



D'Israeli's Peritext: A Preface to Romantic-Period Scholarship

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At the outset of *An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary Character* (1795) Isaac D'Israeli concedes: 'I present the Reader with an imperfect attempt on an important topic'.¹ Displaying the modesty that characterises many eighteenth-century prefacers, as we shall see, he at once disavows the final quality of perhaps his most influential work and yet boldly asserts the intellectual value of the work's subject. At once the writer has denigrated his own claims to authority while the book itself demands to be read. We must engage with the gamesmanship evident in such seemingly artless prefaces by D'Israeli and others, as I wish to argue here, so that we might gauge the self-fashioning of popular scholarship in the Romantic period more fully. My purpose here is to say more about the rhetorical impact of scholars on their readers in order to offer some formalist remarks on the 'reading nation'.²

Here I shall focus on what, for analytical purposes, I call 'scholarly peritexts', after Gérard Genette's study of the 'paratext'.³ Genette defines the paratext as that which 'enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public' (p. 1). It comprises the 'peritext', namely a co-textual apparatus within the book, and the 'epitext', a 'distanced' element 'located outside the book' that contributes to its reception (p. 5). To judge the popular scholar's reception more fully it would be necessary to take consideration of epitexts, such as book reviews, correspondence, obituaries, and other means by which a reader becomes acquainted with the book in hand. Yet, where such a study of paratexts lends itself most readily to reader-response criticism, for a sense of balanced inquiry it is also important to reconsider what often gets overlooked: the roles of the editor, textual scholar, and exegetical commentator in the moulding of peritextual commentary.⁴ Accordingly I focus here on the writer's prefaces as a constitutive element of his or her scholarly image in order to ground the credentials of the scholarship within a commonly accepted frame of expectations. Or, to frame this process in terms of Genette, the paratext, 'always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial [...] constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction* [...] of a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies)' (p. 2). At the risk of tautology, I work on the assumption that writers actively seek to shape their immediate receptions in their prefatory spaces, whether these spaces are clearly demarcated or otherwise.

Rather than editing, biographical criticism, translation, lectures, or other forms of scholarship in the period, I pay most attention here to literary histories and essay writing. I focus not on scholarly footnotes, endnotes or other such peritextual apparatuses, but more locally on the original (and revised) prefaces in the works of D'Israeli, a lively literary figure who thrived in the 1790s-1840s and whose influence on contemporaries has been recognized again in recent accounts of Romantic-period

scholarship.⁵ Taking a broad approach, I trace within his numerous prefaces an increasingly canny awareness of his role as a modern man of letters, specifically as a popular and anecdotal literary historian within the longer tradition of Johnson and Bayle. Judging by the formal development of the authoritative voice in his prefaces, D'Israeli negotiated responses to his works with ever increasing confidence and verve in response to his popular reception. By 1817, in a revised edition of his *Curiosities of Literature*, he was able to declare that prefaces had become redundant in his works: 'I had no longer anxieties to conceal or promises to perform'.⁶

But where Genette's model assumes that the author and his allies achieve their aims, as might be inferred in the case of D'Israeli's revision, I am more sceptical about the hermeneutics of intention. In D'Israeli's case, especially, such intentionality is destabilised by immovable socio-political and nationalist factors. That is to say, even though D'Israeli outwardly sought to depoliticise his reception by presenting 'gardens of Literature' stripped of an overt political agenda, thereby divorcing literary from political discourses, his task was doomed to failure (p. ix). Somewhat paradoxically, this was because, like many of his contemporaries, he had a vested interest in disinterested scholarship. As Stuart Peterfreund, James Ogden, and others have recently observed, D'Israeli, a Jewish Englishman of Italian and Portuguese heritage, clamoured for acceptance in the English aristocracy of letters.⁷ The largely respectful reception his numerous books received indicates that in many ways he achieved this aim, even if his prefaces convey a protracted attempt to moderate his scholarly image in line with the conservative mainstream.

And so he stands on the threshold, both inside and outside of the English tradition, at once an intimate correspondent of prominent literary people, such as the poet laureate Robert Southey, Byron, Scott, and the circle around the publisher John Murray, and publicly held at a distance by some contemporaries as one of the 'lively foreigners'.⁸ In many ways D'Israeli did indeed conform to an 'outdated model of gentlemanly authorship', in the words of Lucy Newlyn.⁹ But we must attend to the persistence of this form of the gentlemanly style of scholarship into the so-called Romantic period, specifically in D'Israeli's many well-received books and editions, if we are to begin to make sense of the complicated ideological battles of the reading revolution.

The prefacer's art

By way of preface we ought properly to situate D'Israeli within the mainstream history of the scholarly peritext, even if, as Genette himself has indicated, to produce a complete history of the preface would be a thankless task, since its "prehistory" alone would properly entail 'the prefatorial function [...] taken on by the opening lines or pages of the text', such as the invocations of the Muses in the Homeric epics or the 'Proem' to the *Histories* of Herodotus (p. 163).¹⁰ Moreover, the function of a preface as a schematic outline of the book can be expressed in a variety of paratextual forms, not only introductions proper, but also advertisements, publisher's notes, and, most commonly of all before the demise of the patronage system in the eighteenth century, dedications. In the modern period it is unclear when prefaces – which tend to be addressed to readers or a readership more broadly – superseded formal dedications to friends or patrons. In practical terms a dedication can exhibit the rhetoric usually used in a preface just as a preface can be addressed narrowly to a dedicatee. In such a way Kevin Jackson has recently warned against distinguishing between acknowledgments, prefaces, and even introductions, since historically the categories are 'hazier than you might expect'.¹¹

In order to navigate around such difficulties, in this section I am focusing narrowly on the function of preludial (i.e. opening) scholarly peritexts, specifically prefaces to English literary scholarship in the late eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth.¹² In particular I am focusing on works that foreground the figure of the author, which in this period often entailed a confused disavowal of pedantry at the point of emphasising the book's innovative contribution to literary-critical method. In his notable edition of John Milton's *Poems upon Several Occasions* (1785), for example, Thomas Warton confidently publicises his original and extensive textual scholarship and yet apologises for the intrusiveness of his annotations by repeatedly insisting on their aid to understanding: 'The chief purpose of the Notes is to explain our author's allusions [...] to point out his imitations [...] to elucidate his obsolete diction [...] to ascertain his favourite words [...] to shew the peculiarities of his phraseology'.¹³ Such affectation, it should be noted, would have had roots in the classical training of eighteenth-century scholars. In the *Institutio Oratoria*, a prominent classical model in the period used extensively by Hugh Blair among others, Quintilian outlines the usefulness of affected modesty as a means for ingratiating the author to the reader: 'there is nothing better calculated than modesty to win the good-will of the judge'.¹⁴

At the same time, the attendant authority associated with the diligent prefacer was a valuable commodity exploited by authors and booksellers, broadly united in their ungentlemanly zest for bookselling. This suggests that there was an irresolvable tension between self-promotion and gentlemanly modesty in the preface form as a published act, even if attempts were made to overcome it. In *A Compleat Introduction to the Art of Writing Letters* (1758) – a hack work misleadingly attributed to the noted literary giant Samuel Johnson – 'S. Johnson' identifies a recent proliferation of poorly written letters and, at the same time, establishes the strength of his own collection of superlative examples. The ghostly authorial presence of Dr. Johnson is not insignificant here, even if the book is derivative, since Johnson was, and remains, the most prolific prefacer in the language, as the author of *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets* (1779-1781) and a host of jobbing forewords to books he had no inclination to read, such as Richard Rolt's *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* (1756).¹⁵ In order to overcome the tension between the prefacer's diligence and braggadocio, the solution here is to appropriate external authority.

Similarly, in *Essays on Song-Writing* (1772), John Aikin begins with a suggestion that a large number of excellent English songs remained uncollected in an accessible form, and thereby he legitimates his present endeavour as that of a duty to art itself: 'it would be a meritorious piece of service to the cause of poetry'.¹⁶ As a contrast, in the advertisement to *The Elements of Reading* (1791), John Adams places his book in the company of a number of excellent adaptations for children while at the same time identifying a niche for his own pedagogical aid: 'there is not a single book that contains a sufficient variety of easy lessons'.¹⁷ In sum, these examples exhibit common functions of the eighteenth-century scholarly peritext: to contextualise and to justify the book in front of the reader. This was especially important in a society in which many commentators outwardly decried the unprecedented proliferation of poor quality books with Malthusian bombast. Without critically sanctioned guides the new reading nation would not be truly literate. Worse, it would be pseudo-literate.

One solution to the onslaught of printed matter was to advocate specialisation – as announced in condensed and clearly marked paratextual spaces, such as the preface – even if this gestured towards intellectual elitism. 'Pedantry in art, in

learning, in every thing', William Hazlitt argues in 1817, 'is the setting an extraordinary value on that which we can do, and that which we understand best, and which it is our business to do and understand.'¹⁸ 'Where is the harm of this?', he wonders, since,

To possess or even understand all kinds of excellence equally, is impossible; and to pretend to admire that to which we are indifferent, as much as that which is of the greatest use, and which gives the greatest pleasure to us, is not liberality, but affectation. (pp. 40-41)

Whilst himself a master of many intellectual disciplines, Hazlitt, like many men of letters in the Romantic period, sought to find a balance between laborious learning and critical utility in his writing. The 'man of letters', according to Jon Klancher, began to lose his authority in the 1790s, in no small part due to the discrediting of Edmund Burke's 'Political Men of Letters' during the fallout of the French Revolution.¹⁹ And so, broadly speaking, 'the formerly authoritative "man of letters" began to be seen as a slavish creature of the market' (p. 297). But his importance as an evaluative aid to general readers was ever more apparent; without him, they would be lost under a mass of undifferentiated, undigested print.

Focusing narrowly on the prefaces to such books here we can identify a number of instances where a disinterested public utility – pedagogy without the politics – is presented as a focal component in the success of a man of letters in modern society. In his bestselling *Essays, Moral and Literary* (1778), the belletrist Vicesimus Knox, a friend of D'Israeli, offers a common assertion of the pedagogical role of the essay tradition, as well as books more broadly: 'To publish without improving, it may be said, is to multiply the labours of learning without enlarging its use'.²⁰ In the case of the poet and aesthete James Beattie, the preface to his *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (1783) registers the contradictions he faced. At the outset he treats his book as a trifling collection of essays for the amusement of his friends and yet, like Knox, claims it is designed 'to inure young minds to habits of attentive observation; to guard them against the influence of bad principles'.²¹

To place these palpable contradictions of design in a longer critical tradition, we find that the third Earl of Shaftesbury, most notably, attacked 'the *Coquetry* of a modern Author; whose Epistles Dedicatory, Prefaces, and Addresses to the Reader, are so many affected Graces, design'd to draw the Attention from the Subject, towards *Himself*'.²² But, not long after this, we also find the critic Joseph Spence defend the self-promoting prefacer, arguing that 'Prefaces, I think, are the only places in which a Man may be allow'd to talk freely of that worst of subjects, *Himself*: I hope no body will deny one the use of so *awkward a Privilege*; and shall therefore go on without any farther Apologies'.²³ Spence's preface relies on the classical trope of modesty at a remove. Far from hindering him, the awkward privilege legitimates the endeavours of the gentleman-scholar.

Isaac D'Israeli: Towards the new man of letters

With different social and economic pressures exerted on the man of letters in the Romantic period, increasing emphasis was placed on his role in society, usually by himself, especially one as self-aware as Isaac D'Israeli. Not only does D'Israeli's increasingly masterful manipulation of his own prefaces alone necessitate further study as an art in its own right, his attentiveness to the production, function and reception of books affords us a way into an understanding of scholarly peritexts as a constitutive element of literary scholarship as a public discipline in the period. In

particular, D'Israeli wrote a number of short essays on prefaces, dedications, errata, quotations and the like that ought to prove highly pertinent to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century book histories, not only in subject matter but also in terms of his idiosyncratic and often witty approach.

Yet, despite D'Israeli's obsessive attempts at self-definition as a bibliophilic man of letters in his essays as much as his prefaces, his contemporaries struggled to categorise his scholarship. As late as 1834, Allan Cunningham, in his *Biographical and Critical History of the British Literature of the Last Fifty Years*, tentatively defined D'Israeli as an historian, conceding that in doing so 'I know not that I am right'.²⁴ Rather, as Cunningham goes on to suggest, D'Israeli can reasonably be categorised as a conservative literary historian in the tradition of Oxford don Thomas Warton; accordingly Cunningham urges D'Israeli to complete his rumoured history of British literature (p. 242). Moreover, in 1819, *The Monthly Review* outlined D'Israeli's qualities as a popular writer in ambivalent terms: 'He is perhaps rather the literate than the erudite, rather the well-read than the well-schooled man'.²⁵ As James Ogden has demonstrated, D'Israeli did not want to be considered a 'mere compiler' but rather 'a writer of Taste' (p. 21). Although he never completed his grand history of vernacular literature, his collections of curiosities and quarrels typify unconventional if popular forms of such scholarly genres. D'Israeli's approach relied on the anecdotal scholarship most emphatically represented by his sometime publisher John Nichols and Samuel Johnson in England, though formally it had its roots in seventeenth-century France.²⁶ Anecdotal history seemed to be a good compromise between a leisured manner of writing and a thorough grounding in an ever expanding stock of knowledge.

With increasing confidence in his approach, D'Israeli asserted the privilege of outlining the scope of his brand of scholarship in his prefaces while at the same time exhibiting the common stock of rhetorical devices that we have seen so far. In his most popular work, *Curiosities of Literature* (1791), as well as *Calamities of Authors* (1812), and *Miscellanies* (1796), D'Israeli continually affirmed his role as a new man of letters. For him this denoted a belletristic writer removed from the interested realms of politics and religion, even if his Tory agenda often underscored his manner, most notably in his royalist apologetic for James I.²⁷ In dismissing religion and politics from his literary enclave, he nevertheless focused on scholarly genres germane to such interests, such as antiquarianism, 'secret history', and biography – namely disciplines traditionally associated with conservative men from privileged backgrounds.²⁸ Whilst his own attempt to open up the treasures of the academic establishment to the wider reading public – and perhaps, more pointedly, to outsiders like himself – seems commendable, even radical, it glossed over the prejudices and political inflections inherent in scholarship of all kinds, even his own. Above all, it was implicitly an attempt to return to the idealised 'state-within-a-state' of Bayle's Republic of Letters (Klancher, p. 298). Rather, as D'Israeli began to acknowledge, scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had to pay more attention to the whims of an ever wider readership. Even if scholars no longer faced the same kind of financial and personal struggles associated with the patronage system, they faced new ones: they now had to sell books to a public vastly differentiated in its social and political assumptions.

In his article on 'The Man of Letters' in a later and much revised edition of his *Literary Character* (1818), D'Israeli associates the characteristics of a nineteenth-century man of letters with those of a saleable author, though paradoxically he is 'not an author' (*The Literary Character*, p. 295). Instead he occupies 'an intermediate

station between authors and readers; with more curiosity of knowledge and more multiplied tastes' (p. 296). On the one hand, this gestures towards a semblance of equality between readers and writers in modern society. On the other, an implicit boundary between the informed writer and the studious reader is maintained: an author shapes his readers and can even nurture genius. Such an assured assumption is dramatically displayed in D'Israeli's subsequent account of the manner in which he influenced prominent contemporaries, in revisions of his *Literary Character* after 1818. Indeed, it is in the 1818 edition of *Literary Character* that D'Israeli more assuredly positions the new man of letters among 'the most active members of the republic' (p. 295). Where he had earlier distinguished between two types of men of letters – those who enjoy learning for its own sake and those who publish books – in this book he now ridicules gentlemen-scholars who do not disseminate their research and so fail to guide the general reader.

Yet, at the same time, in somewhat embittered terms, the former radical anxiously defends the *litterateur* from the common charge of evading divisive social issues: 'In truth, he knows their miserable beginnings and their certain terminations' (p. 303). At issue here was D'Israeli's increasing wariness of the imposition of politics in the literary realm. April London has identified what might be called a 'conservative iconoclasm' within the essay mode as practiced by D'Israeli from the 1790s onwards, after his rejection of radical political action: 'Resistance to hierarchies of knowledge is a key to this iconoclastic mode, but so too, paradoxically, is a commitment to the preservation of residual values' (p. 358). His apostasy from a thinking radicalism to a conservative scepticism is evident in his elimination of the phrase 'progress of the mind' in the preface to his *Calamities and Quarrels*. This phrase, as London reminds us, 'had come to have radical connotations by the late 1790s' (pp. 361-62). In spite of D'Israeli's vested advocacy of disinterested scholarship at this politically sensitive juncture, political discourse had a subterranean presence in his scholarly peritexts, even in its absence.

Due to the immediate success of his books D'Israeli was very conscious of his legacy, and to that effect he quickly produced a number of retrospectives of his work, largely in response to attacks from those who worked in older intellectual disciplines. In 1838 he produced a small pamphlet, *The Illustrator Illustrated*, in response to the irascible antiquary Bolton Corney. Perhaps due to its brevity, the pamphlet lacks a marked-out preface, but, nonetheless, the first twelve pages take on the orientating function of the preface. Here D'Israeli takes the opportunity to outline the rise of literary history as a sophisticated scholarly discipline before he answers specific queries of his articles for the remainder of his text. Vernacular literature had been 'closed up in the grave and massive volumes of Anthony à Wood', he begins, before Joseph Warton 'opened a richer vein in the mine of MODERN LITERATURE' – even if he did so with a 'fragmentary mind'.²⁹ His brother, Thomas Warton, also failed to overcome 'barren antiquarianism; and was lost to us'. Dr. Johnson, next, 'was a famished man for anecdotal literature', and was successful in advancing our studies along the path of anecdotal literary history. After further consideration of some largely unsuccessful predecessors in this field, in the view of D'Israeli, the author then turns to his own project, a youthful work published as *Curiosities*: 'By the preface of the third edition, I seem to have dreamed on a magnificent scheme' (p. 4). And herein he developed as a literary historian in the public eye, constantly expanding his materials (and paratexts) and making corrections. By his 1817 edition he decided that a preface was unnecessary since 'I had no longer anxieties to conceal or promises to perform' (*Curiosities*, 1817, I, p. 5). At this point he no longer had to hide behind the

mock-incredulity of the Shaftesburyan prefacer or the affected modesty evident in others. He was a prefacer in his own right.

By contrast, in the preface to the 1791 version of *Curiosities of Literature*, the anonymous D'Israeli meekly positions himself ('the editor') as an arbitrator between dusty *ana* – 'the valuable stores of Literature' – and the restless modern reader (p. v). Expressing the practiced modesty of the prefacer, D'Israeli asserts that this book 'pretends to no other merit, than that of being a laborious selection'. But, in order to mitigate the pedantry associated with the mouldy annals, the author insists that in this book he will introduce anecdotes that, in his opinion, are both 'amusive and curious' (ibid.). D'Israeli places his book in the popular tradition of published conversation – or 'table talk' – and yet, observing that such books were routinely treated as hack work rather than works of literature, he prudently insists that his own book will evince the evaluative and informed opinion of the new man of letters. The very opening of the preface to what would become his *magnum opus*, then, strangely commingles the audacity of this aspiring literary man with the traditional trepidation of the prefacer. In focusing on entertainment (the 'amusive') he does not express the same sort of anxious focus on utility as witnessed in Knox and Beattie, but nonetheless in the preface he seeks to condition the reader's favourable response to this work. At the same time, since, by definition, *ana* 'form a body of Literature not universally known', this focus on the 'curious' demands the mediating presence of an authoritative figure like D'Israeli (ibid.). He is by definition a useful servant to the reader even if he cannot be an independent observer.

Having placed himself in the dubious tradition of mere compilers, in this preface D'Israeli at once establishes the merits of this genre and of the author in such a cause: 'Had such Repositories of Literature been judiciously formed, they would, have proved a valuable acquisition to the Republic of Letters' (p. vii). Such compilers had been too slavish to the scholars from whom they excerpted their materials, 'as the credulous Enthusiast did in ancient times to the Oracle he worshipped'. Dismissing the superstitious ancients, D'Israeli will instead – as he claims he does in this book – adapt the sentiments of modern treatises to the short essay form: 'I have been prompted towards its publication [*sic*], by a conviction that it will furnish much useful information to the generality of readers' (p. viii). Having stressed the usefulness of his book, D'Israeli dissociates such works of literature from the 'fashionable and commercial world[s]'. 'To the literary labourer they leave the cultivation of the fields and the gardens of Literature: they are willing to purchase the productions of his talents; but they expect to receive only the fruits and the flowers' (p. ix). This value-laden beautification went beyond the scholastic compilations of *sententiae*, vividly described by William St Clair as 'ancient well-tested wisdom which could counter the poison to be found in modern romance, songs, and plays' (p. 71). To meet a modern demand for a discriminatory selection of the 'best' literary works, 'the present Collection will not be found unuseful', D'Israeli continues (p. ix). This conjunction of beauty and utility places *Curiosities* in the popular company of commonplace books and miscellanies.

Yet, what distinguishes D'Israeli's from these collections – which were often printed or copied anonymously or collectively – is his own preponderant focus on his discrete identity as a modern 'man of letters', an authoritative voice who judges and selects rather than collates and compiles. D'Israeli continually reiterates throughout the preface to his *Curiosities* that he has collected the works of others but, in order to distinguish himself, he accentuates the unique care and labour he has undertaken. He deflates the reader's investment in the authorial presence inherent in the anecdotes

since, on the assumption that ‘the useful and the agreeable be found blended’ sufficiently, the ‘Public care little whether the Author has written every sentence himself’ (*Curiosities*, 1791, p. x). He at once affirms his role as a qualified man of letters and yet denigrates the authorial presence; or, more accurately, he tacitly appropriates the materials on display. He ends the preface with a well-placed reminder of the ‘humble pretension’ of this collection: ‘To be useful, and to please the Public’ (p. xi). This he achieved through his anecdotal style, by condensing knowledge into manageable pieces in an age of unmanageable excess.

The importance of the original preface in this book is indicated by its continual if awkward appearance in subsequent editions of *Curiosities*, even when preceded by a new preface. As well as existing in a new form, the 1794 edition, then, contains within it the peritextual kernel of the original 1791 version of the book. Not only does the new book provide the reader – contemporary and modern alike – access to the superseded version of itself, it enforces a contrast between the two versions. The old preface remains as a relic, itself part of the *ana* that D’Israeli seeks to compile in his grand history of modern English scholarship. In the fourth edition of his *Curiosities* (1794), D’Israeli comments upon the favourable reception of his book, to which he now lends his name at the end of the preface. He suggests that it is becoming of an author to improve the book. In this preface he foregrounds the corrective role of the author-scholar, a task in which he is assisted by a note on emendations before the preface. Even at this early stage we can see in his peritexts an emboldening of D’Israeli’s authorial relationship with his work.

Offering more than a routine advertisement of the corrections and expansions in evidence, D’Israeli uses this new preface to clarify how he intends his book to be read: ‘The plan which I have projected appears to be valuable; yet, perhaps, the design has been but rarely understood’.³⁰ The book as a whole, he contends, illustrates ‘a series of observations on human life, by a multiplicity of examples’ (pp. v-vi). This is itself a gesture towards a common discourse in the period, the relation of the parts to the whole. Such unity had not been prescribed in the original preface and it is unclear whether this had been the design all along or whether it is an innovation here but, in terms of the authorial expression of the prefaces taken together, this new preface evinces an authoritative re-assertion of his original intention. His humanist focus is compounded by an anecdotal reference to Montesquieu who, so D’Israeli argues, ought not to ‘so much make us *read*, as make us *think*’ (p.vi). The anecdotalism of the essays has bled into the prefatory outline. In this case it affords him the opportunity to make a comment on the leisurely reading practices of the modern day, in contrast to the more intensive practices immanent in Montesquieu’s worldview.

That said, D’Israeli defines more clearly the scope of the *Curiosities* here, briefly listing the different essays in their group arrangements. The HISTORICAL SECTION, as an example, comprises material on the tyranny and glory of powerful historical figures. In addition to this more overt sketch of the design of his book, he unabashedly asserts his quality above the mere compilers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, albeit surreptitiously, under the guise of the modest prefacer. Fastidious and ‘half-literate’ minds, he asserts, ‘are incapable of discriminating betwixt a heavy, undiscerning, and tasteless transcriber; and an elegant, reflecting, and spirited compiler’ (pp. ix-x). For every dull compiler like Viner, there is a Sir William Blackstone, who, ‘treading the same arid ground, knew the art of rearing on it many a beautiful flower’. ‘Inferior as my abilities are’, turning to his own case, D’Israeli adds that the ‘present edition solicits attention by very essential and copious improvements’

(pp. x-xi). Found here in the rhetorical flowers of the best of the older models, the new man of letters weeds out his errors on the public stage of scholarship.

Although not without precedent, the second volume of the 1794 edition has a further preface. It opens in a similar manner to the preface of the first volume: 'The encouragement I have received, has been a powerful motive to excite me to new exertions of industry' (*Curiosities*, 1794, II, p. iii). He takes the opportunity to outline the corrections he has made and emphasises the complete overhaul of his article on 'Entertaining Preachers'. He again uses the new preface to clarify the intentions behind his book: to educate those readers who, through idleness or preoccupation, had been unable to acquire an adequate store of learning, rather than learned (or completely ignorant) readers. Similarly, volume two of *Curiosities* (1793) has: 'I would produce *coin* for general use, rather than strike *medals* for the mere virtuoso; yet the Volume will not, I hope, be found destitute of matter interesting to the curious'.³¹ With the coin-in-circulation displacing the medal-in-a-cabinet, D'Israeli metaphorically embraces the economic forces of the literary marketplace and shuns the cloistered mysteries of unpublished academia. In so doing he was making a more public gesture than the innumerable readers who collected albums or commonplace books, which were produced for private consumption and circulated only to an extent.

This audacity aside, at around this time he produced his *Dissertation on Anecdotes* (1793), which has a discussion on 'The art of preface-writing' in the preface. This is described as 'the art of concealing the anxiety of an author'.³² 'There are some works which require nor preface nor anxiety', he continues, 'the present trifle merits neither; yet I cannot refrain from bestowing on it a little of both' (p. iii). James Ogden sees through the practiced modesty of the prefacer here since, 'with a touch of self-glorification', D'Israeli states that an anecdotal writer must 'possess a portion of that genius he records' (p. 27). D'Israeli's appropriation of the authority inherent in the subjects he compiles had long been his practice, and here he is theorising it more overtly. This type of literary historian shapes his material according to his self-accredited standards of taste. But D'Israeli wishes to make it known to readers that such a scholar, however assured, feels anxious about the response of his readers and, in order to face this head on, must take recourse to a scholarly peritext in order to define himself as clearly as possible.

Similarly, in a letter to his good friend Francis Douce the antiquary, D'Israeli outlines two contrasting types of readers he hoped to satisfy with his 'light amusing way of writing': the 'matter of fact Reader' and the 'Man of Taste'. Where the former 'is gratified with acquiring information', the latter 'feels a more exquisite pleasure in the Reflections and the Style'.³³ Impelled to curtail charges of sciolistic scholarship from antiquaries, however, D'Israeli gives a calculated anecdote about himself in *The Illustrator Illustrated* (1838):

I passed two years in agreeable researches at the British Museum, which then (1790) was so rare a circumstance, that it had been difficult to have made up a jury of all the spirits of study which haunted the reading-room [...] There we were, little attended to, musing in silence and oblivion; for sometimes we had to wait a day or two till the volumes, so eagerly demanded, slowly appeared (p. 5).

Ensnared in the pseudo-public space, the enthusiastic bibliophile reads, silently and alone, in disengaged abandon amongst the untouched manuscripts and *ana*. At once he establishes his credentials as an accredited scholar and moves beyond such scholastic confines in the act of writing for his readers. One might say he did not write for scholar-ghosts.

D'Israeli's self-consciousness as a public literary man is particularly strong in his playful *Miscellanies; or, literary recreations* (1796). Here he ponders whether his present book 'might be permitted to appear, without the accustomed ornament of a Preface; for what are MISCELLANIES, but a kind of Prefaces? [*sic*]'. Crucially he equates the body of the text with paratext here, and thereby gives the same status to them. But he does so on his own terms. Like prefaces, he continues, miscellanies 'are frequently more pleasing, than the completer works'.³⁴ Indeed, he uses the 'redundant' preface instead not as a perfunctory outline of the book, but rather as an essay, one that critiques the merits of periodical criticism. Moreover, he actually has an essay 'On Prefaces' later in the *Miscellanies*. In this piece he outlines the importance of prefaces, not simply in a functional, scholarly sense but also as beauties in their own right. And he does so in terms of the faculties of taste. No 'literary morsel' is more 'delicious'; 'it is the odour of the authors roses [*sic*]'. 'I agree with the Italians', he adds, 'who call these pieces, *La salsa del Libro*; the sauce of the book' (p. 77). For all his creative verve his imagery is intriguingly vague here, since it suggests that the preface may be the insoluble essence of the book or it may be a discrete and excisable accompaniment. Or, again, it may denote both stability and fluidity, itself spilling over into the different elements of the text. In terms of Genette's paratext, the preface exists on the threshold of the book. Or, more accurately, in terms of D'Israeli's identity formation, it exists on the threshold of his outsider's Englishness.

D'Israeli then proceeds to quote from exemplary (and therefore critically sanctioned) prefaces by Montesquieu and Spence in order to undercut attacks on the literary merits of prefaces. At the same time, he confronts head-on the potential for dishonesty in a scholarly peritext: 'a Prefacer is generally a most accomplished liar' (p. 79). In this way D'Israeli distances himself from such practitioners as the fifteenth-century Italian printer Aldus Manutius. Not without hypocrisy, D'Israeli also critiques the insincerity of prefacers who decry their own successes and who insist on the humbleness of their productions, adding that 'an affected haughtiness and an affected humility are alike despicable' (pp. 82-84). Warburton is roundly criticised for his 'pompous' edition of Shakespeare, but nonetheless D'Israeli is at pains to establish that this is not merely a modern affliction. Albinus, for instance, in the preface to his Roman History, entreats pardon for his numerous errors, which occurred as he had written in Greek rather than in his native tongue. Cato, according to the anecdote, rails at Albinus for this. Nonetheless, for D'Israeli the best prefaces are modern ones, specifically those by John Dryden, one of the earliest literary critics in the modern sense.³⁵ Dryden, as quoted here, offered a precursor to D'Israeli's take on the 'art' of preface-writing, the art of 'rambling'. And yet this is not quite appropriate anymore, D'Israeli suggests, for the new man of letters in England – a writer of populist literary history for a wider readership (*Miscellanies*, pp. 93-94). In terms of a history of prefaces, Dryden is singled out as a national master, but D'Israeli is professedly concerned with the present and quickly moves on. Prefaces in the present must be more clearly defined so that, amid the proliferation of unsanctioned books, the reader can understand the author's intentions fully and without equivocation.

The essay 'On Prefaces' is, it must be noted, an altered version of an expanded item on the preface that appeared in the third edition of *Curiosities*. In the original *Curiosities* (1791) a short remark entitled 'Prefaces' opens with a suitably Genettian description of the preface as the 'porch, or the entrance, to a book' and, accordingly, D'Israeli stresses that it must be beautifully ornate. Nevertheless, he suggests, 'Our fair ladies' tend to skip over the prefaces, which they consider 'as so many pages lost'

in their favourite novels (*Curiosities*, 1791, p. 45). D'Israeli, by contrast, finds that they give amusement for a page or two, 'though they become insufferable throughout a whole volume' (p. 46). And here the piece ends, heeding its own advice. As a scholar D'Israeli is playing with the idea of a prelude paratext here. He has inserted a kind of neo-preface or delayed preface that draws attention to the inevitable artfulness of the prefatory materials. Far from being dull scholarship or self-indulgent whimsy, it can bear witness to the humour of scholarship, on the assumption that the virtue of brevity is practiced. This, for D'Israeli, is a masculine quality found in scholarship divorced from feminine literature (the novel). This gender distinction is made at the commonplace level of genre but stylistically D'Israeli has defined the paratext in his own terms, as the preserve of male authority and reason.

In his expanded version of this essay in the 1793 and 1794 editions of *Curiosities*, D'Israeli tacks on further anecdotal remarks. He extends further the idea that prefaces, like anecdotes more broadly, can be a masculine art form in their own right and often 'superior' to the work proper: 'A good Preface is as essential to put the reader into good humour, as a good Prologue is to a Play, to soothe the auditors into candour, and even into partiality' (*Curiosities*, 1794, I, p. 88). Moreover, his remark that Italians treat the preface as the 'sauce of the book' first appears in the 1794 edition, part of his new emphasis on the gustative qualities of reading in an age of excess. With the expanded entry 'On Prefaces' in the *Miscellanies* we can see that D'Israeli's developing interest in theorising the artfulness of the preface is taking shape. Like the prologue of a play, he figures it here as an essential part of the book, and one that demands reading, even if only by robust and manly readers.

In the 1810s we can see the usefulness of the scholarly peritext in modifying D'Israeli's outward intentions and his unique contribution to the English tradition. He uses the preface to the first volume of his *Quarrels of Authors* (1814) to defend his recent collection *Calamities of Authors* (1812), a book that D'Israeli had presented as a timely study, and cautionary tale, of the thankless labours of a literary life: 'It has been alledged [*sic*], that in giving "Calamities of Authors", I have not balanced them by their enjoyments, and therefore my view is unphilosophical'.³⁶ The author deflates this criticism – criticism that he does not cite or even paraphrase – by placing it in the context of his large corpus of belletristic criticism. Displaying the characteristic faux-modesty of the prefacer, he references his 'puerile Essay' on the *Literary Character* precisely at the same moment in which he insists that his life's work is devoted to 'an extended view of "The Literary Character"'.³⁶

Moreover, to his mind, he places his work in prestigious company – a French work entitled *Querelles Littéraires* and 'a passage in the great Lord Bacon' – and then, somewhat disingenuously, he claims that he cannot remember if he was influenced by the *Querelles* or whether Bacon 'might have afforded the hint' (pp. iv-v). He even states that 'From the French Work I could derive no aid; and my plan is my own' (p. v). Labouring under such haziness, he affirms the originality and merit of his own work while at the same time placing himself in an established intellectual tradition.

In this preface D'Israeli goes on to define the influences that have most strongly shaped his approach to national literary history. 'The Philosophy of Literary History was indeed the creation of Bayle [...]. He ennobled a collection of facts, by his reasonings, and exhibited them with the most miscellaneous illustrations' (pp. vi-vii). Johnson, too, has proved an admirable model of the man of letters as an affable transmitter of dusty *ana*. Indeed, in order to illustrate this successful combination of taste and curiosity, D'Israeli uses Dr. Birch as a tasteless failure by contrast: Birch

possessed ‘the most ample knowledge [...] but his touch was mortal to Genius!’ (pp. vii-viii).

Turning to a discussion of his own methods in the preface, D’Israeli explains that ‘I have freely enlarged in my *Notes*; a practice objectionable to many, but indispensable perhaps in *Literary History*’. Cumberland, he observes, never used notes, preferring to give all the information necessary in the body of his writing. This, indeed, was standard practice among the ancients, but modern writers, as D’Israeli has it, have discovered their use in promulgating ‘all the usefulness and the pleasure’ of knowledge (p. xi). In this preface, then, D’Israeli outlines the most amiable methods of modern scholarly peritexts, as exemplified by Johnson, John Nichols, and a number of seventeenth-century French scholars. However, at the same time he reminds the reader of the innovativeness of his anecdotal approach to literary quarrels, which may or may not be derived from other sources but is nonetheless fortified by the most worthy of scholars.

Another important preface in terms of the author’s coyly revisionist stratagems occurs in the 1828 edition of *The Literary Character*, which opens with a dedication to the poet laureate (and fellow former radical) Robert Southey. Much abused by Byron, among others, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Southey was nonetheless long established as a model of the modern literary man. Indeed, in his journal for 22 November 1813, Byron himself noted that ‘he is the only existing entire man of letters’, one whose ‘prose is perfect’. For Paul Magnuson, among others, it was the emergence of Southey’s toadying laureate poetry that led to Byron’s vastly altered mood: ‘I am sure Southey loves nobody but himself [...] I hate these talkers one and all, body and soul’ (Byron).³⁷

Naively attempting to extricate politics and religion from the situation, D’Israeli uses his preface as an opportunity to define further his ideal of the new man of letters as a disinterested genius. He classes Southey with an eminent group of academics – ‘the JOHNSONS and the WARTONS, the GIBBONS and the HUMES’; ‘With these it will be your fate to be classed, when the passions and the party of the day are forgotten – when the age can afford to do justice to you’.³⁸ This apolitical ideal of scholarship frames the preface in the noticeable absence of any acknowledgement of the politicised feud between the libertine poet and the poet laureate, even though Byron is as prominent a subject in the preface as Southey. Emptied of overt political judgment, the introduction of Byron into the book history of *Literary Character* is carefully placed in an account of the enduring popularity of D’Israeli’s text. After his insistence that ‘I have returned for the fourth time to a subject which has occupied my inquiries from early life, with feelings not less delightful, and an enthusiasm not greatly diminished’, D’Israeli proceeds to give a potted history of his own edition, reminding us that thirty-three years have elapsed since it was first published (p. xi). ‘The crude production’, he continues, was ‘not ill received’ and demand for his text was high (pp. xvi-xvii). The book, so he claims, moulded several leading literary figures, most notably ‘the great poetical genius of our times’ – Byron.

In this preface D’Israeli recalls how, in the 1818 preface to *Literary Character*, he had first made use of Byron’s private endorsement of his writings as proof of its public utility as an aid to literary genius. In 1822, so D’Israeli continues to remind us, he published an expanded edition with notes by the poet included. Here the other scholarly peritexts further substantiate the claims made in the increasingly assured preface. In the present edition (1828) D’Israeli provides a long letter from Byron, in which the poet apologises for his juvenile commentary, that is, notes

privately made in the margins of his copy of the book. Moved onto the public stage, the poet performs the literary mannerisms of the Byronic hero outlined by D'Israeli in his sketch of him as an unsettled and unruly daemon. In this new preface D'Israeli gleefully regales the reader with his firsthand observations of the changes in Byron's character. More knowledgeable and less misanthropic, this most talented poet had vastly improved, even if he had not achieved his full potential, before his recent death in 1824. Instead D'Israeli considers his fellow Tory doyen, Robert Southey, to be 'the most perfect specimen of the literary character in England', something he unconvincingly claims Byron would have also conceded, in spite of his quarrels with the poet laureate (p. xxxviii). For D'Israeli – an outsider still – literary excellence prevails above all, political and religious differences notwithstanding. But this was unavoidably a politicised manoeuvre that marked out the failings of the excessive genius for those who still prioritised Enlightenment order and rationality, as D'Israeli did. Not only does the *litterateur* shape contemporary writers, he or she can subsequently dictate their standing in the aristocracy of letters.

Indeed, D'Israeli is compelled to discuss his own claims to genius, admitting that he sought fame and reminding the reader of the great satisfaction taken in his books by readers of all classes and political orientations (p. xl). In the modern world of letters, this book, and by extension the author, has proved indispensable. Outwardly this is a bold update of the 1818 and 1822 prefaces, in which D'Israeli insisted that, just as a physician ought not to undertake the same treatment as his patient, so the author of a work on men of genius need not necessarily be a man of genius. 'My heroes are men of genius, but I am only their historian', he mock-modestly insists.³⁹

Furthermore, *A Second Series of Curiosities of Literature* (1823) contains a brief and seemingly defeatist preface: 'The form of essay-writing, were it now moulded even by the hand of the Raphael of Essayists, would fail in the attraction of novelty'.⁴⁰ Yet, there is an outward show of job satisfaction evident here insofar as he has helped to enlarge the knowledge of the wider reading public: 'The progress of the human mind has been marked by the enlargement of our knowledge; and essay-writing seems to have closed with the century which it charmed and enlightened.' And so, as a substitute for essay writing, he offers 'occasional recurrence to speculations on human affairs, as they appear in private and in public history, and to other curious inquiries in literature and philosophy' (p. iv). How this substitute precisely differs from essay writing is unclear, although he does now place more emphasis on the discovery of new learning and avenues of research. To D'Israeli's mind the man of letters is no longer merely a compiler of old stores of anecdotes, or a teacher of the newly literate masses, but rather a self-validating discoverer of knowledge. For D'Israeli the short essay form, like the well-wrought preface, represented the most appropriate way to transmit learning to an impatient readership beset by the ceaseless proliferation of books of varying quality.

This restless reaching after new and accessible forms of knowledge is evidenced in the preface to perhaps his most ambitious work, *Amenities of Literature* (1841). After such a long career, this was intended to be his uniquely learned yet entertaining history of English literature – as the title indicates – even if in its published state it is subtitled with the more pedestrian 'Sketches and Characters of English literature'.

It was my design not to furnish an arid narrative of books or of authors, but following the steps of the human mind through the wide track of Time, to trace from their beginnings the rise, the progress, and the decline of public opinions,

and to illustrate, as the objects presented themselves, the great incidents in our national annals.⁴¹

By now almost blind, as he twice reminds readers in his preface, the tireless D'Israeli still reaches after his task. His methods and his self-definition came into clearer view over his long writing career from the 1790s to the 1840s, but his expressed aim remained the same: to make the Franco-English tradition of anecdotal writing accessible to the reading public. As has been well documented, a diverse group of younger "romantic" prose stylists and periodicalists, such as William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and Thomas De Quincey, shaped the marked new changes in popular scholarship amid the expansion of print culture at the end of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, a period generally linked with reactionaries and revolutionaries.⁴² But old-fashioned *litterateurs* such as D'Israeli continued to make their own voices heard. 'We have become a reading, and of course a critical nation', asserts D'Israeli in the 1795 version of *Literary Character* (p. 167). 'A refined writer is now certain of finding readers who can comprehend him': a fine if naïve sentiment, but not one he upheld in his conception of his readership. To be sure, he was fully aware that the successful scholar had to negotiate responses to his or her works. One way, long practiced by authors, was to embolden scholarly peritexts, such as the preface, advertisements, notes, and the like. Entrenched in this longer tradition, the outdated D'Israeli initially employed the rhetoric of the humble prefacer but, in seizing on the need to theorise the 'art' of preface-writing more overtly, finally succumbed to the practices of the new man of letters. In order to guide readers one must first define oneself as an author. And one must do it boldly and without too much show.

Endnotes

¹ Isaac D'Israeli, *An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary Character* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1795), p. iii.

² This phrase is borrowed from William St Clair's seminal study, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Here I have also been influenced by Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Meditation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

³ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.

⁴ For thoughtful essays on the peritext and fiction see Mikko Keskinen, 'Reading on the Threshold: Gérard Genette's Peritexts as Interpretive Commentary', in *Reading Reading: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Reading*, ed. by Andrew Bennett (Tampere: University of Tampere, 1993), pp. 159-182 and Marie Maclean, 'Pretexts and Paratexts: The Art of the Peripheral', *New Literary History*, 22:2 (1991), 273-279.

⁵ Philip Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain', *Representations*, 71 (2000), 24-47; April London, 'Isaac D'Israeli and Literary History: Opinion, Anecdote, and Secret History in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Poetics Today*, 26:3 (2005), 351-386; Ina Ferris, 'Antiquarian Authorship: D'Israeli's Miscellany of Literary Curiosity and the Question of Secondary Genres', *Studies in Romanticism*, 45:4 (2006), 523-42. See also James Ogden, *Isaac D'Israeli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

⁶ Isaac D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, 3 vols (London: J. Murray, 1817), I, p. 5. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.

⁷ Stuart Peterfreund, 'Identity, Diaspora, and the Secular Voice in the Works of Isaac D'Israeli', in *The Jews and British Romanticism: Politics, Religion, Culture*, ed. by Sheila A. Spector (New York:

Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 127-147. See also Marvin Spevack, 'D'Israeli & Disraeli and *The Genius of Judaism*', *Aschkenas*, 15:1 (2005), 135-149.

⁸ For further information see C. L. Cline, 'The Correspondence of Robert Southey and Isaac D'Israeli', *Review of English Studies*, 17:65 (1941), 65-79. For remarks on 'lively foreigners' see Ogden, p. 207.

⁹ See Newlyn, p. 27. Newlyn also suggests that D'Israeli might be the basis of Hazlitt's caricature of privileged dilettantism in his 'On the Aristocracy of Letters'.

¹⁰ See also Kevin Jackson, *Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities* (London: Picador, 1999), pp. 104-123.

¹¹ Kevin Jackson, p. 106. See also Genette, p. 212.

¹² For a formalist account of the function of prefaces in major Romantic-period works see Mary Catherine Herrington-Perry, 'The Romantic Era Literary Preface' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Indiana University, 2001).

¹³ John Milton, *Poems upon Several Occasions*, ed. by Thomas Warton (London: James Dodsley, 1785), p. xix. See Marcus Walsh, 'Literary Scholarship and the Life of Editing', in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. by Isabel Rivers (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2001), pp. 191-215.

¹⁴ Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. by H. E. Butler (London: W. Heinemann, 1921-1922), XI.3.161. For the influence of Latin exordium (the introduction to an oration) and Greek proemion – associated most closely with Cicero, Quintilian, and Aristotle – on eighteenth-century prefacers see Jeanine Hurley, 'Authoring Audiences: Rhetorical Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Prefaces' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 2003), pp. 11ff. See also Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London and Edinburgh: W. Strahan et al., 1783), passim.

¹⁵ See Kevin Jackson, pp. 119-123.

¹⁶ John Aikin, *Essays on Song-Writing: with a collection of such English songs as are most eminent for poetical merit. To which are added, some original pieces* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1772), p. iv.

¹⁷ John Adams, *The Elements of Reading: being select and easy English lessons, for young readers of both sexes: designed as a sequel to the spelling-book* (London: B. Law and Son, 1791), advertisement.

¹⁸ William Hazlitt, 'The Same Subject Continued', in *The Round Table: A Collection of Essays on Literature, Men and Manners*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: Archibald Constable and Co. et al., 1817), II, pp. 36-45. This follows an essay entitled 'On Pedantry'.

¹⁹ Jon Klancher, 'The vocation of criticism and the crisis of the republic of letters', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism; Volume 5: Romanticism*, ed. by Marshall Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 196-320. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.

²⁰ Vicesimus Knox, *Essays, Moral and Literary*, 2 vols (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1778-1779), I, p. iv.

²¹ James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1783), p. x.

²² Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Treatise III: Soliloquy: or Advice to an Author', in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols (London: John Darby, 1711), I, p. 200.

²³ Joseph Spence, *An Essay On Pope's Odyssey: In which Some particular Beauties and Blemishes of that Work are consider'd* (London: James and J. Knapton et al., 1726-1727), preface.

²⁴ Allan Cunningham, *Biographical and Critical History of the British Literature of the Last Fifty Years* (Paris: Baudry's Foreign Library, 1834), p. 241. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.

²⁵ *The Monthly Review* (1819), p. 77.

²⁶ For D'Israeli's realignment of genres of historical writing see London (*op. cit.*), and Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 167-168. John Sutherland has produced his own modern anthology of literary oddities: *Curiosities of Literature*, with illustrations by Martin Rowson (London: Random House Books, 2008).

²⁷ Isaac D'Israeli, *An Inquiry into the Literary and Political Character of James the First* (London: John Murray, 1816). Subsequent references will be given in parentheses. See London, pp. 376-383.

²⁸ For more on the intellectual background of antiquarianism in the period see Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004) and Marilyn Butler, 'Antiquarianism (Popular)', *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 328-338.

²⁹ Isaac D'Israeli, *The Illustrator Illustrated* (London: Edward Moxon, 1838), p. 3. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.

- ³⁰ Isaac D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, 2 vols (London: H. Murray, 1794), I, p. v. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
- ³¹ Isaac D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, 2 vols (London: J. Murray, 1793), II, p. i. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
- ³² Isaac D'Israeli, *A Dissertation on Anecdotes* (London: C. and G. Kearsley, and J. Murray, 1793), p. iii. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
- ³³ Bodleian library, MS Douce d 33, fols 7-8. See Ogden, p. 36.
- ³⁴ Isaac D'Israeli, *Miscellanies; or, literary recreations* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1796), p. v. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
- ³⁵ For the importance of Dryden's critical prefaces see Lawrence Lipking, 'Literary criticism and the rise of national literary history', in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780*, ed. by John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 471-497.
- ³⁶ Isaac D'Israeli, *Quarrels of Authors; or, some memoirs of our literary history*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1814), I, p. iv. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
- ³⁷ Quoted in Paul Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 134.
- ³⁸ Isaac D'Israeli, *The Literary Character*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), I, p. x. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
- ³⁹ Isaac D'Israeli, *The Literary Character*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1822), I, p. vii.
- ⁴⁰ Isaac D'Israeli, *A Second Series of Curiosities of Literature* (London: J. Murray, 1823), p. iii. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
- ⁴¹ Isaac D'Israeli, *Amenities of Literature*, 3 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1841), I, p. v.
- ⁴² See Annette Wheeler Cafarelli, *Prose in the Age of Poets: Romanticism and Biographical Narrative from Johnson to De Quincey* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

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Preface to transgression. 33. Undoubtedly it is excess that discovers that sexuality and the death of God are bound to the same experience; or that again shows us, as if in "the most incongruous book of all," that "God is a ~ h o r e . "And from this perspective the thought that relates to God and the thought that relates to sexuality are linked in a.Â Preface to transgression. 37. an experience that has the power "to implicate (and to question) everything without possible respite"¹⁵ and to indicate, in the place where it occurs and in its most essential form, "the. The Romantic period is the most fruitful period in the history of English literature. The revolt against the Classical school which had been started by writers like Chatterton, Collins, Gray, Burne, Cowper etc. reached its climax during this period, and some of the greatest and most popular English poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley andâ€ This period starts from 1798 with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the famous Preface which Wordsworth wrote as a manifesto of the new form of poetry which he and Coleridge introduced in opposition to the poetry of the Classical school. Period of change (cont.) ĩ american & french revolutions were hugely important elements of the political landscape. ĩ threats to existing social struc- ture were being posed by new, revolutionary ideas.Â The spirit of the new poetry in. The preface to lyrical ballads. (1800, 1802). Concept of poetry, the poet.