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In Chapter V of *Jane Eyre* the little orphan girl finds her first friend in the terrifying new world of Lowood Institution, the "Dearthills Hall" (as it has been so aptly named by the critic, Elizabeth Rigby, in the Quarterly Review, December 1848), into which she has been dumped by her unfeeling aunt, Mrs. Reed. She discovers this friend, Helen Burns, sitting on a stone bench in the school garden "bent over a book, on the perusal of which she seemed intent". From where Jane stood, she could see the book’s title - it was *Rasselas*.

What is the significance of this choice of book? There is little further reference to it in the novel, apart from the fact that Jane, after a brief examination, decided that *Rasselas* looked dull - "I saw nothing about fairies, nothing about genii, no bright variety seemed spread over the closely-printed pages." But when one considers the outstanding use of symbolism throughout the novel, one is convinced that the choice of this particular novel has a special importance.

The story continues with a conversation between the two girls, to which I shall refer in greater detail later, as I try to show that the choice of *Rasselas* for Helen Burns to read is of very great importance, both in the development of this novel, and in exemplifying the influence of Dr. Johnson upon Charlotte Bronte.

Like all her writing, *Jane Eyre* contains much that is autobiographical. The sufferings of Jane at Lowood School mirror the actual conditions undergone by Charlotte and her sisters at the Clergy Daughters School at Cowan Bridge. But in a deeper sense the change in Jane from the wild, turbulent rebellious orphan child to the calm, well-regulated young woman who refuses the advances of her lover, Rochester, may mirror a change within the personality of Charlotte Bronte herself. In the novel, the influence of Helen Burns has much to do with the change in Jane, and it is significant that Helen advocates following a path of endurance, not seeking self-satisfaction or even revenge for injury. Perhaps she has learnt something of this attitude from her study of *Rasselas*.

You will remember how all the characters in Dr. Johnson's story turn eventually from their search for happiness to lives of usefulness. Pekunah fills her Convent of St. Anthony with pious maidens, for "she was weary of expectation and disgust, and would gladly be fixed in some unvariable state." The princess founds a college of learned women "to

*A paper read at the Johnson Society of London meeting on 18th November 1978

Chairman: Jean Hickling.
raise up for the next age models of prudence and patterns of piety".
The prince desires "a little kingdom, in which he might administer justice
in his own person, and see all the parts of government with his own eyes" —
all plans of life which would meet with the approval of Helen Burns,
and of the adult Charlotte.

Incidentally, the thought and language attributed to Helen
in her first conversation with Jane seems to me to owe much to the
concluding pages of *Rasselas* — Helen says:

We are, and must be, one and all burdened with faults in this world;
but the time will soon come when, I trust, we shall put them off
in putting off our corruptible bodies; when debasement and sin will
fall from us with this cumbrous frame of flesh, and only the spark
of the spirit will remain — the impalpable principle of life and
thought, pure as when it left the Creator to inspire the creature;
whence it came it will return; perhaps again to be communicated
to some being higher than man — perhaps to pass through gradations
of glory, from the pale human soul to brightness to the seraph!

Compare with this Imlac, speaking of the immortality of the soul in the
penultimate chapter of *Rasselas*, who has this to say in answer to Nekayah's
question:

"But the Being", said Nekayah, "whom I fear to name, the Being which
made the soul can destroy it". "He surely can destroy it," answered
Imlac, "since, however unperishable, it receives from a superior
nature its power of duration. That it will not perish by any
inherent cause of decay or principle of corruption, may be shown
by philosophy; but philosophy can tell no more. That it will not
be annihilated by Him that made it, we must humbly learn from
higher authority."

In his autobiography *A Sort of Life*, Graham Greene asserts that
"The influence of early books is profound. So much of the future lies
on the shelves; early reading has more influence on conduct than any
religious teaching." Charlotte Bronte and her sisters and brother,
locked in the narrow community of the Parsonage at Haworth, depended
greatly on the books they were able to read. They had the freedom of
their father's bookshelves, and also the opportunity to borrow books
from the library of the Keighley Mechanics Institute. Further
opportunities came for Charlotte when she was sent to Miss Wooler's
school in 1831. There she formed a lifelong friendship with Ellen Nussey,
to whom she wrote a letter, with advice as to what Ellen should read; and
it is to be noted that Charlotte recommends Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. 
But it was before she went to Miss Wooler’s school that the young Charlotte betrayed her debt to Dr. Johnson in one of the numerous stories which she was writing at the time. Written when she was only thirteen, the story is called “The Search after Happiness” a title strongly reminiscent of the reason given by Prince Rasselas for escaping, at the beginning of the novel, from the Happy Valley of Abyssinia. Like the Prince of Abyssinia, Charlotte’s hero, O’Donnell, leaves a situation of comfort, safety, even luxury, to travel in unknown regions in pursuit of happiness.

The two young princes, his companions, question O’Donnell: “Then why do you go away from us — why do you go from your own house and lands from this great and splendid city to you know not where?” “Because I am not happy here.” “And if you are not happy here where you have everything for which you can wish do you expect to be happy when you are dying of hunger or thirst in a desert or longing for the society of men when you are thousands of miles from any human being?”

“How do you know that that will be my case?”

“It is very likely that it will”.

“And if it was I am determined to go”.

We can compare this conversation with that of Rasselas with his old instructor:

“I fly from pleasure” said the prince “because pleasure has ceased to please; I am lonely because I am miserable, and am unwilling to cloud with my presence the happiness of others”.

“You sir,” said the sage “are the first who has complained of misery in the Happy Valley. I hope to convince you that your complaints have no real cause. You are here in full possession of all that the Emperor of Abyssinia can bestow; here is neither labour to be endured nor danger to be dreaded, yet here is all that labour or danger can procure or purchase. Look round and tell me which of your wants is without supply; if you want nothing, how are you unhappy?”

“That I want nothing”, said the prince, “or that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint....I have already enjoyed too much; give me something to desire.”

The old man was surprised at this new species of affliction, and knew not what to reply, yet was unwilling to be silent. “Sir”, he said “if you had seen the miseries of the world, you would know how to value your present state.”
"Now", said the prince, "you have given me something to desire; I shall long to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness."

So the two adventurers set out on their search. Rasselas goes with one companion, Imlac, but O'Donell goes alone, soon to be joined by one companion, Alexander de Lacey. Early in their journey O'Donell and Alexander seek shelter in a cave where they are joined by a "very old man" who has definite similarities to the hermit who entertained Rasselas and Imlac. Like the hermit, the "very old man" was of respectable antecedents; but unlike the hermit, he had been led away from his home while he was still a child, and after magical adventures which recall the "Arabian Nights", had arrived at the cave which sheltered O'Donell and Alexander.

The entry to the Happy Valley in Rasselas was "a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it has long been disputed whether it was the work of nature or of human industry." Similarly O'Donell and Alexander find their way to the desert land of their abode by "a subterraneous passage which they could not see the end of". O'Donell suggests that they might find happiness at the end of it, so they set out and after "about two days" "they came to the end of the passage, and leaping out of the opening which formed it they entered a new world".

Finally, both Rasselas and O'Donell return home, discovering their true happiness was to be found there.

As would be expected, Rasselas, being the work of a great and mature writer, is much more structured and purposeful than "The Search after Happiness". In both stories conversation is used to a great extent to reveal the characters and to advance the story.

Dr. Johnson includes considerable descriptive passages to set his scene. Here is part of the description of the Happy Valley:

From the mountains on every side rivulets descended, that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle, inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This lake discharged its superfluities by a stream, which entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to precipice till it was heard no more.

Charlotte Bronte also makes use of description; her scenes are more nightmarish and starkly coloured:

They were upon the top of a rock which was more than a thousand fathoms high. All beneath them was liquid mountains tossed to and fro with horrible confusion roaring and raging with a tremendous noise and crowned with waves of foam. All above them was a mighty
firmament in one part covered with black clouds from which darted huge and terrible sheets of lightning. In another part an immense globe of light like silver was hanging in the sky and several smaller globes which sparkled exceedingly surrounded it.

We note how in each passage an appeal is made to our sense of awe at the raging noise and power of water. Charlotte's balanced sentences may well owe a debt to Dr. Johnson's prose; but her nightmare picture seems to have the vividness of drawing from experience and to be a remarkable piece of writing for a child of thirteen.

While the connection with Passelas is seen most clearly in Jane Eyre and in Charlotte's early story of "The Search after Happiness", we can also, I believe, trace the influence of Dr. Johnson in her other novels. In Shirley Charlotte considers the ills of society; unrest among work people, conflict with mill owners, the attitude of the clergy of the established church towards dissenters. We have only to remind ourselves of Dr. Johnson's poem London to see that he, also, concerned himself with the conditions of society in his day; and though it may be argued that this is a perennial theme for authors, I think it must be admitted that both Dr. Johnson and Charlotte Bronte showed an approval of ordered life and harmony in human relationships which was somewhat at variance with accepted opinion.

As regards the style of Charlotte's writing, we have to distinguish between a variety of influences. There is a "Gothic" streak, which seems to hark back to Mrs. Radcliffe and The Castle of Otranto, noticeable in such episodes as the hiding of Mr. Rochester's mad wife in an attic of Thornfield Hall, and all the events which flowed from this, in Jane Eyre, or the ghostly nun in Villette. There is a Byronic streak, which emerges in some very colourful descriptions, and which may explain her "ugly" heroes — Rochester, Louis Moore, Paul Emmanuel. But there is also the use of balanced prose which harks back to Dr. Johnson and the best eighteenth-century prose. Here is a paragraph from Shirley:

Whether, during this busy life — whether, while stern justice and exacting business claimed his energies and harassed his thoughts — he now and then gave one moment, dedicated one effort, to keep alive gentler fires than those which smoulder in the flame of Nemesis, it was not easy to discover. He seldom went near Fieldhead; if he did, his visits were brief; if he called at the Rectory, it was only to hold conferences with the Rector in his study. He maintained his rigid course very steadily. Meantime, the history of the year continued trouble; there was no lull in the tempest of war; her long hurricane still swept the Continent. There was not the faintest sign of serene weather; no opening amid 'the clouds of battle — dust and smoke'; no fall of pure dews genial to the olive;
no cessation of the red rain which nourishes the baleful and
glorious laurel. Meantime Ruin had her sappers as miners
at work under Moore's feet, and whether he rode or walked —
whether he only crossed his counting-house hearth, or galloped
over sullen Rushedge — he was aware of a hollow echo, and felt
the ground shake to his tread.

You will have noted the long sentences with their elaborately
balanced phrases; the classical reference and Latinate vocabulary;
the sense of impending doom built up by the extended metaphor of Ruin
with her sappers at work.

We get some excellent vignettes of minor characters which
remind us of Dr. Johnson in Lives of the Poets. Here are two minor
characters from Shirley:

The Sympos were Church people; of course, the Rector's
niece was received by them with courtesy. Mr. Symson proved to
be a man of spotless respectability, worrying temper, pious
principles and worldly views; his lady was a very good woman,
patient, kind, well-bred. She had been brought up on a narrow
system of views — starved on a few prejudices; a mere handful of
bitter-herbs; a few preferences, soaked till their natural flavour
was extracted, and with no seasoning added in the cooking; some
excellent principles, made up in a stiff raised-crust of bigotry,
difficult to digest; far too submissive was she to complain of
this diet, or to ask for a crumb beyond it.

The crux of the irony here, it seems to me, lies in the use
of the homely culinary metaphor in describing a lady who would regard
herself as much too well-bred to soil her fingers with the humble
art of cooking:

Another paragraph from Shirley describes a nobleman with a
literary turn:

He would beguile her to take moonlight walks with him on the
bridge, for the sole purpose, as it seemed, of pouring into her
ears the longest of his ballads; he would lead her away to sequestered
rustic seats, whence the rush of the surf to the sands was heard
soft and soothing; and when he had her all to himself, and the sea
lay before them, and the scented shade of gardens spread round,
and the tall shelter of cliffs rose behind them, he would pull
out his last batch of sonnets, and read them in a voice tremulous
with emotion. He did not seem to know, that though they might be
rhyme, they were not poetry. It appeared by Shirley's downcast
eye and disturbed face that she knew it, and felt heartily mortified
by the single foible of this good and amiable gentleman.
Herself gentle and retiring, Charlotte could portray a tyrannical woman with consummate skill. Here are two such characters:

Mrs. Horsfall had one virtue — orders received from MacTurk she obeyed to the letter; the Ten Commandments were less binding in her eyes than her surgeon's dictum. In other respects she was no woman, but a dragon. Hortense Moore fell effaced before her; Mrs. Yorke withdrew — crushed; yet both these women were personages of some dignity in their own estimation, and of some bulk in the estimation of others. Perfectly cowed by the breadth, the height, the bone and the brawn of Mrs. Horsfall, they retreated to the back-parlour. She, for her part, sat upstairs when she liked, and downstairs when she preferred it; she took her dram three times a day and her pipe of tobacco four times.

And, from Villette an introduction to the redoubtable Madame Beck:

Madame Beck was a most consistent character; forbearing with all the world and tender to no part of it. Her own children drew her into no deviation from the even tenor of her stoic calm. She was solicitous about her family, vigilant for their interests and physical wellbeing; but she never seemed to know the wish to take her little children upon her lap, to press their rosy lips with her own, to gather them in a genial embrace, to shower on them softly the benignant caress, the loving word.

I would set alongside these vignettes a paragraph from Dr. Johnson's Life of Savage:

He was sometimes so farcompassionate by those who knew both his merit and distresses that they received him into their families, but they soon discovered him to be a very incommodious inmate; for, being always accustomed to an irregular manner of life, he could not confine himself to any stated hours or pay any regard to the rules of a family, but would prolong his conversation till midnight, without considering that business might require his friend's application in the morning; and, when he had persuaded himself to retire to bed, was not, without equal difficulty, called up to dinner; it was therefore impossible to pay him any distinction without the entire subversion of all economy, a kind of establishment which, wherever he went, he always appeared ambitious to overthrow.

Is there not something of the same flow in Charlotte Bronte's sentences, something of the same use of language and of irony? In the study of literature we have been too apt to divide authors into "movements" and to miss the delicate interplay of influences across the generations.
With Charlotte Bronte I hope it has been possible to trace the influence of an eighteenth-century classical writer of great distinction upon an early nineteenth-century novelist who has usually been termed a Romantic.

THE BOUNDARIES OF STREATHAM PARK

The boundaries of the estate were as follows:-

North - Tooting Upper Common Road (now Tooting Bec Road);
South - Mitcham Lane; East - Tooting Upper Common (i.e. S.E. corner)
to Mitcham Lane (indicated now by Ambleside Avenue);
West - Tooting Lower Common Road and Green Lane (now Thrale Road).

The position of the Lodge Gates, which abutted upon Tooting Upper Common can be located by a modern lodge (on the same site) at the corner of Tooting Bec and Aldrington Roads; the House, which faced the Common, being placed about fifty yards south-west of this lodge, midway between North Drive and Ullathorne Road. The long avenue leading to the House from Tooting Lower Common, Graveney, is now indicated by Ullathorne Road, and the lake or moat about three acres in extent lay between Ullathorne Road and Tooting Common. The lake has long been filled in and part of its bed is now the Streatham Lawn Tennis Club. The summer house which Dr. Johnson frequented for meditation and study was in the shrubbery about a hundred and twenty yards to the east of the House and close to where the Southern Railway now runs....

There is an avenue of elm trees crossing Tooting Common at right angles to the House, known as Johnson's Avenue. The two rows of elm trees were planted in the eighteenth century by the Duke of Bedford and by Mr. Thrale, respectively....

The Streatham Park of today is beautifully laid out with pleasant houses and gardens and spacious roads; it is partly bordered by Tooting and Tooting Bec Commons (formerly Tooting Upper and Lower Commons) and elsewhere surrounded by a pleasant residential neighbourhood; the entire area representing the Thrale Hall Estate of former times....

Extracts from an article by Dr. Frank Coleman in The New Rambler July 1953. Dr. Coleman lived in Streatham at four different periods, in two of which he resided in roads adjoining Streatham Park - Ed.
THE LIBRARY PORTRAITS AT STREATHAM PARK*

Mrs. Donald Hyde, Ph.D, D.Litt.

Mr. President, Vice-President, Members and Friends of the Johnson Society of London -

Our Honourable Secretary, Miss Pigrome, told me a few months ago that the Society once possessed "one or more of the doors from the library at Streatham" but, she added, "sadly they were lost in the London blitz during the war". Very sad indeed, but the fact that the Society once owned them, and that some of you may even have seen them, gives my talk an appropriate connection.

The account that I am going to give you is a preliminary sketch of a thorough study I hope to make - of the room - and of the famous Reynolds' portraits that once hung around the walls. As time goes on, I warn you, I may find that I have made errors. This is only a start.

Streatham Park, as you remember, was inherited in 1758 by Henry Thrale, then thirty, only son of Ralph Thrale, the rich brewer. Henry also, of course, inherited the Thrale Brewery in Southwark and the dwelling which was part of the Brewery complex. Streatham Park was his country place, a property of about a hundred acres, located six miles from London. The house, when Henry Thrale took possession, was not impressive, simply a compact three-storied brick building. There were no spacious rooms, no library and none of the extensive landscaping that one associates with Streatham. Thrale's passion for building and for the enhancement of his property did not develop until after he was married.

This event took place five years after he had inherited Streatham Park. On the eleventh of October 1763 he married Hester Lynch Salusbury at St. Anne's Church in Soho, and immediately after the service he brought his bride, accompanied by her mother and her uncle, to Streatham Park. Hester Thrale had never laid eyes on the house before, but she was drawn to it immediately, and in a short while she loved it as much as she hated the house by the Brewery. The Thrales' routine was to spend the winter in Southwark, so that Thrale might avoid the long, dark rides to and from the city. Spring, summer, and early autumn were spent in the country.

* A paper read at the Johnson Society of London Meeting on 15th December, 1979

Chairman: J.R.G. Comyn Esq.
In 1771 Thrale began to make extensive improvements at Streatham, the grounds, the lake, the gardens, and the long walk around the property. The next year, 1772, he was busy with the addition to the house, the bow wing with the library on the ground floor, and Dr. Johnson's bedroom on the floor above. Progress was watched by the entire family, sizeable by this time. Hester, or Queeney, the Thrales' oldest child was eight; Harry, five; Anna Maria, four; Lucy, three; Susan, two; and Sophy, one. Besides the children, there was Mrs. Thrale's mother, Mrs. Salusbury, always at Streatham when the family was in residence. Mrs. Salusbury was now very ill with cancer. Dr. Johnson was also at Streatham, a virtual member of the Thrale family for the past five years.

One day in June 1773, a few days before she died, Mrs. Salusbury expressed such interest in the new rooms, that Thrale carried her, with the assistance of her maid, to see them. He showed her the library and though she was barely able any longer to speak, she gave her whispered approval.

By the next month, July, Johnson's room was ready for occupancy, so by this time the library was presumably inhabitable as well. We know, from the moment it was, it became the favourite room of Johnson, of the Thrales, their family, and their friends. It was the heart of the house.

This fine house no longer exists; it was pulled down in 1863. The library is gone, but we can still discover a good deal about it from various sources. The familiar engraving by William Ellis (1792), shows the new wing. We can see where the chimney was located, and we can assume that the ceilings were about fifteen feet high for there are only two storeys in the wing as opposed to three storeys in the main body of the house. We know that the bow of the room faced west, because it was so designated on the Bromhead "plan" (1822), and from the Streatham Park auction catalogue, we know there were three windows because three pairs of curtains are listed. The catalogue gives more details: they were cotton, lined with salmon coloured calico, trimmed with a fringed valence, and they had a set of "brown holland covers".

The catalogue is helpful in determining the size of the room because it describes a Brussels carpet "planned to the room", thirty one feet six inches by sixteen feet six inches. Did the carpet extend into the large bay? We do not know, but it was a sizeable room.

In front of the fireplace, which was on the north wall, was a fringed hearth rug, seven feet six inches long. And we know from letters of Mrs. Thrale that there was a fine mantel, of which she was very proud. Furniture in the room consisted of "a double headed
scroll-end couch", bolster and cushion "with cases to match the
curtains, and brown Holland covers." There were "six elbow chairs",
with stuffed backs and cases to match the curtains, "and brown Holland
covers". There were four "circular back easy chairs", stuffed in
hair cloth; and "twelve neat ebonized chairs, with cane seats and
brass ornaments"; an "octagon table, made of the root of oak, on
castors"; "a mahogany library table, on castors, with three drawers,
and sliders on each side"; an "elegant mahogany writing table" with
a rising top, covered with blue leather; and there was a "mahogany
library step ladder".

As for the bookshelves which ran along the walls, I have a
little manuscript, a scrap of paper on which Dr. Johnson has written
his "Rules for the Shelves". This came from Mrs. Thrale's archive,
so the "Rules" were very likely for the Streatham Library. They
describe the conventional scheme seen in many places; the first shelf
a foot above the floor, for large folio volumes, a second shelf for
small folios, a third for octavos and quartos, and a fourth for
duodecimos; then, as Johnson said, as many more of the smallest shelves
as needed, "to the top". Johnson gives specific measurements for each
shelf, but we do not know how many of the smallest shelves there were.
If we suppose there were four, the total height would be seven feet six
inches from the floor, and this would leave an equal amount of space for
the pictures and cornice. We can only guess.

To fill the shelves Thrale gave Johnson a hundred pounds to
supplement the Streatham collection already inherited or collected. And
as Mme. D'Arblay (Fanny Burney) says in the Memoirs of her father (II,79)
if Johnson had felt that more money was required for the project,
gerous Thrale would not have hesitated to give it. Johnson did not
ask for more, so he must have thought the sum sufficient for the general
reading collection that was envisioned, a "rational, readable, well
chosen library" for instruction and enjoyment for the Thrales themselves,
their friends, and their growing family. Johnson doubtless made a
booklist for the Thrales, similar to that he wrote out for the
antiquary, Thomas Astle, which still survives.

[As a parenthetical note: it is not known how many books
Johnson purchased with the hundred pounds, but at the time of the 1816
auction (even with some of the library books excluded from the sale),
about twenty-five hundred volumes were listed in the catalogue.]

Appropriate books, in Johnson's opinion, were good, sound
works, in stout, simple covers. He scorned expensive, fine bindings and
gilding. Only the ignorant esteem a book for its cover. To him "all
finery seemed foppery, and all foppery futility" (Memoirs, 79).
These opinions are reminiscent of those found in L'AVIS pour Dresser une Bibliothèque by the seventeenth-century Gabriel Naudé, librarian of Cardinal Mazarin. This small book had been translated into English by John Evelyn (London, 1661) and was well known.

Naudé's advice is again reflected in the general conception of the Streatham library room, that it should not be gilded, nor over-decorated, that it should be in a quiet part of the house, as far as possible from the kitchen, that its windows should have a pleasant view, and that there be about the whole room an air of tranquility conducive to reading and reflection. The books should be upon shelves which would hide the walls, and for decoration, globes, spheres, or maps would be appropriate. For inspiration, there was no need to have antique statues or busts (so often seen without a shoulder or a nose or an ear). Good copies of "the most famous in the profession of letters" were recommended, or pictures of them, so that a reader might "at once make judgement of the wit of the Authors by the Books", also by "their bodies, figure, and physiognomy". All this Naudé said, might well serve as "a puissant spurre" to "follow their track".

The suggestion of showing the pictures of past worthies had already inspired the high frieze in the Upper Reading Room of the Bodleian at Oxford, and also the rows of portraits in gentlemen's libraries at Woburn, Badminton, and Petworth, and the famous set at Chesterfield House in London. A discussion of the appropriateness of such pictures must have taken place, and according to Mme. D'Arblay, "Mr. Thrale resolved to surmount these treasures for the mind (his books) by a similar regale for the eyes, in selecting the persons he most loved to contemplate, from amongst his friends and favourites, to preside over the literature that stood highest in his estimation". (Memoirs, II, 80) Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale could only have applauded his originality and imagination, interpreting the "surround" of historical worthies as a "surround" of his own celebrated living friends.

Mme. D'Arblay continues by saying that Thrale "fixed upon the matchless Sir Joshua Reynolds" to paint his library portraits, each subject being at least occasionally "a part of the brilliant society of Streatham".

Reynolds accepted Thrale's commission to paint the portraits, and he often referred to them with pride as his gallery of celebrities*. Early, certain focal positions must have been determined; the double portrait of Mrs. Thrale and Queeney, to go over the mantel; Thrale, opposite, above the door to his study. And, although I have not found any proof of it, I think Johnson was over the entrance door into the library. The order in which the portraits were to hang and how many the wall space would permit, were subjects which must have been discussed
at length. On the latter point, it was decided that there would be place around the walls for twelve three-quarter length portraits (measuring approximately 29" x 24"). Reynolds' price for each such portrait was £35.

The most animated discussion of all between Johnson and the Thrales must have been the choice of friends. In time, they selected the following men, four very celebrated still: Garrick, Burke, Goldsmith, and Reynolds (who was asked for a self-portrait); less well known today were Guiseppe Baretti, Arthur Murphy, Sir Robert Chambers, Lord Sandys, and William Henry Lyttelton (created Lord Westcote, 1776, and Baron Lyttelton of Frankley, 1794). All the friends were flattered to be included, and entered into the scheme with interest and pleasure. But then came the hard reality of execution, the difficulties of arranging sittings and all manner of other complications and frustrations. The undertaking moved very slowly. Lord Sandys and Lyttelton were not often in London. Sir Robert Chambers was appointed a judge in Bengal and went off to India late in 1773. Goldsmith died in 1774. In 1776 the Thrales met Dr. Burney, distinguished in both the fields of music and letters, and they were so charmed that they wanted a portrait of him painted, to fill the last empty space on the wall, "the last chasm in the chain of Streatham worthies" (Memoirs, 81). The following year, 1777, found Mrs. Thrale still posing for Reynolds, and though Johnson's portrait had been begun in 1772 (The Life and Times of Sir J. Reynolds by C.R. Leslie and Tom Taylor I,36) it was 1778 when he wrote to her. "Sir Joshua has finished my picture, and it seems to please everybody, but I shall wait to see how it pleases you." (Chapman 586). Murphy, who started to pose in 1773, was still posing in 1779. "Of those Sittings I was cruelly impatient - no wonder!" cried Mrs. Thrale. (Verses, FO).

In 1777, she records in her journal that she has written a few character sketches in verse to go with the portraits but, she says, only two or three of them are finished, that of Baretti, her daughters' Italian teacher, she mentions specifically, but, she adds, her verse for him is too long for her page and must wait. (Thrilia, 49). She does say in this entry that the friends' portraits "hang round our Library".

There is no further mention of the pictures in Thrilia until the tenth of January 1781 (the Thrales were still at Streatham after their Christmas house party). She now writes out the verse character sketches, as promised in 1777, giving "the good and the bad" impartially, for "the People who are intended [underlining mine] to have their Portraits hung up in the Library here at Streatham" (Thrilia, 470). "Intended" would imply that the pictures were not yet on the wall.
I believe, though I cannot yet prove it, that when portraits were finished, they were temporarily hung, possibly even carried from country to city, wherever the family was in residence. But as Mrs. Thrale says, on the tenth of January 1781 the final circle of portraits was not yet hung in the Streatham Park library, though each place was determined. The portrait verses are numbered and run counter clockwise. You can place the pictures as Mrs. Thrale leads you around the room.

The first portrait is of Lord Sandys, Thrale's fellow student at Oxford. Sandys was a godfather of the Thrales' son, Ralph, who had been born in 1773. The Thrales and Johnson had visited Sandys and his family at Ombersley Court on their tour to Wales in 1774.

(I shall give you just snatches from a longer verse for Sandys, and for the others as well. Mrs. Thrale is satiric, as you can see).

Lord Sandys' first appears at the head of the Tribe
But flat Insipidity who can describe?
When such Parents and Wife as might check even Pindar
Form Family-Compacts his Genius to hinder...

Next comes Lyttelton, also a friend at Oxford, and it was he who made the Grand Tour with Thrale. Lyttelton was now a distinguished man, recently returned home, after having been Governor of South Carolina (1755) and Minister to Portugal (1760). Lyttelton was the second godfather to little Ralph Thrale:

Next [Sandys] on the right hand, see Lyttelton hang
Polite in Behaviour, prolix in Harangue
With Power well-natured, with Science well bred
He had studied, had travelled, had reason'd, had read
Yet the Mind as the Body was wanting in Strength
For in Lyttelton every thing ran into Length

"Now", as Mrs. Thrale says, "my own & my eldest Daughter's portraits in one Picture come next, and are to be placed over the Chimney". (underlining mine: Thraliana, 471). I think this is a beautiful portrait of Mrs. Thrale, but she could never abide it. She said there was "no resemblance, and the character is less like my father's daughter than Pharaoh's". (Hayward, II, 173). The picture does have the dignity, grace, and serenity so often associated with Reynolds' ladies - qualities certainly not in the lively make-up of Mrs. Thrale. Her comment:

In Features so placid, so smooth, so serene
What Trace of the Wit - or the Welch-woman's seen
Of the Temper sarcastic, the flattering Tongue
and so forth.
Of her daughter, Queeney:

To the World's fiery Tryal too early consign'd  
She soon shall experience it, cruel or kind

And she comments that her remarkable daughter really "deserves  
better lines" for "she is a valuable girl".

"Next in Order" comes Arthur Murphy, the playwright, social  
bachelor, early friend of Thrale, the man who introduced Dr. Johnson  
to the family. She complains again about Reynolds' bland painting:

A manner so studied, so vacant a Face  
These features the Mind of our Murphy disgrace  
...A Mind in which Mirth can with Merit reside  
And Learning turns Frolic with Humour his Guide.

Then comes Goldsmith, whose Retaliation (his character  
verses on friends), was her model for the Streatham library verses:

From our Goldsmith's anomalous Character, who  
Can withhold his Contempt - and his Reverence too?  
From a Poet so polish'd, so paltry a Fellow

and her verse ends with "our odd little Doctor".

Next comes Reynolds himself, whom Mrs. Thrale did not like.  
She thought he had social pretensions, mistreated his sister, had no  
scholarship and no wit. "I wish", she said honestly, that the verse  
"were more favourable":

Of Reynolds what Good can be said? - or what harm?  
His Temper too frigid, his Pencil too warm;  
A rage for Sublimity ill understood  
To seek still for the Great, by forsaking the Good.

Then Robert Chambers (Sir Robert after 1778). He was  
obviously the choice of Johnson and Thrale. Johnson had helped write  
the law lectures Chambers gave at Oxford; and when Thrale received  
his honorary degree he stayed with Chambers, who was head of an  
Oxford College then. Now he had his judgeship in Bengal.  
Mrs. Thrale commented that she did not know him well;

In this luminous Portrait requiring no Shade  
See Chambers' soft Character sweetly display'd  
Oh quickly return with that genuine Smile  
No longer let India's Temptations beguile
The portrait of Garrick, on Chambers' right, received this comment from Mrs. Thrale, that Goldsmith had said everything already in Retaliation, and she herself had really not known Garrick well:

Here's Garrick's loved Features our Mem'ry must trace
Here Praise is exhausted, and Blame has no Place
Many Portraits like this, would defeat my whole Scheme
For what can be said on so hackney'd a Theme?

Now, comes the door to Thrale's study, with his portrait above:

See Thrale from Intruders defending his Door
While he wishes his House should with People run o'er.
Unlike his Companions the Make of his Mind,
In great things expanded, in small Things confin'd;
Yet his Purse at their Call, & his Meat to their Taste,
The Wits he delighted in, lov'd him at last;

Next to Thrale is Baretti, shown reading a book. Baretti had come to Streatham in 1773 as Queeney's Italian tutor. He was fond of her and of all the children but soon, over the matter of discipline, became an enemy of Mrs. Thrale. He left the house suddenly in 1776, without a word. Mrs. Thrale says that her verses about him "are most to my Liking of the whole Collection": (Thraliana, 474)

...By his Crowns you may know him,
He has lately been reading some new-publish'd Poem:
He finds the poor Author a Blockhead, a Beast
A Fool without Sentiment, Judgment or Taste;

Then comes "the good":

Yet let us be candid, and where can we find,
So active, so able, so ardent a Mind?
With your Children more soft; more polite with your Servant,
More firm in Distress, or in Friendship more fervent".

"Next follows Dear Doctor Burney". Mrs. Thrale was always ardently enthusiastic over new friends, and this verse is the only one in the whole collection without a single satiric thrust:

See here happy Contrast! in Burney combine,
Every Power to please, every Talent to shine:
On Burney's right is Burke, and he is given a curious character. Mrs. Thrale explains by saying that when the Thrales and Johnson visited the Burkes at the end of their tour to Wales in 1774, Burke "was the first Man I had ever seen drunk, or heard talk Obscenely". The house was filled with dirt and cobwebs but also with "Pictures and Statues that would not have disgraced the City of Paris itself; where Misery & Magnificence reign in all their Splendour, & in perfect Amity". First, "the good" about his character:

See Burke's bright Intelligence beam from his Face
To his Language give Splendour - his Action give Grace;
Let us list to the Learning that Tongue can display,
Let it steal all Reflexion, all Reason away;

In contrast, his house -

Where scenes of another Sort rise to our View;
Where Meanness usurps sage Oeconomy's Look,
An Humour cracks Jokes out of Ribaldry's Book;
Till no longer in Silence, Confession can lurk,
That from Chaos and Cobwebs could spring even Burke.

Then, this portrait, perhaps over our library doors, and with a wall to itself:

Gigantick in Knowledge, in Virtue, in Strength,
Our Company closes with Johnson at length;

[Who] from Science proud Tree and rich Fruit he receives
Who could shake the whole Trunk, while they turn'd a few leaves
The inflammable Temper - the positive Tongue,
Too conscious of right for endurance of Wrong;
We suffer from Johnson - contented to find
That some notice we gain from so noble a Mind;

Such were the Streatham "worthies", which Mrs. Thrale now says she has described "without Prejudice or partiality; and who will say that any of them are such Characters as one would wish to be oneself? but let any other Set be produced & the manifest Superiority of ours will speedily be acknowledged". (Thrallana, 477)

On January 30th 1781 the Thrales left Streatham for London and the house in Grosvenor Square, which they had leased for the winter. On the tenth of February, Thrale completed his payment to Reynolds for the entire collection of portraits. He had paid £200 in May of 1775. Now with the final payment, his total cost was about £500. By the first of April, the Thrales were still in London, and Thrale was ill. On the fourth of April he died.
It is ironic if he never saw his full gallery of celebrities hanging on the Streatham library walls, if he never had the opportunity in their company to entertain "the Wits" who had come to love him. But I think it doubtful he was able to do this; some of the portraits may not even have been framed at the time of his death for there is a large payment in the Account Book of his Estate on the 17th of October 1781, £45/14 to a Mr. Thomas Vials for "Picture frames".

If the portraits did not hang in the library before Thrale's death, they were certainly all in position shortly thereafter, when the family returned to the house. But it was ironic still, for there could be little entertaining during the traditional year of mourning, and in the autumn of 1782 Mrs. Thrale leased Streatham Park to Lord Shelburne. At the time, Shelburne was Prime Minister and found Bowood, his own country house in Wiltshire, too distant from official duties in London; Streatham served his purpose. There is one anecdote which should be noted during Lord Shelburne's stay. At a dinner party he gave in January 1783, during the negotiation of the Treaty of Peace with France, one of the guests, the Viscomte de Vergennes, son of the Prime Minister of France asked Jeremy Bentham "Are there any such people in England as authors?" The portraits of 'the wits of the age' whom Reynolds had painted for Thrale were still hanging on the walls." Bentham "pointed out to the foolish Viscount the likenesses of Burke, Johnson and Goldsmith" (Johnsonian Miscellanies, I, 108 n 2).

In February 1783 Lord Shelburne resigned the office of Prime Minister, and the following year was created the first Marquess of Lansdowne; he withdrew to his house in Wiltshire, and Streatham was leased to Major-General Dalrymple. Meanwhile Mrs. Thrale and her daughters had a leased house in London, then one in Bath and then - of course - in July 1784, Mrs. Thrale terrified society - and alienated her children and Dr. Johnson forever - by marrying Gabriel Piozzi, the Thrale music teacher.

In September the Piozzis set off for the Continent on their wedding trip. Mrs. Piozzi left the management of Streatham Park in the hands of shrewd John Cator, one of Thrale's executors. She cautioned him to watch after the Reynolds' portraits; these remained in the library, with one exception, the picture of Johnson. This, Mrs. Piozzi proudly carried with her, a large object to transport, but the Piozzis' custom-made coach was ingeniously constructed; providing not only a secure place for the portrait but also another for Piozzi's portable harpsicord, (neatly fitted under one of the seats). (Clifford, 231). All went well, and Mrs. Piozzi wrote to her young friend, the antiquary, Samuel Lysons, from Milan: "Do not neglect Dr. Johnson, you will never see any other Mortal either so wise or so good - I keep his Picture in my Chamber, and
his Works on my Chimney". This letter was written on the 7th of December, and in less than a week – Johnson died.

It was more than two years after Johnson's death when the Piozzis returned to London (March 1787). The Reynolds portraits, except for that of Johnson, were now being enjoyed by another tenant at Streatham Park, one Thomas Steele of the Treasury. Steele's lease still had two years to run. The Piozzis therefore leased a house themselves in London until the end of April 1790. When this time came, they took back Streatham Park, and proceeded with great energy and expense to restore the place, after seven and a half years of damage by tenants. The Piozzis spent over £2,000 on renovation, and by July, the time of their sixth wedding anniversary, they were ready to give an elaborate housewarming. Seventy people dined in various rooms: thirty-six were seated "at an immensely long table in the Library". (Thraliana, 775).

At this dazzling occasion all the portraits of Thrale's celebrated friends were on the walls for the guests to see, and the pictures continued to be seen every other time that the Piozzis entertained. Still the occasion was ironic, for society had never forgiven Mrs. Piozzi for the "low" marriage she had made. The new Piozzi friends did not match the celebrated old Thrale friends. Of all the persons Reynolds painted, who were still living, only one remained loyal to Mrs. Piozzi – that was Arthur Murphy.

The Piozzis drew away from Streatham. They built "Brynbella", a beautiful and more practical house in Wales. They stayed there in the summer, and at Bath in the winter. In 1798 they leased Streatham Park again, and it was still leased when Piozzi, the devoted second husband died in 1809. Mrs. Piozzi continued to lease the house and by this time it had become an unsupportable burden. Taxation and dilapidation charges were ruinous, and each tenant was more irresponsible than the last, still she could not afford to live there herself. And she could not live at Brynbella for she had given this property to Piozzi's nephew and their adopted son, Sir John Piozzi Salusbury and his family. By 1815, all she could afford for herself was a miserable lodging in Bath. She implored the two daughters, who could afford Streatham, to take it over; Queen, now Viscountess Keith, and Sophia, married to Mervik Hoare, the banker. Both refused.

Mrs. Piozzi had only a life-interest in the house; at her death it would go to all four daughters. She did, however, own all the contents outright - and help coming from no other source - she decided to sell her possessions at public auction.
At the beginning of April 1816 she came from Bath to Streatham. "Oh I shall be happy to see my own self once more in the Library", she wrote to her faithful Steward at Streatham, Andrew Leak (HLP-L, 8 March 1816). For a week she worked on the auction catalogue with him and with Squibb the auctioneer, and her friend, Sir James Fellowes, and his wife.

The auction was set for Wednesday, the 8th of May, and scheduled to continue through Monday the 13th. Objects were on view for a number of days before the sale, and great crowds came to the house. The Merrick Hoares were there every day, Leak reported to Mrs. Piozzi in Bath, and the Keiths came several times. The portraits in the library created the greatest interest. Mrs. Piozzi knew that her best reliance was in the portraits. She wrote Leak, they should bring at least £2,000 (HLP-Leak, 15 March 1816) and she hoped to have £6,000 from the whole sale.

Lord Lyttelton's relations, she thought, "are likely enough to purchase his Portrait"... "how many near Friends of Lord Sandys yet live, I know not" (HLP-L, 28 April 1816), and yet there must be some. "I wish Dr. Burney may bid for his Father's portrait", "Murphy's Portrait must not be sold for under L00£ but I have no other Reserves... unless for the Bed I lay in when last at Streatham Park --- and not even that if the full price can be obtained" (HLP-Leak, 5 May 1816).

On the third day of the sale, Friday the 10th of May, twelve Reynolds library portraits were auctioned. Understandably, Mrs. Piozzi withheld the portrait of Thrale (HLP-Leak, 15 May 1816). The Reynolds portrait of the Thrales' friend, Miss Owen, was added to the list to bring the number to the original thirteen.

There was "solemn silence" in the room when the bidding began, Leak wrote to Mrs. Piozzi, and she answered, it "shocks, while it flatters me: ... People felt they were present at poor H.L. Piozzi's Dissection" (HLP-Leak, 15 May 1816). And so they were.

The portraits of Lord Sandys and Lord Lyttelton went for under fifty pounds, and to the persons she thought would buy them; Lady Downshire, a friend, buying the former and Lord Lyttelton's son the latter.

The portraits of Sir Robert Chambers, Baretti, and Dr. Burney each went for under £100; Sir Robert's picture was bought by his widow, Dr. Burney's by his son, and Baretti's portrait by someone described by Mme D'Arblay as "Steward Esquire, I know not who".

The large double portrait of Mrs. Thrale and Queeney was knocked down for only £81/8 to S. Boddington, a rich merchant. This
small price brought a protest from Mrs. Piozzi who complained to
Leak that the portrait was worth at least twice the price "even as
a History-Piece" (HLP-Leak, 12 May 1816).

For five other portraits, the prices ranged, as Mme D'Arblay
said "according to the celebrity of the subjects", in this order:
Sir Joshua Reynolds, £128/2 to Richard Sharp, MP, and a partner
in the West India house of Boddington, Sharp & Phillips; Oliver
Goldsmith, £133/7 to the Duke of Bedford; David Garrick, £183/15 to
Dr. Charles Burney; Edmund Burke, £252 to Richard Sharp; and
finally Dr. Johnson, £387 to George Watson Taylor.

These twelve portraits brought lower prices than Mrs. Piozzi
had hoped, still they accounted for nearly half of the grand total.
This was £3,921/7, a disappointing figure, little more than half
what she had expected and little more than half of the money she
had put into the renovation of the place only two years earlier.

Some of the items once in the library can still be traced;
a considerable number of books which Mrs. Piozzi kept out of the sale
for herself and for Queeney. Also, held back and given to Queeney
were the fine, big Library globes, from which as a precocious infant,
she had gained her knowledge of geography and astronomy. To Leak
Mrs. Piozzi commented, "Lady Keith is kind ... or at least civil;
& receives the Books, Globes etc. with more good Humor than I
expected" (HLP-Leak, 29 May 1816).

The "twelve neat ebonized chairs" Leak bought in for
Mrs. Piozzi and she was delighted to have them again in her Gay
Street house in Bath. (Her bed, parenthetically, reached the full
price and did not return to her, much to the sympathetic distress
of her maid Bessy Jones; "Bessy regrets the Bed" (HLP-Leak, 15 May).
Bessy still "cries after the Bed" (HLP-Leak, 26 May) she reported to
Leak.

As for the portrait of the loyal friend, Arthur Murphy,
Mr. Watson Taylor bid £102/18 for it, a few pounds above the reserve,
but Mrs. Piozzi would not let it go. "Did I tell you", she wrote
to Sir James Fellowes, "I... saved Murphy from the general wreck?
... Mr. Watson Taylor wrote after me to beg him for £157/10; but
I am no longer poor, & when I was, there ought surely to be some
difference made between fidelity and unkindness. When Burneus
were treacherous, and Baretti boisterous, against poor unoffending
HLP, dear Murphy was faithful found, among the faithless faithful
only he" (HLP-Fellowes, 30 May 1816, Hayward, II, 339).

Unfortunately, within three years, Mrs. Piozzi was poor
again, having continued to give away money to her adopted son,
John Salusbury, and now, trying to raise some from any source she could, she offered the Murphy portrait to Mr. Watson Taylor, and he paid £200 for it. She wrote this time to Sir James Fellowes saying, "I must pack Murphy's portrait up very nicely to send off" (30 March 1819, Hayward, 431).

Such was the scattering of the "Streatham Library worthies" in Mrs. Piozzi's lifetime.

Where are the portraits today?

Two are in the houses which belonged to the original sitters; Lord Sandys at Ombersley Court, Lord Lyttelton at Hagley Park.

The portrait of Goldsmith is in the great house of the auction purchaser; the Duke of Bedford, Woburn Abbey.

Three or four others are privately owned; Baretti by Lady Teresa Agnew; Chambers by Col. R.V. Boyle; Thrale and possibly Garrick (the identification of this Garrick portrait is not certain) at Four Oaks Farm.

Six of the portraits are in museums; that of Dr. Burney at the National Portrait Gallery; Burke in the National Gallery of Ireland; Mrs. Thrale and Queeney at the Beaverbrook Gallery, Fredericton, New Brunswick; the portraits of Reynolds and Dr. Johnson at the Tate.

Perhaps many of you remember that in 1967 Mr. John Kerslake put on a remarkable exhibition in London - at the National Portrait Gallery, entitled "Mr. Boswell", and included in the show was a wonderful display of the Streatham library portraits, only two not present.

One which was absent was the double picture of Mrs. Thrale and Queeney. This, Mr. Kerslake had tried very hard to borrow but permission was never granted by the Beaverbrook Museum. The second portrait not to be seen was that of Murphy - because the present whereabouts is unknown. Its provenance can be traced only so far; the portrait passed from Watson Taylor to Sir Robert Peel, and was in the Peel Sale of May 1900. There, it was bought by Agnew's and sold by Agnew's in July 1900, to Charles Fairfax Murray for £336. The picture was in the Fairfax Murray Sale, 14 December 1917, Lot 72. It was sold to the dealer, Arthur Selley, for 380 guineas.
Where is this portrait now? I should certainly like to know. Fortunately, I have a photograph of it, kindly given me by Sir Ellis Waterhouse, so the picture can be identified if it can ever be spotted.

I certainly hope it will be. Do look for it as you visit houses, for Mr. Kerslake and I would like to do a little book, about all the portraits, with full provenance, and Mrs. Thrale's verses, of which there are at least five variants (Huntington, Rylands, Harvard, and two at POP), all this, with the story of the undertaking. It combines so much; the guidance of Johnson, the invention and generosity of Thrale, the genius of Reynolds - and his patience, the co-operation of friends - and their patience, pride and pleasure all around, leavened by the sallies of wit and satire of Mrs. Thrale - and by the inescapable ironies of life.

ANNUAL COMMEMORATION 1979

The annual ceremony was held in Westminster Abbey on Saturday 15th December 1979 by courtesy of the Dean and Chapter. A wreath was laid on Samuel Johnson's grave by Mrs. Donald Hyde who also gave the Commemorative Address. The Service was conducted by The Very Reverend the Dean of Westminster.

Following the Commemoration, the Johnson Society of London held its Christmas Luncheon at the Vitello d'Oro Restaurant, Church House, Westminster. Later in the afternoon Mrs. Hyde presented her paper on "The Library Portraits at Streatham Park".

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Donald Hyde, not only as the speaker but as a distinguished Vice-President of the Society. He referred to her unique personal contribution to the understanding and appreciation of Samuel Johnson through her unremitting research, authorship and, above all, ownership. The astonishing collection brought together at Four Oaks Farm by the late Mr. Donald Hyde and Mrs. Hyde must have stimulated their contribution to and encouragement of Johnsonian scholarship.
THE COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS 1979

Mrs. Donald Hyde Ph.D., D.Litt.

A hundred and ninety five years ago, in December, when Dr. Samuel Johnson lay dying, he asked where he would be buried, and Sir John Hawkins said, "Doubtless in Westminster Abbey". This reply gave Johnson great satisfaction.

A few days later, on Monday 13th December 1784, Johnson died. On the following Monday, a few minutes after twelve o'clock, the funeral procession left his house in Bolt Court; the hearse and six with the coffin, and ten mourning coaches and four, followed by several gentlemen's carriages.

At one o'clock the procession arrived at the Abbey. The pall bearers were Sir Joseph Banks, Sir Charles Bunbury, Edmund Burke, William Windham, Bennet Langton, and George Colman, the elder. The number of mourners was surprisingly few, but Johnson's three executors were here: John Hawkins, Joshua Reynolds and William Scott. And among his friends were: Dr. Burney, George Steevens, Edmund Malone, General Paoli, William Seward, the Reverend George Strahan, the Reverend Samuel Hoole; his doctors - Brocklesby and Cruickshank; and members of his household - Mrs. Desmoulins and Francis Barber - all standing where we are standing now.

The funeral service was read by Johnson's life-time friend, Dr. John Taylor of Ashbourne. After Taylor's reading, the big coffin was laid here, beside the grave of Johnson's friend, David Garrick.

Johnson's funeral was a bare, private service, of the kind that any poor person in the parish might have had - no anthem, no choir, no lesson. The arrangements had been made by Sir John Hawkins. When he had asked what was the difference in cost between a public and private funeral, he had been told that it was a matter of a few pounds to the prebendaries and about ninety pairs of gloves to the choir and attendants. Hawkins had thought for a moment and then said that since "Dr. Johnson had no music in him, he chose the cheapest manner of interment". The "unworthy" funeral, as the papers and public opinion immediately termed it, was assuredly NOT the fault of the Dean and Chapter. It was solely the result of Sir John Hawkins' ungenerous decision.

Time has made amends. Now, even the Hawkins' story is somehow appealing and the simplicity of Johnson's service seems in a way more appropriate and more moving than one of pomp would have been.
Though there were few contemporary friends in Poets’ Corner at Johnson’s funeral, the reward of immortality has brought hundreds and hundreds of new friends here. And there is no one to whom friendship meant more than to Johnson. They come to this spot every day, peering down on this stone as we are, giving thanks for the life and influence of this great man and great Christian.

Our traditional service today, the annual laying of the wreath, is just one testament of Johnson's continuing inspiration and the continuing affection of new friends.

The Thrales of Streatham Park Mary Hyde 1977 368pp 56 illustrations £9.50, $18.00 (prices subject to change without notice) Harvard University Press, 126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1.

Nester Thrale, vivacious and intellectual wife of a prosperous London brewer, began in 1766 a journal devoted to her children; their growth and achievements, their education and illnesses, family travels and diversions. Beyond the life of the children, there is the story of Mrs. Thrale herself, talented and well educated, but held back in many things by conventions of the time. Her greatest defiance came as a widow, when she took a second husband, Gabriel Piozzi, foreigner, music teacher, public entertainer, a decision for which her children and friends never forgave her. Mary Hyde has fully annotated the journal for us, drawing on such sources as the letters between Mrs. Thrale and Samuel Johnson and their journals to fill in the gaps of the "Family Book," providing a continuous account of the family at home and among friends. She brings to her task the authority of wide learning in the field and a wonderful narrative skill. The Thrales' story has both typical and unusual aspects. Special interest derives from their friendship and acquaintance with some of the most celebrated figures of the time. We see vignettes of Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Charles Burney, and Lord North in unguarded moments: the journal is particularly valuable for its insight on Samuel Johnson, showing a side of him that Boswell rarely saw firsthand. To the extent that the family's daily life and vicissitudes were typical, this history offers a revealing account of domestic life and child raising in the eighteenth century. "Unrivalled as a vivid, dramatic story of the actual life of an eighteenth-century family at the centre of both the social and intellectual worlds. Superbly researched, fascinating to read, at once authoritative and warm-hearted. The book is unique" - W. Jackson Bate.
"... AND A MR. OFFELY ..."

Ross E. Wilson MA Th.L

We are all aware that the three pupils of Johnson's school at Edial were, according to Boswell, "the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, a young gentleman of good fortune, who died early."

Who was this Mr. Offely? What was his good fortune? Thanks to some friends in the wine trade, particularly the Port wine trade, I am able to offer the following notes on his background and the goodness of the fortune of Mr. Offely. The spelling may have then been as used by Boswell, but the family has long corrected it to Offley, which form I shall use.

The remotest ancestor of Johnson's pupil I have been able to trace is William Offley, who was twice Mayor of Stafford and afterwards Mayor of Chester. He was Sheriff of the last-named city in 1517. His wife's Christian name is unknown, but her surname was Dorrington - some records spell it Dorringtonne - and she apparently came of a London family, for one of her relatives is described as the daughter of a certain John Dorrington, haberdasher, of London. This William Offley had twelve children, of whom the eldest was Sir Thomas Offley, to whom I shall revert as the ancestor of Johnson's pupil.

Another son of William, and brother to Thomas, was John Offley who was Sheriff of Chester in 1544, and Mayor of the city in 1553. A third brother was Robert, who came to London, settled in Gracechurch Street and became a Merchant of the Staple, and a member of the Haberdashers' Company - which would fit in with the above description of John Dorrington as father of William Offley's wife.

Another brother, Thomas, who also came to London, like his brother was a Merchant of the Staple, but joined another company, the Merchant Taylors, by apprenticeship, and eventually became Warden twice - in 1565 and 1574 - but never attained the dignity of Master. Then came the second William who became, like his brothers, a Merchant of the Staple, and a Merchant Taylor. He did not, however, take any high position in the City of London, and although he was elected both as Sheriff and as Alderman he paid the necessary fines rather than assume these dignities.

We must now revert to Thomas, the eldest son of William. He became Sir Thomas Offley, was, like his brothers, a Merchant Taylor
and a Merchant of the Staple, but he succeeded even more. He became Mayor of the Staple of England and Westminster, a very successful man of business in the City and Lord Mayor in 1556. He made an appropriate marriage, marrying Joane, daughter of one Nicholls, also a Merchant Taylor, and a Merchant of the Staple at Calais - spelt Callice in the records - and her mother had been the daughter of another Merchant of the Staple, Sir Stephen Jennings, who had been Lord Mayor of London in the last year of Henry VII, 1508.

Sir Thomas, then, was both very successful and very well connected, and so well-to-do a man was he that he bought a country estate in his original county, with which he said he had been very familiar as a boy, Madeley Manor. This purchase was made in 1547, the first year of Edward VI, and was made from Sir Edward Bray and Lady Bray, the latter being the daughter of Sir Matthew Brown. This property remained in Offley ownership for generations and then passed into the ownership this century of a notable family who then represented the Offleys.

Lord Mayor Sir Thomas Offley had a surviving son, Henry, who married the daughter of another Lord Mayor, Mary, daughter of Sir John White. Thomas's son Henry had himself a son, John, named - no doubt - after his wife's father, and as the only surviving son and heir of his grandfather at Madeley was a very notable man in the county from which the family had originated in quite ordinary circumstances.

This John Offley of Madeley was knighted in 1615, was High Sheriff of Stafford in 1616, was a Deputy Lieutenant of the same county, twice MP for Stafford and also a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to James VI & I. He married Anne Fuller, daughter of the Member for the City of London, adopting the same practice that marked so many of these Offleys by which they made their marriage alliances amongst the best families of the City, and into families of those who were in the best position to help them advance. Marriage was a practical business proposition.

This Sir John had a son John who went to Trinity College, Oxford, and, like his father, became Sheriff of Stafford in 1649, and, again like his father, married well, taking two wives in succession, both of whom came from important families. By one wife he had a son, John, who will never be forgotten, for it was to this John Offley that Isaac Walton dedicated his Compleat Angler.

This John Offley, of Isaac Walton fame, a Christ Church man, made a very important marriage; his wife Anne was the daughter and eventually heiress of John Crewe, of Crewe, and their son John took his mother's name, and instead of becoming John Offley of Madeley and Crewe became in 1708, the year before Johnson's birth, John Crewe.
John Crewe's brother was baptized as Crewe Offley, taking his grandfather's surname as his Christian name. He was a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, twice MP for Bewdley, and married the daughter of Sir Thomas Lawrence of Chelsea by whom he had one son, John.

This John it was who followed the steps of his grandfather by making sure his name was recorded in history by a literary association; just as grandfather John Offley was the friend of Isaac Walton and had the latter's Compleat Angler dedicated to him, so it was grandson John, the son of Crewe Offley and the daughter of Sir Thomas Lawrence, who was the "Mr. Offley, a young gentleman of good fortune who died early" and who attended Johnson's academy at Edial together with the Garrick brothers.

It can be said quite correctly that the Johnsonian pupil was indeed "a young gentleman of good family." It is somewhat surprising that Boswell did not bother to establish exactly who precisely was this young gentleman of good - of very good - family.

For Walton's friend John Offley had, beside the two sons, John Crewe and Crewe Offley, a daughter Mary. She married at Crewe Hall Robert Needham who was eventually Lord Kilmorey. So we find the Offleys steadily climbing the social ladder until at length one of them was a peeress. This lady lived until 1765 and died at Windsor at the age of eighty. She was the aunt of Johnson's pupil and thus it might have been expected that with the Offley, Crewe and Needham background that Johnson's Edial establishment would have succeeded.

To round off the John Crewe and Crewe Offley generation, the uncle and father respectively of the John Offley who was Johnson's pupil, we may add the following brief notes.

John, the eldest son of Walton's friend, John Offley, changed his name by Act of Parliament in 1708 to become John Crewe; he had succeeded to his grandfather's estates and it was necessary that he assume his grandfather's name. His eldest son John was another John, and this John married Elizabeth Shuttleworth - their eldest son being created the Baron Crewe of Crewe in 1806. Like his ancestors, he represented Stafford in Parliament, sitting from 1765 to 1768, that is, during Johnson's lifetime, and then for the County of Cheshire down to 1806. He left a son and a daughter.

Meantime, the estate of Madeley had passed away from the family - remember that instead of becoming John Offley of Madeley and Crewe he had become John Crewe in 1708 - and one of the Cunliffes,Poster Cunliffe or Cunliffe-Owen, married this first Lord Crewe's only daughter, Elizabeth Emma, and he then assumed the name and arms of Offley, the estate being bequeathed by Lord Crewe to his daughter. On her death without issue the property reverted to her nephew, the third Lord Crewe. Elizabeth Emma's brother, the second Lord Crewe,
married and left an eldest son Hungerford who became the third Lord Crewe and a daughter Annabella, who married Richard Monckton, afterwards the first Lord Houghton.

Hungerford, the third Lord Crewe, dying without issue, his barony became extinct, and his nephew, the son of his sister, who had become the second Lord Houghton, was raised to the peerage in 1885, and promoted as Marquess of Crewe and Earl of Madeley in 1911. Through the marriage of Emma Crewe the old property of Madeley had come back to the family and with it the name of Offley - that estate purchased by Sir Thomas Offley in the first year of Edward VI, the Sir Thomas Offley who was the progenitor of the "Mr. Offley, a young gentleman of good fortune" who was one of Johnson's three pupils at Edial. Had he not died young but lived to a normal old age what advantage he might have been to the indigent Samuel Johnson ...

HOUSE BUILDING ON COLL AND TIREE

Ross E. Wilson MA Th.L

We are all well acquainted with the reports by both Johnson and Boswell of their visits to Coll and housing accommodation there. The Doctor also mentions "another Island called Tireye", known to us as Tiree, and separated from Coll by the two-mile wide Bunn Dubh.

But my attention has recently been drawn to the native architectures of the islands and their quite distinct differences. On Coll, the West Highland or Skye type of thatched house was the norm, that is, houses with a hipped roof but with the thatch hanging over the outer edge of a thinner, dry stone wall, while on Tiree - only two miles away, be it recalled - was the Hebridean type of thatched house with its double walls filled in between with sand or soil, and thus forming a considerable ledge (or "tobhta") round the base of the hipped roof. This type of house was universal with crofters and cottars on Tiree well into the present century.

No one knows why there should be such a difference between the old houses of two so closely adjacent islands. It seems unlikely that the two islands had different forms of architecturally designed houses well up to and even beyond mediæval times at least. Ownership of the islands is thought to have been the decisive factor. Coll has been under the continuous ownership of a number of resident lairds, the most notable being the Macleans of Coll, as we know from the Johnson-Boswell visit, who only sold their estate on the island in 1856 to John Lorne Stewart. The more primitive Hebridean or
"Blackhouse" type on Tiree was in existence until the latter half of the 17th century, when Tiree came into the possession of the House of Argyll. From 1674 and to the present day, Tiree has thus been owned by an absentee laird, and until recently administered by a factor responsible to the Duke of Argyll in Inverary.

There is, however, still a trace that the double-walled Hebridean type of house may once have predominated on Coll. On the machair behind the now derelict house at Caolas are the walls of a ruined cottage which are over four feet and a half thick, being double with a cavity filled with soil. This cottage was inhabited within living memory, and local information is that it had an exposed grass-covered walled top, or "toibhna", at the base of its roof with the couples resting on the inner wall, as in the Tiree houses. This is a freak example, and there are no other remains of this type left on Coll. At Cornaigmore in Coll there was, until fairly recently, a felt-roofed house with a ledge bounding the roof, but this was built by a Tiree man early in this century; it was distinctively peculiar to Tiree in its design. And it may well be that the cottage mentioned above at Caolas was built by newcomers from Tiree, especially as it is located so near the most westerly part of Coll.

We will all recall from the Johnson-Boswell visit the improvements being introduced - such as turnips, the beginnings of a road, for example - by Young Coll then, and that Maclean trend to better the lot of their tenants was continued by the resident lairds. But again we come back to the Coll house as distinct from the more ancient and crude Tiree double-walled house.

The former crofting townships of Coll, such as Totonald, were formed around 1800 under the supervision of Alexander Maclean of Coll, as resident laird, to replace the runrig system, and the remains of houses of that period show they were all of the single-walled West Highland type.

This all indicates that a native and resident laird, or landowner, such as Alexander Maclean was continuing the family tradition, eulogised by the Doctor, of improvements to raise the living conditions of his tenants, many of whom were his own kinsmen. All the houses in the clearance settlements of Bousd and Sorasdail were also all of the West Highland type, except for one or two which were "modernised" by the addition of gable-ends, including the only remaining occupied thatched house on the island.

We are all well aware, thanks to our 1773 visitors, of the strong and loving allegiance of the Coll islanders to their laird Maclean, and it is of interest to note that not only was Tiree without a resident
landlord but its population – some 4,500 at the time of the potato famine in the last century – had little or no allegiance to him, for the Duke of Argyll was a Campbell. The saying held fast, "Fair and false as a Campbell" – the perpetrators of the massacre of Glencoe, among other things.

Summing up, we may say that the difference in architectural styles of domestic dwellings was due to the difference in lairds; on Coll a resident laird and family with the welfare of his tenants and section of island at heart, and on Tiree an absentee landlord interested only in his receipts of revenue. The majority of the islanders of Tiree, many of them Macleans, had little if any enthusiasm for the improvements which John, Fifth Duke of Argyll, attempted to impose on them about 1800 through his resident chamberlain, Malcolm McLaurin.

Read again what the Doctor and Boswell wrote of their visit to Coll and realise again the value of a resident landlord bent on the betterment of his people and property.
VISIT TO BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH, KENT

On September 29th 1979, members of the Johnson Society of London met at Bromley Parish Church for a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial to Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson, Johnson’s dear “Tetty” - the Society’s first visit to this evocative place for many years. Canon David Bartlett, MA, Vicar of Bromley, welcomed us, and Miss Muriel Hughes, BA, the honorary Parish Church Archivist, gave us a lively talk on Bromley in Johnson’s day. Apparently he was so shattered by Tetty’s death that he was unable to attend her funeral, which was arranged at Bromley by his friend, John Hawkesworth, who had connections with the place, so through this accident Bromley is of special interest to the Johnson Society today. Only later did Johnson visit the spot, and provide the moving epitaph on the gravestone now preserved inside the church, in the vestibule rebuilt after the destruction of the church in the last war’s blitz.

After tea and scones served in the church, we visited buildings that were there in Johnson’s times, which he may well have visited himself - the old Palace of the Bishops of Rochester which has survived as part of Stockwell College (with a characteristic folly in its beautiful grounds) and the architecturally distinguished Bromley College, seventeenth-century almshouses for “twenty poor widows (of orthodox & loyal clergymen)”, which would surely have been approved by the Doctor! We were sad to hear that the palace was destined to house bureaucrats, when it would obviously have made the perfect local museum centre, with appropriate reference to the Johnsonian and many other historical connections. We were all very grateful to Dr. David Brown for being the moving spirit behind this delightful excursion.

D.W.

THE STREATHAM PARK DOORS

The valuable mahogany doors which were formerly entrance doors to the library of Streatham Park in Dr. Johnson’s days, and which were presented to the Society by Frank Coleman, Esq., of 31 Weymouth Street, W., also the mahogany Georgian bookcase were unfortunately destroyed by enemy action when St. Clement Danes' Church was burnt out on 10th May 1941. A claim was made under the War Damage Insurance Act (Personal chattels) but the Government Valuer repudiated liability on the ground that the articles should have been insured under the "Business Equipment" section.

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NOMINAL AND VERBAL STYLE IN JOHNSON’S
THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

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In Johnson’s early poem London, The Vanity of Human Wishes, with its vision of the chaos and futility of human ambitions, is already present in embryo. But the early Johnson is more sanguine despite his indignant tone, if only because he provides specific geographical and historical co-ordinates for the harmonious life, in the country and in the classical past, of which the anachronistically named Thales is a representative. In The Vanity of Human Wishes, however, life’s corruption and confusion are seen in the context of human limitations, and happiness is no longer sought within a temporal framework. The reader is exhorted to achieve contentment by placing himself above what is now the flux of human life rather than the corruption of the metropolis. Whereas the reader of London found order ready-made in the country, the reader of the later poem must construct it by transcending experience and surveying it from a higher perspective. In this movement from the involvement of action to the commitment of understanding the style plays a crucial role, which has not hitherto received the attention it warrants. Through constant shifts between verbal and nominal styles, Johnson juxtaposes two very different ways of responding to the ceaseless jostle of human life, and thereby makes the reader measure the relationship between action and cognition.

It may be useful, in this context, to speak of an overview which the mind achieves as a result of surveying mankind from the mount of wisdom, and of a groundview in relation to which this overview is developed. What is significant in this poem is the tension established between the two through the use of contrasting styles; a tension which is not so clearly present in the similarly sententious Essay on Man. Where Pope states his conclusions in a largely nominal language which has already resolved experience into precept, Johnson also presents a groundview of life as it happens. He, therefore, states conclusions, but also involves the reader in the process by which the mind makes order of its experience by participating in human wishes and then only recognising their vanity. Thus we are alternately plunged into the jostle of human life and withdrawn to the vantage-point from which the poet himself surveys mankind:

Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfin’d,
And crowds with crimes the records of mankind;
For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;
Wealth heaped on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys.
Here the immediacy of the first four lines draws us into what is happening; then, in the fifth line, we seem to move above the unstable world of actions and to judge it in terms of conceptual norms such as safety and truth. We move from drama to judgment and from a groundview to an overview.

The stratification of the poem into levels of style sharpens the reader's sense of actually moving from the clutter of the particular and contingent to the stability of general truths. At the risk of over-schematising, it seems possible to say that verbs predominate in the groundview where nouns predominate in the overview, and that the groundview tends to use the present tense where the overview opts for the imperative or interrogative moods. There are, of course, some caveats. If a distinction between verbal and nominal styles is intended to discriminate a mode of expression which is dynamic and stresses actions from one which is static and suggests states, the difference is not always as neatly grammatical as has been assumed by theorists of style. A noun may be charged with verbal energy, as in the line "Fall in the general massacre of gold" (1.22), though in such a case it is the proximity of a vivid verb that imparts this energy to the noun. On the other hand, a verb may be largely nominal in what it suggests, as in "He left the name, at which the world grew pale, / To point a moral, or adorn a tale" (1.221-2). Here the finite verb "left" is a weak one, and the verbs "point" and "adorn" are infinitives which do not denote specific temporal actions. Furthermore, to speak of a passage as written in a verbal style is not to imply that it contains no nouns, but only that the nouns are unimportant and serve as links between the verbs. A passage is characterised as either verbal or nominal on the basis of the words which it "actuates."

Several factors may serve to actuate a word: metrical stress, its position before a caesura or (in the case of masculine rhymes) at the end of a line, the fact that it is polysyllabic, or finally, the vividness of the word. To take one of the more quantifiable of these factors, the opening six lines of the poem, where Johnson establishes an overview, all end with nouns and have nouns before the caesura. It is therefore possible to say that these lines make use of a nominal style. A similar analysis can be done of the long section which presents first a close-up of the rise and fall of Wolsey (11.99-120), and then a detached assessment of his life in the context of history (11.121-34). Both the dramatic narration of Wolsey's life and the reflective summation obviously contain verbs. But in the first passage nine of twenty-two lines end with finite verbs, one with a participle, and two with infinitives which, however, directly follow finite verbs. In the following fourteen lines, by contrast, only one ends with a finite verb, two with participles, and two with infinitives which are not preceded by finite verbs. It therefore seems possible to say that the first passage is predominantly verbal in style, but that the second is not.
It is now possible to look more specifically at an example of verbal style, the description of Xerxes:

With half mankind embattled at his side,
Great Xerxes comes to seize the certain prey,
And starves exhausted regions in his way;
Attendant Platt'ry counts his myriads o'er,
Till counted myriads soothe his pride no more;
Fresh praise is try'd till madness fires his mind,
The waves he lashes, and enchains the wind;
New pow'rs are claim'd, new pow'rs are still bestowed,
Till rude resistance lops the spreading god;

(11.226-34)

What is remarkable about this passage is the number of vivid and forceful verbs that thrust themselves on the reader's attention within a relatively short space: twelve verbs and four participles, to be precise. The opening line of the account of Xerxes, "All times their scenes of pompous woes afford" (1.223), gave the reader an overview; it recalled the tone of the poem's opening, and told him how to interpret Xerxes within the general pattern of history. As a result it used a relatively unforceful verb, "afford," which served only to elaborate the nouns "scenes" and " woes." But in the lines that follow, Johnson plunges us into the drama of Xerxes' life. Violent, overreaching verbs generate an impression of hectic activity. The same order of syntax (subject:verb:object) is used in each clause, and in each case the verb occupies a crucial position as a channel through which the rage of this Johnsonian Tamburlaine is vented on its victim. Furthermore, past participles used as predicative adjectives have, in effect, an implied meaning equivalent to that of an absolute construction employing a passive verb in the present tense. The word "embattled," for instance, suggests that mankind has been and is still being besieged; although the construction is adjectival, it asks to be expanded into a full predication, and therefore contributes to a sense of the passage as crowded with verbs.

According to Pennoloma the basic sentence in English has a characteristic structure as the transference of a force from agent to object via an act: "It consists of three necessary words; the first denoting the agent or subject from which the act starts, the second embodying the very stroke of the act, the third pointing to the object, the receiver of the impact." This statement serves as an excellent characterisation of verbal style, if not of the English sentence in general, and accurately describes the manner in which the syntax of the lines quoted gives prominence to the verbs. Equally characteristic of Johnson's verbal style is an earlier passage in the poem:

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,
A thirst for wealth, and burning to be great;
Delusive Fortune hearth'Incessant call,
They mount, they shine, evaporate and fall. (11.73-6)
Here the verbs are supplemented by participles, and are thrown into relief by the fact that even nouns such as "supplicants" have, etymologically, a participial force. Verbal action is crowded into the passage, and things accelerate to a desperate pace. Finally, four verbs are crammed into a single line (1.76), and the chaotic attempt of the supplicants to forestall time subsides into insubstantiality.

Had Johnson chosen to say the same thing in a nominal style, the result would have been very different. He did in fact say much the same thing in The Rambler:

The state of the Possessor of humble virtues,
to the affecter of great excellencies, is that
of a small well-built cottage of stone,
to the palace raised with ice by the Empress
of Russia; it was for a time splendid and
luminous, but the first sunshine melted it
to nothing.

The verbs here are unobtrusive; indeed, apart from the relatively weak verb "to be" there is only one finite verb. As in most of Johnson's moral prose it is the nouns which stand out. Through the use of a nominal style Johnson cultivates a detached and conceptual tone; he speaks as a reasoning, judging philosopher who balances one state against the other. The use of an allegorical simile reinforces the detachmen resulting from a nominal style, by abstracting the tenor from its vehicle, the moral significance from a narrative embodiment which has no value except as decorative illustration. The lines from the poem, by contrast, immerse the reader in a series of actions as they are happening. The difference may seem slight, but it is significant. In the one case the reader experiences the content of the passage as concept, in the other he experiences it as action. The difference is between a reflective and a dramatic style.

The insistent use of verbs in the groundview actually causes the reader to experience the sense of haste, of futile energy which he is then invited to transcend in the overview. The piling up of verb upon verb in line after line generates an enormous amount of activity that seems to lead nowhere, because the very frequency of the verbs suggests their expendability. It is worth noting, moreover, that in these passages Johnson uses a compound sentence made up of co-ordinate clauses and not of main and subordinate clauses. In the more meditative prose of a Browne or a Donne, the use of subordinating conjunctions complements a largely nominal style; it distances the reader from a situation by asking him to reflect upon it in terms of causes and consequences, alternatives and parallels. Here events are simply
presented in serial order, unsorted by subordination and analysis, in a syntax whose method of linkage is episodic. Through his verbs and through the manner in which he links clauses, Johnson is able to build up a sense of the confusion of an existence ungoverned by reason. The thrusting energy of the verbs conveys the attempt of the heroes of human history to make an absolute out of the purely contingent world of action and ambition. But if the verbs dramatise the aspiration — sometimes trivial and sometimes grand — which tries to halt time, verbs are temporal and they ultimately make it clear that human life is bound by the laws of time.

The use of the present tense, which is the other major stylistic feature of the groundview, serves a similar function to the more general use of verbal style, in showing both the energy and the limitation of human endeavour. One obvious feature of the present is that it is the tense of generalisation. To describe human actions in the past is to suggest that they were done once and for all, at a particular time and by a particular person; to describe them in the present is to suggest that they constitute not specific actions but patterns of human conduct which keep recurring because of the failure of men to learn from experience. But it is, moreover, the use of the present which draws the reader into the groundview and makes it a groundview. The past sets the reader at a temporal remove from what is being described, by reconstituting events in retrospect and therefore with less vividness and immediacy. The present dramatises events and makes them live for him.

But at the same time the very immediacy of what is happening creates another effect, because the events described are so vivid that they become confused. There seems to be nothing but a foreground crowded with actions which cancel each other out because they occur simultaneously. Xerxes rushes all over the place; for a moment he is everywhere at the same time doing everything, and then abruptly we realise that he has got nowhere. The effect of the present, as Vernon Lee has pointed out, is to do away with the sense of cause and effect which is dependent on our being able to project ourselves into the past and future. A world without cause and effect in which man is so immersed in the present that he does not stop to think where it is leading him, must be recognised as self-defeating. Action is piled on action, but the present never becomes a past; nothing is ever consolidated because there is no permanence in the world of action. The style provides a mimesis of this inconclusiveness; as present succeeds present, so today's suppliants are replaced by tomorrow's and drops out of sight. The episodic character of the present comments on the failure even of the Wolseys and Alexanders, who last for five couplets instead of one, to build anything enduring out of their moments of glory. On a larger scale, the poem reflects in its construction the episodic quality of its verbs and clauses; it is not the story of one
man's rise and fall, but rather a series of loosely linked episodes, of exemplary narratives which repeat each other without progressing.

Even as the groundview presents the restless, unstable world of time, however, it is characteristic of the poem's movement that the reader should always feel what Bate calls "the constant centripetal pull toward maxim or aphorism," the pulling together of the contradictions of life in the clarity of concept. The contrast between nominal and verbal style divides the realm of cognition from that of action:

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey mankind, from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scene of crowded life; (11.1-4)

The actuated words here are nouns. The effect of using such words as "toil" and "strife", instead of saying "See one man toil, another strive," is that the reader moves away from involvement in the particular to contemplation of the universal. He is dealing not with the drama of men toiling and striving, but with the concept of toil and strife, and with the state of humanity under such conditions. The crucial noun "observation" directs the reader at the very outset to look for states underlying actions. The energetic verbs of the groundview are absent; words like "survey" suggest a state of mind and are, in any case, infinitives. Since non-finite forms of the verb lack person, number and tense, their use contributes to a sense of impersonality and permanence; an effect which is strengthened because the natural order of the syntax is altered in such a way that the infinitives do not directly follow the finite verb "let", but are prefaced by a series of nouns which weaken their verbal force.

We have already noted the tendency of a nominal style to lay things out discursively rather than dramatically, and Johnson suggests through the counterpointing of styles that understanding alone can come to terms with the instability of the world. Once the poet has made clear the appropriate attitude of ratiocinative observation, it is periodically re-articulated for the reader, as in the reference to Democritus (11.69-70). But the overview that the poem tries to sustain is vigorous in tone, unlike that in Johnson's prose piece, *The Vision of Theodore: The Hermit of Teneriffe*, which is in many ways identical in content and similarly nominal in style. The narrator of the prose piece speaks in the past tense, at a vantage-point from which life and human wishes are matters of retrospect. His education into knowledge at the hands of his protector has been a passive one, which he transmits to a similarly passive reader. The narrator of the poem, by contrast, articulates his overview with a series of imperatives. In the opening lines alone, the reader is told to "remark," to "watch"
and then to "say" (11.3–5). Later he is told to "pause," "mark," and "see". (11.158–61) The imperatives draw and exhort the reader into the judging and reasoning process, and ask him to enter into an active commitment to understand the vanity of human wishes.

But the contrast between the two works goes further. The Vision of Theodore is entirely an overview; there is none of the energetic verbal style which makes us experience the pull of the scenes of life. A purely nominal style reduces life to a series of fixed, allegorical symbols which have been abstracted from the concreteness of experience. The narration in the past, the parabolic tone, and the ascetic paring down of all description to the most basic of allegorical landscapes are likewise part of the language of the resolved soul. The prose is without tension; its narrator has won all his victories and has moved completely beyond the hunger of imagination.

The difference between the poem and the prose piece raises a final question: that of why Johnson chose to create in The Vanity of Human Wishes an oscillation between two styles. If, as Bate so aptly puts it, "the hunger of imagination" and "the stability of truth" form "the twin poles between which Johnson's practical insights into human life and destiny move back and forth," we can see the groundview and the overview as ways of embodying these poles. Johnson in London had seen human wishes purely in terms of the general massacre of gold, but in the later poem he becomes aware that it is some deeper aspiration, of which materialism is only the manifestation, which makes a Wolsey want to possess "the golden canopy, the glistening plate" (1.114). Wolsey is no mere political gangster; he is fired with the hunger of imagination, and we understand the impulse in him, even if we condemn it as a delusion. His ambitions are presumptuous, but what distinguishes "the wisest justice on the banks of Trent" from him is not greater humility, but merely "safer pride" (11.123–4). So when Johnson, having immersed his readers in Wolsey's search for the sweet fruition of an earthly crown, asks them to pass judgment on him, he is not asking a simple question. Wolsey may have lacked the stability of prudence, but he cannot be summed up in allegorical abstractions—hence the need to recreate sympathetically a style of response which is actively committed to the vanity of human action.

Charles XII too is treated with tragic irony rather than detachment. For a few lines the poetry burns with the restless energy of his ambitions, and verb is piled on verb, present on present (11.193ff.). Then he is left isolated and insignificant as the narrator retreats into the measured aloofness of a nominal overview:

His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand:
He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale. (11.219–22)
Yet this is something more than the grotesque end met with by Charles' Juvenalian original, Hannibal. If Johnson is pointing the moral of his poem, he is doing so in a complex way. He is asking the reader to judge, not to reject, the tremendous Marlovian energy that could say "And all be mine beneath the polar sky" (1.204). When we move to the overview from the groundview there is an actual loss of energy in the poetry.

In the long run, Johnson recognises that the summits of Caesarean power are a delusion. But tonally The Vanity of Human Wishes is very different both from The Vision of Theodore and from its Biblical locus in Ecclesiastes. Even when he moves from drama to maxim Johnson speaks only from above, and not from beyond, the flux of things. Human existence is not perceived as something infinitely distant and contemptible. The insatiate energy of the verbs in the groundview reflects a recognition that the hunger of imagination is a primary, even admirable, human drive. The contrasting use of a nominal style reflects an equal awareness of how destructive this hunger can be. The greater stylistic complexity of the poem, in comparison with the prose piece, is a product of a more complex sense of what constitutes understanding. The author of The Vision of Theodore uses a largely nominal style because he believes understanding to be an abstraction from, indeed a rejection of experience. The de-personalisation consequent upon the use of allegorical language reveals Johnson in an uncharacteristic mood, insisting by implication that knowledge is a matter of abstract rather than concrete universals. In the poem, by contrast, the mixture of styles reflects a more characteristic sense of understanding as the constant dialectical interchange between knowledge and experience, the achievement of a knowledge which can come only through an engagement in experience.

Documentation

1. There have, of course, been numerous analyses of Johnson's prose style. For a bibliography see W.K. Wimsatt, The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1972), xv. The use of the heroic couplet throughout the poem makes for a greater homogeneity than my analysis may suggest. Johnson does not abruptly switch levels in moving from one style to the other; the movement is much more subtle. But The Vanity of Human Wishes is a very rhetorical poem, and the shift between styles is part of the technique by which it persuades us. We are plunged into aspiration and withdrawn to reason, and thus given an insight into the structure of understanding.


4. Wells expresses some doubt as to whether non-finite forms of the verb should count as verbs (p.255).


11. For a discussion of elements of Johnson's style which suggest his liking for concrete rather than abstract universals, see Melvin G. Williams, "Samuel Johnson and the Concrete Universal," CEA Critic, 34 (1972), 10-15.

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