist," manifests an anxiety that the novelist is unwelcome, that America has no place for "a man of imagination and taste." In the other books such fears lie beneath the surface but become
evident in the characteristics these stories of authorship share with James's letter to Shaw.

James's anxiety about his audience is manifested in an ambivalent attitude toward his readers, just as he alternately flatters and implicitly insults Shaw. He appears gracious and confidential, but what he often confides is his contempt for the reading public. James's sense that the world does not value the man of imagination leads him deliberately to combine active and passive metaphors for artistic creation and the act of perception, much as he does in the letter to Shaw. This is a strategy for advancing the paradox that the artist is an active observer, a participating spectator. While seeming to merely "dawdle and gape," the man of imagination is in fact "extremely interested in life" and thus worthy of the interest and admiration of his fellow human beings. James strives to win this admiration and interest, to make someone care.

I

Two well-known passages of James's prefaces confess his desire to write about a man of imagination. In the preface to The Portrait of a Lady, in an attempt to explain how he could have such a vivid perception of the character of Isabel Archer without having as yet placed her in relation to other characters, James muses, "One could answer such a question beautifully, doubtless, if one could do so subtle, if not so monstrous a thing as to write the
history of one's own imagination" (Art 47). In the second passage James is concerned with another of his characters, but instead of attempting to trace the process by which his mind took possession of Lambert Strether, he instead professes satisfaction with having chosen him as hero of The Ambassadors, the novel he found "quite the best, 'all around' of my productions": "It was immeasurable, the opportunity to 'do' a man of imagination" (Art 309, 310). However, Strether is not possessed of "imagination in predominance or as his prime faculty" (Art 310). The luxury of a "study of the high gift in supreme command of a case or of a career" remains for the present "well in view and just out of reach" of the novelist (Art 310).

As the conjunction of these two passages implies, the "supreme" case James has in mind here is his own. The prefices quite clearly exhibit James as a man for whom imagination is the "prime faculty," and who uses this gift to forge a career as a novelist. Thus several critics have identified the prefices as the history of the growth of James's imagination.3 Other critics, like Millicent Bell, identify James's autobiography as his long awaited opportunity to construct a narrative about a man of imagination with himself as hero ("Henry James" 467). Indeed, James invites these interpretations in both books. In the first preface, to Roderick Hudson, James describes his enterprise as a representation of "the continuity of an artist's endeavour, the growth of his whole operative
consciousness" (Art 4). In *Notes of a Son and Brother*, the second volume of his autobiography, James identifies the "governing principle" of his book as "the principle of response to a long sought occasion, now gratefully recognized, for making trial of the recording and figuring act on behalf of some case of the imaginative faculty under cultivation" (454). The book constitutes "a personal history . . . of an imagination" (454).

James's two stories of authorship are intimately related though superficially distinguished, like Nabokov's and Glasgow's, as an autobiography concerned with the man behind the writer and a collection of prefaces concerned with the craft of writing. Both are glorifications of the artistic imagination, and presentations of the self as author. Both books are largely affirmative. James shares Nabokov's aesthetic delight in words and images and Glasgow's sense of possessing an exquisite sensibility. While this sensibility was a source of suffering for Glasgow, for James it appears to be a source of infinite interest and pleasure. As Elsa Nettels observes, "James dwells not upon the hardships and frustrations of art, but upon its rewards and privileges, upon problems solved and difficulties mastered" (39). The persona most in evidence in the prefaces, according to Marcia Jacobson, is "an aloof, self-sustained artist, governed by a devotion to style and a passion for form" (1).

But Jacobson, Michael Anesko, and Anne T. Margolis all
question the accuracy of this portrait of James as the
Master. For them it is one-sided, corresponding to a view
of himself and his art that James assumed only in his late
years, and then only reluctantly. Though James's letters
and notebooks show him taking refuge throughout his career
in the idea of himself as a superior writer, with a talent
and an excellence too subtle for the vulgar public to
grasp, he also repeatedly exhibits the desire for and the
expectation of popular success. Only after repeated
commercial failures, and particularly after the failure of
his play *Guy Domville* in 1895, concurrent with the
development of a small but enthusiastic avant-garde
audience, did James begin to embrace the position of "the
obscure novelist" which Nabokov would later relish. As F.
O. Matthiessen (xiii) and Michael Anesko (24) have
observed, James turned his failure into a kind of triumph
and responded with a renewed dedication to writing. As I
will argue in the next section, the literary productions of
his late years were such as to provide ample justification
for his confidence in his art. The prefaces and the two
volume autobiography express that confidence. They were
"final gesture[s] of self-acceptance" of James's role as a
"minority writer" (Jacobson 143), dedicated to producing
literary treasures for which "ninety-nine readers in a
hundred have no use whatever" (*Art* 30-31).

But if James had accepted his status as a writer for
the elite, educated minority, why then was he disappointed
when the New York Edition failed to sell as well as he expected? Unlike Glasgow, who anticipated poor sales for her collected editions and hoped to reach "the small minority who read critical essays" (Glasgow to Cabell, July 3, 1941, qtd. in MacDonald) with her book of prefaces, James, who had garnered more critical, though less popular acclaim, hoped to find at last a large appreciative American audience. Margolis observes that the edition "had a double meaning and purpose" for James (186). While on the one hand it was "a forbidding edifice which only the most initiated of readers could appreciate and gain entrance to," it was also an opportunity to sell his books (Margolis 186). Concurring with Peter Buitenhuis's observation that in the New York Edition "James chose to present himself . . . as the international novelist tout court" (Buitenhuis 4), Margolis takes the emphasis on the international novels as evidence of James's attempt to court conventional readers who responded most readily to him in this role as the author of The American, Daisy Miller and The Portrait of a Lady (Margolis 187-88).

The idea that James's choice of works was primarily motivated by an attempt to appeal to the interests of conventional readers seems suspect. Anesko's analysis of the correspondence relating to the publication of the edition suggests that the selection was in fact often governed by such practical considerations as how much money the original publisher demanded for reprint rights (141-62). So far as
James was deliberate in his selections, he chose works that emphasized his attempts to develop and refine the narrative technique he eventually described as the use of a "reflector" or a "center of consciousness." Novels that were fairly popular upon publication, such as *The American* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, are extensively revised to correspond more closely to his late, "difficult," and hence less popular, style. James includes novels that were distinctly unpopular, such as *The Princess Casamassima*, *The Tragic Muse* and *The Awkward Age* and calls attention to their unpopularity. Finally, in the preface to *Lady Barberina* James objects that he has too often been labelled as exclusively concerned with the international contrast when it is often only incidental to his work (Art 198), and in the preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*, he depicts himself as having outgrown the appeal of the "international fallacy" (Art 132-33).

Yet Margolis is correct when she sees the prefaces as evidence that "despite his periodic railings against the debased taste of the Anglo-American public, the master himself stubbornly clung to a vision of his own work as an ongoing attempt to educate and initiate his less developed readers" (xiv). James's desire to reach new readers whom he would bring to a new critical appreciation of his work is evident from his initial letter proposing the edition. James hoped that his prefaces:

*might count as a feature of a certain importance*
in any such new and more honorable presentation of my writings... Their being thus presented, in fine, as fair and shapely will contribute, to my mind, to their coming legitimately into a "chance" that has been hitherto rather withheld from them. (Letters 4: 367)

His prefaces are the mortar which will hold together the edifice of these collected works and command the public's respect and attention.

The idea of giving his books a new "chance" at success seems reminiscent of the "second chance" the novelist Dencombe hoped for in James's short story "The Middle Years" (1893). In this story Dencombe, aging and ill, reads the novel he expects will be his last and is struck by its merits. It seems to Dencombe that it is only in this novel that he has lived up to his potential as a writer. His previous novels are all flawed apprentice works: "He had ripened too late and was so clumsily constituted that he had had to teach himself by mistakes" ("MY" 95). Dencombe hopes for a second chance, to live long enough to write novels that reflect his new found vision, but his final illness has already taken possession of him, and he dies.

Yet the mood of the story is not tragic, as James's notes for the story make clear. The tale turns on "some incident... to show that what he has done is that of which he is capable--that he has done all he can, that he
has put into his things a love of perfection and that they will live by that" (NHJ 59). Accordingly, Dencombe dies with the realization that the second chance is a delusion, but that his works still form a worthy monument to his artistic vision.

In the New York Edition, James takes a similar view of his novels. He repeatedly employs a rhetoric of failure, returning in preface after preface, as Laurence Holland observes, to the gap between his intentions and the novels as actually produced (156). Thus he too "has had to teach himself by mistakes." But he is never truly harsh to the early novels, and if he revises them, he insists that he is only bringing out what was latent in them (Goetz 90). The emphasis on technical problems is James's way of demonstrating "that he has put into his things a love of perfection," and he trusts that they will "live" in this edition which brings the beauty of their design to light.

In the autobiographies, as Eakin has noted, James aims "to testify to the reality of the small boy's gift, his identity as the artist, in the period preceding the documentation of this reality in his published work" ("Obscure Hurt" 698). James strove to show that this love of beauty, of form and perfection, this vision that embraces all of experience necessarily shaped the way that he lived as well as he wrote.

But one element of the story remains unaccounted for. In "The Middle Years" Dencombe's realization is tied to "a
young doctor, a young pilgrim who admires him." It is this man's admiration and devotion which enables Dencombe to realize that he has succeeded after all. "The thing is to have made somebody care" ("MY" 105). The prefaces and the autobiographies are James's attempts to find those admirers, to present his art and life in such a way as to create an appreciative audience. They are his final attempts to "make somebody care."

II

Before we can explore either James's reliving of his literary career in the prefaces to the New York Edition or the anxious relation to his readers which subtly undermines the confident, affirmative portrait of the man of imagination in both the prefaces and the autobiographies, we need to review the events of that career and examine the grounds of that confidence. Though James was frequently frustrated by his failure to find the audience he thought he deserved, his conviction that he was a great artist never seems to have been seriously shaken. He was throughout his life conscious of being "full of ideas, full of ambition, full of capacity," certain that "there [was] an immensity to be done" in the domain of art, and that "at the worst" he will at least "do a part of it" (NHJ 44).

James's first slight novel, Watch and Ward, was serialized in the Atlantic in 1870, but not reprinted in book form until 1878 (Edel 125). James published his first books, both collections of short pieces, in 1875 in New
York. The 15 per cent royalty on *Transatlantic Sketches* did not repay the cost of publication (which James assumed) until 1906. *The Passionate Pilgrim*, on the other hand, made a modest profit for James during its first year (Anesko 32-33). During the same month that the *Passionate Pilgrim* was published, January 1875, *Roderick Hudson*, the first novel James felt worthy of including in his collected edition, began appearing serially. It too was published in book form at the end of the year.

With this modest success behind him, James moved to Europe in the fall of 1875 and in the next few years established himself as a successful transatlantic author.⁹ The British public was first introduced to him in a pirated version of *The American* which was serialized in the *Atlantic* in 1876. Meanwhile an English publisher, Frederick MacMillan, agreed to publish a book of critical essays entitled *French Poets and Novelists* (1878).

James continued to publish in both the English and American markets. His popular success peaked in 1878 when a serial published in the British magazine *Cornhill*, entitled "Daisy Miller: A Study," was pirated in both Boston and New York before James could arrange for American serial rights. In 1881 *The Portrait of a Lady*, twice as long as any of his previous novels, solidified his position as a major Anglo-American writer. But as Anesko, Jacobson and Margolis have noted, his next novels failed to please audiences who wanted more stories of the young American
female confronting the European scene. Neither the 
Bostonians (1886), nor The Princess Casamassima (1886) nor 
The Tragic Muse (1890) was commercially successful.

At the end of the 1880's, frustrated by his observation that The Princess Casamassima and The Bostonians had "reduced the desire and the demand for my productions to zero" (Letters 3: 209), James turned to drama, turning his novel The American into a play. James's notebooks reveal that he hoped his ventures into drama would be financially successful--giving him "time, leisure, independence for 'real literature'" and that he cynically reminded himself to write down to the vulgar audience (NHJ 52-53). But as Anesko and Margolis suggest, he was probably motivated as much by the desire to reach a large new audience as by the need for money (Anesko 21-22; Margolis 74-76).

After the successful premiere of the play in Southport in February 1891, James wrote enthusiastically to his brother William, anticipating success in London and a great demand for his future productions. He claimed that drama was his "real form . . . for which the pale little art of fiction has been for me but a limited and restricted substitute" (Letters 3: 329). A few months later he was writing optimistically of making "a genuine and sustained attack on the theatre" (NHJ 57).

But the attack, once mounted, did not enjoy the success James anticipated, and James was unable to sustain
it. In 1895 James was booed on stage at the opening night of *Guy Domville*. A small avant-garde contingent supported the play, which nevertheless folded after a few performances. According to Leon Edel, James was severely depressed, yet he insisted in a letter to his brother and sister-in-law that he had gotten "quickly detached and away from it" and was "wholly given up to the better and fresher life of the next thing to come" (*Letters* 4: 514). More importantly, in the same letter he assumes the role of the avant-garde artist. Despite his failure with an audience too quick to reject the unfamiliar and "too coarse and too stupid" to appreciate "an exceedingly skillful, considered and expert piece of construction" like his play, James claims to have enjoyed "a rare and distinguished private success with people of taste" (516, 515).

This pattern of public failure and private success was to become familiar to James. For his own part, James was committed to producing more "exceedingly skillful . . . and expert piece[s] of construction" but once again in the genre of fiction rather than drama. He was convinced that his "long tribulation, . . . patiences and pangs, of theatrical experiment" had taught him a lesson (*NHJ* 127). That lesson was what in the prefaces he calls the "scenic" method (*Art* 90, 157, 182, 300, 322-23). James sought to move away from an omniscient narrator and to "dramatise, dramatise!" (*Art* 239, 267). The novels in which he sought to "actively show" what he had learned in the theatre, What
Maisie Knew (1897) The Spoils of Poynton (1897) and The Awkward Age (1899), sold poorly, and critics attacked his style, his choice of subject matter and his apparent detachment from his characters, which was perceived as emotional coldness.\textsuperscript{10}

As Matthiessen has argued, at the same time James was making these technical experiments in writing fiction, he was also pondering the subjects that would lead to three great novels of his "late manner": The Wings of the Dove (1902), The Ambassadors (1903), and The Golden Bowl (1904). Though James admits that Wings is a partial failure (Art 302) and criticizes The Golden Bowl in a letter to Mrs Humphrey Ward (Letters 4: 415), the prefaces end on a triumphant note with these three novels as primary evidence that "the artistic problem involved in [his] scheme, . . . a deep and exquisite one," was "very effectively solved" (Letters 4: 777).

Even though James believed that these novels neither in their original form nor in their presentation in The new York Edition had ever enjoyed "the least intelligent critical justice" (Letters 4: 777) he continued to write, turning in his final years to autobiographical ventures: A Small Boy and Others and Notes of a Son and Brother, the "family books" which were "in [their] essence and inevitably autobiographic" (Letters 4: 794).

In contrast to Hawthorne, whose confidence crumbled during his last years, Henry James seems to have triumphed
over, if not entirely escaped, the specter of failure which haunted his predecessor's late career. As Leon Edel has documented in his ample biographies of James and his edition of James's letters, the novelist suffered two major periods of depression, the first after the failure of his play *Guy Domville* in 1895 and the second in response to the low sales of *The New York Edition* and a series of illnesses beginning around 1909. But after each of these failures James turned with renewed energy to his literary projects, taking consolation in his belief that though he might never "make [his] fortune," he would persist in producing superior work (*Letters* 3: 300, 514). Even from his deathbed, disoriented by fever and the effects of a stroke, he made writing motions and disjointed attempts at dictation, by then his preferred method of writing (Edel, *A Life* 709). It was failing health rather than failing confidence which intervened at the end. As Peter Buitenhuis observes, though James faced declining health, personal tragedy and shrinking audiences, "he alone among this list of major American writers [Melville, Dreiser, Hawthorne and Twain] prevailed to the end and was still at work when death placed the period on the page" (267).

When James died on February 28, 1916, he left unfinished three works at which he had labored intermittently during the last two years of his life: *The Middle Years*, the next installment of his autobiography; *The Sense of the Past*, a novel first abandoned in 1900; and
The Ivory Tower, the "American Novel" Scribner's had commissioned in 1912. Although James was occupied with The Sense of the Past just before the series of strokes in December 1915 which inaugurated his final illness, it was for The Ivory Tower that he felt the most enthusiasm. James's high hopes for the novel echo through his letters. He confides to his agent James B. Pinker that he is "dazzled and elated" by the initial proposal that he write the novel which will perhaps be his "supreme" work (Letters 4: 626-627) and writes to his publisher of "a kind of fierce apprehension of what I have still grandly within me to do" (Letters 4: 649).

James's confidence in regard to The Ivory Tower accords with his general belief that his literary powers increased with his age. As early as 1884, when he was almost forty-one, James wrote to Richard Watson Gilder, "As one grows older, and sees and learns more, it becomes harder to squeeze this enlarged matter into brevity of form, and I find I must take elbow room" (Letters 3: 23). As James would later record in his prefaces to The New York Edition, his desire for "elbow room" brought him into repeated conflict with the market which valued the short story over "the shapely nouvelle" (Art 220). After a short story commissioned by the Atlantic, "The House Beautiful," had so exceeded its intended length that he began to think of it as "the poor little long thing" (Art 125), James wrote to Horace Scudder, the editor, that the tale "must go
elsewhere, as of the major length, and I must try again for you on a tinier subject" (Letters 4: 18). But James's confession that "I can't do the very little thing any more" proved accurate (Letters 4:18). The replacement story, "Glasses," proved long as well, and James wrote to apologize for its length:

I find, in my old age, that I have too much manner and style, too great and invincible an instinct of completeness and of seeing things in all their relations, so that development, however squeezed down, becomes inevitable" (Letters 4: 22).

Ostensibly an apology for his inability to heed the editorial word limits, this passage, following a few months upon the failure of Guy Domville, actually represents a characterization of himself as author which validates his "great and invincible" instinct and vision.

For the rest of his life James would repeat variations on this characterization of himself and boldly continue to take "elbow room" in the three lengthy novels of what F. O. Matthiessen christened the "major phase," in the mammoth undertaking of the New York Edition which embraced both revisions and prefaces for much of James's work, and in the two autobiographical family books which crowned James's writing career. It was in reference to the second of those two books, Notes of a Son and Brother, that James made this famous explanation to Henry Adams of why he continued to
write. James writes because he lives, that is because "in the presence of life" James still reacts. He elaborates:

I am that queer monster the artist, an obstinate finality, an inexhaustible sensibility. Hence the reactions—appearances, memories, many things go on playing upon it with consequences that I note and "enjoy" . . . noting. It takes doing—and I do. I believe I shall do yet again—it is still an act of life. (Letters 4: 706)

Once again James blends active and passive in an effort to describe the artist. The artist is an endlessly receptive sensibility which is "played upon," yet art takes "doing" and James chooses to do it. James affirms the vital art of writing as an "act of life."

III

In the midst of the affirmative bravado of James's letter to Adams lurks a disturbing phrase. What did James mean by calling the artist a "queer monster?" I would suggest that the word "monster" or "monstrous" carried for James primarily the connotation of enormity rather than hideousness or grotesque deviation. The novels of Tolstoy were "large, loose, baggy monsters" because they were such sprawling tomes (Art 84). To write the history of the growth of one's imagination would be a monstrous undertaking because the subject appears inexhaustible. The artist is a "monster" because of his or her insatiable appetite for impressions, the "extreme interest in life"
James pointed out to Shaw, and the endless capacity to absorb experiences as grist for the mill of art.

However, the addition of the modifier "queer" suggests that James may also be acknowledging public opinion which saw the artist as a kind of oddity, even as a monster. The cases of Mary Shelley and Nathaniel Hawthorne show that such a view was not unprecedented. A person who apparently preferred observing others' lives in order to transform them into fiction rather than living his or her own life appears unnaturally withdrawn and perversely curious. An author who chose "immoral" subjects, like adultery or the corruption of a young girl's innocence might seem monstrous. A writer whose stories continually disappoint conventional expectations for a "happy ending" might seem inhuman or unfeeling. James qualified as a potentially monstrous writer on all counts.

James's autobiographies imply that if as a child he seemed more timid than monstrous, he was nevertheless conscious of himself as an oddity. William Walsh observes that what was influential in both James's "life as a person" and "career as a novelist" was "the quality of discrepancy, of oddity, of lack of fit" (60). In the autobiography James depicts his younger self as constantly brushing up against the contrast between the values and experiences of his family and those of American society (Walsh 60). James fails in the competitive atmosphere of the "scientific" preparatory school of M. Rochette (NSB
240) and later at Harvard law school (NSB 438). He feels pressured to find a vocation when he wants to be "just literary" and guilty for staying at home while others go off to war.

James's autobiographies not only depict but attempt to redefine this sense of oddness as the privileged view of the artist, as special rather than abnormal. James's letter to Adams implies as much. He acknowledges the "unmitigated blackness of Adams's point of view: "Of course we are lone survivors, of course the past that was our lives is at the bottom of an abyss" (Letters 4: 705). But this sense of isolation and loss is not cause for lapsing into silence. Instead James is motivated to pick up his pen both to elegize the past, his "memories," and to affirm his continued interest in and response to life, the "appearances" that play upon his sensibility.\textsuperscript{16} Though it is in Notes of a Son and Brother that James most eloquently presents the dilemma of the man of imagination in a world that does not understand or appreciate him, his first attempt in this direction was The American Scene.

In The American Scene, which Gordon Taylor sees as an initial autobiographical exercise, prefiguring the later more ostensible acts of autobiography, James confronts the hostile view of the artist as a "queer monster," a view which erects a barrier between himself and his audience. In the text of the book he faces and condemns the changes in modern American life that render it inhospitable to the
man of imagination rather than to the man of business. He deplores the growth of materialism, the loss of simple elegance, and the replacement of old, cherished values by new ones of greed and ambition. In the preface, he presents the author in an appealing light—not as a monster, inhuman and detached, but as a man deeply interested in life and "the human scene" (AS x).

As Laurence Holland has observed, James is not consistent in his use of the first person in The American Scene (417). The pronoun "I" frequently designates the writer of the essays, while the protagonist is referred to by some other term such as "the fond critic," "the painter of life" or the "student of manners." For instance James will speak of "the observer whose impressions I note" (AS 77). This continual distinction between the observer of the scene and the recorder of the impressions has the effect of emphasizing James's role as a writer, as does his self-conscious discussion of his choice of imagery, metaphor or illustration (49, 52), and his endless return to the dilemma of how to be selective in his presentations of memories and impressions, how to fit them into "a decent form" (3, 304).

It is as the "restless analyst" and the "story-seeker," two personas related to his profession as a novelist, that James frequently finds himself overwhelmed. However, he also implies that it is his own responsiveness, his own capacity for discrimination that produces these
impressions. "To be on the lookout for differences was, not unnaturally, to meet them just over the border and see them increase and multiply" (AS 36). He reminds his readers "that the imaginative response to the conditions here presented may just happen to proceed from the intellectual extravagance of the given observer" (53).

If the analyst confesses to producing his own adventures, to reading meaning into appearances (AS 194, 235), a further implication is that the American scene itself is either chaotic or vacant, since there is no meaning inherent in it. James implies that it is both. Unlike the analyst, Americans generally "abhor . . . discrimination[s]" and make them only as "lightly and scantily as possible" (219). If one cannot discriminate, one cannot make meaningful connections and chaos threatens. It is "the prime business and the high honour of the painter of life always to make sense" (195), but James can find no sense in the "money passion" which demands the destruction of landmarks for the ubiquitous "business block" (172). New York, driven by the energy of Wall Street, seems to have outdistanced "any possibility of poetry, dramatic capture" (60).

The restless analyst finds little to nourish his aesthetic appetite (275), and the story-seeker is "starved" by the "blankness of the American street-page" (175). At a Florida hotel, where "the interest of the general spectacle was supposed to be . . . that people from all parts of the
country contributed to it [and that] it brought to a focus so many elements of difference" (325-26), James is struck by the "dimness of the distinctions" except for "the comparative ability to spend and purchase" (326). As a student of manners James found nothing to study (327): "it was the scant diversity of type that left me short, as a story-seeker or a picture maker" (328).

If America offers little inspiration to the story-seeker, it offers less approbation. "America is no place" for those who do not make money, James observes, and in a society where "the black ebony god of business" is worshipped, there are few people interested in serious literature (170, 159). His sense that he can find no appreciative audience in America is reflected in his obsession with the pervasiveness of the "alien" element, a concern which Matthiessen argues comes "dangerously close to a doctrine of racism" (110). However, most of James's resistance to the immigrant population can be viewed as an expression of "'lettered' anguish" (AS 99) in the face of the transformation of the American public into an entity with which James cannot communicate, with whom he has nothing "in common" (141) and with whom any sense of "brotherhood" is impossible (86). For James the American public at large had become "alien," and non-English speaking immigrants represented a convenient illustration of his sense that his audience had vanished.

The American Scene was serialized beginning in 1905,
and the preface James added to the book of 1907 seems in part a response to criticism of the installments. Rosalie Hewitt reports that the critics split into two camps: Some criticized it as a "negative assessment of modern America written in a densely textured style that only highlighted the aristocratic superiority of the author" ("Henry James's The American Scene" 179). Others praised it as a "probing study by a native son who could both admire and lament the diversity of a new America" (179). According to Hewitt, James had not anticipated the controversy, but the indignation of patriotic Americans was fierce enough that the condemnatory final chapter was omitted in the first American edition.

In the preface James rather passionately defends his "gathered impressions" and implicitly responds to the criticism that there were many good things about America that he overlooked:

I would take my stand on my gathered impressions, since it was all for them and them only, that I returned; I would in fact go to the stake for them—which is a sign of the value that I both in particular and in general attach to them and that I have endeavoured to preserve for them in this transcription. My cultivated sense of aspects and prospects affected me absolutely as an enrichment of my subject. . . . There would be a thousand matters--matters already the theme of
prodigious reports and statistics—as to which my record would accordingly stand naked and unashamed. (ix)

His book is not a statistical report or a scientific document, but the impressionistic account of a man of letters. James attempts to make his readers recognize the validity of his viewpoint.

James's preface has one explicit purpose: to make clear to the reader "the Author's point of view and his relation to his subject" (AS ix). James takes up this relation first, explaining that since he was born in America, but had been absent for "nearly a quarter century," he approaches his subject as neither an "inquiring stranger" nor an "initiated native" (ix) but with the advantages of both positions. He brings a certain "freshness of eye, outward and inward," but is convinced that as a returning native, "I should understand and should care better and more than the most earnest of visitors."

Recalling that while musing on a title for the book James found the more specialized appellation of "novelist" even more appropriate than "native," it is tempting to see James's presentation of his "great advantage" as referring also to the fact that he relates to his subject as a novelist.

The novelist, like the stranger, is able to look critically at his subject. He sees with "fresh" eyes and "vibrate[s] with curiosity." Yet the novelist is not so
detached that his inquiries become mechanical, like those that produce the "prodigious reports and statistics" James dismisses in the next paragraph (ix). The novelist is a participant in life as well as an acute observer. He "understands" and "cares."

In the remainder of the preface James more explicitly presents himself as an author. "[A]rtistically concerned as I had been all my days with the human subject, with the appreciation of life itself, and with the consequent question of literary representation, I should not find such matters scant or simple" (x). Although his readers fail to appreciate his special perspective, this lifelong concern has given James "a point of view" which makes him uniquely qualified to address the "human subject" through literary representation. But James's plea for a more sympathetic audience went largely unheeded, for as James wrote to Morton Fullerton, "this published volume [AS] appears to have had no 'success' whatever over there" (Letters 4: 454).

IV

As Thomas Leitch notes, James frequently presents himself, in the prefaces to the New York Edition as in The American Scene, as a "critic" of life, of manners, of cities, and of his own work. James implies that to be a serious writer one must also be a critic, and in a passage frequently cited as an appeal for intelligent criticism he points to a problem that threatens such a writer/critic:
His danger is inevitably of imputing to too many others, right and left, the critical impulse and the acuter vision--so very long may it take him to learn that the mass of mankind are banded... to defend themselves to the death against any such vitiation of their simplicity. 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 (Art 155).

While James here outlines the kind of criticism for which he hopes, he also emphasizes the scarcity of people imbued with the "critical impulse." The passage seems to be a warning to himself against high expectations for his readers. He must be careful about imputing to his readers the "acuter vision" he possesses. Throughout the prefaces James struggles with the contrast between what he wants to discuss and what he believes his readers will be interested in or capable of understanding.

For all his conscious hopes that the New York Edition would bring his novels and short stories the audience they deserved, James's memory of The American Scene--both its poor sales and the negative estimate of the American public it contains--must have acted as an unconscious warning that this new publishing venture had little prospect of success with the majority of the reading public. Hidden expectations of failure like those evidenced in the passage...
above might even have functioned as a self-fulfilling prophecy. For like most of the forewords to Nabokov's novels, James's prefaces exhibit an elitist attitude that seems almost calculated to discourage the casual reader. He is constantly reminding the reader of the artist's superiority. Readers are incapable of making the fine distinctions with which the novelist forever struggles, of recognizing a good subject, or of appreciating the difficulties with which "the painter of life" must contend (Art 120, 119, 64). The dilemma James encounters in the composition of *Roderick Hudson*, the earliest novel included in the edition, was to confront him throughout his career: "The greater complexity, the superior truth, was all more or less present to me; only the question was, too dreadfully, how to make it present to the reader" (Art 13)?

James complains throughout the prefaces of the failure of criticism to respond adequately to his books. *The Tragic Muse* was launched into a "great grey void" (Art 80). He found "editorial doors . . . impenetrably closed" to some of his tales (Art 241). Though *Daisy Miller* was ultimately to prosper, James stresses his initial struggles to place it (Art 268). According to the prefaces, James was continually frustrated by "the odd numbness of the general sensibility, which seemed ever to condemn it, in the presence of the work of art, to a view of scarce half the intentions embodied" (Art 228). For instance, though carefully designed, *The Awkward Age* apparently struck its
readers as utterly formless, and, according to James's publisher, the book was treated with unprecedented "general and complete disrespect" (Art 108). Yet James, turning back to it, is lost "in the vision of a hundred bright phenomena" (Art 108). Again James's vision is more acute than that of his readers. As Robert Gale, examining the imagery of the prefaces notes, James calls his readers stupid, though "in a gentle way" (Gale 435).18

With such resisting readers, who will pay no more than "the living wage," which is the "least possible quantity of attention required" (Art 54), the artist must create his own high standards and labor to satisfy them. James, for instance, expends enormous efforts in trying to place the structural center of The Tragic Muse at the middle of the book, and "it mattered little that the reader with the idea of a suspicion of a structural center is the rarest of friends and of critics" (Art 85). Despite his complaints about public numbness, James contends that what is most important and what remains most memorable for a "story-teller" is "not the variable question of the 'success,' but the inveterate romance of the labour" (Art 287). The artist delights in his solitary efforts:

A large part of the very source of interest for the artist . . . resides in the strong consciousness of his seeing all for himself. He has to borrow his motive . . . But after that he only lends and gives, only builds and piles high,
lays together the blocks quarried in the depths of the imagination. . . . [He] can say to himself--what really more than anything else inflames and sustains him--that he alone has the secret of the particular case (Art 123)

The true artist demands no payment for his labors, but is thankful that he enjoys the pleasures of artistic creation "without a tax" (Art 29).

Perhaps even better than the original pleasure of writing is the pleasure of revising, which for James can mean both the actual revision of his texts, which James applied primarily to the earlier works (Art 335-36), and the "re-perusal" accomplished in the prefaces. "To revise is to see, or to look over, again--which means in the case of the written thing neither more nor less than to re-read it" (Art 339). Re-reading his works, James relives the adventure of writing them and reviews his career from a mature vantage point created by a lifetime of experiences which made his present perspective "the only possible one" (Art 339). What is fascinating about this question for James is the prospect of tracing the "history of this effect of experience" (Art 340). James wishes to trace the history of the development of his "taste," of his growth as an artist, with the aid of the "intenser light" of his mature perspective (Art 341). He wants to find the latent promise of his earlier works and present them as they might have been had he been sufficiently developed as an artist.
when he wrote them.

The ultimate goal of this exercise in revision is the mutual pleasure of author and critic. If James indulges himself by "dreaming over" his immature works, it is with the idea of satisfying future critics. "What has the affair been at the worst . . . but an invitation to the reader to dream again in my company" (Art 345)? The reader of the prefaces, James believes, will be able to enjoy the novels and tales in a new light thanks to the ray of James's "critical lantern" (Art 205-6). "It all comes back to . . . my and your 'fun,'" James assures the reader (Art 345).19

But if readers failed to respond imaginatively to James's novels, it is difficult to imagine them finding much amusement in re-reading along with him. James manifests a certain uneasiness on this point. He insists that reperusal is intensely interesting, but admits "that this interest, in a given relation, will nowhere so effectively kindle as on the artist's own part" (Art 29). Readers don't care about such things as the effects of "treatment by scenes," James reminds himself (Art 158).

James's doubt about the critical capacities of his audience leads him to fear that this exercise in revision will be, like his earlier literary efforts, another solitary exercise practiced solely for his own pleasure. So James's determination to foreground "the story of one's story" over "the story of one's hero" (Art 313), to focus his essays on
problems of composition and the thrills of artistic creation, becomes another instance of James's insistence on the worth of his "gathered impressions" despite the indifference of his audience. Yet James affects to be solicitous for the reader's amusement (Art 52). He pointedly claims to attempt to keep the reader entertained both in his fiction and in these prefaces themselves. In his fiction he provides amusing characters like Henrietta Stackpole (Art 55-57). In his prefaces he uses lively and adventurous metaphors in hopes of making the reader share his sense that "the story of one's story," the novelist's "process of production," is a "thrilling tale" or "a wondrous adventure" (Art 313, 4). Retracing the process by which he composed The Golden Bowl, James compares himself to a detective: "I track my uncontrollable footsteps, right and left, after the fact, while they take their quick turn, even on stealthiest tiptoe" (Art 328). The novelist trying to find a subject for his tale is presented as "an explorer" making his way through a "thick jungle" filled with "possible stories" (Art 3, 60). In another example the novelist is a fisherman, one of whose "dormant impressions . . . flashes to the surface as a fish, with a single 'squirm,' rises to the baited hook, and there instantly meets the vivifying ray" (Art 151).

James's efforts to achieve "a certain indirect and oblique view of [his] presented action," the "critical
problem" he poses in the prefaces, is portrayed as his attempt "to get down into the arena and do my best to live and breathe and rub shoulders and converse with the persons engaged in the struggle that provides for others in the circling tiers the entertainment of the great game." (Art 327-28). And in what is perhaps the most dramatic image in the book, James "cherishes" the memory of his attempt to balance the structural center of The Tragic Muse as "some adventurer in another line may hug the sense of his inveterate habit of just saving in time the neck he ever undiscourageably risks" (Art 85).

James's vivid images and diction, his talk of thrills, risks and dangers, can be seen as both an attempt to capture the interest of his readers and an attempt to convey to them his own sense of the power of the imagination and the vitality of the life of the artist. Especially frequent are references to the artist's imagination in terms of special powers of vision or illumination. The artist possesses "a good eye for a subject," (Art 119); the imagination "projects a further ray" onto the facts of a particular case (Art 141); an impression "work[s] itself out with confidence" after meeting the "vivifying ray" of the artist's vision (Art 151). James also stresses the artist's acute interest and immersion in life. The artist's "sense of life" is "fed at every pore" (Art 201), and the moral sense of his tales depends on "the amount of felt life" concerned in their
production (Art 45).

As a "painter of life" (Art 149) the writer actively seeks to add to his store of impressions. While writing *The Princess Casamassima*, James recalls pulling no wires, knocking at no closed doors, applying for no "authentic" information; but I recall also . . . the practice of never missing an opportunity to add a drop, however small, to the bucket of my impressions. . . . To haunt the great city and by this habit to penetrate it, imaginatively in as many places as possible-- . . . *that* was to pull wires, *that* was to open doors, *that* positively was to groan at times under the weight of one's accumulations. (Art 77)

In this passage, James equates imagination with action. James learns more by observing, by soaking up the atmosphere while haunting the London streets, than if he had attempted a more formal inquiry.

In most of James's images of authorship there is either a balance between activity and passivity, or an inversion of the expected emphasis. The balance reflects a view of authorship in which the author takes ideas from life, or becomes aware of characters or ideas for a story by some unconscious process but then consciously selects, shapes and builds his material. An example would be the long passage quoted above where James admits to "borrowing" his motive, but then "lends and gives . . . builds and
More interesting are the passages which reverse ordinary associations. While observation is generally considered a passive activity, for James it is a form of penetration and selection. The acute eye of the artist spots and illuminates the buried germ of a possible story. But when James depicts himself wandering through a jungle filled with possible stories and characters "fluttering up like startled game," he is not a hunter stalking these elusive ideas and figures but an observer forced to "guard himself against the brush of importunate wings" (Art 60). James undermines the traditional distinction between activity and passivity in an effort to reinforce his view that the contemplative life of the man of imagination can be as intense an adventure as the more active life of, for instance the soldier or the man of business. As Maurice Beebe suggests, James chooses a life of "being and seeing" over the more common life of "doing and getting" (230).  

Perhaps to say that James "chooses" the life of the man of imagination, as one might choose a career, is misleading. James himself is more accurate when he explains to Shaw that he "happens" to be such a man. For James the superior vision of the artist and the unbounded receptivity to impressions that marks him or her is not something that can be put on or taken off like a pair of glasses and not something that can be changed or abandoned.
like a job. It is a way of seeing and a manner of living. Having recognized this mode of existence in himself, James wrote in his notebooks that

To live in the world of creation—to get into and stay in it—to frequent it and haunt it—to think intently and fruitfully—to woo combinations and inspirations into being by a depth and continuity of attention and meditation—this is the only thing. (*NHJ* 62)

The man of imagination is drawn irresistibly toward the "world of creation," but must make great efforts to "get into and stay in it." Thus to be an author involves both the apparently passive acceptance of impressions and the activity of selection, discrimination and arrangement through which the author creates his fiction.

James records these efforts in his notebooks and relives them in the prefaces. In *A Small Boy and Others* and *Notes of a Son and Brother*, however, James turns back to a time before he became a published author. As William Hoffa notes, the emphasis is not on his public achievement as an author but on the development of the imaginative vision which would define him as an artist (290). Although James is concerned with the history and development of his artistic imagination in both his prefaces and his autobiographies, there is an important shift in emphasis. The prefaces are concerned with James's authorial acts of selection and construction in his fiction.
viewed in the "intenser light" of the mature novelist's perspective. The autobiographies constitute another act of revision from the same perspective, but this time the "text" is James's childhood and youth. In the autobiographies James depicts "the "inexhaustible sensibility" which qualified him to become an artist.

James presents himself as an avid observer of life and insists that he has "lost nothing of what he saw" (SB 60). As Bell notes, the autobiographies are full of visual and gustatory imagery ("Henry James" 473). The young James is forever gaping at or consuming the world around him. He rises to experiences on "wings of wonder" (SB 98). He indulges in the luxury of "endlessly supposing, wondering and admiring" (SB 138) and feels in retrospect that he enjoyed a "highly colored and remarkably active life" (SB 173).

But the "intenser light" of the mature writer's backward glance is strong and influences James's memories. For although James wants to present himself as delighting in bewilderment, thriving in the role of enchanted spectator (Hoffa 286), the autobiography repeatedly suggests that as a small boy James was troubled with feelings of inferiority. He was unable, at this early stage of life, to find more value in "the tenacity of impression" than in a "wealth of experience" (SB 60) and worried about lagging behind his older brother and cousins in "real pursuits" (SB 99, 122, 128). The consoling
knowledge that he was destined for literary greatness was denied James in his youth. For his aptitude for fiction was apparent to neither himself nor his parents during these early years: "I yet recall, on my part, no practice whatever of narrative prose or any sort of verse" (SB 148). In fact, his interest in novels led his parents to try him at a "scientific" school, from which James emerged as "a deeply hushed failure" (NSB 241).

Although a tension between societal, and sometimes familial, expectations and James's own latent desire to be "just literary" continues to lend the autobiographies the tone of a "crisis of identity and vocation" (Eakin Fictions 7), James ultimately presents the tale of his youth as a "success story" whereby he discovers his literary vocation (Goetz 37). The discovery begins with James's perception of order and meaning in his impressions, a sign that he would eventually move from passive reception to active selection, from the eye that merely takes in all impressions to the discriminating eye of the artist, which chooses subjects to develop:

To feel a unity, a character and a tone in one's impressions, to feel them related and all harmoniously coloured, that was positively to face the aesthetic, the creative, even, quite wonderously the critical life and almost on the spot to commence author. (NSB 253)

The autobiographies, then, concern the process by which
James came to recognize and value his impressions, to define himself as a successful man of imagination rather than a young man on the sidelines with nothing to show for his life.

Much interpretation of the two books has focused on two specific passages which are seen as decisive moments in James's identification of himself as a novelist: an account of a nightmare in *A Small Boy and Others* (196-97) and the story of James's "obscure hurt," a wound he claims prevented him from engaging in combat in the Civil War, in *Notes of a Son and Brother* (414-25).

The story of the nightmare, in which James turns aggressively on a shadowy figure that is pursuing him and causes the pursuer to turn and flee through the Galerie d'Apollon at the Louvre, interrupts James's description of his first encounter with the Galerie. James had been overwhelmed by a "general sense" of glory, which he associates with "beauty, art and supreme design" as well as "history and fame and power." James felt "vaguely" that the Galerie would be "the scene of something" and many years later it became the scene of this dream. James remarks, "The triumph of my impulse [to chase his pursuer] ... was the grand thing, but the great point of the whole was the wonder of my final recognition" (197). James recognizes "the deep embrasures and the so polished floor ... of the Galerie d'Apollon of my childhood," but more important than the "wondrous place" is the revival of his
"young imaginative life in it" (197).

Adeline Tinter describes the dream as an encounter in which the "self which is not an artist" is an intruder routed by the artistic self (256). This is the "grand thing". But the great point is the instant of recognition, which links child and adult as fellow participants in the "imaginative life." In the dream an adult James recognizes what even as a child entranced by the galerie he had precociously sensed, that this "palace of art" in which he would embrace "beauty, art and supreme design" would also be the arena of his triumph.

The second incident, as Eakin has pointed out, concerns a vocational crisis. James is trying to explain why he attended Harvard Law School, which seemed to take him away from the literary life to which he was leaning but which he could not yet bring himself to embrace. James explains that the decision was complicated by two incidents, a public one and a private one: the outbreak of the Civil War and an injury sustained while fighting a fire in "the soft Spring of '61." Lincoln's first call for volunteers is fused in James's mind with this fire and James's injury. James further implies that this injury not only made it impossible to answer Lincoln's call, but that his injury was the equivalent of the wounds suffered by soldiers on the battlefield. Although a specialist, when consulted, finds nothing wrong with James, the young man still chooses the indulgence of a "season of
retirement" while he prepares for Harvard. At this point James sees his activities as "at least a negative of combat . . . something definitely and firmly parallel to action in the tented field" (417). The injury, then, releases James from the responsibility of physical combat and frees him to participate instead in "an intellectual ordeal" (417).

As the Cambridge year passes, James's initial belief that he had a "merely relative right . . . to exist" is replaced by a conviction that his own realities are just as meaningful and absorbing as the apparently "stiffer ones" faced by the soldiers (417). Eventually this confidence in himself and the validity of his own different course would lead him to begin to "woo the muse . . . of prose fiction" (NSB 439) while ostensibly still attending law school. Meanwhile James records a kind of vicarious participation in the war through a visit to Portsmouth Grove, where he conversed with and comforted wounded soldiers. James emphasizes his identification with the soldiers. Whatever the "facts of the case," subjectively, this brief encounter in the summer of '63 figures as a valid "substitute for the concrete experience" (NSB 423). Here again James insists on the intensity of his impressions and the essential equivalence of actual and vicarious participation.

One reason that these incidents have received so much critical attention is that they are among the few dramatic passages in the whole two volumes. For all James's insistence that his life seemed to him "highly colored and
active," it appears rather uneventful. James faced the same dilemma in the autobiography as in the prefaces and in his novels: how to make a drama of consciousness present to his readers? how to make a psychological adventure satisfy the reader who wants plenty of incident? James's strategy is again to dramatize and to confound the reader's expectations about passivity or activity. The literary life is presented as a near equivalent to a military one. The apparently passive son and brother surprises himself by exhibiting aggression, though only in a dream. A story of an inward transformation or recognition is dramatized as a crisis or climactic encounter.

As in the prefaces, James may be trying to placate bored readers while simultaneously asserting again his own sense that the literary life is a vital one. Both Eakin and Mayo recognize that James, at the moment of writing the autobiography, is still trying to resolve feelings of guilt for non-participation in the war of half a century earlier. Eakin goes further, recognizing that in telling the story of finding his authorial identity as a young man James is reasserting and rediscovering it (Fictions 57-125). For James, disheartened by the poor sales of the New York Edition and three years of chronic illness, is looking into his past for a time when illness or injury proved an "enabling event," "a wonderful chance" leading to the discovery of his literary vocation ("Obscure Hurt" 688).
Eakin points out that James manipulated chronology in order to relate his injury to his failure to enlist.

But James himself recognizes that as in the act of revision practiced in the *New York Edition*, he is reading the past in the light of the present, constructing a new history for himself. In the nightmare episode he freely acknowledges that his dream dates from many years later, but inserts it at the moment of his first encounter with the Galerie in order to suggest that even as youth he had the vague sense that this "palace of art" would be the scene of his greatness. And he admits that "my appreciation of what I presume at the risk of any apparent fatuity to call my 'relation to' the War is at present a thing exquisite to me . . . whereas it had to be at the time sore and troubled" (*NSB* 383).

James's awareness of his acts of retrospective interpretation in the autobiography was prefigured in an essay he began to write for William Dean Howells in 1900 on the subject of "The Turning Point of My Life." Howells proposed that every man's life had a "turning-point." At first, James recalls, "I glanced back at my own career in the light of this generalisation--only perhaps to look too blank and unrecognising" (*NHJ* 437). What James's autobiographies suggest is that James finds no definite turning point in his past, no point when he "became" an artist, because he was in a sense born one. One of the burdens of the autobiographies is to demonstrate that he
always possessed an artistic viewpoint. Before he was an author, he still responded imaginatively to the world.

But when a friend, Howells, suggests that James's decision to leave law school after one year could be such a turning point, the rejection of the world of litigation for the world of creation, James is charmed by the possibility. "I wondered whether I mightn't find, on ingenious reflection, that my youth had in fact enjoyed that amount of drama" (NHJ 438). James is at once inspired to begin a story of "consciously committing myself to my particular divergence" in rejecting law for literature, and the arbitrary nature of the "turning point" becomes insignificant. The nightmare and "obscure hurt" incidents are similar stories. James applies his literary skills to his life, selecting and rearranging the materials of his past to fit the story he wants to tell, a success story about his "growing authorhood" (Tinter 249).

As James implies in "the Turning Point of my Life," when he notes that there is more "bliss" in talking about the things that "one has kept," that one has allowed to "richly accumulate" over the course of one's life, than in identifying "the things that one had thrown off" and which had "ceased to be part of oneself" (438), the best evidence that the autobiographies compose a "success story" would be some illustration that those gathered impressions of childhood were still vivid for James and that he had indeed found a place for them. The autobiographies themselves
provide that illustration. James's "backward reach" (SB 73) toward his childhood self, his revision of his young life in light of his later artistic achievements, is accompanied by copious glimpses of the consciousness of the mature James which blossoms with memories, the fruit of his "earliest aesthetic seeds" (SB 95), tenderly evoked on the pages of the books. James does not entirely forgo self-conscious presentation of active authorship, the transformation of impressions into art.

As in the prefaces, James allows the story of his hero (in this case his younger self) to be eclipsed at times by the story of his story--the writing of the autobiography. James once again presents the thrilling adventure of composition in which he still finds himself overwhelmed by impressions but rises to the challenge of selection and discrimination. "Aspects began to multiply and images to swarm" so that James finds "discrimination among the parts of my subject again and again difficult (SB 3). As James presented himself "as saving his neck" at the last moment in his technical performance in The Tragic Muse, here he narrowly escapes the "traps for remembrance" posed by the letters which threaten to distract him (NSB 322). He lingers lovingly over certain memories, then catches the "dangling threads" (SB 99) of his "story proper" (SB 385). He violates chronology, as would Nabokov, to trace the path of certain themes or images throughout his life.

Like Speak, Memory in contrast to Nabokov's prefaces,
A Small Boy and Others and particularly Notes of a Son and Brother found a more appreciative audience than did the New York Edition. Perhaps readers were more inclined to "dream along" in James's company because the fondly reminiscing narrator and the unassuming small boy made more congenial and less threatening companions than the "master" of the prefaces, who constantly reminded readers of his superiority. Holly's account of contemporary reviews suggests that while reviewers recognized A Small Boy and Others as a story of the development of artistic consciousness which privileged "mental states rather than external facts" ("British Reception" 575-8), they preferred Notes of a Son and Brother. Here readers praised James's "personal warmth." Their interest focused on the ostensible story of James's relation to his brother and his family rather than the story that James himself was most irresistibly drawn to write, the history of his "fostered imagination" (584). As for the story of his story, James's tendency to make the writing of the autobiography a subject of the autobiography, that would be for later critics to discover.

The reading public had not been transformed overnight, and most reviewers, as Holly notes, complained of James's difficult style (580). Yet for the first time in years James was touched by public response to his work. Though James had argued in the prefaces that the writer must strive to please himself and not expect the reward of
appreciation or serious attention on the part of his readers, it was gratifying for James to manage to please both himself and his readers in his last published work. As James rejoiced in a letter to William's widow, "the thing appears to be quite extraordinarily appreciated, absolutely acclaimed here" (Letters 4: 707). Basking in the glow of this "extraordinary" appreciation, James could feel that his sense of writing as an "act of life" was recognized: he had at last "made somebody care."
Part Three
"Tell All the Truth But Tell It Slant": Prefaces to Autobiographies

Something happens in my writing--I don't mean it to--a sort of distinction, a sort of writing on the bias, seeing things with a sort of swerve and swoop.

Mary McCarthy,
Interview with Elizabeth Niebuhr

"The new version of an old tale always had a twist in the telling worth listening to."

Peter Feibleman on Lillian Hellman as a storyteller
Less perhaps than any other book written by me, or anybody else, does this volume require a preface... For, this book is a very intimate revelation; and what that is revealing can a few more pages add to some three hundred others of most sincere disclosures?
Joseph Conrad, "Author's Note" to The Mirror of the Sea (CP 97)

The re-issue of this book in a new form does not strictly speaking require another Preface. But since this is distinctly a place for personal remarks I take the opportunity...
Conrad, "Author's Note" to A Personal Record (v)

Chapter Seven

"A Personal Note in the Margin of the Public Page"

"Really, universally," wrote Henry James, "relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw... the circle within which they appear to stop" (Art 5). When the artist is an autobiographer, the canvas his or her own life, the problem of continuity looms particularly large. Because a crucial part of the problem of finding a pattern in the complexity of life is determining meaningful starting and stopping points, "beginnings and endings are crucial components of many autobiographical acts" (Stone 265). The autobiographer, unlike the biographer, can convincingly avail himself or herself of neither of the self-evident points at which to begin or end the account of a life.
birth and death. The autobiographer can anticipate his or her own death and write as if the life were already over (as Henry Adams does in *The Education of Henry Adams* and Glasgow does in the "Epilogue" to *The Woman Within*), but narration of one's own death remains impossible. A first-hand account of one's birth is likewise precluded. Although the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* begins with a straightforward statement, "I was born in Tuckahoe," Douglass goes on to explain that he knows neither his age nor his father's identity (21). Douglass makes clear that the absence of knowledge about his origins is another of the unjust deprivations of slavery, and in fact, most autobiographers do not literally share his ignorance about their own beginnings. Yet what they do know about their births and early childhood is based on hearsay. The tales of others must supply what memory cannot retrieve, making the autobiographical task, as Mary McCarthy complains, particularly difficult for orphans (*MCG* 5).

St Augustine, praising God for his "first beginnings," reconstructs his infancy through his parents' comments and his observation of other children in whom he "can see what I do not remember in myself" (22-23), but he is stymied by attempts to recall his existence in the womb or "the time even before then":

Was I anywhere or anybody? For I have no one to tell me this. My father and mother could not
tell me, nor could the experience of others or my own memory. (22)

Most autobiographers do not try to go this far back. While many include some biographical information outside the scope of their own memories, they are generally content to begin their life stories at some later significant point. They may begin with an early memory, such as Glasgow’s vision of a bodiless face, or, like Nabokov, may attempt to identify the moment when they first became conscious of themselves as individuals. Some writers begin with an event which transformed the shape of their childhood. Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* opens with the arrival of the author and her brother in Stamps, Arkansas to live with the grandmother who will raise them for the next several years. McCarthy begins *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* at the moment when her parents’ deaths abruptly plunge her and her brothers into an austere, unwelcoming world, in which their prior existence seems a fairy tale.

Finally autobiographers may choose to begin with an episode, frequently from early childhood, which is not only significant in itself, but is overtly invested with symbolic meaning and becomes a sort of paradigm for the autobiographer’s life. Richard Wright begins *Black Boy* with an account of his setting fire to a white curtain, accidentally burning his house down, and then being beaten almost to death by his mother in punishment. The incident suggests the violence Wright will repeatedly suffer at the
hands of his family and the black community as they attempt to curb the curiosity and assertiveness towards the white world that could be fatal to a black man in the South.

However the autobiographer chooses to begin, he or she seldom simply starts with the account of the first memory, the transforming event, the traditional notation of birth and parentage or any other ostensible beginning. Instead autobiographers appear compelled to account in their opening pages for their decision to write an autobiography, to explain what they are doing and what they hope to accomplish. Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* provide a sort of paradigm. As Stephen J. Kellman remarks, Rousseau's opening is "a thoroughly characteristic demonstration of the personality we see forming at the same time that it is a preface to an account of that formation" (146). The conventional beginning--"I was born at Geneva in 1712, the son of Issac Rousseau, a citizen of that town and Susanne Bernard, his wife" (17)--follows upon three paragraphs that serve to explain Rousseau's aims in the book, postulate the uniqueness of both himself and his enterprise, and insist upon his veracity:

I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself.

Simply myself... I am made unlike any one
I have ever met . . . I may be no better, but at least I am different. Whether Nature did well or ill in breaking the mould in which she formed me, is a question which can only be resolved after the reading of my book.

. . . I shall come forward with this work in my hand, to present myself before my solemn judge. . . . I have never put down as true what I knew to be false. I have displayed myself as I was. . . . So let the numberless legion of my fellow men gather round me and hear my confessions. (17)

While not technically a preface, Rousseau's opening remarks illustrate the characteristic concerns of prefaces to autobiographies. First, there is the equation of self and work and the consequent unease at self-exposure. He has "bared [his] secret soul" and "reveal[ed] his heart." Rousseau will arrive at the judgment day with his book in his hand since to judge the book is to judge the man. Second, because he knows his readers must judge him Rousseau takes a defensive posture towards them. By insisting on his own uniqueness, he undercuts their basis for judgment. While he claims to understand his fellow men, his emphasis on his difference from them implies that they are incapable of understanding him. And he implicitly charges them with moral cowardice since none of his detractors would dare expose himself in this way. Finally,
to gain the reader's confidence, Rousseau stresses his sincerity.

In *Father and Son*, Edmund Gosse follows a similar pattern, prefacing a conventional beginning, "my parents were poor gentlefolks . . .," with a few paragraphs addressed to the reader (35). Like Rousseau, Gosse explains his view of the enterprise before him and somewhat defensively encourages the reader to adopt it as his or her own. While Rousseau presents himself as sometimes "vile and despicable" and sometimes "generous and noble," but always sincere and no worse than other men (17), Gosse depicts his relationship with his father as one characterized by mutual respect, honor, and affection despite crucial misunderstandings. As Rousseau fears that his honest depiction of his "depravities" might lead some to revile him as morally inferior, so Gosse seems concerned that he may be accused of unfilial conduct. He tries to forestall this objection by professing his enduring esteem for his father and casting their conflict in terms that transcend the merely individual. "The book is the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs" (35). Gosse takes a similarly objective stance in the "Preface" to the book, where he depicts himself as a social or theological historian and calls the book "a document . . . the diagnosis of a dying Puritanism" (33). Avoiding the first-person pronoun, he refers to himself as "the Son" and "the writer of these
recollections" (33-34).

Gosse's preface also echoes Rousseau's protestations of truthfulness, claiming that his account is "scrupulously true" (33). Both Gosse and Rousseau thus seem to illustrate Stone's contention that the opening moments of autobiographical acts traditionally "announce, apologize and explain" inviting the reader to form a "trustworthy relation" to the narrator (265-6). But while, unlike more recent autobiographers, Gosse and Rousseau do not deliberately blur the line between fiction and truth, each is sensitive to the possibility that his veracity will be questioned. Gosse notes that "at the present hour . . . fiction takes forms so ingenious and so specious" that it becomes necessary for him to identify his book explicitly as a factual document. Rousseau carefully explains that "if by chance I have used some material embellishment it has only been to fill a void due to a defect of memory. I may have taken for fact what was no more than a probability, but I have never put down as true what I knew to be false" (17). In prefaces to modern autobiographies, as Stone implies, the truthfulness of the autobiographer has become the paramount issue.

Stone's insightful suggestion that in the past thirty years the blurring of distinctions between truth and fiction, between novel and autobiography, has contributed to an increase in prefaces concerned with this issue helps to account for the overflow of the preface into the body of
the autobiographies of Lillian Hellman (Three 1979) and Mary McCarthy (Memories of a Catholic Girlhood 1957) which will be discussed in the next chapter. According to Stone, "Either to remain silent or to reaffirm a verifiable historical discourse seem equally false to now-altered perceptions of the nature of autobiography. Definitions and boundaries once shared between writer and reader are growing larger" (267).

But, as Stone points out, it is also true that throughout history, "autobiographies commonly commence not with chapter one but with an introduction or a preface" (265). From Montaigne's Essays to John Updike's Self-Consciousness, from De Quincey's Confessions of an Opium Eater to The Education of Henry Adams, from Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl to William Alexander Percy's Lanterns on the Levee, we find autobiographers addressing their readers in prefaces and forewords. But few critics have noticed this phenomenon. Exceptions (those autobiographers who do not write prefaces) are taken as the rule because they conform to our intuitive expectations. A preface to an autobiography seems somehow redundant. Hawthorne yielded to an "autobiographical impulse" and addressed the reader in prefaces, but he was writing novels. There seems to be much less justification for burdening an autobiography with a preface, for surely there has been ample opportunity to indulge the autobiographical impulse in the autobiography
proper. As Conrad remarked wryly in a passage from the preface to *The Mirror of the Sea* which serves as an epigraph for this chapter: "what that is revealing can a few more pages add to some three hundred others of most sincere disclosures?" (CP 97).

Two critics have, logically enough, suggested that prefaces to autobiographies are superfluous. In the introduction to a collection of prefaces and afterwords, Herbert Grierson explains that the interest of the texts in his collection lies in observing the ways in which "the writer's consciousness of himself is always to some extent qualified by his consciousness" of the book's theme and audience (3). Frequently the author will allow "personal feelings" to emerge in the preface; he or she "will forget alike theme and audience" and speak of the self (2). However, "to seek the personal note in the preface or epilogue to . . . an autobiography" is a futile enterprise, for this personal note is "impressed on or diffused throughout the whole work" (25).

In an attempt to explain why "a body of critical literature did not grow up alongside autobiography," James Olney points to the self-reflexivity of the genre and suggests that

the criticism of autobiography exists within the literature instead of alongside it. The autobiographer can discuss and analyze the autobiographical act as he performs it: St.
Augustine, Montaigne, Rousseau and Henry James are forever talking about what they are doing even as they do it. ("Autobiography and the Cultural Moment" 25).

If the critic's work seemed dispensible because the autobiographer had already performed a kind of auto-criticism in the autobiography, how much less necessary is it for the autobiographer to repeat this task in a preface?

Olney depicts the preface as a second-best alternative, used by writers of fiction at the cost of "a large part of [their] privileged status as the creative consciousness in which this fiction comes into being" (25). Henry James is his primary example:

In order to talk about his fictions, Henry James had to write the "prefaces" to the New York edition, but [in his autobiographies] it is as if the critical, theoretical prefaces had found their way into the text of the narrative, allowing the author . . . to comment in his own voice on the origins of the tale, the problems it presented in conception and composition, and the means discovered to overcome those problems (25).

By all accounts Henry James is a particularly self-reflexive autobiographer, and it seems reasonable to argue that a preface is not necessary for A Small Boy and Others or Notes of a Son and Brother because this self-reflexive discourse has been incorporated into the autobiographical
narrative. By the same token, Rousseau's conception of his "enterprise" was such that material obviously prefatory in nature could be included as part of the first chapter. The voice of the narrator is indistinguishable from the voice of the author so there is no need for the author to speak outside the narrative.

When we carry these observations to their logical conclusion and suggest that prefaces to autobiographies are superfluous and redundant, we are forced to acknowledge that nevertheless many autobiographers write them. To complicate matters further, it is not so much a question of the autobiographer forgoing the privilege of speaking self-reflexively in the autobiography and writing a preface instead as it is a question of writers like Gosse, Nabokov and Conrad doing both.

Conrad is an interesting case because while he seems to acknowledge that his prefaces are unjustified additions to his autobiographical works, he nevertheless persists in writing them. The two epigraphs to this chapter are taken from the series of author's notes Conrad wrote for J. M. Dent and Sons' collected edition of his work published from 1917-1920. Thus Conrad is provided with an easy rationale for writing these admittedly unnecessary prefaces. Since the books are part of the edition, and all the other works will have "Author's Notes," he is obliged to furnish prefaces for these works as well (CP 97). But the inadequacy of this excuse is hinted at in the "Author's
Note" to *A Personal Record*. The reissue of the book does not require "another preface." For it was for *A Personal Record*, which, though Conrad dismisses it as a "mere fragment of biography" (*CP* 97), seems to me to contain even more "sincere disclosures" and "intimate revelations" than *The Mirror of the Sea*, that Conrad wrote one of his earliest and longest prefatory pieces, "A Familiar Preface." Plainly Conrad did feel the need to address his readers before allowing them to encounter his autobiography.

Like Hawthorne and Shelley before him, Conrad seems ever ready to apologize for a personal intrusion. The first words of his "Familiar Preface" explain that "a little friendly pressure," against which he defended himself "with some spirit" was necessary before he yielded to the apparent obligation to write of himself made manifest by "the friendly voice" (*PR* 5). If it is somewhat self-indulgent to talk about himself, it is worse to talk about his work. His propensity to explain his motives and intentions is a "weakness" which "exposes one to the risk of becoming a bore" (*CP* 104). He disparages the idea of the author as a privileged critic of his own work. "One does one's work and theorizes about it afterwards. It is a very amusing and egotistical occupation of no use whatever to anyone" (*CP* 57).

Though Conrad admits to "a propensity to justify my action" which he later will indulge in his "Author's
Notes," he is initially hesitant about confronting his critics in print. Like Nabokov after him—though Nabokov professes disdain where Conrad professes respect—Conrad prides himself on his reticence with respect to criticism, unless it touches upon his personal life rather than concerning itself exclusively with his published works. After "[f]ifteen years of unbroken silence before praise or blame," Conrad feels moved to respond to the suspicion, prevalent in "one, at least, authoritative quarter of criticism," that he is guilty of "what the French would call sècheresse de coeur" (PR 12). This response is justified because this particular criticism "is more of a personal matter, reaching the man behind the work, and therefore it may be alluded to in a volume which is a personal note in the margin of the public page" (PR 13). In other words, it is the autobiography itself which constitutes this personal note, which assumes a marginal position in relation to the public page of his works of fiction. But the preface itself can be considered a marginal note to the public page of the autobiography.

The same ambiguity appears in the justification of the "Author's Note" to the 1919 edition of A Personal Record. Though a second preface is not required, Conrad is free to take the opportunity to respond to "certain statements about [him]self [he has] noticed of late in the press" because "this is distinctly a place for personal remarks" (PR v). Is the reference for "this" the autobiography, the author's
note, or in particular the author's note to an autobiography?

Conrad seems to have recognized both genres, the preface and the autobiography, as suitable arenas for authorial self-presentation. In both his author's notes and *A Personal Record* he presents his view of the writer and his craft and attempts to explain his transformation from seaman to writer. He appears to recognize a certain continuity between his voice in the autobiography and in the "Familiar Preface." Of the latter he remarks, "I fear that trying to be conversational I have only managed to be unduly discursive. . . . Yet this discursiveness is not so irrelevant to the pages that follow. They, too, have been charged with discursiveness" (*PR* 20). Yet he does not simply include the contents of his preface in *A Personal Record*. Although the preface to an autobiography seems doubly marginalized as the marginal note in a book which is itself a marginal note, and thus all the more suitable as a place for discreet personal remarks, it nevertheless commands special attention as the first element of the volume. And because the preface is set apart, the author's voice in the preface seems to be set apart as well. By stepping outside the text the author can attempt to take on the role of an objective commentator who can vouch for the truth of the work. The preface is necessary because a book about the self is particularly in need of defense.

The charge of undue discursiveness is the first that
Conrad seeks to refute. Commenting on the popularity of novels written in the autobiographical mode, that is novels narrated in the first person by one of the main characters, Percy Lubbock maintains that the privilege of looseness or formlessness is accorded to both such novels and autobiography itself.7 According to Lubbock, autobiography's "natural right is to seem wayward and inconsequent" (132). But this is not how Conrad wants his autobiography to be judged. The rambling nature of his account, which shuns chronological order and conventional forms (20-21), is only apparently a sign of careless writing. "[T]hese memories put down without any regard for established conventions have not been thrown off without system and purpose. They have their hope and their aim" (21-22).

The burden of the preface to an autobiography, then, is often to explain to the reader how the fragments (assorted memories, vignettes, diary or journal entries, short stories, miniature biographies and so on) collected and presented by the autobiographer add up to a composite portrait of the self or at least to a unified book. The autobiographer uses the preface to present the particular "design" that governs the presentation of the life. For instance, Heilman explains in the short preface to Pentimento that her method—composing verbal portraits of other people along with comments on how her own view of that person has changed over time—is the equivalent of
looking beneath "old paint on canvas" and seeing the painter's original vision through the later picture. It is a means of "seeing and then seeing again." We are to read the book as Hellman's attempt "to see what was there for me once, what is there for me now" (Three 309).

Another author who uses a preface to proclaim the design according to which the pieces of his autobiography are arranged is Michel Leiris. In the preface (or the afterword as it appears in the first English version) to Manhood, Leiris explains several times that the technique followed in the book is one of photomontage or collage, that his aim is for a kind of emotional catharsis, and that the theme linking the book's disparate elements -- "childhood memories, accounts of real events, dreams and actually experienced impressions" -- is sexuality, his erotic life (157).

Finally in the 1966 "Foreword" to Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited, Nabokov identifies the book as a "systematically correlated assemblage of personal recollections ranging geographically from St Petersburg to St. Nazaire and covering thirty-seven years, from August 1903 to May 1940, with only a few sallies into later space-time" (SM 9). After giving bibliographical information on the first publication of the various chapters, he notes that though the chapters were composed in an "erratic sequence" they had in fact "been neatly filling numbered gaps in my mind" (SM 10). Nabokov's preface thus makes a
claim for an elaborate, precise design and yet, with the hint of "sallies into later space-time" and the admission of an "erratic sequence" of composition, suggests the freedom from precise chronology that Nabokov enjoys in his autobiography.

It is not only the form of the autobiography which calls for defense or explanation but the content. As Rousseau's comments about baring his "secret soul" suggest, what is primarily at stake in an autobiography is self-exposure. Of course writers of fiction do reveal themselves through their writing, but, as Conrad recognizes, there is a crucial difference:

I know that a novelist lives in his work. He stands there, the only reality in an invented world, amongst imaginary things, happenings, and people. Writing about them, he is only writing about himself. But the disclosure is not complete. He remains to a certain extent a figure behind the veil; a suspected rather than a seen presence—a movement and a voice behind the draperies of fiction. In these personal notes there is no such veil. (PR 8-9)

Conrad's images resonate with Hawthorne's in "The Custom-House" where the latter insisted that his "Inmost me" remained behind the veil, and in the preface to The Snow-Image where he hinted that indeed a shadowy image of himself might be deduced from examining the whole spectrum
of his fictional characters. This image would be "the suspected presence behind the draperies of fiction" to which Conrad alludes. Carefully concealing his true self from the public's eye, Hawthorne confessed to trying deliberately in his later writings to conform to the image suggested by his early work. "He is by no means certain, that some of his subsequent productions have not been influenced and modified by a natural desire to fill up so amiable an outline, and to act in consonance with the character assigned to him" (TTT 7). In writing his autobiography, Conrad accepts that he risks forfeiting any flattering image his fiction may have suggested to his readers. "This is the danger incurred by an author of fiction who sets out to talk about himself without disguise" (9).

Leiris, who begins Manhood with a merciless self-portrait, takes autobiographical self-exposure to an extreme. For Leiris self-exposure is what makes autobiography a vital literary form. He admits to loathing the accidental glimpse of himself in the mirror where he appears "humiliatingly ugly" (3-4), yet he captures this embarrassing reflection in the Prologue:

My head is rather large for my body; my legs are a little short for the length of my torso, my shoulders too narrow in relation to my hips. I walk with the upper part of my body bent forward; . . . my chest is not very broad and I am not
at all muscular (3)
This presentation of himself as a physical misfit is preliminary to other kinds of exposure. Manhood aims "to expose certain obsessions of an emotional or sexual nature, to admit publicly to certain shameful deficiencies" (152). For Leiris the writing of an autobiography is:

an act, finally, on the literary level, consisting of a backstage revelation that would expose, in all their unenthralling nakedness, the realities which formed the more or less disguised warp, beneath surfaces I had tried to make alluring, of my other writings. (155)

Those alluring surfaces of his other writings remind one of "the draperies of fiction" which Conrad proposed to cast off in A Personal Record. Conrad rather nervously promised "[t]ruth of a modest sort" and complete sincerity "which, while it delivers one into the hands of one's enemies, is as likely as not to embroil one with one's friends" (PR 8). While Conrad hastily reassures himself that "embroil" is too strong a word, Leiris insists on the real danger. The honest autobiographer "undoubtedly . . . risks suffering in his relations with those close to him" (157). These can never be "quite the same once [the autobiographer exposes] what may have been already suspected, but only in a vague and uncertain way" (156). In fact, Leiris compares the risks incurred in the self-exposure of the autobiographer to those embodied in the threat of the
bull's horn for the bullfighter.

Whether or not this comparison can be sustained is one of the primary concerns of the prefatory essay, "The Autobiographer as Torero." The preface begins with a short section in quotation marks, soon identified as the preface (or presumably a fragment of the proposed preface) Leiris was writing for Manhood in 1939, four years after completing the book, in which the metaphor of the bull's horn is tentatively proposed. This original preface is written in the third person, and its tone is somewhat skeptical. Leiris questions his choice of title and confides some doubts about this project in which he professes to "have tried to talk about himself with the maximum of lucidity and sincerity" (152):

One problem troubled his conscience and kept him from writing: is not what occurs in the domain of style valueless if it remains "aesthetic," anodyne, insignificant, if there is nothing in the fact of writing a work that is equivalent ... to the bull's keen horn? (152)

Leiris suggests that although his solution is "crude," ruthless self-exposure may supply the necessary danger which would give the autobiographer's act a "human reality," a significance beyond its aesthetic value. "The author" provides a cautious affirmation of his literary effort. "The so-called literature of confession" is judged "to be one of the most suitable instruments" in the
author's "search for a vital fulfillment"; the title is retained for "it does not belie his ultimate intent"; and the method of lucid and sincere self-revelation introduces, if not the bull's horn itself, at least "the shadow of the bull's horn" into the literary work (151-52).

In the next section of the essay Leiris assumes a more intimate, confidential tone. Speaking in the first person, he acknowledges "the author" of the first section as his former self, but distances himself from the author's enterprise. "I WAS dreaming, then, of a bull's horn. I found it hard to resign myself to being nothing more than a littérature" (153). But from his present perspective looking out on war-torn Le Havre, Leiris is constrained to acknowledge that "the personal problems" addressed by his autobiography appear "obviously insignificant" (153). 

"[T]he poet's inner agony, weighed against the horrors of war, counts for no more than a toothache over which it would be graceless to groan" (153).

In both the fragment of the 1939 preface and in the entire essay, the reader is confronted with a variety of perspectives, separated by both chronology and tone. In the fragment Leiris is rereading his autobiography; by the third page of the preface, Leiris is rereading the fragment. His practice in "The Autobiographer as Torero" suggests a final reason for the autobiographer to write a preface. Through the preface the autobiographer can record a later perspective reflecting consciousness of the change
and development that is a part of any human personality. At the most banal level, prefaces, especially multiple prefaces, to autobiographies can allow the writer to correct errors discovered in the original version or to respond to recent developments. For instance, Conrad takes the opportunity of an author’s note to respond to recent statements in the press, statements that presumably were made after the autobiography was written and could not have been addressed in it.

At a more profound level the preface may record insights provoked by rereading, expose facets of the personality suppressed in the initial narrative or manifest a significant change in the author’s self-image. The preface to an autobiography testifies to the continued vitality of the autobiographer’s voice. It is a way of defending oneself against rigidity, stasis, even perhaps against awareness of death.

Roger Rosenblatt has called autobiography “an extended suicide note” explaining that “the life recorded is the life complete to a specific point, and is therefore as good as dead” (178). But the preface to an autobiography, whether it continues the autobiographer’s story or re-examines the account supposedly “laid to rest” (Rosenblatt 178) in the text, affirms the continued existence of the autobiographer’s consciousness. Leiris admits that in writing Manhood he was “trying to gather my life into a single solid block (an object I can touch, as though to
insure myself against death . . .)" (160). If the life presented to us in *Manhood* is a "solid block," it is one with many facets, and Leiris was later to reject his mosaic method in this book for failing to achieve any meaningful unity. But what is interesting in this statement of intention, is that although the "life" is collapsed into a block, an "I" remains outside to "touch" it. This "I" narrates the preface, where it is further fragmented into the author of *Manhood*, the author of the 1939 preface, and the present writer and rereader.

Leiris is not the only autobiographer to use prefaces to incorporate the consciousness of multiple selves into the book. Mary McCarthy, whose semi-autobiographical character Meg Sargent prays to be preserved in her disunity (*The Company She Keeps*), uses a preface and several interchapters to juxtapose an adult consciousness with her girlhood memories in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*. Through the insertion of the interchapters, as Martha Lifson observes, McCarthy dramatizes the split between narrated and narrating I, between the writer and the written (256). For Lillian Hellman, the prefatory commentaries added to the books and individual chapters of her earlier autobiographies make *Three* an elaboration of the method of self-discovery introduced in *Pentimento*: "seeing and then seeing again." Furthermore by reflecting an ever-changing perspective, they proclaim that she is still an "unfinished woman." They attest to her continued
vitality.  

But to return to Leiris's preface, as he continues to probe the "dream" of the bull's horn, to elaborate the task he had set himself in the autobiography, he begins to question the sincerity of his motives:

What I did not realize was that the source of all introspection is a predilection for self-contemplation, and that every confession contains a desire to be absolved. . . . To expose myself to others, but to do so in a narrative which I hoped would be well-written and well constructed, perceptive and moving, was an attempt to seduce my public into being indulgent, to limit—in any case—the scandal by giving it aesthetic form (154-55).

But after admitting this apparent "duplicity," his attempt, while seeming to make himself vulnerable to judgment, "to find in my neighbor less a judge than an accomplice," Leiris begs the question of sincerity he has just raised (155). He turns to a discussion of whether the dangers of a literary confession, even one so brutally honest that "the paper would shrivel and flare at each touch of his fiery pen," could be comparable to the risk of death faced by the matador.  

While he concludes that the autobiographer's "moral risk" cannot be compared to the bodily danger the matador faces, he judges that the autobiographer and the matador are comparable in that both
observe a rigid code which both increases their danger and turns the act into a ritual (158-59).

Leiris's code demands not only that the truth be told, but that it be told without artifice, without any aesthetic disguise to "attenuate its crudity" (159). He must "say everything and say it without 'doctoring'" (160), using images which "would accord [his] emotion a better chance of being shared." (160) Adherence to this code would create a valid analogy between the autobiographer and the bullfighter.

But Manhood is carefully structured. Can the reader believe that Leiris's literary techniques and chosen symbols--"Biblical and classical figures . . . psychological myths which . . . constituted . . . not only motifs but intermediaries suggesting an apparent greatness where I knew only too well there was no such thing"--do not constitute a kind of artifice that attempts to "seduce the public into being indulgent"? And if "every confession contains a desire to be absolved," what does it mean when Leiris confesses knowledge of this fact? The essay suggests that paradoxically, by calling attention to the problem of insincerity and the temptation to make one's confession palatable with literary skill, Leiris seeks absolution for those offenses. Since throughout the essay Leiris both asserts and undercuts his analogy between autobiographical literature and bullfighting, it becomes increasingly difficult to decipher his tone, to gauge his
sincerity. The problem of sincerity in which Leiris entangles himself is symptomatic of the paradox of the preface to an autobiography. The reader, who must decide whether the narrator of the preface is to be trusted, may begin by asking whether the voice of the preface is the same as or different from the voice of the autobiographical narrative. If the same, then the voice is part of the same subjectivity. By what authority can it assert objectively that the autobiography does or does not contain the truth? Why should we privilege the later version of the autobiographer's voice? As Hellman remarks, "tampering" with the text "on the basis that [one is] now wiser" is a highly suspect proceeding (Three 5).

The voice of the preface to an autobiography however, implicitly or explicitly, presents itself in a new role, that of the author of the autobiography. Of course at some level the autobiographer is always engaged in authorial self-presentation, and some autobiographers like Henry James (or for that matter Mary McCarthy in How I Grew and Michel Leiris in Manhood and La Règle du jeu), quite self-consciously reflect on the act of writing as they proceed. But by writing a preface, the autobiographer makes a deliberate authorial gesture, and the reader is forced to recognize the autobiography as part of his or her œuvre. Hellman, for instance, begins Three by professing her distaste for re-reading: "My dislike of going back over
old work would not matter to anybody but me, except as it affects the collection of these three books" (3). Hellman's remark identifies her three memoirs as part of her "old work," and her next sentence equates her memoirs with her plays as examples of the completed work she prefers to leave finished, rather than to reexamine.

When the autobiographer uses a preface to lay bare the design of the work, again he or she speaks with the author's authority, and simultaneously reminds the reader that the autobiography is a creative effort, a deliberately crafted literary work. Literary autobiographers frequently comment on their status as writers in the preface as well. When McCarthy complains that "the professional writer is looked on perhaps as a 'storyteller,' like a child who has fallen into that habit," she inspires not the confidence but the skepticism of the reader, who soon becomes convinced that McCarthy is still bound by her own habitual storytelling (MCG 3). When Hellman confesses her uncertainty as to whether she has yet arrived at the truth and labels this uncertainty "a common experience for all writers," she undercuts the rationale for this new version of her autobiography. "I wonder, therefore, whether what I . . . have to say about past work is worth very much" (Three 9). The more the author identifies himself or herself as a writer of fiction, the more we are apt to distrust the truth of both the autobiography and the preface.
"Tell all the truth but tell it slant." In borrowing Emily Dickinson's line as the title for this section on prefaces to autobiographies, I allude to the fact that both Hellman in *Three* and McCarthy in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* print the prefaces and interchapters which ostensibly confront the question of truth in the memoirs in italic type.14 Telling the truth in the preface only, in effect correcting oneself in the margins, is one way of being circuitous. Another is one that Leiris warns against:

To tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth is not all; [one] must also confront it directly and tell it without artifice, without those great arias intended to make it acceptable, tremolos or catches in the voice, grace notes and glidings which would have no other result than to disguise it . . . attenuating its crudity. (158-59)

But he admits to the difficulty of such naked honesty just as McCarthy confesses to a certain "swerve and swoop" in her writing (qtd. in Niebuhr 89). The prefaces expose some of these "grace notes and glidings," such as the fictional touches in each of McCarthy's stories. Hellman recognizes "that I kept much from myself, not always but sometimes" (*Three* 9). But we can not be sure that the prefaces will correct all such misrepresentations; nor can we know that new ones are not being created.

In a sense the italicized preface or afterword allows
the writer to have it both ways. The integrity of the initial memoir or story is preserved, but a later perspective is added. Italics are used for emphasis, but the thin, delicate type seems less assertive than the bolder roman font. Paradoxically, like a whisper, a message written in italics seems somehow tentative at the same time as it calls attention to itself. In this the italic type reflects the position of the preface itself. It is assertive, at the front of the text, and tentative, only a marginal appendage. It is at once the last word and a mere afterthought. Thus the voice of the preface to an autobiography claims no final authority. But in layering voice upon voice, in giving us glimpses of the author-autobiographer at various times and in various moods, it may yet provide a more authentic picture.
Mary McCarthy and Lillian Hellman, in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* and *Three*, both collections of previously published autobiographical material prefaced and bound together by italicized passages, confront the problem of telling the truth.¹ Left unresolved in both books, the problem also inspires the final autobiographical exercise of each author: McCarthy’s *How I Grew* and Hellman’s *Maybe: A Story*.² For both writers, though in different ways, the problem of truth-telling is bound up with the relation of writing to lying. Both see the writer as a kind of liar, who yet endeavors to tell the truth by telling it slant.

I

The difficulty of telling the truth without a slant, is a perennial problem for those who write life stories. Consider these three accounts of an interview of Mary McCarthy by Dick Cavett which resulted in Lillian Hellman’s bringing a libel suit against McCarthy:

Cavett asked McCarthy to name contemporary writers she thought were "overrated and we could do without. . . ." "I don’t think we have those anymore" she answered. . . . Surprised by her response, Cavett repeated his question, as if he could not believe what he had heard.

. . . McCarthy replied, "The only one I can think of is a holdover like Lillian Hellman, who I think is tremendously overrated, a bad writer and a dishonest writer. . . ."

"What is dishonest about [her]?
" Cavett asked.
"Everything," McCarthy responded. "I said once in some interview that every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the.'" (Carol Gelderman 332)

Dick Cavett... was surely prodding her to do her stuff when he asked [McCarthy] if there were American writers who she felt were overrated. ... She snapped at the bait and started her catalogue of the undeserving. When she came to Hellman's name, Cavett expressed surprise.

McCarthy was ready with amplification, Hellman, she said was "a bad writer, overrated, a dishonest writer." (William Wright 387)

[The account concludes with Cavett's request for clarification and McCarthy's reply as quoted by Gelderman above.]

Hellman's growing legend rankled people like Mary McCarthy—an anti-Stalinist since the 1930's who had for years detested Hellman's politics and writing. On January 25, 1980, McCarthy appeared on the "Dick Cavett Show" and in response to his question on overrated writers, she jumped on Hellman, calling her a bad and dishonest writer. When asked by Cavett to clarify her opinion, McCarthy declared that everything Hellman wrote was a lie, including every 'and' and 'the.'" (Carl Rollyson 512)

The accounts are not dramatically different, and each of the three biographers would probably claim that he or she had presented a true account of the case. But subtle yet meaningful discrepancies exist. Gelderman, the sole biographer of McCarthy in the group, is the only one to quote the writer's initial demurral. By shifting to Cavett's surprised reaction, she implies that only his prodding led McCarthy to oblige with Hellman's name. The exact phrasing of McCarthy's reply, "the only one I can think of is Lillian Hellman," lends supports to the image of McCarthy racking her brain for a suitable candidate for deflating.
Wright's account, in contradiction to the transcript as quoted and summarized by Gelderman, suggests that McCarthy reeled off a list of names, a "catalogue of the undeserving" before zeroing in on Hellman after Cavett's indication of surprise. Wright quotes (or rather slightly misquotes) only the damning part of her comment on Hellman. While in both accounts Cavett is depicted as manipulative, McCarthy emerges from Wright's description much like a trained animal performing on command. She "snaps at the bait" and "does her stuff."

McCarthy is also venomous in Rollyson's paraphrase, but since he does not quote from the transcript he is able to dismiss Cavett's role. Instead McCarthy is presented as having a personal, but politically motivated, grievance against Hellman, which she "jumps" at the chance to indulge on national television.

I begin with these accounts of the infamous interview in part because they illustrate the ways in which the choices one makes when telling a "true" story—to quote or to paraphrase, to recreate a scene or to summarize, to interject comments on possible motives or to bring up past history, to use a neutral verb like "replied" or a loaded one like "snapped"—inevitably influence the picture created. If this is true of a genre like biography which presumably aims at objectivity, how much more difficult is it to get at truth in a frankly subjective genre like autobiography? Yet McCarthy called Hellman a liar on the
basis of her autobiographical writings, particularly *Pentimento* and *Scoundrel Time*.

As McCarthy later explained to her legal adviser Benjamin O'Sullivan:

> In one of those "autobiographical" volumes—she tells some story about "Dash" and a pond on her property full of turtles; I no more believe that than I do her account of her House un-American performance. (qtd. in Gelderman 335)

McCarthy objected not only to Heilman's alleged distortion of historical events but to what she saw as the self-aggrandizement of the whole autobiography. Hellman, she felt, was guilty of the kind of dishonesty Roy Pascal identifies as most damaging to the autobiography's integrity—falsifying the truth to make oneself seem more admirable (63).

But to convict an autobiographer of lying is a difficult task, as McCarthy would discover. McCarthy and other Hellman detractors like Martha Gellhorn and Samuel McCracken could locate numerous discrepancies in chronology both within and between the different memoirs, but this did not prove Hellman was lying. Perhaps with the passage of years she had merely gotten confused about dates and places. Politically oriented critics like Sidney Hook or Philip Abbott can argue that Hellman is wrong in her presentation of the McCarthy years, but it is more difficult to establish that she is lying and not merely
In her deposition for the hearings in the libel suit, McCarthy found herself softening her original accusation, though she maintained that the memoirs, in her opinion, were still characterized by "pervasive falsity":

I did not address myself to the question of prevarication per se, which would require a conscious intention to state an untruth.

... It may well be that the plaintiff has persuaded herself of her version of the truth and is deaf to any other. (qtd. in Rollyson 516)

Not surprisingly, McCarthy's clarification did not appease Hellman; nor did her efforts to construe her comments as a literary opinion persuade the judge to dismiss the case.

McCarthy, armed with what appeared to be fairly damning examples of Hellman's fabrications, still stood a good chance of losing her case. Though Hellman died before the suit came to trial, both her lawyer, Ephraim London, and Rodney Smolla, author of *Suing the Press*, felt the odds were on Hellman's side (Rollyson 524). McCarthy's vulnerable point was the extravagance of her statement. As Gelderman notes, "McCarthy's statement that every word Hellman wrote was a lie was false literally speaking, and it was certainly defamatory" (336).

Thus McCarthy's attack on Hellman, and Hellman's libel suit against McCarthy, constitute a confrontation over the question of honesty, in which each woman, a writer with a...
reputation for rigorous honesty, is accused by the other of lying. Though it seems ironic, given the increasingly more meticulous attacks on her veracity in the early eighties, Hellman's memoirs were originally praised for their candor and her famous refusal to "cut [her] conscience to fit this year's fashions" before theHUAC was presented in the context of a personal code: "to try to tell the truth, not to bear false witness" (Three 659).⁵ According to Stephen Geist, for McCarthy honesty is the "absolute rule, even if it hurts others and herself" (qtd. in Gelderman xv). Ironically, while the "fateful aside" on "The Dick Cavett Show" is for Gelderman evidence of McCarthy's vaunted honesty, her unwillingness to mince words even at the risk of trouble, for Hellman it is an instance of bearing false witness since Hellman believed, as she maintained in her fourth memoir Maybe, that in her memoirs she had tried to tell the truth (Maybe 51).

McCarthy's defense is interesting for two reasons: it duplicates McCarthy's characteristic stance in Memories and it could conceivably have served Hellman as her own defense against charges of lying in her memoirs. In her deposition, McCarthy struggled to explain what she meant by saying that "everything" Hellman wrote was a lie: I will probably make matters worse. Again it is a rhetorical exaggeration, that nothing in her writing rings true to me. That does not mean her writing is made up of literal lies. And I don't
mean literally nothing when I say "nothing in her writing rings true." . . . Of course, say perhaps seventy percent of the factual statements are probably true. I don't mean they aren't. I mean the general tone of unconvincingness and falseness. (qtd. in Gelderman 338)

McCarthy retracts her literal statements only to assert their essential truth. Even if seventy percent of Hellman's statements are true, the book is marred by "a general tone of falseness." She acquits herself of lying about Hellman by convicting herself of exaggerating. The only problem is that McCarthy's defense must either implicate herself or excuse Hellman. While defenders like Gelderman note that there are "suprisingly few . . . errors of fact" (204-05) in Memories, some readers are as unconvinced by its "general tone" as McCarthy is by Hellman's memoirs. And if "rhetorical exaggeration" is to be permitted McCarthy, should it not be allowed to Hellman as well?

"Rhetorical exaggeration" characterizes both autobiographies. In each there is an incident in which the heroine refuses to give in to the pressure of authority, insists on her own virtue and innocence, and refuses to shift her own burden on to other innocent people. In Three this incident is Hellman's appearance before the HUAC. In Memories it is McCarthy's refusal to confess when she is falsely accused of stealing a butterfly pin. Hellman refuses
to use the Communist Party's criticism of *Watch on the Rhine* to vindicate herself of the suspicion of being a Communist. "I did not want to use the attacks of the Communist Party on me; in my thin morality book it is plain not cricket to clear yourself by jumping on people who are themselves in trouble" (*Three* 655). More importantly Hellman refuses to satisfy the committee by "naming names" and thus shifting her trouble onto others. In McCarthy's case, her experience of "the very unfairness of the condemnation that rested on me made me reluctant to transfer it to one of my brothers" (*MCG* 77). Both writers are punished unjustly for their heroism. McCarthy suffers a brutal beating and Hellman faces blacklisting. But both also triumph. Hellman is gratified to find that "the press was in general, very good" and McCarthy believes her defiance loosened the hold Meyers had on the four orphans and led to their rescue.

McCarty maintains that Hellman's account is dishonest because she exaggerates the importance of what she did. Although the probably apocryphal exclamation of the voice in the press box, "Thank God somebody finally had the guts to do it" (*Three* 675), and Hellman's account of Abe Fortas's "hunch" that it was about time for someone to take a moral position with the committee (619-20) imply that Hellman's stand was novel and heroic, McCarthy points out that Hellman was not the first to propose testifying only about oneself, and moreover that while the others, Sidney
Buchman and Arthur Miller, did forgo the protection of the Fifth Amendment but refused to name names, Hellman maintained silence by falling back on the Fifth Amendment. Thus, McCarthy complained that "the lack of reference to either Buchman's or Miller's conduct before the Committee in plaintiff's memoirs is self-aggrandizing and dishonest" (qtd. in Rollyson 517).

McCarthy herself is vulnerable to the charge that she exaggerates her own heroism. She later confessed in *How I Grew* to exaggerating slightly the austerity of the Shriver household (*HIG* 9-10) and confesses to that same transgression as a girl in this very memoir: "I used to lie to Mrs. Corkery and say that I had had no breakfast (when the truth was that I was merely hungry)" (*MCG* 68).

According to McCarthy's account, when her guardians finished beating her:

> I finally limped up to bed, with a crazy sense of inner victory, like a saint's, for I had not recanted, despite all they had done or could do to me. . . . I walked on air, incredulously, and no doubt somewhat pompously, seeing myself as a figure from legend: my strength was as the strength of ten because my heart was pure! (78)

She is similar to Hellman in that she sees herself as a legendary figure, as resistant to hypocrisy, and as possessed of a pure heart amid the corruption that surrounds her. But as the words "'crazed" and "pompously"
indicate, McCarthy is being ironic, mocking her younger self's readiness to see herself as martyr. From her adult perspective she can see what the child could not: "It did not occur to me that I had been unchristian in refusing to answer a plea from Aunt Margaret's heart" (78).

But Hellman undercuts her own heroism as well. It is Fortas who proposes the strategy, and it is the reporter who claims she has guts. Hellman shows herself as wracked by anxiety, vomiting and sweating. She wishes she had had the courage to be more defiant, to say what she had really wanted to say to the committee. She wishes she had told them:

"There is no Communist menace in this country and you know it. You have made cowards into liars, an ugly business, and you made me write a letter in which I acknowledged your power. . . ." Many people have said they liked what I did, but I don't much, and if I hadn't worried about rats in jail and such . . . [Hellman's ellipsis] Ah, the bravery you tell yourself was possible when it's all over. (Three 676)

Hellman's stance is finally ambiguous. Although she admits that she was not as brave as she wanted to be, in her memoir she belatedly includes the words she left unspoken. Because this speech emphasizes the bad faith of the committee, Hellman underscores the picture of frightened innocence facing evil authority.
McCarthy does much the same thing. Although she mocks her delusions of martyrdom, she insists that this act of defiance brought the release of herself and her brothers from the evil Uncle Meyers. Admitting that there is no evidence that Meyers actually put the butterfly by her place, she concludes, It may have been Uncle Meyers after all. Even if no one saw him, he remains a suspect: he had the motive and the opportunity (MCG 83). She, like Hellman insists on the unredeemed villainy of her oppressor.

As I will discuss below, there are differences in degree and kind between the lies and exaggerations revealed and concealed in the autobiographies of Hellman and McCarthy, but the parallels between these two ambiguous pictures of the autobiographer as heroine suggest that the difference between McCarthy and Hellman is much smaller than either would like to admit. It is fitting that they should be engaged in a confrontation over truth, for their autobiographies were one long such confrontation, not with each other but with their readers and themselves.

II

Readers rise up to confront McCarthy and Hellman chiefly in the italicized passages—prefaces, interchapters and afterwords—which link the previously published autobiographical components of Three and Memories of a Catholic Girlhood. Sometimes relatives or injured parties, sometimes strangers, these readers, by letter or in person,
insist on being acknowledged and answered. Often they challenge the truth of what has been related, questioning the facts or the autobiographer's perspective. Confidently, they invite McCarthy to confess that she invented Uncle Meyers or her Jewish grandmother (MCG 3). Presumptuously, they advise Hellman to be more tolerant or to learn from Lionel Trilling's piece in the New York Review of Books (Three 725, 649). Other letters are quoted or mentioned as corroboratory evidence. If we accept, as a truthful account, the afterword to "Julia," which consists entirely of Hellman's comments on the reactions of different readers to its publication in Pentimento and to the movie which was based upon it, then the impression that Julia was a real person, whose name Hellman was right to conceal, is reinforced. The letters from Arthur Cowan's friends and lovers imply that Hellman's account touched a chord with them and convinced them that she enjoyed a privileged relationship with the man. By reporting similar experiences, McCarthy's readers serve to make the account of her childhood seem more plausible.

The confrontation between the autobiographer and her readers in these books is most interesting when it forces the author to reexamine her premises, to adjust or defend her position before the readers of the new volume. Both McCarthy and Hellman ultimately defend their autobiographical methods and claim a kind of insight into the truth that is superior to the narrow vision of those
who attack them. McCarthy quotes a letter from a woman from Australia who claims McCarthy's childhood replicated her own. The woman lacked McCarthy's "gift of writing," but suggests that even had she written an account which was "starkly true," no one would have believed her story. Since readers will not accept the stark truth, McCarthy is justified in employing her gift of writing to create a fiction that is a more vivid and evocative version of the truth.

In *Three*, Hellman targets not those who refuse the stark truth, but those who rigidly accept only one biased version of reality. She labels the people who attacked *Scoundrel Time* as those for whom the view from one window, grown dusty with time, has blurred the world and who do not ever intend to move to another window" (*Three* 723). Hellman's autobiographical method consists of moving from window to window. Her memories are one window, her diary entries another, her perspective at the time of writing each of the individual memoirs another, and her perspective in the commentaries the last. Because she does not allow herself to become rigidly confined to one point of view, she implies, she is in a better position to take the moral stand that closes the book a few pages later. *Three* suggests that there is no one truth, but that by constantly shifting one's angle of vision, returning to old perspectives and superimposing new ones on them, one may recover the hidden lines of truth long suppressed or long
Heilman and McCarthy's beliefs about autobiographical truth are intertwined with the roles lying and writing play in each book. Jelinek cites both autobiographies as examples of the tendency of literary women to avoid making their identity as women writers central to their autobiographical self-presentation ("Literary Autobiography Recast" 148). In a sense this is true of Hellman's individual autobiographies, though Falk, Simon, and Brown have observed connections between her work as a dramatist and the themes and techniques of her memoirs. In Three, however, while Hellman minimizes the importance of her authorship in the body of the book, she repeatedly identifies herself as a writer in the commentaries. On the other hand, McCarthy's identity as a professional storyteller is central to her self-presentation in Memories as Eakin, Spacks, Hewitt, and Taylor have observed. For both Hellman and McCarthy writing is ultimately linked with the problem of truth-telling. In Three Hellman presents herself as an honest woman, who, as a writer, is only able to convey imperfectly the truth of her life. In Memories McCarthy depicts herself as a dishonest child, who has grown into an honest writer. But the writer struggles unsuccessfully to conquer "the temptation to invent" (3) and to sort the true from the false in the memories of her highly imaginative younger self.
Adams claims that the "most likely explanation for McCarthy not being branded a liar [in the way that Hellman was] . . . is that McCarthy's autobiographies focus primarily on her childhood" (168). McCarthy is protected in two ways: the lying child self is contrasted to the truth-seeking adult self, and whatever falsehoods a child tells are generally not of significance to the outside world and are thus unlikely to arouse the consternation associated with the perceived lies of a "celebrity," involving public figures or historically significant events. But another reason lies in the way the impression of lying is created by the two books. McCarthy confesses her lies, but Hellman is caught in hers.

For those without personal knowledge of the events presented in Hellman's autobiographies, the impression or conviction that she is a liar comes not from a reading of the individual memoirs or even of Three so much as from external evidence that proves or implies that what Hellman says in them is untrue. Then the books serve as evidence of her dishonesty; the books themselves come to be viewed as lies.

While Hellman never presents herself as a liar, in the italicized passages of Three she suggests that in writing down her memories she has inevitably fictionalized them. Writing does not help her recover the past: "maybe just the act of writing it down, then and then only, turned it into the past, and nothing can or will bring it
As Wagner notes, Hellman "ducks the role of the author as oracle" ("Lillian Hellman" 277). The writer has no privileged position, no necessary insight into the "slippery, tricky, unreliable realm of truth:

Writers . . . learn skill, learn how to handle material, how to make fewer mistakes, how to write better: nice things, but seldom much more wisdom than they showed in their early books. And when an attempt, an honorable attempt is made to gather it all together . . . it often settles into weary sadness and resignation. (5-6)

Coupled with these doubts about the "wisdom" of written memoirs, her repeated admissions that these books fail to express what she wished and that in them, as in her life, she "never knew what [she] meant by truth, never made the sense [she] hoped for" (300) is a surprising lack of emphasis on the role of writing in her life.

Unlike Ellen Glasgow, Vladimir Nabokov, or Henry James, Lillian Hellman does not make the development of her artistic consciousness central to her life story. She does not feel the need to assert the originality of her work, and indeed stresses her debt to Hammett. She mentions struggles with writer's block and the fact that she wrote nine versions of The Little Foxes, but this admission is not a testimony to her meticulous craftsmanship, but a confession of fear. The failure of Days to Come had shaken her faith in herself as a writer. Nabokov, Glasgow and
James were all convinced that they were great writers, but troubled by their failure to receive the kind of acclaim they believed they deserved. Hellman complains that the criticism of some of her plays was inadequate and admits to personally "liking" both most of them and her memoirs, but she does not possess the same conviction of the importance of her work.12

The Lillian Hellman of Three leads an adventurous life. In the course of Three she defies the segregation laws on a streetcar in New Orleans, gets caught in an air-raid in Spain, makes a heroic war-time broadcast despite the risk of injury or death, smuggles money to the anti-fascist cause in late 1930's Germany, claims a friend's murdered body, undertakes a hazardous fourteen-day journey across Siberia in a two-engine plane, defies the HUAC, and is spied on by the CIA. Hellman's dramatic self-presentation has been explained as an attempt to live up to Hammett's "tough-guy" image (Abbott) and as an effort to claim success according to masculine standards (Spacks). Another possible explanation is that it was an attempt to compensate for the insignificance she felt as a writer. It was not that she felt she was an insignificant writer, but that she feared that to be only a writer was to be insignificant.

The Spanish Civil War and World War II are focal points for these fears. Her pieces on the war in Spain seem to her unsuccessful:
Somehow they do not include the passion that I felt. . . . It does not console me that almost nothing that has been written about Spain includes what I missed. . . . Maybe passion, passion on paper, takes more than most of us have. (129)

The flaw lies not with her own writing but with writing generally. In Hellman's view passion and conviction vanish when words get put to paper.

She seems to share the kind of uneasiness about being preoccupied with literary matters during wartime that Leiris expresses in "The Autobiographer as Torero." But unlike Leiris she neither emphasizes nor justifies her literary undertakings. In "Julia" she implicitly criticizes herself for being concerned about her play writing while Julia is opposing the spread of fascism: "I asked her if she liked The Children's Hour as a title and was hurt when she forgot the question in her next letter, which was angry with the news of armed political groups in Austria, the threat of Hitler . . . There was much in her letter I did not understand" (Three 422). The writer, narrowly focused on her own work, is exposed as lacking in foresight and insight.

Finally, Hellman exposes her own helplessness as a mere writer when at a recovery hospital for wounded members of the International Brigades she responds to a plea that she "go home and write the truth" so that "Mr. Roosevelt
would then send the guns and planes to a people who were fighting for freedom" (Three 100). Hellman's reply is that creative writers do not influence politics, "it didn't matter what people like me said and thought" (100).13

It is significant that in two of the incidents branded as substantially false by Gellhorn and McCracken, Hellman presents herself as casting off the passivity of the author to aid the cause of anti-fascism. In her account of an air-raid in Spain, the other writers, Gellhorn and Hemingway, distance themselves from the pain and suffering caused by the bombs and take an aesthetic pleasure in the spectacle, as if it were a display of fireworks. Hellman at first huddles on the sofa and then bravely dares the shelling to give a radio broadcast (112-113). In the Julia episode Hellman interrupts a journey to a theater festival in Moscow to aid the anti-fascist underground.

Hellman lies, then, in part to compensate for the sense of powerlessness and passivity she feels as a writer. Ironically, the very lies designed to evade the limitations of her authorial identity help to reconfirm that identity. In creating these dramatic inventions, Hellman displays her skill as a writer, a creator of stories. In her final book, Maybe: A Story, she will embrace rather than reject this role.14

IV

In contrast to Hellman, McCarthy has not been implicated in large scale distortions of facts (such as
Hellman's appropriation of Muriel Gardiner's history). In fact, the only unconfessed "lie" she seems to tell in *Memories* is indirect: in "Yellowstone Park" she depicts herself as an inexperienced virgin, suffering from her grandfather's overzealous protection, but in *How I Grew* the reader learns that she had been seduced a year earlier by the very man whom she mocks her grandfather for scaring away (*MCG* 170-71; *HIG* 66-67). "Unconfessed" is an important qualification, for there are several other places where McCarthy admits, not to having lied, but to having indulged in "semi-fictional touches" (164).

Despite her indignation in the preface about the skepticism which greets an autobiography of a professional writer, who "is looked on perhaps as a 'storyteller' like a child who has fallen into that habit" (3), McCarthy consistently identifies herself in *Memories* as a storyteller by profession and by a natural, perhaps inherited, proclivity towards invention and exaggeration:

> My father was a romancer, and most of memories of him are colored, I fear, by an untruthfulness that I must have caught from him, like one of the colds that ran around the family. . . . [T]here was mendacity, somewhere, in the McCarthy blood. (11)

In her interchapters, McCarthy repeatedly approaches the problem of telling the truth from the standpoint of the professional writer. Discussing the small freedoms she
took with the facts in "The Figures in the Clock," McCarthy admits to "storytelling": "I arranged actual events so as to make a 'good story' out of them. It is hard to overcome this temptation if you are in the habit of writing fiction (164-65). By couching her remarks in terms appropriate to minor vices, like "habit" and "temptation," McCarthy casts her fictionalizing as a kind of white lying, a trivial transgression that is presented as more of a literary problem than as a sin. 17

McCarthy appears to take a harsher view of her childhood self, whom she repeatedly exposes as a liar. 18 McCarthy admits, "I was a problem liar" (65), an admission amply demonstrated in the stories that make up Memories. Young Mary lies to the neighbors to get extra, more appetizing food (69), to her schoolmates by posing as a "practiced siren" (173), to the convent by pretending first to lose and then to regain her faith (110-23), and to her grandparents by claiming she is going to visit Yellowstone Park. Each chapter has its own examples of lies and equivocations. Yet McCarthy does not really condemn herself for lying any more than she condemns herself for fictionalizing.

McCarthy's implicit plea for clemency comes through most clearly when she discusses her relationship to her grandparents in "Yellowstone Park":

Whatever I told them was usually so blurred and glossed in an effort to meet their approval...
that except when answering a direct question I hardly knew whether what I was saying was true or false. I really tried . . . to avoid lying, but . . . I was always transposing reality for them into terms they could understand. To keep matters straight with my conscience, I shrank whenever possible from the lie absolute, just as, from a sense of precaution, I shrank from the plain truth. (172)

McCarthy excuses the lies of her younger self here and throughout the book. First, she does not always lie deliberately. As a teenager and as a writer attempting autobiography McCarthy faces "cases where I am not sure myself whether I am making something up" (4). She also puts forward the excuse that the lies are not absolute. There is always a grain of truth behind what she says, just as the events of Memories have an historical basis in fact. She employs "half-truths" not untruths, "semi-fictional touches" not fictional ones. Finally, McCarthy suggests that the lies are acceptable in part because she is forced into them. No one in McCarthy's life will accept the unglossed truth, just as no one will credit the stark truth of the Australian reader's story. McCarthy lies and writes in order to please an audience with a good story.

Thus though McCarthy is aware of the pretense that permeates her life, "My whole life was a lie, it often appeared to me. . . . I was always making up stories" (173),
she does not condemn it. Her compulsion to make up stories is also a talent. It is a proof of her specialness (she is too imaginative to accept "the plain truth") a means of earning the approval of others and, as Spacks suggests, a means of coping with and transcending the injustices of her childhood (186). And finally the fiction may recapture a reality whose details are obscured by memory or reveal a deeper truth. While not always literally true, McCarthy's memories are "right" in "tone and tenor" (124).

But if *Memories* seems to celebrate the storyteller there is still a vague sense of uneasiness in the way McCarthy returns repeatedly to her inability to sort fact from fiction. Adams suggests that McCarthy is uncomfortable because she cannot reconcile her knowledge that she was a problem liar with her adult image of herself as uncompromisingly honest. The problem seems to be rather that McCarthy recognizes the continuities between the storytelling practiced by her present and former selves and is uncomfortable with what this may imply about her ability to be honest. In *Memories* the writer is presented as a kind of liar.

*Memories* does not take McCarthy past her teenaged years; her career as a professional storyteller did not begin until more than a decade later. Thus McCarthy has few literary productions to discuss: a prize-winning essay, an elegy for Pope Benedict, an ostensibly autobiographical love poem, and a play written for a Vassar drama course.19
But each act of creative writing is associated somehow with deception. The essay was partly plagiarized from "a series on Catholics in American history that was running in Our Sunday Visitor" (63). The elegy's opening couplet "Pope Benedict is dead,/ The sorrowing people said" was written "for the rhyme and the sad idea," but after the Pope really died McCarthy offered the poem as a tribute, not daring to reveal that she "had had it ready in [her] desk" (62-63).

McCarthy reveals that her love poem contained many romantic distortions of truth, but argues that it is both false and true because the story it hints at, the bittersweet theme of outgrowing youthful rebellion, is something she was experiencing at the time she wrote it. While the poem thus reinforces the idea of creative writing as a way of reaching the truth of the self, McCarthy's play about the butterfly incident suggests the liabilities of this method. The memory of the play's denouement comes to seem real to McCarthy. The fictional truth merges with and obliterates the real memory so that only the "good story" can actually be recovered.

In an interview published a few years after the appearance of Memories, McCarthy reflected on how two decades of writing fiction had altered her perceptions about truth, selfhood and the recovery of the past. As one matures, the quest for self is replaced by an awareness that you really must make the self, . . . you finally begin in some sense to make and to choose
the self you want. . . . I suppose in a sense I don't know anymore today than I did in 1941 [when she was writing her first novel *The Company She Keeps*] about what my identity is. But I've stopped looking for it. I must say, I believe . . . in the solidity of truth much more. Yes, I believe there is a truth and it's knowable.

(Niebuhr 94)

McCarthy struggled to reconcile these two convictions in *Memories*, but the book testifies more to her discovery that the self must be invented than to her belief that there is a solid, knowable truth. Her desire to find that truth led McCarthy to express a wish to abandon fiction for awhile after completing *The Group* and write in her own voice, "not in the disguise of a heroine" (Niebuhr 91). She would try to realize this desire in *How I Grew*, in which she attempts to leave "storytelling" behind.

V

In their last books, McCarthy and Hellman move in apparently opposite directions: Hellman towards fiction with her "story" *Maybe*, and McCarthy away from fiction with her "intellectual autobiography," *How I Grew*. Hellman retains a version of the technique of italicized passages and McCarthy eschews it, but neither escapes the problems confronted in those passages of *Three* and *Memories*. *Three* and *Memories* are striking and ultimately successful autobiographies not only because they make manifest the
troublesome relationship between autobiography and truth, but also because they are composed of engaging narratives; the combination of the stories and the commentaries renders a vivid image of the personality of the author. In *Maybe* and *How I Grew* Hellman and McCarthy each sacrifice half of the dual identity of autobiographer and storyteller that they assumed in their earlier books. The result is a loss of conviction. Neither work seems significant as either an account of a life or as art.

The deliberately ambiguous title of *Maybe: A Story* immediately raises questions as to whether the slim book should be considered Hellman's fourth autobiography or her first novel.²⁰ The book shares with her previous memoirs a narrative voice meant to be identified with Hellman's own, the use of some real people, places, and incidents from Hellman's life, the picture of Hellman as a somewhat awkward intruder in the more dramatic lives of other people (Rollyson 530) and the portrait technique of *Pentimento*. The subject of the portrait is a wealthy woman named Sarah Cameron, a casual acquaintance from Hellman's hard-drinking Hollywood days who claimed to have witnessed a Mafia murder and who later led a mysterious life in Europe, where Hellman caught occasional glimpses of her.

As in *Three* there are italicized passages in which Hellman muses on the difficulty of determining the truth and coming to a kind of understanding about life through writing. But these passages are not prefaces, afterwords
or interchapters. They are embedded in the book's primary narrative, forming a part of it, rather than allowing Hellman to step outside of it. The book becomes awkwardly self-reflexive. The passages in which Hellman questions the purpose and value of her narrative raise the same questions in the reader's mind without resolving them.

In these passages Hellman distinguishes between Maybe and her previous autobiographies. Despite the apparent similarities, they are "memoir books," and this is "a story." "In the three memoir books I wrote, I tried very hard for the truth" (51). In Maybe she does not try to solve all the mysteries, because "time itself makes fuzzy and meshes truth with half-truth" (51). Hellman makes admissions that could stand as a possible explanation for the discrepancies critics discovered in Scoundrel Time: "[T]he truth as I saw it, of course, doesn't have much to do with the truth" (51). But she also implies that her uncertainty about the truth does not apply to her earlier books: "I do not know the truth about . . . much of what I write here. It is the first time that has ever happened (50).

In Maybe Hellman appears to declare the question of truth irresolvable and perhaps irrelevant. One of the few identifiable narrative threads of the "story" is Hellman's reluctant acceptance of uncertainty. According to Maybe, when Hellman was nineteen her first lover, Alex, told her that she had a strong personal odor. Hellman worried over
this for years, bathing several times daily and querying Hammett, other lovers, a young farmer, and anyone who would listen, although their reassurances could never convince her. At last Sarah confides in an off-hand way that Alex had told her the same thing, convincing Hellman that the problem is Alex's misogyny, not her body odor. But Hellman's relief is short-lived, because Ferry, Sarah's college roommate, claims that Alex was her lover, that he told Ferry about Hellman's odor, and that she told Sarah who then lied to Hellman. Hellman can never know the real truth.

Rollyson points out that metaphorically this story reflects Hellman's frustration with her inability to understand how she appears to others. As she is unable to evaluate her own smell, she is unable to judge herself objectively (532). Hellman also uses her increasing physical blindness to symbolize her inability to see the truth. She cannot identify Sarah with any certainty in the possible near-encounter that opens the book because her "eyesight was already failing" (11). The darkness of uncertainty closes in around her, and everything that once seemed solid is now suspect (42). Attempts to research Sarah's stories turn up nothing and at the end of the book even Sarah's husband disappears. Hellman must resign herself; the available light "is not bright enough to illuminate all that you hoped for" (42).

Making no promises about truth, saying only "maybe,"
Hellman shakes off the responsibilities of the autobiographer for the freedom of the storyteller. But the freedom to invent carries with it the responsibility to create meaning and to tell a good story. Unlike the autobiographer, the storyteller cannot shrug off implausibilities or "missing pieces" in the tale with the excuse that this is how things really happened. Hellman refuses her responsibilities as a storyteller. While each of the comparatively obscure figures in the Pentimento portraits held some special meaning for the author, Hellman is at a loss to say why she has chosen to write about Sarah Cameron: "Why am I writing about Sarah? . . . Although I always rather liked her, she is of no importance to my life and never was (50). She refuses to provide a realistic chronology or to piece the "rags and ribbons" of the story together. Hellman is a storyteller who chooses not to read her own tale, who will not or cannot discover any purpose in it.21

While Hellman tells a story without meaning because she no longer believes in truth, McCarthy's belief that there is a "knowable" truth leads her to attempt to find meaning without telling stories. The resulting book, How I Grew, is, in its own way, as unsatisfactory as Maybe. Whereas Hellman leaves too many gaps in Maybe, McCarthy bombards the reader with too many repetitive and trivial details.22 Neither author resolves the contradictions in her narrative to create a compelling story. Neither book
is informed by a sense of self-knowledge.

The major faults of How I Grew are apparent in the first chapter. The book opens with a lengthy digression. No sooner has McCarthy asserted that she "was born as a mind during 1925" then she begins qualifying that statement (1). She must have had "some sort of specifically cerebral life" before she turned thirteen (1). "Almost from the beginning I had been aware of myself as 'bright’" (1).

What follows begins as an illustration of that brightness, an example of the child's precocious attempts at adult reasoning. But after quoting one of "Mary's funny sayings" (2) recorded in a letter from her mother to her grandmother, she becomes skeptical. Perhaps the question was not asked innocently but was the child's attempt to be clever. Thus the story becomes an illustration not of the child's brightness, but of her awareness, while still a child, that she was "bright" and her felt obligation to live up to this role.

This exposure of the child's "vice" of cleverness while explaining that she was constrained to behave this way in order to conform to other's expectations is consistent with McCarthy's self-portrayal in Memories. But while the adult McCarthy's scrutiny of her childish "playacting," takes the form of self-accusation, the real crime exposed in this opening chapter is that of the guardians who suppressed the child's cleverness.

There are no more "cute sayings on record," because
the demand for them dried up with her parents' deaths (2). In this new environment all intellectual and imaginative activity is repressed or forbidden. "[A]lmost no books were permitted—to save electricity, or because books could give us 'ideas' that would make us too big for our boots" (3). Though she keeps remembering, even as she writes, an acquaintance with legends, fairy tales and storybooks that she can scarcely believe her new guardians had allowed, she clings to her picture of her childhood in Minneapolis as a time of deliberate intellectual starvation. Thus if Andersen fairy tales were allowed, it was as "a refined sort of punishment" because the books were imbued with "the feeling of morals lurking like fish eyes peering out from beneath stones in the depths of clear water" (5). A junior encyclopedia, treasured because "it told you the plots of the world's famous books," was permitted by the guardians because they assumed "it was a collection of known facts and figures" (6).

Pulling herself up short, "I am digressing in the middle of a digression" (8), McCarthy admits that losing the thread (or seeming to) has given me time to wonder about the truth of what I was saying. On reflection I see that I have been exaggerating... [I]n Minneapolis we must have had the usual Grimm and Perrault fairy tales and that secretly or openly I read them. Despite the admission of exaggeration, McCarthy clings to
her conception of deprivation: "on the visual side we were kept well below the poverty line, just as in politics, reading and entertainment" (14). *Pilgrim's Progress* was permitted because "our guardians were too ignorant to confiscate it" (9). And if she managed to read entertaining tales like "Rumpelstiltskin" during these years, she might well have done it secretly, in spite of her guardians.

McCarthy depicts these guardians as unimaginative and restrictive. They are on the side of facts and morals, while McCarthy prefers a good story. She confessed to the desire to turn life into a story in *Memories*, and in *How I Grew* awkward facts are still getting in her way, though she self-consciously confronts them within her narrative rather than outside of it.

The result is the "digression upon digression" method McCarthy herself notices. She is constantly stopping to correct herself or to elaborate on what she has just written: "All at once I am sure of this, for I have recalled an odd detail" (45), "Hold on! All the time I have been writing this, a memory has been coming back to haunt me" (75), "But wait! A thought has struck me" (102). The net effect of all this emphasis on honesty and the fallibility of memory is to prevent McCarthy from doing what she does best, telling a good story. The story is interrupted and undercut before she can tell it, as in her account of Sunday dinner with her grandparents the day after she lost her virginity. Though it is obvious from
the details McCarthy recalls that she could have created a funny and touching scene, she instead constantly reminds the reader that she cannot remember the occasion. The details are hypothetical and "for insight into [her own] state of mind," McCarthy resorts to imagining "Emma Bovary at table with Charles after one of her trysts" (79).

McCarthy's abandonment of storytelling would be justified if her quest for truth led her to greater self-knowledge, but How I Grew contains no new insights. In both books McCarthy acknowledges her propensity for theatricality and her habitual lies and exaggerations, but blames others for forcing her to dissemble (HIG 74; MCG 172). She seems not to realize that in the same breath that she confesses to exaggerating, she still insists that her presentation is fairly accurate (HIG 10). She claims that as both a teenager and an adult she detested self-deception without resolving convincingly the apparent contradiction between her hatred of deception and her willingness to lie. She maintains that "lying to parents and teachers is quite a different thing from lying to oneself" (HIG 104), making this distinction just after a confession of a youthful anti-Semitism which she implies she has outgrown (102). But as Adams notes, many casual comments in How I Grew would suggest otherwise (Adams 117-119). McCarthy appears to have deceived herself on this point.

The probability of self-deception, the unreliability of memory, and the inaccessibility of truth are the shoals
upon which *Maybe* and *How I Grew* founder. In these books Hellman and McCarthy lose the balance between their roles as autobiographers and as storytellers maintained in *Three and Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*. The italicized prefaces and interchapters in the earlier books help McCarthy and Hellman to maintain this balance, allowing the autobiographer to speak as an author and calling attention to the autobiographical narratives as stories which yet represent a kind of truth. Thus the author anticipates and attempts to disarm critics who would dismiss the autobiography as a fiction, while simultaneously presenting her unrevised narratives in a different textual space, signaled by a change in typeface. The interplay of the prefatory and primary texts suggests a commitment to telling the truth through stories that *Maybe* and *How I Grew* do not sustain. The confrontations over truth-telling in all the autobiographies of these two writers suggest that to write a successful autobiography one must have both the conviction that it is possible to tell some kind of truth about the self and the recognition that such truth will be couched in stories, that one must invent the self presented to the reader.
Conclusion

I

The main purpose of this study has been to focus attention on the ways both prefaces and autobiographies serve as forums for authorial self-presentation. To take, as a point of departure, the examination of prefaces and autobiographies as "authorial introductions," textual spaces where the writer presents the self to the reader in the role of author, is to commit oneself to the exploration of a thematic resemblance at the risk of ignoring important distinctions between the two genres. Thus before turning to some final reflections on authorial self-presentation, we should take a moment to recognize boundaries which may have become blurred during the previous discussion, especially in the first two sections, which focus on prefaces as permissible autobiography, and on prefaces and autobiographies as complementary genres, each stories of authorship.

Part Three, focusing on prefaces to autobiographies, reminds us that for all their similarities, the genres are not interchangeable. If, as Part One suggested, prefaces can be considered a form of autobiography, the reverse is not the case. Having put oneself forward in print in a preface may satisfy the autobiographical impulse, but, as we saw in Chapter Seven, autobiographers frequently see the need for prefaces to their autobiographies. Prefaces must, then, serve some distinct purpose. The autobiographies of
McCarthy and Hellman underscore the importance of the preface in allowing the writer to speak self-reflexively as the author of a book from a vantage point outside the narrative. In Three and Memories of a Catholic Girlhood, the italicized prefaces and interchapters remain distinct from the previously published stories, portraits, and essays. But in Maybe, the brief italicized passages are part of a disjunctive narrative which has no separate status. These passages are not retrospective commentaries on a completed work, and thus do not function as prefaces.

Autobiographies and prefaces may both be considered retrospective commentary, but the primary referent for the autobiography is the life of the author while the primary referent for the preface is the particular literary work it prefaces, which may be a novel, a collection of tales, a play or even an autobiography. As Part Three demonstrates, the writing of a preface to an autobiography calls attention to the latter's status as a literary work and makes clear a point which may have been obscured in the initial discussion of autobiography as a marginal genre. Autobiographies are only relatively marginal. To some readers, their status as natural discourse may make them appear (wrongly, I would argue) less interesting, less a creative product of an artistic mind than, for instance, a novel. Some writers also acknowledge that their autobiographies would not have been written had not their other books been written first. The autobiography is of
interest because it is the story of a writer; this final act of authorship is dependent upon earlier ones. But while an autobiography is sometimes dependent on earlier writings, a preface always is. Although it may be reproduced without the original primary work, as in Glasgow's or James's collections, a preface is inherently marginal; it comes into existence as a commentary on some other act of authorship.

Prefaces are also more limited in scope. They are generally short, focused on one particular work, and concerned with the author's autobiography only as it relates to the writing of this one work. It takes a collection of prefaces to show the author's development in the kind of depth common to an autobiography. Yet prefaces are more directly concerned with the author as an author. Since the author of the preface is presented as both the author of the preface and the author of the work which follows, the status of a preface as an authorial introduction is more apparent than in an autobiography.

In Hellman's Three, it is almost exclusively in the prefaces and interchapters that we get any sense of Hellman as a writer and the book as a literary autobiography. But writers like James, Nabokov and Glasgow use their autobiographies to tell stories of authorship as significant as those contained in their prefaces. Let us turn now to what these different presentations of the self as author have in common.
II

The prefaces and autobiographies examined here offer various presentations of the self as author, from the reflections of Shelley and Hawthorne on the writer as wielder of the awesome power of language, capable of giving form to "dark, shapeless substances" and presenting secret truths gleaned from burrowing into the depths of human nature (Frk 8; S-I 4), to the troubling associations between writing and lying confronted by Hellman and McCarthy. Nabokov sees himself as a wizard or a god, a divinity who rules absolutely the fictional worlds that spring from his mind, created with no interference or influence from the "real world" or the worlds of other writers. Glasgow and James also see themselves as both creators and craftsmen but insist less than Nabokov on their absolute originality or complete conscious control of the process of writing. They both maintain that the writer's creations reflect life but in a selective, discriminatory way made possible by the author's special insight. Glasgow sees "down into the heart of things" beneath the surface life of appearances, while James's novels emerge from an intense observation of the world, in which his sense of life "is fed at every pore" (Glasgow Letters 41, Art 201).

These presentations of authorship are at times far from positive. Glasgow suggests that being a "natural writer" is both a gift and a burden. The acute sensitivity
the artist needs makes daily life almost unbearable. A person of imagination, as a "natural writer" must be, can never be happy in a suffering world. Hawthorne is so disturbed by the darker implications of his view of authorship that he masks them with a lighter picture: the artist as a mild entertainer, a genial host, a writer of trifles. Hellman finds the role of writer insignificant, especially during wartime. James and Leiris attempt to resolve similar doubts by suggesting that writing can be as compelling as military combat, as daring as a bullfight.

But positive or negative, what these authorial self-presentations have in common is the view of the author's uniqueness. The author is an artist with a special way of viewing the world, a special talent for invention, for discovering latent possibilities in what appear to others to be insignificant events, for seeing all sides of a question, and for transforming experience into art.

As a result of this uniqueness, authors are met with incomprehension. Readers consistently fail to grasp their intentions. Their books are either misread or ignored; their profession is maligned. To the general public authors are "queer monsters": immodest, cold-hearted, cut off from the experience of normal daily life. Their books are attacked as immoral, implausible, pessimistic, trivial, boring or unnecessarily difficult. And when critics do praise their books, as James implies and Nabokov reiterates in their respective prefaces, they often praise them for
the wrong reasons. The critics "appropriate" the author's books for purposes of their own and construct inferior fictions about them. Instead of retracing the author's tracks, as James does in his prefaces, critics' interpretations reveal only their own footprints.¹

The prefaces and autobiographies of creative writers can be seen as attempts to bridge the gap between author and reader, to correct misreadings and provide the reader with a kind of aesthetic education so that the barrier between author and audience will seem less insurmountable. Literary autobiographies aim to humanize the artist, to present the revolt of the man against the fictionist or the "life of the solitary spirit" of the woman within the novelist (SM 95; WW v). Authorial prefaces explain the author's intentions to the reader, reject inappropriate interpretations and sometimes include auto-criticism, where the author not only provides the reader with an appropriate model for future critical efforts but takes pains to point out and extol the specific merits of the work. Nor are the distinctions between the roles of autobiographies and prefaces absolute; prefaces can include personal information and autobiographies can include autocriticism. As we saw in Chapter One, the prefaces of Shelley and Hawthorne attempt to create more positive images of their authors for readers who were apt to judge their fictions as products of a diseased or a gloomy imagination. In A Small Boy and Others and Notes of a Son and Brother James
continually reflects on the decisions he must make as an author writing his autobiography.

While authorship as a profession--that is whether or not he was able to support himself by his pen--was clearly important to Hawthorne, the most significant attribute of authorship for him and for the other writers examined here is possession of a creative imagination. As Roy Pascal has written, the autobiography of the writer is really "the story of how his imagination is kindled" (133). Such an autobiography typically focuses on "the evolutions of [the author's] mode of vision" (135). As I argued in Chapter Six the same emphasis can be found in prefaces, like James's, which are authorial introductions. The focus becomes not the particular work at hand but the way the author's imagination worked to create it.

The presentation of the artist at work is shaped by tensions between what the author feels are the reader's beliefs and his or her own perceptions of what it means to be a literary artist. At times the view implicitly attributed to the reader which the preface or autobiography is meant to counter, actually reflects the hidden anxieties of the author. For instance McCarthy's initial defense of her honesty, her indignation that readers would associate the professional writer with a habitually lying child and consequently doubt the truth of her autobiography, reflects her own uncomfortable tendency to make this association. Hawthorne's assumption of the pose of the writer of trifles
and his protective rhetoric of veils and masks is in response to his own impression of his works as "devilish" and his own fear of self-exposure through his writings.

While authorial introductions are attempts to bridge the gap between author and reader, paradoxically they also frequently reinforce it. Because authors are genuinely frustrated by the incomprehension and indifference of readers at the same time that this very response reinforces the Romantic conception of the artist isolated by his genius, authorial introductions manifest an ambivalence toward readers. Though all these authors longed for an appreciative audience, they felt it necessary to declare their relative indifference to fame and to minimize their successes. Vast popular success would be a dubious blessing, indicating that even while embracing the life of a man or woman of letters, the author had bartered artistic integrity for "public gold." On the other hand, "obscurity" signaled the artist's superiority, as long as the public could be depicted as stupid, and unimaginative.

In the "Postscript" to The Marble Faun, A Certain Measure, and the italicized passages of Three and Memories of a Catholic Girlhood, Hawthorne, Glasgow, Hellman, and McCarthy actually dramatize confrontations with representatives of such a stupid, unimaginative and literal-minded reading public.

The problem of finding an adequate audience and maintaining the right kind of popularity is of particular
concern in prefaces, as we saw in Part Two. Vladimir Nabokov used his prefaces and his interviews to present himself as a writer for a few elite readers, thus countering the threat that the apparent succès de scandale of Lolita would brand him as a writer of vulgar bestsellers. Ellen Glasgow was not satisfied with her status as a popular writer with five bestsellers to her credit; she wrote A Certain Measure in hopes of awakening the attention of the critically minded minority. Though Henry James hoped his prefaces would enable readers to better criticize his works, his repeated comments on their insensitivity and critical deficiencies make this outcome seem improbable.

One way authors resolve this problem is to posit an ideal reader to whom their fictions, prefaces and autobiographies are addressed. This reader, as Nabokov openly admits, may be a version of the author himself (SO 10, 18) or may be described as a "congenial friend" (MF 1). The "rare and distinguished private success" the writer enjoys with this ideal reader provides the confidence necessary to further creation. And by continuing to address this ideal audience despite evidence that it does not exist, the author in a sense attempts to create such an audience by educating some of the common readers. The comforting fiction of the ideal reader sometimes breaks down, as it does in Hawthorne's "Preface" and "Postscript" to The Marble Faun or in James's The American Scene. But
then the author can still take consolation in a sense of artistic superiority.

Yet this consolation is small and somewhat bitter. To be truly successful, an author must find or create a receptive audience. When their literary works failed to win the anticipated response from readers, these writers explained themselves again through prefaces, autobiographies, and even prefaces to autobiographies. Though many of the writers examined here make comments to the effect that finally the only thing that matters is the author's private satisfaction and solitary dedication to his or her art, their authorial introductions indicate otherwise. While these authors were ambivalent or even at times hostile toward commercial success, they craved critical appreciation and some kind of friendly affirmative response to their books, lives, and values as literary artists as presented in their prefaces and autobiographies.
Notes to Volume II
Notes to Chapter Five

1 The sketchy first draft of Beyond Defeat was published as a novella in 1966.

2 Much of "The Novel in the South" (EGRD 68-83) was incorporated into all versions of the preface to The Miller of Old Church. It first appeared in Harper's Magazine, CLVII (December 1928): 93-100. "One Way to Write Novels" (EGRD 150-162), first published in Saturday Review of Literature XI (December 8, 1934): 335, 344, 350, supplies all of the preface to The Sheltered Life in both the Virginia Edition and in A Certain Measure except about four pages dealing with the genesis and the characters of that novel. Sections of "Some Literary Women Myths" (EGRD 36-45), which first appeared in the New York Herald Tribune Books May 27, 1928: 1, 5-6, are reworked for the preface to They Stooped to Folly in the Virginia Edition and in A Certain Measure.

3 The Old Dominion Edition included The Battle-Ground, The Deliverance, They Stooped to Folly and Virginia in 1929 and Barren Ground, The Miller of Old Church, The Romantic Comedians and The Voice of the People in 1933. They Stooped to Folly which had only just been written in 1929, was published without a preface. While the Old Dominion Edition's preface to The Voice of the People is entirely different from the one included in A Certain Measure, ideas from the earlier preface are scattered throughout several
of the prefaces in the book. Finally, the preface to *The Miller of Old Church* is taken almost verbatim from a previously published essay (cited in note 1) and has no specific connection to the novel.

4 See Edgar MacDonald (79-84) and E. Stanley Godbold (233, 281). According to Godbold the book was completed in 1941 and publication delayed for two years ostensibly "because of the paper shortage during the war. But her reason probably ran much deeper" (281, 290). Godbold does not specify what this deeper reason might be, but Glasgow's letters imply that she was waiting (though not patiently) for a literary climate more receptive to "serious literature" than the war-obsessed nation afforded her (*Letters* 311, 317, 326). A letter from Cabell to Glasgow on December 8, 1941 implies that Glasgow had virtually completed work on the book, by then entitled *A Certain Measure* (qtd. in MacDonald 83), and MacDonald argues that Glasgow may have delayed the book's publication because of her discomfort with the extent of Cabell's influence (83-4). Even if the book was essentially complete in the fall of 1941, her letters attest that Glasgow continued to make revisions through late spring 1942 (*Letters* 289-90; 297). In a letter to Van Wyck Brooks dated June 26, 1943, she writes, "The book has been in print for a year, waiting for the right moment" (326).

5 Since Glasgow's correspondence with Cabell is not included in *The Letters of Ellen Glasgow* and since she
never chose to acknowledge his contributions in print, my principal source for Cabell's influence on *A Certain Measure* is MacDonald's account. Fortunately, MacDonald quotes much of the correspondence on which he bases his argument. He reveals that Cabell proposed the general organization and the title of *A Certain Measure* and gave Glasgow a formula for writing the prefaces. In MacDonald's opinion Glasgow followed Cabell's advice closely though she subconsciously denied "his role as collaborator" (85). I believe that Cabell's influence is less pervasive than MacDonald implies.

Godbold repeatedly stresses Cabell's role in shaping Glasgow's critical writing, especially *A Certain Measure* (170-71, 231-4, 289-93).

Finally, we cannot overlook Cabell's own account in *As I Remember It* which has been characterized as both "the last ugly word" (Rouse, *Ellen Glasgow* 25) and a courteous treatment of a delicate matter (Godbold 295). In any case, Cabell contends that his review of *Barren Ground* in 1925 suggested the conception of Glasgow's work as a social history of Virginia and that it was at his recommendation that she used the idea as an organizing principle in her prefaces to each of her two collected editions (219-21). He further claims to have had "a joyous hand in revising somewhat thoroughly each of the prefaces" for the *Virginia Edition* (221).

6 This novel was *In This Our Life* (1941). In The
Woman Within Glasgow alters her account of the revision of this novel to insist that she did in fact complete the third writing, that she "wrote over the whole novel chiefly for style and manner, in proofsheets. Only when it was finished to the last paragraph . . . was I content to lie back and listen to what my good doctors said to me" (292).

According to MacDonald, Glasgow attempted to relate truthfully the story of her life, "but she was accustomed to writing novels" ("Essay" 197). As Louis Rubin notes, Glasgow seems to particularly identify herself with Dorinda in *Barren Ground* and discusses her experience with Harold S. in terms similar to Dorinda's experience with Jason (28). (Dorinda, jilted by Jason in her youth, goes on to start a successful dairy farm while Jason degenerates into crazed alcoholism. However, she has an emotionally barren life and tells herself that she is "finished with love."

Yet the novel ends on a guardedly triumphant note, with Dorinda finding a kind of redemption in her relationship with the land, as Glasgow presumably finds consolation in her writing.) See also Thiebaux (125), Lesser (5), Auchincloss (42), and Godbold (137-150) on the connections between Glasgow/Dorinda and *The Woman Within* and *Barren Ground*.

Since Glasgow invented Dorinda and wrote the novel after the end of her engagement to Harold S., it seems more logical to argue that Dorinda's viewpoint was modeled on her own, and not vice-versa.
According to Alice Payne Hackett, five of Glasgow's novels were among the top ten best sellers in the nation in the year in which they were published: *The Deliverance* (#2 in 1904), *The Wheel of Life* (#10 in 1906), *Life and Gabriella* (#5 in 1916), *The Sheltered Life* (#5 in 1932), and *Vein of Iron* (#2 in 1935).

According to William Kelly (cited throughout Godbold) other popular successes were *Voice of the People* (1900), *The Battle-Ground* (1902), *The Ancient Law* (1908), and the *Romantic Comedians* (1926). *The Miller of Old Church* (1911) was a more modest success, and Glasgow's first novel *The Descendant* (1897) went into three editions.

Sales of *The Romance of a Plain Man* (1909), *They Stooped to Folly* (1929) and Pulitzer Prize-winning *In This Our Life* failed to approach the levels of the popular books which preceded them, and *Barren Ground*, though it remained a personal favorite of Glasgow's (*BG* vii), was not a popular success (*Godbold* 145).

*Phases of an Inferior Planet* (1898), *Virginia* (1913), *The Builders* (1919) and *One Man and His Time* (1922) sold poorly.

Glasgow refers only to the first six novels of the *Virginia Edition* as part of her social history. In discussing the last of these, *Life and Gabriella*, Glasgow records a sense of freedom at coming to the end of her "history of Virginia manners" (102) and declares that her later fiction would be directed by "an entirely new
creative impulse" (103). It is this later fiction that Glasgow considers her best work, and in discussing it she repeatedly distances herself from the implication that in trying to write realistically of the South she was attempting merely to record life. Instead she stresses the role of her imagination in interpreting and creating life in her fiction (CM 153, 161). In the late novels she sought "a distillation of the past, not the dry bones and the decaying framework of history" (CM 170).

Glasgow's situation seems the reverse of Hawthorne's. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Hawthorne was preoccupied with the image his writings projected of him. While Hawthorne stressed the assumption of a mask in his writings and insisted that his private self was more cheerful or "sunshiny" than his "gloomy" books would suggest, Glasgow insists that she pours her "real" self into her writings and that the gay and attractive social persona she assumes is a facade.

However, Glasgow's letters reveal that she did sometimes expose her darker, self-pitying side to friends (Letters 41 112, 135, 171-72, 177, 310, 311). The most dramatic instance is probably a letter to Bessie Zaban Jones from 1934 in which Glasgow claims to have never enjoyed her life, "Not one day, not one hour, not one moment—or perhaps, only one hour and one day" (151).

Rouse notes that according to Glasgow's autobiography, "She seems to have adored her mother and possibly
hated her father" (Ellen Glasgow 19).

12 Monique Parent Frazee comments that the book shows Glasgow "weltering in self-pity" (168), and Rouse remarks that in The Woman Within Glasgow "revealed that vein, not of iron, but of sentimentality that was present throughout her life, even though consciously as an artist she avowed hostility toward the sentimental" ("Civilized Men" 165).

13 In another essay in the same volume, Elizabeth Winston recognizes, contra Jelinek's claim that Glasgow tells us about neither "the writing of [her] successful novels nor the recognition that resulted from them" (9), that Glasgow does use the autobiography to reaffirm her work as a novelist and presents herself as a survivor as well as a victim (104-5).

14 Wagner, who also notes the contrast in tone and emphasis between the two books, does not go on to discuss either book further, but focuses instead on Glasgow's fiction. Her feminist reading of Glasgow's novels is a much needed supplement to two earlier books, by Barbro Ekman and Elizabeth Myer, which ostensibly deal with Glasgow as a feminist. Highly similar, the two books are basically taxonomies of Glasgow's women characters. On the other hand, Monique Frazee provides an excellent discussion of the limitations of Glasgow's feminism.

15 Glasgow writes that she was encouraged to be frank in these prefaces by the thought that both the Virginia Edition and A Certain Measure were destined for limited
audiences, and are therefore likely to attract only a "circle of . . . friendly readers" with whom Glasgow feels "an intellectual kinship which is stronger than gratitude" (CM 113). She makes a similar point about her autobiography (WW 64-5) and claims that *Virginia* (1913) was written for neither "Southern reviewers" nor "their trusting wives" (CM 95). Ahead of its time, the book is aimed at those who can appreciate "the ironic overtones, the relentless logic of events, and the application of modern psychology" (94).

16 At least, she does not strike me as arrogant in the "Foreword," and though few readers will be able to assent to Glasgow's extravagant claims for her late fiction, these claims seem somehow less offensive than Nabokov's prefatory posturings. There is one instance when Glasgow does sound Nabokovian, giving her readers a lecture on her stylistic experiments in *Vein of Iron* which culminates in a metrical analysis of five lines of her prose (CM 182). MacDonald calls this passage "All too obvious Cabell" (83). If so it was poor judgment on Glasgow's part to allow it to remain, for it is awkward and heavy-handed.

17 Hawthorne complained that his early productions discomfitted him because he saw little signs of having progressed beyond them. "The ripened autummal fruit tastes but little better than the early windfalls" (S-I 6).

Glasgow seems to repudiate some of her early writings
including some of those included in the *Virginia Edition.* She says of *The Battle-Ground,* "The remote face it turns back is the face of a stranger. I fail to recognize any feature; I feel not the slightest bond of human or literary relationship" (*CM 6*). Her first two published books, *The Descendant* and *Phases of an Inferior Planet,* which are excluded from the collected edition, are dismissed as "more of less successful failures" (*CM 48*).

But though Glasgow is certainly critical of much of her earlier work, it is criticism well-tempered with praise and with a certain satisfaction in her sense of progress. It is interesting that though she claims to "disinherit" *The Descendant* she obviously finds it worthy of attention as a beginning work and mentions it in several of her prefaces. On the other hand *The Wheel of Life, The Ancient Law, The Builders* and *One Man in his Time,* books recognized by both Glasgow and most of her critics as among her weakest, are not only excluded from the edition but receive no mention in *A Certain Measure.* Because these books follow some of the more promising "Novels of the Commonwealth," to discuss them would threaten the pattern of increasing achievement that Glasgow imposes on her literary career in *A Certain Measure.*

18 *Sharp Realities* was the title of a four-hundred page manuscript that Glasgow wrote during her teens and attempted to publish in 1891. She burned it in disgust after the "literary advisor" she submitted it to proved to
be more interested in her body than her manuscript (WW 96-7). The lost novel, according to Glasgow, "was an indignant departure from the whole sentimental fallacy" (WW 97).

Anne Goodwyn Jones considers these birth images as manifestations of Glasgow's feminism, but birth imagery is fairly common in the prefaces of male writers as well as female. For example, see Henry James (Art 79, 81, 337). As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter James's prefaces seem to have provided a model for Glasgow especially in her characterization of authorship as a combination of an acute sensibility and a dedication to the craft of writing.

As for the question of gender, since Glasgow universally uses the pronoun "he" to refer to the writer, it seems unlikely that she meant her depiction of herself as a persistent, wilful and natural novelist to be gender-specific. In other words, though she objects to the idea that women should not write or should not write about certain subjects, though she criticizes the stereotypical view of women presented in the works of male writers, and though in her fiction she frequently explores the lives of women and attacks some of these male-promoted myths, such as the myth of the ruined woman, Glasgow doesn't suggest that her femininity is an important factor in her writing. Glasgow engages in a feminist critique, but not in gynocriticism. Perhaps in her role as writer Glasgow felt free from some of the constraints imposed upon Southern
women.

20 In a letter, Glasgow criticized D. H. Lawrence and other "strutting, sad-eyed, martyrs of literature" who "do not know the first thing about suffering" (Letters 151)

21 Compare Glasgow's early letters to her publisher, Walter Hines Page, in which she declares her determination to "become a great novelist" (Letters 25) and to write books that will "live" (Letters 26).

22 In The Mind of the South, W. J. Cash argues that the "satisfaction was the hallmark of Southern society" and that "complacency" discouraged analysis (108).

23 Glasgow attempted to speak for the inarticulate in her writing. Retrospectively, Glasgow praises Romance of a Plain Man, the story of a poor white man's economic rise and troubled marriage to an upper-class woman, for its "authentic rendering of unwritten history" (CM 72). Barren Ground is the story of the "good people" of Virginia, who "from beginning to end" were "inarticulate" (CM 157). They Stooped to Folly takes on the myth of the ruined woman, while her fiction in general attempts to paint a more realistic portrait of the Southern woman than that imaged in the stereotypical belle. Glasgow was also proud of her portraits of black characters (Letters 76).

Nevertheless most critics agree that Glasgow is far from escaping either sentimentality or stereotypes in her fiction. See especially Geismar and Godbold (241-67). Attebury argues that her obsessive concern with
repudiating sentimental fiction mars her early work and interfered with her development as a novelist.


25 Cash presents Glasgow as a pioneer in this revolt (152, 373-74).

26 See "Heroes and Monsters," EGRD (162-7), where Glasgow comments on Faulkner's "fantastic nightmares" (163). See also Glasgow's comments on "the present grotesque revival in Southern fiction, . . . a remote logical result of our earlier hallucination, the sentimental fallacy (CM 69).

Judith Wittenburg notes that Glasgow's reputation has fluctuated inversely with Faulkner's.

27 See the exchange of letters with Cabell qtd. in Godbold (284).

It is true that Glasgow was not above attempting to influence reviewers. See her letter of April 21, 1925 to Carl Van Vechten, asking him to repeat "over again and in print" his praise of Barren Ground (76) and a letter written to Stark Young, in the summer of 1935 in which she outlines what he should "bring out" in a review of Vein of Iron (Letters 190-91).

Rouse discusses her "semi-professional relationships" with members of "New York literary circles" (Ellen Glasgow
Nina Baym ("Melodramas" 135) and Linda Wagner (10, 11, 74-97) do see Dorinda as triumphant and suggest that the view of Dorinda's life as emotionally barren or sterile is sexist. A male character who had lived as Dorinda had would have been praised, while Dorinda is held under suspicion for her celibacy and her daring to succeed in a man's world.

Certainly this novel has a feminist aspect, in that Dorinda is not a passive victim, but Dorinda hardly succeeds on her own terms. She vows she won't let a man ruin her life, but then she allows Jason's betrayal to shape it. She resigns herself to a life of physical drudgery and banishes love from her life all to spite Jason. The problem is not her choice of celibacy, but her refusal to let any kind of love have a place in her life and her apparent need, as Monique Parent Frazee points out, to sacrifice her sexuality and any sort of pleasure in her femininity in order to survive (171, 181-2). Wagner does qualify her appreciation of Dorinda, noting that her life is "not exemplary" since "much of it is prompted by bitterness (74).

Mary Castigilie Anderson argues that though Dorinda's "solutions are unsatisfying on a personal level," on a symbolic level she engages and succeeds in an "archetypal confrontation with nature" (385-6). But Glasgow claims that Dorinda's reclamation of the land is "only an
episode," which is "unimportant beside this human drama of love and hatred," (160-61). She stressed that Dorinda was to be seen as a "human being" (154), a character who during the ten years of the novel's gestation in Glasgow's mind grew "more substantial and more human" (162).

Notes to Chapter Six

1 In late July 1905, James wrote to his publishers proposing "a handsome 'definitive edition'" of his fiction. (Letters 4: 366-68). After outlining his proposal, James added, "Lastly I desire to furnish each book . . . with a freely colloquial and even . . . confidential preface or introduction, representing . . . the history of the work [and] a frank critical talk about its subject, its origin, its place in the whole artistic chain" (367).

2 In a letter of Oct 21, 1904 to George Harvey, James proposes the title as a second and even better choice than his first thought, The Return of the Native, because "I am so much more of a Novelist than of anything else and see all things as such" (Letters 4: 328).

3 William Goetz identifies the prefaces as a narrative about Henry James as author, as an attempt at articulating the proposed "history of the growth of one's imagination" (Art 47; Goetz 83-84). Thomas Leitch argues that in the prefaces James presents himself "as the perfect imaginative hero" (25). Norman Holland finds the prefaces informed by "the obsessive concern with the assets, hazards and limitations of the imaginative life" (155).
4 Millicent Bell ("Henry James" 467), Adeline Tinter (250) and James Olney ("Psychology" 49) also find this passage central to the autobiography. Tinter suggests that "the main thrust of Notes of a Son and Brother exhibits James's growing authorhood" (249), and John Pilling finds the "crucial theme" as "the education of [James's] eye, or rather the education of his taste" (32). According to Carol Holly, contemporary reviewers of A Small Boy and Others recognized its subject as the source and development of James's artistic consciousness ("British Reception" 575).

5 However, a passage from James's notebooks is more ambivalent, suggesting the possibility that in his public writings James suppressed the darker side of his experience as an artist, the side that Glasgow emphasized in The Woman Within:

Ah, the terrible law of the artist!--the law of fructification, of fertilization, the law by which everything is grist to his mill--the law in short of the acceptance of all experience, of all suffering, of all life, of all suggestion and sensation and illumination. (NHJ 61)

But James's response to this "terrible law" is to re-dedicate himself to art within which he seemed to find ample consolation.

The consolation, the dignity, the joy of life are that discouragements and lapses, depressions and darknesses come to one only as one stands
without--I mean without the luminous paradise of art. (NHJ 61)

In another passage James apostrophizes his muse: "Oh art, art what difficulties are thine; but, at the same time what consolation and encouragements also, are like thine?" He adds "The Princess [Casamassima] will give me hard continuous work for many months to come; but she will also give me joys too sacred to prate about" (31).

6 For examples of the former see James's notebooks 30, 32, 52-3, 61 and Letters 3: 27, 300, 515-6 and Letters 4: 43, 106, 224 and 454. James's confident desire for popularity and his bitter disappointment when these hopes proved unfounded is expressed in Letters 3: 22 23 25, 102, 275 and Letters 4: 30, 31. The portrait of himself as an author of whose book "scarce a human being will understand a word, or an intention, or an artistic element or a glimmer of any sort" occurs with much greater frequency during his late career.

7 Leon Edel briefly makes this comparison (A Life 625).

8 In several private letters James professed a distaste for and disinterest in finished work and made critical comments about some early novels (Letters 3:206, Letters 4: 195, 242, 375, 422). But in the prefaces he repeatedly professes delight in re-examining his novels and when he criticizes, he also praises.

James did of course exclude some novels, like Watch
and Ward, Washington Square (1880), Confidence (1880) and The Other House (1896) which presumably, even with revision, would not attest to his "love of perfection." James hesitated about including The Bostonians because of its length. Later, with the poor sales of the edition, Scribner's was not inclined to publish it. (Letters 4: 368, 778).

9 The principal sources for this necessarily truncated account of James's publishing career are Henry James: A Life, (1985), Leon Edel's one volume condensation of the five-volume biography of James he published between 1953 and 1972, and three excellent surveys of James's relation to his publishers, to his audience, and to popular contemporary genres: Michael Anesko's, Friction with the Market, Anne T. Margolis's, Henry James and the Problem of Audience: An International Act and Marcia Jacobson's Henry James and the Mass Market.

10 See Margolis 116-17, 126-36 and 139-40 for the critical reaction to these novels. Jacobson notes that contemporary critics lamented the detachment of his late novels (140-41).

At the same time that James's technical experiments seemed to indicate that he had accepted and even embraced his status as an avant-garde master, other evidence suggests that he still craved a wider audience. Anesko observes that James continued to write novels and tales he thought of as pot-boilers like "The Turn of the Screw" and
The Other House (143). Jacobson points out that Maisie and The Awkward Age can be viewed as transformations of popular genres like "child literature" (novels for adults told from the point of view of a juvenile hero or heroine), divorce novels, the English dialogue novel and the New Woman novel.

11 Edel's account of James's two depressions can be found on pages 425-33 and 663-69 of A Life and pages xiii and 569 of Letters 4. Edel suggests that the letters themselves do not reveal the full extent of James's anguish, but for some of the more troubled letters see Letters 4: 546-53, 556.

12 Edith Wharton, believing James to be suffering from financial difficulties, secretly arranged with Scribner's to subsidize a new novel by James. Charles Scribner accordingly wrote to James proposing "an important American novel . . . another great novel to balance the Golden Bowl" for the astounding sum of $8000. Though puzzled and cautious, James was flattered and accepted the offer through Pinker in November 1912. The exchange of letters is printed in Appendix II of Letters 4 (789-92).

13 Edel suggests that James's return to The Sense of the Past was "half-hearted." James took it up by default when anxiety over the war made it impossible to concentrate on The Ivory Tower (A Life 705).

14 "The House Beautiful" eventually became The Spoils of Poynton.
Michael Mayo suggests that James may have some anxiety on this score which is manifested both in his portrayal of himself as an "anxious outsider" in the autobiographies and in the terror of not having truly lived which haunts some of his fictional heroes.

Daniel Schneider suggests that James countered anxiety over the possibility of having sacrificed too much by depicting the artist as the "great accumulator" (449). He notes James's mixture of passive and aggressive imagery in his portrait of the artist. "Behind the mask of passivity and 'surrender' lurked the 'queer monster' with the grasping imagination" (450).

Jane Tompkins also relates this letter to the celebratory yet elegiac mood of the autobiography (687), and Hoffa asserts that this letter reinforces the book's "celebrative and affirmative" mood (283).

James complained that "there was no escape from the ubiquitous alien" (AS 62). See also AS 84-99, 141, 166, 189. James's reaction to the alien presence is discussed by Buitenhuis (190-192).

Gale notes that when James uses war imagery in the prefaces, he is "ranged against wrong-headed critics and the unimaginative public, never against any self-erected critical problem which he must surmount to achieve artistic success" (435).

Walter Benn Michaels suggests that James identifies re-writing with re-reading, assuming an apparently passive
role in regard to his own work, in order to provoke the reader to take a more active role. As James suggests in the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, the aim of this act of revision is to inspire serious criticism. On this issue see also Susanne Kappeler's book *Writing and Reading in Henry James*, especially Chapter Seven.

Goetz also notes this uneasiness but describes it as a tension between the formal and autobiographical concerns of the text. He presents James as uneasy about autobiography, so that in both his "more formal autobiographies" and his prefaces, he is "intent upon finding an objective topic or external occasion for writing about himself" (84). In my view James's discomfort is triggered not by the need to defend his autobiographical impulse but the need to justify his desire to dwell on a subject to which he suspected few readers would respond: "the growth of his whole operative consciousness" as a novelist (Art 4).

Mutlu Blasing and Brewster Ghislen discuss James's presentation of the process of artistic creation as part organic, part artificial (Blasing 58-60) and part intentional, part automatic (Ghislen 298-99). This view is similar to Shelley's description of authorial invention as creating out of chaos, discussed in Chapter Two.

It was the American emphasis on "doing and getting" which so alienated James in *The American Scene*.

Bell ("Henry James"), Goetz, Eakin ("Obscure
Hurt"), and James Cox ("Memoirs of Henry James") all observe that the autobiographies conclude before James's official literary career has really begun.

24 Eakin (Fictions) believes the nightmare "offers a paradigm of the inward drama of the entire autobiography: the dream culminates in an act of self-display that reveals precisely the aspect of a small boy's consciousness that the mature artist sought to dramatize in his autobiographical narrative" (81).

Mayo relates the dream to James's short story "The Jolly Corner" and argues that both James in the dream and Spencer Brydon in the tale, though they both react in terror to the prospect of life at its most intense, are ultimately triumphant. Brydon has the consoling embrace of Alice while James has the consoling embrace of art, and thus they are able to accept the existence "of horror and vulgarity" and conquer their fears. In the dream James recognizes that "art is to be his life and his success" (483-6).

Pilling interprets the dream as a kind of psychomachia in which James's "better nature triumphs" (29). In the dream James accepts the idea that the imaginary life can lead not to sterility but to creation (30). Michael Sprinker has criticized this interpretation arguing that the dream is arbitrarily inserted into the narrative and that James makes no clear suggestion that of what the figures may represent (154-55). Cox, conceding that the
dream has positive connotations for James, suggests that
the fleeing figure should be equated with James the
autobiographer who is shocked to discover in the "timid
small boy" an usurper who has taken over William's
ostensible place as the hero of the book ("Memoirs of Henry
James" 243-44). (The autobiography began as an "attempt to
place together some of the particulars of the early life of
William James" [SB 3].)

25 Though James becomes no more specific than an
"obscure hurt," Leon Edel convincingly argues that it was a
back injury. He points out that the injury actually
occurred in October of 1861 and that Henry made little
reference to it in the years immediately following. (A Life
57-61). Drawing on Edel's research Eakin infers that the
incident became important for Henry for the first time in
1913 when he used it to justify his "'non-participation' in
the war and by extension in 'life'" ("Obscure Hurt" 679,
Fictions 100)

This passage is one example of James's repeated
engagement with "the mathematics of experiences, trying to
balance his account with life, trying to prove that his own
sum is equivalent to that of others" (Fictions 70). Mayo
(480) and Goetz (53-56) read the passage in similar terms.
Both Goetz (54-55) and Edel (A Life 58) stress James's
deliberate vagueness, as if he is trying to cover up his
awareness that the connection he wants to make is an
artificial one.
Cox finds James "complacent" in this passage, his critical faculty "suffocated by his determination to praise" ("Memoirs of Henry James" 251). James does not allow himself to face the "sore and troubled" feelings underlying the incident.

26 The three-page fragment of what was to be a thirty-page article is reprinted in The Complete Notebooks of Henry James (437-438). Carol Holly considers the writing of this essay a "turning point" for James because in it he began to recognize the possibilities of autobiography which he had rejected earlier in his career ("Autobiographical Fragment" 44-45, 49).

27 Jane Tompkins's article "Redemption of Time in Notes of a Son and Brother seems a modern example of this critical reaction. She stresses James's loving presentation in Notes of the others in his life. Pilling prefers A Small Boy because he feels the drama of James's fostered imagination is overshadowed by "family obligations" in Notes (26).

28 These later critics include Hoffa, Eakin (Fictions), Olney ("Psychology"), Goetz, and David Kirby.

Notes to Chapter Seven

1 Nabokov recalls walking between his parents and realizing what his age, four, meant in relation to his parents' ages. "I felt myself plunged abruptly into a radiant and mobile medium that was none other than the pure element of time" (21). "I see my diminutive self as
celebrating . . . the birth of sentient life" (22).

2 Stone examines "Bethe," the opening story of
Hellman's Pentimento as a kind of microcosm of the book
(308-16).

3 The exception appears to be the symbolic incident
(as in Richard Wright's Black Boy) which often constitutes
the very first words of an autobiography. In Maya
Angelou's case, a symbolic incident, her humiliation at an
Easter pageant when she realizes both that she will never
"look like one of the sweet little white girls who were
everybody's dream of what was right with the world" and
that her sense of displacement is nevertheless valid, is
used as a preface (1).

4 After appearing serially, the pages that constitute
A Personal Record were published in 1912 under the title
Some Reminiscences. They were republished in 1916 as A
Personal Record. In 1919 they appeared as part of J. M.
Dent's collected edition with a new "Author's Note," like
the other volumes in the series.

5 Nabokov and James were at one time or another charged
with a similar fault by some of their critics.

6 Elsa Nettels summarizes these views and compares
them to James's in the first chapter of James and Conrad.
David Goldknopf notes Conrad's repeated concern in the
author's notes with documenting the real life sources of his
fictions (58).

7 This tendency toward looseness in the first person
narrative, "the terrible fluidity of self-revelation" is the reason James rejected the method for all but short pieces.

8 L'Age d'homme was published without a preface in 1939. "De la littérature considérée comme tauromachie" ["Of Literature Considered as a Bullfight"] was added as a preface in 1946. In Richard Howard's 1963 translation, from which I am quote, the prefatory essay, entitled "The Autobiographer as Torero" appears as an afterword. In the 1968 edition it appears as the preface.

9 See the interview with Madeline Gabriel in Sub-Stance (52).

10 Leiris's awareness of the fluidity of the self is also implied by his succession of autobiographies (Manhood [L'Age d'homme] plus the four volumes of La Règle du jeu) and in this note to the first sentence of Manhood which reads "I have just reached the age of thirty-four.": "I will be thirty-five when these pages are published for the first time. Such a gap would justify a new book" (147). This perpetual awareness of a gap, of the self's growth and change prompts the notes, the preface and the multiple autobiographies.

11 For the autobiographer who makes a deliberate decision to have the volume appear posthumously, the preface to the autobiography is an attempt to get in the first "last word." It represents the opportunity to write one's own epitaph. This does not mean that while preparing
the autobiography, the future posthumous autobiographer will not experience the same struggle that "premature" autobiographers face in reaching a point where one can be satisfied that the autobiography is complete and its form adequately encompasses all relevant life experience. Both Glasgow and Adams claim in their prefaces to have given up in weariness and despair. (Adams puts his claim for the Education's incompleteness in the preface he had Henry Cabot Lodge sign and publish after his death along with the first official edition of the book.)

12 Leiris is quoting Poe's *Marginalia* (*Manhood* 156).

13 In an interview with Madeline Gabriel, Leiris noted that many critics had failed to see the irony in his title. The bull's horn was admittedly only "a wish, not the actual state of things" (49). One critic who supports Leiris's self-assessment is Germaine Brèe. She observes that Leiris "dramatize[s], with gentle irony," several problems "endemic to the autobiographic mode," such as "self-display, self-revelation, narcissism, myth-making and veracity" (203).

One the other hand, Mehlman's analysis of the preface notes that Leiris seems caught up in his own rhetoric. With each mention of the bull's horn, Leiris effaces more of the gap between the desired risk and the actuality. He begins by depicting his efforts as a "crude" attempt to introduce "even the shadow of the bull's horn," but by the end of the essay he is discussing "a genre of major
significance to me" which includes work in which "the horn is present" (Manhood 161; Mehlman 76-78). Leiris seems to suppress his awareness of the gap between what he desires to achieve in his writing and what is actually possible.

Pilling discusses the framing of the essay with images of Le Havre and suggests that ultimately Leiris is unable to conquer the feeling that his book has failed (63-69). Yet during the course of the essay Leiris moves from viewing his book as an "excrescence" to becoming liberated from the need to apologize for his solipsistic insistence on dealing with personal problems (66-67). For the shared experience of the war binds Leiris and his audience together. Leiris realizes his "inner needs . . . may find an echo in his audience" (67).

14 In the 1946 edition of L'Age d'homme, the preface "De la littérature considérée comme tauromachie," is printed in italic type as well, though this may be just a printer's convention.

15 While italics are ostensibly used for emphasis but may suggest tentativeness, a whisper is ostensibly unobtrusive but may be conspicuous.

Notes to Chapter Eight

1 Timothy Dow Adams also notes the structural similarity between the two books (Telling Lies 124).

An Unfinished Woman (1969), Hellman's first autobiography, begins in Hellman's childhood with a chronological narrative. In the middle of the book Hellman
starts incorporating diary entries, and her present perspective on them, into her retrospective narrative. The book concludes with portraits of three significant people in Hellman's life: Dorothy Parker, her housemaid Helen, and Dashiell Hammett. *Pentimento* (1973) is a book of portraits and essays, and *Scoundrel Time* (1976) recounts the influence of the Joseph McCarthy era on Hellman's life. In 1979 these three books were collected and published as *Three*, with the addition of a preface and other commentaries.

Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957) consists of a series of autobiographical short stories and essays, all focused on childhood, some of which were previously collected in *Cast a Cold Eye* (1950) and all of which appeared in some earlier form in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Bazaar*, or *Mademoiselle*.

2 *How I Grew* (1987) McCarthy's intellectual autobiography, covers the same years as *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* with the addition of her college years. Some of its chapters were also separately published, but McCarthy presents the volume as a book rather than a collection, despite annoying repetitions of information disclosed in previous chapters.

*Maybe: A Story* (1980) depicts Hellman trying to come to terms with the meaning of a mysterious figure in her life, a casual acquaintance named Sarah Cameron.

3 As Adams points out in *Telling Lies in Modern
American Autobiography, many critics consider the question of lying irrelevant to autobiography (4). Adams cites Gusdorf's claim that "the truth of the man" is "affirmed beyond the fraudulent itinerary and chronology" (Adams 16; Gusdorf 43); similar positions are taken by Olney ("Psychology, Memory and Autobiography" 48), Eakin (Fictions in Autobiography), and Roy Pascal (18, 187). Barrett J. Mandel protests against calling autobiography "fiction," but notes that the autobiographer may use devices of fiction and present events not literally true. The autobiography achieves truth insofar as it conveys the author's sense that "this happened to me" (53).

Adams points out that the wide acceptance by critics of autobiography (including himself) of two propositions—that "the truth of one's self can be very different from the truth of one's life" and that therefore "autobiographical truth may bear only tangentially on literal accuracy"—does not preclude an interest in the problem of lying in autobiography (11):

Although the literal accuracy of an autobiography's words is not important, it is important that the writer chose to stray from what really happened. The complicated series of strategies behind an author's conscious and unconscious misrepresentations is not beside the point. (16)

Telling Lies attempts to examine these strategies, though at
times Adams seems more concerned with demonstrating that "even those autobiographers who have been publicly labeled liars should not be considered culpable" (167) and with showing that after all, these problem autobiographers are not as "untrustworthy" in regard to facts as they may have seemed.

4 For an overview of some of the material McCarthy was preparing for her defense see Wright (395-96) and Gelderman (339-342). The most famous issue was the "Julia" episode of Pentimento in which Hellman tells the story of a childhood friend whom she calls Julia, a wealthy woman who studied psychiatry under Freud in Vienna, became active in the anti-fascist underground, and was eventually murdered by the Nazis. In 1937, according to Pentimento, Hellman visited Julia in Europe on her way to a theater festival in Russia and accepted a dangerous mission. She smuggled $50,000 from Paris to Berlin for use in the resistance movement. Later, after Julia was murdered, only Hellman would reclaim the body.

A movie, Julia, was made about this dramatic episode in 1977. Though Gellhorn attacked the time-frame of Julia, it was only after Muriel Gardiner Buttinger's autobiography, Code Name: Mary, was published in 1983 that the factuality of the whole episode was called into question. Buttinger's life history was very similar to Julia's but she was unacquainted with Hellman. She affirmed that there was no other American woman answering
Julia's description either at the University of Vienna's medical school or active in the resistance movement. Buttinger and Hellman had had a mutual acquaintance in the 1930's who conceivably could have told Buttinger's story to Hellman.

Hellman denied the charge that Julia was modeled on Buttinger, but this "coincidence" coupled with some of the logical flaws and inconsistencies McCracken pointed out (the operation is ludicrously overstaffed, and it was unnecessary to smuggle American money into Germany since it could be transferred freely through banks) convinced many, including Hellman's biographer William Wright, that Buttinger was Julia (407).

Adams is an exception, defending the possibility that "Julia" is not a fictional creation modeled on Buttinger (145-50).

Even before the McCarthy-Hellman suit or the publication of Scoundrel Time, John Simon, reviewing Pentimento, questioned whether Hellman deserved her reputation for candor, noting that the "forthright, outspoken author" revealed little about herself (744, 751). In a critical overview of Hellman's career published in 1978, Doris Falk wavers over whether the memoirs, her "primary sources of information on Lillian Hellman as a human being" are "fact or artifact" but supposes that the "outlines" of the Julia story "must be factual" (4, 9). She does note that Hellman has failed to
answer those who object to *Scoundrel Time* "in any cogent, credible way" (155).

6 Gelderman herself quotes one such reader, an anonymous critic who wrote that McCarthy "quite simply wanted to lie about her experiences, then make things all right by confessing the lie, while at the same time capitalizing on the fact that the reader would come upon the lie first" and "accept it as truth" (qtd. in Gelderman 120).

7 Hellman's account also merges the loss of her farm due to unpaid income taxes with the financial deprivations suffered as a consequence of her blacklisting. The farm was actually sold before the HUAC hearing rather than after as Hellman maintains. She can be said to exaggerate her sufferings as the result of her testimony by implying that the loss of the farm was part of it. It seems quite possible, however, that Hellman had no deliberate intent to deceive, but that these two nearly concurrent instances of financial hardship became fused in her mind.

8 Adams (136-37), and Jelinek ("Literary Autobiography Recast" 163-65) note this pattern of undercutting heroism with "humiliating physical details." It occurs throughout Hellman's memoirs, not only in *Scoundrel Time*.

9 See Maurice Brown on Hellman's autobiographical method.

10 Jelinek also believes that Glasgow's *The Woman Within* does not take sufficient note of her literary career.
Jelinek fails to realize that the identity of women writers as authors can still inform their autobiographies despite the omission of critical analysis of their work or a detailed account of the literal facts of their authorship.

Falk divides Hellman's plays into those dealing with "active evil" in which the "chief characters" are despoilers," and those dealing with "bystanders" in which supposedly good people "stand by and allow the despoilers to accomplish their destructive aims" (29). Falk sees Scoundrel Time as a kind of play in the latter tradition in which the non-Communist liberals figure as the "bystanders" (147).

According to Simon, the technique of An Unfinished Woman and Pentimento corresponds to melodrama (748). Brown finds "Hellman's sense of theatre in the significant dramatic gesture, brisk dialogue weighted with implication, the sense of half-glimpsed backgrounds and motives." (7)

Peter Feibleman reports that Hellman became upset after reading an article about the three greatest living playwrights which failed to mention her. That morning she decided to write a memoir, and the result was that "she became a kind of self-propelled American folk heroine" (34). Even if Hellman was motivated in part by a desire to preserve her own fame, she uses her memoirs to call attention to her personality rather than to her literary work.

Billson and Smith discuss Hellman's dissatisfaction
with the role of observer she finds herself playing during her visit to Spain as an "important" writer.

14 *Maybe* is the final book Hellman was to write as a single author. However, she and Peter Feibleman later co-wrote a cookbook published in 1984: *Eating Together: Recipes and Recollections*.

15 It is in regard to this sketch that McCarthy insists that "except for the names of the town and the names of the people, this story is completely true" (199), just as Hellman, after expressing a general skepticism about childhood memories, adds, "But I trust absolutely what I remember about Julia" (Three 412).

16 Hewitt notes that in *Memories* McCarthy presents a "literary self" and that McCarthy "cannot escape nor does she want to escape that part of the self who is a creator, a writer" (102). Spacks observes that McCarthy is always aware of herself "as a writer converting her life into art" (181).

17 Taylor remarks that "mendacity . . . is a kind of creativity for which her occasional apologies never quite ring true" (80).

18 McKenzie notes that though McCarthy seems to want both to expose and explain herself, she ultimately justifies her lying as something forced upon her, though the reader is likely to find her behavior less than inevitable (41-43). Eakin, (*Fictions* 10), Taylor (80) and Lifson (254) also find that though McCarthy presents herself as a kind of liar she excuses rather than condemns herself. Adams, too, finds
McCarthy's confessions disingenuous (100-04).

Hardy, on the other hand, notes the book's emphasis on the young McCarthy's role-playing and concludes, as does Gelderman, that McCarthy presents herself in an unflattering light (Hardy 27, 39; Gelderman 207).

19 The play was written after the time period covered by the book, but it is discussed in an interchapter.

20 Adams calls Maybe her "fourth personal narrative" and maintains that the title applies to itself. Quoting Eakin, he observes that the book is "maybe a story, maybe not" (163). For Wagner the book is "only a mock chronicle" in which Hellman relaxes her need for authorial control over her memory ("Lillian Hellman" 285-87). Feibleman classifies it with the three earlier books as Hellman's attempt at a new literary form which would combine "fiction and memory" (148). For Anita Grossman, Maybe is a "quasi-fictional form" to which Hellman retreated after the controversy over Scoundrel Time (304). Estelle Jelinek finds it "less a memoir than a philosophical search for the truth of memory" (210).

21 Abbott calls the Hellman of Maybe "a lost person" (121), Rollyson finds a new "defenselessness" in her tone (531), and Grossman shares my sense that despite the attempt to link her inability to learn the truth about Sarah to metaphysical speculations on the elusiveness of truth, Hellman fails to make Sarah's story seem significant. (304-05)
22 Gelderman also notes this flaw and finds *How I Grew* "a disappointment because McCarthy's usual elegant, lively, taut and witty way with words is in short supply" (346).

Notes to the Conclusion

1 See *The Art of the Novel* (155, 328) and *Strong Opinions* (66).

2 For instance, Nabokov claims to be "indifferent to the convulsions of fame" (*SO* 133), and Hawthorne predicts with equanimity that the "gleam of public favor" he was enjoying at the time of *The Snow Image* would be transitory (5).

In their prefaces, Glasgow and James both speak approvingly of works the public failed to buy and critically of books that were relatively successful. When discussing his most popular work, *Daisy Miller*, James emphasizes the trouble he had placing it, not its eventual success.

3 The phrase is James's in reference to *Guy Domville* (*Letters* 3: 515).
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