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(II) Legitimate Appendages: The Case of Psalmanazar's Prefaces²

Abstract: *In 1704, George Psalmanazar, a supposed native of the island of Formosa, added his own fabulous construction of another world to an England which was already abundant in fictitious travel accounts. Written 60 years later, Psalmanazar's own Memoirs did not manage to cast a clear light on the author's inauthentic discourse. The problematic of legitimacy in relation to historical writings and works of fiction turned into a debatable cultural issue during the European eighteenth century. The great libraries and collections of manuscripts set up by Cotton or Pepys in the seventeenth century were later to be taken on by eighteenth-century scholars, whose job was to assess and legitimate their value. Psalmanazar's fictitious account passed for a true description of Formosa after it had promoted textual and visual appendages to legitimate the authorial voice. The present article will look at the methods Psalmanazar used to legitimate both the authorial practices and the cultural and literary background against which eighteenth-century outstanding writers, such as Goldsmith and Swift, used Psalmanazar as a source of legitimate inspiration for their writings.*

Key words: *fictitious travel accounts, cultural legitimacy, paratextual schemes, authorial prefaces, authenticity, historical documents.*

Parody is the most appropriate word to use when mentioning George Psalmanazar,³ to refer not only to the manner in which he directed his satiric comments at the English

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³ For further references on Psalmanazar see *** *Formosan Fantasy. Hoaxes and Deceptions*. By the editors of Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1991; Adams, Percy G. *Travelers and Travel Liars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962; Farrar, J.A. "Psalmanazar: The Man Who Invented Formosa." *Grand Deception: The World's Most Spectacular and Successful Hoaxes, Impostures, Ruses, and Frauds*. Ed. Klein, Alexander. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1956; Farrer, J.A. *Literary Forgeries*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907; Penzer, N. M. (Norman Mosley). (ed.) *The Library of Impostors*. London: Robert Holden & co. Ltd., 1926; Baines, Paul. *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999; Balderston, Katharine C. (ed.) *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951; Barnum, Phineas Taylor. *The Humbugs of the World*. London: John Camden Hotten, Piccadilly, 1866; Stewart, Susan. *Crimes of Writing. Problems in the Containment of Representation*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

government, but also in reference to his reception into the European literary world. Dr. William King, criticizing the journal of the Royal Society published during Hans Sloane's secretaryship, whom he held in high professional esteem, but accused of vanity and credulity, and so found fault with his intentions as declared by the *Transactions*. In the preface to the *Useful Transactions*, William King bitterly observed that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the audience was interested more in "Wars, Treatises, and other Political Amusements" and less in "Poetry and Philosophy" with mere curiosity replacing empirical knowledge. Travel writing is the main theme William King alludes to in his examples as he focuses mainly on George Psalmanazar in order to illustrate his point:

Psalmanazar, by describing the Island of Formosa, with the Ceremonies of their Human and Bloody Sacrifices, of their Garments, Shoes, Garters and Top-knots, was respected by the most Learned and most Curious, who were desirous of seeing him eat his Beef, Mutton and second Course as they came raw from the Clerk of the Kitchen, without the unnecessary help of a Cook to alter their natural Flavour (*Useful Transactions*, 1709).

The quotation above comes from a parody written in response to Hans Sloane's *Philosophical Transactions*, and makes direct reference to the dinner Psalmanazar enjoyed in Sloane's house, as well as to the fact that the Royal Society accepted his masquerade and did not prevent his inaccurate description of Formosa from being published. Dr. King remarks how natural history and other sciences were overshadowed in importance by the imposture of such writers as George Psalmanazar and Mrs. Manley, whose false accounts deceived the public. The author recommends that "it is safer of talking of Ants, Elephants, Hedge-hogs, and Butterflies, than of persons of quality under the most secret disguises." An ironic tone characterizes du Maurier's reference to Branwell Brontë's pseudo-prayer, which invokes a pseudo-traveller: "From the falsehood of Psalmanazar... Good Lord, deliver us!" (Foley 71).⁴ Both instances, although written in different centuries, reproduce a similar rejection of false knowledge and show that such a man as Psalmanazar will not go unnoticed by the literary history, on account of his influential, though deliberately deceptive, literary role.

Eighteenth-century Britain was a great age of literary forgery, continuing the medieval and Renaissance tradition of fabricating documents to attest the authenticity of historical writings. During the medieval period, little importance was attached to historical fact, as long as the stories instructed the readers. The medieval storyteller posed as historian and most of the legends of the saints imitated the older versions and came to be considered "fabrications." One critic of the Renaissance period, William Nelson, observed that the Troy stories of the Middle Ages used as reliable sources not Homer, Ovid, and Virgil, "who were thought to be ill-informed historians and liars as well" (24), but based the accuracy of their accounts upon Dictys Cretensis and Dares the Phygian, two of the most fraudulent writers of pseudo-chronicles of the Trojan War. The medieval narratives were written in a quasi-historical mode: the apocryphal tales "created a substantial precedent for a kind of imaginative literature which was presented not as fiction but as documented history" (Nelson 22).

⁴ For the reference to Dr. William King and Daphne du Maurier on Psalmanazar's reception in literature, see Foley, *The Great Formosan Impostor*, pp. 66-71.

In addition to the proliferation of historiography, the eighteenth century witnessed the rise of the novel, most of which posed as historical documents: memoirs, journals, and letters. Eighteenth-century writings did not make a proper distinction between history and fiction, or historiography and literature. Story and history usually overlapped and what one can infer from the titles of most of the fictitious histories of the time is that "history told an exciting story" (Haywood 17). Most writers of literature, such as Swift, Goldsmith, and Smollett turned their hand to history writing, following the rules of the epic.

In the eighteenth-century literary world, "The History of," present in the titles was more often than not associated with "the life and adventures of". For instance, Smollett's *The Orientalist: A Volume of Tales after the Eastern Taste*, which came out in 1764, introduced *The History of Omrah, The Son of Abulfaid*, as well as *The History of Hindbad, the Merchant*. Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, published in 1759, Frances Sheridan's *The History of Nourjahad* (1767), and Beckford's 1786 English version of his *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, all were written in the Oriental manner, proposing an alternative to the realist novel, while keeping the already known formula in the title at the same time.

Eighteenth-century prefaces and epistles dedicatory were inserted in the book with a view to advertising the publication, promoting sales, and increasing the credibility of the author. Gérard Genette (1997: xi) looks into the liminal function of the titles, signs of authorship, prefaces, dedications, and other devices that work as mediators between the text and the reader. On the one hand, there is an objective paratextual scheme which accompanies the text and includes an outline of the title, the name of the author, and the table of contents. On the other hand, the text contains a more subjective organization of the epistles dedicatory, prefaces, and other appendages. The extra-textual paratext includes illustrations to the book, such as engravings, the portrait of the author/narrator, etc.

In identifying the main functions of the preface, Genette focuses on the *original assumptive authorial preface* which holds the author responsible for encouraging the reader to perform a proper reading of the text. In classifying the role and functions of prefaces, Genette overlooks prefaces written by the editors from the early modern period to the end of the eighteenth century, when the practice of authorial anonymity of the writer gradually drew to an end.

Apart from the main function that Genette ascribes to an authorial preface - "to get the book read properly" (197) - there is another important function fulfilled by a preface written by an editor. The book had to sell well. In the eighteenth century, the fact that the role of the individual grew in importance resulted in a battle involving printers, booksellers, and authors, over who first "discovered" a manuscript and made it public. The preface to such a "discovery" usually let the reader know the whole secret story behind the publication of a specific volume.

An eighteenth-century preface usually claimed that the piece of fiction or travel account would create a special reading experience. As Samuel Kinser puts it, "The function of the paratext is to facilitate the communication of the text. In so doing, the paratext also interprets it" (152). The paratext⁵ is an indicator of the context which produced the

⁵ The term was coined by Gérard Genette in his book *Palimpsests: la littérature au second degré*, Paris: Seuil, 1982. I have used the English translation by Jane E. Lewin, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

publication and meaning is constructed not only within the source text itself, but also through the paratextual elements which border it.

When Defoe's Preface to his *Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* revealed the fact that "the editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it" (*The Preface*, 1719), the confusion between imaginary voyages and factual accounts was almost total, although it seemed to have mattered little. The sequel to this edition, published in the same year and entitled *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Being the Second and Last Part of his Life and Strange Surprising Accounts of his Travels Round Three Parts of the Globe, Written by Himself* justified its publication by the great success of the former part. The Preface announces

All the Endeavours of envious People to reproach it of being a Romance, to search it for Errors in Geography, Inconsistency in the Relation, and Contradictions in the Fact, have proved abortive, and as impotent as malicious (1719).

Defoe intended his *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) as a first-hand historical piece "written by a Citizen who continued all the while in London", forgetting that he was only a child in 1665, the year of the plague. The narrator was a historian who authenticated his sources with footnotes, "citing statistics and documents such as bills of mortality" (Haywood 67). As early as 1709, Daniel Defoe observed that

This, Sir, is an Age of Plot and Deceit, of Contradiction and Paradox [...] It is very hard under all these Masks, to see the true Countenance of Any Man. (10).

If Daniel Defoe, himself a fabricator of true fictions, was complaining about masquerades and the difficulty to find out not only the true nature of man, but also of fiction, then what should the eighteenth-century reader have expected from a writer who had assumed linguistic, religious, and identity disguises?

In 1703, the man who called himself Psalmanazar, or Psalmanaazaar, from Shalmaneser, an Assyrian conqueror of the Israelites [2 Kings 17:3], was introduced to London and Compton, the Bishop of London, by the Reverend Alexander Innes, chaplain to one of the Scots regiments in Flanders, who was accompanying Psalmanazar to the English capital. George Psalmanazar's presence in an aristocratic environment was to be legitimated by the fact that when Innes sent a letter to the Bishop of London, asking for his permission to bring to London a Formosan convert, the Bishop's answer was favourable. What legitimated the presence of a Formosan among the learned men of the age was in the first place their adoption and acceptance of Psalmanazar and his stories without questioning the reliability of his identity. It didn't matter who he really was as long as it encouraged and reassured the aristocracy pre-conceived notions of other worlds.

Not only did Psalmanazar have little trouble pretending to be what he claimed, but he also had little trouble making others believe he was what he claimed. Michael Keevak argues that Psalmanazar's success was due both to his audacity and intelligence "to create a culture for himself and to keep his tissue of lies consistent", as well as to the fact that "in 1704, a Formosan was whatever he said one was" (2004a: 12). It appeared that his contemporaries were more interested in his imaginary version of Formosa, and in the fact that he had been converted to Anglicanism and became the supporter of the established

Church, than in his appearance, which was fair and European-like.⁶ Psalmanazar's story was taken for granted as long as he was perceived as "a valuable source of firsthand information about Formosa" as well as "an important piece of religious propaganda because he had chosen to join the English church" (Keevak 2004a: 1). Public opinion was divided in regard to his real identity: some believed he was "a tool of the Scottish Dissenters" (Keevak 2004a: 6), others labeled him a secret Jesuit, while the English Roman Catholics argued that Psalmanazar "was in the pay of the High Church and had come to make a mockery of the Roman Church by parading as a Formosan and then allowing himself to be unmasked as a Jesuit impostor" (Swiderski 24).

By (self)-attributing various identities, Psalmanazar managed to legitimate his presence according to the different circumstances he found himself in: he posed as a pagan, and after that as a Catholic, playing with various identity masks, impersonating a Jewish, a Frenchman, an Irish, a Japanese, to end up in a Christian Formosan disguise.

A Catholic who posed as a pagan before being converted to Protestantism and mistaken for Jewish, Psalmanazar was a Frenchman who masqueraded as Irish in Italy and Japanese in Germany, before arriving in England as Formosan (Ruthven 20).

According to his *Memoirs*, he was born in the South of France to a Catholic family, and his mother educated him, while his father had to leave the family and reside in Germany, because of some circumstances that are not revealed. Considering his Dominican and Jesuit education useless and losing his interest in serious study, Psalmanazar went to Avignon to work as a tutor of Latin to the nephews of a wealthy family, but he was left with no financial support, and to work out this situation, he manufactured his first disguise: an Irish Catholic, persecuted in his own country, seeking refuge in France, where the Irish were regarded with sympathy. He went to Rome, and then to his father in Germany. At his father's suggestion, who did not know his disguise as an Irishman, he embarks for another picaresque journey to the Low Countries, where he poses as Japanese converted to Christianity, another "clever combination of the most fantastically exotic and the reassuringly familiar" (Keevak 2004a: 4). The following mask he created for himself was that of a pagan Japanese in Cologne, where he became a hired soldier in a Dutch army. He entered the company under the name Salmanazar, altered from the name of the Assyrian King in the Book of Kings. From Cologne he went to Holland and the regiment was moved to Sluys, where he was to meet chaplain Innes in 1702. He was unnecessarily baptized once again, which was a terrible sin, as he had already been baptized as a child. He took the name George, after the commander of his regiment, General George Lauder. The chaplain carefully prepared their arrival in London, as well as a new identity for his accomplice: a Christian Formosan.

The controversy around the publication of George Psalmanazar's *Description of Formosa* in London was not solved at the time of its publication, in 1704, nor was it settled 60 years later, when his *Memoirs of ****, *Commonly known by the name of George Psalmanazar; a reputed native of Formosa* came out as a posthumous apology on the part of the author for the lies and inaccurate illustration of Formosa and its society. Even today, after three monographs have been written, and a few articles have been devoted to the topic

⁶ For this aspect see Keevak's study p.47

of the ‘false Formosan’, the problem of the identity and the writings of the man known in the literary history as George Psalmanazar has never been brought to light. It is an amazing thing that the man who was so many times attributed the title of impostor had such a great influence upon the writers and the writings of his own age: he was considered as a possible source for Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Citizen of the World* and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*; he appeared in Smollett’s *Expedition of Humphry Clinker* and was mentioned in Swifts’ *Modest Proposal*; he wrote a chapter for a sequel to Richardson’s *Pamela*, which was rejected by Richardson as inappropriate; he is mentioned in an epistolary novel published in 1731, *Pylades and Corinna*, written by Richard Gwinnet and Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas⁷. George Psalmanazar met with Church leaders and members of the Royal Society, he was sent to Oxford to teach Formosan at Christ Church College, he was invited over dinner in the house of the Secretary of the Society, Hans Sloane, and he eventually became a close friend of Samuel Johnson. A Hebrew authority, a true convert, the real author of the *History of Printing* (1732), which was attributed to Samuel Palmer, and a contributor to the Jewish history and the modern Part of the *Universal History from the Earliest Account of Time* (1736-1750), Psalmanazar was rightly referred to as both the representative of the eighteenth-century cultural environment and the spokesman for the Asian history. On the one hand, Psalmanazar “both fitted into and exemplified the intellectual history of his time” (Day in Rousseau and Porter, 1990: 198), while on the other hand, “the fake Asiatic had ironically become the spokesman not only for a different Eastern language, but for the whole of its history as well” (Keevak 2004b: 103). He participated in the writing of *A Complete System of Geography* (1747), contributing to the section for Asia, including Formosa. It is interesting that he was given the task of writing an authentic geography and history despite his reputation as a literary impostor.

How did the principle of presenting a false document as true for the sake of moral education work in an age when the main aim of the literary world was to instruct a less educated public? It appeared that as long as a text intended to instruct, moralize and educate the audience, then it was accepted even if it was under the suspicion of lie.

To clarify this ironic rhetorical question, I shall refer to Psalmanazar’s two different English editions of *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa*. Psalmanazar mentioned that his work was first published in Latin, and then translated into English by a certain Mr. Oswald. Apparently, the new publication satisfied the eighteenth-century taste for wonders and novelty, as it displayed geographical details, religious particulars, and travel reports, all related in a reliable first person narrative.

The first English edition, which came out in London, in 1704, was dedicated to “The Right Honourable and Right Reverend Father in God, Henry, by Divine providence, Lord Bishop of London, and One of her Majesty’s Most Honourable Privy Council.” By mentioning the name of the Bishop of London and Her Majesty, Queen Anne in the Epistle Dedicatory, the publication was thus legitimated and supported as an accurate account of the history and geography of the island of Formosa. In his Dedication, Psalmanazar expressed his conviction that if the Bishop of London approved of this edition, his consent would assure the reading public into buying and reading it: “if Your Lordship smile upon it, the World cannot dislike it.” (*The Epistle Dedicatory* 1704).

⁷ For further references on *Pylades and Corinna*, in addition to the complete text included in Foley’s study, see the Appendix C in *The Great Formosan Impostor*, pp. 118-124.

Psalmanazar granted that the approbation of an authority would best serve its readers' interests and would guarantee that his discourse was a legitimate one. In support of his statements, Psalmanazar added to the second English edition, published in 1705, a second Preface "in Vindication of himself from the Reflections of a Jesuit lately come from China, with an Account of what passed between them", as well as several illustrations not present in the former edition, such as a map of Formosa and the image of the Devil worshipped by the Formosan people. If in the first edition, after the Epistle Dedicatory, the Preface, and the Errata, Psalmanazar went on with the account of his travels, in the second edition, after adding a second Preface in which he answered to his detractors' objections, he changed the order of the accounts, placing the description of Formosa before his travels throughout Europe and his conversion, which might be a sign that he knew exactly the literary demands of his epoch as well as the marketable requirements, and quickly responded to them. What is more, his pretence to relating a true and accurate account was clearly expressed in his dedication to Bishop Compton, as well as in the Preface:

When I had met with so many Romantick Stories of all those remote Eastern Countries, especially of my own, which had been impos'd upon you as undoubted Truths and universally believ'd, [...] I thought myself indispensably oblig'd to give you a more faithful History of the Isle of Formosa, than as yet you have met with (*Description, The Preface*, 1705).

Psalmanazar's strategy in the prefaces is reader directed, like a device of rhetoric to persuade the audience of his and his work's reliability. The fact that he added a Second Preface to his *Description* brings to the fore Psalmanazar's concern with convincing his audience of his legitimate discourse. The adage that "I will strengthen what I assert by the authority of some English Merchants trading to China", followed by "let Candidius and others say what they please" introduces a preface whose major purpose is to warn against the false and inconsistent former accounts of Formosa, which should not be taken for granted as they were different from "what I shall give you" (*The Preface* 1705). The most common method Psalmanazar uses to enforce the authenticity of his writings is to accuse the predecessors and rivals of falsehood and "to stress the impurities you have avoided" (Haywood 19).

In a very authoritative voice, Psalmanazar informs the reader of the fact that "Candidius and others, in their Account of Formosa, tell us there is neither Monarchical, nor Democratical Government in the Island; that there is no Law nor Punishment against Theft, Adultery, or Murther, and such black Crimes" (*The Preface* 1705). Rejecting the accepted sources and replacing them with the information he had from some Merchants he mentioned, Psalmanazar stresses the idea that Formosa is a civilized society, under the rule of a Governor and organized according to well-established laws: "For how is it possible for any Kingdom to stand, if no Law or Degrees of Dignity are observ'd? Or how can a Community be preserv'd, if there are no Penal Statutes to correct Offenders?" (*The Preface*, 1704).

In his preface, Psalmanazar denies all the former sources on Formosa and, instead, imposes his own writing as the solely reliable historical reference to the island. One of these sources he mentions is Candidius, definitely a reference to his 1637 *An Account of the Island of Formosa in the East-Indies*, which was published in Churchill's *Collection of*

Voyages and Travels. One can speculate on other sources Psalmanazar referred to but did not specifically name. An amazing thing is that he makes use of these sources in his account, yet he denies them as false and unreliable in his prefaces. A possible source he might have used is Varenus Bernhardus' *Description Regni Japoniae*, dated 1649. While studying in Oxford, he might have also come across Jean Crasset's *Histoire de l'Eglise du Japon*, published in 1689, or the 1699 treatise written by Francis Gemelli Careri, *Giro del Mondo*. According to his own confession in the *Memoirs*, he was endowed with a great talent for languages and he mastered Latin and Greek to such a degree, that it wouldn't be uncommon to assert that he read these accounts in their original language. Psalmanazar's prefaces not only embody his concern about his being given credit for his description of the Formosan society, but also his purpose to prove wrong everything related to Formosa that was written before him. Were Psalmanazar's intentions subversive? Was he determined to reveal the English intellectual stage as corrupt, biased, and based on superficial and false documents? In a letter to James Pound, astronomer, written in 1704, John Flamsteed, the first astronomer royal of England, manifested his ignorance in regard to under whose jurisdiction the island of Formosa should be placed. It appears from the letter that Flamsteed sent Isaac Newton, the President of the Royal Society, Psalmanazar's book, along with his treatise of light and colours, and some tracts from *Philosophical Transactions*.⁸

Flamsteed mentioned Father Jean de Fontaney's meeting with Psalmanazar, who was considered an impostor by Fontaney because he placed Formosa "under ye jurisdiction of ye Japanese" (Scott, 425, letter 678), while Fontaney said it was under the Emperor of China. Flamsteed asked for more information regarding the debate, revealing the fact that few things were known about Formosa at that time: "pray enquire under which it is and informe us as also what more you can learn of yt country, for we are here in the dark about it" (Scott, 425, letter 678).

Both Fontaney, the French Jesuit who had lived at the Emperor's Court in Beijing and Psalmanazar were invited over dinner in the house of the Secretary of the Society, Hans Sloane, physician and collector of objects of natural history and other curiosities, who was to succeed Newton as President of the Royal Society in 1727. Psalmanazar answered calmly all Fontaney's questions, stating that Formosa was under the rule of the Emperor of Japan and exemplifying Formosan customs by eating raw meat himself in front of the well-mannered guests. Fontaney was shocked by this fascinating performance. Psalmanazar had the correct answers for all the questions Fontaney addressed him, so at this point, Fontaney could not prove him wrong. Besides, as a French Jesuit, he was regarded as biased in his judgment of Psalmanazar, and therefore not a reliable evaluator. They were to meet again, inadvertently, at the Grecian Coffee House, Devereaux Court near Temple Bar, but the meeting ended with no better results.

The Journal of the Royal Society published some conclusions, drew from Mr. Halley's reports as well as Mr. Griffith's letters about Formosa, which clearly contradicted

⁸ Further details about Psalmanazar's publication and his meeting with the members of the Royal Society is to be found in *The Correspondence of Issac Newton*, vol. iv, 1967. The footnote to letter 670 describes Psalmanazar as an "able scholar" who "had a particular gift for modern languages" (footnote 3, p. 412). There is a reference to the public meeting at the Royal Society on 2 February 1703/4, which reads "it does not appear that Newton attended the meeting" (footnote 3, p. 413).

Psalmanazar's claims. Mr. Griffith was an Englishman who had lived on the island and was used by the Royal Society as an eyewitness to testify on the truth of Psalmanazar's claims. And yet, the Royal Society made no public statement related to this situation. It seemed Psalmanazar's fake was accepted with a good grace, as "the Royal Society seemed unwilling or unable to expose him publicly" (Keevak 2004a: 6). Keevak emphasizes the political and religious aspects that are not to be avoided in debating Psalmanazar's case: "Perhaps this was due to the fact that political and (especially) religious factors were often more at the forefront of public debate than simple questions about cultural veracity" (2004a: 6).

In spite of Fontaney's eyewitness declaration according to which Formosa was under the jurisdiction of China, Psalmanazar went further and, in the Preface to his *Description*, argued that Formosa was under the rule of Japan, legitimating his statement by two references. First, he rhetorically asked "why do the Chinese pay so great Tribute to our Governour?" (*The Preface* 1704). Secondly, he used the Dutch people as a legitimate source, as they "are competent Judges in the Case, ever since the Emperor of Japan has given them leave to renew their Trade in Formosa, after they had many Years been banish'd from thence." (*The Preface* 1704). He enforced these references by his own report in the book, sending the reader to the final and the most convincing explanation of his own reliability: "as you may see in the Book, Chap. 37. *Of the Success of the Dutch in Japan.*" (*The Preface* 1704).

Psalmanazar apologized in his Preface for not giving a perfect and complete history of the island of Formosa, because he was only 19 years old when he left it, "and therefore incapable of giving an exact Account of it" (*The Preface* 1704). He persuades the reader that

I have not positively asserted any thing which is not as positively true; but if I have said what I did not know, as a certain Truth, as such I have admonish'd you of it. I have discharged my Conscience, receive it as you please; for since I have done my Duty, I shall no more be concern'd about it (*The Preface* 1704).

Psalmanazar's Epistle Dedicatory, prefaces, footnotes, illustrations, and errata form the ground on which authority rests; they are intended to reinforce the voice of authority and extend the boundaries of the text by clarifying and illuminating pre-texts on which the argument is based. Thus, the text is taken out of the suspicion of fiction, and offered to the reader as historical document. In his pre-text, Psalmanazar not only warns the reader about his intentions, as he addresses the Preface to the reader, but he also explains and justifies himself and legitimates the authorial text. Psalmanazar advertises his fabulous stories in a direct, first person address:

In the first place there are several things in their Story which *you* are oblig'd to suspect, because they contradict one another in those matters which every Relator assures *you* he has been an Eye-witness of (*The Preface* 1705, emphasizes mine).

The technique of dragging the reader in through direct address was not uncommon in the eighteenth century, and it emphasized the interplay between author and reader, as well as the fact that the author engaged the reader in the text. This device looks like the oral tradition in literature, when during the story telling the narrator reminds the listener of some

real things mentioned beforehand. These are the pre-texts or the prefaces in the printed texts.

In Shari Benstock's article the author is attributed a double role, according to the narrative theories of Iser and Booth:

The persona who speaks in the guise of the author therefore plays a double role, existing in the narrative (he is a "fiction," as Booth [*Rhetoric* 74-75] and Iser [*Implied* 102-03 and nn] remind us) but continually extended its boundaries to include the reader. (207).

According to Michael Keevak, "each time the story is retold, the documentation accumulates" (2004a: 26). Each edition contains more citations, further references and additional footnotes to 'improve' the new edition with supplementary information. The 1716 German edition, translated from the first English version⁹, even "corrects" the first English version in some aspects.¹⁰ Keevak comments that the Preface to the French edition (Paris 1739) adds "the Dutch had built their fort on a spit of land called Tyowan (which was in fact true), and that Tyowan was merely a remote outpost among some one thousand small islands in the area (which was not at all true)" (Keevak 2004a: 25).

In Psalmanazar's case the longer the Preface, the more influential its authentication and legitimation. The second English edition of his *Description* contained a second apologetic extended preface, answering the twenty-fifth objections raised by Psalmanazar's literary attackers.

The popularity of history tended to surpass that of the literary arena, to the point of a dangerous identification. Gibbon's boasting about the success and popularity of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: "My book was on every table and almost on every toilette" (180), and his declaration that "History is the most popular species of writing" (179) are not very different from Psalmanazar's positive reception in the literary salons. On November 5, 1715, Chief Justice Sir Dudley Ryder wrote in his *Diary*: "Went to my closet, read the History of one Psalmanazar, a native of the island of Formosa" (Foley 66). Psalmanazar's attempt at inventing people and creating his own arguments to legitimate his writings is amazing. In a letter addressed to Samuel Reynolds, dated December 18, 1706, he mentions a Polish prince, Albert Lubomirski, whose favourable opinion on Psalmanazar's *Description* and support of Psalmanazar's statements regarding the children sacrifice in Formosa are in agreement with his account of the island. However, recent research has proved that prince Lubomirski is another invention of Psalmanazar's.¹¹

According to Harold Love, one clue to revealing that a text is a fake is noticing that "the faker can rarely resist justifying the fake with an elaborate narrative or provenance." (184). Psalmanazar's elaborate prefaces prove this assumption right. The relationship between the

⁹Observations on the German, Dutch, and French translations have been made by Michael Keevak in his *The Pretended Asian: George Psalmanazar's Eighteenth Century Formosan Hoax*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2004, pp. 9, 25, 26-27. See especially the notes to chapter one, "The True and the False Formosa."

¹⁰See the same reference as above-quoted, p. 26.

¹¹The correspondence between Psalmanazar and Samuel Reynolds is included in Frederic Foley's monograph *The Great Formosan Impostor*. The author refers to Lubomirski as "the Franciscan missionary created by Psalmanazar to give credence to his obvious errors." (Foley, 92, footnote 7).

preface, footnote, errata, endnote, and history writing/historical literature tries to establish factuality, while history and fiction legitimate themselves via the appreciation of the reading public.

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