

**THE NEW RAMBLER**



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# THE NEW RAMBLER

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#### OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

Anne McDermott's review of Pat Rogers: *The Samuel Johnson Encyclopaedia* has been unavoidably postponed until the next issue

#### From the Editor:

First of all I have the pleasant duty of recording three additions to our roll of Vice Presidents: Mr Robert Robinson, Mr Philip Howard and Dr Graham Nicholls have all accepted invitations to assume this position. All will be well-known to members and need no further introduction. Additionally, Dr Nicholls, in his capacity of Curator of the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum in Lichfield, provides a very appropriate link with The Johnson Society based in that place. We welcome them, and we look forward to a long and successful association with them. It is sad, however, to record the death of another Vice-President, Professor Donald Greene: this happened within a very short time of his accepting the position. A memoir appears elsewhere in this journal. Other deaths have also taken place: Mr R. F. Bailey, The Hon. Mrs Harmsworth, Miss Jean Henderson, Mr B. H. Somner and Mr J. Todd: the Society has extended its sympathy to their families.

As in previous years, I have had a visit from Mr John Byrne of The Johnson Society of Australia: and also from Professor Daisuke Nagashima of The Samuel Johnson Club of Japan. It is one of the most pleasant aspects of Editorship of this Journal that it brings contacts (mostly epistolary but often personal) with overseas Johnsonians: off-prints of articles and copies of books supplement and deepen these contacts.

This is the last issue of *The New Rambler* which I shall edit: it is my twelfth, and although I have not rivalled the record of my predecessor, Mr James Leicester, I know that it is time to give way to a younger and more active successor. I am happy to say that Mr Michael Bundock has accepted the position. He is a practicing lawyer, he is already a member of Committee and he has been a very helpful colleague both to the Honorary Secretary and to myself. I wish him all success.

I should like to record my thanks to Miss Catherine Dille, of Pembroke College, Oxford, and a member of this Society, for her invaluable advice and assistance in the production of my last three *New Ramblers*. There have been appreciative comments on the improved appearance of the journal, and it is to her that this is due.

A member is looking for a copy of Dr William Payne: *An Introduction to the Game of Draughts*. 1756 (the Preface and the Dedication are attributed to Dr Johnson). If anyone is in a position to respond to this request, will he or she please contact the Editor giving details?

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**MRS THRALE LEAVES HOME: CLOSED CIRCLES AND EXPANDING HORIZONS IN HESTER  
LYNCH PIOZZI'S ANECDOTES OF DR JOHNSON**

**Dr Valerie Rumbold — 12th October 1996**

**Chairman: Mrs A. G. Dowdeswell**

Dr Rumbold is Lincolnshire born and bred. She took her first degree at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and then went to Jesus College, Cambridge for her Ph D on the subject *Pope and the Gothic Past*. A research fellowship at Jesus was devoted to writing *Women's Place in Pope's World*: this was published in 1989 by the Cambridge University Press and was awarded the Rose Mary Crawsgat Prize by the British Academy. After holding posts in the Universities of London and Oxford she went to the University of Wales at Bangor, where she is now Senior Lecturer.

When in 1763 Hester Lynch Salusbury entered more with resignation than enthusiasm on the marriage that made her Mrs Thrale, most people would have agreed that a wife, especially if she were a lady, belonged to the realm of the private and domestic, while her husband was destined for a wider role in public life.<sup>1</sup> Yet after Henry Thrale's death in 1781, and after her decision in 1784 to defy her daughters and advisers, marry Gabriel Piozzi, and travel with him to Italy, she returned to what, according to William McCarthy, had always been her real enthusiasm, namely her career as a writer: it was at this point that she began to publish substantial works, and to publish them not anonymously or under pseudonyms but under her own name, blazon as it now was of her insistence on choosing for herself.<sup>2</sup> In the case of a woman writer, publication always implied a potentially discreditable breaking out of the circle of feminine privacy, but in the case of Hester Piozzi's first major publication there was the additional problem that the very substance was private, privileged, domestic knowledge. The book was *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*, and she was able to write it only because the great man had shared the intimacy of her home.<sup>3</sup>

The sense of a threshold to be negotiated is plain from the first words of her preface:

I have somewhere heard or read, that the Preface before a book, like the portico before a house, should be contrived, so as to catch, but not detain the attention of those who desire admission to the family within, or leave to look over the collection of pictures made by one whose opportunities of obtaining them we know to have been not unfrequent. I wish not to keep my readers long from such intimacy with the manners of Dr. Johnson, or such knowledge of his sentiments as these pages can convey.<sup>4</sup>

At first sight, Mrs Piozzi seems to negotiate the crossing of the boundary of privacy by figuring herself in the impeccably feminine role of hostess, bringing in her visitors to meet the family. Yet who are these visitors? In effect, anyone who can read and can buy or borrow the book is invited to share 'such intimacy with the manners of Dr. Johnson . . . as these pages can convey'. Such a throwing open of the doors, performed by one of the sex supposed to enforce the proper seclusion of the domestic sphere, could be thought to have an air of the scandalous about it, especially when outrage at the hostess's remarriage was fresh in the public mind: first, as Mrs Thrale, she wilfully breaks up what remains of her home, then, as Mrs Piozzi, she presumes to invite readers to share its intimacy. For her part, Mrs Piozzi suggests that her visitors may have come, like the increasingly broad social spectrum of tourists whose visits to great houses were such a feature of the time, to see the pictures.<sup>5</sup> The 'not unfrequent' 'opportunities' she has had to collect her pictures of Johnson would seem to make it impolite to refuse access; yet to show the pictures is in effect only another way of figuring admission to intimacy with the family; and among these particular pictures she shows a variety of undress portraits which show Johnson's darker and more vulnerable side. In effect, her opening paragraph, which seeks to smooth the reader's passage over the threshold, risks emphasising the solecism of inviting casual tourists to participate in family intimacy — a solecism which may, at the time, have seemed scandalously

consistent with her breaking up the Thrales' circle by remarrying against the wishes of her daughters and of Johnson.

Thus from the very beginning the text makes plain the way in which the circle that propriety would close is being expanded to admit all comers — just as, in effect, Mrs Piozzi herself has abandoned it for the wider horizons of Italy and love. In pronounced contrast with many women writers of the period (who often justified their appearance in print as motivated by family piety or obligation to authority, rather than acknowledging their own pleasure or ambition in the work), Mrs Piozzi makes only the most perfunctory obeisance to inhibitions against public performance which she has effectively outgrown. As Margaret Doody remarks, the furore that had greeted her remarriage had already been a wholesome learning experience: through it she had already 'shaken off the trammels of English gentility'; and the resulting 'loss of both feminine anonymity and bourgeois respectability served to harden her into an author'.<sup>6</sup> This hardness arguably characterises her decisions about what to tell the world about Johnson, although it would be a mistake to attribute her attitude simply to resentment and a sense of having been let down by a man for whom she had done so much for so long. She is, for example, entirely silent about the mysterious padlock which he had entrusted to her, which, whatever interpretation is placed upon it, could surely have been made to figure effectively in any thoroughgoing scheme for destroying Johnson's reputation.<sup>7</sup>

On the contrary, the combination of copiousness and specificity with which Hester Piozzi expresses her esteem for Johnson could hardly fail to impress an unprejudiced reader; but in the light of her recent marriage, unprejudiced readers were bound to be in short supply, and those predisposed to find ingratitude and indecorum could perhaps have found what they were looking for in her very judiciousness; for she insists from the outset that there are limits to the praise that can reasonably be given to his character. 'I am aware that many will say, I have not spoken highly enough of Dr. Johnson; but it will be difficult for those who say so, to speak more highly', she warns.<sup>8</sup> By implication, those who say so will have to assent to misrepresentation, for 'he who should plant honeysuckle round Trajan's column, would not be thought to adorn, but to disgrace it.' What she declares she will not offer is a prettified Johnson; and necessarily associated with her sense of his scale, strength and toughness is the darker sense of the physical and mental burdens against which she measures that strength. Although she by no means reveals all that she could have done of his private unhappiness and vulnerability, her rejection at his hands and the fact of his subsequent death set her relatively free to present this darker vision as an integral part of a character which she still presents as awesome. She makes no secret of the fact that she found Johnson often so irritable that he would make petulant, even spiteful remarks, even to people he loved, and she repeats such remarks in all their offensiveness; she expresses her own fatigue and frustration at having to humour his fear of going to bed alone by making herself constantly available for conversation into the small hours; and, connected with this, she makes no secret of the anguish that she perceived as fundamental to his personality, hinting plainly that his fear of damnation had brought him to the brink of insanity:

No one had however higher notions of the hard task of true Christianity than Johnson, whose daily terror lest he had not done enough, originated in piety, but ended in little less than disease.<sup>9</sup>

Yet at the same time as she reveals the painfulness of some of what she learnt, Mrs Piozzi seems almost to boast of her ability to elicit confidences:

At the age of ten years his mind was disturbed by scruples of infidelity, which preyed upon his spirits, and made him very uneasy; the more so, as he revealed his uneasiness to no one, being naturally (as he said) 'of a sullen temper and reserved disposition. . . . I cannot imagine (said he) what makes me talk of myself to you so, for I really never mentioned this foolish story to any

body except Dr. Taylor, not even to my dear dear Bathurst, whom I loved better than ever I loved any human creature; but poor Bathurst is dead!!!' — Here a long pause and a few tears ensued.<sup>10</sup>

Johnson may not have been able to imagine, but the reader is clearly invited to credit this particular listener with a charm which set the great man at ease as no-one else could: this is a strategy which entails the risk that Mrs Piozzi will be seen as treacherous in proportion to her power. She is, for example, dismissive about her repetition of the story of his being frightened as a child by reading about the ghost in *Hamlet*, 'which every body has heard as well as I', and goes on to cap it with a revelation so disturbing that even she could not learn the full truth:

One day when my son was going to school, and dear Dr. Johnson followed as far as the garden gate, praying for his salvation, in a voice which those who listened attentively, could hear plain enough, he said to me suddenly, 'Make your boy tell you his dreams: the first corruption that entered into my heart was communicated in a dream.' What was it, Sir? said I. 'Do not ask me,' replied he with much violence, and walked away in apparent agitation. I never durst make any further enquiries.<sup>11</sup>

Extraordinarily valuable and suggestive as such glimpses are to us now, they risked suggesting to contemporary eyes the treachery of a woman who had breached the circle of domestic intimacy on all fronts.

To an extent Mrs Piozzi was sensitive to the danger and impropriety of ruthless anecdote-seeking, at least when it intruded on the pleasantly relaxed privacy of the kind of select party cultivated by a hostess like herself:

A trick, which I have however seen played on common occasions, of sitting steadily down at the other end of the room to write at the moment what should be said in company, either by Dr. Johnson or to him, I never practised myself, nor approved of it in another. There is something so ill-bred, and so inclining to treachery in this conduct, that were it commonly adopted, all confidence would soon be exiled from society, and a conversation assembly-room would become tremendous as a court of justice.<sup>12</sup>

Her own practice, less open to the charge of being 'ill-bred', was to record what she had heard later in her private commonplace book, and she shows in *Thraliana* that she felt under pressure from Johnson's admirers to commit more, not less, to paper — though they can hardly have anticipated that she would ever use her jottings to pass public judgment on the great man as she did in the *Anecdotes*. In *Thraliana*, however, it is the charge of not recording enough from which she feels the need to defend herself:

Little do these wise Men know or feel, that the Crying of a young Child, or the Perverseness of an elder, or the Danger however trifling of any one — will soon drive out of a female Parent's head a Conversation concerning wit, Science or Sentiment, however she may appear to be impressed with it at the moment: beside that to a *Mere de famille* doing something is more necessary & suitable than even hearing something; and if one is to listen all Even<sup>g</sup> and write all Morning what one has heard; where will be the Time for tutoring, caressing, or what is still more useful, for having one's Children about one: I therefore charge all my Neglect to my young ones Account, and feel myself at this moment very miserable that I have at last, after being married fourteen Years and bringing eleven Children, leisure to write a *Thraliana* forsooth; — though the second Volume does begin with Mr Johnson.<sup>13</sup>

Although Mrs Piozzi describes her *Anecdotes* as the 'first [book] I ever presented before the Public', and avows her intention as a novice author of shielding herself from attack by an attempt 'to shew as little

of myself as possible', this was a vain hope in view not only of the impropriety of what she had decided to publish, but also of her inability, as the work proceeds, to refrain from alluding to her own current situation.<sup>14</sup> Even if she does not deliberately place herself in the foreground of the work, the new Mrs Piozzi repeatedly comes into focus through her comments on the record of her life as Mrs Thrale. An example comes, significantly enough, at the only point at which she seems to invoke for a moment the conventional pose of a lady author impelled to uncharacteristic publication by domestic obligations. She is contrasting Johnson's love of his literary work with her own supposed distaste for an occupation which she claims she will be glad to be done with:

He loved to be set at work, and was sorry when he came to the end of the business he was about. I do not feel so myself with regard to these sheets: a fever which has preyed on me while I wrote them over for the press, will perhaps lessen my power of doing well the first, and probably the last work I should ever have thought of presenting to the Public.<sup>15</sup>

This fever, matter-of-factly though she mentions it, could all too easily have been related by the contemporary reader to the literal perils of her new life in Italy, or to the insane fever of imagination to which former friends had ascribed her decision to marry a foreigner and an inferior.<sup>16</sup> Yet her 'power' of crafting her writing to her own satisfaction was to increase, not diminish, amid the stimulation of her new life: in McCarthy's words, this was the time when 'she resumed the career that her first marriage had stifled', becoming in his estimation 'by far the most considerable of the Bluestocking writers, and one of the most eminent women writers in England before Jane Austen'.<sup>17</sup> The publication of the *Anecdotes* was far from the once-and-for-all departure from the straight and narrow of feminine privacy that it seeks — however momentarily — to appear.

The *Anecdotes* is, however, a text that makes explicit the consequences of a division between masculine and feminine spheres which was then regarded for the most part as natural: Mrs Piozzi is keenly aware, for example, that for all the privileged knowledge of Johnson which came to her through the exemplary domesticity of her first marriage, she had missed his male associates' opportunities of observing him in the public, masculine world in which he had struggled and made his name. We might compare the articulation of the distinction between the public world of men and the private world of women offered earlier in the century by Pope in his *Epistle to a Lady: Of the Characters of Women*, when he was considering the opposite problem to Hester Piozzi's, that is, how best, as a man, to know the character of a woman:

But grant, in Public Men sometimes are shown,  
A Woman's seen in Private life alone:  
Our bolder talents in full light display'd,  
Your Virtues open fairest in the shade.<sup>18</sup>

Thus Mrs Piozzi was in the ironic position of knowing only of her male subject what the received wisdom said she would have needed to know about a female subject. It was not only that she could not play a part in the public literary world in which Johnson conducted his professional life, but also that she could not share the all-male contexts in which talk was most uninhibited.<sup>19</sup> The impact of the decorous censorship which the masculine world imposed when reporting back to the ladies is plain in her account of Garrick's mimicry of Johnson's married life, which he claimed to have spied on as one of the pupils at Johnson's short-lived school. Hester Piozzi's information is entirely second-hand, and the awkwardness of her obstructed viewpoint is figured by her seeming at first to tell the story on her own authority, only to retreat at last into a confession that her testimony is only hearsay:

[Garrick] made out some comical scenes, by mimicking [Elizabeth Johnson] in a dialogue he pretended to have overheard: I do not know whether he meant such stuff to be believed or no, it

was so comical; nor did I indeed ever see him represent her ridiculously, though my husband did.<sup>20</sup>

In comparison, Boswell's account is a direct report of Garrick's rendition of the intimate scenes on which he claimed to have spied:

The young rogues used to listen at the door of his bed-chamber, and peep through the key-hole, that they might turn into ridicule his awkward and tumultuous fondness for Mrs. Johnson. . . . I have seen Garrick exhibit her, by his exquisite talent for mimicry, so as to excite the heartiest bursts of laughter. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Malone made an additional note in his copy of Mrs Piozzi's *Anecdotes*:

This was a dialogue between Mrs. J. when in bed, & J<sup>n</sup> in his shirt, the lady thinking he delayed too long to come to bed. Garrick made it entertaining, but doubtless it was all invention.<sup>22</sup>

Everyone, including Boswell, doubted the literal truth of Garrick's representation, but Mrs Piozzi did not even know precisely what it was that she was doubting. No gentleman was going to share with a lady the coarse hilarity of Garrick's schoolboy prurience, and her text can only execute a baffled retreat from the subject.

Hester Piozzi quite explicitly focusses her presentation of her *Anecdotes* within the accepted dichotomy of public male and private female that Pope had drawn on in his *Epistle*. When she defines the kind of record she is presenting, Pope's conventional metaphors of masculine light and feminine shade are not far away:

I must here take leave to observe, that in giving little memoirs of Mr. Johnson's behaviour and conversation, such as I saw and heard it, my book lies under manifest disadvantages, compared with theirs, who having seen him in various situations, and observed his conduct in numberless cases, are able to throw stronger and more brilliant lights upon his character.<sup>23</sup>

Here is the familiar sense that male life is more varied, the sense that Pope had rendered in his *Epistle* by assigning a range of ruling passions to the male sex, but only two to the female:

In Men, we various Ruling Passions find,  
In Women, two almost divide the kind;  
Those, only fix'd, they first or last obey,  
The Love of Pleasure, and the Love of Sway.<sup>24</sup>

Pope relates this clearly to the diversity of occupations and experiences available to men in the public world, compared to the relative sameness of female domesticity. Mrs Piozzi realises that Johnson had a life among men of which she knows little, and she suspects that a great deal was revealed there that is hidden from her. She offers a supposedly illustrative analogy between virtues and different shrubs which is far from easy to interpret; but its very awkwardness seems to express something of her uneasiness in judging between a public life of Johnson that she knew only by report and a private life that she had come to know — in some ways — only too well:

Virtues are like shrubs, which yield their sweets in different manners according to the circumstances which surround them: and while generosity of soul scatters its fragrance like the honeysuckle, and delights the senses of many occasional passengers, who feel the pleasure, and half wonder how the breeze has blown it from so far, the more sullen but not less valuable myrtle waits like fortitude to discover its excellence, till the hand arrives that will crush it, and force out that perfume whose durability well compensates the difficulty of production.<sup>25</sup>



The application is ambiguous. Is she merely contrasting the lighter, pleasanter (perhaps feminine) 'generosity of soul' that diffuses itself even on a breeze with the more lasting and valuable perfume of 'fortitude' which is wrung out only by force from the (perhaps masculine) leaf of the myrtle, and implying that while the former can be found in domestic settings the latter is produced only under the stress of a demanding public life? If so, the doctrine seems oddly discordant with her own experience of the fortitude and cheerfulness demanded of her in twenty years of emotionally arid wedlock beset by financial panics and the deaths of children. Perhaps, then, the analogy makes more sense if we apply the lessons of the two plants directly to Johnson, contrasting the pleasure that he gave to 'occasional passengers' in the times of relative peace he shared with the Thrales with the more impressive virtues Piozzi takes him to have displayed in the years of struggle before she knew him. If we read the passage in this way, however, we may see Piozzi in effect denying the crucial importance of the relationship to Johnson that had come to be such a burden to her: if she has not witnessed the public crushing of the myrtle, perhaps she is no more than one of the 'occasional passengers' in Johnson's life who 'wonder[s] how the breeze has blown [the fragrance of the honeysuckle] so far'. But the uneasiness of the passage remains expressive of the writer's awkwardness as she asks herself the double-edged question of how important she really had been to Johnson and he to her: if the public life that she had not shared really had been the context for the most important aspects of his character, did this vitiate her claims as confidante? Or if what Johnson had shared with her in the domesticity of his old age really had been the more important, could she bear to be so crucially identified with him?

As Hester Piozzi works through this figurative meditation on the boundaries between private woman and public man, she comes back again to the conventional contrast between the bright publicity of masculine life and the shade in which Pope had claimed that female character was best revealed, and she casts her viewpoint in terms of 'evening', 'candle-light' and 'shadow':

I saw Mr. Johnson in none but a tranquil uniform state, passing the evening of his life among friends, who loved, honoured, and admired him: I saw none of the things he did, except such acts of charity as have been often mentioned in this book, and such writings as are universally known. What he said is all I can relate; and from what he said, those who think it worth while to read these *Anecdotes*, must be contented to gather his character. Mine is a mere *candle-light* picture of his latter days, where every thing falls in dark shadow except the face, the index of the mind; but even that is seen unfavourably, and with a paleness beyond what nature gave it.<sup>26</sup>

There is frustration here about what she cannot report directly: other observers had seen what 'he did', while she can vouch only for 'what he said'. Her immediate frustration is that this limits her knowledge of her subject; but behind that is surely the sense, stirring now as she prepares to publish for the first time under her newly chosen name, that she, as well as her subject, belonged to the more various, more active, and more assertive world traditionally appropriated to men — a world towards which Johnson had himself, to an extent, encouraged her to aspire, when he exhorted her to the journal-keeping on which she now drew for her *Anecdotes*, corrected her verse, and embarked with her on a joint translation of Boethius, meant for publication, and abandoned only because they learnt that a needy author had taken up the same project.<sup>27</sup>

Mrs Piozzi's newly widened horizons offer a suggestive context for her initial figuration of her role as the owner of pictures who allows tourists to come inside and look at them. Many of the great houses which genteel tourists visited in this way at this time would have possessed, beside family portraits, the harvest of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, reflecting their owners' diligence, particularly in Italy, in collecting pictures on their travels. For affluent males, the Grand Tour was a crucial rite of passage. Its possibilities for exploration and freedom presented an extreme contrast with the years of boyhood tutelage, offering a glorified foretaste of the public world they would inherit on their return,



when as fathers and masters they took on the patriarchal role of setting limits to the freedom and exploration of others. As Mrs Thrale, Hester Piozzi had been in perpetual tutelage: even her journeys to Wales and France were made as the harrassed and isolated mother in a family party dominated by masculine agendas.<sup>28</sup> Now, when she thinks of her memories of Johnson, she characteristically thinks of travel.

She does so in two different ways. At one level, she presents souvenirs collected on the gruelling metaphorical journey into the interior of the awe-inspiring yet terrifying and exasperating continent that had been Samuel Johnson. At another level, she rejoices in the literal travel and exploration she is now undertaking with her Italian husband. What comes as something of a shock — at least to anyone disposed to think of her Johnsonian years as the most important episode of her life — is the way that she brings these two levels together:

Upon revising these Anecdotes, it is impossible not to be struck with shame and regret that one treasured no more of them up; but no experience is sufficient to cure the vice of negligence: whatever one sees constantly, or might see constantly, becomes uninteresting; and we suffer every trivial occupation, every slight amusement, to hinder us from writing down, what indeed we cannot chuse but remember; but what we should wish to recollect with pleasure, unpoisoned by remorse for not remembering more. While I write this, I neglect impressing my mind with the wonders of art, and beauties of nature, that now surround me...<sup>29</sup>

However shocking her readers may have found her abrupt transition from Johnsonian Streatham to her present (and in the eyes of many, guilty) enjoyments, it would have been hard for them to deny that, for men at least, Italy was considered a worthy object. As she records, Johnson's own 'desire to go abroad, particularly to see Italy, was very great': the wonders she rejoices in are culturally approved even by men of weight, and cannot easily be written off as the mere freak of an irresponsible woman.<sup>30</sup>

Mrs Piozzi takes the figure of travel further when, dissatisfied with her attempt at recreating the humour of the ludicrous servility of a Welsh clergyman towards Johnson, she reflects on the difficulty of repeating jokes outside their original intimate context. She begins:

Stories of humour do not tell well in books; and what made impression on the friends who heard a jest, will seldom much delight the distant acquaintance or sullen critic who reads it.<sup>31</sup>

She then compares this difficulty to that of modelling a great city for those who have not been there: 'The cork model of Paris is not more despicable as a resemblance of a great city, than this book, *levior cortice*, as a specimen of Johnson's character'. (The Latin quotation from Horace by which she denigrates her work as 'more light-weight than cork' also reminds readers that the same pose of modesty had not been beneath the dignity of one of the greatest classical writers.)<sup>32</sup> It is at this point that she explicitly figures her acquaintance with Johnson as a kind of travel, remarking that 'every body naturally likes to gather little specimens of the rarities found in a great country'. What is most expressive, however, is the sudden turn that the paragraph takes at this point, veering away from the image of Johnson as the 'great country' and her anecdotes as the treasured 'specimens'. Without even ending the sentence, she goes on:

... and could I carry home from Italy square pieces of all the curious marbles which are the just glory of this surprising part of the world, I could scarcely contrive perhaps to arrange them so meanly as not to gain some attention from the respect due to the places they once belonged to.

She cannot forbear upstaging her presentation of her Johnsonian explorations by reminding us that now she is exploring in earnest. Without Johnson and the Thrale retinue that had set the context for her earlier travels, she is now in Italy without her children, without Johnson, and with her chosen partner,

not the 'Master' to whom her relations had given her, but the man she called 'my Piozzi'. From other, private sources, we know that her new husband opened up a new emotional world for her, a world in which for the first time since adolescence she was freed from the repression that had been the price of her exemplary conformity with the requirements laid on Mrs Thrale; but what she wants to stress in her published book is that he has also opened up for her a literal new world, as he shows her the sights and introduces her to the company of his own country. Mrs Piozzi reminds her readers of the glamour conventionally attaching to Italy and its artifacts, ostensibly in order to present by analogy an excuse for the formal inadequacy of her writing, but more profoundly in order to express the excitement that now puts into the shade the life she had shared with Johnson. The paragraph finally comes to rest with a conventional enough disclaimer of artistic merit:

Such a piece of motley Mosaic work will these Anecdotes inevitably make: but let the reader remember that he was promised nothing better, and so be as contented as he can.

But for all its modest deference to the intrinsic merit of Johnson himself, 'the place they once belonged to', the paragraph has refused to subordinate the zest of the actual travel that now enables her to collect real instead of metaphorical curiosities:

Ultimately Hester Piozzi has the confidence not only to parallel herself with all the other would-be reporters of Johnson's sayings (implicitly putting herself on a level with male writers used to commanding the public ear, men like Boswell, Hawkins and Burney), but also to image a journey far beyond either Paris or Italy, a journey to the fabulous lands of Asia:

We who produce each a score of his sayings, as proofs of that wit which in him was inexhaustible, resemble travellers who having visited Delhi or Golconda, bring home each a handful of Oriental pearl to evince the riches of the Great Mogul. May the Public condescend to accept my *ill-strung* selection with patience at least, remembering only that they are relics of him who was great on all occasions...<sup>33</sup>

Mrs Piozzi's insistence on the wider horizons of her second marriage is a reaction against the narrowness of her first: Henry Thrale had been 'my Master' in earnest as well as in would-be affectionate jest, he had forbidden her both housekeeping and riding, joined with her mother in discouraging contacts with neighbours or attendance at public gatherings, and reacted with indifference to her attempts to woo his interest by writing poems for him.<sup>34</sup> In Mary Hyde's words:

He was always civil to her, good humored, and correct, but he was totally unresponsive. She never felt close to him or at ease with him.<sup>35</sup>

Her friendship with Johnson had thus been not a supplement to a fulfilling marriage but at best a partial compensation for its emotional aridity, and even that compensation was now retrospectively compromised by Johnson's hostility to her seeking in a second marriage the happiness she had never achieved in her first. Johnson, moreover, had insisted that the Thrales *were* happy, and had if anything increased the burden of Thrale's indifference and infidelity by repeating to her the myriad assertions and examples recorded in her *Anecdotes* tending to enforce the moral that unhappiness in marriage was characteristically the wife's fault.<sup>36</sup> While the toughness with which Johnson spoke to Hester Thrale of the responsibilities and pitfalls of being a wife was of a piece with the scorn for emotional affectation that she noted as one of his leading characteristics, and while it no doubt reflected his real convictions, it also served defensive purposes. It seems to have masked intense feelings, notably guilt, about his own marriage, which had ended in virtual separation from an invalid whose dependence on alcohol and opium reflected badly on his capacity to fulfil her emotional needs.<sup>37</sup> It also served his need to find in the Thrales' home the affectionate tolerance, peace and order which

had eluded him equally as son, as husband, and now as master of a houseful of mutually discontented objects of charity: Mrs Piozzi remembers that it was 'at once vexatious and comical' that he was 'afraid of going home, because he was so sure to be met at the door with numberless complaints'.<sup>38</sup>

This tendency to idealise the Thrale home and Mrs Thrale's place in it is evident from very early in their correspondence. In July 1767 Johnson writes that when away in Lichfield 'I have found nothing that withdraws my affections from the friends whom I left behind, or which makes me less desirous of reposing in that place which your kindness and Mr Thrale's allows me to call my *home*'.<sup>39</sup> In October he writes again from Lichfield chafing at confinement: 'There has not been one day of pleasure, and yet I cannot get away'.<sup>40</sup> He then uses an unusual and significant word to express his sense of Streatham as a world apart which he will not willingly leave again: 'But when I do come, I perhaps shall not be easily persuaded to pass again to the other side of Styx, to venture myself on the irremeable road.' Here he seems to allude to Virgil, who had called the river Styx 'unda inremeabilis', that is, 'the water from which no-one returns'.<sup>41</sup> The first crossing into the underworld is final; yet Johnson, blessed as many would think with freedom to travel around England, and visiting the home town where he might be expected to be at ease, represents his travel as exile, and yearns for permanent seclusion at Streatham — a seclusion figured in an allusion that speaks of death. Whatever the mysterious exchange of letters (prompted by Johnson's letter in French to Mrs Thrale) in 1773 really means, it is hard not to think in this connection of its juxtaposition of Johnson's insistence on being confined at Hester Thrale's hands (probably because she is too occupied with her dying mother to tolerate much of his company) with her urging him not to 'dwell thus upon Confinement and severity'.<sup>42</sup> Their respective attitudes at that time, bizarre as the particular situation may appear, are entirely in keeping with the deeper divergences implied throughout their relationship, from this early correspondence to their final separation.

Johnson goes on in this early letter to compare himself to Ulysses and Mrs Thrale to Penelope, in a witty allusion to Ovid's letter from Penelope to her absent husband: 'Nil mihi rescribas, for though I have no right to say, Ipse veni, I hope that ipse veniam' ('Don't write back', he says; though he can't yet say he *has* come back, he hopes that he *will* come back).<sup>43</sup> Thus, at one remove, he invokes the *Odyssey*, the Homeric narrative that adumbrates the gender roles of so much later literature. The wisely passive Penelope stays at home, while her far-travelling husband experiences strange lands, strange adventures and strange bedfellows: when he completes the long circle that brings him home, it is to reassert his place as husband and master in the home that his wife has never left. Home, in this master narrative of the western tradition, is the place where women belong, but the place from which men journey and to which they return, in a movement that defines the shape of happy endings for centuries to come. Johnson in this letter yearns for such a return: though Mrs Thrale is actually at Brighton when he writes, her physical mobility hardly matters, since she is so identified for him with home and family. He speaks of longing to see her 'and all those of whom the sight is included in seeing you'. Given the emotional realities of her marriage as she perceived them, this seems a peculiarly willed projection of the family ideal that Johnson wanted to believe in. Even more surprising and, in effect, cruel, was his assurance, just after Henry Thrale's death in 1781, that she had enjoyed 'happiness in marriage to a degree of which without personal knowledge, I should have thought the description fabulous'.<sup>44</sup> Yet if he was cruel to her, he was in effect equally cruel to himself, as he persistently idealised the wife with whom he had been so miserable.

Part of Johnson's need to idealise the Thrales' marriage stemmed from his appreciation of the comfort, quiet and order it offered him: where he was so protected from the solitude that made him fear insanity and the bad housekeeping that threatened the material fabric of his life with collapse, any hint that the wife felt oppressed and neglected must have seemed intolerably threatening. In some ways he recognised the need for Mrs Thrale and her daughters to expand their horizons: he advised her to learn

about her husband's brewing business in order to have a topic of mutual interest to bring them together, he criticised her for living in the country rather than in the more stimulating environment of London, and he encouraged her to give her daughters plenty of amusement and company.<sup>45</sup> Yet all this was in order to sustain, not challenge, the status quo: busyness and conversation were his prescription for keeping dangerous emotions at bay, and the widowed Hester Thrale came to realise that his advice was aimed more at the maintenance of her remaining family circle than at the realisation of any potential for personal fulfilment: for this reason she did not share with him the intimate progress of her decision to exchange her widowhood for a second marriage.<sup>46</sup>

However, Johnson was not simply trying to reconcile Mrs Thrale to limitations that he rejected for himself, for there is much in Johnson's attraction to domesticity to suggest that in some ways he envied women what he saw as their simpler and less dangerous role in life. The subservience and repression that it demanded of them appeared in the guise of barriers against the dangers to which men were exposed by a culture that encouraged them to act for themselves and pursue their own desires. Johnson lamented that 'while one fondles a baby' one wishes 'that it may never live to become a man; for it is so probable that when he becomes a man, he should be sure to end in a scoundrel'.<sup>47</sup> It is the masculine, rather than simply the human condition he had in mind here, for Mrs Piozzi adds that in contrast he considered that because girls' 'temptations were fewer . . . , their virtue in this life, and happiness in the next, were less improbable; and he loved (he said) to see a knot of little misses dearly'. Similarly, she remembers that he was convinced of, and envied, the therapeutic value of needlework, seeing it not as a burden on women or as an obstacle to their pursuit of higher goals, but as something that gave them an advantage over men by allowing them to 'amuse themselves with petty occupations, which contributed to the lengthening their lives, and preserving their minds in a state of sanity.' The comparative freedom of his own sex evidently scared him by the scope it offered for going wrong, while his comments on the traditional limitations imposed on women reveal how deep-rooted were his fears of insanity and damnation. Much as the company laughed, there is poignancy in his whimsical insistence that madness can be staved off by hemming a handkerchief, or in his envy of a confined gender role as effectively barring the broad road that leads to destruction.

It is not then, mere selfishness or narrow-mindedness that makes Johnson idealise the restrictions under which he hoped Hester Thrale would live after her husband's death in 1781. He wanted her to commit herself to the life of a single parent, satisfying her emotional needs through her children, and her need to be busy by managing the family business and finances. Having reminded her of what he asserts to have been her exceptional degree of happiness in her marriage, he tells her that God 'can give You another mode of happiness as a Mother, and at last the happiness of losing all temporal cares in the thoughts of an eternity in heaven'.<sup>48</sup> It is almost as if he sets aside the thirty years that separate them, and projects for her, then aged forty, a retirement in preparation for death to which her remaining duties towards her nearly grown-up daughters will be only the briefest of preludes. As his own life began to close in, with the declining health and expectation of life which began to mark these years, his language closes hers too: even the management of the family and its finances — Johnson seems particularly to have enjoyed helping her to run the brewery until she sold it later in 1781 — is imaged defensively as a way of keeping out the implicitly unlawful weeds that might otherwise invade the garden of her mind:

We must first pray, and then labour . . . Cultivated ground has few weeds, a mind occupied by lawful business, has little room for useless regret.<sup>49</sup>

A little later he encourages her to involve herself in this 'lawful business' by holding before her the promise of authority and initiative newly available to her as a widow in charge of a brewery; but even

here there is a sense that the duty entailed on her by her marriage is implicitly to elbow aside the literary interests that she would have chosen for herself:

You are in your civil character a man. You may sue and be sued. If you apply to business perhaps half the mind which You have exercised upon knowledge and elegance, you will need little help ...<sup>50</sup>

This emphasis on caring for children and running a business as the keys to future happiness — implying that the family circle broken by Thrale's death needed no radical revision, but could be shored up indefinitely in its fragmentary form — matches closely the terms of a discussion later included in *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*:

We talked of Lady Tavistock, who grieved herself to death for the loss of her husband — 'She was rich and wanted employment (says Johnson), so she cried till she lost all power of restraining her tears: other women are forced to outlive their husbands, who were just as much beloved, depend on it; but they have no time for grief: and I doubt not, if we had put my Lady Tavistock into a small chandler's shop, and given her a nurse-child to tend, her life would have been saved. The poor and the busy have no leisure for sentimental sorrow.'<sup>51</sup>

But where the Thrale marriage was concerned, such advice was beside the point, since Thrale had never sought intimacy with his wife, had subjected her to continual infidelity and risk of venereal disease, and after the death of his son in 1776, as McCarthy puts it, had 'settled into that kind of despair that unleashes all the appetites'.<sup>52</sup> He became wantonly extravagant with money, preposterously ambitious for his business, and apparently determined to eat himself to death — partly, as his wife suspected, for the pleasure of defying anyone who tried to restrain him. This nursing of a 'Master' through the consequences of his insane self-destructiveness came as coda to nearly two decades of continual morning sickness and confinements, from which, at this point, she had only five children to show for her twelve live births and several miscarriages.<sup>53</sup> All in all, it was not so much her husband's death that the widow needed to get over as her twenty years of marriage. Johnson refused to acknowledge any of this; and although he evidently knew at least something of her attraction to Piozzi from others, he seems to have avoided confronting its likely outcome until the news of the marriage was finally sprung upon him. Here was a new family formation that definitively superseded the Thrales-minus-Thrale scenario that he had hoped to perpetuate, and this was what elicited the famously hurt and angry response which effectively ended their friendship.<sup>54</sup>

Yet it was not that Johnson discounted passionate romantic love. Whereas the married Hester Thrale treated the whole concept of being in love as something of a curiosity, something that had apparently happened to other people but never to her, she was later to remember Johnson's speaking of it in impressive terms: 'We must not ridicule a passion which he who never felt never was happy, and he who laughs at never deserves to feel.'<sup>55</sup> But then Mrs Thrale noticed his unease: 'he thought he had already said too much' and in 'an altered tone' turned the subject to jest. As she noted in this and other observations of Johnson, he was characteristically defensive in his attitude to such emotions, decrying common talk of sentiment not because he felt none but because he felt too much.<sup>56</sup>

So as we hear him in the years after Thrale's death exhorting his widow to remake her life in the circle of her remaining family, we hear also in the background, quite apart from the self-interested concern to prop up his adoptive home in its fragmentary form, the fear for her of passions which he also feared for himself, and the fear of a wider world which he feared for its proliferation of temptation. Early in 1784, speaking of another of the Thrale girls' guardians, he exhorts her, 'Let your children, dear Madam, be *his* care, and *your* pleasure; close your thoughts upon them, and when sad fancies are excluded, health and peace will return together.'<sup>57</sup> Later that year he told her to give up her hopes of



'Hesperian felicity', implying that her desire to marry Piozzi and go to Italy had been no more than a malignant trick of the imagination, the faculty which he feared as harbinger of insanity:

That You regain your health, is more than a common recovery, because I infer that you regain your peace of mind. Settle your thoughts, and control your imagination, and think no more of Hesperian felicity. Gather yourself and your Children into a little system, in which each may promote the ease, and safety, and the pleasure of the rest.<sup>58</sup>

But Mrs Thrale was convinced that more happiness was possible to a woman than such advocates of repression and self-sacrifice claimed, and her remarriage declared her willingness to take risks in pursuit of it. Once Johnson's initial fury at her marriage had passed, and he wrote to her again, he recurred poignantly to the same Virgilian phrase he had used near the beginning of their friendship, speaking of the river that cannot be crossed twice, the river that separates the living from the dead.<sup>59</sup> Then he had seen her home as a kind of Elysian Fields which he would be happy never to leave, in line with the defensive allure of privacy and restriction which in some ways made him envy female domesticity. Now he uses again the unusual Virgilian word 'irremeable' to warn her not to let her new husband take her over the water to Italy, where, almost casting Piozzi as the Italian villain of the Gothic novel, he hints that her 'dignity', 'security' and 'fortune' may be at risk.<sup>60</sup> He links this with the dangers of imagination: 'every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy'. Was he remembering the young Hester Salusbury's *Imagination's Search after Happiness*, the poem in which she had signified her submission to the unattractive prospect of marriage to Henry Thrale? In that sadly resigned allegory, Imagination finds that her belief in the possibility of happiness has led her to embrace a mere 'Phantom', and she is left with only the consolation of Piety.<sup>61</sup> But it is this grim resignation itself that Mrs Piozzi now recognises as the phantom to be rejected: the happiness she had first imagined only to give up hope of its realisation did indeed turn out to be possible once she defied her family and friends and married the man she wanted. But Johnson's argument goes on to reach its climax by comparing her situation to the fatal decision of Mary Queen of Scots to flee trouble at home by taking refuge with the English, thus putting herself into the power of the Queen who imprisoned and executed her. This is where the Virgilian word 'irremeable' recurs, referring now to a voyage to Italy which is literally one of widening prospects, but is seen through Johnson's fears as a voluntary crossing into constraint, even into the circles of hell:

When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrew's attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey and when they came to the irremeable Stream that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection, pressed her to return. The Queen went forward. — If the parallel reaches thus far; may it go no further. The tears stand in my eyes.

Johnson's whole attitude to her widowhood had stressed a defensive busyness, a retreat into family exclusiveness that drew on his own fears of emotion, imagination, temptation and damnation. But Hester Thrale had never feared these things as he had: she believed in an infinitely kinder God, as she shows throughout the *Anecdotes* by her almost incredulous response to the religiously grounded terrors which she deplored in him. The *Anecdotes'* insistence on her Italian experiences is one way in which she can assert that she was right, that she had not stepped into the constraints of hell but out into widening horizons. In contrast, she resorts to the language of constraint to describe the experience of life with Johnson, calling it a 'perpetual confinement' and 'a yoke my husband first put upon me'.<sup>62</sup> She effectively reverses the terms in which Johnson had sought to persuade her of the happiness of closure and denial.



Throughout the *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*, Piozzi has the problem of combining her sense of the extreme privilege of caring for him and sharing his conversation with the pain and frustration that memories of Johnson now evoked. Her final sentence, which compares Johnson's mind to a marvellous garden, may at first sight seem cumbersome; but when we read it in terms of the ambiguous polarities of confinement and liberty in Johnson's thought, it emerges as a deft and yet discreet way of registering both the glory and the limitations of his mind as she had come to see them:

The mind of this man was indeed expanded beyond the common limits of human nature, and stored with such variety of knowledge, that I used to think it resembled a royal pleasure-ground, where every plant, of every name and nation, flourished in the full perfection of their powers, and where, though lofty woods and falling cataracts first caught the eye, and fixed the earliest attention of beholders, yet neither the trim parterre nor the pleasing shrubbery, nor even the antiquated ever-greens, were denied a place in some fit corner of the happy valley.<sup>63</sup>

At first the garden is 'expanded', transcending 'limits', and presents an image of plenitude, full of variety, ranging the world for its plants 'of every name and nation'. Yet finally it stands exposed as *only* a garden, a plot with walls and boundaries, equated with the Happy Valley of *Rasselas*, a pleasure garden which tormented the prince with pleasures refined in permanent separation from the outside world of work, marriage, risk and development. He escapes and explores, only to find that happiness is no more easily found in the outside world, and finally can think of nothing better to do than to return to Abyssinia. By placing Johnson within his own pessimistic fable, Hester Piozzi leaves the reader with the irony of a mind that was full and expansive, which knew the irksomeness of confinement, but which instinctively flinched back towards it because of a profound, and, in her terms, perverse fear of liberty. Johnson had attempted to persuade her that her first marriage was a Happy Valley, and when the barrier that kept her inside was breached, he urged her to recommit herself to restoring it. The ending she contrives for her *Anecdotes* combines a graceful allusion to her subject's great work with the insinuation that her former mentor's mind, for all its greatness, proved in the end to have been a closed system. Her recurrent allusions to her Italian journey leave the reader of her *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson* in no doubt that, in her view at least, leaving the Happy Valley was the best thing she ever did.

#### Notes

1. For the docility towards her mother and uncle and the desperate financial straits that induced her to accept Henry Thrale despite her realisation of his indifference to her, see the revised second edition of James L. Clifford, *Hester Lynch Piozzi (Mrs Thrale)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 43-6, and the new introduction by Margaret Doody, pp. xxii-xxiii.
2. William McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi: Portrait of a Literary Woman* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 9.
3. First published in 1786, and edited by Arthur Sherbo in *William Shaw, 'Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Late Dr. Samuel Johnson', and Hester Lynch Piozzi, 'Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. during the Last Twenty Years of his Life'* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).
4. *Anecdotes*, p. 59.
5. For the rise and significance of wider tourist access to great houses during the second half of the eighteenth century, see Carole Fabricant, 'The Literature of Domestic Tourism and the Public Consumption of Private Property', in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, edited by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 254-75.
6. Doody's preface to Clifford, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.
7. For a recent review of the significance of the padlock, see Donald Greene, "'A Secret Far Dearer to Him than his Life': Johnson's 'Vile Melancholy' Reconsidered", *Age of Johnson* 4 (1991), pp. 1-40.

- especially pp. 1-5, and the responses by David Fleeman ('Johnson's Secret', *Age of Johnson* 6 (1994), pp. 147-50) and Barry Baldwin ('The Mysterious Letter "M" in Johnson's Diaries', *Age of Johnson* 6 (1994), pp. 131-46). For assessment of the letter which Johnson composed in French to Mrs Thrale in 1663, which some have associated with the affair of the padlock, see Bruce Redford's commentary in his edition of *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, 5 vols, The Hyde Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), II, 37-9.
8. *Anecdotes*, p. 59.
  9. *Anecdotes*, p. 97.
  10. *Anecdotes*, p. 66.
  11. *Anecdotes*, p. 67.
  12. *Anecdotes*, p. 74.
  13. *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs Piozzi)*, edited by Katharine C. Balderston, 2nd edition, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), I, p. 158.
  14. *Anecdotes*, p. 60.
  15. *Anecdotes*, p. 134.
  16. For a contemporary view that such passion in a woman in her early forties could only be accounted for by insanity, see Clifford, p. 231; Johnson's exhortations to the widow to repress imagination are cited below.
  17. McCarthy, pp. 46, 267; for a full list of her publications, see pp. 287-8. Her major publications after her second marriage comprise the following: *Anecdotes* (1786); her edition of *Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson* (1788); *British Synonymy; or, an Attempt at Regulating the Choice of Words in Familiar Conversation* (1794); and *Retrospection: or a Review of the most striking and important Events, Characters, Situations, and their Consequences, which the last eighteen hundred Years have presented to the View of Mankind* (1801).
  18. *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, edited by John Butt and others, 11 vols (London: Methuen, 1939-69), III.2, *To a Lady. Of the Characters of Women*, lines 199-202.
  19. For discussion of such contexts in the transmission of Johnsoniana, see Annette Wheeler Cafarelli, 'Johnson and Women: Demasculinizing Literary History', *Age of Johnson* 5 (1992), pp. 61-114 (69-71).
  20. *Anecdotes*, p. 110.
  21. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, edited by George Birkbeck Hill and L.F. Powell, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-50), I, 98-9.
  22. Recorded in the commentary to *Life*, I, 531.
  23. *Anecdotes*, p. 140.
  24. Lines 207-210.
  25. *Anecdotes*, pp. 140-41.
  26. *Anecdotes*, p. 141.
  27. See Isobel Grundy, 'Samuel Johnson as Patron of Women', *Age of Johnson* 1 (1987), pp. 59-78 (p. 73).
  28. This is strongly brought out by Marie E. McAllister in 'Gender, Myth, and Recompense: Hester Thrale's Journal of a Tour to Wales', *Age of Johnson* 6 (1994), pp. 265-82.
  29. *Anecdotes*, p. 71.
  30. *Anecdotes*, p. 117.
  31. *Anecdotes*, pp. 139-40.
  32. *Horace: The Odes and Epodes*, edited and translated by C.E. Bennett, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1968), *Odes* III.ix.22.
  33. *Anecdotes*, pp. 158-9.
  34. See Clifford, pp. 49-52.
  35. Mary Hyde, *The Thrales of Streatham Park* (London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 18.
  36. Examples are legion: see for example *Anecdotes*, pp. 110-111.
  37. See Gay W. Brack, 'Tetty and Samuel Johnson: The Romance and the Reality', *Age of Johnson* 5 (1992), pp. 147-78.

38. For a suggestive account by a psychiatrist (although the assessment of literary evidence needs to be weighed with caution), see Roy W. Menninger, 'Johnson's Psychic Turmoil and the Women in his Life', *Age of Johnson* 5 (1992), pp. 179-200. For his irritation with his lodgers, see *Anecdotes*, p. 131.
39. *Letters*, I, 284.
40. *Letters*, I, 286.
41. *Virgil*, edited and translated by H. Rushton Fairclough, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1947), *Aeneid* VI.425.
42. *Letters*, II, 38-9.
43. For explication of the Ovidian source, see *Letters*, I, 287.
44. *Letters*, III, 330.
45. *Thraliana*, I, 84-5; *Anecdotes*, pp. 66, 147-8.
46. For her explanation of her conduct, see *Letters*, IV, 338, n.1.
47. *Anecdotes*, p. 150.
48. *Letters*, III, 330.
49. Clifford, pp. 200-202; *Letters*, III, 330.
50. *Letters*, III, 340.
51. *Anecdotes*, p. 112.
52. McCarthy, p. 33.
53. Another of the remaining five was soon to die: only four lived into adulthood. For Hester Thrale's marriage and childbearing, see Mary Hyde, *The Thrales of Streatham Park* (London: Harvard University Press, 1976), which includes the text of Mrs Thrale's 'Children's Book'; Clifford, Chapters 2-9 and the introduction by Doody, p. xxv; McCarthy, pp. 18-34.
54. For hints that Johnson knew at least something of her attraction to Piozzi, see *Letters*, IV, 321-2, and n.7.
55. See her remarks in *Thraliana*, I, 110, 197, 544. For Johnson's views, see *Anecdotes*, p. 130.
56. Compare *Anecdotes*, p. 127.
57. *Letters*, IV, 276-7.
58. *Letters*, IV, 321-2.
59. The echo is noted in the commentary to *Letters*, I, 286, and in McCarthy, p. 140.
60. *Letters*, IV, 343-4.
61. McCarthy, p. 20.
62. *Anecdotes*, p. 156.
63. *Anecdotes*, p. 160.

#### PREPARING THE DICTIONARY FOR CD ROM

Dr Anne McDermott — 9th November 1996

Chairman: C. Tom Davis BA MA

Dr McDermott's interest in Johnson dates from her undergraduate days: it was carried through to a doctoral thesis on Johnson's arguments (soon to appear as a book). After three years with the J.M.B. Examination Board she joined Birmingham University as a Leverhulme Research Fellow, working on a project to edit Johnson's Dictionary. She is now a Lecturer in the same department, running the Dictionary Project: the first phase of which resulted in the publication (by Cambridge University Press in 1997) of the text on CD ROM. She has continued this work by investigating the sources of the illustrative quotations in the *Dictionary*, with a view to incorporation in a later re-issue of the CD ROM. She has also established a Johnson Centre, jointly between Lichfield and the University of Birmingham, and is involved in the Millenium Editions Project. This latter aims at the publication of all the literature in the language in electronic form, to be available to schools and colleges.

[Editor: This paper is not in a form presented by the speaker; it is an adaption prepared from a tape recording taken at the meeting.]

Dr McDermott said that the main work in preparing the *Dictionary* for CD ROM had been to encode it. She would be happy to answer questions anyone might have about that, but the actual process of encoding was of only limited interest. What she proposed to do, therefore, was to take Johnson's *Dictionary* as a Monumental Icon, which was what it has become, a Monument of the Language, and place it in an historical context. She would discuss what Johnson in his *Preface* says he is trying to achieve with the *Dictionary*, and talk about that in relation to strands of the language, particularly as they affect people's idea of the nation, since people generally look upon the English language as being closely related to matters of patriotism, a sense of nationalism. Even now that is generally so; the English language is a great language when Britain is a great nation, and when Britain goes into decline, people begin to question the language, and the two things seem to be closely related. She thought, therefore, that she would look at what Johnson says he is trying to achieve in his use of the language, and see how he fits into its historical development. This involves starting with Caxton.

Caxton is interesting because he had an attitude towards the English language which is very apologetic. He does not think that the English language is much to be proud of, and yet he is the first person to print in the language. His attitude to French is completely the reverse of that; he thinks that French is a great language. So he apologizes, in many of the texts that he prints, for knowing French only imperfectly; additionally, he says that he learned his native tongue in the Kentish Weald, "where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England." French is the international language which everyone would be expected to know, and that attitude continues through the sixteenth century; almost up to its end. English was regarded as rude, barbarous, gross, incorrect. It was perceived as not eloquent, 'eloquent' being one of those words which occurs frequently in writings of that century. Writers all felt that English was too full of monosyllables; eloquence meant Latin, Greek, French and Italian in the modern languages, so that anything that was polysyllabic was considered elegant and delicate. English was not like that, it was recognized that it was a monosyllabic language with a lot of consonants in it: it was a barbarous language, not on a par with French and Italian.

Dr McDermott selected extracts from texts through the sixteenth century in order to illustrate this particular point. The first was from the anonymous translator of a French treatise. Because he is translating from French, and French has prestige at the time, he apologises for his translation since English is not able to match the eloquence and delicacy of the French original.

Remember clarkes dayly doth theyr delygens,  
In to oure currupte speche maters to translate.  
Yet betwene frenche and englysshe is grete deffens.  
Their longage in redynge is douse and dylycate.  
In thy mother tonge they be so fortunate.  
They have the bybyll and the apocolypys of devynyte  
With other nobyll bokes that in Englyche may not be

(The Kalender of Shepherds [1506])

For this author, French is a great language, not just because it is "douce and dylycate," soft and delicate, but the fact that the Bible had been translated into French was proof to him that it was a great language, that it had prestige. This is, of course, 1506, nearly twenty years before Tyndale's translation of the Bible, so the Bible had not been translated into English at this time. Thus for the first three quarters of the sixteenth century the classical languages, Latin and Greek, were regarded as superior to English, but so also were some European languages, in particular French and Italian, but specifically French. Through this period, writers bemoan the baseness of English and its lack of elegance, which they see as an intrinsic part of the language, something they cannot do anything about; it is not their

inability to translate that is the problem, it is the language itself that lacks this kind of elegance and sweetness. This is, perhaps, until Shakespeare. It is very interesting, that towards the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, that attitude completely reverses itself.

It is not true that only the lower orders spoke English because there was Chancery English throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth Centuries. Up until the twelfth century, everybody spoke French. From the end of the fourteenth century, Chaucer writes in English. He is well-educated and a writer; for him the language in standard use in educated writing, in learned writing, is English. By the end of the fourteenth century onwards some people still speak French, but for Chaucer there is a choice, one could write in French or in English. From that time onwards it really stops being a choice; from the late fourteenth century to the fifteenth century English is the language of everybody, the Clergy, the learned and the scholars. They speak French as well, but English is the native language, it is regarded as the native tongue in a way that it had not been in previous centuries.

Dr McDermott moved into the fifteenth century, since by this time French was no longer regarded as the native tongue. English is the native tongue, but everybody is rather apologetic about it; it lacks elegance, it lacks copiousness — that is the word they use — it is regarded as having a rather restricted vocabulary, unable to match the elegance of Greek. Greek was the exemplar of elegance; French was considered as being able to match the qualities of the classical languages, whereas English was not.

The second extract was from Andrew Borde in 1548. This is mid-way through the sixteenth century and he says: "The speche of Englande is a base speche to other noble speches, as Italion, Castylion, and French; howbeit the speche of Englande of late dayes is amended." (*The fyrst boke of the introduction of knowledge*. [1548]). The amendment which Borde mentions is that round about the beginning of the sixteenth century all kinds of neologisms and loan words derived from the classical languages, and from French and Italian, began to be imported into English. This was to improve the language from this base, coarse, barbarous tongue into something much more elegant, to increase its copiousness in other words; Andrew Borde thinks that even with all these neologisms and loan words, it is still a base speech compared with Italian, Castillian and French.

Roger Ascham, in the third extract, (this is 1545, again half way through the sixteenth century) is really repeating a commonplace when he states his low opinion of the vernacular; "And as for the Latin or greke tonge, euery thyng is so excellently done in them, that none can do better: In the Englysh tonge contrary, euery thinge in a maner so meanly, both for the matter and handelynge that no man can do worse." (*Dedication of Toxophilus* [1548]). For Ascham, Latin and Greek are excellent languages, but the English tongue, by comparison, is at the opposite end of the spectrum. It is curious that he can still state so baldly a very low opinion of the vernacular language not long before the appearance of Shakespeare.

Dr McDermott said that she thought that these attitudes had little to do with the language, they had everything to do with the political context, with what was going on in the wider, cultural, political, and social world. Attitudes to the English language are rarely to do with the language itself. People who write to the *Daily Telegraph* now about the state of the language are not really writing about the state of the language, they are writing about the state of the nation, as they see it. The two things are still closely connected.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century there is a very noticeable change, you could almost date it to a brief period about 1575-1580. It is in a very short period indeed that the change happens from this standard repetition of the view of English as being rude, barbarous incapable of expressing elegancies to a sudden pride in the language, a sudden change to a view that the language is perfectly capable of expressing eloquence and copiousness and elegance in the way that had previously been thought



impossible. The language itself did not change in such a short time, so something else must have been going on which changed their attitude to the language so fundamentally that it had now become a source of pride.

Two main factors, perhaps more than this, influenced the last quarter of the sixteenth century. One was innovations in printing and the sudden availability of printed texts which exceeded the demand from the reading public. There is a sudden demand for texts in the vernacular, for translated texts; you therefore get translations of the Bible and of other classical texts in great proliferation towards the end of the sixteenth century. The other factor parallel with this is the Reformation. When religious authority was transferred from the Church to the Bible, which is in effect what happened at the Reformation, a translation of the Scriptures was rendered imperative. If ordinary people are going to be able to teach themselves their religion, they need to be able to read the Bible, they need to be able to read it in their own language, not in Latin.

The fourth passage is an extract taken at random from many expressions of this kind. This is Hugh Goughe saying, "I have translated into our vulgar speche, this little booke, that herein, the vnaquainted with the latine tonge, may learne, reade and see the sune of their belefe." (dedication, Bartholomeus Georgievits, *The Offspring of the House of Ottomano*. [1570?]). For him, it is important that ordinary people should be able to read in their own tongue, so that they can educate themselves in their own religion; but this was not a smooth transition, and there were many who still felt defensive about the vernacular. This apologetic feeling for English, that it was still a rude barbarous language still carries on toward the end of the sixteenth century. The following is from an anonymous letter to Sir Thomas Hobbes. In *The Courtier* in 1561:

... knowledge may be obtained in stydyng only a mans owne natieue tongue. So that to be skilful and exercised in authours translated is no lesse to be called learning, than is the very same in the Latine and Greeke tongue.

The writer of this letter is still rather apologetic, he feels that to write in English is somehow to be less learned than to write in Latin or Greek. Still, there was a contrary feeling that, although English could not match the eloquence of Greek, it could express adequately the thoughts and ideas of classical writers. You find this expressed commonly in such translations of classical texts. There was, therefore, a great proliferation of translated texts towards the end of the sixteenth century, and commonly prefaced to them would be a dedication, or an introduction, written by the translator, which, rather than apologizing for the lack of eloquence in the English tongue, would claim that English was perfectly able to match Latin and Greek. The apologetic tone starts to disappear and, instead, a kind of nationalistic spirit begins to creep into discussions of English as the native tongue.

We are now at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and this next passage is from Philemon Holland, in his preface to a translation of Pliny, which he calls *the Historie of the World*, (1601). This is one of the standard translations of a classical writer and he says:

As for our speech, was not Latine as common and naturall in Italie, as English here with us . . . .  
Are we the onely nation under the sun unworthie to taste of such knowledge? or is our language so barbarous, that it will not admit in proper tearmes a forrein phrase?

His argument is, why are we apologizing for English as being not eloquent enough, not as elegant as Latin or Greek because, he says, Latin was the native language in Italy, just as English is in our country. He argues for English, but also for incorporating into English some Latin terms to supply lack. These are what came to be called in-court terms, terms that were taken almost directly from Latin or Greek, mostly from Latin, so they sound latinate, they sound learned. Later in the seventeenth century, they began to attract a kind of contempt, as though they were only learned words that did not really belong in the language, they were not native words, but just at this time these terms were needed.



A writer who takes a stand against this view of English as barbarous, takes a stand against those who disparage their own nation, was George Pettie, author of the following extract. He says:

But how hardly soeuer you deale with your tongue, how barbarous soeuer you count it, how little soeuer you esteeme it, I durst my selfe undertake (if I were furnished with learnyng otherwyse) to wryte in it as copiouslye for varietie, as compendiously for breuitie, as choycely for woordes, as pithily for sentences, as pleasauntly for figures, and eurey way as eolquently, as any writer should in any vulgar tongue whatsoeuer. (George Pettie, trans. from French of *The Civile Conuersation of M. Steeuën Guazzo* [1581]).

Not everybody was as up-beat as Pettie about the language. There were many who were still apologetic, but he is going on the attack here; he thinks that English is just as copious, just as elegant, just as capable of eloquence as any classical language and as French or Italian. Interestingly, his translation is from the French, so he is making a direct comparison, the French text was published, and his English text alongside it, and he makes no apology for the English language as compared with the French.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, there were many who asserted that the English nation owed the glory and purity of its tongue to its poets; this is the time in which Shakespeare is writing and many other great poets. Puttenham, in his *Art of English Poesie* (1589) draws up a list of poets whom he thanks for their "studious endeavours, commendably employed in enriching and polishing their native tongue. Never so furnished or embellished as of late, they have so much beautified our English tongue as at this day it will be found that our nation is nothing inferior to French or Italian." Only forty years earlier, as in some of the above extracts, writers had been apologizing for English and saying that it was obviously inferior to French and Italian; here Puttenham is saying quite the reverse, "it will be found our nation is nothing inferior to the French or Italian". He attributes this change in the language to the poets, the poets of Britain. The poets have expanded its vocabulary, they have made it copious, and they have made it eloquent.

Interestingly, Molcaster sees in the expanding vocabulary of England, evidence of her development as a world power, and Dr McDermott thought that he was probably right. This is the age of Elizabeth, this is the age in which England began to be a world power and a nation on the world stage in a way that it had not been previously. Molcaster justifies loan words and neologisms on the ground that they enriched the language. Thus he writes in the first part of *The Elementary* (1582) a defence of loan words, particularly from Latin, but also from French. Thus English is borrowing words from French, and at the same time claiming a superiority over it.

Dr McDermott connected these views of the language with this sudden change of attitude, so that the vernacular, which had been viewed as rude and uneloquent, was suddenly regarded as rich, copious, eloquent, capable of great elegance. It was no accident that this change in attitude to the language coincides with the age of Elizabeth and the age of England as a great nation, particularly a great sea-faring nation. Many of comments made are about the language being transported abroad, through the journeys by ship to various countries. Contemporaries, however, attributed this to the achievement of the poets; they did not think it had anything to do with political and cultural or social change, but these things, perhaps, go alongside each other and there was a sudden upsurge of national pride at the end of the sixteenth century.

This changes through the seventeenth century, and there is a major alteration in views of the language. In the seventeenth century there was much emphasis on the original Anglo-Saxon character of English, while this was not something that was ever picked up in the sixteenth. Spencer writes about English origins as coming from King Arthur, or Brutus, or some kind of mythological age of Britain. He never mentions the Saxons, and no other writers in the early part of the sixteenth century ever mention them, except in passing,

In the seventeenth century just the reverse happens, there is a sudden interest in the Anglo-Saxon origins of English with writers like Richard Verstigen. Richard Verstigen's name in itself reflects this change; he was really Richard Rollands and changed his name to Verstigen, because he had so great a respect for Germans and everything Teutonic. Teutonic things start to have a prestige, just the kind of prestige that France and all things French had in the first three quarters of the sixteenth century. Writers start to look at the English language and try to investigate its connections with the Teutonic languages; they suddenly find that English has Anglo-Saxon roots, and they start to emphasize this much more than had been done previously.

Verstigen praises the Germans' bravery, honesty, virtue and endurance, and he thinks this is what makes them worthy ancestors of Englishmen. So this is a kind of national pride; the English at that period are regarded as being a fierce, proud and independent people. Elegance is no longer a virtue that is thought desirable. Instead pride is taken in just those features of the language that had been a matter for apology in the sixteenth century. Its rude, unpolished nature showed that we were really true Saxon people and connected with the Germans. Camden, for example, and other antiquarians saw the wonderful providence of God in the migrations of the Angles and the Saxons into England. Richard Hawkins in *A Discourse on the National Excellencies of England* (1658) writes:

But more particularly, the English descend from those people of Germany which are called Saxons. These by good authors were esteemed the strongest and valientest of its nations and are reported to have enlarged their bounds further than any other particular nation did in Germany, and carried the terror of their arms into all parts that lay about them, but especially to have lorded it on the seas.

For him the fact that the Saxons "lorded it on the seas" is a matter for praise, and a matter of pride. He thinks that the English are the true inheritors of this Saxon language and the Saxon culture, and we, too, as an English nation, "lord it on the seas," because that is our true ancestry. So, instead of apologizing for our Saxon inheritance, in the seventeenth century it becomes a matter of pride: and it also becomes politicized, around the time of the Civil War. Writers describe the Saxons as having fought for true liberty. They were the down-trodden peoples, who fought against the Norman Conquest and the Norman yoke. 'Liberty' becomes one of those watch-words; that is what many people thought they were fighting for. So, rather than French occupying a position of prestige and English trying to match it, you have precisely the reverse, you have writers identifying the Saxon element in English and putting great emphasis on it, and the Danes and the Normans, who conquered England in turn, were seen as dimming the glory of the true Teutonic original of the English people. The Norman Conquest was, in the seventeenth century, regarded as a great disaster, because it corrupted that true purity of the Saxon tongue. Thus, by the time Johnson writes his *Dictionary*, we have gone full circle; in a way, he writes in this tradition, which regards Anglo-Saxon as the true, pure, English, that has been corrupted by French influences from the Norman Conquest onwards.

The following are extracts from the *Preface* to the *Dictionary* which make the point that he was trying to preserve the English Language in a pure form, that he identified it as being close to its Anglo-Saxon roots. The first extract reads,

So far I have been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the Restoration, whose works I regard as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction.

He takes his authorities, the sources of the illustrative quotations, from a period, roughly from Sydney, 1560-1570 up to the Restoration and actually beyond. He includes writers such as Milton and Dryden, right up to the end of the seventeenth century, and he regards this as the age of the pure English. He adds as a rider to that comment,

our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original *Teutonick* character, and deviating towards a *Gallick* structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recall it, by making our ancient volumes the groundwork of stile, admitting among the additions of later times, only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with our native idioms.

Johnson is returning to what he thinks is the original Teutonic character of the language, the original Anglo-Saxon. He thinks that of late, in the eighteenth century, it has been deviating towards a Gallic structure and phraseology. It is really a kind of anti-French bias that he has, and he thinks that French has corrupted the language. The English language is beginning to have a Gallic structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recall it and we ought to try to keep out these French neologisms. Later he says:

If an academy should be established for the cultivation of our stile, which I, who can never wish to see dependence multiplied, hope the spirit of *English* liberty will hinder or destroy, let them, instead of compiling grammars and dictionaries, endeavour with all their influence, to stop the licence of translatours, whose idleness and ignorance, if it be suffered to proceed, will reduce us to babble a dialect of *France*.

He really feels so strongly about this and trying to maintain a pure English against this French intrusion in the language and he finishes up, towards the end of the Preface, by saying, "... tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language." Sometimes, said Dr McDermott, she thinks it is probably easy to miss the political overtones in the *Preface* to the *Dictionary* for us who, perhaps, do not share that feeling, this anti-French feeling, in fact the French now feel very protective of their own language, and try to preserve it against intrusions from English. Exactly as the English felt about French in the eighteenth century.

It is ironic that from about the fourteenth century onwards, the eighteenth century has the fewest incorporation of loan words from French into English, and yet the feeling of the time was that English was being taken over by the French. It is not an accurate reflection of what was actually going on in the language, but this was how people felt and felt very strongly.

Swift says exactly the same thing, in his *Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue*: this kind of anti-French feeling was very common and was connected with the politics of the time. Britain was constantly fighting wars with France, — for world domination, effectively. The Seven Years War between Britain and France was basically for control of the colonies in North America. So the fact that the English language is now the language of North America is almost directly as a result of the Seven Years' War, and the fact that Britain won that war. If France had won it, France would undoubtedly have become the dominant European nation and the French language too would have become dominant.

The anti-French point, is picked up by certain reviewers of the *Dictionary* at the time. For example, David Garrick published a poem in the *Public Advertiser*, on the 22nd April, 1755, just after the *Dictionary* was published in which he says,

and Johnson well armed like a hero of yore,

Has eat forty French and will eat forty more.

The allusion is obviously to Johnson, supposedly excelling the Académie Française which had forty members and Johnson had originally boasted that he could finish the *Dictionary* in three years, while it had taken the Académie forty years to complete theirs. There is that nice comment in Boswell's *Life*, where he says, "and this is the proportion, let me see, forty times forty is sixteen hundred, as three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman."

Johnson was enormously proud of that achievement; it is not just pride in his own individual achievement, it is a matter of national pride that England now has a dictionary to match the French, in fact more than match it, to surpass it. Many of these anti-French sentiments emerge later on. When Garrick organized the Stratford Jubilee, in 1769, to celebrate the Shakespearean anniversary, he composed a song for the occasion which incorporates many such sentiments:

Our Shakespeare compared is to no man,  
No Frenchman, nor Grecian, nor Roman.  
Their swans are all geese to the Avon Sweet Swan,  
And the Man of All Men was a Warwickshire man.

The whole of the Stratford Jubilee was characterised by such anti-French sentiments, and it contained many little plays in which a French nobleman who would be worsted in argument. It was all to do with pride in Britain, pride in Britain's poets, and pride in the English language as well. It is quite the reverse of the feeling that was common in the sixteenth century, that French was ordinarily regarded as superior.

Dr McDermott concluded by taking that argument to a later period, to show that attitudes to the language are affected by attitudes to the nation as a whole, even later than Johnson. This emphasis on Anglo-Saxon continues into the nineteenth century. James Ingram in a text called *The Utility of Anglo-Saxon* [1807], writes that:

Anglo-Saxon is of the greatest importance to Englishmen, in that it is intimately connected with the original introduction and establishment of their present language and laws, their liberty and their religion.

Ingram makes precisely the point that is made by seventeenth-century writers that Anglo-Saxon is connected with liberty. It is also associated with religion, because Anglo-Saxon is Teutonic, so it is a Protestant language, it is not Catholic. French, by this time, has connotations of Catholicism and so does Italian, and there is a considerable anti-Catholic sentiment throughout the eighteenth century. It is no accident, for example, that just at the time of the two Jacobite rebellions, 1715 and 1745, there is an upsurge of anti-French and anti-Catholic sentiment. These are also precisely the periods when there is the most emphasis on the Saxon character of English language; its Teutonic character, in other words, is emphasized at the expense of its French element dating from the Norman Conquest.

Dr McDermott quoted from Arthur Quiller-Couch who wrote in *Studies in Literature* (1918) at the time of the first World War that

from Anglo-Saxon prose, from Anglo-Saxon poetry, our living poetry and prose have, save linguistically, no derivation . . . always our literature has obeyed, however unconsciously the precept, "Antiquam exquisite matrem," seek back to the ancient mother always it has recreated itself, kept itself pure and strong, by harking back to bathe in those native — yes native — Mediterranean springs.

Quiller-Couch is arguing precisely the opposite of what has been argued through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And it is no accident that this is written at the end of the first World War. You would not expect a writer to be claiming England had a strong Saxon character, that it was connected to the Teutonic peoples when we were at war with them. So, at such a time somebody like Quiller-Couch starts to argue precisely the opposite. He says, "From Anglo-Saxon prose, from Anglo-Saxon poetry our living poetry and prose have, save linguistically, no derivation." He is quite prepared to acknowledge that linguistically we might have some connection with the Saxon people, but that has no influence whatsoever on our literature. Our literature is quite separate. He is separating the two, the language and the literature; he says, "our literature has always gone back to the ancient mother, it has gone back to Mediterranean springs", in other words, to its Latin and Greek ancestors, to classical writers, and he calls it "harking back to bathe in those native — yes native — Mediterranean springs". He is looking for the inspiration of English, and he finds it in Latin and Greek, not in Anglo-Saxon. He is trying to

separate out the strands of English and diminish the Anglo-Saxon at the expense of emphasising the Latin/Greek character of the language.

The writers of the Oxford English Dictionary — which started around the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Philological Society was considering how it might go about recording the history of the English language, it became a kind of statement of politics at the same time — because they had to work out what they thought *was* the character of English and they, quite arbitrarily, chose as a starting point of English, the date 1150. We do the same thing now, when we are teaching in academic departments, we separate Old English from Middle English, and we say that Middle English starts at around 1150. Before that it was Old English; but it is not really so, it is a continuum. For the O.E.D. editors and the members of the Philological Society, to choose 1150 is an arbitrary act. *Old English* begins to be used as a synonym for *Anglo-Saxon* — a kind of political usage showing Anglo-Saxon as being the oldest form of English, that English does go back to a pure form. Writers who want to separate the Saxon origins of English, tend to refer to it as 'Anglo-Saxon', those two terms are used by writers, apparently interchangeably, but it does betray their attitude towards Anglo-Saxon.

Dean Trench, writing about the language in the middle of the nineteenth century — around the time (1855) that the Philological Society was collecting proposals for the O.E.D. — says,

What can more clearly point out our ancestors' native land and ours, having fulfilled a glorious past, as being destined for a glorious future, than that they should have acquired for themselves and those who came after them a clear, a strong, a harmonious, a noble language.

He is writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, at a time when the British Empire was at its height, and that is reflected in his view of the language. He is saying, "Our language has fulfilled a glorious past and is destined for a glorious future". This is what people felt at the time was the nature of Britain; Britain was destined for a glorious future, and this is reflected in his language and his characterization of English as a clear, a strong, a harmonious and a noble language is a reflection of Britain's status in the world. Britain is a world power, and so its language is seen as being noble and harmonious, clear and strong.

Returning, then, to the beginning of the sixteenth century, when people were apologetic about English, English has not changed so much. It has not changed so fundamentally between the middle of the sixteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century, as to have effected this change in attitude by itself. Attitudes toward the language are primarily connected to social, political and cultural events and Britain's status as a world power.

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#### DR JOHNSON AND EDMUND BURKE

Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien — 14th December 1996

Chairman: Richard Thrale

Dr O'Brien needs no introduction: but it may be helpful to outline his career. Educated at Sandford Park School, Dublin, he proceeded to Trinity College Dublin where he graduated. He entered the Department of External Affairs of the Republic of Ireland, later becoming Head of the United Nations section and a member of the Irish Delegation to the UN. He became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana: he taught at New York University. Entering politics he became Minister for Posts and Telegraphs and a member of the Senate of the Republic of Ireland. He was editor of *The Observer*. He has published numerous works, including studies of Parnell and Burke. His latest book is *The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution*.

The best sources for the relationship between Johnson and Burke are just two in number. The first is the ten volume edition of *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* under the general editorship of Thomas



Copeland, published by Cambridge and Chicago, between 1958 and 1978. The second is Boswell's *Life of Johnson* edited by R. W. Chapman. The edition I have used is the third revised edition of 1970, with an introduction by Pat Rogers.

Let us first consider what *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* has to tell us about that relationship. A topnote to an entry for 21 June 1770 tells us something about its early stages.

Burke's acquaintance with Dr Johnson began in the late 1750's. Arthur Murphy (1727-1805) reports their meeting at Garrick's dinner table on Christmas Day 1758, when in a discussion of the affairs of Bengal, Johnson allowed himself to be contradicted by Burke. He remarked to Murphy the next day: 'I suppose, Murphy, you are proud of your countryman. Cum talis sit utinam noster esset!' Johnson and Burke was both among the original members of the Literary Club founded in 1764; they met often at its meetings and much enjoyed each other's conversation.

The next relevant entry is for June 1776. It concerns a round-robin drawn up by Burke concerning Johnson's Latin draft of an epitaph for Oliver Goldsmith. Burke's draft praised the epitaph but ended with a recommendation.

But if We might venture to express our Wishes, they would lead us to request, that he would write the Epitaph in English, rather than in Latin: As we think that the Memory of so eminent an English Writer ought to be perpetuated in the language, to which his Works are likely to be so lasting an Ornament; which we also know to have been the opinion of The late Doctor himself.

Johnson kept his epitaph in Latin — it is one of the most admired inscriptions in the Abbey — and spoke with contempt of his friends' remonstrance. As for Burke's share in the business, Johnson said "I should have thought Mund Burke would have had more sense."

The next reference comes at the end of a long letter about Scottish affairs, from Burke to James Boswell on 1 March 1779. The letter ends with the following message:

I dined with your friend Dr Johnson on Saturday at Sir Joshua's. We had a very good day, as we had not a sentence, word, syllable, Letter, comma, or title, of any of the Elements that make politicks.

It looks as if Boswell, in an earlier meeting, had warned Burke against discussing politics with Johnson, since Johnson was a Tory, at least in theory, while Burke at this period of his life (and indeed for most of his life) was a committed Whig. Burke seems to be telling Boswell, with some irony, that his warning was quite unnecessary. To read between the lines, the letter appears to suggest that the superficially friendly relationship between Burke and Boswell was already somewhat fraught. We shall be considering further evidence to that effect in the second part of this lecture in connection with Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

Fanny Burney's estimate of Edmund Burke, and comparison of him with Dr Johnson, is of some interest here.

Fanny first met Burke at one of Sir Joshua Reynold's dinners in the spring of 1782. She decided that she was in love with him: 'quite desperately and outrageously in love.' He was the '2nd Man in this Kingdom . . . Dr Johnson I think the First of every Kingdom; — but I need not, I think, name Mr Burke for his next Neighbour, — such spirit, such intelligence, — so much energy when serious, so much pleasantry when sportive, — so manly in his address, so animated in his Conversation, — so eloquent in Argument, so exhilarating in trifling . . .



Burke was named as the first pall-bearer at Dr Johnson's funeral in Westminster Abbey on 20 December 1784.

I shall have occasion, before the end of this lecture, to come back to some significant correspondence between Burke and Boswell after Johnson's death. But first I should like to look at the picture of Burke's relationship with Johnson as it appears in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

It is quite an odd picture. It falls into two parts. There is one part which consists of direct quotations from Johnson, concerning Burke. These references are uniformly respectful. The other part — interspersed with the direct quotations — consists of statements by Johnson, in which Burke is not named, but appears to be aimed at, and in which Burke is generally much less respectfully treated than he is in the direct quotations.

R. W. Chapman, the editor of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, takes the unusual course of setting out in his Index, under the heading Burke Edmund a special category: 'Anonymous or veiled references.'

As I say, the categorisation is unusual, but it is fully justified in the circumstances. The 'anonymous or veiled references' deserve to be identified and they shed a good deal of light on the relations of Burke and Johnson — and even more light on the relations between Burke and Johnson's biographer. Let us consider what seem to me the most significant of these references.

Johnson, unlike many others, had a low opinion of Burke's wit. Boswell writes (for 28 July 1763)

Boswell. 'Has not Burke a great deal of wit, Sir?' JOHNSON 'I do not think so, Sir. He is, indeed, continually attempting wit, but he fails. And I have no pleasure in hearing a man attempting wit and failing, than in seeing a man trying to leap over a ditch and tumbling into it.'

Boswell reports (8 December 1763) Johnson as mourning the loss of an intellectual feast in consequence of Burke's immersion in politics:

To me it is not conceivable how [Bishop] Berkeley can be answered by pure reasoning; but I know that the nice and difficult task was to have been undertaken by one of the most luminous minds of the present age, had not politicks 'turned him from calm philosophy aside.' What an admirable display of subtilty, united with brilliance, might his contending with Berkeley have afforded us! How must we, when we reflect on the loss of such an intellectual feast, regret that he should be characterised, by Goldsmith, as the man

Who born for the universe narrow'd his mind,

And to party gave up what was meant for mankind

More substantially, Boswell (15 April 1773) quotes Johnson as assailing Burke's honesty, in relation to his political allegiance.

An eminent publick character being mentioned; — JOHNSON. 'I remember being present when he shewed himself to be so corrupted, or at least something so different from what I think right, as to maintain, that a member of parliament should go along with his party right or wrong. Now, Sir, this is so remote from native virtue, from scholastick virtue, that a good man must have undergone a great change before he can reconcile himself to such a doctrine. It is maintaining that you may lie to the publick; for you lie when you call that right which you think wrong, or the reverse.' A friend of ours [J Reynolds], who is too much an echo of that gentleman, observed that a man who does not stick uniformly to a party, is only waiting to be bought. Why then, said I, he is only waiting to be what that gentleman is already.

And again (7 April 1775): Boswell is speaking.

I maintained, that certainly all patriots were not scoundrels. Being urged (not by Johnson,) to name one exception, I mentioned an eminent person, whom we all greatly admired. JOHNSON. 'Sir, I do not say that he is not honest, but we have no reason to conclude from his political conduct that he is honest. Were he to accept of a place from this ministry, he would lose that [reputation for] firmness which he has, and might be turned out of his place in a year.'

(Burke did not in fact accept a place from that Ministry, although he was offered one on condition that he changed his opposition to the American War, which he and his political friends refused to do.)

On Burke's conversation (7 April 1778)

An eminent friend of ours is not so agreeable as the variety of his knowledge would otherwise make him, because he talks partly from ostentation.

Yet even from so reluctant a writer as Boswell, Burke can extort admiration. Boswell thought in 1781, that a certain work by another writer (now forgotten) had displayed 'a pretty successful imitation' of Johnson's style. Boswell goes on

When I mentioned this to a very eminent literary character [Burke], he opposed me vehemently, exclaiming 'No, no, it is not a good imitation of Johnson, it has all his pomp without his force; it has all the nodosities of the oak without its strength.' This was an image so happy, that one might have thought he would have been satisfied with it; but he was not. And setting his mind again to work, he added, with exquisite felicity, 'It has all the contortions of the Sybil, without the inspiration.'

Boswell's last recording of a Johnsonian verdict on Burke ends on a negative note, for 26 May 1783, a year before Johnson's death:

Another day I spoke of one of our friends, of whom he, as well as I, had a very high opinion. He expatiated in his praise, but added, 'Sir, he is a cursed Whig, a bottomless Whig, as they all are now.'

That was eight years before Burke broke with the Whig Party over the French Revolution.

By contrast, almost all the references in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, in which Burke is named, are favourable. There is one apparent exception, for 17 April 1778, Boswell writes, of Johnson.

But he did not repine at the prosperity of others. The late Dr Thomas Leland told Mr Courtenay, that when Mr Edmund Burke shewed Johnson his fine house and lands near Beaconsfield, Johnson coolly said, 'Non equidem invideo; miror magis.'

Wonder at evidence of unexplained wealth generally is taken as implying a suggestion of some kind of bribery, and Johnson's remark has been read, by writers unfriendly to Burke, in this sense. Boswell is aware of this suggestion and he is at pains — ostensibly at least — to repel the implication. He adds a footnote — almost the longest and much the strangest in his entire book — to the Latin quotation which closes his original reference, and which he translates:

['I grudge thee not — rather I marvel' — Virgil, *Eclogues*: II (Wickham).] I am not entirely without suspicion that Johnson may have felt a little momentary envy, for no man loved the good things of this life better than he did; and he could not but be conscious that he deserved a much larger share of them, than he ever had. I attempted in a newspaper to comment on the above passage, in the manner of Warburton, who must be allowed to have shewn uncommon ingenuity, in giving to any author's text whatever meaning he chose it should carry. As this imitation may amuse my readers, I shall here introduce it —

No saying of Dr Johnson's has been more misunderstood than his applying to Mr Burke when he first saw him at his fine place at Beaconsfield, *Non equidem invideo; miror magis*. These two celebrated men had been friends for many years before Mr Burke entered on his parliamentary career. They were both writers, both members of THE LITERARY CLUB: when, therefore, Dr Johnson saw Mr Burke in a situation so much more splendid than that to which he himself had attained, he did not mean to express that he thought it a disproportionate prosperity, but while he, as a philosopher, asserted an exemption from envy, *non equidem invideo*, he went on in the words of the poet *miror magis*; thereby signifying, either that he was occupied in admiring what he was glad to see; or, perhaps, that considering the general lot of men of superior abilities, he wondered that Fortune, who is represented as blind, should, in this instance, have been so just.

This is a strange and tortuous defence, if it is a defence at all. His newspaper 'defence' — introduced as he says 'to amuse my readers' — is so strained as to suggest that the loyal writer is doing his best to defend the indefensible, and really knows that Burke was bribed. In reality, Burke was not bribed. Like other politicians, in days when politicians were not paid from public funds, he accepted large gifts from wealthy party leaders, especially Lord Fitzwilliam. But he never allowed this financial dependency to affect, or constrain, his political advice, which was quite frequently at variance with the views of his political leaders, as his published correspondence amply shows. In 1793, when Fitzwilliam was still resisting Burke's advice to oppose the French Revolution, Burke declined the continuance of the proffered subsidy. Shortly afterwards, it was Fitzwilliam who capitulated and, with a considerable following, left Fox's Whigs, who still clung to the Revolution.

Boswell represents himself — in May 1776 — as having been instrumental in reconciling Burke with Johnson:

This record, though by no means so perfect as I could wish, will serve to give a notion of a very curious interview, which was not only pleasing at the time, but had the agreeable and benignant effect of reconciling any animosity, and sweetening any acidity, which in the various bustle of political contest, had been produced in the minds of two men who, though widely different, had so many things in common — classical learning, modern literature, wit, and humour, and ready repartee — that it would have been much to be regretted if they had been for ever at a distance from each other.

Mr Burke gave me much credit for this successful *negociation*; and pleasantly said, that 'there was nothing to equal it in the whole history of the *Corps Diplomatique*.'

The remaining references to Burke and quotations from Johnson on Burke in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* are appreciative, or (at worst) neutral.

On Burke's political debut (on which Johnson might have been expected to have some reservation)

However, I will tell you that THE CLUB subsists; but we have the loss of Burke's company since he has been engaged in public business, in which he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his [first] appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp-act, which were publicly commended by Mr Pitt, and have filled the town with wonder.

Burke is a great man by nature, and is expected soon to attain civil greatness.

(Letter to Bennet Langton, March 9, 1776).

On not talking to Burke about politics (10 April 1772)

A question was started, how far people who disagree in any capital point can live in friendship together. Johnson said they might. Goldsmith said they could not, as they had not the idem velle atque idem nolle — the same likings and the same aversions. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, you must shun the subject as to which you disagree. For instance, I can live very well with Burke: I love his knowledge, his genius, his diffusion, and affluence of conversation, but I would not talk to him of the Rockingham party.' GOLDSMITH. 'But, Sir, when people live together who have something as to which they disagree, and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of Bluebeard: "You may look into all the chambers but one." But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber, to talk of that subject.' JOHNSON (with a loud voice) 'Sir, I am not saying that *you* could not live in friendship with a man from whom you differ as to some point: I am only saying that *I* could do it.'

A palpable snub, from Johnson to Goldsmith, over Burke (1 April 1781)

Boswell. 'Upon the subject of exaggerated praise I took the liberty to say, that I thought there might be very high praise given to a known character which deserved it, and therefore it would not be exaggerated. Thus, one might say of Mr Edmund Burke, He is a very wonderful man. JOHNSON. 'No, Sir, you would not be safe if another man had a mind perversely to contradict. He might answer, "where is all the wonder? Burke is, to be sure, a man of uncommon abilities, with a great quantity of matter in his mind, and a great fluency of language in his mouth. But we are not to be stunned and astonished by him." So you see, Sir, even Burke would suffer, not from any fault of his own, but from your folly.'

The snub here is to Boswell.

Johnson compares Burke to Charles James Fox, on 21 March 1783, greatly to Burke's advantage. Boswell is speaking.

It has been observed and wondered at, that Mr Charles Fox never talked with any freedom in the presence of Dr Johnson, though it is well known, as I myself can witness, that his conversation is various, fluent and exceedingly agreeable. Johnson's own experience, however, of that gentleman's reserve was a sufficient reason for his going on thus: 'Fox never talks in private company: not from any determination not to talk, but because he has not the first motion. A man who is used to the applause of the House of Commons, has no wish for that of a private company. A man accustomed to throw for a thousand pounds, if set down to throw for sixpence, would not be at the pains to count his dice. Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full'.

Johnson's last recorded tribute to Edmund Burke, 15 May 1784, is the most striking of all. It follows a 'neutral' observation from Boswell, who may have hoped for something negative in reply:

BOSWELL. 'Mr Burke has a constant stream of conversation.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, if a man were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say — "this is an extraordinary man." If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse drest, the ostler would say — "we have had an extraordinary man here".'

Pat Rogers in his Introduction to the 1970 edition of Boswell's *Life*, refers to Boswell's 'haziness' with regard to Burke. The observation is just, and I think the haziness is due to ambivalence. Boswell is jealous of Burke's power over Johnson. Yet Boswell's ambivalence, as is often the case, is helpful to his readers. He picks up the negative vibrations — rather eagerly as we may think — but he also records the positive comments, which outweigh the negative. So we get a rounded picture of Johnson's relation to Burke.

We have nothing equivalent about Burke's relation to Johnson. Burke confided in few people, and he most certainly did not confide in Boswell, as Johnson did. Burke was deeply grateful to Johnson. Burke's Catholic background was an object of general suspicion in the mid eighteenth century. Johnson did not share this attitude and made Burke welcome to his house at a difficult period in Burke's life, when he was a suspect stranger in London. These were not matters which Burke was ever prepared to discuss, but we know that he resisted any tendency to criticise Johnson, even when Johnson had been rather hard on him. There is one revealing passage by Boswell (for 1780).

As Johnson always followed the extraordinary talents of Mr Burke, so Mr Burke was fully sensible of the wonderful powers of Johnson. Mr Langton recollects having passed an evening with both of them, when Mr Burke repeatedly entered upon topics which it was evident he would have illustrated with extensive knowledge and richness of expression, but Johnson always seized upon the conversation, in which, however, he acquitted himself in a most masterly manner. As Mr Burke and Mr Langton were walking home, Mr Burke observed that Johnson had been very great that night: Mr Langton joined in this, but added, he could have wished to hear more from another person; (plainly intimating that he meant Mr Burke). "O, no (said Mr Burke), it is enough for me to have rung the bell for him."

Finally, I should like to consider the relations between Burke and Boswell in the period between the death of Johnson in 1784 and the publication of the *Life of Dr Johnson* in 1791.

As the Editor of *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* writes:

James Boswell (1740-95) at first achieved a degree of intimacy with Burke. Subsequently he became less easy or confident in his relations with him. Their friendship had recently been punctuated by a succession of crises when Boswell supposed that he had said or done something at which Burke would take offence.

A strain on the relationship is already evident from an incident in April 1784. A letter from Boswell to Burke dated April 19, opens with the words

Your long silence, and particularly your not complying with my request to be informed of the time of your coming to Scotland made me apprehend it is possible you may have taken offence at my Tory Zeal against a political system which you have supported.

On this, Copeland comments:

Boswell had been worried earlier in the year that Burke might have taken offence at a pamphlet against Fox's India Bills which Boswell had written and indeed had sent to Burke.

'Fox's India Bills' were in fact entirely Burke's work, and were very dear to his heart. It is probable that, after receiving the letter which Boswell foolishly sent to him, Burke was very annoyed with him and silently avoided him. However, on learning of Boswell's distress Burke made it up with him.

On receiving this letter from his servant, Burke came into the room where Boswell was waiting apprehensively, embraced him and said: 'What has made you go so mad of late? As to quarrelling with you, that cannot happen ...'

The next episode, nearly two years later, was much more serious. Copeland writes:

Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* had spread alarm among Johnson's friends. Was the *Life of Johnson* — already promised, although it did not appear until 1791 — going to reproduce all remarks they had ever made in Boswell's presence, with the exhaustive accuracy, not to say indiscretion, of scores of passages in the *Tour*? It would be making Johnson's friends 'give an account of every light word' indeed, not only in heaven but here on earth. For an active



politician, like Burke, under constant and irresponsible attack, it was no casual matter to be reported so stenographically in one's hour of relaxation.

Copeland also quotes Boswell himself who was uneasy:

I imprudently touched on a calumny against Mr Burke, in order to be enabled to refute it. We parted on sad terms. I was very uneasy.

As we have seen, touching on a calumny against Burke, in order to appear to refute it (unsuccessfully) was one of Boswell's techniques, whenever he felt inclined to put down Burke. Burke's reply to Boswell's apology is grave and stately: in what Mary Wollstonecraft admirably describes as Burke's 'Rhadamantine' mode.

I am pretty well known, and my Character must stand on its own Base, or it cannot stand at all. Apologies, defences and minute discussions cannot serve it. This is, and has been my own Course, and it will continue to be so long as I can; and if I might recommend any thing to those who are indulgent enough to take any concern in what relates to me, it would be to take the very same Course, and leave me undefended. I believe, on recollection, they will observe that one of the most known and most successful ways of circulating slander is by stating charges, and anticipating defences, where nothing can come to proof, where there is no judge, and where every man credits and carries away what he pleases, and according to the measure of his Malice. This I am perfectly convinced was never your intention, but hasty friendship sometimes produces the effect of Enmity.

In referring to 'circulating slander . . . by stating charges, and anticipating defences' Burke is identifying what was one of Boswell's less admirable controversial techniques.

Burke did not break off relations with Boswell. The two men had dinner together in April 1788. I have an impression that, out of respect to the memory of their common friend, Samuel Johnson, Burke did not wish ever to make a definite break with Boswell. But it is quite clear that Burke — at least from February 1786 on — neither liked nor trusted Boswell, and accepted Boswell's occasional overtures only with reluctance, out of Johnsonian piety.

But we of a later age can be grateful to Boswell for telling us more than anyone else does about the relations between Burke and Johnson. And if there is some distortion there occasionally, it is not too hard to read between the lines.

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## SAMUEL JOHNSON AND NEO-HIPPOCRATIC MEDICINE

Mr David Harley — 11th January 1997

Chairman: Robert Bartlett

David Harley is a historian of Medicine, who has published extensively on Medicine in England from Elizabeth I to George II — 1560 to 1760. He was educated at Highgate School and worked in the North of England before graduating from Lancaster University. He has since continued his research at Oxford. His main interest is in the relations between Religion and Medicine, and a recent article is on the diagnostic methods used at the Salem Witch Trials. Other recent work has been on Midwives and Autopsies.

The relationship of Johnson with medicine has been much discussed, including astonishing quantities of retrospective diagnosis of his various ailments. It seems to me, however, that there has been little discussion of the questions, what sort of medicine did Johnson want and why did he want it?

The reason why these issues have not attracted much attention has more to do with modern attitudes towards medicine than with the world inhabited by Johnson. Ever since the time of the Hippocratic Corpus, the history of European medicine has been used by practitioners to defend their own position relative to other kinds of medicine. There has been a search for heroes and precursors, for the first description of a disease or for the first glimmerings of a medical specialty. Such quests are almost always marred by entrenched anachronism, wrenching examples out of their context to illustrate some modern argument. We might call these types of history, "disciplinary history". During the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries, following the advent of "scientific medicine", the story of past doctors was usually recounted as a heroic march from ignorance towards enlightenment, with points being awarded to past practitioners who seemed to anticipate modern notions of psychology or epidemiology or whatever. Most of the ideas of this handful of heroes were ignored, and the actual structure of their arguments was generally disregarded, because their reasoning was less modern-sounding than their conclusions could be made to seem.

This is the context for most writing on Johnson and medicine. Even those authors who were not medically qualified were anxious to interpret Johnson more in the light of modern medicine than in the context of the medical ideas of his own time. The modern medical disciplines have seemed so powerful, both socially and intellectually, by comparison with their ancestors and their modern competitors, that few historians or literary critics had the courage to write against the grain. Because medical practitioners, like the practitioners of most disciplines, have preferred origin myths to analytical history or sociology, the contested nature of medical ideas within society has been largely suppressed in favour of anodyne narratives of progressive change. Such has been the confidence of modern medicine that it has always been assumed that the final answer to all problems is just around the corner, so that the medicine of 1910 or 1930 or 1950 is virtually the last word before perfection is reached. Not only in medicine but in every discipline, such confidence has always been cruelly disappointed. A discipline whose practitioners believe they are on the verge of the final theory is probably about to experience a crisis arising from totally unexpected problems. For historians and literary critics to place too much reliance on the latest medical or psychological theory is therefore not only to commit gross anachronism in the analysis of past ideas but also to give hostages to fortune, since the latest ideas are likely to become outmoded all too soon.

Since about 1970, however, most writing on the history of medicine has been produced by historians, writing from outside the modern disciplines of medicine. They have tended to view medicine from the viewpoint of patients or governments, and they have seen medical practitioners as competing for the favour of their clients. Questions of intellectual innovation or actual efficacy have been somewhat neglected in favour of questions of credibility. Building a medical career in past society has seemed a more interesting topic than the healing of patients, which is far too difficult to judge. Medical ideas, as considered by social historians of medicine, have often been reduced to the level of mere self-advertisement or the application of new notions current in the wider intellectual world.

Although it is perfectly reasonable to study the history of medicine in such terms, and it can be very illuminating to examine the development of medical institutions in terms of power relationships or economic interests, this new history of medicine is as little likely to help us understand Samuel Johnson as the former kind. Both intellectual and social history can help us in some respects, but the real challenge is to examine the intersection of ideas and social patterns. That is where we will find the explanations for the medical thought and behaviour not only of Samuel Johnson but also of the great mass of patients and practitioners in any period. Thus we might expect pious patients to be influenced by the precise selection of theological beliefs held by them and their friends or families. We might expect poor patients to be influenced by local folk beliefs, probably inherited from the learned medicine of an earlier age. We might expect rich patients to be influenced by the fashions being followed by their

social equals. And so on and so forth. Medical practitioners who ignored such considerations when they approached their patients would be unlikely to have prosperous careers. The many intersections of medical ideas with other kinds of ideas and practices did not need to be much discussed by contemporaries, since they were usually fairly obvious to anyone equipped with the mass of tacit knowledge needed to survive in any society. Only when there is conflict or rapid change do many social mores need to be made explicit. It is the historian's task to tease the connections out of the records.

In the case of Samuel Johnson, it seems to me that we have been presented with an extraordinarily depoliticized view of eighteenth-century medicine, as if the only serious conflicts concerned quacks and chemists. Thus, the fact that Sir John Floyer was a High Tory, almost a Jacobite, is never mentioned in the context of his relations with Johnson, even though this feature of his ideas would be of obvious utility in explaining his belief in the efficacy of the Royal Touch and his advocacy of cold bathing, which he modeled on the controversial issue of infant baptism.

A Saturday afternoon is not perhaps the right time for a detailed analysis of all Johnson's medical ideas and practices. In any event, the unexpected medicalization of my own body has recently prevented me from pursuing my researches as thoroughly as I might have wished. I shall therefore attempt to turn necessity into a virtue, by making some broad suggestions about how Johnson scholars might address the question of Johnson's medical preferences.

Everyone present today is probably well aware of the respect which Johnson expressed towards Hippocrates, Sydenham and Boerhaave. What is perhaps less well known is just how political such respect might have seemed to contemporaries. What I want to argue today is that Johnson participated in the political reconfiguration of neo-Hippocratic medicine, which he adopted for reasons that had to do with his moral posture, as a Tory critic of Whig vice and corruption.

The dominant medicine of the centuries before Johnson's birth had been based on the medicine of Galen, which had been revived in the Italian universities of the late medieval period. During the sixteenth century, considerable effort had been expended on establishing sound texts of Galen's works. The combination of scholarship with the new anatomical enquiries, influenced by some varieties of Aristotelianism, was intended as a bastion against both unlearned medicine and the challenge of the radical philosophy of Paracelsus. This traditional learned medicine, practised throughout Western Europe, is usually thought of as useless, elitist, and hidebound, but this is to take the word of its critics at face value. It was certainly not cheap, because it was practised by small numbers of physicians who had to undergo long academic training. However, it was intellectually subtle, it involved careful observation of individual cases, and it was fully consonant with Christian ethics.

Paracelsus attacked Aristotle and Galen because they were not Christians, but his position on religious matters was widely distrusted, since he was seen as an extreme radical and a man of dubious personal morality. The great authorities later came under more serious attack, not least because they were seen as incompatible with the new experimental natural philosophy, expounded by the likes of Galileo, William Harvey and Descartes, despite the extent to which such men grounded their thought in Aristotelian methods and concepts. However much some of them might have thought they were saving scholastic method for posterity, it became increasingly clear that the new philosophy proceeded on radically different lines. However, few philosophers or physicians were ready to abandon their respect for the classics altogether and there was wholesale scouring of antiquity for suitable new authorities, such as the use of Epicurus and Democritus to justify the atomism of Gassendi and his followers.

One of the authorities whose reputation was salvaged was Hippocrates. Latin editions based on a more complete version of the Hippocratic Corpus became available in the mid-sixteenth century and many of

the loose and suggestive concepts developed in the Corpus were taken up and applied in preference to the more rigid system that had been erected on the writings of Galen. Of especial interest were the Hippocratic texts on airs, waters and places, which encouraged the new environmental focus on such topics as spas, weather and cleanliness, the dietetic writings, and the works on epidemic diseases. Although there were many versions of Hippocrates put forward in different parts of Europe, the one that is of interest to us today is the one taken up by English Calvinists, used to give authority to medico-moral advice books written in the vernacular. Starting with discussions of spa water or diet, such early seventeenth-century authors as James Hart and Tobias Venner wrote attacks on immoderation and luxury which matched the household guidance books issued by their clerical friends and contemporaries. Thus, Hippocrates was built up in England initially as the advocate of moderation, that most Calvinist of virtues, and of careful attention to the external circumstances that promoted health or disease.

During the revolutionary decades of the mid-seventeenth century in England, the writing of medical texts in the vernacular and the translation of Latin texts into English were advanced as virtuous by such radicals as Nicholas Culpeper, to the horror of orthodox academic physicians. After the Restoration, the new experimental natural philosophy produced by members and associates of the Royal Society was written almost entirely in English. It is therefore striking that the works of Thomas Sydenham were published in Latin, especially since it was rumoured that they had to be translated from the English original.

Sydenham was far from conservative, in politics, religion and philosophy. During both Civil Wars, he fought in the parliamentary army, and he twice stood for Parliament in the late 1650s. In religion, he was an extreme Independent. In philosophy, he was an opponent of all rational systems inherited from the ancients and the Renaissance, as well as the new anatomy of Padua and Oxford, advocating instead experiment and empiricism, although the latter was such a pejorative term that neither he nor his disciple John Locke openly admitted that that was their epistemological stance.

Sydenham was so closely associated with republicanism and radical religion that it was impossible for him to establish a fashionable practice in Restoration London. Instead, he practised among the poor, seeing large numbers of patients in any year. This was the context for his examination of disease in terms not of an imbalance of the humours of an individual patient's constitution but rather in terms of a constitution of the year. A particular fever was prevalent in a particular year and it would respond not to the rational rules of art but to specific cures that had been discovered largely by trial and error. Thus, diseases were to be seen as broadly similar in all patients, responding to the same therapy in all cases. An ague, or what we would probably call "malaria", Sydenham treated with Jesuit's bark, cinchona, taking away the side effects with laudanum. Although the detail of the therapy might be adjusted, this was a universal remedy, appropriate to men, women and children of all ages, temperaments and conditions. Such universal remedies were heresy to learned medicine, since they did not have any rational explanation. The idea that some diseases might be things-in-themselves, having occult causes and being treated by empirically discovered remedies, was not new. Under the influence of Sydenham, however, it began to extend its grip to the whole realm of medicine. Diseases began to be seen as species rather than disorders. Although Sydenham, the English Hippocrates, is now mainly remembered as a champion of clinical medicine, observation at the bedside, it is this new view of disease, experiment and empiricism that was his real revolution.

Sydenham stated that he thought a university was no place to learn medicine, and his pupils and disciples were mainly nonconformists, excluded from the English universities, as well as a few who left in disgust at the impractical education offered by anatomists such as Thomas Willis. John Locke was one of this latter group. Since Sydenham published in Latin, however, he was widely read and republished abroad, where his radical associations were unknown. Thus the great influence of Sydenham was

initially in Italy, Holland, and later France. The works of Ramazzini on epidemics and on the diseases of workmen were strongly influenced by Sydenham, for example. For foreign readers, the utility of Sydenham was as a Hippocratic counterbalance to Galenic orthodoxy, as a new sceptical epistemology for medicine that could introduce the results of the new natural philosophy into diagnosis and therapeutics.

Among those who championed Sydenham as one of the great figures in the history of medicine was Hermann Boerhaave of Leiden University. A staunch High Calvinist, Boerhaave was attracted to Sydenham's piety, which seems rather conventional in his published works, although some of his Presbyterian pupils in England thought him somewhat heretical. Boerhaave placed him in his pantheon of great exemplars: Hippocrates, Bacon, Sydenham, Newton. These four men were to be the cornerstones of Boerhaave's massively influential reconstruction of the medical syllabus. Thus the reputation of Sydenham was irrevocably linked with the name of Hippocrates, the only other physician in the list, and with the practice of bedside teaching, on which Boerhaave insisted. Boerhaave's pupils carried the fame of Sydenham throughout Europe, and his works were an important influence in many eighteenth Century medical schools, notably the famous vitalist school at Montpellier in France, where his authority was cited by those who sought to classify the species of diseases.

Boerhaave was not an especially original thinker, nor was he a partisan of any particular school of medical thought. He did sweep away the study of Galen, at least as the central authority of medical education, but he was eager to place chemistry and mechanics alongside anatomy in the medical curriculum, rather than championing one above the others. Of course, as a sound Calvinist, he had no time for the mysticism of Paracelsus or Van Helmont, but he believed that chemical processes could be integrated with mechanistic explanations of the movement of fluids and solids within the body.

The English students who went to Leiden to study under the great man were almost all nonconformists, excluded by their consciences from taking a degree at the English universities. The few others were either touring the continental universities or they were men who had not had a regular academic education but had come to physic after an apprenticeship to a surgeon or apothecary. Those of them who set up in London, after graduating from Leiden or another continental university, could never become Fellows of the College of Physicians, but only licentiates, a barrier that led to severe friction among London physicians during the eighteenth Century. Generally speaking, the Leiden graduates felt they had received a more adequate education than that available in the moribund English universities, yet they were excluded from office in the College and from any say in the making of policy.

As regards the ideas of the Leiden graduates, many of them were deeply interested in chemistry, which they applied to the study of spa water, for example. Others collected information on epidemic diseases, in relation to environmental factors. A few were interested in experimental anatomy, but this was a subject that had declined drastically in England since the mid-seventeenth century. The first half of the eighteenth century has been described as a lost period in English medicine. This, however, is to privilege anatomical discoveries over all other forms of medical publication, taking the view as seen from either seventeenth Century Padua and Oxford or nineteenth Century London and Paris. The Leiden graduates, and later the graduates of Edinburgh where the Leiden model was initially followed, were interested in different matters.

However, there was also a move by Scottish Episcopalian physicians in England to appropriate Hippocratic discourse for their own Tory purposes, attacking the Whig vices of Walpole and his successors. Among the earliest examples of this were John Arbuthnot, who wrote on air and diet, and George Cheyne, who started as a Newtonian mechanist and moved increasingly into pietist and



Methodist circles. I mention these two because Johnson used three of Arbuthnot's works as sources for the Dictionary (W.K. Wimsatt, *Philosophic Words, a study of style and meaning in the Rambler and the Dictionary of Samuel Johnson*, 1948, pp. 149-160) and he recommended Cheyne's *The English Malady* to Boswell (*Life*, III. 27 Hill and Powell). In order to make this appropriation convincing, it was convenient to appropriate or at least modify Sydenham and Boerhaave, the leading modern representatives of moral Hippocratism.

Let us then look at what Johnson does with Sydenham, in the biography that prefaced John Swan's translation of the complete works. The imaginary account of Sydenham's childhood genius has attracted much attention, but little attention has been paid to the account of Sydenham in the 1640s and 1650s. Johnson remarks, "It is indeed reported, that he had a commission in the king's army, but no particular account is given of his military conduct. . ." Writing in 1676, Sydenham says little about his military service, depicting the war as a tiresome calamity that interrupted his education, because he was on the side of the Parliament, like all the rest of his family. Johnson follows Sydenham in attributing the original impetus to study medicine to "an accidental acquaintance with Dr Cox, a physician eminent at that time in London, who in some sickness prescribed to his brother." Sydenham does not choose to mention that his brother was a leading officer in the parliamentary army and Thomas Cox was an army physician. Johnson either made no effort to discover such details, or chose to ignore them.

Johnson spends several pages attacking the popular notion that Sydenham was naturally gifted rather than having a regular education, which he bases largely on Sydenham's MB degree, assuming that this must have required considerable study. In fact, he received it a year or so after his return to Oxford as a member of the victorious army. Johnson then notes that Sydenham was granted a fellowship at All Souls as the result of a relative's patronage: "Having submitted to the subscription required to the authority of the visitors appointed by the parliament, upon what principles, or how consistently with his former conduct, it is now impossible to discover." Indeed. Since his brother was a leading parliamentarian, and Sydenham was intruded by the visitors in the first flush of purges, in October 1648, it would be surprising if he had to make too many compromises with his principles, since he had never been a Royalist.

Finally, Johnson notes that Sydenham set up in practice in Pall Mall, received a Cambridge MD and a licence from the College, and "lived in the first degree of reputation, and the greatest affluence of practice." Of course, mentioning Pall Mall in the 1740s would give a different impression from the reality of Pall Mall in the 1660s, although Sydenham did have some fashionable neighbours, but the reference to the MD and the licence is positively misleading. Sydenham did not obtain an MD until near the end of his life, and how he managed to bypass the oaths is a mystery. He spent his career as a licentiate rather than as a Fellow of the College precisely because he did not have an MD from Oxford or Cambridge. Moreover, the description of his high reputation and affluence conceals more than it reveals. Johnson concludes with praise of Sydenham's moral principles: "his chief view was the benefit of mankind, and the chief motive of his actions the will of GOD, whom he mentions with reverence, well becoming the most enlightened and most penetrating mind." Writing in an era when he had to contend with Deists and overt atheists, Johnson was perhaps not well equipped to detect in Sydenham a man whom he would have hissed from the room as a heretical freethinker.

Whether Johnson was simply careless in his hasty research, which leaned too much on Sydenham's own tactical silences, or was deliberately suppressing the radicalism that was all too well remembered, is a moot point. Charitably, we might suggest that the blandly uncontroversial Sydenham had been created by Boerhaave and imported into England by his pupils. Yet 1689 was not so very long ago. Had everyone in London forgotten that Sydenham had been a supporter of the Good Old Cause to his dying day? Had

the problem of Jacobite support for the exiled Stuarts led people to forget that opposition to the Stuarts had once meant something quite different? One might suspect that Sydenham's reputation had been deliberately laundered for the new era, so that his radical Whig critique could be appropriated by Tories.

The task of laundering Boerhaave was a more straightforward one. In his biography of the great Dutch professor, Johnson stresses his subject's devotion to the example of Hippocrates and his opposition to Descartes and Spinoza. Although there is considerable space devoted to Boerhaave's original intention to train as a clergyman, Johnson does not specify his religious affiliation. After all, a Dutchman might be almost anything. Johnson writes, "So far was this Man from being made impious by Philosophy, or vain by Knowledge, or by Virtue, that he ascribed all his abilities to the Bounty, and all his Goodness to the Grace of God. May his Example extend its Influence to his Admirers and Followers! May those who study his Writings imitate his Life, and those who endeavour after his Knowledge aspire likewise to his Piety!" Johnson clearly wishes to combat the phenomenon of materialism among physicians and natural philosophers, but it seems unlikely that he would wish to see strict Calvinism breaking out all over London.

Wiltshire, writing on Boerhaave's role in Johnson's thought, insists that he was "broadly speaking, an iatromechanist." (John Wiltshire: *Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: the Doctor and the Patient*, 1991 p. 76) Iatromechanism, Wiltshire suggests, provided a rationale for traditional therapeutics. (pp. 76, 86). Well, perhaps, but it was also a hotly contested area within natural philosophy. It was precisely Boerhaave's opposition to the mechanism of Descartes that Johnson found laudable. As with Sydenham, Johnson discarded the specific nature of Boerhaave's piety and held him up as a shining example of opposition to impious philosophies. It would be just as reasonable to see Boerhaave as the mentor of Albrecht von Haller, whom Johnson detested for his vivisections. (Wiltshire, pp. 135-6).

Certain types of iatromechanism were compatible with moral Hippocratism. These Johnson could tolerate, as iatromechanism provided a useful vocabulary for discussing the motions and ailments of the body. However, it was the broad diagnostic and epidemiological thrust of neo-Hippocratic medicine that attracted him, especially because of its appropriateness to moral argument.

Having given a little thought to where this Hippocratism was coming from, and how it was being modified, it is perhaps time to quote at length from the proposal for the medical dictionary to which he contributed: R. James [and S. Johnson], *A General Account of the Work* [1742]. If Johnson did not write the relevant passage, he certainly endorsed it.

"All these Sciences, however *difficult* and *extensive*, are only preparatory to the great Hippocratic Art of CURING DISEASES, an Art which we shall endeavour to illustrate with a Degree of Attention in some measure proportioned to its Importance; and conceive no Method more proper than that of exhibiting, under every Distemper,

1. SELECT Cases of those who died of the Distemper treated of, with an Anatomical Description of the Parts affected as they have appeared upon Dissection; by which the immediate Causes of Diseases, and the concomitant Symptoms, may with most Certainty be discovered.
2. AN accurate Description of the Disease, in which the Symptoms that are peculiar to it, and distinguish it from all other Distempers, will be diligently remarked.
3. THE Prognostics, being Directions for judging whether the Disease is likely to terminate in Health, Death, or some other Distemper.
4. THE Method of Cure, both in regard to Regimen and Medicine, as laid down by the principal Authors; in which the Practice will be regularly deduced, from the Age of Hippocrates to the present time.

This approach provides a particular kind of Hippocrates-cum-Sydenham as the founding father, a figure who believed in bedside observation and regular learned medicine, a sort of Galenist without the arrogance and obscurantism. Diseases are separate entities but due attention still needs to be paid to individual patients, thus keeping quacks at bay. Experiment is kept to a minimum, and empiricism is restricted. This laundered tradition is suitable as the basis of a non-radical moral critique, one that respects the authority of Church, State and classical scholarship but detests the corruptions of modern life. Johnson wanted certainty, in morals as in medicine, but he was hard pressed to find it. In February 1751, he reviewed a book on the uncertainties in the practice of physic, for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He admitted the problems caused by insufficient knowledge of the "situation, habit, manner of life, and constitution" of the patient, but insisted on the universal efficacy of a few sure specifics such as ipecacuana, manna, mercury, which always produced the same result. Surely certain cures must be possible. Although Johnson failed to recognize it, such an attitude was fundamentally opposed to the learned medicine of Sydenham's generation. For proposing the use of specific remedies, Sydenham was denounced as an unlearned impostor. Johnson thought he was holding to the good old Tory medicine, sealed with the approval of the learned and pious Sydenham.

It was not the various kinds of experimental medicine to be seen at the Royal Society that acted as a model for Johnson. Inoculation for the smallpox or electric jolts could have been used as moral metaphors, but they lack the richness of the Hippocratic model, which had been used by Aristotle and Thucydides. Johnson liked the neo-Hippocratic writers of his own day because they respected tradition even while they were producing something new. As he said in Rambler no. 85, "very learned treatises have been produced upon the maladies of the camp, the sea, and the mines." Such works are reviewed in issue after issue of the literary quarterlies of mid-eighteenth century London. Each sought to extend the Sydenham project into a new region or a new field of activity, classifying ailments and relating them to the environment. In a sense, this kind of nosological classification was what Johnson was doing himself, as he tackled the diseases of the mind in successive issues of *The Rambler*. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that Johnson set himself up as the epidemiologist of fashionable society.

What I have said today can hardly be described as the last word on the political significance of medicine in Johnson's thought, but I hope I have said enough to open up the idea that medicine in the eighteenth century, and indeed any other century, is not a simple spectrum running from orthodoxy to heterodoxy or from learned to unlearned. There is always a plurality of views, and these views often carry a political or religious significance, even when their exponents attempt to pretend otherwise. Moreover, the meaning of authorities such as Hippocrates or Sydenham can change over time, as they are recruited to serve different purposes. Just as Sydenham remodeled Hippocrates in his own image, so Johnson was one of those who remodeled Sydenham.

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#### THE PREVAILING MORAL TONE OF JOHNSON'S MILITARY COMMENTARY

Captain B. J. Hanley USAF — 8th February 1997

Chairman: Mr David Parker

Captain Hanley is a member of the Society, and has already contributed articles to this journal (volumes DX and DXI). He took his Master's degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and was then commissioned in the U.S. Airforce. He is at present at New College, Oxford, working on a doctoral thesis on Johnson and the "Age of Authors." The Society will miss him when he returns, on completion of this work next year, to the U.S. Airforce Academy at Colorado Springs.

Samuel Johnson's commentary on the major military issues confronting Hanoverian England — the conduct of military operations in North America and elsewhere (Johnson opposed the Seven Years' War); the size, nature, and financing of England's armed forces (Johnson preferred a militia to a large standing army); the formation of military/political alliances (as a rule Johnson opposed them) — fits nicely into his broader outlook on politics, as Donald Greene has amply demonstrated.<sup>1</sup> Johnson's private and published remarks on the military profession itself, however, at a glance may strike us as oddly disjointed and at times sharply contradictory. In Boswell's *Life*, for instance, we find Johnson extolling the courage of military men — Boswell tells us that "in conversation he [Johnson] always exalted the profession of a soldier" — even though some of Johnson's better known writings on the army — *Idler* no. 5, "Proposal for a female army", and no. 8, "Plan of military discipline", immediately come to mind (1758), as does the contemptuous treatment of the army ("scarlet reptiles") in *Marmor Norfolciense* (1739) — are satirical in ways that even a committed anti-war activist might think of as nasty and intemperate. Confusing matters further are Johnson's laudatory essay the "Bravery of the English Common Soldiers" (*British Magazine*: January 1760), his intelligent interest in military history and technology (Johnson expressed interest in compiling a dictionary of military terms and in writing a history of the Seven Years' War), and his eagerness to serve in the London militia. Indeed, it is refreshing to contemplate an intellectual of Johnson's standing outfitting himself — as he is alleged to have done — with a musket, sword, and military belt in preparation for duty.<sup>2</sup>

Donald Greene and Maximilian Novak both suggest that historical circumstance reliably accounts for Johnson's shifting outlook on the profession of arms. *Idlers* 5 and 8 followed a series of embarrassing military setbacks during the Seven Years' War, for example, while "Bravery" appeared shortly after England won several major battles against the French in North America. But how, then, does one reconcile the stance Johnson takes in his biography of Admiral Blake (*Gentleman's Magazine*: 1740), which exalts the skill and courage of English sailors — almost to the point of jingoism — with that of his pamphlet on the Falkland's Islands conflict (1771), which emphatically rejects militarism in a manner that can be said to anticipate some of the sharpest anti-war literature produced in the years since the fall of Saigon (1975)? The range of Johnson's responses to issues related to the profession of arms prompted me to assemble Johnson's commentaries on military matters and to evaluate them by the light of his underlying ethical outlook rather than in relation to contemporary politics or events. Not surprisingly, Johnson's remarks on the military profession — far from being merely occasional or haphazard reactions to contemporary events — can be said to embody consistently his underlying views on charity, courage, and idleness. True, Johnson did not have a great deal to say about the military as a profession, but what he did write appears to be much more substantive than the scholarly heritage would have us believe, and it conforms perfectly to his underlying ethical views.

Charity — "benevolence"; "the good done"; "liberality to the poor", as the term is defined in Johnson's *Dictionary* — is an appropriate place to start in relating Johnson's moral thought to his treatment of the profession of arms because for him it is the greatest of moral goods. "Charity is the most excellent of all moral virtues", Johnson avers in *Sermon* 27 (1745), "because it conduces most to the happiness of mankind". Interestingly enough, Johnson in the sermon argues that the duty to act charitably outranks even the reverence owed to the crown. Some would argue that "the general duty of life, is the love of our country", Johnson observes, but never can it be said that patriotism should "absorb all other considerations". We are to "endeavour, indeed, the happiness of our country", Johnson points out, "but in subordination to the happiness of mankind".<sup>3</sup>

The outlook expressed here shapes much of what Johnson says on matters related to the military profession. Johnson's brief essay on the public celebrations marking the end of the War of Austrian Succession (*Gentleman's Magazine*: January 1749), for instance, decries lavish public displays of

patriotism even while the plight of war veterans and their families is emphasized. The massive fireworks display took place on 27 April 1749 and is perhaps best known nowadays as the occasion which called forth George Frideric Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. As far as Johnson was concerned, however, the funds consumed by the pyrotechnics might have been put to much more beneficent uses. The "blaze, so transitory and so useless, will be paid for, when it shines no longer", Johnson observes:

and many cannot forbear observing, how many acres might be drained, how many ways repaired, how many debtors might be released, how many widows and orphans, whom the war has ruined, might be relieved, by the expence which is now about to evaporate in smoke, and to be scattered in rockets; and there are some who think not only reason, but humanity offended, by such trifling profusion, when so many sailors are starving, and so many churches sinking into ruins.<sup>4</sup>

Remarkable here is Johnson's explicit sympathy for the combatants — an emphasis all the more striking when we recall the low standing of rank-and-file military men in Johnson's day.<sup>5</sup>

We find Johnson expressing a similar degree of compassion for the hazards of military life many years later in a letter written to his friend Bennet Langton in the autumn of 1778, who at the time was serving as captain in the North Lincolnshire militia. Johnson's five-day visit with Langton in the late summer of 1778 allowed him to indulge his keen interest in military technology and strategy. What caught Johnson's interest more than anything else during his stay at Warley Camp, however, was the disparity between the officers' living conditions and that of the enlisted troops. "When are you to be cantoned in better habitations", Johnson writes in the 31 October letter. "The air grows cold, and the ground damp. Longer stay in camp cannot be without much danger to the health of the common Men", Johnson adds, "if even the Officers can escape" the harshest edges of life in the field. "[T]ake care of your own health; and, as you can, of your Men".<sup>6</sup> Military operations evidently fascinated Johnson — why else would the then sixty-nine-year-old Johnson exchange his London lodgings for the Spartan conditions of an army encampment? — yet we find him here laying stress on the charitable rather than the martial obligations of command.

Arguably Johnson's most sustained and powerful discussion of military life in the context of his broader views on charity is his pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falkland's Islands* (March 1771), the main point of which is to discourage public support for a war between England and Spain over possession of the Falkland's Islands ("a bleak and gloomy solitude, an island thrown from human use, stormy in winter, and barren in summer"). Johnson's essay remains valuable even today for its historical account of the Falkland's and for its demonstration of Johnson's firm grasp of the politics of empire-building. Of chief interest here, however, is that once again we find Johnson demonstrating a profound sympathy for the trials of life in the trenches. I quote Johnson at length on this point because his remarks seem to anticipate the blunt realism that defines the scholarly and fictional treatments of warfare produced by Paul Fussell, say, or the authors whose works are featured in *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities*:

The life of a modern soldier is ill represented by heroic fiction. War has means of destruction more formidable than the cannon and the sword. Of the thousands and ten thousands that perished in our late contests with France and Spain, a very small part ever felt the stroke of an enemy; the rest languished in tents and ships, amidst damps and putrefaction; pale, torpid, spiritless, and helpless; gasping and groaning, unpitied among men made obdurate by long continuance of hopeless misery; and were at last whelmed in pits, or heaved into the ocean, without notice and without remembrance. By incommodious encampments and unwholesome stations, where courage is useless, and enterprise



impracticable, fleets are silently dispeopled, and armies sluggishly melted away. Thus is a people gradually exhausted, for the most part with little effect.<sup>7</sup>

At an historical moment when arms merchants were clamoring for a confrontation with Spain over the islands — “There are men who, without virtue, labour, or hazard, are growing rich as their country is impoverished” — Johnson here strives to arouse opposition by calling attention to the massive scale of suffering which military campaigns inevitably entail. Indeed, the viewpoint expressed here can be said to exemplify the theme of *Sermon 27*: patriotism is a good thing, Johnson declares in the sermon, but charity is one thing better.<sup>8</sup>

Johnson’s understanding of courage may also help us interpret his commentary on the profession of arms. “Courage” is defined in Johnson’s *Dictionary* as “bravery; boldness; spirit of enterprise; active fortitude”. Significantly, the term “fortitude” here gives Johnson’s definition of “courage” a firmly moral cast. “Fortitude” is defined as “greatness of mind; the power of acting or suffering well”. Johnson quotes from John Locke to illustrate his definition. “Fortitude is the guard and support of the other virtues; and without courage, a man will scarce keep steady to his duty, and fill up the character of a truly worthy man”. Johnson’s *Dictionary*, then, would have us believe that courage is essentially a moral concept: the courageous person suffers, or takes risks, in the service of beneficent or moral ends.<sup>9</sup> A favorite topic of Johnson’s, needless to say, is the “fortitude” required of authors. In *Ramblers* 1, 2, 3, 146, and elsewhere, for instance, Johnson emphatically points out that the altruistic profession of authorship is intrinsically hazardous, a contest of sorts in which fame-hungry writers square off against the malignancy of critics and the sullen indifference of readers. Triumphant authors may acquire celebrity and their works immortality while the losers — by far the greater part of aspiring authors — must come to terms with disgrace or oblivion. Ambitious scientific experimentation demands no small measure of courage from its practitioners as well, Johnson argues in *Adventurer* 99, as do other types of intellectual activity, a point Johnson makes in his biography of the Dutch physician Herman Boerhaave (*Gentleman’s Magazine*: 1739). It is equally true, however, that Johnson held a particularly intense admiration for the courageousness of military men.

Johnson’s most important discussion of courage in its military context is his essay, “The Bravery of the English Common Soldiers” (*British Magazine*: January 1760), which appeared in the wake of significant British military victories against the French in North America. What makes this essay important is that Johnson goes beyond merely applauding the army for its recent triumphs, as he attempts to shed light on the psychology of combat soldiers. Interestingly enough, Johnson rejects the possibility that rigorous or innovative training can account for the extraordinary valor displayed recently by England’s army. English troops “are rarely exercised, and therefore [they] shew very little dexterity in their evolutions as bodies of men, or in the manual use of their weapons as individuals”, Johnson states, “they neither are thought by others, nor by themselves, more active or exact than their enemies, and therefore derive none of their courage from such imaginary superiority”. Nor does reverence for England’s traditions of political liberty amount to much of an explanation either, Johnson adds. “The English soldier seldom has his head very full of the constitution; nor has there been, for more than a century, any war that put the property or liberty of a single Englishman in danger”. And it cannot be argued that English soldiers are inspired in any meaningful way by their commanders. “It is not to any great esteem of the officers that the English soldier is indebted for his spirit in the hour of battle”, Johnson observes, “for perhaps it does not often happen that he thinks much better of his leader than of himself”.

The true source of battlefield heroics, Johnson goes on to argue, is the intense camaraderie that inevitably develops amongst front-line combat troops. Every “man that crowds our streets is a man of honour, disdainful of obligation, impatient of reproach, and desirous of extending his reputation among

those of his own rank", Johnson asserts, "and as courage is in most frequent use, the fame of courage is most eagerly pursued". Johnson is often thought of as a "conservative", i.e., one who looks with reverence on tradition and with suspicion on innovation. There is some truth to this, of course, but here as elsewhere in his writings we find Johnson advocating what we might term a modernist approach to the subject at hand. Indeed, Johnson's ambitious thesis here — that troops fight valiantly out of a desire to earn the respect of immediate peers rather than in the service of lofty concepts such as "patriotism", "liberty", or even the regard of their commanding officers — can be said to anticipate some of the recent works on the psychology of modern warfare, particularly Stephen Ambrose's *D-Day* (1994) and its companion volume on World War II, *Citizen Soldiers* (1997).<sup>10</sup> More significantly, it is Johnson's view of courage as a moral concept — the suppression of our innate selfishness; a striving for the esteem of others by demonstrating nobility of purpose — that leads him to make what must have been at the time rather pioneering observations on the motivations of soldiers under fire.

A word here must be said about Johnson's infrequent but memorable "pro-military" statements recorded by Boswell because they complement the argument advanced in "Bravery". "The character of a soldier is high", Johnson is said to have remarked in 1776. "They who stand forth the foremost in danger, for the community, have the respect of mankind". Two years later, Boswell reports Johnson as declaring that, "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea".<sup>11</sup> English history since the days of Cromwell's New Model Army may have encouraged Johnson, along with many of his fellow citizens, to fear and loathe large standing armies. And the episodic incompetence of the army as it conducted what Johnson believed to a misbegotten war with France may have prompted him to write a pair of sneering satirical *Idler* papers, along with the condemnatory "Speech on the Rochefort Expedition" (composed in 1757 but published posthumously). We can safely say, however, that Johnson as a matter of principle admired the military ethos because it tended to inspire a nobility of spirit, even among the unlettered and — in civilian life at least — often disorderly common men who in wartime filled out the ranks of England's regiments.

Johnson may have spoken well — even at times loftily — of the military as a profession, but it cannot be argued that he was insensible to the less attractive aspects of a soldier's life. This is particularly true in relation to garrisoned troops who, as Johnson admits in "Bravery" and in his rendition in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of the parliamentary debate on "Incorporating the New-raised Men into the Standing Regiments", were rarely assigned much in the way of gainful employment as they waited for deployment orders. In *Sermon 26* Johnson characterizes idleness as the "original or parent" vice, so it is not much of a surprise given the prominence of military issues in Hanoverian England that the inactivity of the army in peacetime is taken up by Johnson in one of his moral essays.<sup>12</sup> *Idler 21* (1758) relates the story of "Dick Linger", the "son of a gentleman" who procures a commission in the army through family connections. What commands attention here is that Johnson's portrait of "Dick Linger" is not only intelligent and affecting, but also refreshingly free of the cheap anti-military clichés employed in *Idlers 5* and *8*. "I passed some years in the most contemptible of all human stations, that of a soldier in time of peace", "Dick Linger" flatly states in the second paragraph of his "letter" to "Mr. Idler". "I wandered with the regiment as the quarters were changed, without opportunity for business, taste for knowledge, or money for pleasure. Wherever I came I was for a time a stranger without curiosity, and afterwards an acquaintance without friendship", "Dick Linger" adds before making what amounts to a powerful case against large standing armies:

I suppose every man is shocked when he hears how frequently soldiers are wishing for war. The wish is not always sincere, the greater part are content with sleep and lace, and counterfeit an ardour which they do not feel; but those who desire it most, are neither prompted by malevolence nor patriotism; they neither pant for laurels, nor delight in blood;

but long to be delivered from the tyranny of idleness, and restored to the dignity of active beings.<sup>13</sup>

Of interest here is that "Dick Linger's" anti-heroic observations are thoroughly modern, insofar as they oppose directly Homeric notions of military honor and anticipate the bluntly realistic narratives of day-to-day soldierly life which World War II and the Vietnam War would produce. Scarcely less significant is that *Idler* 21 manages to speak out against large standing armies even as it refrains from vilifying the soldiers conscripted to fill the ranks. Indeed, we are given to understand here that the establishment of large standing armies forces large numbers of otherwise honorable young men into a morally corrosive atmosphere.

*Idler* 21 can be said to epitomize Johnson's outlook on the military profession. However intensely Johnson may have opposed the Seven Years' War and, collaterally, the large standing army which an expanding empire required, on the whole he admired and sympathized with the men who actually did the fighting. True enough, Johnson's military commentary represents one aspect of his outlook on the politics of Hanoverian England, but just as true is that Johnson's understanding of military life transcends the historical moment and is rightly viewed as the forerunner of the war literature written during the twentieth century. But perhaps more than anything else, Johnson's military commentary exemplifies his great wisdom and humanity.

#### Notes

1. See Donald J. Greene, *The Politics of Samuel Johnson* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990).
2. Greene, *Politics*, pp. 176-78; Maximilian E. Novak, "Warfare and its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Or, Why Eighteenth-Century Fiction Failed to Produce a *War and Peace*", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, volume four, number three (1992), p. 188; *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1934-60), i. 138, 354; iii. 266; iv. 319; *Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven, 1977), x. 35-36 and notes, and *passim*.
3. *Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London, 1755); *Yale*, xiv. 289-98; also see pp. 315-16.
4. *Yale*, x. 114-115, and notes; in his headnote Donald Greene avers that the use of the term "sailor"—as opposed to "soldier"—here reflects Johnson's alleged contempt for the army in particular and his admiration for the navy, but I think Johnson here means for us to take "sailor" as a synecdoche for the armed forces in general, a supposition given some credence when we recall that the Royal Navy represented the lion's share of England's contribution to the War of Austrian Succession; the ground war was conducted largely by England's continental allies.
5. See John Fortescue, "The Army"; Sir Herbert W. Richmond, "The Navy", *Johnson's England*, ed. A. S. Turberville, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1933), i. 39-87.
6. *Boswell's Life*, iii. 360-62; *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Bruce Redford, 5 vols. (Princeton, 1994), iii. 132.
7. *Yale*, x. 370-71.
8. Johnson makes this same point in his 1760 essay advocating charitable contributions for French prisoners of war being held by the English in North America (see *Yale*, x. 285-89).
9. Also see *Boswell's Life*: "'courage is reckoned the greatest of all virtues'", Johnson is reported to have said, "'because, unless a man has that virtue, he has no security for preserving any other'" (ii. 339).
10. *Yale*, x. 278-84.
11. *Boswell's Life*, iii. 9, 265.
12. See *Yale*, x. 282; xiv. 282; also see *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. F. B. Walesby (Oxford, 1825): in the parliamentary debate on new-raised men, Johnson has "Mr. Pulteney" declare that, on the whole,

garrisoned soldiers—required by the Mutiny Act of 1742 to be billeted in local communities—“live at ease upon the labour of industry, only to insult their landlords, and rob the farmers” (x. 52). 13. *Yale*, ii. 66-67; see also *Boswell's Life*: “A soldier's time is passed in distress and danger”, Johnson is reported to have declared, “or in idleness or corruption” (iii. 267).

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#### AN ENCORE OF PIPERS

Dr Richard Fricker LRCP & SI LDS RCSI MSc DA — 8th March 1997

Chairman: James H. Leicester MA FRSA

Dr Fricker is a member of the Committee of the Society. He is a man of many accomplishments: a Doctor of Medicine, a Dentist, and an Anaesthetist. He is the founder of the Music Club of London, and Concert Director of the Wagner Society. He is an authority on the Art of Flemish Primitives, and holds a London University Diploma in the History of Music. He has published two volumes of poetry, and his book *Clatterface to Mute* exemplifies all these interests. He also lectures on music and, occasionally, on the History of Art.

[Editor: This talk was given in response to requests for a sequel to Dr Fricker's earlier paper *A Background of Pipers* (15th May 1993, reported in issue DVIII). Since the subject matter consisted principally of extracts of music, it is not easy to give a satisfactory account of the occasion, but it is hoped that the explanatory commentary recorded here will go some way towards it.]

Dr Fricker first recalled some of the few references to Johnson and music. The use of the word *Piper* stems from the famous occasion at Streatham Park when Johnson, irritated by constant reference in the conversation to J.C. Bach, suddenly burst out to Burney with the enquiry “Pray, Sir, who is this Bach? Is he a piper?” But Dr Fricker felt this is capable of more than one interpretation. Once, in the Hebrides, Johnson put his ear close to the drone of a bag-piper — was this the sort of piper he meant? In fact he thought that Johnson was not deaf but tone-deaf, a very different thing, it meant that he could only pick up music from external signs: as when he asked one of the Thrall daughters, who was playing slowly and tidily, “Why don't you dash away like Burney?” Then there was the occasion when Boswell told him “When I listen to such music I am moved to tears” and received the tart reply “I would not hear it, Sir, if it made me such a fool!” Towards the end of his life, however, Burney said to him “You know, Sir, one of these days I shall make even you like music:” and his expression of gratitude seemed to indicate an acknowledgment of his defect.

The purpose of this paper was to survey the music of Johnson's lifetime (1709-1784) and outline its development from late Baroque at the beginning to early Classicism at the end. He based his sequence on extracts from composers whom he called his “Pipers.” The first was a son of John Sebastian Bach, John Christian, 1735-1782, (Symphony Op. 18 No. 1 2nd movement) who contrasted his stature with that of his brother Carl Philip Emmanuel in the words “My brother lives to compose. I compose to live.” An accurate perception, perhaps, but it does not exclude J.C. from greatness. Piper No. 2 was the great J. S. Bach himself, 1685-1750 (Brandenburg Concerto No. 6, 3rd movement): this piece illustrates the different styles of the two men. One of the characteristics of the Baroque was Imitative Counterpoint, which Dr Fricker explained and illustrated by his Piper No. 3, again J. S. Bach (Fugue BWV 564). It was a piano transcription (by Busoni), although his preferred instrument was the organ, at which he excelled. Dr Fricker quoted the anecdote of the organist Louis Marchand (1669-1732) who fled the city rather than face up to an arranged contest with J. S. Bach. Piper No. 4 was J. A. Reinken (1623-1722) an organist much admired by J. S. Bach: the chosen piece was his Fugue in D. Minor. J. S. Bach once walked many miles to hear him play, about the time of Johnson's boyhood. Piper No. 5 was Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722), a composer and musician whose death left vacant the post of Cantor at S. Thomas' Church

at Leipzig. J. S. Bach, who needed to leave his current post at Cothen to provide opportunities of education for his many sons, applied for it. It was not, however, until it had been offered to and rejected by five other musicians of varying degrees of excellence, that he was allowed to re-apply: this time, of course, successfully. Dr Fricker felt that one of the reasons for the earlier failure was the Teutonic character of his work at a time when the new Italianate style was in demand. Piper No. 6 was, again, J. S. Bach (an aria from the S. John Passion).

Unfortunately, the restrictions of time prevented the completion of the Sequence of Pipers: so Dr. Fricker concluded with a commentary on the Mannheim school, under Johann Wenzel Stamitz (1717-1757) and his son Karl (1745-1801) whose new orchestral techniques provided an interim period, around the 1750s, leading to the early Classical style which was flourishing at the time of Johnson's death.

### **SAMUEL JOHNSON THE POET**

**Mr Peter Strickland, MBA, BA — 12th April 1997**

**Chairman: Brian Rees MA**

Peter Strickland read English at Oxford: and since then he has combined a career in telecommunications with teaching English Literature to adults. He has taught for the WEA and for the Universities of London, Essex and Cambridge. As well as teaching Johnson, he has guided students through Shakespeare, Pepys, Byron — and 20th century poetry. His enthusiasm for Johnson and his contemporaries stems from his undergraduate days, and he is glad to share it with fellow enthusiasts.

I have chosen the subject of Johnson as a poet. One reason is that I wanted to spend some time asking why it has proved so remarkably difficult during many years as a part time adult education lecturer to run courses on Johnson or, indeed, virtually any poet of his period. I should, perhaps, explain that in the non-vocational sector of adult education market testing was experienced in its most savage form years before the Conservative Government turned it into a political dogma. If you did not offer courses people wanted nobody would turn up for them and if you did not teach them well those who did turn up would soon fail to return. In either case, failure was punished by rapid unemployment. Courses on eighteenth century poetry simply did not sell.

I sometimes wonder what Johnson would have thought of the preferences of adult education classes. There is demand for courses on the Metaphysicals, which would probably have saddened him. I never detected the slightest indication of demand for anything on Sterne, which he might have taken as vindication of his views. He would probably have been encouraged by the surprisingly low demand for lectures on Swift. I am confident, however, that he would have been appalled by the reason for this pattern — a great fear of encountering literature which does not fit comfortable, familiar models.

The great problem in presenting Johnson, and most authors of his time, to a modern audience is that they do not fit the pattern which is expected. In large measure this may be put down to the legacy of the romantic movement. I do not want to go into detail about Romanticism so I will limit myself to two foolhardy generalisations.

First, Romanticism — coupled with the economics of the publishing industry — savagely reduced the number of literary genres. Creative writers today write poems or novels. Modern audiences have difficulty coming to terms with a writer whose greatest work is probably a Dictionary, whose prose works largely comprise essays, who wrote only one work remotely resembling a novel and whose poems do not match modern expectations.



This brings me onto my second rash generalisation. An unfortunate legacy of Romanticism is the assumption the poems ought to be short, intense and completely original. Now of course many of the greatest twentieth century poets have departed from this pattern. T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W. H. Auden all violate one or more of these conventions largely because all of them were in rebellion against one or another aspect of Romanticism. But the conventions are surprisingly durable. They explain the popularity of the Metaphysical poets — they tend to write poems which are short and intense. The imagery which Johnson regarded with disfavour as an expression of singularity is now greeted as refreshing originality.

Johnson's poetry has several obstacles to overcome before it can get a hearing. His best poems tend to be long. A long poem cannot sustain the intensity of lyric verse over its entire course, so much of Johnson's best poetry is more sober and reflective. Finally, two of his finest poems, *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are adaptations. This immediately betrays them as not original — perhaps the supreme romantic sin. Such differences should, of course, be regarded as a challenge. Everyone accepts that Mediaeval writers are different and it is unreasonable to judge them by modern critical expectations. Nobody minds that Dante makes free use of ancient authors and writes long poems in which passages of intensity are punctuated by philosophical or narrative material. Johnson's problem is that he lived so close to the first stirrings of the Romantic movement that people tend to be reluctant to make allowances for his different perspective. I want to develop this theme by looking in some detail at what is probably Johnson's finest poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. I want to examine why it was a success in its own time and, in the process, show how much it has to offer to readers today. I'm an impossibly old fashioned critic in that what I am interested in doing is trying to answer the question why something is worth reading and may, therefore, be recommended as a source of pleasure and — hopefully — rather more. This is what I want to do this afternoon with *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.

*The Vanity of Human Wishes* is an adaptation of Juvenal's Tenth Satire. Juvenal has the distinction of being one of the ancient writers who has always been read on merit — despite the dim view Latin teachers invariably have of his 'impure' silver Latin style. Johnson, of course, wrote two adaptations of Juvenal — *London* is based on the third satire. He wrote for a readership which was familiar with Latin authors in the original language. They did not want translations. They wanted a true adaptation — something which would preserve major parts of the original but would incorporate contemporary material and deal creatively with anachronisms. As good Augustans, they wanted good memorable lines. They were also interested in morality in a way which seems strange to us. Juvenal was known as a moral author and it should always be remembered that some of the most widely distributed and frequently read books in the eighteenth century were collections of sermons.

Let us first look at some of the ways in which Johnson made some of Juvenal's material more contemporary. One of the most vivid passages in Juvenal concerns his example of political ambition, Sejanus the minister of the Emperor Tiberius who ended his days being lynched by the Roman mob.

Juvenal rapidly homes in on detail. The statutes of Sejanus meet a sad end:

And now the flames are hissing, and amid the roar of furnace and of bellows the head of the mighty Sejanus, the darling of the mob, is burning and crackling, and from that face, which was but lately second in the entire world, are being fashioned pipkins, basins, frying pans and slop pails.

Juvenal then takes us into the street to hear the Romans talk about Sejanus' fall:

'What a lip the fellow had! What a face!' 'Believe me, I never liked the man!' 'But on what charge was he condemned? Who informed against him? What was the evidence, who were the witnesses, who made good the case?' 'Nothing of the sort; a great and wordy letter came from Capri' 'Good, I ask no more.'

This is Juvenal at his most wonderfully immediate — he is the great poet of the close-up. He is also a poet who likes cutting his chosen victims down to size. He cannot resist speculating about the use to which the recycled bronze of Sejanus' statue may be put.

Johnson greatly extends the general introduction before focusing on his example. He begins with a wonderful reflection on the political life:

Unnumber'd Suppliants croud Preferment's Gate,  
Athirst for Wealth, and burning to be great;  
Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant Call,  
They mount, they shine, evaporate and fall.

I like the way in which Johnson packs energy into the first part of the passage — 'croud', 'athirst' and 'burning' and we then have a progression — 'mount' and 'shine' — followed by the bathos of 'evaporate'. There is a great feeling of expectation and striving leading not to a great catastrophe but an anticlimax. One minor irony is that Johnson's passage strongly calls to mind one of Swift's satires — his *Satirical Elegy on the Death of a late famous General* — his old enemy Marlborough:

Come hither, all you empty things,  
Ye bubbles rais'd by breath of Kings;  
Who float upon the tide of state,  
Come hither, and behold your fate.

Johnson may have learned more from Swift than he dared admit.

Johnson's general reflection is then developed with a fine portrait of the decline of a political career:

Love ends with Hope, the sinking Statesman's Door  
Pours in the Morning Worshiper no more;  
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,  
To growing Wealth the Dedicator flies,  
From every room descends the painted face,  
That hung the bright Palladium of the place.

The desertion of the setting for the rising sun is splendidly captured and the passage about the removal of the portraits makes me think of the fate of the images of the former rulers of Eastern Europe. We also see the rhetorical character of Johnson's poetry — the use of pithy aphorisms — 'love ends with hope' — and the use of repetition to build up to a climax;

For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,  
To growing Wealth the Dedicator flies,

After this generalisation, Johnson then gives us his exemplum — Cardinal Wolsey. He gives us a portrait of Wolsey in his prime:

Turn'd by his nod the stream of honour flows,  
His smile alone security bestows;  
but rapidly moves on to Wolsey's fall;  
At length his Sov'reign frowns — the train of state  
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate  
Where-e'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,  
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;

Johnson departs from Juvenal's approach in significant ways. He is far more abstract. He describes processes rather than explaining events through imaginary eye witnesses. The strength of Johnson's account is that whereas Juvenal dwells on the dramatic fall, Johnson concentrates on what leads up to it — the desertion of old adherents, the way in which the courtiers take their lead from the Sovereign and wait for the moment when cold disapproval will turn into outright hostility. Johnson has well captured the sinister atmosphere which rules in autocratic countries and multi-national corporations. In addition,

by being more abstract his account travels better — there is less mental readjustment than one needs when reading Juvenal. Johnson also has to deal with major differences between Imperial Rome and Georgian England. A good example of some contemporary relevance is voting. Juvenal, like most fashionable Imperial writers, idealised the republican past. After all, satirists need standards against which they may make unfavourable comparisons. In denouncing the rabble who lynched Sejanus Juvenal coins his most famous phrase:

Now that no one buys our votes, the public has long since cast off its cares; the people that once bestowed commands, consulships, legions and all else, now meddles no more and longs eagerly for just two things — bread and games!

Johnson's readers, of course, would have been among the minority of citizens who actually had votes. He overcomes the problem brilliantly:

Through Freedom's sons no more Remonstrance rings,  
Degrading nobles and controuling Kings;  
Our supple tribes repress their Patriot Throats,  
And ask no questions but the price of votes;  
With weekly libels and Septennial Ale,  
Their wish is all to riot and to rail.

Johnson has managed to be more deeply sceptical than Juvenal. Juvenal had his illusions about a noble republican past. Johnson notes that the people of his day have their constitutional liberties but only want to sell them. Today he would have substituted unrealistic promises of tax cuts for 'septennial ale' and the tabloid press for 'weekly libels'. Johnson's voters have the votes Juvenal's plebs lacked — and do not care.

One of the core moral passages in Juvenal concerns old age — a treatment of the ancient theme that old age does not always lead to happiness. Juvenal plunges into the miseries of old age with scarcely concealed relish:

Look first at the misshapen and ungainly face, so unlike its former self; see the unsightly hide that serves for skin; see the pendulous cheeks and the wrinkles like those which a matron baboon carves upon her aged jaws

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Juvenal has a distinctly unhealthy obsession with such material. Johnson starts off with one of his best phrases — the person who begs for long life does not wish to know:

That life protracted is protracted woe

but his account is far gentler than Juvenal. There is no counterpart to Juvenal's catalogue of the ugliness of old age. Juvenal launches on a list of pleasures which are denied to the elderly:

Their sluggish palate takes joy in wine or food no longer, and all the pleasures of the flesh have been long ago forgotten . . .

and then describes the waning of sexual performance with a degree of detail even modern editions shrink from translating.

Johnson, not surprisingly, ignores the effects of age on sexual pleasure. He makes a powerful contrast between the abundance of nature and the decayed ability to enjoy it:

In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,  
The fruit Autumnal and the Vernal flow'r,  
With listless eyes the dotard views the store,  
He views and wonders that they please no more.

The authors use differing images to describe the illnesses of old age: Juvenal has:

Besides all this, the little blood in his now chilly frame is never warm except with fever;  
diseases of every kind dance round him in a troop;

Johnson's equivalent reminds us of his comment in old age 'I will be conquered, I will not capitulate.'

Unnumber'd maladies his joints invade,

Lay siege to life and press the dire blockade  
These differences in approach bring us close to the central difference between Juvenal and Johnson. Juvenal is committed to a fundamentally contemptuous view of human nature. The misfortunes of people are chiefly their own fault and deserve ridicule. Johnson empathises far more with the misfortunes, acknowledges that they are based on ineradicable aspects of human nature and are therefore to be pitied more than derided.

So far we have concentrated on ways in which Johnson has adapted Juvenal. I now want to turn to some examples of ways in which Johnson used the poem to touch on his own concerns. One such area is the use of learning. It is hard not to think of Johnson's own thwarted expectations of a career when he went to Oxford when we read the lines:

Through all his veins the fever of renown  
Burns from the strong contagion of the gown;  
O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,  
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.

Note the richness of the imagery — we have the idea of the burning fever — but the *contagion of the gown* calls to mind the shirt of Nessus — the idea that the academic gown administers a fatal poison. This is, of course, the famous passage when Johnson lists the ills the scholar's life assails,

Toil, Envy, Want, the Patron and the Jail

[The word 'patron' was, in the 1755 revised edition, substituted for 'garret' which was the 1749 original. --ed.] With this list in mind Johnson may have been thinking of Richard Savage as much as of his own experiences when he wrote the line. Perhaps the strongest expression of Johnson's approach comes in the conclusion to the poem. Juvenal, as every schoolboy used to know, comes to the rather lame conclusion that all we can safely ask for is a sound mind in a sound body. Johnson goes much further, reflecting his own Christian convictions. He begins by making a critical distinction:

Still raise for good the supplicating voice  
But leave to Heav'n the measure and the choice.

He then goes on to the list that we may safely pray for:

Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,  
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;  
For Love, which scarce collective man can fill;  
For Patience sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;  
For Faith, that panting for a happier seat,  
Counts Death kind Nature's signal of retreat.

This neatly builds on the image of the old man besieged by illnesses which we noted earlier — but softens it and leaves us with a more reassuring, more positive conclusion than Juvenal was able to reach. Johnson's adaptation of a pagan satire ends with a profoundly Christian conclusion.

What I have tried to do this afternoon is to show why Johnson's contemporaries liked *The Vanity of Human Wishes* — that the poem met their expectations of a good adaptation. I have also attempted to show that Johnson was able to communicate his own ideas in the course of the poem. It remains for me to ask the question where is the poetry?

One test of good poetry is how many lines you can remember, *The Vanity of Human Wishes* scores well:

Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail

He left the name at which the world grew pale  
To point a moral or adorn a tale

Life protracted is protracted woe

From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow  
And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show

Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring  
And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a king.

A further characteristic of good poetry is imaginative richness, such as we find in effective and fertile imagery. We saw this earlier in the passage about the scholar's fever for renown. Here is another example. In the following passage Johnson talks about the perils which await beautiful girls (the equivalent in Juvenal deals with pretty boys);

Against your fame with fondness hate combines,  
The rival batters, and the lover mines.  
With distant voice neglected virtue calls,  
Less heard, and less the faint remonstrance falls;

In croud at once, where none the pass defend,  
The harmless freedom, and the private friend.

Comparing a seduction attempt to a siege was nothing new — but Johnson deploys the imagery with wonderfully suggestive precision. We have the unholy combination of rival forces against the victim. The idea of undermining is particularly effective — the slow, insidious process of persuasion and persistence. The allied forces which could give relief are ignored. The foes pour through the undefended breach. Again the phrases *The harmless freedom, and the private friend* are wonderfully evocative of the slippery slope leading to disgrace. Johnson's brief portrait is strongly reminiscent of a cycle of paintings by Hogarth.

Poetry is also about tone, mood and atmosphere — producing feelings. One of the best examples of this is in the conclusion to the poem. Johnson begins with the picture of despair. Is there nothing we can do or strive for?

Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?

Johnson then makes the point we noted earlier — we may ask but we should leave the outcome to God. He then reminds us of the great virtues, Love, Patience and Faith, and concludes:

These goods for man the laws of Heav'n ordain  
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;  
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,  
And makes the happiness she does not find.

It is a conclusion of calm, rational enthusiasm. It is an affirmation of the view that we will find happiness in this world, but we may discover it in ourselves by cultivating our good instincts. *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, therefore, offers a rich and rewarding experience to the reader. All poetry is about the creation of imaginary worlds. Whether the poet is a contemporary or an ancient it needs some effort to enter the world, understand its customs and see what it has to offer. Samuel Johnson has much to offer.



## THE WREATH-LAYING

The annual wreath-laying ceremony, held around the anniversary of Dr Johnson's death, took place in Westminster Abbey on Saturday, 14th December 1996. The allocution was delivered by Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien.

He spoke as follows:

I appreciate the opportunity you have given me to join you here in paying tribute to the memory of Samuel Johnson.

Later today I shall be discussing the relation between Johnson and Edmund Burke. The two men were on opposite sides in the politics of the day and this difference occasionally cast a shadow over their long friendship, but was never allowed to undermine it. Edmund Burke was chief pall-bearer at Johnson's funeral.

The enduring friendship of these two men of genius, despite their political differences, offers one of the most moving passages in the intellectual history of these islands.

After the ceremony, the Annual Luncheon of the Society, for the speaker and other guests of the Committee, took place at the *Vitello d'Oro* restaurant. It was organised, as in previous years, by Mrs A. G. Dowdeswell. Other members of the Society were also present, making it an agreeable social occasion.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Donald Johnson Greene  
1914-1997**

The death of Donald Greene on 13th May 1997 affected the whole world of eighteenth century studies: but to us in this Society, of which he had been a supportive member, it was of particular sadness as he had only a few weeks previously accepted our invitation to become a Vice-President. We are grateful that we had taken the opportunity to honour him.

He was born in Saskatchewan, and graduated BA from that University in 1941: later degrees followed at University College London, where he gained his MA in 1948 and at Columbia University New York (PhD 1954). London made him a D Litt in 1973 as did McMaster in 1985. He taught at various schools and universities, but it is his tenure of a Leo S. Bing Chair of English and American Literature in the University of Southern California (1968-1985) which is the climax of his academic career. He was made Professor Emeritus on retirement.

It is impossible, in a memoir of this length, to describe — or even to record — the whole range of his scholarship: but certain themes stand out. His early work *The Politics of Samuel Johnson* 1960 (with a second edition in 1989) sets the scene for a major re-assessment of Johnson's alleged Toryism. He later edited Johnson's political writings, published in 1977 as the tenth volume of the Yale University edition

of Johnson's works. A second misconception which he set himself to correct was that of Johnson as a "character" rather than an author. This involved him in a vigorous attack on the Boswell/Macaulay position, and his essay *The World's Worst Biography* (1993) trenchantly sets forth his long-term views. A third area of great importance to him was the setting of Johnson in his background: this found expression in his leading role in the foundation of both the International and the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies. And finally there were his bibliographical interests which resulted in two major bibliographies of Johnsonian Studies, with J. L. Clifford in 1970 and with J. A. Vance in 1987.

To follow this inevitably inadequate summary of Donald Greene's work, I should like to refer to an exchange of papers published in our journal *The New Rambler*. In the 1991/2 issue (Vol D VII) Professor Daisuke Nagashima wrote on the theme *Progressive or Conservative? Two trends in Johnson Studies*. This resulted in a forthright response from him, published in Vol D IX (1993/4) entitled *Progress towards where? Conservation of what?* And I recall with pleasure personal letters received from him during my years of editing this journal. He will long be remembered, not least by this Society.

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### BOOK REVIEWS

Barry Baldwin, *The Latin and Greek Poems of Samuel Johnson* (London: Duckworth, 1995). Pp. iii + 299. Price £55.00

This edition of Johnson's Latin and Greek verses consists of a preface and introduction, the canonical poems, each accompanied — a few exceptions apart — by Baldwin's prose translation, an essay on the general background to the piece and line-by-line editorial notes on textual, metrical and similar points, including sources of thought or diction from classical and later writers on which Johnson may have drawn. Poems of doubtful ascription are then followed by Johnson's Latin translations of poems from the Greek Anthology. What may have been a 'stop press' item, the discovery of a possible new poem by Johnson, precedes the bibliography and six indexes. Baldwin does not advocate the removal of any of the *incerta* from that category: his handling of them and of the Anthology translations does not differ substantially from that adopted for the main group of canonical poems. These last form the heart of the edition and will provide the focus for this review.

Baldwin realises that he has to address two main classes of readers, whose needs may well not coincide, those with an interest in Johnson and hence in his Latin and Greek poems, but who would regard themselves as classicists, and classicists who would be helped by information on the writer and his background. In this situation he opts for inclusion rather than omission. The themes of the seventy canonical poems are varied, reflecting the breadth of Johnson's interests: an impression of how Baldwin handles this diversity can be gathered from examples. The page numbers of the Oxford edition will be used for reference: *Poems of Samuel Johnson*, Ed. D. Nichol Smith and Edward L. McAdam. (2nd ed. 1974.)

On the version in Latin elegiacs of Dryden's epigram on Milton (Oxf. 43) Baldwin's commentary provides evidence for Johnson's authorship and the poem's dating within the Oxford period: it also discusses the tradition of translating into and from Latin at school and university. For the non-classicist Homer and Virgil are named as the poets linked by Dryden with Milton. Some felicities of Johnson's translation are pointed out and attention is drawn to Cowper's Latin version of the Dryden epigram and to the possibility of rivalry having been felt by Cowper. At first sight Baldwin's allocation of two full pages of comment to the single elegiac couplet addressed to Molly Aston (Oxf. 59) may seem overgenerous, but they provide the reader who is not well versed in Johnsoniana with information on Johnson's

relationship with Mary Aston, on the place of women in intellectual society, on whether Aston's political championing of liberty was in formal address or in private conversation — *sermo* in the poem's title could mean either — and on some possible literary influences on Johnson's poem. The sapphic poem *In Theatro* (Oxf. 180) reproaches 'Crispus' for continued attachment to the theatre, when books and friends of his own age would be more appropriate. Johnson himself wrote or roughed out this poem at Covent Garden theatre and Mrs Thrale refers to it, but her various accounts and dating are confused: was Johnson at Covent Garden for Handel's *Messiah* or for Dr Arne's *Love in a Village*? Without claiming to have answered the question Baldwin adduces information on the style and the reception of eighteenth century performances of *Messiah* which at least diminishes objections raised against Johnson's having written the poem at the oratorio concert. Baldwin further suggests that although Crispus is a name drawn from Horace, Samuel Crisp, dramatist, may have been the poem's target. *Geographia Metrica* (Oxf. 263-4), of uncertain date, is an exercise by Johnson in hexameters, setting out the square mileage of the earth and some of its continents and countries. Baldwin details other instances of Johnson's interest in geography, and in discussing the poem's dating points to a possible reference in it to voyages of exploration (Cook, Banks): he also notes Boswell's phrase 'rebellious America', not to be included in a tour for which Johnson hoped. Renaissance and later poems reflecting interest in the exploration of distant lands are cited as possible influences on Johnson. On Johnson's final Latin prayers (Oxf. 246), a free version of the Book of Common Prayer collect, 'Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open . . .', Baldwin indicates phrases and devices of classical ancestry on which Johnson called even when nearing death: he movingly adds the last of Johnson's English prayers, together with Boswell's description of the moment of Johnson's death.

The range of Baldwin's annotation covers ancient literature, philosophy and myth, neo-Latin literature, Johnson's writings and thought, the social and general history of his time, his immediate circle and Johnsonian and classical scholarship of later date. It is a remarkable compilation, even if knowledge is more easily gained now than in pre-computer days. In so great a mass of material it is not surprising that there are some flaws to be noted. When Johnson wrote from his sick bed to his friend, Dr Lawrence (Oxf. 190-1), he asked what he could compose 'quod tu . . . posses saltem facili dignari aure' (l. 4-5). Baldwin translates 'that you . . . would even deign to listen to with a courteous ear.' It is better, and fairer to Lawrence, to give *saltem* its proper force and translate ' . . . that you could judge acceptable to your friendly ear at least.' *Facili aure* echoes Propertius 2.21.15 and Juvenal 3.122 — a rare miss by Baldwin. On recovering the use of his eyes (Oxf. 192) Johnson thanks God for restoring *me, cui cuncta beans nocuit dies* (2.8): Baldwin translates by 'me, to whom the whole day in its blessed course brought harm': it means 'me, to whom the whole day, as it gladdened all things, brought hurt' — a reference to the reaction of an inflamed eye to light. In the epigram, in Greek, on Marlborough (Oxf. 199) Johnson applies to Ares (Mars) a word from Homer meaning 'destruction' to mortals': Baldwin's paraphrase 'a veritable Ares' is flat and sacrifices the play between mortals and the goddess who also succumbs to Ares, but in love. A point of a different kind arises from *Geographia Metrica* (Oxf. 263-4), where Baldwin speaks of 'Johnson's dazzling facility with numerals and metrics' forgetting, apparently, his verdict of 'cumbersome' on the phrase Johnson used to place Crispus in his sixties (*In Theatro*, l.1: Oxf. 150). On a wider scale it seems that for Baldwin the gathering of information is sometimes in danger of becoming an end in itself. On the lost poem *Somnium* Baldwin points out the distinction between *somnium* (dream) and *somnus* (sleep): this is correct, but not particularly relevant: far less so is the list that follows of neo-Latin poets who wrote on Sleep. In line 53 of his translation of Pope's *Messiah* (Oxf. 45-49) Johnson uses the word *ocellus*: this diminutive of *oculus* (eye), found in many ancient authors, is not remarkable. It turns up also in a Renaissance neo-Latinist, Marullus: that occurrence is recorded and in turn leads to a gratuitous listing of recent studies of that author. Finally, Baldwin rightly comments that a long distance, poetically and emotionally, has been travelled from Johnson's first poem, on college ale, to the Latin prayer (Oxf. 266) looked at earlier. His next sentence is: 'One cannot help noticing that the two

very different poems have one word ('sono') in common.' That fact is without significance and it does not enhance the sympathetic treatment given by Baldwin to the poem as a whole.

Other matters of question could be mentioned, but so also could many items of credit, including Baldwin's handling of the Scottish poems and of the elegiacs on Stowe Mill in which Johnson recalls childhood and change. To sum up, readers can be grateful for Baldwin's industry and range of scholarship: they must also, as always, keep their wits about them.

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Valerie Grosvenor Myer, *Obstinate Heart: Jane Austen, A Biography*, (London: Michael O'Mara Books Ltd, 1997), Pp viii + 248, plus 16 pages of black-and-white plates. Price £18.99

We no longer hear of 'gentle Jane'. Modern biographers stress instead her 'regulated hatred' of her society and her sharpness of perception and tongue. The latest biographers (for it is a flourishing industry) do not applaud her contentment with social limitation but emphasise the difficulties she faced through poverty and her unmarried status. Valerie Grosvenor Myer's book *Obstinate Heart: Jane Austen, A Biography* particularly stresses the last of these. Two thirds of her book are devoted to the period before the publication of Austen's novels, and particular attention is given to the years which have been recognised as the least happy in Austen's life, the move to Bath in 1801, and the period after the death of her father when she with her widowed mother and sister moved to cheaper lodgings, relieved by a succession of visits to her brothers' more comfortable houses. Grosvenor Myer draws on the surviving letters to create a picture of life which was busy, but ultimately unsatisfying. Austen was aware of poverty particularly because many of their circle were much richer, and as she grew from her twenties to her thirties, still unmarried, she became aware of the implications of spinsterhood. Life consisted of plans to make a shabby pelisse last a little longer, to save tea and sugar, and to arrange the necessary escorts when she wanted to travel. The 'obstinate heart' of the title of this book is that of a woman who refused an offer of marriage — from Harris Bigg-Wither in 1802 — when fully aware of the economic and social consequences of doing so. Grosvenor Myer presents Austen as 'emotionally unfulfilled', and suggests that her wit was 'her way of coping.' This is an implicit statement of a view usually assumed to be true. It is countered, however, by the study of the emotional richness and support given to the novelist by an all-female society in Deborah Kaplan's *Jane Austen Among Women* (1992).

Grosvenor Myer creates a frightening picture of a spinster in her thirties, with increasing poverty and social exclusion to look forward to, partly through quotations from Austen's letters and partly by withholding information about Austen's early writing until she is ready to launch Austen as a novelist with a work in print. This book is not a critical biography — it says little about the merits of the novels — but it places the act of writing clearly in a context of what Austen's life might have been like if she had not written. Looked at that way money appears a more urgent motive for publishing her novels than is usually claimed. The author orchestrates a large cast of characters with clarity, and writes with momentum. Her style varies from being close to that of Austen's letters to one of conscious modernity: one of the chapters is entitled 'Dancing and Shopping, 1796-1800'. Grosvenor Myer brings striking twentieth-century judgments to bear on Austen's world, with mixed effect. The reader is probably amused at the description of Madame Duval as 'the heroine's grisly grandmother in Fanny Burney's novel *Evelina*'; but traditional pieties are offended by the suggestion that the only authenticated portrait of Austen, the drawing by Cassandra, makes her look 'like a peevish hamster.'

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Greg Clingham (editor), *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), £37.50/£13.95 (paper back)

This collection of fifteen essays bills itself as an "accessibly written introduction to the works and intellectual life" of Samuel Johnson. Editor Greg Clingham has included essays on most of Johnson's major works: *The Dictionary*, *The Rambler*, *Rasselas*, the Shakespeare edition, and *The Lives*. Clingham has also included a number of essays on general topics, such as poetry, religion, conversation, women, politics, travel, and letter-writing. Although only a few of these essays will seem new and noteworthy to Johnson scholars, almost all of them will be useful to the non-specialists and interested amateurs who make up the target audience for this volume.

Clingham has selected a number of fine essays. Michael Suarez gives a superb overview of Johnson's nervous Anglicanism, and John Wiltshire is almost as good on Johnson's travel writing. Eithne Henson chips away at the persistent myth of Johnson's misogyny, while Clement Hawes hails Johnson as a prescient opponent of racism and imperialism on the one hand and "cheap and easy relativism" on the other. Howard Weinbrot introduces readers to a number of obscure poems without neglecting *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Other highlights include Robert DeMaria, Jr., on the *Dictionary*, Tom Keymer on Johnson's letters, and Steven Lynn on Johnson's reception history from 1738 to the present.

Most of the contributors do an excellent job of avoiding theoretical jargon and keeping the introductory reader in mind. However, there are a few unfortunate exceptions. Catherine Parke insists that biography ought to be "a language event in the continuous present that authorizes itself independently of, but not in annihilating competition with its subject". And the editor himself is not always as clear as he might have been: "the distance between Milton and [Johnson]," Clingham writes, "might be thought of as a space in which Milton manifests himself, and his manifestation is dialectically related to Johnson's action of confronting and parrying Milton's otherness".

Clingham's essay on the *Lives* contains a number of fine insights, but it tends to ramble. His essay is almost twice as long as any other essay in the volume, and the discrepancy in length between the editor's own piece and the others in the collection may remind readers of Juvenal's famous question: "quis custodiet ipsos custodes?"

Philip Davis's "Life of Samuel Johnson" is not what it purports to be. The essay is a sympathetic and humane examination of Johnson's personality, but readers looking for biographical facts will not find them here: only three of Davis's thirty-seven paragraphs discuss the events of Johnson's life.

Robert Folkenflik gives a solid summary of Johnson's political pamphlets, but he is perhaps too cavalier in his dismissal of the Jacobite-Nonjuror hypothesis advanced recently by J. C. D. Clark and Howard Erskine-Hill. Although the evidence concerning Johnson's politics is complex, it seems increasingly likely that Johnson had at least "a kind of liking for Jacobitism".

Fred Parker draws attention to skepticism and inconclusiveness in *Rasselas*. Much of what he says is sensible and unobjectionable. However, some Johnsonians may think he takes a good point too far and makes Johnson sound too much like Hume when he de-emphasizes Nekayah's "choice of eternity" and concludes that this "invocation of a religious perspective finally determines nothing".



A handful of additional criticisms of the book might be made: there are a few factual errors and inaccurate quotations (e.g., pp. 61, 104, 115-116), and the selective bibliography sometimes seems more quirky than authoritative. But it would be wrong to over-emphasize these shortcomings: as Johnson himself remarked, fallible beings will fail somewhere. *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* more than fulfils the goals which it sets for itself: it provides a comprehensive, interesting, and reliable introduction to Johnsonian studies.

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The Johnson Society of London now has its own website of which  
the address is:

<http://www.nbbl.demon.co.uk>

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