CHAPTER VII

Prefaces to Plays on Mixed Topics
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Under the heading Plays on Mixed Topics the following plays could be included-

The Admirable Bashville or Constancy Unrewarded, Pygmalion, Buoyant Billions and Farfetched Fables.

The Admirable Bashville or Constancy Unrewarded is the dramatic version of Shaw's fourth novel, Cashel Byron's Profession written in 1882. It is placed in the group of plays called Translations and Tomfooleries by Shaw. The play was written in 1901 and the first half of the short preface appears to be written in 1909 and the second half of the preface was written "after the lapse of thirty years" since the writing of the first half. Shaw says that he has 'poetasted' The Admirable Bashville in the early Elizabethan blank verse. The preface is about the feasibility and practicability of blank verse as the language of the theatre in the twentieth century. In the preface Shaw has tried to analyze the reasons as to why the twentieth century spectators prefer plays written in vernacular English and why they find plays written in blank verse or in non-vernacular style 'incomprehensible bore' (p. 774). Shaw suggests that a revival of Elizabethan literature could be made possible if the system of compulsory teaching of the Bible and Shakespeare is put a stop to and a system of voluntary education is introduced where the plenty of dramatically illustrated Bibles and Shakespeares would be left on the way of the children with the illustrated passages printed under the pictures.
In a brief reference to the theme of the play, Shaw says that he has observed the established laws of stage popularity and probability in the play. He says that he has given 'consistency' to the heroism of Cashel and due honour to Morality and Patriotism in the play. He also says that he has treated the Throne as the 'fountain of social honour' in the play. All these can be said to have been achieved in the last Act of the play where all the characters, namely, the policeman, Lucian, Bashville, Adelaide, besides the hero and the heroine seem to be satisfied with what they get. With regard to Shaw's claim in the preface that he has observed the rules of probability in the play, one could maintain that the air of probability is a bit marred in the third Act where Lucian and Bashville hurriedly reconcile themselves to their lot and Adelaide also promptly accepts the hand of Lord Worthington. Dr Sen Gupta finds the manner of Cashel Byron's encounter with his mother and Lydia's encounter with Lucian, Bashville and Cashel's mother and the policeman in the third act 'unnatural' and awkward. The only positive quality in Cashel Byron appears to be his physical prowess which he displays as a prize-fighter. Lydia considers him a 'sylvan god' and seems to be in love with her because of his physical qualities. This has reference to Shaw's philosophy of eugenics as expressed in The Revolutionists's Handbook, the sequel to Man and Superman. Cashel Byron's revolt against filial affection and filial duties has reference to what Shaw

saves about the family relations in the preface to Misalliance
called Parents and Children. Bashville's disinterested passion
for his mistress Lydia may be ascribed to Shaw's socialistic
conception of intermarriageability of population as expressed
in the prefaces to Geneva and Farfetched Fables and in the
Revolutionists's Handbook. The preface to The Admirable
Bashville has nothing to say about such thematic matters.

As already said, the preface discusses the practicability
of the use of blank verse as the language of theatre, the reason
being that the play The Admirable Bashville is written in blank
verse. As such, the link could be said to be based on a
discussion of an associated matter.

Pygmalion was written in 1912 and the preface to the play
(dateless) appears to be written in the same year.

The preface to Pygmalion is an essay on the importance of
the study of phonetics. Shaw holds the current English alphabet
responsible for the large scale mispronunciation of words in
daily use. In the preface Shaw advocates reform and enlargement
of the English alphabet so as to cover all the sounds in use.
He refers to different phoneticians and linguists such as
Alexander Melville Bell, Alexander J. Ellis, Tito Pagliardini,
Henry Sweet and Robert Bridges who did notable experiments in
this field.

In the beginning of the preface Shaw declares, "The reformer
we need to-day is an energetic phonetic enthusiast; that is why

1 - The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw, p. 884.
2 - Ibid, p. 897.
I have made such a one the hero of a popular play." (p. 807).
Shaw announces that his purpose in writing the play is to make people realise that "there are such people as phoneticians and they are among the most important people in England" (p. 809).
Shaw declares in the preface that the portrait of Henry Higgins has not been modelled on anybody in particular, but he admits that "there are touches of Sweet in the play" and Higgins may owe his "Miltonic sympathies" to Robert Bridges (pp. 808-9).
In conformity with the theme of the preface, the play centres round a giant phonetician who is also the hero of the play.
Henry Higgins is a dedicated phonetician to whom phonetics is the whole time occupation and his whole world. He is such a thorough-bred phonetician that he can locate the birthplace of any person from hearing his or her speech. He knows one hundred and thirty two vowel sounds. He is a genius for whom intellectual joy is more important than sexual joy. He remains a confirmed bachelor because the intellectual standard that his mother has set for him is not seen in any other woman. He regards Eliza as a working robot and does not care for her emotions and feelings. He is only interested in his experiment, his language and his phonetics. In the climacteric situation that arises in the house of Mrs Higgins after Eliza's flight from Higgins's house, Higgins remains as phonetics-minded as before. When Higgins suggests that Eliza could marry Colonel Pickering if she likes, Eliza reacts sharply, but Higgins's obsession with phonetics and language remains unaffected.
Higgins. Not a bit. I'll adopt you as my daughter and settle money on you if you like. Or would you rather marry Pickering?

Liza (looking fiercely round at him). I wouldn't marry you if you asked me; and yours nearer my age than what he is.

Higgins (gently) Than he is: not "than what he is"

(Act V, p. 749)

When Eliza says that she would offer herself as an assistant to the Hungarian quack, phonetician, Nepommuck, Higgins loses his temper and warns her against any inefficient meddling with his methods. He is so much taken up with his subject that he cannot live without some loss or harm if somebody does not look after him. Mrs Pearce accuses Higgins of coming down to breakfast in his dressing gown, using napkin in all cases, eating everything off the same plate and putting porridge saucepan on the clean tablecloth in his absent-mindedness. Higgins's request to Eliza towards the end of the play to buy a pair of gloves and tie for him and Eliza's pert reply in this connection pointing to his forgetfulness only show how fatally absorbed Higgins is in his subject. Thus, the portrait of Higgins in the play is a complete realisation of Shaw's conception of "phonetic enthusiast" as related in the preface.

In the preface Shaw declares that Pygmalion is a 'didactic' play and accordingly, the theme of the play successfully bears out the didactic purpose of the play. The business of a teacher is creation of minds. A. C. Ward observes that "the problem in Pygmalion is .... like the world problem of education. To educate is to give (or least to offer) new life to those who receive
教育，而且这种新的生活会产生对现状的不满，并且产生对不同世界的愿望。\(^1\) 导论文与Eliza的关系是创造者与创造物之间的关系。它不仅提供了一种新的语言、新的文化，而且还伴随着所有这些，形成了一种新的思想。一种新思想意味着一个新的个性。\(^2\) 因此，在完成语音实验之后，Higgins站在了一个新的平台上，Eliza Dolittle也是如此。即使在这一新平台上，Higgins的教师态度仍然存在，并阻止他产生任何浪漫兴趣，这导致Higgins允许Eliza与Freddy Hill一起去。该预言并未说明关于Clara Rynsford Hill的势利和阿尔弗雷德·多利特尔的“原初道德家”的哲学分析。该预言也未说明剧本的反浪漫结局，教育的功能，以及Higgins教授所呈现的乌托邦社会主义。

在导言的开头，Shaw给读者一个警告，说"Pygmalion"不需要前言，但需要一部剧本，这被"提供在适当的位置"。这个声明禁止读者期望前言与剧本之间有紧密的联系。Eric Bentley发现剧本和前言之间的不一致，并观察到，"Pygmalion"是关于一个人类性格的剧本；而它的前言则是另类的。

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2. Sonja Lorich comments, Pygmalion is "no doubt the most objective and outspoken of Shaw's plays as concerns women's right to have an education and become independent human beings". "The Unwomanly woman" in Shaw's Drama", Fabian Feminist, ed. Rodelle, Weintraub (Pennsylvania, 1977), p. 109.
about phonetics."¹ Robert Rockman also comments that the preface has "little to do with the play".² Shaw accounts for the anti-romantic ending of the play not in the preface, but in the sequel to the play. However, as the preface is about the importance of the study of phonetics, and as the play is about a thorough-bred phonetician, the link between the play and the preface could be said to be quite vital, though it is not complete.

*Buoyant Billions* was written in 1947 and the preface to the play was written in July, 1947, that is, in the same year. The preface speaks about Shaw's reasons for writing the play, the practice of being mediums, the method in which Shaw writes a play, the failure of biological science in explaining certain mystical experiences, and Shaw's own sense of fallibility.

The first act provides a discussion between Junius Smith and his father about the problem of social reform in which the son announces his decision to take to the profession of world-bettering. The preface does not say anything about social reform. In the second Act British respectability and the system of university education have been sharply attacked. The preface to *Buoyant Billions* has not touched upon these problems at all. The Native in the Act speaks of the local God Hoochli who nearly corresponds to the conception of the Life Force. University education has been the subject of severe attack in the preface to *Misalliance* called *Parents and Children*.³ In the third act Darkie complains

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that she has been a "spoilt darling and pampered pet" of the family. Her parents have destroyed her power of initiative by 'overpatting' her. The preface to Buoyant Billions does not deal with the relation between parents and children at all, because Shaw has exhaustively discussed the topic much earlier in the prefaces to Getting Married and Misalliance. In the preface to Misalliance Shaw has inveighed against undue parental interference in the growth of children as each child is an experiment in the hands of the Life Force.¹

A satire on legal profession has been attempted through the character of Solicitor Ferdinand in the play. His views on marriage and university education are outrageously backward and reactionary. He says to Mrs Thirdborn, "Marriage is a legal institution; and God has nothing to do with legal institutions" (Act III, p. 1380). When the Widower opines that "no two marriages are alike", Solicitor Ferdinand says, "Nonsense, All marriages are alike in law" (p. 1380). The preface to Buoyant Billions does not say anything about law—it is in the prefaces to Major Barbara and Millionaireess that Shaw has expressed his views on law and its relation to society. In the preface to Major Barbara Shaw has dwelt on the necessity of enacting laws in keeping with public conscience and keeping laws up-to-date.

Matters like polygamy, the right of the old maid to unmarried motherhood and the variability of the passion of love have been made the subjects of discussion in the play but the preface does not say anything about them at all. Junius Smith in the play

¹ The preface to Misalliance (The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw, 1965), p. 50.
maintains that love is of different kinds. He says to Sir Ferdinand, "Love means many different things: love of parents and children, love of pet animals, love of whisky or strawberry ices, love of cricket or lawn tennis, also love or money" (act III, p. 1382). Shaw says about love in the preface to Getting Married, "No healthy man or animal is occupied with in any sense for more than a very small fraction indeed of the time he devotes to business and to recreations wholly unconnected with love".¹

Passions are always of different kinds in different persons. The Life Force creates different people for different purposes. Mr Secondborn has a passion for mathematics, Junius Smith and Fify Buoyant have passions for reforming and bettering the world. Bill Buoyant has a passion for making money and his daughter has passion for house-keeping. The preface to Buoyant Billions does not say anything about the variability of passions in human beings. The Life Force endows different people with different passions. In the preface to Farfetched Fables Shaw speaks about the ways of the Life Force and says, "Providence, which I call the Life Force, when not defeated by the imperfection of its mortal instruments, always takes care that the necessary functionaries are born specialized for their job."²

The failure of the biological science in certain fields has been pointed out in the play by Junius Smith and Secondborn. Junius says that Babzy Buoyant's attraction for him cannot be scientifically explained. Secondborn says that there may be some mathematical hormones in him which may have caused his mathematical

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² - The preface to Farfetched Fables (Ibid), p. 895.
passion. Fiffy says that, instead of taking to the profession of world-bettering, he would do some research on the hormone for world-bettering. In the preface to Buoyant Billions Shaw says that Biological science fails to explain certain matters belonging to the realms of magic and miracle and also the moments of mystical happiness. The preface does not say anything about the hormones of mathematics. In the course of his criticism of the practice of vivisection in the preface to The Doctor's Dilemma Shaw has hinted at the possibility of research in this line and argues, "Why not perform a careful series of experiments on persons under the influence of voluptuous ecstasy, so as to ascertain its physiological symptoms? Then perform a second series on persons engaged in mathematical work or machine designing, so as to ascertain the symptoms of cold scientific activity?"¹ The research intended by Fiffy in the play on the mathematical hormones may naturally include the examination of physiological symptoms of a mathematician as referred to in the above lines.

Thus, it will be seen that the preface to Buoyant Billions is one of the most ill-connected prefaces written by Shaw. The only relevance the preface has with the play is found in the brief discussion about the failure of Biological science to explain certain things belonging to the realms of mysticism, magic and miracle.

Farfetched Fables was written in 1948 and the preface to the play was written in 1948-49. Farfetched Fables is not a complete single play. It has six independent scenes called Fables by Shaw.

¹ - The preface to The Doctor's Dilemma (The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw, 1965), p. 258.
The first Fable is about the danger to the world peace posed by the proliferation of atom bomb, the hypocritical talk of world peace and hypocritical talk of disarmament by the big powers of the world. The second Fable is about the secret competition among the nations of the world for the acquisition of more and more deadly weapons to outdo each other and achieve hegemony over other nations. Shaw says at the end of the preface to *Farfetched Fables* that there would be no atomic warfare as long as the manufacture of atom bomb would remain a trade secret of a single nation, but when the trade secret would be out, the danger of war would be again real. Shaw says that in the first two Fables he has shown how the danger of war will again threaten the world after the trade secret of the atomic bomb gets divulged to the other nations. The first Fable hints at the possibility of discovery of volatile poison gas and the second Fable dramatises its realisation which surpasses the atomic bomb in destructive effects.

The third Fable is about the working of anthropometric machine that will classify people for different kinds of public work. The preface to *Farfetched Fables* insists on the necessity of setting up panels of worthy people for different kinds of social work. The job of classifying and testing people's abilities would be done by the anthropometric machine. In the preface Shaw has not been able to give a complete list of panels of rulers required for administering a country. He says that the top panel should be closed against the man who cannot master the theories of rent and exchange value. Shaw also holds that the panel for health authorities should require a stringent test in statistics about diseases and public health, because, Shaw believes that the eradication or control of many diseases has been wrongly ascribed to compulsory
vaccination instead of sanitation. Shaw also insists on an aesthetic test for selection of people for the top panel. In the third Fable two persons are interviewed by a middle-aged gentleman and a matron who are in charge of an anthropometric laboratory. Of the two visitors, one is considered by the Gentleman as a nincompoop who thinks himself to be a genius, and the other is found to be a genius who thinks himself to be a nincompoop. Shaw speaks about the necessity of an anthropometric machine to select people for different kinds of administration in the prefaces to *The Apple Cart*¹ and *Too True to be Good*². In the preface to *The Apple Cart* Shaw refers to one San Francisco doctor who declared that if a drop of a certain candidate's blood could be obtained on a piece of paper, he could easily declare within half an hour what was wrong with the candidate physically. In the above mentioned preface Shaw says that he is waiting for the day when, on delivery of a drop of blood or a lock of hair, one can easily ascertain what is right with the candidate mentally. In the preface to *Too True to be Good* Shaw gives a hypothetical list of panels and says that panel A would be for diplomacy and international finance, panel B for national affairs, panel C for municipal and country affairs, panel D for the village councils and so forth. Thus, it will be seen that, in addition to what Shaw says in the preface to *Farfetched Fables*, one has to refer to the prefaces to *The Apple Cart* and *Too True to be Good* for full Shavian views on panels for rulers.

The fourth Fable dramatizes the idea of living solely on air

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2 - *The preface to Too True to be Good* (Ibid), p. 352.
and, thereby, dispensing with the food problem altogether. The Diet Commissioner in the Fable, in the course of his dictation, refers to one Russian woman who managed to love solely on air and water. The fifth Fable dramatizes the idea of dispensing with the human body altogether and living wholly as mind. The preface to *Farfetched Fables* speaks about the working of the Life Force and the problem of good and evil but has not said anything about men's ultimate evolution into creatures living solely on air and water or evolution into thought vortexes. Both of these ideas relate to Shaw's evolutionary beliefs as expounded in the preface to *Back to Methuselah*. Shaw subscribes to the Lamarcko-Butlerian conception of evolution according to which will is the basic thing behind all acts of evolution. Men can get or lose an organ by dint of sheer willing. Analyzing the Lamarcko-Butlerian concept of evolution Shaw says in the preface to *Back to Methuselah*, "We can lose a habit and discard an organ when we no longer need them, just as we acquired them" (p. 510). In the light of the above theory Shaw believes that it is possible for human beings to will themselves into bodilessness or evolve themselves into creatures living solely on air.

In the sixth Fable Shaw has brought in several issues such as the Disembodied Race, Disembodied Thoughts, Thought Vortexes and also the problems of hearing the voice of God, dispensing with the habits of eating and drinking and the reproductive methods of human beings. All these have sprung from the Shavian belief that will is the central and the supreme thing in the universe. The Fable has it that the thought vortexes are not omniscient or omnipotent; they have to work by trial and error method. In the preface to *Farfetched Fables* Shaw has not said anything about the thought vortexes at all, but he has dwelt on the ways of the Life Force and
the problem of good and evil. Shaw says that the Life Force is not omniscient or infallible - it has to proceed by trial and error method. Through the last Fable Shaw means to show that the Life Force exists in the shape of Thought Vortexes in the air independently of human body. A thought vortex can assume a living body or reject it in accordance with its necessities. As Raphael argues in the Fable, "If the body can become a vortex, the vortex can also become a body" (p. 1402).

In the sixth Fable the Teacher speaks of a chain smoker of cigarettes who could not give up smoking despite his best efforts to do so, but subsequently, on the advice of a preacher to listen to the voice of God, he tried the experiment, and soon he heard the voice of God and gave up smoking accordingly. In the preface Shaw says that he cannot say for certain whether Jesus Christ or Mohomet actually heard the voice of God and this remains a puzzle for him. He refers to a real chain smoker who wrote to him to say that he gave up smoking on hearing the voice of God to do so.

In the preface to Farfetched Fables Shaw has again criticized the schoolmasters and their method of teaching in the prefaces to Getting Married¹, Misalliance² (Parents and Children) and Back to Methuselah³. In the preface to Farfetched Fables Shaw has criticized the questioning system of the school examinations. He calls the schoolmasters "the enemy of mankind" and maintains that the system of compulsory memorization of the lessons in the schools causes permanent damage to the minds of the youngsters. In the classroom

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² - The preface to Misalliance (Ibid), p. 73
scene given in the sixth Fable Shaw has tried to present a picture of an ideal relation between the teacher and the taught. The students and the teacher appear to ask each other questions at a human level without complexes or inhibitions.

The preface discusses some other issues which seem to have no bearing upon the themes of the six Fables. He has dwelt on matters like mendacity in kingcraft and priestcraft, the effects of miracles, parental dilemmas in teaching their children the right religion, the contradictions in the thirty nine articles of the Church of England, the freedom of speech in Russia and in the capitalistic countries, Freudian psychology, British democracy and the Russian communism, and the ills of capitalism, but all these have almost nothing to do with the six-pronged play, Farfetched Fables. The last important preface by Shaw shows that Shaw's inhibitions about the system of school education, parliamentary democracy and medical profession on the one hand and his admiration for the Russian communism on the other lasted till the end of his career.

It could be concluded that the link between Farfetched Fables and its preface is only partial, because although the preface touches upon certain matters of the Fables, still there are parts in the preface which have nothing to do with them.