

**THE NEW RAMBLER**



JOURNAL OF  
THE JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON

JUNE 1967

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Samuel Johnson**



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# The New Rambler

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## CONTENTS

THE DESERTED VILLAGE	
Ian Jack	2
SAMUEL JOHNSON: SATIRE AND SATIRISTS	
Douglas Grant	5
JOHNSON AND COWLEY	
Lois M. G. Spencer	18
JOHNSON IN MINIATURE?	32
JOHNSON AND CHARLOTTE LENNOX	
Duncan Isles	34
HARLEQUIN RASSELAS	49
NOTES	4, 17, 51

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THE DESERTED VILLAGE\*

Ian Jack, M.A., D.Phil.  
Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge

None of Goldsmith's friends stood up for him more stoutly than did Samuel Johnson. Johnson's memorable epitaph on him merely repeated what he had often said during Goldsmith's lifetime: "Whether ... we take him as a poet, as a comick writer, or as a historian, he stands in the first class". Taking Goldsmith as a poet, Dr. Jack approached his principal topic by considering The Traveller, a favourite poem of Johnson's and one of which he always spoke "in terms of the highest commendation". The inception of this poem could be traced to the year 1755, when Goldsmith sent a first draft of part of it from Switzerland to his brother, the Rev. Henry Goldsmith. The portion in question could not now be identified, and must presumably have been extensively revised; but the poem's origin as a verse-epistle suggested that among its models were Addison's Letter from Italy and Dryden's splendid Epistle to his "honoured kinsman" John Dryden of Chesterton. It was tempting to suppose that the nostalgia which is one of the master-themes in all Goldsmith's writing was in the poem from the first; the very word "homesickness" (according to OED) first appeared in English at this time, in a reference to the people of Berne, where Goldsmith might have caught both the word and the disease. By the time The Traveller (originally entitled "A Prospect of Society") was published in 1764, Goldsmith, now committed to the profession of letters, had not only written his "Chinese Letters" (the original form of The Citizen of the World), but also come under the influence of Samuel Johnson, twenty years his senior. More important - in Dr. Jack's view - than the few lines that Johnson actually contributed to The Traveller were his general "friendly revision" of it and that "strength and connexion of thought" in which Johnson so notably excelled Goldsmith. The expressed object of the poem, as formulated at the end of the dedication, is Johnsonian, and its theme is reminiscent both of London and of Rasselas.

In explanation of Johnson's preference of The Traveller to The Deserted Village, Dr. Jack suggested that whereas the former was a very Augustan poem (almost in a limiting sense), the latter contained intimations of the future

\* An abstract of a paper read to the Johnson Society of London on 21 January 1967; Eric M. Bonner, Esq., in the Chair.

course of English poetry; it could have been written later than 1770, and, unlike most Augustan poetry, remained popular throughout the Victorian Age.

The Deserted Village might be seen as a development of the theme of rural depopulation thrown out in the lines near the end of The Traveller beginning:

Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,  
Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore?

This passage, and the opening of Ch. iv of The Vicar of Wakefield, might have been inspired by a visit to the country which Goldsmith made in 1761, and described the following year in an essay, "Revolution in Low Life", in Lloyd's Evening Post (identified as Goldsmith's by Professor Ronald Crane). The Augustan voice of the moralist and satirist, evident throughout The Traveller, is heard again in passages in the latter half of The Deserted Village, before the poem returns to the description of the departure of the villagers. The Deserted Village, like many highly successful poems, was essentially a variation on a number of familiar themes, invested with a particular contemporary relevance. The basic theme (a typically Augustan one) was the contrast between the life of simple innocence and that of corrupt luxury. Goldsmith combined the two settings associated with the simple life: the country (as opposed to Court and town) and the past (as opposed to the corrupt present). Whereas in The Traveller the poet had been an exile in space, in The Deserted Village he was an exile in time. The essential comparison in the later poem came from the recognition that, since the poet's boyhood, the city and its wealth had invaded the countryside and that the innocent life once possible there had been banished. One of the unforgettable images of the poem is that of the unhappy villagers leaving their home to emigrate; in later lines they become a train of personified virtues similarly portrayed as leaving England's strand. Dr. Jack referred to Mr. Paul Fussell's reminder that every Augustan writer is laudator temporis acti; inheriting from his classical forbears the habit of comparing the corrupt present with the simple virtues of our ancestors, he exhorts and rebukes his contemporaries by the standards of the past. In this instinctive conservatism, no writer was more Augustan than Goldsmith, as is clearly shown in the dedication to The Deserted Village, where, "in regretting the depopulation of the country", he inveighed against "the increase of our luxuries" as prejudicial rather than advantageous to the nation; upholding "the wisdom

of antiquity" against "fashion" and "the shout of modern politicians", he claimed to "remain a professed ancient".

On the vexed question of the historical and sociological accuracy of the poem, Dr. Jack confined himself to pointing out that Goldsmith laid his emphasis on the eviction of the rural population by wealthy landlords laying out estates for their own pleasure, whereas modern historians emphasised rather the effect of newer and more productive methods of farming. What was clear - and what mattered - was that, at a time when the agricultural revolution was under way and England was set on the road that was to make of her a wealthy imperial and industrial power, it was fortunate that a poet came forward to write a lament for the passing of the old rural order. Imaginatively sensing this change, Goldsmith was the first to give it memorable expression in poetry. Idealised, sentimentalised, Arcadian though its picture of the past might be, the main part of The Deserted Village could be regarded as the only great Augustan pastoral, with a characteristic passage of satirical and didactic poetry somewhat incongruously added. It was a transitional poem, if ever there was one. In 1770, the year of its publication, was born a greater poet who was to make the social and psychological consequences of the changes described in The Deserted Village one of the principal themes of his poetry. Standing chronologically midway between Johnson's London and Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey, Goldsmith's poem was almost a medial term between the two, combining satire on the corruptions of city life with praise of the innocent country - a poem which (we are told) angered Jeremy Bentham, but which has been loved by every other recorded reader.

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"Thanks to your help, we were able to trace our quotation. It is from the Preface to the Dictionary of the English Language, and runs:

The chief glory of every people arises from its authors.

We hope to incorporate this as part of the franking for our envelopes."

Extract from a letter to Mrs. A. G. Dowdeswell, from The Society of Authors.

SAMUEL JOHNSON: SATIRE AND SATIRISTS\*

Professor Douglas Grant, M.A., D.Phil., F.R.S.L.  
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I suppose that we would describe the years we have just passed through as a satirical decade. We have had satirical revues on the stage and a new satirical journal and, of course, the notorious late night Saturday shows on T.V. And we have enjoyed it. We have laughed at the sight of the pompous being deflated and the affected being stripped of their frippery, and even when the victims being scarified were our own heroes, we have secretly relished the spectacle, in spite of our open expressions of outrage.

And yet, we have been uneasy. Even when we have admitted the justice of the attacks and delighted in the skill of their delivery, we have felt there was something unfair in holding people up to public ridicule, especially when they were not given the chance to defend themselves or retaliate. We share this uneasiness that satirists themselves have often felt. I noticed the other day that Byron, re-reading his English Bards and Scotch Reviewers nine years later, scribbled in the margin opposite one scorching passage: "All this is bad, because personal." Byron's remark is not to be taken as a fit of temporary contrition. He is expressing the same unease that we ourselves have experienced at the personalities which satire deals in - so constantly that it seems it must be its nature.

The eighteenth century was an age of satire, the greatest our literature has known, and even though the readers of the time were prepared to accept a violence of invective that would seem to us murderous and horribly indecent, supposing the law allowed the publishing of its equivalent today, the question of its propriety did occur in criticism. Joseph Addison, in discussing the brief given to Mr. Spectator by the Spectator Club on the conduct of his paper, remarked that while the paper would be of use to the public, "by reprehending those Vices which are too trivial for the chastisement of the Law, and too fantastical for the Cognizance of the Pulpit," it would "combat with Criminals in a Body, and [to] assault the Vice without hurting the Person." Addison's intention to refrain from personalities could be put down to a natural timidity and squeamishness, as well as to his policy of trying to promote public quiet, rather than to disturb it, but his observation

\* A paper read to the Johnson Society of London on 18 February, 1967; T. S. Blakeney, Esq., in the Chair.

actually shows that the critical conscience was troubled then, as it is now, by the nature and psychology of satire.

Dr. Johnson, as we would expect, laid bare the problem. In his Dictionary he defined "satire" as "A poem in which wickedness or folly is censured. Proper satire," he continued, squaring up to the difficulty, "is distinguished, by the generality of the reflections, from a lampoon which is aimed against a particular person; but they are too frequently confounded." The definition is in close agreement with Addison's view that true satire assaults "the Vice without hurting the Person," and it conveniently allows us to approve of satire, on account of its moral purpose, while condemning its similar, the lampoon, which has the individual as its quarry. The separating of the two can be done, one might suppose, by the simple rule of the general and the particular - one of the basic assumptions of eighteenth-century criticism, in all the arts.

The difference between satire and lampoon had already been discussed by John Dryden, in his great "Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire", published in 1693 as an introduction to his translations from Juvenal. The lampoon "is a dangerous sort of weapon, and for the most part unlawful," Dryden affirmed; "We have no moral right," he went on sternly, "on the reputatica of other men." The crux of the issue could not have been put more pithily: "We have no moral right on the reputation of other men" - a proposition that sounds self-evident. But the reader of 1693, who was being invited to recline on this certitude, once he had recovered from his pleasure at the well turned phrase, must have remembered that Dryden was the poet of Absalom and Achitophel and The Medall, not to mention MacFlecknoe. How could Dryden, this reader might have asked, square his theory and his practice?

Dryden was too old a controversialist not to be ready for so obvious a query. Lampoons might be permitted for two reasons. The first was revenge. If you yourself were lampooned you were justified in revenging yourself in kind. Dryden was obviously uneasy on this score and, in fact, after a rather flurried display of self pity he waived the subject - his own phrase - and turned to his second reason. The "second reason," he continued, "which may justify a poet when he writes against a particular person" is when that person "is become a public nuisance." "Tis an action of virtue," he went on in his memorable way, "to make examples of vicious men." The first of

his reasons, he now disingenuously admits, "was only an excuse for revenge; but this second is absolutely of a poet's office to perform."

Dryden's argument is not entirely straightforward, as is so often the case when he is engaged in justifying his own practice, but he has shown why you cannot conveniently keep satire and the lampoon apart, in spite of the demands of benevolence. Dryden clearly dislikes the idea of revenge being brought into a discussion of the satirist's intention, though honesty compels him to refer to it, because it questions his morality and impartiality, but he is, in fact, acknowledging that the satirist cannot be impartial. He must feel powerfully - as powerfully as the lover - or else his verse will lie motionless - as motionless as a sermon that treats of sin without threatening hell. Johnson himself, freed from the trammels of dictionary definitions, accepted Dryden's justification. "Personal resentment," he noted, "though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter."

The wish for revenge will at least partly explain the extraordinary weight of feeling behind many of Dryden's character sketches. When he described his old enemy, Thomas Shadwell, under the name of Og, who can doubt the depth of his resentment? In fact he strays in one couplet into frenzied gross abuse, calling Og,

A Monstrous mass of foul corrupted matter,  
As all the Devils had spew'd to make a batter.

And Alexander Pope's determination to be revenged on Lord Harvey is the ferocious impulse behind the character of Sporus; a passage in which the sibilants express the poet's deadly hate:

Let Sporus tremble - What? that thing of silk,  
Sporus, that mere white curd of Ass's milk ...

Nobody reading either Dryden or Pope can doubt for a moment that one of the motives behind great satire is an intense desire for just revenge on the part of the poet. He must hate his victim, to throw aside Dryden's apologetic circumlocution.

But Dryden was right to "waive this subject," and to turn quickly to the second and less subjective of his excuses for satire; that is, the duty of the poet "to make examples of

vicious men." The excuse would save the satirist from the charge of wantonly indulging in personalities, for if his victims were genuinely vicious, then they deserved their fate. But the purpose of Dryden's argument was not really to institute the satirist as a moralist, but to free him as a poet from being trapped among generalities. Vice and folly were far more spectacular when they were expressed in notorious characters of the day than when they were revealed in the guise of personified abstractions. Lucifer is one thing, Anthony Ashley Cooper quite another; and who could doubt which must have attracted more attention in 1681, the year of the publication of Absalom and Achitophel, as illustrations of overweening pride and political ambition?

Johnson himself was aware, though as uneasily as the rest of us, that whether or not Dryden's excuse was justifiable, the satirist must deal in personalities. He defended Pope's practice in The Dunciad - the most personal of all satires - by affirming that "if bad writers were to pass without reprehension what should restrain them? ... and upon bad writers only will censure have much effect... All truth is valuable," he goes on, seeking for the generalization to validate his argument, "and satirical criticism may be considered as useful when it rectifies error and improves judgement: he that refines the public taste is a public benefactor." Johnson is only repeating Dryden, in his own words.

But personal revenge and public duty, powerful motives though they be, are insufficient in themselves to explain the extraordinary achievement of Dryden's and Pope's greatest satires. The achievement is, of course, obviously due to the brilliance of the verse. Dryden learnt through practice that the couplet could, if properly managed, move with all the flexibility of the speaking voice without any sacrifice of discipline, and he handed all he had learnt on to Pope, for his final improvement. But such virtuosity was only effective because it was the means to the expression of the highest ideals of poetry, not an end in itself.

One of Dryden's most arresting remarks about satire was made in an aside. "Had I time," he observed, "I could enlarge on the beautiful turns of words and thoughts, which are as requisite in this, as in heroic poetry itself, of which the satire is undoubtedly a species." All his life Dryden was haunted by the idea of writing an heroic - that is, an epic - poem, and although he was unable to gratify his ambition

directly, he diverted it towards satire. Absalom and Achitophel tells - or more properly, assumes as epic narrative - the Biblical story of David and his rebellious, yet greatly beloved son, Absalom - but, more importantly, it endows the characters with an epic solemnity, by using an epic style. Achitophel is Lord Shaftesbury, the scheming, ambitious leader of the Whig party, hateful to the Court and to Dryden as an ardent Tory - a "public nuisance," in Dryden's view and therefore deserving of castigation. But he also becomes, by the transforming power of Dryden's verse, an heroic figure, none other than Lucifer, the fallen angel, cast out of Heaven and wreaking his vengeance by tempting innocence - in the shape of Absalom - to fall.

All the characters in Dryden's other satires cannot be so easily identified with epic prototypes as Achitophel, but having once discovered the importance of the epic manner, Dryden applied it to all his subjects. By elevating them in this way above their ordinary selves he gave them a transcendence which allowed him to merge the particular in the general.

Pope followed Dryden in his admiration of the epic; in fact, he exceeded him. A poem like The Dunciad embodies almost every recognizable epic quality, in contradiction. We can see this clearly if we consider the poem in relation to the Preface Pope wrote for his translation of the Iliad. He praises the Iliad for its "commanding impetuosity"; the action of The Dunciad meanders until it falls asleep. He singles out particularly the "poetical fire" which "burns everywhere clearly, and everywhere irresistibly" in the Iliad; the fire in The Dunciad is livid and fuliginous. The characters gain enormously from being placed in an epic context. They may have been dunces, one and all, in ordinary life, but in the poem they assume an absurd and frightening significance from the contrast between their obscene behaviour and their epic address. They are identifiable individuals - Pope's enemies, all - but they merge into the general - the forces of barbarism that tirelessly conspire against civilisation, like the Goths and Vandals massing against Rome's gates.

Dryden's shrewd identification of satire with epic rescued both him and Pope from the charge of writing only out of a spirit of revenge and deliberately confounding the private enemy and the public nuisance in order to justify themselves. By assimilating their characters into epic they gave them representative importance which warranted their condemnation.

The Dunciad is, in one sense, the most personal of satires; all the characters involved in its unreal action are there because they once offended Pope; but it is also a most general poem - conspiratorial legion of malevolent dunces who wage immortal war against wit.

Such a high view of The Dunciad may not be entirely acceptable. Its success may be argued to depend on the reader being able to identify the characters and recognize the allusions, a feat that challenged even the sophisticated contemporary reader. As soon as that common knowledge disappears, the poem must lapse into unintelligibility. Johnson himself acknowledged the force of such an objection when he wrote that it is "of the nature of personal invectives to be soon unintelligible." But he equally disliked general satire, whose tendency was, he asserted, to "exhaust its virulence upon imaginary crimes, which, as they never existed, can never be amended." Johnson seems once more to be caught in the dilemma between the particular and the general. Did he resolve it in his own satires?

Johnson published two satires, London, in 1738, and The Vanity of Human Wishes, in 1749, both of them imitations of Juvenal, of the third and the tenth Satires, respectively. (Johnson, by the way, neatly defined an "imitation" in his Dictionary as "A method of translating looser than paraphrase, in which modern examples and illustrations are used for ancient, or domestic for foreign."). The third Satire had already been imitated by John Oldham, in 1682, and, as David Nichol Smith suggested in his edition of Johnson's Poems, a comparison between the two will show the remarkable transformation that had occurred in English satire between 1682 and the composition of London. "The harsh cadence of a rugged line, which Oldham still believed proper to effective satire, had passed out of favour by Johnson's day," Nichol Smith remarked. The difference between Oldham and Johnson can be seen in many passages. Here is one, the famous section in which the poet's friend offers as one of his reasons for retreating into the country, the hateful and corrupting presence of too many foreigners in the city. Oldham, first:

What would'st thou say to see th' infected Town  
With the foul Spawn of Foreigners o'er-run:  
Hither from Paris, and all Parts they come,  
The Spue and Vomit of their Goals at home;

To Court they flock, and to S. James his Square,  
And wriggle into great Mens Service there:  
Foot boys at first, till they from wiping Shoes,  
Grow by degrees the Master of the House:  
Ready of Wit, harden'd of Impudence, }  
Able with ease to put down either H }  
Both the King's Player, and King's Evidence: }  
Flippant of Talk, and voluble of Tongue,  
With words at will, no Lawyer better hung:  
Softer than flattering Court-Parasite,  
Or City-Trader, when he means to cheat,  
No Calling or Profession comes amiss:  
A needy Monsieur can be what he please,  
Groom, Page, Valet, Quack, Operator, Fencer,  
Perfumer, Pimp, Jack-pudding, Juggler, Dancer:  
Give but the word; the Cur will fetch and bring,  
Come over to the Emperor, or King...

Johnson is obviously imitating the same passage in the original:

The cheated nation's happy fav'rites, see!  
Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me!  
London! the needy villain's gen'ral home,  
The common shore of Paris and of Rome;  
With eager thirst, by folly or by fate,  
Sucks in the dregs of each corrupted state,  
Forgive my transports on a theme like this,  
I cannot bear a French metropolis...  
All that at home no more can beg or steal,  
Or like a gibbet better than a wheel;  
Hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court,  
Their air, their dress, their politics import;  
Obsequious, artful, voluble and gay,  
On Britain's fond credulity they prey.  
No gainful trade their industry can 'scape,  
They sing, they dance, clean shoes, or cure a clap;  
All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,  
And bid him go to hell, to hell he goes.

Oldham is hardly more personal, in a direct way, than Johnson, but Johnson assumes a generality of utterance, quite unlike Oldham's hectic concern with the immediate. The difference between them lies only in part with Oldham's "rugged line".

London was a successful poem, not only on account of its great technical competence - the unknown poet "will soon be

déterré," was Pope's well-known remark. It was popular because it was topical. The personal allusions are few - the one to Lord Hervey is the most direct:

Despise a fool in half his pension dress'd,  
And strive in vain to laugh at Hervey's jest.

- but in its tactful adaptation of Juvenal's thought to the circumstances of the day, it strongly appealed to a patriotism that was deeply offended by the corruptions of Walpole's Whig administration at home, and its pusillanimity in the face of France and Spain abroad. The luck of the moment allowed Johnson to strike a perfect balance between the general and the particular. The satire was timely, without being restricted to affairs of the moment; the charges were specific and could be brought home, without the naming of individuals. The tone of personal resentment could be justly attributed, at the worst, to party bias, rather than to personal malice.

The Vanity of Human Wishes, published eleven years later, in 1749 is, by general consent, a much greater poem. It, too, is an imitation of Juvenal - of the tenth Satire -, but it is so entirely expressive of Johnson's own sombre personality that the two poems, the Latin and the English, must be considered, "as companion studies of the same subject," to quote David Nichol Smith.

The differences between the two poems can, to some degree, be seen by comparing a passage from Dryden's translation of Juvenal with the corresponding passage in The Vanity. Dryden's translation had appeared in 1693 and is more comparable in style to Johnson's verse than is Oldham's "rugged line". Dryden's verse had already been refined by becoming associated in Dryden's ardent imagination with the epic. The passage is the one in which Juvenal describes biting the fall of Tiberius's favourite, Sejanus:

Some ask for Envy'd Pow'r; which public Hate  
Pursues, and hurries headlong to their Fate:  
Down go the Titles; and the Statue Crown'd,  
Is by base Hands in the next River Drown'd.  
The Guiltless Horses, and the Chariot Wheel  
The same Effects of Vulgar Fury feel:  
The Smith prepares his Hammer for the Stroke,  
While the Lung'd Bellows hissing Fire provoke;  
Sejanus almost first of Roman Names,

The great Sejanus crackles in the Flames:  
Form'd in the Forge, the Pliant Brass is laid  
On Anvils; and of Head and Limbs are made,  
Pans, Cans, and Pisspots, a whole Kitchen Trade.

Here is the same theme of the vanity of political ambition, as turned by Johnson:

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,  
Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;  
Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,  
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.  
On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,  
Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.  
Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door  
Pours in the morning worshipper no more;  
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,  
To growing wealth the dedicator flies,  
From every room descends the painted face,  
That hung the bright Palladium of the place,  
And smok'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold,  
To better features yields the frame of gold;  
For now no more we trace in ev'ry line  
Heroic worth, benevolence divine:  
The form distorted justifies the fall,  
And detestation rids th' indignant wall.

I think that we are bound immediately to ask after reading these passages; can The Vanity of Human Wishes be justly entitled a satire at all? Johnson defined "satire", you may remember, as a "poem in which wickedness of folly is censured;" a definition that can certainly be applied to Juvenal's poem, but less certainly to his. In the passage on Sejanus, Juvenal shows the "fierce indignation" which we associate with satire: an undeviating concentration upon a particular object, combined with a witty use of the relevant from contemporary life. I think this comes across clearly in Dryden's translation. Rather than by indignation, Johnson's lines are inspired by a feeling that could best be called "resignation" - or, even, "pity". The folly, or vanity, of political preferment, is only one of mankind's follies, or vanities. "All is vanity, saith the preacher," and the censure that Johnson lets fall is not the censure of the satirist - harsh, particular, topical - but the censure of the preacher - of the Christian moralist.

Of course, Juvenal himself justifies Johnson's moral

reflectiveness. The tenth Satire ends with Juvenal's deeply moving statement of Stoic philosophy. After ferociously noting the follies of mankind in notorious examples, the Roman asks:

What then remains? Are we depriv'd of Will?  
Must we not wish for fear of wishing III?

Leave the future to the capricious gods, he answers, and for the strength to bear the calamities of the moment, look to yourselves,

and stand confin'd  
To health of Body, and Content of Mind:  
A Soul, that can securely Death defie,  
And count it Nature's Priviledge, to Dye;  
Serene and Manly, harden'd to sustain  
The load of Life, and Exercis'd in Pain;  
Guiltless of Hate, and Proof against Desire;  
That all things weighs, and nothing can admire:  
That dares prefer the Toils of Hercules  
To dalliance, Banquets, and Ignoble ease.  
The Path to Peace is Virtue: What I show,  
Thy Self may freely, on Thy Self bestow:  
Fortune was never Worshipp'd by the Wise;  
But, set aloft by Fools, Usurps the Skies.

Juvenal's stern stoical philosophy allows him to satirize, with a vengeance. He can castigate the folly and wickedness about him because virtue lies within the capacity of all of us. But Johnson, the Christian moralist, has no such confidence in the individual's ability to rise above his nature. He does not counsel self-reliance; only prayer, and then doubtfully:

Four forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,  
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;  
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;  
For patience sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;  
For faith, that panting for a happier seat,  
Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat:  
These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,  
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;  
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,  
And makes the happiness she does not find.

Johnson's profound sense of the tragedy of the human predicament

prevents The Vanity of Human Wishes from being classed properly as satire. It is a solemn review of the general situation of man, not an attack on aberrations from a correct standard of conduct, as in Juvenal; and it is consequently suffused with charity, not intensified with stoical contempt.

I think that the reason for the tone of The Vanity of Human Wishes lies with Johnson's Christianity, but the style itself is attributable to his great forerunners, Dryden and Pope. The phrase "a rugged line" to describe John Oldham's style occurs, of course, in Dryden's verses to Oldham's memory:

O early ripe! to thy abundant store  
What could advancing Age have added more?  
It might (what Nature never gives the young)  
Have taught the numbers of thy native Tongue.  
But Satyr needs not those, and wit will shine  
Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line.

Dryden himself had concluded that satire did require "numbers" and justified their use by claiming, as we have seen, that satire was undoubtedly a species of epic, an assumption made equally by Pope.

The brilliant use of the epic by both these poets allowed them to unite poetry and virulence - to speak simply. But their successors, among whom the epic ambition was increasingly dormant, if not already dead, found it easier to assume the manner than to practice the method. The Vanity of Human Wishes is, in this respect, a good example of what was happening. The epical style of the verse, its ponderousness and elevation, lead it into generalized utterances, which seem remote from day to day concerns - the materials of true satire.

Johnson's contemporaries certainly found a difference between London and the later poem. London was topical and went into three editions in two months, proof sufficient of its having scored a hit with ordinary readers. The Vanity of Human Wishes was much less popular, in spite of being the greater poem. "When Johnson lived much with the Herveys," Garrick remarked, rather cuttingly, "and saw a good deal of what was passing in life, he wrote his London, which is lively and easy. When he became more retired, he gave us his Vanity of Human Wishes, which is as hard as Greek. Had he gone on to imitate another satire, it would have been as hard as Hebrew." Garrick may be a little unfair, out of personal

resentment, but he was surely correct in thinking that Johnson had taken satire too far out of the ordinary world, to which it belonged.

But satire was soon to be returned to the ordinary world - with Johnson as one of its chief victims. Charles Churchill's first satire, The Rosciad, which was published in 1761, deliberately rejected both general satire and the mock epic; it was intensely personal and unsophisticated. The actors and actresses on the contemporary stage were shown contending for the chair of Roscius, the great Roman actor, and their faults and pretensions were discussed with extraordinary truculence, in powerful, simple verse. Churchill could not dispense with the improvements which had been introduced into English verse by Dryden and Pope, but he deliberately tried for originality and independence. He had much of the vigour of Oldham's "rugged line", with more skill.

The Rosciad was one of the greatest successes of the century. The poet made so much money from the nine editions that he was able to resign his curacy and set himself up as a man about town. He survived the excesses of his new life for only four years, but he published in this time no less than thirteen satires; another two were left unfinished - satires that, however hastily composed, were capable of terrorizing the literary and political scene. Johnson was one of his victims. He appears as Pomposo, in The Ghost:

Pomposo, insolent and loud,  
Vain idol of a scribbling crowd...  
Who proudly seiz'd of Learning's throne,  
Now damns all Learning but his own;  
Who scorns those common wares to trade in,  
Reas'ning, Convincing, and Persuading,  
But makes each Sentence current pass  
With Puppy, Coxcomb, Scoundrel, Ass;  
For 'tis with him a certain rule,  
The Folly's prov'd, when he calls Fool;  
Who, to increase his native strength,  
Draws words, six syllables in length,  
With which, assisted with a frown  
By way of Club, he knocks us down...

The usual opinion is that Johnson did not deserve this attack, which was written in retaliation for his publicly expressed dislike of Churchill's poetry. At least Johnson's opinion

would account for Churchill's personal animus, but, as Johnson himself acknowledged, "Personal resentment...can add great force to general principles;" and on general principles Johnson deserved his inclusion in *The Ghost*. One of Johnson's weakest sides was his credulity, and though it is true that he served on the committee of investigation that helped to prove the Cock Lane ghost an imposture, he helped to lend credence to other tales of apparitions by appearing to take this one seriously, as worth formal investigation. Credulity and superstition were the vices of the age, in the opinion of William Hogarth as well as of Churchill, and Churchill was entitled to attack Johnson, in the interests of the general principle of rationality.

I have not, however, brought in Churchill to praise him at Johnson's expense, but rather to show how satire, in its attempt to recover its primitive vigour, rejected the generalities into which it had been carried. Satire is inspired by personal resentment; it deals in personalities. But Churchill's attack on Johnson should remind us when we question its relevance, that satire cannot harm, however it may hurt, unless it is justified. Let Johnson have the last word on the matter. "All truth is valuable," he argued, in defence of *The Dunciad*, "and satirical criticism may be considered as useful when it rectifies error and improves judgement: he that refines the public taste is a public benefactor."

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#### THE BRIGHTON MULBERRY TREE

Mr. G. P. Burstow, The Junior School, Brighton College, Sussex (part author of *The History of Brighton College*), is preparing an article on the mulberry tree in the grounds of the College which is believed to have Johnsonian associations.

The mulberry tree, said to have been a twig from the one in Shakespeare's garden at New Place Stratford on Avon snatched at the Jubilee Commemoration by Samuel Johnson, was originally planted in the garden of Henry Thrale's house in West Street, Brighton. Mr. Burstow has accumulated strong evidence for the truth of the tradition that the tree was removed to the grounds of Brighton College when Thrale's house was pulled down in 1866. He adds that he has found no reference to the tree in any of the standard works on Johnson or the Thrales, and welcomes readers' observations.

JOHNSON AND COWLEY\*

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In accepting the invitation of the Johnson Society to speak at this meeting, I fear that I exemplify Johnson's definitions of the word "Upstart" as "a man suddenly exalted" and of "Uppish" as "proud; arrogant. A low word." I am wholly and obviously unqualified for any such honour, but I am all too easily flattered. And I am always profoundly grateful for any excuse which allows me to spend a little time in pondering over Johnson.

Because this year marks the tercentenary of Cowley's death, because Johnson's account of Cowley occupies a rather special place among his Lives, and because that account is more frequently discussed with reference to its central section on metaphysical poetry than with reference to what it suggests about Cowley, I have hoped that a reminder of some points connected with that Life might be appropriate. We begin, as so often in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the booksellers. Edward Dilly has recorded that it was partly anxiety for the eyesight of readers who wrestled with Bell's "little trifling edition" of The Poets, partly perturbation at errors discovered in that publication, and partly concern for what he calls "our Literary Property" which moved him and others of the "most, respectable booksellers" to plan in 1776 their own edition and to send a deputation to Johnson asking him to furnish the biographical and critical introductions. In the first edition (1779) of this undertaking, the Life of Cowley was placed first in the first volume, and seems to have been the first of those which Johnson wrote specifically for the booksellers' project. It was, however, virtually a twin. On 11 October, 1777, Johnson's Diary has the entry "Finished the Life of Cowley"; but on the next day he recorded the completion of the Life of Denham; so the two were carried simultaneously.

Johnson's interest in Cowley was not new. As long ago as 1750, for instance, he had devoted No. 6 of The Rambler to animadversions upon the poet's escapism. In the Preface to his Poems (1668) which reflects a mood of despondency - his skilled services to the Royalist party and to the Royal family itself had brought esteem but no post-Restoration recognition -

\* A paper read to the Johnson Society of London on 15 April, 1967; the Rev. F. N. Doubleday, M.R.C.S., in the Chair.

Cowley expresses a wish "to retire to some of our American Plantations, not to seek for Gold, or enrich myself with the traffick of those parts (which is the end of most men that travel thither...) But to forsake this world for ever... and to bury myself there in some obscure retreat (But not without the Consolation of Letters and Philosophy)."<sup>1</sup> How Cowley would secure such alleviations in this locality is not shown. Johnson deplores his lack of realistic good sense. England herself had surely "innumerable coverts sufficiently dark to have concealed the genius of Cowley".<sup>2</sup> Moreover, vicissitude, had he stayed at home, would inevitably have diminished his woe by providing a distracting "succession of new objects". Moreover, his woes would assuredly have followed him to America, and he would "have been soon convinced, ... that he, who has so little knowledge of human nature, as to seek happiness by changing any thing, but his own dispositions, will waste his life in fruitless efforts, and multiply the griefs which he purposes to remove."<sup>3</sup> This is rather hard on Cowley, whose disappointment was natural enough and whose "brain drain" impulse was transient and unrealised. But Johnson also extols him as "exalted by genius and enlarged by study", so No. 6 of The Rambler does Cowley no great disservice.

In 1776, says Boswell, Johnson envisaged doing Cowley an inestimable service: that of editing his works. This would have been a complete and thorough-going affair, since it appealed to Johnson in contrast to Hurd's Select Works of Abraham Cowley, which Johnson disapproved of because he thought it a mutilation of Cowley's achievement to print only selections from his writing. Two years later, Johnson had changed his mind about this. On 30 March, 1778, seemingly in a relaxed mood after one of those Streatham dinners, he confided to Boswell: "I was angry with Hurd about Cowley, for having published a selection of his works: but, upon better consideration, I think there is no impropriety in a man's publishing as much as he chooses of any authour, if he does not put the rest out of the way." Perhaps this leniency sprang partly from Johnson's own exertions since Easter Eve, 1777, when he uneasily took time off (only a short time) from his religious observances to confer with the booksellers. He had quickly agreed to furnish the Lives, and refers to them buoyantly in mini-terms: "I am engaged to write little Lives, and little Prefaces, to a little edition of The English Poets." Perhaps he was encouraged by the words of Henry Felton, whose Dissertation on Reading the Classics (first written, 1709) Johnson knew, for he quotes it: "I have often wished, my Lord"

cries Felton to the youthful Duke of Rutland, whom he seeks to imbue with a devotion to literature, "that some of the finest Wits would undertake the finest Writers in the World, and give us a Comment upon them, to display the Life and Beauty of their Authors: It requireth a Genius like that wherewith they writ, to write upon them."<sup>4</sup> Johnson had not been asked to introduce classical authors. But he, like Felton, was critically concerned with the moderns, and especially with those who, like Dryden, Milton, and Cowley, were renowned as classicists. His didactic bent might respond to Felton's pedagogical stress on the merit of extolling eminent writers: "to shew ... the bright Parts, the peculiar Excellencies, the Force and Spirit, the Ease and Gentleness of their Writings: How all is uncommon, and all is natural, and everything so thought and said, that it is impossible to deliver better thoughts in better Words."<sup>5</sup> Johnson was less of an enthusiast; but Felton's comment on the marriage of the uncommon and the natural approaches very closely to Johnson's own theory of wit. That Johnson was equally prepared to attribute blame appeared in September 1777, when Boswell asked whether he would really write the Life of any poet put forward by the booksellers, even if the man were a dunce. "Yes, Sir, and say he was a dunce." Boswell noticed that Johnson "seemed now not much to relish talking of this edition". The "little Lives" had become a major undertaking, and this magnitude may well have moved Johnson to condone the publishing of selections. Moreover, his researches into Cowley, whose Life was almost finished, must have revealed to Johnson that Hurd's basis of selection, and also many of Hurd's pithy, pointed notes, were in line with his own estimate of Cowley's value. However that may be, Johnson was now content to furnish merely a critical Life of Cowley rather than a full and scholarly edition of his Works.

Because Johnson's Lives are so superbly written, so stimulating, and so undyingly fresh, one cannot regret that they ousted any notion of an edition. Still, in view of Johnson's own excellence as an editor, and the challenge which Cowley's erudition and versatility would have posed, one may pay the passing tribute of a sigh to the stillborn project. If Johnson's Cowley, in several stout volumes, could stand now beside Johnson's Shakespeare, it would be less needful for us today to exclaim with Pope, "Who now reads Cowley?" And that it is needful, Mr. Chairman, will probably be endorsed by any would-be purchaser who, in this tercentenary year, seeks to procure through normal channels a complete, or even a fairly

full, edition of Cowley's Works (nor is reassurance to be found in Whitaker's Paperback Catalogue).<sup>6</sup>

In his own day, and for some time afterwards, Cowley was very much admired. The darling of Dryden's youth, he was rated by Denham with Ben Jonson and Spenser; Milton (as Johnson reminds us) placed Cowley, after Spenser and Shakespeare, as one of England's three greatest poets. Subsequently, as Loiseau has shown,<sup>7</sup> he was criticised by Walsh, the later Dryden, Rymer, Dennis and Addison; Mulgrave and Oldmixon, voicing the height of the reaction, had censured Cowley's mean diction, ill-wrought verse and "prosaick poetry". Pope loved and admired "the language of (Cowley's) heart" but endorsed the now general dislike of Cowley's wit and conceits. Warton thought him "indisputably a genius"; but that his taste was perverted, false and unclassical despite his learning. Hurd opined that everything Cowley wrote was either so good, or so bad, that a separation should be made, lest the bad should hide the good. Hurd praises Cowley's "moral air, and tender sensibility of mind" but blames his addiction to the taste of his time, which was "the worst imaginable".

More recently, an introductory eulogy by Cibber had echoed the admiration of Sprat, whose Life of Cowley, based on personal knowledge, must always be a basic source. This trend seems to have irked Johnson, who at the beginning of his own Life censures Sprat for furnishing "a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life of Cowley; for he writes with so little detail, that scarcely anything is distinctly known, but all is shown confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyric." Since Cowley had left his MSS to Sprat (rather as Johnson gave those of the Lives to Boswell), it had been natural enough that Sprat, introducing a posthumous edition of his friend's works, should commend and sympathise with him. Cowley's life had not been easy; his Muse, like Goldsmith's

Dear charming Nymph, neglected and decried ...  
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so

(though whether the most munificent of Nymphs could have kept Goldsmith solvent is questionable indeed) had rewarded him with fame, but not with money; Jermyn, his employer, had rescued him there. He and Sprat had planned and worked together in connection with the Royal Society; both were profoundly stirred by the new vision of scientific and philosophical advance.

Sprat wanted to show what Cowley had achieved despite the "warlike, various, and tragical age" which he had found so difficult to write in. None the less, Johnson's point is supported by the contrast between Sprat's smoothly flowing but single-toned account and the sharply detailed, prickly, and stimulating Life which Johnson himself produced. Johnson had sources such as Antony à Wood, Hurd, and Peck, which had not been available to Sprat; he refers also to Cowley's published letter to Bennett, and to Dryden, Joshua Barnes, Addison, Rymer, Denham, Clarendon and Felton, though mainly in critical connections. He certainly succeeded in the aim of surpassing Sprat in variety, precision and informativeness, on a scale beyond that which he had probably first envisaged. Writing to Nichols, Johnson owned that he had "been drawn to a great length, but Cowley or Waller never had any critical examination before". This is a surprising statement, for Loiseau's fascinating and detailed study shows that Cowley had been extensively discussed, not only by such known writers as I have mentioned, but also by anonymous critics in periodicals and elsewhere. Much of this writing must have been familiar to Johnson, who himself refers us to Addison's important Spectator No. 62 on Cowley, and who is, for instance over The Mistress and  Davideis, often closely in line with his predecessors. He sought, one supposes, to furnish something distinctive in kind; and here again he succeeded, partly from brilliance in actual writing and partly through the central dissertation on what he called metaphysical poetry.

To discuss at all adequately Johnson's treatment of Cowley, one would need first to review, and to quote extensively from, Cowley's writings; especially, I think, from those which Johnson rather cursorily dismisses. Today, I can only pick out a few points which seem to have interest in the general Johnson-Cowley situation: outstandingly, those instances where Johnson's known opinions or attitudes are involved.

First, one notices a rather pernickety passion for accuracy. Cowley, who at Westminster School had been a brilliant classical prodigy, tells us that his hatred of "all constraint" had been such that his masters "could never prevail on me ... to learn without book the common rules of grammar; in which they dispenced with me alone, because they found I made a shift to do the usual exercise out of my own reading and observation." Sprat's version is "He was wont to relate that he had this defect in his memory ... that his teachers never could bring it to retain the ordinary rules of grammar."

Johnson alleges that Cowley is "propagating a wonder" - unjustifiably, since Cowley "does not tell that he could not learn the rules, but that, being able to perform his exercises without them ... he spared himself the labour." To say this is to rely on Cowley's printed statement and to disregard the phrase of Sprat's "He was wont to relate that ..." Johnson is, though, supported by Felton, though he does not cite him; Felton says, on this matter, "I am of Opinion, that Language may be attained by the Reverse of the Method that is generally taken, and a Youth taught to know Grammar by Books instead of Books by Grammar. This was Mr. Cowley's case, and in some Measure it was my own at the same School ... There is no Necessity of burthening the memory with an exact Repetition of the Rules."<sup>8</sup> Johnson, perhaps, is more interested in getting after Sprat than in such progressive theories of education as commended themselves to Felton. Yet Johnson himself, I think, adds one imaginative touch. Cowley explains, in a charming passage which one would love to quote in full, how he was first seduced by the chimes of poetry: "I remember, when I began to read ... there was wont to lye in my mother's parlour ... Spenser's works: this I happened to fall upon, and was infinitely delighted ... so that, I think, I had read him all over before I was twelve years old."<sup>9</sup> Sprat, more tersely, echoes this. Johnson says "In the window of his mother's room lay Spenser's Fairy Queen, in which he very early took delight." Whence comes this window, unmentioned by Cowley? Is it Johnson's own imaginative picture of the enthralled child, poring over an enchanting poem in the lightest corner of a wainscoted London room? However that may be, the Faerie Queene is adduced by Johnson as the "accident" which determined the course of Cowley's genius - genius being characteristically defined as "a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction."

One direction which Johnson himself habitually rejected was that of the Pastoral. While still at school, Cowley produced, and later published, a comedy called Love's Riddle which was sufficiently admired. This play, says Johnson, "was of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore ... adds little to the wonders of Cowley's minority." Remembering those disappointing shepherds in Rasselas who at first seemed idyllic but proved to be rude, ignorant, stupid, and inarticulate, remembering too Johnson's verdict on the pastoral form of Lycidas, "easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting", one tends to feel that he is at it again. Characteristically, too, he disapproves of The Mistress, a

collection of love poems first published in 1647, because it formed, as Cowley tells us, "not a Picture of the Poet in love, but of things and persons imagin'd by him," a convention which Cowley felt obliged to follow because a poet then was scarcely recognised as such until he had shown himself competently versed in love. Johnson despises this. Petrarch, the founder of the convention, was "a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness". (Research on Laura has tended to confirm this view; but Johnson, who holds that the ladies of other classical poets were similarly authentic, might be unhappy over today's suggestions that many of these were perhaps fictitious too.) Cowley's work as secretary to Jermy and to the exiled Henrietta Maria was, for Johnson, a more satisfactory achievement: "At Paris ... he was engaged in translating real things of real importance with real men and real women, and ... did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry." Having completed the biography, Johnson makes a suspiciously handsome bow to Sprat, recommending "the perusal of his work, to which my narration can be considered only as a slender supplement." He then sets about buttressing the supplement by the celebrated dissertation on metaphysical poetry, which bisects his exposition of Cowley alone.

Whatever its merits, this treatment does not operate to the advantage of Cowley. It opens by referring to him as one of those poets "who have written with narrow views, and who instead of tracing intellectual pleasures in the mind of man paid their court to temporary prejudices." It is difficult to think of a more fantastic allegation than this. I doubt whether any poet in our whole tradition has tried more consistently and variously than Cowley to extend his intellectual range and to trace, and transmit, the intellectual pleasures which were his stimulus and consolation. Robert B. Hinman, in Abraham Cowley's World of Order (Harvard, 1960), has shown in meticulous and convincing detail how alive and up to date was Cowley's general knowledge, and how vigorous his interest in its poetic embodiment. He concludes that "No poetic imagination in the seventeenth century was more stimulated than Cowley's by the intellectual energy of his age ... Few writers have so effectively transmuted so many exciting ideas, or so much interesting data into poetic utterance." Cowley, we must remember, took a Doctor's degree (admittedly with the help of Royal influence) late in life, and justified it by learned botanical writings as well as by poems on scientific themes; he admired Bacon and Hobbes, whose work he studied closely, and appreciated Harvey's discovery of the circulation

of the blood; he sought, with a sense of poetic vocation no less genuine than Milton's, to synthesise the new philosophy, science, art, and religion, seeing all as a complex revealing the divine will, and the poet, with his unifying artefact, as something approaching an earthly counterpart of God. The religious and spiritual strain in this thinking might well appeal to Johnson, but though he commends Cowley's piety he seems to do this more in a spirit of reverence than of full response. The implications of Cowley's wider outlook he disregards, or scornfully reduces. For instance, Cowley's The Muse describes the creative and unifying function of Poetry, who not only recreates actuality but fashions also her own men, materials, thoughts and figures; who links past, present and future time, choosing at will "out of the wrack of Time of things that it will save from Oblivion". This he at one point conveys through an image which may be linked with his poem on Harvey's discovery and which concerns two aspects of what is yet unborn. The Muse, in Cowley's invocation,

into the close Nests of Time do'st peep,  
And there with piercing Eye,  
Through the firm shell, and the thick White do'st spie,  
Years to come a forming lie,  
Close in their sacred Secondine asleep,<sup>10</sup>

on which the poet mildly remarks "There is no difficulty, I think, in the Metaphor of making a year to come like an Egg not yet hatch't, but brooding."<sup>11</sup> Johnson's comment is "having once an egg in his mind, he cannot forbear to show us that he knows what an egg contains." Cowley's fascinated interest in the nature of structure and the processes of growth has no appeal for Johnson; he appears to have perused Cowley's Plantarum, a long Latin poem on the qualities of plants, with what he unforgettably describes as "sluggish frigidity".

Wordsworth was looking into the future when in the Preface to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads he expressed the hope that "if the time should ever come when what is now called science ..., familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man." Whether or not this hope has indeed since been realised in our own time, Wordsworth expresses very exactly what Cowley, for his own period, steadily tried to do. Johnson's disregard, considering his own interest in chemical

experiments, may seem surprising, but it is of course linked with his insistence on the artistic value of the poetic product, which in turn is dominated by his rejection of the particular in favour of the general, and his disapprobation of that fantastic complexity of metaphor and conceit which he censured as "heterogeneous ideas yoked by violence together". His stress upon the nature of true wit as "that which is at once natural and new", which reminds us of Felton's "how all is uncommon, and all is natural" forms the basis on which he assesses the "metaphysical" poets. Of the forty-five illustrative quotations which adorn this central discussion, twenty-seven come from Cowley, sixteen from Donne, and two from Cleveland. Johnson's scorn of abstruseness, intricacy, and "enormous and disgusting hyperbole" cannot be read without an unholy glee - at least, I think it is, in part, unholy. For though Johnson's statements impress, they too obviously form a cover for a lack of sensitivity. Cowley's lines on his Mistress bathing:

The fish around her crowded, as they do  
To the false light that treacherous fishes show,  
And all with as much ease might taken be,  
As she at first took me:  
For ne'er did light so clear  
Among the waves appear,  
Though every night the sun himself set there.

strike me as acceptably connected and pleasingly fanciful. But Johnson finds them "violent and unnatural". Without multiplying instances, one must note that Cowley, whose reflective thread is normally coherent but delicate and frequently extended, is likely to fare badly in the rather piecemeal treatment which Johnson here employs. Johnson's grand central section makes one sore with the booksellers for not including Donne in his own right, but it does not considerably advance our understanding of Cowley.

When Johnson returns to Cowley alone, though, he makes amends; he praises generously the Ode on Wit, where he finds the poet superbly illustrative in his condemnation of exuberance; and he specially commends The Chronicle for its gaiety, facility, and dance of words, such as it would be "vain to expect except from Cowley". As the poem has less fame now than of yore, I quote briefly to show what aspect of Cowley found such high regard:

Margarita first possest,  
If I remember well, my brest,  
Margarita first of all;  
But when a while the wanton Maid  
With my restless Heart had plaid,  
Martha took the flying Ball 12

In successive similar stanzas, the ball is passed to Catharine, Elisa, Mary, Ann, Mary the Second, Rebecca, Judith, Susanna, Isabella, and others, until finally "Heleonora, First o' th' Name" commands the field. Unqualified praise from Johnson for this may surprise; but it is, I think, stanzas 12 and 13 which evoke two of his most charming sentences. Cowley tells of

the politick Arts  
To take and keep mens hearts,  
The Letters, Embassies, and Spies,  
The Frowns, and Smiles, and Flatteries,  
The Quarrels, Tears, and Perjuries,  
Numberless, Nameless Mysteries!

And all the Little Lime-twigs laid  
By Matchavil the Waiting-Maid;

Johnson is equally nimble: "His strength always appears in his agility; his volatility is not the flutter of a light, but the bound of an elastic mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it; the moralist, the politician, and the critic, mingle their influence even in this airy frolic of genius." How flat, in comparison, is Hurd's remark on the poem: "This agreeable Ballad has had justice done to it. Nothing is more famous, even in our days, than Cowley's Mistresses."

On the Pindaric Odes, Cowley had explained that, in view of the huge distance and disparity between Greek society and our own, any attempt at word-for-word correspondence must be unrealistic and would inflict "a vile and unworthy kind of servitude"; so he sought not so much "to let the Reader know precisely what (Pindar) spoke, as what was his way and manner of speaking."<sup>13</sup> He was later supported by Felton, who urges that Paraphrase may sometimes be in fact "the true Translation" and thinks that Cowley's Odes achieve success because "he was of a Genius equal to his Author". Johnson sees Cowley's method as so working out that "nothing was required of him but not to write, as Pindar would not have written" and he deplors Cowley's particularity, lightness and ease, but finds in some

poems, such as The Resurrection, the true Pindaric dignity. He is more favourable than is Hurd, who thinks that Cowley's style was "very ill suited" to this end, being "for the most part, careless, and, sometimes, affectedly vulgar". Images such as

The Red Sea's slaughter  
New dyes the water's name

(almost a Joycean conceit) do not appeal to Johnson, who also complains that Cowley's "total negligence of language", his laxity and lawlessness were infectious: "all the boys and girls caught the pleasing fashion, and they that could do nothing else could write like Pindar." Cowley's easy colloquialisms, and his technique and theory of embodying and reflecting his thought in the "number" (or metrical and syllabic structure) of the line raise doubts in Johnson, who none the less recognizes the attempt at "an improved and scientific versification". On one of Cowley's instances, the intentionally protracted line: "Like some fair pine o'er-looking all th'ignobler wood" Johnson cannot discover "why the pine is taller in an Alexandrine than in ten syllables". But he admires Cowley's identification of the stream "Which runs, and, as it runs, for ever will run on". He rejects Cowley's Monosyllabic gigantism in the epic portrait of Goliath:

Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and o'er  
His breast a thick plate of strong brass he wore

but finds some of Cowley's monosyllabic lines "smooth and sonorous." Considering how unusual and how frankly experimental Cowley's versification often is, and remembering Johnson's esteem for the regular perfections of Pope, one is impressed by the tolerance of Johnson's remark on Dauides: "Cowley was, I believe, the first poet that mingled Alexandrines at pleasure with the common heroic of ten syllables; and from him Dryden borrowed the practice, whether ornamental or licentious. He considered the verse of twelve syllables as elevated and majestic, and has therefore deviated into that measure when he supposes the voice heard of the Supreme Being...." A pious gesture which Johnson approves, but which Cowley does not invariably use. God's first speech is in heroic couplets, beginning

Are we forgotten then so soon? can He  
Look on his Crown, and not remember Me  
That gave it?

and ending, monosyllabically,

The Man who has his God no aid can lack,  
And we who bid him Go, will bring him back.<sup>14</sup>

God's second speech, in Book IV, is in alexandrines: it opens

This stubborn Land sins still, nor is it Thee, but Us  
(Who have been so long their King) they seek to cast off thus.

Not surprisingly its effect on the listeners proves various:

Some their demand repented, others prais'd,  
Some had no thoughts at all, but star'd and gaz'd.<sup>15</sup>

To see how Cowley can use the occasional single alexandrine pleasingly, one must, I think, turn to the picture of the Infant Christ in Book II.

In her chaste arms th'Eternal Infant lies,  
Th'Almighty voyce chang'd into feeble cryes.  
Heav'en contained Virgins oft, and will do more;  
Never did Virgin contain Heav'en before.  
Angels peep round to view this mystick thing,  
And Halleluiah round, all Halleluiah sing.<sup>16</sup>

where the last line has a cumulative breadth, though inferior to Milton's "bright-harnest Angels". But perhaps the peeping wit in such a passage contributed to Johnson's main problem over Davideis - his dislike of religious poetry's trend towards frivolous and vain ornament. In Davideis, he found wit and learning unprofitably squandered. And it, like Paradise Lost, is too long, even though Cowley never got past Book IV: "By this abruptness posterity lost more instruction than delight." For myself, I have never been able to consider Davideis closely enough to know whether my enjoyment of it - with all its glaring faults and oddities - is more than a quirk of ignorance, so I can suggest only with diffidence that I find it much more interesting than Johnson leads me to expect. But because this is a tercentenary year for both Cowley and Paradise Lost, I must say bluntly that I do wish that Johnson, who devotes some lines to Rymer's comparison between Tasso's Jerusalem and Milton's epic, could have found space for a full comparison of the epic diction of Cowley and Milton. He notes a parallel in the treatment of Satan's staff, but little more. Here, Johnson, probably because his life of Cowley was already so long,

ignores a matter of historical importance which, perhaps, could have been more easily probed in Johnson's day than now: that of the possible connexions, or lack of them, between Milton's approach - spread over many years - and that of Cowley to the writing of sacred epic, and the language suitable to that end. Sprat says that Cowley began upon Davideis while at Cambridge, though he did not print it until he included (with an interesting explanation) the incomplete work in the 1668 edition. Milton, who quitted Cambridge probably in the year when Cowley went up (1637) maintained connexions with the University and its Latinists, and had also friends, such as Hartlib, who knew Cowley: through these he could, conceivably, have seen Davideis in MS before Cowley went to France in 1646. When Cowley returned (1656), he was imprisoned and sought the help of those near to Cromwell whose influence might - and did - effect his release. Would he not try, as Davenant in the same situation is thought to have done, to see Milton? If he did so, epic might well be discussed, since Paradise Lost was then pre-occupying Milton. There is an interesting similarity, which cannot be examined here, between steps and arguments used by Davenant, after his release, to establish opera in England (1656 onwards) and also, in the Letter to Hobbes, to commend his own Gondibert, and the way in which Cowley - in almost Miltonic prose - proposes his own epic theme:

When I consider ... how many ... bright and magnificent subjects the Holy Scripture affords ... to Poesie, in the wise managing and illustrating whereof, the Glory of God Almighty might be joyned with the singular utility and noblest delight of Mankind; It is not without grief and indignation that I behold that Divine Science employing all her inexhaustible riches of Wit and Eloquence, either in wicked and beggerly Flattery, or the unmanly idolising of Foolish Women, or the wretched affectation of scurril Laughter.... It is time to recover [Poetry] out of the [Devil's] hands, and to restore it to the Kingdom of God who is the Father of it.<sup>17</sup>

So, though he will never finish Davideis, Cowley prints the incomplete text of his sacred epic "as the opening of a way to the courage and industry of some other persons, who may be able to perform it thoroughly and carefully." Whether Cowley envisaged Milton (now blind) as such a successor, and therefore wrote "courage and industry" in that order, we shall probably never know. It is certain, of course, that both poets found that a Latinate diction suited their end: and here, surely, was

a field finely suited for Johnson, had he chosen to go in. But he did not. T. S. Eliot had observed that "the foreign idiom, the use of a word in a foreign way or with the meaning of the foreign word from which it is derived rather than the accepted meaning in English ... is an act of violence which Milton (was) the first to commit."<sup>18</sup> Yet does not Cowley's line "The birds obscene far from his passage fly" with his note (No. 196, Book II, Dauides) that "Obscene was a word in use among the Augures signifying that which portended ill-Fortune" furnish an earlier instance of such violence? Cowley's description of the horses that "with proud prancings beat the putrid ground" is an obvious and avowed imitation of Virgil's famous line; but it, and other instances, might be thought to attest Cowley's anticipation of the Latinate ingenuity of Milton. Johnson's opinion here would have been of value; one must also regret that he had no scope to discuss Cowley's frequently fascinating and always learned notes.

Such regrets cannot amount to criticism, since Johnson was writing within a compass which prohibited such excursions. In conclusion, one can only, and humbly, admire what he did so masterfully achieve. His views on Cowley seem not to have been very new nor, in one sense, profound; yet the more this is recognised, the more necessary and pleasurable does it become to read and re-read the Life, and always with fresh reward. This is Johnson's own artistic triumph, accomplished through quality of mind, personal integrity and sheer excellence of writing. Johnson and Cowley had often little in common, but Johnson toughly and brilliantly demonstrates throughout that he himself is most certainly endowed with Felton's primary requisite for the critic - "a Genius equal to his Author".

#### Documentation

1. The English Writings of Abraham Cowley, ed. A. R. Waller, Cambridge English Classics, 1905, I ("Poems"), p.8.
2. Citations from Johnson's Life of Cowley in this article are drawn from the Everyman Edition of The Lives of the English Poets, ed. Archer-Hind, n.d., I, pp.1 - 45.
3. The Rambler, 12th ed., London, 1791, No. 6, p.32.
4. A Dissertation on Reading the Classics and Forming a Just Style, by Henry Felton, D.D. I quote from the Fourth Edition, London (B. Motte) 1730, p.45.
5. Ibid., p.46.

6. L. C. Martin's Abraham Cowley Poetry & Prose (Clarendon Press, 1949) is available and is a helpful selection, but it is not very full; for instance, it gives only 154 lines of  Davideis, all from Book I. Its admirable notes most usefully inform the student but (necessarily) show little of Cowley's own habits of annotation.
7. Loiseau, J., Abraham Cowley, sa vie, son oeuvre. Paris, 1931.
8. Cowley's Prose Works, ed. Lumby, J. R., Pitt Press, Cambridge, 1891. "Of Myself", p.169.
9. Ibid., p.170.
10. Cowley, English Writings, I, p.186.
11. Ibid., p.187.
12. Ibid., p.39.
13. Ibid., p.156.
14. Ibid., p.251.
15. Ibid., p.373.
16. Ibid., p.303.
17. Ibid., p.12.
18. Eliot, T. S., On Poetry and Poets, Faber, 1957, "Milton II", p.154.

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#### JOHNSON IN MINIATURE?

Mr. J. G. Raymer, 25 Trenham Drive, Warlingham, Surrey, would welcome any comments on a wood carving which he possesses (illustrated on facing page). In particular he would like to know of the existence of any similar figures.

The carving, contained in a deep ebonised frame, is in a fine grained wood suggestive of Box. Size from top of hat to base of plinth is 5½". The plinth bears the words: "R. Carpenter, Sculpsit, London 1784".

The department of Sculpture of the V and A Museum have identified the figure as a genuine piece of late eighteenth-century wood carving in a style and concept unmistakable English. They have no other record of the Sculptor's name and work although he must have been well practised in the art of miniature carving. The figure seems unique in that whilst wood was used in miniature carving on the Continent, the practice in England was to work in either terra cotta or wax.

In the opinion of staff at the V and A, and the British Museum, the figure could well be a portrayal of Dr. Johnson.



JOHNSON AND CHARLOTTE LENNOX\*

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Samuel Johnson never became a rich man, and his literary career is strongly marked by what Boswell repeatedly called his "constitutional indolence".<sup>1</sup> It is nevertheless true to say that one of his outstanding personal characteristics throughout his career was the unstinting assistance, both financial and literary, which he gave to others. Financially, as Boswell remarks, "His liberality, indeed, was at all periods of his life very remarkable".<sup>2</sup> We are given repeated instances of this charity and compassion, ranging from Johnson's kindness to "the poor, who watched him, between his house and the tavern where he dined" - to whom "He frequently gave all the silver in his pocket"<sup>3</sup> - to his generosity towards his own servant (Francis Barber) and ill-assorted household dependents (Anna Williams and Robert Levett, later joined by Mrs. Desmoulins and "Poll" Carmichael).<sup>4</sup> This group of household dependents is of particular interest in that it illustrates Johnson's forbearance and tolerance as well as his generosity, showing the remarkable extent to which he was prepared to put up with inconvenience and ingratitude without withdrawing his assistance. Boswell remarks on "how uncomfortable his home was made by the perpetual jarring of those whom he charitably accommodated under his roof", and quotes Johnson's summary of their personal relationships: "Williams hates everybody; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll loves none of them."<sup>5</sup> In spite of this acrimony, Johnson continued to assist them all, and his conduct here seems particularly relevant to our present topic, namely, his relationship with Mrs. Lennox. There is no record of his ever giving Mrs. Lennox or her family any direct financial assistance; in fact, the only surviving evidence points in exactly the opposite direction, Johnson having once asked Mrs. Lennox's husband for the loan of a guinea.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, however, the kind of forbearance shown by Johnson in accepting and tolerating the unpleasant characteristics of his dependents is one of the most marked features of his association with Mrs. Lennox.

Johnson's other outstanding form of charity - the literary and professional assistance which he gave to his fellow-

\* A paper read to the Johnson Society of London on 18 March, 1967; Miss Mary Lascelles, M.A., in the Chair.

writers - is central to our topic. As a writer, Johnson had first-hand experience in practically every kind of contemporary literature - poetry, drama, prose fiction, the essay, scholarly writing, lexicography, literary criticism, and, of course, the more mundane work of translation, the writing of prefaces and dedications and all the other miscellaneous work likely to be undertaken by the professional writer of that period. This breadth of experience, combined with his equally wide reading and his perceptive powers of criticism, was in itself sufficient to make him an ideal adviser on any conceivable kind of literary problem. In addition to this, his life as a professional writer made him an expert in the marketing of literature as he was in the writing of it. The profession of letters of his day tended to be overcrowded at the lower levels. No matter how gifted a would-be professional writer might be, the gateway to success - in the commercial sense of making a living out of letters - was extremely constricted. Any beginner, however talented, was largely dependent on the good will of the booksellers, theatre managers and reviewers. His success (even his survival) was therefore very closely related to his influence, negotiating powers and general knowledge of the conditions governing the literary profession. In this commercial respect, as well as in the more aesthetic respect, Johnson's qualifications as a helper and adviser were unsurpassed. As early as 1750, for example, the combination of Johnson's ability, experience and personality had put him on terms of mutual friendship and respect with many of the leading booksellers and printers (such as Millar, Dodsley, Payne, Strahan and Richardson), one of the main theatre managers (Garrick) and the proprietor of the leading periodical (Cave of The Gentleman's Magazine). With this immense amount of influence to draw upon, then, together with the reserves of his own experience (both literary and commercial), he was in a position to launch any talented newcomer in the most efficacious possible manner, and to give him the best possible assistance at every stage in his career. At the same time, his generosity and compassion ensured that he made lavish use of these powers of assistance throughout his life.

The range of writers who benefitted from Johnson's assistance, and the various kinds of assistance which he gave in individual cases, makes a fascinating study. We remember, for example, not only his relationships with his contemporaries (such as Richardson) and with younger writers (such as Joseph Barretti, Oliver Goldsmith and Fanny Burney), but also the dozens of prefaces and dedications, and the miscellaneous advice

and assistance of all descriptions, given to all kinds of works and authors. On this occasion, however, we must limit ourselves to the examination of only one such relationship, that which existed between Johnson and Mrs. Lennox. This relationship is of particular interest in many ways. If, for example, we agree with Mrs. Lennox's contemporaries in acknowledging her to be one of the major authors of the period, it becomes true to say that Johnson gave more assistance to her, and played a greater part in launching and forwarding her career, over a longer period, than he did in connection with any other major author of his time. Even if we do not feel inclined to agree with this estimation of Mrs. Lennox's intrinsic importance, we are still left with the fact that he apparently contributed more dedications to, and proposals for, her works than to those of any other writer. His relationship with her is one of the longest-lived in his career, covering a period of at least thirty-four years. Over this period, he helped her in a very wide range of ways, and much of their correspondence over a period of at least twenty-five years has fortunately survived. Bearing all this in mind, it can reasonably be claimed that their relationship is of interest not only for its own sake, but for the degree to which it epitomises the manner and degree of Johnson's assistance to other writers.

Before examining Johnson's relationship with Mrs. Lennox in detail, it is necessary to say something about her career, talents and personality. This should give some idea of why Johnson should have spent so much of his time on her, and of the difficulties he encountered in maintaining their relationship. Unfortunately, we cannot devote any time here to the vexed question of Mrs. Lennox's date and place of birth, and of the circumstances of her early life, except perhaps to remark that her date of birth is very unlikely to have been 1720, as is claimed by all extant authorities. The true date is probably 1729 or 1730, and her place of birth was certainly not New York (as is currently accepted), although she spent some of her childhood there.<sup>7</sup> Of her early years, it is sufficient to say here that she returned to England alone in the mid 1740 s, was patronised by ladies of the Court and wrote poetry for her own amusement, until her highly imprudent marriage in October 1747<sup>8</sup> obliged her to begin writing in earnest, for profit. Her first known publication (Poems on Several Occasions) appeared only a month after her marriage, and her last (Euphemia, a novel) in 1790. Even after that, she made more than one unsuccessful attempt to publish (or

re-publish) her works in the 1790s, and she eventually died destitute in 1804. For most of her adult life, then, she was obliged to make a living as a professional writer. She turned her hand to a very wide range of literary projects, including six novels, three dramas, a volume of poetry, a work on the sources of Shakespeare's plays (Shakespeare Illustrated), a periodical for ladies and at least seven translations from the French (one of these being a seventeenth-century French romance, one a discussion of Greek drama and the remainder historical works). The major part of her writing - both quantitatively and qualitatively - was done in the 1750s, and by about 1755 she had established herself as one of the leading writers of her time.<sup>9</sup>

With regard to Mrs. Lennox's literary talents, her main achievement (in the opinion of her contemporaries as well as of ourselves) was as a novelist. Besides possessing a wide reading knowledge of earlier prose fiction, she appears to have been very much aware of the problems inherent in the novel as a literary genre, and of at least some of the developments in narrative technique being made by her contemporaries in France as well as in England. In her own novels, this awareness is combined with an acute realisation of certain of the cultural, social and moral defects of her society (especially as these affect impoverished gentlewomen) and a considerable talent for satire and for the writing of fluent prose. All of these qualities are seen emerging in her first novel, The Life of Harriot Stuart (1750). In her second novel, The Female Quixote (1752), these qualities are developed to a very high degree. Basically, this novel satirises the conventions of the seventeenth-century French romances on the one hand and the gullibility of young inexperienced girls who accept these romances as truthful historical accounts (and model their own conduct and ideas on them) on the other. This theme was by no means original, having been used repeatedly by dramatists, novelists and essayists alike between the publication of Don Quixote and the writing of The Female Quixote. In Mrs. Lennox's hands, however, it can fairly be claimed that the theme was given a new breadth and depth, being used not only to poke fun at fantastic fictions and immature readers, but also to examine the entire relationship between real life, history, fiction and the reading public. Thus, for example, Mrs. Lennox praised beneficial fiction as well as mocking harmful fiction, and satirised not only the people who accepted prose fiction as truthful history but also those who simply rejected all prose fiction as harmful lying. On the whole, The Female Quixote

appears to embody a better treatment of this theme than had appeared in any previous prose fiction since Don Quixote itself, and is certainly Mrs. Lennox's greatest literary achievement.

Unfortunately, the promise of The Female Quixote is not fulfilled in her later novels (Henrietta, Sophia, Eliza and Euphemia).<sup>10</sup> Although her sprightly writing and acute social satire are maintained, this tends to be undermined by an ever-increasing taste for moralising which distorts her characters and blunts her satire. Even so, as her own contemporaries realised,<sup>11</sup> the overall standard of her work entitles her to a high place among the eighteenth-century novelists.

Mrs. Lennox's other literary attempts vary somewhat in interest and quality. Her drama and poetry, for example, contributed very little either to literary development or to the pleasure of her contemporaries. On the other hand, the standard of her periodical (The Lady's Museum, 1760-1761) was unusually high for its time,<sup>12</sup> and her many historical translations were reasonably accurate, well-written and deservedly popular.

Considering Mrs. Lennox's writings as a whole, it can be said that, apart from her excellence as a novelist, the general level of their competence was certainly high enough to justify Johnson's interest in her on literary grounds alone. That Johnson admired her work, and saw the assistance which he gave her in terms of the promotion of literary talent (rather than of the assistance of a friend in distress) is reflected in practically every comment he ever made about her. As well as sharing the general opinion of her novels, it seems very likely that he admired that overall competence which has just been mentioned, and respected the quality of her mind, along the same lines as his appreciation of Goldsmith ("Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit") though possibly not to the same extent. His citation of The Female Quixote under the heading of "talent" (in the sense of "Faculty; power; a gift of nature") in his Dictionary<sup>13</sup> may be some indication of this, as is his alleged statement that "Mrs. Lenox [sic] writes as well as if she could do nothing else, and does everything else as well as if she could not write."<sup>14</sup> Again, he referred to her as a "great genius" with a "powerful mind";<sup>15</sup> and here we suspect that it was the Dictionary definition of a genius as "A man endowed with superior faculties"<sup>16</sup> and hence his admiration of Mrs. Lennox's intellect and achievements in general, that he had in mind. Finally, when he referred to her as being "superior" to Elizabeth Carter, Hannah More and Fanny Burney,<sup>17</sup> he was

probably thinking of the comprehensiveness and general standard of her endeavours, rather than of her novels alone. To sum up, then, it seems obvious that Johnson assisted her throughout her career not so much out of pity or personal affection (although both of these elements were present in the relationship) as out of a genuine desire to promote the worthwhile talent which he found in her writing activities in general as well as in her novels.

When we examine what is known of Mrs. Lennox's personality any suspicion that Johnson gave her literary help for the sake of the pleasure of her company must be considerably diminished, whereas our admiration of Johnson's tolerance and forbearance is correspondingly increased. Even when we allow for the possibility that contemporary criticisms of her behaviour may be distorted by ignorance, envy spite or simple personal dislike, it must be admitted that most of the surviving evidence reveals Mrs. Lennox as a woman remarkably difficult to get on with. One of the main factors of her personality appears to have been a paradoxical combination of remarkable shrewdness in making influential and advantageous literary and social connections on the one hand with an equally remarkable propensity for quarrelling and making enemies on the other. Her shrewdness was probably that born of necessity. In her apparently perpetual poverty,<sup>18</sup> she could not afford failure, and therefore took every possible step to ensure that each of her works would be a financial, as well as a literary, success. Thus, she made a practice of dedicating her works to members of the nobility or the royal family, presumably in the hope of additional financial reward. More important, she also made a practice of seeking the best available literary advice, from the most eminent relevant authorities, while her work was in progress. While she was writing The Female Quixote, for example, she contrived to have her manuscript shown to Richardson; when she tried to make a play out of another of her novels, Henrietta, she sought the advice of Garrick, and when she contemplated writing a history of the Age of Queen Elizabeth she turned to Robertson.<sup>19</sup> From this point of view then, she was never too proud to solicit assistance, or to invite and accept criticism. The potential benefit of all this shrewdness and humility, however, was very much lessened by the fact that she had an exceptionally quick temper, was quarrelsome and impatient, outspoken to the point of rudeness and (above all) bitterly resentful of any criticism of her work that had not been solicited as described above. She therefore, at one time or another, quarrelled with many of the influential friends

that she worked so hard to make (for example, Richardson, Garrick and the bookseller John Payne), and failed to achieve any lasting personal popularity in literary or social circles. The fact that she was obviously persona non grata in the Thrale household<sup>20</sup> probably stems (in part, at least) from this unfortunate personality.

As far as her relationship with Johnson is concerned, the evidence shows that even he was not spared from her quarrelsomeness, resentfulness and rudeness. His awareness of her shortcomings is shown in the full text of his reference to her as "a great genius", which reads: "She has many fopperies, but she is a great genius, and nullam magnum ingenium sine mixtura."<sup>21</sup> Again, in a letter written to her in 1775, he refers to certain aspects of her character in a manner so blunt that she afterwards deleted two of the offending passages.<sup>22</sup> Taking his correspondence with her as a whole, however, we see that his general treatment of her temperamental failings is almost fatherly in its combination of frankness, advice, occasional reproof, patience and continual willingness to forgive and to take the initiative in seeking reconciliation. He praises and mollifies her when she takes criticism too seriously, and, when they quarrel, reminds her that "When friends fall out the first thing to be considered is how to fall in again."<sup>23</sup>

In estimating the relationship between Johnson and Mrs. Lennox at the personal level, then, it is safe to say that, although he obviously must have found some pleasure in her company, he was obliged (as in the case of his household dependents, mentioned earlier) to exercise his restraint and compassion to the full in dealing with her temperamental deficiencies. He acted as her most valuable and intimate adviser in many of the crises of her life, and his frankness and compassion must have made an incalculably large contribution to her happiness and peace of mind throughout most of her working life.

It now remains to examine the details of the practical literary and professional assistance given by Johnson to Mrs. Lennox from the beginning of her career until his death - and, in some ways, beyond. At the outset, two difficulties immediately arise. First, Johnson's participation in Mrs. Lennox's career was so extensive, and certain aspects of it so problematical, that it is not possible to give anything like a comprehensive or definitive account of it within the present scope. Second, shortage of concrete evidence often makes

proof of Johnson's participation - or lack of it - extremely difficult. For example, the facts that Johnson knew Robert Dodsley, and that Mrs. Lennox was given work by Dodsley, are not in themselves sufficient evidence to support the contention that Johnson introduced Mrs. Lennox to Dodsley. Nor, on the other hand, does the fact that a passage in Mrs. Lennox's work has a Johnsonian ring to it give sufficient grounds for asserting that Johnson must have written it for her. Such problems frequently arise in the study of this relationship, and assessing the balance of probability in these cases often demands lengthy speculative argument which cannot be attempted here. Even within the limits imposed by these difficulties, however, it should be possible to present a fairly accurate general outline of the various phases of this particular literary relationship.

The problem of insufficient evidence is particularly acute when we examine the early years of Mrs. Lennox's career, from the appearance of Poems on Several Occasions in November 1747 to that of The Memoirs of the Duke of Sully - which was published by Dodsley in March 1751.<sup>24</sup> Even so, there seem to be sufficient grounds for claiming that Johnson's interest and influence played a major part in her successful establishment as a professional writer. There is no reason to suppose that Johnson had anything to do with Samuel Paterson's publication of her Poems - or, for that matter, with her unsuccessful attempts to become an actress as well as a writer.<sup>25</sup> Her first substantial piece of professional progress appears to have taken place in the summer of 1749, when proposals for a new edition of her poems were issued, and an anonymous admirer gave them additional advertisement by a poem in her praise which was published in the Gentleman's Magazine.<sup>26</sup> Here, one is tempted to suggest that Johnson's close and long-standing connection with the Gentleman's Magazine might have had something to do with this development, but any such suggestion must remain purely speculative. A much more major advancement in Mrs. Lennox's career occurred towards the end of 1750. First, the booksellers Payne and Bouquet became sufficiently interested in her to pay Strahan for the printing of "1000 Proposals for Mrs. Lennox" (probably for a subscription edition of her poems) in October; subsequently, a second laudatory poem occasioned by "reading her Poems, printing by Subscription" appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for November, together with two of her own poems. In December her first novel, Harriot Stuart, was published by Payne and Bouquet. Finally, the Gentleman's Magazine printed yet another poem in praise of

her work in January 1751.<sup>27</sup> An undated letter from Johnson to Mrs. Lennox refers to the fact that she had asked him to intercede on her behalf with both Payne and Cave.<sup>28</sup> Although we cannot be absolutely certain, the subject-matter of this letter corresponds sufficiently closely to the aforementioned publications of November and December 1750 to support the tentative suggestion that by that date Mrs. Lennox knew Johnson well enough to ask him to exert his influence on her behalf, and that he did so successfully, thereby playing an important part in securing publication for her first novel.

The remarkably eulogistic mention of Harriot Stuart in the Gentleman's Magazine for December 1750 has been claimed to be both the first critical review of a novel ever to appear in that periodical and the work of Johnson himself.<sup>29</sup> The second claim, at least, appears to have absolutely no evidence in its favour, but at the same time it is remarkable that the Gentleman's Magazine gave outstandingly enthusiastic support to Mrs. Lennox's works throughout the 1750s. In view of Johnson's association with the Magazine, then, it is by no means unlikely that, in general terms, his influence made some contribution to this favourable attitude.

The clinching proof of Johnson's support of Mrs. Lennox's efforts at that period is highly spectacular, being Hawkins' account of the all-night banquet given to Mrs. Lennox at the Ivy Lane Club to celebrate either the writing or the publication of Harriot Stuart.<sup>30</sup> Although it is difficult to date this banquet with any confidence,<sup>31</sup> it is sufficient to say here that the banquet established beyond doubt that, by late 1750 or early 1751, Johnson was prepared to demonstrate his enthusiasm for Mrs. Lennox's work, and his friendship with her, in the most striking possible manner. This enthusiasm makes it particularly tempting to assume that Mrs. Lennox's translating part of Sully's Memoirs for Dodsley in 1751 was the result of Johnson's introducing Mrs. Lennox to Dodsley. This again, however, is a mere speculation, and, whether or not it is true, we have already seen sufficient evidence of Johnson's assistance to Mrs. Lennox to establish that his friendship to her was almost certainly of crucial importance in the early stages of her career.

With the publication of The Female Quixote in March 1752, Mrs. Lennox achieved a striking success both for herself and for her new bookseller, Andrew Millar. Her next publication was probably an anonymous translation of Voltaire's Le Siècle

de Louis XIV, published as The Age of Louis XIV by Dodsley in November 1752. Although her next work (the two-volume Shakespear Illustrated, published by Millar in May 1753) was highly controversial, and probably jeopardised Mrs. Lennox's relationship with Richardson and Garrick alike,<sup>32</sup> its popularity made Millar publish a third volume in February 1754. Subsequently, the popularity of her translation of the full version of Sully's Memoirs published by Millar, the Dodsleys and Shropshire in November 1755, confirmed Mrs. Lennox's status among the booksellers as a proven and valuable professional writer.

Johnson's assistance to Mrs. Lennox throughout this period is at least as important to her as it was at the beginning of her career. The pre-publication history of The Female Quixote is particularly striking in this respect. In the first place, Johnson introduced Mrs. Lennox to Richardson,<sup>33</sup> who, in his turn, criticised parts of her draft of The Female Quixote late in 1751.<sup>34</sup> Johnson, too, is said to have made a direct contribution by writing the second-last chapter for her, but there is no convincing external evidence for this claim.<sup>35</sup> The completed Female Quixote ran into very serious trouble when Millar flatly refused to publish it. Both Richardson and the Earl of Orrery - to whom Johnson had introduced Mrs. Lennox in the first place - attempted to change Millar's mind (as, no doubt, did Johnson), with successful results.<sup>36</sup> Even then, yet another problem arose, in that the printing - and hence the publication - was held up through some fault of Richardson, who, as a printer, was involved in the work. Here again, Mrs. Lennox turned to Johnson for help and advice, which he duly gave.<sup>37</sup> Finally, Johnson contributed in yet another capacity, this time by writing the dedication (to the Earl of Middlesex). His great interest in the entire project is confirmed by the fact that, even although Johnson was in acute distress over his dying wife, he still found time to write a congratulatory letter to Mrs. Lennox on the eve of publication.<sup>38</sup> In general, then, the Female Quixote project very clearly illustrates just how important Johnson's assistance to Mrs. Lennox (both directly, with actual advice, and indirectly, by providing her with introductions) was. In fact, one might go so far as to say that, without Johnson's support, Mrs. Lennox's best novel might never even have been published.

The Age of Louis XIV project was apparently instigated by Richardson,<sup>39</sup> and can therefore be said to owe something to Johnson in that he introduced Mrs. Lennox to Richardson in the

first place. Similarly, another of the friendships which Mrs. Lennox owed to Johnson, this time her friendship with Orrery, was outstandingly helpful in connection with Shakespeare Illustrated: here, Orrery not only had the work dedicated to him, but also lent her considerable assistance in its execution.<sup>40</sup> The exact extent of Johnson's direct participation in Shakespeare Illustrated is difficult to establish. At the very least, he wrote the dedication, and encouraged Mrs. Lennox by praising the work itself - albeit in an ambiguously playful manner.<sup>41</sup> Beyond this, it is possible that he made more fundamental contributions - by suggesting the undertaking in the first place, giving her guidance as to her research materials and even collaborating to some extent in the work itself. The existing external evidence, however, is so slight as to make any suggestions on this matter largely speculative.<sup>42</sup> For the same reason, the attribution of the Gentleman's Magazine review of Shakespeare Illustrated to Johnson<sup>43</sup> cannot be accepted with confidence.

With regard to Sully's Memoirs, Johnson not only wrote the dedication, but also reviewed the work very favourably in his Literary Magazine.<sup>44</sup> On the whole, then, when we review Mrs. Lennox's career from the writing of The Female Quixote to the publication of Sully's Memoirs, we find that Johnson's influence is seen in one form or another in every one of her works in this period. Despite the increasing amount of assistance given to her by other people (whose initial acquaintanceship with her is itself largely attributable to Johnson), he still remains her most constant ally, and the importance of his advice, guidance, assistance and general concern to her progress as a professional writer cannot be over-emphasised.

By this stage in her career, as we have said, Mrs. Lennox was firmly established. Throughout the remainder of the 1750s, however, she continued to turn to Johnson for advice, assistance and encouragement. He wrote the dedication for her pastoral drama, Philander, in 1757, and in 1759 he (together with Orrery, Gregory Sharpe, James Grainger and John Bourryau) contributed translations to her Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy,<sup>45</sup> and supplied the dedication for it. Apart from this purely literary assistance, he recommended at least one French work to her for translation - a recommendation which she failed to act upon - and soothed her with praise and encouragement when her Memoirs of the Countess of Berci (1756) were unfavourably reviewed.<sup>46</sup> As her rage on this occasion was directed at

Johnson himself (whom she unjustly accused of having advised her to translate the unfortunate Memoirs) as well as against the reviewers, this incident reminds us not only of his constant helpfulness towards her, but also of the remarkable degree of patience and magnanimity which he was prepared to exercise in his relationship with her.

So far, we have seen Johnson as being continuously involved with Mrs. Lennox's career from its early stages right up to the publication of The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy in February 1760. From this date until Johnson's death, however, evidence of his direct relationship with her lessens considerably. The most striking break in this hitherto continuous relationship appears when we examine The Lady's Museum (March 1760 - February 1761). Although this periodical was nominally written by Mrs. Lennox, a considerable proportion of the contents was contributed by Orrery and others, possibly because of Mrs. Lennox's ill health in this period. In spite of Johnson's close connection with Brumoy however, and his experience as a periodical writer, none of the items in The Lady's Museum appear to be his. This apparent weakening of the ties between them is further seen in her other works up to 1784. Thus, Johnson appears to have had nothing to do with Eliza (1767), The Sister (1769), Meditations and Penitential Prayers ... (1774) or Old City Manners (1775). The changes in their respective personal circumstances probably had much to do with this altered relationship. Johnson, of course, had his pension, his Club (for which Mrs. Lennox was obviously ineligible) and the Thrales (who disliked her).

Mrs. Lennox wrote far less in this period than she had hitherto. Apart from her failing health, which must have made writing more difficult, various alterations in her personal circumstances (which cannot be gone into here) contributed towards making her application to literature somewhat more sporadic. On the whole, then, it would appear that from about 1760 onwards the lives of Johnson and Mrs. Lennox diverged to an extent which made less frequent professional - and probably social - contact between them inevitable. Having said this, however, it must immediately be pointed out that their contact was very far from being destroyed. On the literary side, Johnson's assistance was still important, and his advice sought after. He wrote, for example, the dedication for the second edition of Henrietta in 1761. More important, when she decided to publish a collected edition of some of her works by subscription in 1775, Johnson both wrote the Proposals for the

edition and gave her valuable advice in connection with the project.<sup>47</sup> Further advice and active assistance was given by him when she became involved in a copyright dispute in 1778. Their professional association, then, though diminished, was still very much in being. Socially, too, they remained in some contact with one another, and some of the undated letters which he wrote to her probably belong to this period.<sup>48</sup> Finally, it must be noted that it is from this period that most of the surviving remarks made by Johnson about her belong. The nature of these remarks and anecdotes, as found in his letters, and his conversations with Boswell, Mrs. Thrale and Fanny Burney, leave us in no doubt that Johnson's interest in Mrs. Lennox's works and material welfare, and his high regard for her abilities, remained strong until his death.

Examining Johnson's relationship with Mrs. Lennox in his lifetime enhances our knowledge of, and respect for, both parties, reminding us of Mrs. Lennox's reputation in her own time on the one hand and deepening our respect for Johnson's generosity, compassion and forbearance on the other. In addition it must be remembered that Johnson's importance to Mrs. Lennox by no means ended with his death. She survived him by almost twenty years, and it seems very much to her credit that, despite her long association with him, and despite her poverty, she made no attempt to exploit the public interest in him by publishing any kind of Johnsonian memoir herself. On the other hand, she did benefit obliquely from her past association with him. For example, it probably accounts to a great extent for the help which she received from Boswell, and from his son.<sup>49</sup> Again, the references to her in the *Lives* of Boswell and Hawkins helped to keep her works and reputation alive in the minds of her contemporaries. Finally, when we consider the crucial part played by Johnson in furthering Mrs. Lennox's career while he was alive, and in the indirect stimulation of interest in her from his death until her own, it seems particularly appropriate that even to this day the majority of readers who make any study of her works and career must surely owe their initial acquaintanceship with her to seeing Johnson crown her with laurel at the Ivy Lane Club, or to hearing him describe her as "superior to them all".

#### Documentation

The following abbreviations have been used:

BLJ      Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell, 1st ed., vols. I - IV (Oxford, 1934); 2nd ed., vols. V - VI (Oxford, 1964).

- Letters The Letters of Samuel Johnson, ed. R. W. Chapman, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1952).  
TLS (a) D. Isles, "Unpublished Johnson Letters", Times Lit. Supp., 29 July 1965, p.666.  
TLS (b) D. Isles, "Other Letters ...", Times Lit. Supp., 5 August 1965, p.685.

Details of the dedications written by Johnson for Mrs. Lennox are to be found in A. T. Hazen's Samuel Johnson's Prefaces and Dedications (New Haven, 1937), pp.89 - 116.

1. BLJ, I, 87 and 203.
2. Ibid., III, 222.
3. Ibid., II, 119.
4. See J. W. Krutch, Samuel Johnson (Harbinger Books ed., New York, 1963), pp.143 - 155, 406.
5. BLJ, III, 368.
6. TLS (a), item 2.
7. These suggested emendations to the currently accepted account of Mrs. Lennox's early years are based on contemporary references to Mrs. Lennox substantiated by military and other records. They will be discussed in detail elsewhere.
8. Apart from noting that at hardly any period of his life did he appear capable of supporting his wife, Mrs. Lennox's husband will not be discussed here.
9. More details (not all of them accurate) concerning Mrs. Lennox's career can be found in M. R. Small's Charlotte Ramsay Lennox (New Haven, 1935; hereafter cited as Small) and G. H. Maynadier's The First American Novelist?, Cambridge (Mass.), 1940.
10. The attribution of Eliza (i.e. The History of Eliza. Written by a Friend, London: J. Dodsley, 1767) to Mrs. Lennox is conjectural, and will be justified in detail elsewhere. The same applies to (i) The Memoirs of the Duke of Sully, during his Residence at the English Court... (London: R. Dodsley, 1751), which is a translation of Books XIV-XVI and XXX of L'Excluse's edition of Memoirs de Maximilien de Bethune ..., and (ii) The Age of Louis XIV (London: R. Dodsley, 1752), a translation of Voltaire's Le Siecle de Louis XIV. In this paper, all three works will be assumed to be Mrs. Lennox's without further discussion.
11. For an over-stated example of this, see Thraliana, ed. K. C. Balderstone (Oxford, 1942), p.328, where her novels are equated with those of Smollett and Fielding.
12. See R. D. Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines 1740-1815 (1962), pp.288-292.
13. A Dictionary of the English Language, 1st ed., 2 vols. (1755), II, sub "Talent", meaning 2.

14. The Edinburgh Weekly Magazine, LVIII, 36 (9 October 1783).
15. Letters, II, 431 (Letter 736. 1).
16. Dictionary, II, sub "Genius", meaning 2.
17. BLJ, IV, 275. Cf. Id., IV, 524.
18. This perpetual poverty might seem incompatible with her success as a professional writer, but is, in fact, frequently referred to by her.
19. TLS (b), items 18, 19, 23, 36.
20. Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, ed. C. Barrett, (1891), I, 45.
21. See n.15.
22. TLS (a), item 10.
23. Ibid., item 14.
24. See n.10.
25. Her first known stage appearance was at Richmond on 3 September 1748 (Small, p.7) and her last as Almeria in The Mourning Bride, at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, Thursday 22 February 1750. See G. W. Stone, Jnr., The London Stage 1660-1800, Part 4 (1747-1776), 3 vols. (Carbondale, 1962), I, 17.
26. Small, p.236.
27. Bodleian MS Film 29 (William Strahan ledgers), Ledger A (20, c.1739-1768), f.73<sup>r</sup>; Small, pp.237, 261.
28. TLS (a), item 3.
29. Arthur Sherbo, "Samuel Johnson and The Gentleman's Magazine, 1750-1755", Johnsonian Studies, ed. M. Wahba (Cairo, 1962), p.139.
30. Sir John Hawkins, The Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D., ed. B. H. Davis (1961), p.121.
31. Hawkins' date, "the spring of 1751" is in many respects unacceptable; spring or autumn 1750 appear to be more likely. I am indebted to Professors J. L. Clifford and B. H. Davis for their valuable suggestions on this point.
32. See Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson, ed. J. Carroll (Oxford, 1964), pp.246, 250 for Richardson's opinion of the work, and TLS (b), item 21 for Garrick's.
33. As n.20.
34. TLS (a), item 1 and (b), items 18, 19.
35. See Small, pp. 79-82, for the arguments in favour of this attribution.
36. TLS (b), item 17.
37. TLS (a), items 4 and 5.
38. TLS (a), item 5.
39. TLS (b), item 20.
40. TLS (b), item 32.
41. TLS (a), item 7.
42. See K. Young, "Johnson on Shakespeare: One Aspect", U. of Wisconsin Stud. in Lang. and Lit., No. 18 [1924] for a full discussion of this question.
43. Sherbo, op. cit., p.145.
44. I, no. iv, 281-282 (15 Sep. - 15 Oct. 1756).
45. Small, pp.257-258.
46. TLS (a), items 8 and 9.
47. TLS (a), item 10.
48. TLS (a), items 12-14.
49. TLS (b), items 42 and 44.

HARLEQUIN RASSELAS

An extract from a lecture by Professor Mayer on  
"Pantomime and Regency Taste"

In a somewhat similar manner, literary works which were Persian by design, but otherwise unsuited for pantomime, were altered to meet the requirements of the Persian fable. The most notable example of this practice is to be found in the treatment accorded Samuel Johnson's philosophical allegory Rasselas, which was transformed by an enterprising arranger at the Sans Pareil to appear in February of 1815 as Harlequin Rasselas; or, The Happy Valley. The libretto for the pantomime has disappeared, but a synopsis, furnished by a playbill, reveals the astonishing fact that while Harlequin Rasselas submitted its characters to perils never remotely considered by Dr. Johnson, the original intent of Johnson's Rasselas, to illustrate "the vanity of human wishes," had been preserved:

According to the supposed Custom of the Abyssinian Monarchs, Rasselas, with other Sons and Daughters of Royalty, is confined in a delightful but inaccessible Valley, from which he can never remove unless called by the Order of Succession to the Throne. Here he is allowed every Pleasure that can charm the Ear, amuse the Eye, or fascinate the Senses. Mechanics, Artificers, Singers, Dancers, the Diversions of Youth, the Instructions of Age, are all happily blended to render this enchanting Retirement a terrestrial Paradise - The Night closes with Songs of Joy, the Morning wakes to sounds of Harmony! Yet amidst all these Delights Rasselas is wretched! The Sorceress, Curiosity, eluding the Vigilance of the Genii who guards the Mountains, gains Admittance and incessantly breaking in on the Repose and Pleasures of the Prince, raises an irresistible Desire in his Breast to roam at large in that World from which he is secluded. This secret Desire he imparts to an old Sage, skilled in Mechanics, who promises to construct a Pair of Wings, by Means of which Prince Rasselas may take his Flight, and for ever bid adieu to his happy Valley. But here the prince's Resolution nearly fails! - In the splendid Pavilion of his favourite Sister Nekayah, he encounters his beautiful and

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beloved Mistress, Floreda. Affection disperses the Infatuation that clouds his Senses, he disregards the awful Voice of the Sorceress, and is on the Point of vowing never to quit the happy Valley, when a winged Serpent, an Agent of Curiosity's, descends with a Map of the World. This has an electrical effect on Rasselas, who descending in Pity to the Distress of His Sister and Mistress, presents them with a counter Map, portraying the Blessings of the Happy Valley; - this they contrast with the troubled Map of the World. Love and fraternal Affection triumph! - He yields to the Voice of Truth, and Joy and Festivity follow - But alas! Rasselas is doomed to be the Victim of Curiosity! in vain he seeks the Couch of Rest, the hag Curiosity is by his Side, - he sees her in the Visions of the Night, her solemn Warnings break in on his Repose; - He wakes distracted and rushing with desperation to the Cave of the Sage, demands the promised Wings. Here expectation is raised to the highest Pitch; but on the first Trial the experiment fails, and the Prince overpowered by Vexation and Disappointment yields to Despair.

A tremendous Snake now enters and, amidst the Horrors of Terror and Dismay, informs Rasselas he is sent by Curiosity to guide him through the Mountains. The Prince and Sage accept the promised Guidance, and immediately proceed to enlarge the Opening through which the Snake passes; they are on the Point of quitting the Valley when Nekayah and Floreda enter; - in vain their Cries, in vain their Tears, Curiosity calls, and the Prince rushes at her bidding through the Mountain Pass, leaving the hapless Floreda senseless in the Arms of Nekayah.

The next scene discovers Curiosity with her attendant Snake, guiding Rasselas and his Companion into the World, hitherto to them unknown. All is delightful Novelty, till a Storm coming on, terrifies the Wanderers, - they endeavour to regain their Happy Valley; - but are prevented by the Entrance of the Mountain Genius, who upbraiding them with Ingratitude and Folly, finally changes Rasselas to Harlequin and the Sage to Clown, dismissing them to experience the Vicissitude of that World they so anxiously wished to explore. Curiosity now comes forward, consoles Harlequin, provides him with a beautiful and merry Guide in Columbine, who presents him with the Tower of Magic. The Eccentricities of Comic Pantomime now commence; Harlequin, Columbine and Companions, visit Egypt, France and England, where being tempted by Curiosity to the Gaming table, he stakes his Magic Sword, which he loses; he is now separated from Columbine, and becomes the Inhabitant of gloomy Prison. Despair seizes on Harlequin, Death is his last Resource! when the Genius of the Mountain appearing, forgives his Errors, and convinced of his unfeigned Repentance, restores him to his Happy Valley and declaring Columbine to be an Aerial Spirit, finally unites him to his beloved Floreda!

THE JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON

Presidency

Dr. W. R. Matthews, the Dean of St. Paul's, is retiring this year, and at the same time giving up the Presidency of our Society. We all deeply regret this, but console ourselves with the knowledge that he has consented to continue as a Vice-President and will take the chair at one of our meetings next season. He takes with him our best wishes for a happy retirement in his new home, and our warmest thanks for honouring us with his interest for so long.

We are indeed fortunate that in Dr. L. F. Powell, our greatest living Johnsonian, we have found a worthy successor. Dr. Powell has been a Vice-President for many years and we warmly welcome him as President.

Change of Venue

Meetings throughout the 1967-68 season will be held at:

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The new programme begins on Saturday 21st October at 3 p.m. with Readings from the Poetry of Pope given by Professor Geoffrey Tillotson. Chairman: Dr. L. F. Powell.

Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month from October to April.

Overseas Visitors

We are always pleased to welcome our friends from overseas to the Society's meetings. It was particularly pleasant to see Mr. Bertrand H. Bronson at our last meeting in April. His essays entitled Johnson Agonistes have recently been reprinted and we look forward to his researches into the ballads.

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When an unexpected visit was paid on Christmas Eve to our member, Mrs. A. S. Pick, who is often prevented from coming to our meetings because of ill health, she was discovered reading one of her Christmas presents - Dr. Johnson and his World, by Ivor Brown.

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