Preface

In the preface to "Men, Women and Ghosts," the author outlines the expansive definition of "stories" used in this collection, encompassing narrative poems, tales divided into scenes, and pieces where nature and inanimate objects play central roles. A significant portion of the preface is dedicated to exploring the potential of `vers libre` (free verse), inspired by the rhythmic similarities between poetry and music, notably sparked by the compositions of Debussy. The author describes experiments with mimicking the movements of natural objects and music through poetry, specifically in "A Roxbury Garden" and "The Cremona Violin," aiming to capture the essence of motion and sound within the fluid structure of free verse.

A particularly challenging experiment mentioned is attempting to emulate the movements in Stravinsky's "Three Pieces `Grotesques', for String Quartet," which the author notes has been acknowledged by musicians as accurate in translation. These endeavors underscore a belief in the untapped potential of free verse for poetic expression.

The preface also introduces the concept of "polyphonic prose," a form that strays from traditional prose in its vocal and dramatic qualities. Through this form, characters are given a vividness akin to roles in a play, embedded within a poetic framework. This approach is highlighted as uniquely suited to dramatic poetry due to its capacity to enliven characters while maintaining a lyrical decorum.

Additionally, the author shares innovations in capturing the essence of places and moments, focusing on the visual aspects such as color, light, and shape, devoid of relational context to emphasize their sensory beauty. This technique was partly inspired by the visual patterns observed in aquariums, leading to the creation of "An Aquarium" and influenced by John Gould Fletcher's "London Excursion."

The backdrop of the ongoing European war is acknowledged as an inevitable influence on the poems, though it is approached indirectly. The collection aims to explore the vast possibilities of poetic expression, from the rhythm and motion of free verse to the dramatic potential of polyphonic prose, seeking to push boundaries and explore new facets of storytelling through poetry.