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CONTENTS

ARTHUR MURPHY, ACTOR AND AUTHOR

H. MacL. Currie 2

ARTHUR MURPHY'S "ESSAY ON THE LIFE AND GENIUS OF HENRY FIELDING, ESQ.": RE-READING A SLIGHTED CRITIC

Susan Miller Passler 15

THE HAPPY VALLEY: A VERSION OF HELL AND A VERSION OF PASTORAL

Marlene R. Hansen 24

JOHNSON'S VISION OF THEODORE

Richard R. Schwartz 31

REVIEW OF THE CORRESPONDENCE OF EDWARD YOUNG 1683-1765, Ed. Henry Pettet

Richard C. Frushell 40

JOHNSON'S MORAL SHOCK AS CRITICAL NORM

John T. LaVia 43

NOTES

23, 39, 44

ARTHUR MURPHY, ACTOR AND AUTHOR*

H. MacL. Currie, M.A.

Arthur Murphy, the son of a Dublin merchant, was born at Clomquin, Roscommon, on December 27th, 1727, and died on June 18th, 1805. If a quick description were required "Irish actor and dramatist" would suffice, I think. From 1738 to 1744 he was a student at the English College at St. Omer under the name of Arthur French - French was his mother's maiden name. On the recommendation of his uncle, Jeffery French, he obtained a post in the counting-house of a merchant at Cork in 1747. Young Arthur refused to go to Jamaica in pursuit of a business career, which led to a quarrel with his uncle, and to his moving to a similar post in London. By the autumn of 1752 he was publishing the "Gray's Inn Journal", a periodical after the style of the "Spectator". In 1754 he turned actor, appearing in the title-rôles of "Richard III" and "Othello"; also as Biron in Southerne's "Fatal Marriage" and as Osmyn in Congreve's "Mourning Bride". His first farce, "The Apprentice", was performed at Drury Lane on January 2nd 1756, and it was followed by, amongst other pieces, "The Upholsterer" (1758), "The Orphan of China" (1759), "The Way to keep Him" (1760), "All in the Wrong" (1761), "The Grecian Daughter" (1772), and "Know your own Mind" (1777). These were almost all adaptations from French originals and were immensely popular, bringing their creator money and fame.

Because of his association with the stage, Murphy's application to the Middle Temple in 1757 had been unsuccessful; but he was later called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn through the influence of Henry Fox, in support of whom he edited a political periodical called the "Test". Murphy also produced a biography of Fielding, an essay on the life and genius of Samuel Johnson, and translations of the Roman historians Sallust and Tacitus. Towards the end of his life the office of a commissioner of bankrupts and a pension of £200 a year were bestowed upon him by the Government.

* A paper read to the Johnson Society of London on 18th November, 1972.
Chairman: Dr. David Brown.

Such is the brief outline of the life and work of a man who gained the affectionate regard of Samuel Johnson. Murphy is quoted or referred to several times in Boswell. In a letter to Bennet Langton, dated January 9th, 1758, given in full by Boswell, Johnson remarks that 'Murphy is to have his "Orphan of China" acted next month', but the opening was actually delayed until April 21st of the following year. William Fitzherbert, an acquaintance of Johnson, invited Murphy and a few friends to dinner at the Rose Tavern (near Drury Lane) on that day; Murphy himself writes:

The author, who was in some alarm, and wished to hide himself, was obliged to attend. In the middle of the dinner, he received a letter from Mrs. Cibber, regretting that her name was not in the play-bill, as she found herself in great spirits; but as it was then too late to make any alteration, she desired to have a line as soon as the play was over, and, in the mean time she said, "I shall offer up my prayers for your success." Foote read the letter aloud, and returned it, saying with great gravity, "Mrs. Cibber is a Catholic, and they always pray for the dead." The company laughed heartily, and the author looked with a foolish face of praise.

The plot of this play is concerned with the struggle of Zamti, a mandarin in Peking, and Mandane his wife to restore to the Chinese throne the rightful heir, an orphan, despite the grave danger to themselves and their own son (who is confused with the orphan). Timurkan, the Tartar usurper, is eventually ejected by the efforts of Zamti, Mandane, their son, the orphan-heir and sundry conspirators, but though justice is done in the end both Zamti and Mandane perish in the hour of victory.

Murphy himself informs us that he used two sources for this play: "Tchao Chi Cou Ell" or "The Little Orphan of the Family of Tchao", an English version of a French translation of a Chinese play; and Voltaire's "L'Orphelin de la Chine" (1755) which was itself based on the same French translation. Allardyce Nicoll describes the piece as 'a tragedy of mingled classic and romantic tendencies.' The unity of time but not that of place is observed. On the whole the play, like other eighteenth-century English tragedies, must be adjudged as mediocre. It was Murphy's

first venture into tragedy and it was a considerable success, but he had experienced no small difficulty in having it produced. By the late autumn of 1756 Murphy had completed the play; there were now to be two years of wrangling with David Garrick before it could be presented.

"The Orphan of China" was acted only nine times in its first season, but would certainly have had a longer run if its first presentation had not been delayed. But it was acted almost yearly at Drury Lane between 1759 and 1769; after the first two representations in 1760 Garrick ceased to take the part of Zamti, being succeeded permanently thereafter by Charles Holland. The play's success is in part a reminder that the age had a special interest in, and taste for, things oriental.

Murphy's first farce, "The Apprentice", a two-act afterpiece, deals with the adventures of a stage-struck young man, Dick Wingate, who has been apprenticed to Gargle, an apothecary, by his old father who is fond of money and the study of mathematics. Dick is the leader of an amateur dramatic society (or "Spouting Club", as it is called), and having fallen in love with his master's daughter, Charlotte, has imbued her with his own passion for acting. With the help of Simon, Gargle's servant, Dick and Charlotte prepare to elope and join a troupe of players. But Catchpole, a bailiff, intervenes and frustrates the elopement. The parents are summoned and Dick's father goes bail for the young couple upon Dick's promising, somewhat half-heartedly, to be a reformed character. The farce satirises chiefly the contemporary passion amongst many London apprentices for spouting clubs where they, neglecting their duties, rehearsed plays and staged them for their friends. One very notable feature of the piece is the tissue of Shakespearian phrases along with quotations from other dramatists (Johnson, Congreve, Otway, Farquhar, Vanburgh, Rowe, and various minor writers) which Murphy very cleverly puts into Dick's mouth and, to a smaller extent, into that of Simon.

"The Apprentice" was first performed on January 2nd, 1756. His next farce was "The Upholsterer" which opened at Drury Lane on March 30th, 1758, with a brilliant cast which included Garrick as Pamphlet. The play makes fun of excessive interest in trivial political news and gossip and of the concomitant neglect of business and domestic duties. Amongst its literary sources are Addison and Steele's "Tatler",

and Fielding's novel "Joseph Andrews" as well as Fielding's comedy "The Coffee-House Politician" or "The Justice Caught in His Own Trap" (1730). Murphy's Mrs. Termagant with her propensity for misusing and mispronouncing words is drawn from Slipslop in "Joseph Andrews", while Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop in "The Rivals" seems to have been directly inspired by Murphy's Mrs. Termagant, as Allardyce Nicoll remarks.

Two other farces belong to this period. "The Spouter" or "The Triple Revenge" was written in 1756 but never performed because its satirical content was too personal. His "Englishman from Paris" was performed once, on April 3rd, 1756, at Drury Lane, but is now lost.

Meanwhile Murphy's acting career had been proceeding apace. From his debut on October 18th, 1754, at Covent Garden, in the difficult part of Othello he was regularly in demand until he left the stage at the end of the 1755-56 season in order to cultivate other fields. Amongst the parts he played were that of Archer in "The Beaux' Stratagem", of Bevil, Junior, in Steele's "The Conscious Lovers", of Essex in Henry Jones's "The Earl of Essex", of Bajazet in Nicholas Rowe's "Tamerlane", and the title role in John Brown's "Barbarossa".

We have interesting testimony concerning Murphy's histrionic capacity in Mrs. Thrale's table of rating. She awards him for his person and voice thirteen points out of a possible twenty. Only four of the other thirty-seven male competitors did better than this - David Garrick's score was eighteen. Another witness, John Taylor, writing years later, gives this account:

He was an admirable reader... and read to me one of his manuscript tragedies; and without the least pomp or affectation, he appeared to me to be able to do justice to any author in theatrical performance. His voice was firm and well-toned, and capable of adapting itself to every change of passion, particularly as his figure in the meridian of life must have been lofty and commanding.

In June, 1754, Murphy entered accidentally into a friendship which was to have great significance for the elite

of contemporary literary society in London. He happened to be spending some time in the country with Samuel Foote, the wit, actor and dramatist, and having mentioned that he was obliged to go to London in order to get ready for the press one of the numbers of the "Gray's-Inn Journal", Foote said to him, "You need not go on that account. Here is a French magazine, in which you will find a very pretty oriental tale; translate that, and send it to your printer."

Murphy took up this suggestion and accordingly there appeared in the "Gray's-Inn Journal" for June 15th "a Translation of" an "Indian Narrative," the tale of Morad and his son, Abouzaid. People were quick to notice that this story had first been translated into French from Samuel Johnson's "Rambler", No. 190, Saturday, January 11th, 1752. When Murphy realised what had happened he published a handsome apology in the next issue of the "Gray's-Inn Journal" (June 22nd, 1754) and without delay called on Johnson. He had no need to be afraid; - Johnson had read and approved of his essays, and when he met him in the flesh was captivated by his "gentleman-like manners." Each rejoiced in the other's capacity to quote Latin, and "a friendship was formed which was never broken."

In 1760 Murphy, when stung by the comments of the Rev. Dr. Franklin, a contributor to "The Critical Review", published an indignant vindication of his art in "A Poetical Epistle to Samuel Johnson, A.M." in which he pays high and elegant compliments to his important friend.

Murphy was one of those who claimed the distinction of having first raised with the authorities the question of a pension for Johnson. When Boswell enquired of Lord Loughborough who the prime mover in the business actually was, his Lordship replied: "All his friends assisted". It appears that Murphy and Sheridan independently made the suggestion that Johnson ought to have a pension, but that Murphy was the person who was asked to convey the offer to Johnson. In the Dictionary Johnson had defined "pension" as an "allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country." In view of this tendentious definition it was natural that Johnson should have a certain delicate reluctance about accepting such an offer, but his scruples were allayed and accept it he did.

Round about 1763 Johnson and Henry Thrale were amongst Murphy's closest friends, but Johnson and Thrale were unacquainted. Ever since 1754 when he had first met him, Murphy had become increasingly friendly with Johnson. On the notable day of May 16th, 1763, Murphy was standing behind Johnson when Johnson and Boswell were introduced to each other "in the back-parlour" of "the shop of Davies the bookseller, in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden." Murphy and Thrale had been close friends since 1760 at least. After Thrale married Hester Lynch Salusbury in the autumn of 1763 he brought some of his bachelor companions to Streatham Park to meet his young bride. About these friends of her husband Mrs. Thrale commented: "I liked none of them but Murphy." Murphy for his part readily discerned the intellectual capability and social charm of his hostess. His praises of Johnson so excited the Thrales that they determined to cultivate the great man; they invited him to visit them, using James Woodhouse, a shoemaker in whom a vein of poetry had been discovered, as bait. Johnson came, and Murphy introduced him (at dinner on Thursday, January 10th, 1765.) For the rest of the winter they both dined with the Thrales on Thursdays. Thus began the Johnson-Thrale association.

Boswell provides an interesting footnote on Woodhouse and Johnson's reaction to his Muse: "He spoke with much contempt of the notice taken of Woodhouse, the poetical shoemaker. He said, it was all vanity and childishness: and that such objects were, to those who patronized them, mere mirrors of their own superiority. They had better, said he, furnish the man with good implements for his trade, than raise subscriptions for his poems. He may make an excellent shoemaker, but can never make a good poet. A school-boy's exercise may be a pretty thing for a school-boy; but it is no treat for a man."

Boswell, too, reports Johnson's opinion of Murphy as a dramatist: "Speaking of Arthur Murphy, whom he very much loved, 'I don't know (said he) that Arthur can be classed with the very first dramatick writers; yet at present I doubt much whether we have anything superiour to Arthur.' Praise indeed!"

We have an account in Boswell of Johnson and Murphy at dinner with the Thrales on April 10th, 1776. Murphy entertained the company by telling them about Joseph

Simpson, who had been at school with Johnson, and who, though an able barrister, had fallen into dissolute ways: "He wrote a tragedy on the story of Leonidas, entitled 'The Patriot'. He read it to a company of lawyers, who found so many faults that he wrote it over again: so then there were two tragedies on the same subject and with the same title. Dr. Johnson told us, that one of them was still in his possession. This very piece was, after his death, published by some person who had been about him, and, for the sake of a little hasty profit, was fallaciously advertised, so as to make it be believed to have been written by Johnson himself."

On the same occasion Johnson "talked of Lord Lyttelton's extreme anxiety as an authour; observing, that 'he was thirty years in preparing his History, and that he employed a man to point it for him; as if' (laughing) another man could point his sense better than himself.' Mr. Murphy said, he understood his history was kept back several years for fear of Smollet. JOHNSON. 'This seems strange to Murphy and me, who never felt that anxiety, but sent what we wrote to the press, and let it take its chance.' MRS. THRALE. 'The time has been, Sir, when you felt it.' JOHNSON. 'Why really, Madam, I do not recollect a time when that was the case.'"

On Friday, April 12th, of the same year Boswell and Johnson dined with Tom Davies. In the course of conversation Davies "reminded Dr. Johnson of Mr. Murphy's having paid him the highest compliment that ever was paid to a layman, by asking his pardon for repeating some oaths in the course of telling a story."

At the dinner party on April 10th, 1776, to which reference has already been made, Johnson expressed disapproval of Dr. Hurd "for having published a mutilated edition under the title of 'Select Works of Abraham Cowley.' Mr. Murphy thought it a bad precedent; observing, that any authour might be used in the same manner; and that it was pleasing to see the variety of an authour's compositions, at different periods." Two years later Boswell reports Johnson as speaking thus: "I was angry with Hurd about Cowley, for having published a selection of his works: but, upon better consideration, I think there is no impropriety in a man's publishing as much as he chooses of any authour, if he does not put the rest out of the way. A man, for instance, may print the Odes of Horace alone." Boswell then adds this remark: "He seemed to be in a more indulgent humour, than when this

subject was discussed between him and Mr. Murphy." It is not often that we find the self-confident Johnson acknowledging that he had perhaps been in error.

My own interest in Murphy began when I picked up his translation of Tacitus' works. He received his education at the English College at St. Omer which was run by Jesuits, and he himself writes that he "knew no object of attention" there except "Greek and Latin". From our knowledge of the general syllabus for Jesuit institutions and of Murphy's subsequent literary career we can safely assume that the young Murphy studied Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Homer, Plato and Aristotle amongst the Greeks, and Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, Sallust and Tacitus. The bias was towards Latin authors, which was usual at the time. Johnson himself was more at home in Latin in which he had read more widely and deeply.

In 1793 Murphy published his translation of Tacitus, an elegant and in the main accurate work, following it two years later with his version of Sallust's "Conspiracy of Catiline" to which he added the four speeches of Cicero relating to the same subject.

That he should have selected Tacitus and Sallust for translation is significant. He spent his formative years in France, receiving his education there and achieving mastery of the language. The revolutionaries of 1789 were contemporary with him, and many of them had been trained in the same classical curriculum. This had moulded their thinking and had given them a set of symbols to replace those of the monarchic and aristocratic régime which they rejected. H.T. Parker in his "The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries" (1937) has brilliantly analysed the influence of classical ideas on their practice. Robespierre and Desmoulins were pupils of the Collège Louis-le-Grand, studying mainly classics; Saint-Just and Danton attended similar institutions supported by the religious order of the Oratoire; and others, like Marat and Mme Roland, studied the classics for their own instruction and delight. The classical curriculum of the colleges was fairly uniform. It was weighted towards Latin literature, not Greek, and the principal authors read were Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Livy, Sallust, Ovid and Tacitus. Closely examining the

quotations from classical authors in the revolutionaries' newspapers and debates, H.T. Parker finds that, with one category of omissions and one important addition, they faithfully reflect that curriculum: the poets are left out, possibly as being too trivial in their matter; the addition was Plutarch's "Parallel Lives". An important book could be written on the influence of this work on the 18th century.

The 18th century found a special inspiration in the study of Greek and Roman history. The French revolutionaries, not a collection of illiterate peasants but cultivated, middle class people, were conscientiously and hopefully attempting to revive the good old days of free Greece and republican Rome; the American revolutionaries showed a similar enthusiasm for classical ideas and motifs; and in our own country Gibbon produced his magisterial "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", a landmark in European historiography. When, therefore, Murphy turned particularly to Sallust and Tacitus he was acting in tune with his age.

His Tacitus translation he described as a "gaol-delivery" of the historian from Thomas Gordon who had published a version early in the same century. Murphy wished to produce an English literary work which could be read with enjoyment but which would if possible, avoid any loss of "the precision and energy of the original." Generally correct while yet avoiding literalness, Murphy's Tacitus, on which he spent twenty years at least, fitting it out with elaborate notes on historical, geographical and genealogical matters, and with various supplements and appendices, is a notable contribution to literature. Sallust's biography of the anti-republican conspirator Catiline and Tacitus' savage histories of the Roman emperors contained moral and political lessons and warnings to which the 18th century was ready to pay attention. Murphy had the satisfaction of seeing his Tacitus become the standard version of this author.

Murphy was greatly stirred by the French Revolution and by its effects upon this country. He was worried by many aspects of the movement, and in a five-act closet drama, "Arminius" (1798), he gave his views. In the long Preface which he wrote for the piece he severely condemns Jacobinism and supports Britain's war against France with resounding patriotism. For the play itself he adapted with additions of his own Tacitus' account of the German warrior leader

of the first century A.D., Arminius (whence the modern proper name Hermann), who inflicted the most damaging losses on the Romans and made them abandon their plan to try to occupy German territory.

Although he was as familiar with the ancient writers on Roman political history as his revolutionary contemporaries were, Murphy adopted a quite different stance. He dedicated his Tacitus to Edmund Burke whom he had known for nearly forty years; the second Earl of Shelburne had wished the work to be dedicated to himself, but he supported the French Revolution, which Murphy and Burke most emphatically did not do, and so the translator lost an opportunity for gain. Despite the fact that the work's scholarly value was generally recognised, Murphy apparently did not profit from it - perhaps because the booksellers overreached themselves.

While we are on the subject of Murphy's classical achievements we shall not overlook his rendering into English iambic pentameters (the usual metre of Shakespeare) of the mock heroic poem "in five cantos" composed in Latin hexameters by the Italian scholar and poet Marco Vida (circ. 1489-1566) and entitled "Scacchiae Ludus" or "Game of Chess". This description of chess warfare in high-flown style, with plentiful touches of Virgil in particular, gained its author great acclaim, as did another poem called "Bombyx" or "Silkworm". Pope Leo X became Vida's patron and urged him to write a heroic Latin poem on the life of Christ; - such was the origin of the "Christiad", Vida's most celebrated, if not his best, performance. Murphy's version of the "Game of Chess" is fairly close but spirited. This poem was greatly admired by, amongst others, Alexander Pope and it takes its place with such works as "Le Lutrin" in the mock heroic tradition, a high point of attainment in which is marked by Pope's own "Rape of the Lock". In classical epic from Homer's "Iliad" down, the description of battles is a staple element; Vida's "Game of Chess" deals largely with the chess moves in terms of military dispositions and encounters, and Pope's "Game at Carts" motif in the "Rape of the Lock" owes more than a little to Vida.

Murphy turned into Latin hexameters with accuracy and Virgilian elegance Pope's "Temple of Fame" (which, as Pope himself observes, had been suggested by Chaucer's

"House of Fame"). Murphy clearly enjoyed Pope; he made a Latin version, very successfully, of his "Ode on Solitude" in the Sapphic metre after the manner of Horace, the classical author above all who spoke to the condition of the eighteenth century. Murphy was no mean Latinist, handling the language deftly.

An interesting oddity is his version, in the Alcaic metre (which was Horace's favourite medium along with the Sapphic), of a small and charming whimsy whose authorship is not stated; - perhaps it is Murphy's own work:

Busy, curious, thirsty fly,
 Drink with me, and drink as I;
 Freely welcome to my cup,
 Cou'dst though sip, and sip it up.
 Make the most of life you may;
 Life is short, and flies away.

Both alike your days and mine
 Quickly hasten to decline:
 Thine's a summer, mine no more,
 Tho' repeated to threescore:
 Threescore summers when they're gone,
 Will appear at last but one.

The (trite) sentiment and the brevity of form recall the "Greek Anthology" and Martial's epigrams.

The pastoral and the elegiac themes are both classical, and in one of the most famous poems in the English language, Thomas Gray's "Elegy", there is a blend of pastoral idealism and elegiac melancholy. Murphy was attracted by it, and translated it into Latin Alcaics, again basing himself upon Horace's style, vocabulary and procedure - inevitably. The result must be declared creditable. There is no difficulty which Murphy avoids, and his ingenuity is notable in transposing Gray into Horatian lyrics. Just look at one stanza as an example:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
 Await alike th' inevitable hour:
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Murphy's Horatian version runs:

Quid longa prosunt stemmata? Quid Tagus
 Quod volvit aurum? Forma quid, aut ducum
 Virtus in armis? Marte claros
 Urna manet; cinis aequat omnes.

I have used the word 'Horatian' - not inappropriately, though a purist would object to stemmata in this stanza as being a post-classical intrusion, for which compare Juvenal's 'stemmata quid faciunt?' (8. 1) - a line which Murphy is clearly echoing here.

Horace's influence is to be seen in the "Poetical Epistle" which Murphy addressed to Samuel Johnson in October, 1760, to which reference has already been made. Verse letters of this kind go back to the two books of Epistles which Horace produced, the former of these being thought by many competent critics to show the poet at his best and most mellow. The eighteenth century took up the idea enthusiastically and wrote a great deal of this kind of verse. Pope contributed notably to the genre.

We must now sum up on Arthur Murphy. A man of varied talents - actor, dramatist, lawyer, writer of belles lettres, poet, translator - he won fame, a certain amount of fortune, and the friendship of eminent people, Samuel Johnson included. He was obviously a man of striking and captivating personality, and his dramatic gifts were certainly considerable; we have Mrs. Thrale's evidence as well as the fact that he was entrusted with important roles at the very start of his stage career. His winning ways brought him into high society where he quickly established a secure place for himself - a witty Irishman with the gift of eloquence (and no doubt flattery). And then in the affair of Johnson's pension, when he is still quite young, we find him taking a leading part. And Johnson's use of his Christian name (a rare thing) points to a more than ordinary affection. A man's personality can be an elusive entity, lost to us with the passage of time. Something of the savour of Murphy as man and friend comes to us through the tradition, but he was clearly greater than we can apprehend, although it seems likely that his actual personality was larger than his genius, that he made his way rather through the sheer force of his charisma (if we may use that somewhat weathered term) than

through the power of his intellect, considerable though that admittedly was.

In giving my account of Murphy I hope I have not made you think that I ought to be categorised with that race of men who (to quote Murphy's own words at the close of his preface to the version of Vida's "Game of Chess") 'throw round every Author, however elegant or pathetic, the mist of their own dullness, and call themselves Commentators'.⁽¹⁾



(1) Two works by American scholars on Murphy appeared in the same year, 1946, since when there has been silence (to judge from James Clifford's latest bibliographical survey): H.H. Dunbar's "The Dramatic Career of Arthur Murphy" (New York), and J.P. Emery's "Arthur Murphy: an Eminent English Dramatist of the 18th Century" (Philadelphia). Emery's starting point is the rather unbalanced notice, to his way of thinking, which the D.N.B. published on Murphy. Perhaps, however, Emery has gone too far the other way. The dramatic side of Murphy's career has been well studied; it would seem that there is still room for work on his more general literary endeavours and critical ideas. But, as I repeat, there should be no attempt to puff him up into a major figure who has been overlooked; his character rather than his brains won him his place, it would seem; Boswell's comparative reticence is probably due to more than mere envy.



ARTHUR MURPHY'S

"ESSAY ON THE LIFE AND GENIUS OF HENRY FIELDING ESQ."

RE-READING A SLIGHTED CRITIC

Susan Miller Passler
Georgia State University

Ever since Wilbur Cross entitled the first chapter of his survey of pre-twentieth century responses to Henry Fielding "The Shadow of Arthur Murphy,"¹ few have referred to Murphy's work on the first collected edition of Fielding's Works without acknowledging the shadow of Cross himself. In his zeal to reclaim Fielding's life and his works from nineteenth-century mistreatment, Cross judged Fielding's first editor by standards neither magnanimous nor entirely just; in the process he diverted attention from an excellent piece of early Fielding criticism. Indeed, Cross took Murphy to task for his selective editorial omission of many of the periodical essays, poems, and pamphlets, in spite of Murphy's clearly stated desire only to "print every thing worthy of a place in this edition of his Works..."³ But even more emotionally, Cross gave the impression that Murphy's prefatory "Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq." was the work of a man snivelling after Dr. Johnson's approval at the expense of Fielding's reputation. In fact, however, Murphy's essay is not the product of a man "not yet in his full moral decline,"⁴ but instead an extolling, highly perceptive survey of Fielding's talents. While it suffers from flaws, its critical comments do not echo Dr. Johnson's negative opinions of Fielding. Reading it carefully reveals that it is a description of the achievement of Tom Jones might well serve as a blueprint for recent Fielding studies.

Popular in the eighteenth century as a dramatist and actor, Arthur Murphy was an Irish-born young man about London who, like Fielding, edited periodicals such as The Gray's-Inn Journal, practised law, and wrote criticism. There is a tradition that Fielding selected him to co-edit his Covent Garden Journal in 1752. Like Johnson, Murphy was a translator and biographer.⁵ He met Johnson, he relates in his "Essay on the life and Genius of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.," in 1754, the year of Fielding's death and

eight years before his essay on Fielding appeared. Like Boswell, however, Murphy seems not to have sacrificed his admiration for Fielding to this friendship at all. Although Dr. Johnson doubted Fielding's ability to improve mankind, Murphy did not: "Whenever he addresses us in person, he is always in the interests of virtue and religion, and inspires, in a strain of moral reflection, a true love of goodness, and honour, with a just detestation of imposture, hypocrisy, and all specious pretenses to uprightness" (265).

This kind of praise for Fielding is constant in Murphy's work. In 1757, for example, he had praised Fielding in his review of Samuel Foote's The Author, stating that unlike some other authors of mock epics, Fielding excelled by keeping his portraits "correct and reserved."⁶ In his memorial biography of Johnson himself, Murphy criticised Sir John Hawkins' misrepresentations of their subject, and used as evidence for Hawkins' ill temper an indicative remark he made about Fielding: "Sir John had a root of bitterness that put rancours in the effect of his peace. Fielding, he says, was the inventor of a cant phrase, Goodness of heart, which means little more than the virtue of a horse or a dog. He should have known that kind affections are the essence of virtue; they are the will of God implanted in our nature...."⁷ If Murphy had publically abandoned Fielding for Johnson, as Cross intimated, certainly he would not have included even this oblique praise of Fielding in his tribute to him.

If Murphy was not disloyal to Fielding in the name of Johnson, neither was he blind to the uneven aspects of Fielding's career. Both the biographical criticism of the "Essay" and its explanations of editorial omissions in his edition are characterised by a selective attitude. Not governed by recent editorial standards of inclusiveness, Murphy explains that he has made some omissions on the basis of comparative excellence. All of the plays are included in his edition for "they are worthy of being preserved, being the works of a genius, who in his wildest and most inaccurate productions, yet occasionally displays the talent of a master" (235). Of the poems, he only included "An Epistle to the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole," which stands in the "Essay" as "a specimin (sic.) of his ability" (253). To justify this exclusion, he refers to the "Preface" to the Miscellanies (which he excludes), in which Fielding himself said "his poetical pieces were

mostly written when he was very young, and were projections of the heart rather than of the head" (253). His own opinion is that Fielding could have been a good poet if he had had time to perfect his art. Although Murphy included few of Fielding's minor prose works, which he classifies as "written before his genius was come to its full growth" (255), he does provide Fielding's own comments (from the excluded "Preface") on those which are included ("The Essay on Conversation," "The Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," "The Journey from this World to the Next," and Jonathan Wild). He has also made selections from The Covent Garden Journal, essays he compares favourably to the Tatler and Spectator papers. As a discerning editor, Murphy also printed Amelia from a copy corrected by Fielding himself, one that "will be found a perfection than it was in its original state" (264). His final editorial statement is that he, "from the prodigious number of materials before him, (he) was careful, after communicating with the ablest and best of the author's friends, to reprint everything worthy of a place..." (273). If we accept his premises, then Murphy's editorial decisions were at least as well-founded as those made by Gray's biographer and editor, William Mason, whose destruction of some of Gray's letters far exceeded the liberties Murphy took.

Similarly, Murphy's selectivity about the details of Fielding's life - which is at the root of later critics' tendencies to dismiss the "Essay" - follows from his clearly stated intention not "to observe the rules of strict biography" (245). Murphy aimed to explore Fielding's artistic growth; the biographical details he supplies usually support his critical thesis that Fielding's "Genius" developed during his lifetime. The biographical information he incorporates is, therefore, not complete, but much of it has been accepted by later biographers, including Cross. The biographical facts Murphy incorporates usually support his critical thesis that Fielding's "Genius" developed during his lifetime. He connects Fielding's education to his literary work, shows how financial pressure served to make him rush out many of his plays, and suggests that experience with the law contributed to both Fielding's judgment and his ability to portray realistically a broad range of characters.

The curious and troublesome thing about the biography in the "Essay," however, is that it both stoutly defends Fielding's virtue and defames it. On the issue of Fielding's

dissipation, Murphy is of two minds, not entirely reconciled by his general position that Fielding matured with time. On the one hand, he dismisses charges against Fielding at the end of the "Essay," answering all the common complaints of infidelity and dissolution that were made:

When young in life he had a moderate estate, he soon suffered hospitality to devour it; and when in the latter end of his days he had an income of four or five hundred a-year, he knew no use of money, but to keep his table open to those who had been his friends when young, and had impaired their own fortunes. Though disposed to gallantry by his strong animal spirits, and the vivacity of his passions, he was remarkable for tenderness and constancy to his wife, and the strongest affection for his children.... The interests of virtue and religion he never betrayed; the former is amply enforced in his works; and, for the defence of the latter, he had projected a laborious answer to the posthumous philosophy of Bolingbrook.... (272)

This realistic appraisal appears to be Murphy's considered judgment of Fielding's morality. Nonetheless, earlier in the "Essay" he proposes to avoid scrutinising Fielding's life in order to reveal few questionable details (231). He says Fielding's sunny genius was clouded in youth; his potential as a scholar might have been realised if he had been less available to the "wild dissipations" that followed (232). Then, describing Fielding as a young and emergent playwright in London, Murphy says that Fielding "launched wildly into a career of dissipation" (233). At this point Murphy is most harsh to Fielding, referring to his "careless and hasty pencil" (235), and to his casual, drunken (and probably apocryphal) dismissal of Garrick and his audience's protests against the poor quality of The Wedding Day.

It is no wonder, therefore, that later commentators find evidence to portray Murphy either as defamer or as eulogiser of Fielding, for either case might be made from the "Essay." A few pieces of external evidence, other than stories about Murphy's relationship with Dr. Johnson, shed light on these apparent contradictions. Murphy proposed to write his essay in 1759 but dated it March, 1762, close to its publication. During these three years, many events occurred which might have caused him to make emotional

judgments about his dead subject. Murphy had been an actor, and had begun to write plays himself, working with Garrick until they had a dispute which forced him to move to other theatres and other managers. He had also studied law and had been admitted to the bar. He further had become involved in politics and political writing.¹⁰ The period of Fielding's life and art which Murphy finds most reprehensible includes Fielding's dramatic indiscretions against both the government and, with the 1737 Licensing Act, the entire dramatic industry. Murphy remarks, "had he considered that by the bill...he was entailing slavery on the muses, and that a time might come, when all dramatic genius should thereby be led a vassal in the train of the managers of the theatre, to be graciously fostered or haughtily oppressed...perhaps then, as he was himself of a large and comprehensive understanding,...he might have been contented with milder restrictions ..." (236). This specific criticism lends weight to the conclusion that Murphy's comments on Fielding's "wild" days had some motive in personal defensiveness. It is no wonder that Murphy, whose dramatic career was being slowed by Garrick, and who was soon (June, 1762) to write *The Auditor* for Lord Bute in support of the government's policies, might bear down heavily on Fielding's years as a rebellious playwright.

Murphy's personally motivated accusations do not in any case undermine the accuracy of his judgment that Fielding's writing matured. As many recent Fielding studies propose, Fielding's art simply did improve in time.¹¹ Murphy was a good critic, and his "Essay" makes many judgments that students of Fielding find repeated. He saw in many of Fielding's plays a higher form of the mode of Buckingham's *Rehearsal* (235).¹² He identified Fielding's verbal skill, praising his metaphors and witty allusions (246).¹³ Murphy also expounds on Fielding's characterisations and types, praising his selection of revealing details (246-7). In a general comparison of drama with fiction, he concluded that some of Fielding's failures on stage would have succeeded in prose (249). A constant thread of appreciation in the "Essay" is for Fielding's fertile invention, his ability to produce great variety and change within a regular plan. As later critics have, Murphy recognised the achievement of *Jonathan Wild*, appreciating Fielding's talent for satirising-hypocrisy (239).

The essay's highly rhetorical comparison of the progress of Fielding's novels to the rising, zenith, and

setting of the sun has offended critics of Murphy's style, but its content is broadly true. His opinions of Joseph Andrews and Amelia are certainly supportable, for neither is as much "a complete work" (263) as Tom Jones. As Murphy notes, Joseph Andrews is in many senses preparatory to Tom Jones. Murphy praised its invention and description of the comic epic in prose, its imitation of Cervantes, and the novelty of its characterisation. As an instance of such novel analysis, Murphy tells a story about a Reverend Mr. Young wandering into the enemy's camp in Flanders and being sent back by the enemy, still wandering in meditation, that captures the spirit of Parson Adams perfectly. Murphy's opinion of Amelia is also judicious: "The author's invention in this performance does not appear to have lost its fertility; his judgment too seems as strong as ever; but the warmth of imagination is abated; and in his landscapes or his scenes of life, Mr. Fielding is no longer the colourist he was before. The personages of the piece delight too much in narrative, and their characters have not those touches of singularity, those specific differences, which are so beautifully marked in our author's former works..." (269).

It is in his assessment of Tom Jones, however, that Murphy's insight and his value as a critic show most clearly. He compares Tom Jones to the Iliad, the Aeneid, and Paradise Lost, ranking it with the three "with a view to the fable, the manners, the sentiments, and the stile" (263). No one between Murphy and R.S. Crane¹⁴ was more specifically and fully appreciative of the plot of the novel. Murphy saw that the most fascinating and artful aspect of Tom Jones is the intricate and suspenseful unfolding of the action. "By this artful management," he says, "our author has given us the perfection of fable; which... consists in such obstacles to retard the final issue of the whole, as shall at least, in their consequences, accelerate the catastrophe, and bring it evidently and necessarily to that period only, which... could arise from it No fable whatever affords, in its solution, such artful states of suspense, such beautiful turns of surprise, such unexpected incidents and such sudden discoveries..." (264). On the issue of the realism of Tom Jones, Murphy was more perceptive than many readers have been.¹⁵ He saw the life in Fielding's characters, who, he says, have Manners, "the very manners which belong... in human life. They look, they act, they speak to our imaginations just as they appear in the world" (265).

Murphy was clearly judging by relevant eighteenth-century standards of imitation, referring Fielding's achievement to Pope's definition of "True Wit" as an artistry which can "give us back the image of our minds."¹⁶

Murphy also perceptively remarked on the varieties of style in Tom Jones. Although he never specifically details the narrative technique of the novel, he compares Tom Jones to Homer's lost comic epic, Margites, and often alludes to its "Homeric style" (265). He noticed the many contrasting stylistic levels Fielding achieved, including the author's addressing the audience "in person" (265). The ambivalent relationship between reader, narrator, and fictional world that marks the epic point of view is at least implicitly realised in these comments, especially since Murphy caps his praise by calling Fielding "the English Cervantes" (266). By the same token, his references to Fielding as a "colorist" (269) and a possessor of "the softer graces of character-painting" (266), point the way toward studies of Fielding's close relationship to theories of portraiture and visual composition.¹⁷

A final instance of Murphy's critical insight is that in his lengthy comparison of Fielding to Marivaux, his analysis foreshadows neutrally the unfavourable opinion of Dr. Johnson and the favourable opinion of Coleridge in their comparisons of Fielding with Richardson. Dr. Johnson favoured Richardson's portrayal of the "heart," while Coleridge's judgment was that Richardson's attachment to the minute workings of the feelings was "oozy."¹⁸ He preferred Fielding. Murphy had said that "the author, for the most part, is more readily satisfied in his drawings of character than the French writer,...when the passions are agitated, he can give us their conflicts, and their various transitions, but he does not always point out the secret cause that sets them in motionFielding was more attached to the manners than to the heart: in descriptions of the former he is admirable; in unfolding the latter he is not equal to Marivaux." This evaluation, whether taken as a sign of Fielding's propriety or of his shallowness, is unprejudiced. It accurately reveals Fielding's special talent and limitation.

Murphy's "Essay," then, was a mixed production. Sometimes inaccurate or apocryphal, occasionally digressive (his long description of the nature of genius and imagination is, at best, distracting), and perhaps coloured by his

responses to his own authorial situation, it has faults. But if we are aware that Murphy's own situation as he wrote the "Essay" may have coloured his views of Fielding's active youth, and then accept his editing and his criticism on their own terms, we find Murphy to be an intelligent judge of Fielding's career. The student of Fielding who avoids this early criticism because of the opinions of early twentieth-century critics like Cross misses a well-balanced contemporary critical reaction to this subject - perhaps the most currently relevant eighteenth-century reaction to Tom Jones.

Documentation

1. The History of Henry Fielding (1918; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), III, 125-50.
2. The Works of Henry Fielding, Esq.; With the Life of the Author, ed. Arthur Murphy (London: Andrew Millar, 1962).
3. "An Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq.," The Lives of Henry Fielding and Samuel Johnson, Together With Essays from "The Gray's-Inn Journal" (facsimile rpt. Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints, 1968), ed. Matthew Grace, p. 273. All references to these works are from this edition.
4. Cross, III, 127.
5. The best biography of Murphy is Howard Hunter Dunbar, The Dramatic Career of Arthur Murphy (1946; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint Corp., 1966). Dunbar finds no evidence that Murphy co-edited The Covent Garden Journal.
6. New Essays by Arthur Murphy, ed. Arthur Sherbo (Michigan State U Press, 1963), p.120.
7. "An Essay on...Samuel Johnson, LL.D.," p.399.
8. E.g., Cross, I, 16, 22, 175, 244.
9. Dunbar, p.137.
10. See Dunbar, pp. 106-52
11. E.g., Marsha Kinder, "Henry Fielding's Dramatic Experimentation: A Preface to His Fiction" Diss., U.C.L.A., 1967; and J. Paul Hunter, "Fielding's Reflexive Plays and the Rhetoric of Discovery," SLitI, V (Oct., 1972), 65-100, offer two views of Fielding's drama as inferior to and preparatory for his fiction.
12. See Hunter, 67.
13. See Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in "Tom Jones" (University, Ala.: U of Alabama Press, 1965).
14. "The Concept of Plot and Plot of Tom Jones," in Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern, ed. Ronald Crane (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1957). See also Charles A. Knight,

- "Multiple Structures and the Unity of Tom Jones," Criticism, XIV (Summer, 1972), 227-42, for a careful elaboration of Murphy's view of the variety within uniformity of Tom Jones.
15. See e.g., Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of Calif. Press, 1962) and Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding: The Tentative Realist (Oxford The Clarendon Press, 1968).
 16. "Essay on Criticism," The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale U Press, 1965), p.153, l.300. A good summary of eighteenth-century attitudes to "realism" is in Wallace Jackson, "Hogarth's Analysis: The Fate of a Late Rococo Document," SEL, VI (1966), 544-50.
 17. See Ronald Paulson, "Introduction," Hogarth's Graphic Works, (New Haven: Yale U Press, 1965) and Sean Shesgreen, Literary Portraits in the Novels of Henry Fielding (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois U Press, 1972).
 18. James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., edd.C.B. Tinker and R.W. Chapman (London: Oxford U Press, 1953); and Animae Poetae, ed. E.H. Coleridge (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895), p.141.

VISIT TO OXFORD

The Johnson Society of London will join with the Johnson Society (of Lichfield) in a visit to Oxford on June 30th, 1973, which will include luncheon at Pembroke College.



THE HAPPY VALLEY:

A VERSION OF HELL AND A VERSION OF PASTORAL

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Whatever Dr. Johnson's opinion of Milton's character and political views may have been, there is no doubt that he considered Paradise Lost a great and wonderful poem, and was very closely acquainted with it. I propose to show that there are both explicit and implicit echoes of Paradise Lost - especially Book IV - in Rasselas, and that Johnson's handling of this source is bound up with his criticism of pastoral poetry, in so far as it is a facet of his general ideas about literature and human nature.

I

It is well known that in his enumeration of the "paradises" which Eden transcended, Milton cites Amhara, the valley which Johnson was to call the Happy Valley:

...where Abassin kings their issue guard,
Mount Amara (though this by some supposed
True Paradise) under the Ethiop line
By Nilus' head, enclosed with shining rock,
A whole day's journey high, ... (IV, 280-84)¹

Here Amhara is categorised with the Garden of Eden through the comparison; and Johnson takes up and develops the parallel. Not only is his Happy Valley, like Eden, almost impossible to enter or to leave, but they are irrigated by similar means: small rills or rivulets descend into both; both have rivers which proceed underground; and both feature waterfalls:

Southward through Eden went a river large,
Nor changed his course, but through the shaggy hill
Passed underneath ingulfed; for God had thrown
That mountain, as his garden-mould, high raised
Upon the rapid current, which through veins
Of porous earth with kindly thirst updrawn
Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill

Watered the garden; thence united fell
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,
Which from his darksome passage now appears... (IV, 223-32)

From the mountains on every side, rivulets
descended that filled all the valley with verdure and
fertility, and formed a lake in the middle inhabited
by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl
whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This
lake discharged its superfluities by a stream which
entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern
side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to
precipice till it was heard no more (Chap.1, p.506)²

Johnson was always rather scornful about natural
description. He usually found it repetitive and insipid,
too prone to "number the streaks of the tulip" (Chap.10, p.527),
and consequently apt to fall short of the grander poetic
effects:

Poetry cannot dwell upon the minuter distinctions,
by which one species differs from another, without
departing from that simplicity of grandeur which fills
the imagination.... (Rambler 36, p.219)³

Anyway, his inclinations and talents did not lie in that
direction. It, therefore, does not prevent the possibility
of a parallel that the reasonably large amount of lush and
gorgeous natural description in Paradise Lost Bk IV has in
general no serious equivalent in Rasselas; in fact, Johnson
seems to dismiss the vegetable part of the scenery as
perfunctorily as possible:

The sides of the mountain were covered with trees,
the banks of the brooks were diversified with
flowers; every blast shook spices from the rocks,
and every month dropped fruits upon the ground (Chap.1, p.506).

However, this paragraph has an interesting continuation:

All animals that bite the grass, or brouse the shrub,
whether wild or tame, wandered in this extensive circuit,
secured from beasts of prey by the mountains which
confined them. On one part were flocks and herds
feeding in the pastures, on another all beasts of chase
frisking in the lawns; the sprightly kid was bounding

on the rocks, the subtle monkey frolicking in the trees,
and the solemn elephant reposing in the shade. All the
diversities of the world were brought together, the
blessings of nature were collected, and its evils
extracted and excluded. (*ibid.* - my italics)

This passage has a parallel in Paradise Lost, Bk. IV:

...About them frisking played
All beasts of th'earth, since wild, and of all chase
In wood or wilderness, forest or den;
Sporting the lion ramped, and in its paw
Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
Gambolled before them; th'unwieldy elephant,
To make them mirth, used all his might, and wreathed
His lithe proboscis;... (IV, 340-47; - my italics)

Both paradises contain a plenitude of the animal
creation, Eden absolutely, the Happy Valley with the
exclusion of "beasts of prey" for reasons of decorum and
rationality. The verbal parallels are remarkably many for
two passages of such brevity; of the three animals which
Johnson mentions by name, two, the kid and the elephant,
are also mentioned by Milton. There are further
similarities between:

...About them frisking played
All beasts of th'earth, since wild, and of all chase
In wood or wilderness, forest or den;...

and:

On one part were flocks and herds feeding in the
pastures, on another all the beasts of chase frisking
in the lawns.

May we not suppose that Johnson at least had Milton's Eden
in mind when describing the Happy Valley?

II

Despite these echoes, the two paradises have
vastly different symbolic functions. For Adam and Eve,
the worst of their punishment is that they must leave Eden,
which remains a paradise to them after their fall. Eve
laments:

O unexpected stroke, worse than of Death!
 Must I thus leave thee, Paradise? thus leave
 Thee, native soil, these happy walks and shades,
 Fit haunt of Gods? where I had hope to spend
 Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day
 That must be mortal to us both. ... (XI, 268-73)

Rasselas, on the other hand, is discontented in the Happy Valley; he feels that something is missing, reasoning:

Man has surely some latent sense for which this place
 affords no gratification, or he has some desire
 distinct from sense which must be satisfied before
 he can be happy. (Chap. 2, p. 509)

Rasselas is in the position of a fallen Adam confined to the Garden of Eden; it is really a confinement, an imprisonment, and he chafes against the restraint. Here he differs from the Adam of Paradise Lost, to whom Eden is a secure and desirable confinement. In fact, Rasselas's state of mind in his Paradise resembles Satan's in Heaven, before his rebellion: boredom with the ordered perfection of the place.⁴ Rasselas is to discover other ways by which the human condition approaches the satanic; the book has at its heart Johnson's belief that "Infelicity is involved in corporeal nature, and interwoven with our being; all attempts to decline it wholly are useless and vain." (Rambler 32, p. 194) In other words, human beings carry their own misery about with them; it is "interwoven with our being", and not dependent on the circumstances on which it may happen to be blamed. In the same way, hell is interwoven in Satan's being:

...horror and doubt distract
 His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
 The Hell within him; for within him Hell
 He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
 One step, no more than from himself, can fly
 By change of place. (IV, 18-23)

He cries out in anguish:

Me miserable! which way can I fly
 Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
 Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell; ... (IV, 73-75)

Rasselas, Imlac, and the Hermit, all find out that "change of place" brings no escape from the essential human discontent. It is of course futile to draw out the parallel between Rasselas and Satan; after all, Satan is not only fallen, but damned, and cannot avail himself of the one true hope held out to Rasselas, the hope of redemption from the miseries of the human condition, through the love and mercy of God. Rasselas is more an Adam than a Satan figure, insofar as he is Everyman, but he is a fallen Adam. My point is that Johnson's conception of post-lapsarian man includes some traits which belong to Milton's Satan rather than to his Adam.

Adam, with no experience of his new nature, grieves at the loss of Eden; Johnson would argue that for man in his fallen state, Eden is only another version of Hell:

Variety, said Rasselas, is so necessary to content, that even the happy valley disgusted me by the recurrence of its luxuries. (Chap. XLVII, p. 605)

III

But the Happy Valley is not only a version of hell; it is also a version of pastoral, and a version which Johnson is particularly adamant in rejecting. In Rambler 37 he attacks the tradition that pastoral poetry should be set in the Golden Age and reflect the conditions and manners of those times, on the grounds that following such an ideal produces confusion, inconsistency, and insipidity. To some extent, this opinion exhibits a failure of vision on Johnson's part; he does not seem to have grasped the archetypal significance of the Golden Age myth, and, therefore, could not understand its poetic validity.

Positive justifications, however, can be found, involved with Johnson's theories about the nature and purpose of literature. These were largely traditional, of the utile et dulce school. In his Preface to Shakespeare he says:

The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing.² (p.245)

Naturally, instruction must be based on truth:

Poets, indeed, profess fiction, but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth.³

Johnson regarded it as irresponsible, indeed,

immoral, for a writer to depart from essential truth in his representations, and considered that in general pastoral writers were guilty of blatant untruthfulness:

They have written with an utter disregard both to life and nature, and filled productions with mythological allusions, with incredible fictions, and with sentiments which neither passion nor reason could have dictated, since the change which religion has made in the whole system of the world. (Rambler 37, p.229)

Pastoral poetry set in the Golden Age is most particularly unable to convey instruction to post-lapsarian man, whose true moral province is in society, wrestling with the complications caused by his own fallen nature. A large part of Rasselas's discontent in the Happy Valley is occasioned by his exclusion from moral action:

...raising his eyes to the mountain: "This, said he, is the fatal obstacle that hinders at once the enjoyment of pleasure, and the exercise of virtue."
(Chap. 4, p.513)

By presenting men happy in a golden Arcadia, the pastoral poet, in Johnson's view, falsifies both human nature and the conditions of life. A representation of prelapsarian life was to him morally irrelevant; unless, as in Paradise Lost, it was part of a larger design concerning the human condition which we must bear. His conception of human nature demanded poetry which truthfully displayed life as we know it, as a basis for the moral instruction which was urgently necessary.

Therefore, although the Happy Valley seems in several points to be based on Eden in Paradise Lost Bk. IV, it is an ironic Eden whose Adam is tormented by the humanistic questions which beset Hamlet^o, and afflicted with discontent and ennui.

Johnson, then, makes use of Milton's Eden as a model, and does in fact describe a place which had traditionally been considered a paradise, but shows the effect on a fallen Adam of life-long experience of paradise. This treatment of a demonstrable source is relevant to the theme of Rasselas, and explicable in terms of Johnson's attitude towards pastoral poetry, and indeed of his moral conceptions

in general.

Documentation

1. All quotations from Paradise Lost are taken from The English Poems of John Milton, ed. H.C. Beeching, The World's Classics, London, 1963.
2. All quotations from Rasselas and the Preface to Shakespeare are taken from Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson, New York, 1966.
3. All quotations from The Rambler are taken from the 10th edition, London, 1784.
4. This attitude is implied in his response to Gabriel (IV, 943-4). It is also expressed by Mammon (II, 239-49).
5. "The Life of Waller", Lives of the English Poets, vol. I, p. 160, Everyman's Library, London, 1964.
6. One can see a marked parallel between Rasselas and Hamlet in Rasselas, Chap. II, where he spurns the pleasures of the palace. His attendants are as officious towards him as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are towards Hamlet, but he repulses them and walks off alone to soliloquise on "the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation." (p. 509), cf:

...What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more!
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd.

(Hamlet, IV, 4, 33-9; Shakespeare: Complete Works,
ed Peter Alexander, London, 1963.)



JOHNSON'S VISION OF THEODORE

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On 7th April 1748 Dodsley published The Preceptor, a two-volume school text and self-help manual.¹ Consisting of twelve unequal sections dealing with such varied topics as astronomy and the writing of letters, The Preceptor included selections from such figures as Cicero, Pliny, Shakespeare, Temple, Pope and Gay. The longest sections, those dealing with ethics and logic, were written by David Fordyce and William Duncan, successive professors of moral philosophy at the University of Aberdeen. The manual's success is clear. It reached an eighth edition by 1793; its title was appropriated for other works such as The Polite Preceptor (1774), The Poetical Preceptor (1777), and The Historical Preceptor (1789).² Johnson provided the Preceptor's preface, a preface he revised carefully. Professor Hazen has suggested that Johnson's connection with the book was more than casual;³ among his many dedications and prefaces, this one deserves special attention. It is particularly relevant as an index to Johnson's own intellectual allegiances, since in the course of the preface he recommends a series of authors and titles to his youthful audience.

The twelfth section of The Preceptor, that treating human life and manners, begins with a warning, probably written by Dodsley, against bad habits. The warning introduces "a beautiful and instructive fable communicated to me by a friend for this⁴ purpose." The beautiful - Boswell also uses the word⁴ - and instructive fable is Johnson's Vision of Theodore, the Hermit of Teneriffe. In a letter to Shenstone dated 12th March 1760, Bishop Percy wrote, "I think Oriental Tales and Allegories not the least striking productions of (Johnson's) Pen. At least he himself attributes the Palm over all he ever wrote to a little allegorical Piece intituled 'The Vision of Theodore....'"⁵ Thomas Tyers, noting the fact that Johnson composed the work in a single night, attributed his high opinion of it to its circumstances of composition, adducing as support a comment from the Life of Milton: "What has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention."⁶

Tyers' judgment is sound, but limited, for numerous other reasons can be offered for Johnson's striking opinion of the work.

Johnson himself was very interested in the judgments which authors delivered on their own works. He easily bypassed the perennial caveat that in this situation they are chronically unreliable. To be sure, the writer's view of his work may not square with that of the reading public. Thomson, for example, as Johnson points out, considered Liberty "his noblest work;" but an author and his reader are not always of a mind.⁷ Johnson is well aware of the myriad prejudices which obstruct an author's judgment, but he agrees with Dryden that the author is a capable assessor of his own work in matters which can be reduced to principle. It is "in those parts where fancy predominates (that) self-love may easily deceive."⁸ In the famous passage in Boswell's Tour, where Johnson states his opinions concerning the weakness of English literary biography, he asks, among other things, that the biographer inform us of his subject's opinion of his own works.¹⁰ His personal assessment of The Vision of Theodore is inordinately favourable, but to say that the work is not Johnson's masterpiece is not to label it, or his judgment of it, unimportant; vis-a-vis their fellows, all of his works are instructive, and this one, in my judgment, particularly so.

The fabric of Johnson's finest prose consists of the alternation of incident and principle. The delineation of specific traits or actions leads to generalised comment; general principles and observations explain individual deeds and characteristics. To the extent that the rare is generalised or the general applied to the seemingly unique, Johnson's commentary is successful, his own cardinal critical tenet satisfied.¹¹ The traits and actions in which he is chiefly interested are, of course, human ones. He is most engaging and most at ease when treating human motivation, whether as hortatory moralist or moral psychologist, the two not mutually exclusive, of course, for Johnson simultaneously can explain human action and effect, or at least encourage, human action, with considerable facility. Though no one would restrict Johnson's accomplishment to the application of moral and psychological discernment, it is there that his greatest strength resides; in psychological portraiture¹² and the establishing of delicate but certain moral distinctions he is most adept.

Thus, one of the chief reasons why Johnson would look upon The Vision of Theodore with particular favour is the fact that it afforded him an opportunity to portray the course of human life and the entanglements of human motivation in the clearest and in a sense purest form, that of diaphanous allegory. The work is a kind of epitome or précis of his total statement as essayist, poet, biographer, travel writer, dramatist, and writer of sermon and parable. Here he faces directly the personified conceptions which he is always at pains to illustrate or discover: Habit, Appetite, Passion, Education, Despair, Intemperance, Indolence, and all the rest, but preeminently Reason and Religion.

Because, in Johnson's judgment, they should be central factors in human motivation, the allegory of Reason and Religion constitutes the most important element in The Vision of Theodore. Johnson raises no issues which could be termed "new," but there is an especially satisfying finality in his representation, as if all the disputes and diatribes are at last laid to rest. The authoritative posture is to be expected, given the nature of Johnson's audience and his own solicitous conception of the task, but his orthodoxy is neither tyrannical nor priggish, but rather something approaching the formulaic, a kind of ritual jettisoning of the heretical and the heterodox.

For Johnson Reason is subordinate to Religion, "the noblest and the greatest" of her sort, but beneath the dignity, sweetness, and power of her superior. Reason attracts the self-sufficient ignorant who seek to follow her alone, who feel no need for Education's care and protection, and who, finally, will not even listen to their chosen guide, the point being that those who welcome the title of "rationalist" are painfully irrational. Johnson shares the anti-rationalism of the period to which Donald Greene has decisively directed our attention; in the Dictionary he defines "Rationalist" as "One who proceeds in his disquisitions and practice wholly upon reason (my italics)," an unsympathetic judgment supported by an appropriate reference to Bacon.¹³

Moreover, in the allegory, those who trust to Reason alone are not secure against Appetites and Passions. In the regions of Desire they are seized by Habits and dragged off to the caverns of Despair. Rationalism is associated with Pride, Reason's only messenger, while Religion's emissary is Conscience, who is, unlike Reason, proof against the onslaughts of the Passions and Appetites. Johnson begins his eighteenth sermon with a parallel comment:

To subdue passion, and regulate desire, is the great task of man, as a moral agent; a task, for which natural reason, however assisted and enforced by human laws, has been found insufficient, and which cannot be performed but by the help of religion.

Pride encourages Reason's followers to seek the "Bowers of Content." Reason is unable to perceive them even when she focuses carefully; those whom Pride persuades to travel towards them are trapped by Habits and Despair. In the Dictionary Johnson defines "Content" as "Moderate happiness; such satisfaction as, though it does not fill up desire, appeases complaint."¹⁴ It represents that woefully imperfect state of calm for which Nisroch yearns (Paradise Lost, VI, 461) after the proud forces of Satan have encountered those of God. In context it may involve an oblique attack on Johnson's part against the claims of stoicism, a favourite object of his scorn and a philosophic tendency to which the followers of Milton's Satan are susceptible. In this connection it is appropriate to note that in the Vision the "Temples of Happiness" lie beyond the mist at the top of the mountain. When people enter that mist Religion can see that they are happy, while Reason can only perceive that they are safe.

Pride also incites Reason to assume that it is she who has discovered the Road of Reason which blends into and becomes the Road of Religion, but Reason's attempts to guide Religion are termed "vain," suggesting impossibility as well as a meaner form of pride. The pretences of Deism are effectively shattered. Given the fact that in the allegory Reason and Religion do not exclude one another, that Reason guides its followers to Religion and enforces Religion, Johnson's attack is directed at Fideism - the opposite form of heterodoxy - as well.

The geography of the Vision suggests that of Addison's Vision of Mirzah (Spectator 159). Johnson has, perhaps, taken the bridge of human life from that vision and set it upright. The brief dream-vision allegory is, of course, quite common in Johnson's periodical writings just as it is throughout the periodical tradition, Addison's work serving, in many ways, as a kind of paradigm. What Johnson is doing here is developing common notions through the evocation of literary associations. Other examples are not far to seek. The aforementioned comment concerning

the proud tendency to assume that revelation was attained by Reason and that Reason should guide Religion, recalls, among other passages, the celebrated one from Religio Laici:

These Truths are not the product of thy Mind,
But dropt from Heaven, and of a Nobler kind.
Reveal'd Religion first inform'd thy Sight,
And Reason saw not, till Faith sprung the Light.
Hence all thy Natural Worship takes the Source:
'Tis Revelation what thou thinkst Discourse.

(11. 66-71)

Theodore's admission at the outset that he was once "a Groveller on the Earth, and a Gazer at the Sky" suggests the erroneous perspectives of the blind creepers and sightless soarers of the Essay on Man. The assaults on pride and rationalism are so representative of the period that one need not even begin to list comparable passages in the works of such figures as Cowley, Locke, Rochester, Sprat, Dryden, Pope, Swift, and Hume. Besides epitomizing matters which are of compelling importance to Johnson, The Vision of Theodore solidifies the consensus of an age with regard to several issues of paramount importance.

Lapses are generally tonal. The piece begins with a weighty admonition: "Son of Perseverance, whoever thou art, whose Curiosity has led thee hither, read and be wise." The figure addressed has, presumably, just come upon the manuscript in Theodore's cell at the foot of Teneriffe, but one finds it difficult not to envision the "Son of Perseverance" as the student who has made his way through two sizeable volumes. What humour there be is doubtless unintended. Moreover, the implicit injunction to the reader at the conclusion ("my Protector called out to me, 'Remember, Theodore, and be wise, and let not Habit prevail against thee'") sounds somewhat like the dictum of a stern Dickensian guardian. Nevertheless, there is more than adequate compensation for such petty flaws - if, indeed, they are flaws - in the implicit self-portraits in the passages in which the followers of Religion must strive with Habit, and in the representation of the "Maze of Indolence" which terminates in the dominion of Melancholy, and finally, of Despair. In addition to portraying an important facet of Anglican orthodoxy, with the discussion of Reason and

Religion, the Vision details, in miniature, the highly critical views of his own religious experience which Johnson provides in fuller form in his private devotional writings.

Theodore sees that such human goals as wealth, love, honour, and fame do not bring happiness. We often see Rasselas as a prose version of The Vanity of Human Wishes. I would suggest that The Vision of Theodore would serve us equally well and perhaps be even more appropriate since the important function of religion is far more explicit there, though it is given eloquent attention in such passages as the penultimate chapter of Rasselas. In the Vision, Religion directs men to the Temples of Happiness where they enjoy the eternal repose which the philosophic travellers of Rasselas and the Christian suppliants of The Vanity of Human Wishes restlessly seek.

The Vision thus provided Johnson an opportunity to treat the multi-faceted issue of human action and motivation, to establish, definitively, the relation between reason and religion, and, in the process, assail heterodoxy and portray an aspect of his own religious experience. Finally, it furnished a vehicle by which he could express what he calls the "highest wisdom," a

degree of knowledge which will direct a man to refer all to providence, and to acquiesce in the condition which omniscient goodness has determined to allot him; to consider this world as a phantom that must soon glide from before his eyes, and the distresses and vexations that encompass him, as dust scattered in his path, as a blast that chills him for a moment, and passes off for ever.¹⁵

Such wisdom must be restated constantly. "All ideas influence our conduct with more or less force, as they are more or less strongly impressed upon the mind; and they are impressed more strongly, as they are more frequently recollected or renewed" (Sermon IX, par.17). However, Johnson argues, "truth does not always operate in proportion to its reception. What has been always known, and very often said, as it impresses the mind with no new images, excites no attention, and is suffered to lie unheeded in the memory" (Sermon XV, par. 2).¹⁶ Hence Johnson seeks to embody this single vision in varied forms, including the imitation,

apologue, and periodical essay, though he never hesitates to treat the issue in other contexts. The Vision is but another instance of the process. Here, the "highest wisdom" is conveyed with both clarity and succinctness.

We shall never be able to determine the precise appeal of the work for Johnson, and we shall probably never consider it his major achievement, either as moralist or literary artist, but The Vision of Theodore is so representative both of his art and of his thought that his own favourable response is predicted easily. Given that fact plus the extent to which it provides an entrée into an extremely important body of ideology, it deserves far more attention than it has been accorded.

Documentation

1. For a general discussion of the work, see Roger P. McCutcheon, "Johnson and Dodsley's Preceptor, 1748," Tulane Studies in English, 3 (1952), 125-132.
2. It has been argued that The Preceptor, and particularly Johnson's preface, provided both method and material for Provost Smith's important system of education at the College of Philadelphia. See McCutcheon, 125; Theodore Hornberger, "A Note on the Probable Source of Provost Smith's Famous Curriculum for the College of Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 58 (October 1934), 370-377.
3. Allen T. Hazen, ed., Samuel Johnson's Prefaces & Dedications (New Haven, 1937), pp. 172-173.
4. Boswell, Life, ed. Hill-Powell (Oxford, 1934-1950), I, 192. Boswell calls The Preceptor "one of the most valuable books for the improvement of young minds that has appeared in any language."
5. For the Percy and Tyers references, see Life, I, 537, 192.
6. Lives of the English Poets, ed. Hill (Oxford, 1905), I, 147. Johnson's view of allegory may provide part of a rationale for the absence of "toilsome efforts" in this case. See Edward A. Bloom, "The Allegorical Principle," ELH, 18 (Sept. 1951), 183: "...Johnson censured the broad practice of allegory because of, among other things, its failure to sustain interest and evoke surprise."
7. Lives of the English Poets, III (Life of Thomson), 289
8. See, for example, Lives of the English Poets, I (Life of Milton), 147; Rambler 21, final par.

9. Lives of the English Poets, I (Life of Dryden), 340
10. Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1773, ed. F.A. Pottle and C.H. Bennett, new ed. (New York, 1961), p. 204.
11. Johnson's desire for both "truth" and novelty, the simultaneous impression of surprise and justness, has been discussed in detail by William R. Keast, "Johnson's Criticism of the Metaphysical Poets," ELH, 17 (March 1950), 59-70.
12. Studies of Johnson's knowledge of psychology and his deployment of that knowledge are seriously lacking, as Donald Greene (Samuel Johnson: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), pp. 5-6) has pointed out. W.J. Bate's famous suggestion that Johnson's work "probably provides us with the closest anticipation of Freud to be found in psychology or moral writing before the twentieth century" (The Achievement of Samuel Johnson (New York, 1955), p. 93) has hardly been pursued. The most important work is that of Kathleen M. Grange. See her "Samuel Johnson's Account of certain Psychoanalytic Concepts," Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 135 (August 1962), 93-98; "Dr. Samuel Johnson's Account of a Schizophrenic Illness in Rasselas (1759)," Medical History, 6 (April 1962), 162-168, 291. It is clear that the knowledge of what Johnson terms "the recesses of the mind" is a very great virtue (though not an absolute necessity) for the literary artist. See, for example, Lives of the English Poets, I (Life of Milton), 189; (Life of Butler), 213; (Life of Waller), 287; (Life of Dryden), 429, 457; II (Life of Rowe), 76; (Life of Addison), 121, III (Life of Young), 394. Among the writers of his own age it is perhaps Richardson who receives the highest praise in this regard. Johnson's judgment is best represented by his introductory comments to Rambler 97, which Richardson contributed, where he is described as "an author from whom the age has received greater favours, who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature"
13. I treat Johnson's anti-rationalism with regard to scientific methodology in my Samuel Johnson and New Science (Madison, 1971).
14. Cf. Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees, ed. Phillip Harth (Baltimore, 1970), p. 251: "Content I call that calm Serenity of the Mind, which Men enjoy whilst they think themselves happy, and rest satisfy'd with the Station they are in: it implies a favourable Construction of our present Circumstances, and a peaceful Tranquillity,

which Men are Strangers to as long as they are sollicitous about mending their Condition." It goes without saying that in a moral context the Christian must always be sollicitous about mending his condition.

15. Review of A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil, Literary Magazine, 2, no. 13 (April 15-May 15, 1757), 174.
16. Cf. Life, IV, 215 where Johnson discusses "how large a proportion of almost every man's life is passed without thinking of (religion)." He treats the issue at greater length in his tenth sermon.

ANNUAL COMMEMORATION 1972

On 16th December, the Very Revd. Dean of Westminster conducted the annual commemoration service in Westminster Abbey and gave an address. A wreath was laid on the grave of Dr. Johnson by the Countess of Huntingdon.

Following the Johnson Society's informal luncheon at the White Hall Hotel, the Countess of Huntingdon gave a talk, illustrated with slides, on "The Queen of the Methodists". The Revd. Kenneth Twinn, Librarian of Dr. Williams' Library, took the Chair.

REVIEW OF THE CORRESPONDENCE OF EDWARD YOUNG 1683 - 1765

ED. HENRY PETTIT. CLARENDON PRESS: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 1971

Pp. xl-624. - U.K. PRICE £10.00 NETT

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Seldom can the claim "Standard" be made with confidence for an edition immediate upon its publication, but Professor Pettit's Correspondence of Edward Young demands at least that distinction. The fact of his hand in the work makes it so as much as the thoroughness of the edition; some 525 letters (my count), 332 of them from manuscript and 127 published for the first time. After a register of Young's correspondence (25 pages) and a list of plates, Professor Pettit introduces his work, including an account of previous editions and some of his copy texts, a statement of his editorial practice, and acknowledgements (8 pages in all). The letters follow, then three appendices, including Young's will, herein printed accurately. The index of correspondents is very useful, as is the full (17 pages), accurate general index.

The letters, scrupulously edited, range from 1705 to 1765 and are presented chronologically, with entries explaining records of lost letters included. Also, "letters to, or closely connected with, Young are distributed in order of appearance to provide continuity and appropriate context for Young's letters". One cannot take issue with Professor Pettit's use of Chapman's Letters of Samuel Johnson as a model for letter headings, and one appreciates the editor's inclusion of date and correspondent at the top of each page. But most laudatory is his decision to keep his text as faithful to the copy texts "as modern typography allows", for the edition is a scholarly edition, although unobtrusively so, and there is no doubt that the editor intended - no mincing, soft-pedalled, agonised statements in this editorial policy - an old-spelling critical edition, and that he feels no need to apologise for it. How refreshing nowadays. With notes that rival in completeness, usefulness, and (so far as I know) accuracy those of, say, Chapman and Sherburn, Professor Pettit impresses, teaches, and entertains by his learning as he identifies Latin proverbs, comments on places, things, and persons contemporary with Young and makes splendid biographical tie-ins with all. Without specific

exposition here, his resourcefulness in dating troublesome letters can be seen, for example, in note 1, p.17 (to Martha Lady Giffard, 22 Nov.1719), and in note 1, p. 23 (to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 27 Feb. 1723/4), the notes in the first third of the volume much fuller than subsequently. Taken collectively, the notes constitute a valuable highlighting of Young's professional career. For me, the only disappointing aspect of the book is the introduction.

One could wish that a scholar of Professor Pettit's stature would have rewarded the reader with his own insights into the correspondence, its peculiarities and its specific place in the tradition of the familiar letter, by offering examples from the letters and some sustained analysis. Instead, the reader is left with such dangling (in that not developed), yet tantalising, statements as these: "...it is not for the view of Young himself so much that his letters are important as it is for the panorama of English familiar life that opens to the reader"; and, "Beneath the archaic gallantry and elaborate affectation of Young's letters - never written for publication - it is possible to feel closer to another age and time than in many of the more justly celebrated correspondences of the century..."; and, "This common touch...of Young's letters helps explain why they have been so slow to come out". All occur in a single paragraph of topic sentences, the sole paragraph that attempts such speculation. The reader is left to flesh out such skeletons. The history of the discovery and publication of the correspondence of Young is the only bright spot in the introduction, and this is short-lived since little more than a page is devoted to the matter.

I wonder, too, if Johnsonians whose notion of Johnson in-part embraces a man of undaunted courage would accept the following portrait of a seemingly timid man and writer?

...Even the slayer of myth, Samuel Johnson, old in years and seasoned to the public temper, resorted to another's hand when it came to the account of Young, the only one of the fifty-two Lives of the English Poets not written by Johnson himself. Johnson's wisdom, if not his courage (my emphasis), was vindicated by the protests the unsympathetic life of Young provoked at its publication in 1781. (opening paragraph, "Introduction")

Such a statement may make some persons anxious to see Professor Pettit's forthcoming edition of Croft's Life in Johnson's Lives of the Poets in the Yale Works.

Johnsonians will find no letters from or to Dr. Johnson here but will be interested in the substantial correspondence between Young and the novelist Samuel Richardson, in many ways the favourite of Young and Johnson for the same reasons. I find the following exchange between the novelist and Young telling of all three men. On 24 May 1759, Richardson tells Young that Johnson is "much pleased" with his Conjectures and forthwith has "made a few observations on some passages, which I encouraged him to commit to paper, and which he promised to do, and send to you." The next day Young writes to Richardson and tells him to inform Johnson that "I shall not send a copy till I have the pleasure of Mr. Johnson's letter on the points he spoke of to you; and please to let him know that I impatiently wait for it" (that is, Johnson's remarks). On 29 May, Richardson assures Young that he has "written urgently to Mr. Johnson: but it would be pity to baulk the sale. Mr. Millar has ordered one thousand to be printed". Two days later Young writes to Richardson that he has "made a few corrections and additions in this copy, which I desire may direct the press"; then in the postscript to this letter: "It was very kind in you to send to Mr. Johnson's; and unfortunate to me that you sent in vain". Warburton came through, however.

Other correspondents are of some interest, not the least of which are the prolific Duchess of Portland (other than Richardson the most persistent contributor to Pettit's volume), Alexander Pope, Friedrich Klopstock, Edmund Curll (here as everywhere in hot water for manipulating manuscripts), George Bubb Dodington, and Henrietta Howard. And there is even a poem-letter "To the Lady Giffard on the Countess of Portland's being ill of a fever". But I must admit that most of the correspondence is underwhelming. It may, though, be most accurate - and safe - to describe all the correspondents in the book as being of interest to Johnsonians, and not only obvious names such as some of those above and Garrick, Langton, Millar, Savage, and Warton (Joseph); for all those listed in the "Index of Correspondents" and most of those in the "General Index" touch Johnson's life and art, some significantly.

A first-rate edition, then, a model of scholarly method and acumen. Dr. Pettit is now Professor Emeritus, University of Colorado, and one feels somewhat melancholy that students of the eighteenth century will know him formally only through what he writes.

JOHNSON'S MORAL SHOCK AS CRITICAL NORM

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The Modern student of Johnson's Shakespearean criticism is often tempted to join the early nineteenth century's vituperation of "Johnson the Frog-Critic."¹ The force of numerous Johnsonian insights is suddenly dissipated by the unexpected observation, for instance, that Macbeth "has no nice discriminations of character...Lady Macbeth is merely detested..."² One of Shakespeare's most interesting characters has been abruptly dismissed, and until some critical rationale for such an attitude is discovered, the exasperation of the Romantic critics is understandable.

The clue to Johnson's neglect of such a fruitful psychological study as Lady Macbeth may, perhaps, be inferred from his even more perfunctory treatment of Richard III. Johnson pointedly announces his dissent from the general approbation of the entire play, and then he says little more about it or its title character. His judgement is simply that "some parts are trifling, others shocking, and some improbable."³ Johnson's notes do not furnish significant illustrations of his objections; and while enough trifling or improbable scenes could conceivably be indicated as the basis of his disapproval, I have no doubt that in this instance, and in the case of Lady Macbeth, and in many other places in Johnson's criticism, the rather uncritical term shocking best describes what alienates Johnson. His shock is not caused by an affront to neoclassical decorum; he is no Thomas Rymer. The shock is to his moral sensibilities; he is a Christian moralist, and when he insists that "we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance,"⁴ the substitution of literary critics for geometricians would in no way impair the validity of his statement but would, in fact, help to explain Johnson's own work. Richard III is a moral monster, and even though poetic justice is upheld by his death, the heroism of his final combat continues to present him in too favourable a light. Moral monsters should not be given any redeeming traits that might obscure their monstrosity, and yet good drama demands such character complexity. One way out of this critic-moralist dilemma is silence. Moral monsters need not be studied, for it is enough that they be recognised as such; and so Richard is passed over as shocking, and Lady Macbeth is merely detested.

Documentation

1. Coleridge does not explain his phrase. Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. Thomas M. Raysor, 2 vols. (London, 1930), I, 82, n.2.
2. Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, vols VII-VIII in The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven and London, 1968), VIII, 795.
3. Sherbo, VIII, 632
4. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, ed. G. Birbeck Hill, 3 vols. (New York, 1967), I, 100



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