

THE NEW RAMBLER



JOURNAL OF
THE JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON

1975 ISSUE

The New Rambler

JOURNAL OF THE JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON

Editor: JAMES H. LEICESTER, M.A., BROADMEAD, EYNSFORD ROAD, FARNINGHAM, KENT

Serial C No. XVI

1975

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RADICAL SAM JOHNSON*

Graham W. Nicholls, BA., Ph.D

Curator : The Samuel Johnson Birthplace, Lichfield

While considering what I was going to say this afternoon, it occurred to me that my title ought really to end with a question mark. For my intention is not so much to put forward a case for Johnson as radical thinker but rather to question the growing popularity of that idea. A complete exposition of this question is beyond my range. It would require an understanding of the outline and the fine detail of eighteenth-century and earlier political and social philosophy which I do not possess. But as Johnsonians I think it behoves us to keep a watch on the critical repute and popular image of Johnson and to take stock from time to time of his reputation for that famous "educated layman."

The attitudes of that important personage are often a step or two behind that of the specialist, and frequently academic attitudes have taken two steps backward before the man in the street has had a chance to move forward one step. An example in the Johnsonian world was a recent essay by Professor Pat Rogers who questioned the accepted attitude that Johnson was a tortured soul whose solitude was a nightmare of religious doubt, sexual fantasy and feelings of insecurity.¹ Leaving aside for today the question of whether we agree or not, this attitude of Professor Rogers strikes me as interesting because I feel that many amateur Johnsonians have not yet caught up with the idea that Johnson was a tortured soul with religious doubts, sexual fantasies, and so on. This perhaps goes to show that if one stays in the same position long enough orthodox opinion will eventually come round to one's point of view.

I was prompted to these thoughts about Johnson as a radical by the fine, new biography by John Wain, the Professor of Poetry at Oxford.² In his book, Wain is

*A paper read at the Johnson Society of London Meeting on 18th January 1975.

Chairman: Miss Jean Hickling.

Oxford University Press

rightly concerned to emphasise the humanitarian Johnson, the spokesman of the oppressed, the Good Samaritan, the anti-imperialist. He is not the first popular writer to question the traditional notion of Johnson the reactionary Tory (as the term was understood by Boswell and the nineteenth century). As long ago as 1889 George Birkbeck Hill wrote an essay entitled "Dr. Johnson as a Radical" and at the end of the Second World War Professor Joseph Wood Krutch in his influential biography wondered whether "in certain respects, Johnson's position is closer to that of nineteenth and twentieth-century social philosophers of the left than it is to that nineteenth-century liberalism which was being born in his own day."³ I describe Krutch's book as "influential" but twenty-five years later Wain finds it necessary to hold up as an example the intelligent journalist who was surprised by Wain's enthusiasm for the arch-reactionary Johnson.⁴ Whether Wain's book will finally turn the pendulum away from "funny old Doctor Johnson" remains to be seen. Historical research has helped us to understand eighteenth-century labels such as "Whig" and "Tory" and critics like Donald Greene have used this knowledge in their discovery of Johnson the great writer.⁵ We are slowly coming to a realisation of what Johnson's Toryism was all about. But I would like to put forward a few doubts about this critical movement. In moving away from Johnson the stuffy reactionary, contemptuous of all advanced thinking, are we in danger of creating a new Samuel Johnson - social democrat or even forerunner of the New Left?

I suppose it is incumbent on me to define my terms, though I realise that definitions in papers such as this tend to be set up merely to be knocked down later. Johnson could not have used the word "radical" in its modern political context - this sense developed during the upheavals at the end of his century. My idea of a radical is of a member of a small group whose opinions, life-style, or philosophy are either opposed or unsympathetic to the broadly accepted standards and attitudes of the time. They may be hostile to the System and, generally speaking, they would wish to replace it with another system or philosophy. They need not be what we regard as left-wing - National Socialism and Fascism in the 1920 s posed as a radical solution to an outworn, tired, political system. There is also the traditional English radical figure who wishes to return to an earlier, supposedly superior, way of life: an example of this figure would be William Cobbett. Even if a radical's dissatisfaction is merely expressed as pacificism or by

being a drop-out, I think it is necessary for his views to be held with some fervour, even to the extent of arousing hostility amongst conservatives and holders of orthodox opinion.

Now in this cluster of definitions I hope it will be clear that some apply to Johnson, while others clearly do not. One aspect of Johnson which is frequently emphasised is his Bohemianism. At least until he met the Thrales his life was disorganised, his method of working desultory. We need only think of Bennet Langton's description of his first meeting with Johnson when he expected the grave, philosophic figure of the Rambler and was met by an uncouth savage, newly risen from his bed at noon.⁶ (Today, interestingly enough, a visitor to such a figure would anticipate the exact opposite.) Johnson's untidiness and slovenliness is something that "everybody knows". But we should make a few reservations. Many of these famous descriptions of Johnson the Bear were made by people whose own standards were extremely fastidious and who were accustomed to the sophistications of genteel life. Again, we must avoid assuming that Johnson's Bohemianism represented a rejection of eighteenth-century gentility. Much of the dirt about Johnson was the grim necessity of poverty and depression. A favourite Johnson quotation is his sympathetic response to Kit Smart's dirtiness and his own lack of passion for clean linen.⁷ Perhaps today Johnson would not be a welcome visitor in the homes of many who enthuse over him; particularly those like Mrs. Boswell who valued a tidy home highly. But we may wonder how far Johnson would have regarded himself as an outsider in his way of life. Certainly, once he was well-established in the households of the wealthy Thrales and on his visits to the well-heeled John Taylor he did not disdain the comforts they offered. He accepted the Thrales' criticism of his couture and table-manners. We know that Johnson considered himself an expert on ladies' fashion. In calling Johnson "Bohemian" and regarding this as a radical dissatisfaction with contemporary modes, we must not, in this as in many other matters, confuse the eighteenth with the nineteenth centuries. Johnson was not a romantic, starving in his attic because he rejected comfortable living in order to work at his art. On the other hand, it is also true that Johnson would never have rated cleanliness very highly as a virtue (certainly not next to godliness) and he was not a man to judge another by his outward appearance, either for good or ill.

When we turn from his way of life to his opinions, there is one large area in which Johnson could be called a radical - though even here the word must be carefully used. Johnson was opposed to the social, economic, and political philosophy of the eighteenth century which emphasised individualism and competition at the expense of co-operation, and rights rather than responsibilities or duties. To this contemporary outlook on life Johnson gave the name of "Whiggery" and we now understand that as much as being a coherent party label, the terms "Whig" and "Tory" as Johnson used them, applied to attitudes of mind and outlook. As Greene puts it: "It is clear that in such outbursts (e.g. 'Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig'; 'Sir, the first Whig was the devil' etc.) Johnson is relieving his feelings, not against a political party or a set of principles or even 'negation of principle', but against sophisters, economists, and calculators, against essential coldness of feeling masked by a specious appeal to 'rational humanitarianism'".

As an example of Whiggery we are given the Whig Sir Andrew Freeport in The Spectator arguing against charity to the poor. It is in his attitude to the poor that Johnson's humanitarianism, his sympathy for the oppressed, is most apparent. There is not merely his Samaritanism, examples of which are legion, but his championing of the poor in conversation and writing. There were presumably others who gave generously to beggars in the street (though I suspect that Johnson's charity was outstandingly generous for it to be so widely commented on), but against the popular feeling that one must be selective in one's charity, Johnson maintained an attitude of large-minded sympathy which excluded any rational assessment of worth. When someone criticised excessive charity to beggars - they only spend it on tobacco and gin - Johnson replied: "And why should they be denied such sweeteners of their existence? It is surely very savage to refuse them every possible avenue to pleasure, reckoned too coarse for our acceptance. Life is a pill which none of us can bear to swallow without gilding." But again it would be wrong to argue that Johnson's attitude to poverty and the under-privileged entitled him to be called a radical. His sympathetic humane feelings arose out of an almost despairing realisation that individual charity was a tiny contribution towards the great mass of unhappiness in the world. "It is an unhappy circumstance that one might give away five hundred pounds in a year to those that importune in the streets, and not do any good."¹⁰ Johnson's hard-headed realisation

however did not lead to a refusal to act. We still have the problem. Faced with innumerable starving people, we are sometimes told that our own contributions will achieve little. This is often a mask for doing nothing. Johnson could not have refused to act.

Johnson's philanthropy, however, differed from that of, say, a Shaftesbury, because the nineteenth century believed in a kind of social and moral progress in which factory legislation, poor law reform and improved sanitary conditions played a part. Johnson's charity was a good deed in a naughty world, an emotional response to a bleak and hostile universe. Today many people have become cynical about progress through social legislation and this is perhaps one reason for Johnson's renewed popularity.

Johnson's pessimism has been compared to that of A.E. Housman but though there are similarities, the differences between the two outlooks seem to me to be more important.¹¹ Housman's pessimism, though no doubt deeply felt, was the reaction of the academic with a classical training; a comforting despair from which one turns with a sigh and soon dismisses from one's mind. Johnson's is an altogether more virile attitude founded on personal experience.

Samuel Beckett is not perhaps the first writer one would associate with Johnson, but I think that in both Rasselas and, for example, Endgame there is a similar feeling of man's struggle against a universe which will not come up to one's expectations. As a well-known comment on Beckett puts it, the world of both men is that of the boxer flat on the canvass who struggles to his feet even though he knows he is certain to be knocked down again. The huge difference between the two men is, of course, their belief and non-belief in God, though even here I think it would be true to say that at least until the end of his life, we hear little in Johnson of the consolations of religion. Part of his religious faith was based on the conviction that if that didn't exist, there would be nothing but a bleak, comfortless world to inhabit. This kind of pessimism seems to me to militate against any real belief in radical solutions to life's problems. It would be as absurd as the idea of offering land nationalisation or improved social security benefits to the characteristic Beckett hero. For Johnson too, "most schemes of political improvement are very laughable things".¹²

A radical, one who wishes to see drastic changes in society, must have a fundamental belief, however obscured it might be by cynicism or doubt, in progress and amelioration of the human condition. For Johnson schemes for political improvement were so laughable because they were so gloriously irrelevant to the underlying sadness and pain in life, "in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend".¹³ Johnson's laughter at "most schemes of political improvement" reminds us of the glorious passage from Boswell when Johnson was so convulsed by the thought of the pompous Bennet Langton making his will that he was obliged to hold on to the posts by the roadside while his laughter rolled through the night. A reviewer of Wain's biography characterises this incident as scornful.¹⁴ This is nonsense. It is laughter at the pitiful attempts of man to make himself important in a wide, bleak world. Johnson is not laughing in a superior way: all human activities from writing an epic poem to knitting were methods of filling up a vacuity. As I have indicated, he rushed into the sorrows of life headfirst, working furiously to do his best to alleviate suffering or attack those who, like Soame Jenyns, refused to admit the "reality" of evil or pain.

Johnson's reaction to the unsatisfactory existence which he saw around him was a distinctly individual one. There is none of the radical's sense of unity with other sympathisers. The clubs which Johnson either founded or of which he was a principal member represent attempts to alleviate the essential loneliness of the individual. Apart from his writing, his unorthodox opinions were conducted on a one-to-one basis. With regard to slavery, Johnson's individual contribution was his kindly and humane attitude to Francis Barber. His theoretical position, according to Hester Piozzi, was that the black races were naturally inferior to the white.¹⁵ Despite his interest in charitable organisations, his emphasis is on the individual's responsibility to the poor. He hated "to hear people whine about metaphysical distresses, when there was so much want and hunger in the world" and attacked the Whig's continual uproar about "universal liberty". They fail to consider, said Johnson, that "all that is to be valued, or indeed can be enjoyed by individuals, is private liberty".¹⁶ Such opinions are emotional responses to the human condition. A Marxist, for example, would despise pity as a luxurious irrelevance in the fight for Utopia. By placing pennies in the hands of urchins sleeping in the doorways of Fleet Street so that they would be able to buy breakfast when they woke up,

or in keeping together a disagreeable band of inadequates under his roof, or in kneeling down in prayer with his black servant, Johnson was placing responsibilities on his own shoulders and on those of each man and woman rather than in direct political or social reorganisation.

I hope that I will not be accused of returning to a nineteenth-century picture of Doctor Johnson as Santa Claus. I suspect I have adopted the Johnsonian device of taking a deliberately opposite opinion in order to clarify the issues. It is essential that we remember Johnson the anti-slavery writer, the denouncer of white exploitation of the Red Indians, Protestant supremacy in Ireland, cruel punishments for trivial crimes, the Johnson who had such a high opinion of monarchy and such a low opinion of monarchs, who maintained a non-mystical attitude to the nature of the state, who dismissed offers of patronage from society's leading arbiter of taste and fashion, and the supporter of the poor and oppressed with whom he had lived so long. All these factors are wonderful contributions to our picture of a great human being, but Johnson is great enough to contain innumerable complexities and ambiguities. By stressing some of the factors which do not make Johnson a radical, I hope I have shown again the truth of Johnson's retort to the unfortunate Goldsmith: "Sir, you have not travelled over my mind, I promise you".

Documentation

1. Pat Rogers, The Augustan Vision (London, 1974), p.228.
2. John Wain, Samuel Johnson, London, Macmillan, 1974.
3. George Birkbeck Hill, "Dr. Johnson as a Radical", Contemporary Review, LV (June 1889), 889-899; Joseph Wood Krutch, Samuel Johnson (New York, 1944), p.240.
4. Wain, op.cit., p.13.
5. Donald Greene, The Politics of Samuel Johnson (New Haven, 1960).
6. Boswell's Life of Johnson ..., edited by G. Birkbeck Hill, revised and enlarged by L.F. Powell (Oxford, 1934-1950), I, 247.
7. Ibid., I, 397.
8. Greene, op.cit., p.18.
9. Hester Lynch Piozzi, Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D During the Last Twenty Years of His Life, edited by Arthur Sherbo (London, 1974), p.89.
10. Life, op.cit., IV, 3.
11. See for example, Marjorie Jones, 'Housman and Johnson: Some Similarities', Transactions of the Johnson Society (1959), 12-36.

12. Life, op. cit., II, 102
13. Johnson on Shakespeare, edited by Arthur Sherbo, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven and London, 1968), VII, 66.
14. Life, op.cit., II, 262; John Carey, 'The VAT of Human Wishes', The Listener, 21 November 1974.
15. Anecdotes, op.cit., p.131.
16. Johnsonian Miscellanies, arranged and edited by G. Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1897), II, 196; Life, op.cit., II, 60
17. Life, op.cit., IV, 183.

LAWRENCE FITZROY POWELL MA, D.LITT
1881 - 1975

At the Memorial Service held on Saturday 15th November 1975, in the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, the Johnson Society of London was represented by our Chairman, J.R.G. Comyn, Esq., and the Hon. Secretary, The Revd. F.M. Hodgess Roper.

The Order of Service opened with the words:

We are come together to remember before God
LAWRENCE FITZROY POWELL and to give thanks
for his long life and example and for his
work as a scholar, librarian, and lexicographer.

The Readings were from Samuel Johnson's Life of Edmund Smith and from the 41st Idler read by Mrs. Mary Hyde, MA, PH.D, D.LITT., and ECCLESIASTICUS 39, 1-11, read by the Master of St. Catherine's College.

The Address was given by J.D. Fleeman, MA, D.PHIL., Fellow of Pembroke College.

An Obituary to the Society's late President will appear in the next issue of the Journal.

JOHNSON'S HEROES BEFORE THE

LIFE OF SAVAGE

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By the time Johnson told Boswell, in 1763, the biographical part of literature was what he loved most, he had published many such pieces for the common reader and written a number of biographical entries in James' Medicinal Dictionary (1743).¹ The first eight lives - those of Sarpi, Boerhaave, Blake, Drake, Barretier, Morin, Burman and Sydenham - appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine between 1738 and 1742,² and Johnson portrays them in largely heroic colours. The pieces which followed the Life of Richard Savage (1744), exhibit a darker tone; the faults of the later figures are more plainly illustrated.

Johnson was writing of men well-known to the public in the first four lives. Two biographies of Father Paul Sarpi had previously been published in England. Fontenelle wrote an éloge of Boerhaave, based on the same source Johnson used, and the Gentleman's Magazine printed an obituary review of Boerhaave's life before Johnson's account appeared. The exploits of Blake and Drake had been extensively recounted and their lives were almost simultaneously published in Campbell's Lives of the British Admirals (1742). The next four of Johnson's subjects were less known. Neither Barretier, Morin, Burman nor Sydenham is the principal figure of any British biography but Johnson's. In the first group well-known men, whose deeds were topical, virtually presented themselves to Johnson for biography. Occasion promoted interest in each of these lives. The second group had not that advantage; here Johnson used the idea he subsequently advanced in Rambler 60 (October 13, 1750), that learning, integrity and piety are equal to any other achievement.

The first eight lives provide examples of human accomplishment and self-fulfilment, with a clear sense of the difficulties and obstacles which each man overcame. Of course Johnson suggests no formula for heroism, but from these early lives a pattern emerges, one not surprising

in view of Johnson's better known work. The hero is outstanding in four ways. He has a bold, innovating spirit; he is generous and humane; he confronts death with resolution, and his life demonstrably enriches mankind.

The hero's daring is not simply bravery, but a desire for intelligent adventure. Johnson praises Admiral Blake for striking out in new directions, for inventing techniques of naval warfare. Drake, according to Johnson's account, displayed his spirit when members of the British court opposed his determination to make a second voyage to the South Sea. Drake's adversaries are pictured to be:

(M)en of narrow views and groveling conceptions, who treat every new attempt as wild and chimerical, and look upon every endeavour to depart from the beaten track as the rash effort of a warm imagination... men (who) value themselves upon a perpetual skepticism, upon believing nothing but their own senses, upon calling for demonstration where it cannot possibly be obtained...the most formidable enemies of the great benefactors to mankind(509).

One of the important ingredients in the energetic attitude is simply vigorous use of time. Johnson admires Drake for this quality. When, as a young man, he received a small boat as a bequest from his master, Drake put it to immediate service; Johnson contrasts his action with those who "when they are engaged in affairs not adequate to their abilities, pass over them with a contemptuous neglect"(389). Drake does not "sit down idly to lament misfortunes which heaven had put in his power to remedy, or to repine at poverty"(389). Moreover, Drake's awareness of the depressing effects of inactivity is an important attribute of leadership. On several occasions, when his men are discouraged by defeat or delay, Drake rallies them to action. Johnson's procedure is to rearrange slightly the facts given by his source, weave in his own reflections and make his own emphases, so that what evolves is not merely a history of events, but a perspective of the hero. When Drake, sounding the coast line is separated from his ship by a sudden storm, "he well knew how fatal one moment's inattention might be and how easily every man suffers himself to be surprised by indolence and insecurity"(511). Johnson expands the notion that action is valuable

for itself, because it makes progress and avoids despair, to the idea that the response of action is a part of character. His repeated stress on Drake's refusal to yield to moods of dejection indicates that Johnson's biography is not merely praise of "English deeds" (a favourite phrase of his sources), but a portrayal of the resilient spirit of Drake, which every man might well emulate.

Herman Boerhaave frequently rises above discouragement to become a physician, and then to success in practice. He admitted to a friend that he was naturally quick of resentment, but subdued the tendency by daily prayer and meditation. The same kind of purposefulness distinguishes the careers of Sarpi, Morin and Sydenham.

There is also an intellectual analogue to the spirit of adventure Johnson admires so in Blake and Drake. It is essentially the strength to set individual conviction against authority. Johnson's life of Sarpi shows the priest's long struggle against those who sought to impose doctrine on him. On two occasions Sarpi is summoned before the Inquisition; each time he refuses to appear and stands on the integrity of his position, and each time he is justified, although his stand eventually prevents his becoming a bishop. Reviewing the wholly intellectual career of Barretier, Johnson stresses that when his subject inquired into the various opinions of the writers of all ages, he reasoned and determined for himself: "he was no imitator, but struck out new tracks and formed original systems" (245). Similarly, Sydenham's practice as a physician and research scientist was marked, according to Johnson, by "contempt of pernicious methods supported only by authority, in opposition to sound reason and experience" (635).

The qualities of action and independence are combined with magnanimity in six of the first eight lives. In the biography of Drake, Johnson states that humanity and true courage are inseparable and cites three examples: Drake's protection of the women of Venta Cruz after the English defeated the Spanish there; his polite reception of a Spanish envoy he knew to be a spy, but harmless, and his demonstration of gratitude to the Symeron natives who had helped the British. Johnson concludes the passage with an observation not to be found in his source.

Thus was Drake's character consistent with itself; he was equally superior to avarice and fear, and through

whatever danger he might go in quest of gold, he thought it not valuable enough to be obtained by artifice or dishonesty(447).

Financial generosity is another form which magnanimity often takes in the early lives. In a number of instances there is a closing remark about the small estate the subject left at his death. Morin surreptitiously returned his salary to the hospital which paid it. Admiral Blake scorned nothing more than money. In the life of Drake, Johnson manages to eliminate the emphasis of his sources on the search for treasure. Boerhaave, according to a Gentleman's Magazine obituary not in Johnson's style, left an estate of a hundred thousand guineas which, says the writer, "those who would have had the pattern of an absolute perfect man in Dr. Boerhaave, wish did not exceed fifty thousand."³ But Johnson's life of Boerhaave omits any reference to the physician's accumulation.

The individual's confrontation of death generally constitutes a final proof of character. But the details of how the last days were borne usually were unavailable to Johnson. Sydenham meets death with courage of mind and body,

teaching, by example, how to bear the torments of illness, without indecent impatience or unmanly dejection...supporting himself by the reflections of philosophy and the consolations of religion(635).

Johnson is so favourably impressed by Drake's spirit during his voyages that he refuses to believe his source's statement that Drake's death was hastened by the failure of his final adventure. The last days of Father Sarpi are so reshaped in Johnson's account that there is special stress on Sarpi's retention of mental vigour even as his physical powers dissolved. Johnson connects this to Sarpi's entire life: "his presence of mind... could only arise from his consciousness of innocence"(583). The peaceful, dignified deaths of Sarpi and Sydenham, like that of Dr. Levet, contrast sharply to the ends of the lives Johnson describes in The Vanity of Human Wishes.

Those who have helped mankind die with easy consciences, implies Johnson in reporting these deaths, and they may reasonably have hoped for salvation. Those

who have advanced merely selfish ends die miserably. In most of the early lives, the subject is so plainly a man who has served others that there is no need for Johnson to explain his merit. He has simply to mention that Sarpi died honoured by the learned for his abilities and by the good for his integrity, or to recite the public spirit of Blake, who dismissed a brother from command in the navy for neglect of duty, but privately showed his affection for the brother. Johnson observes that Drake was knighted when only exceptional merit won that reward. Barretier proved, in his short lifetime of 20 years, how much might be accomplished in so brief a span. Morin daily visited the sick and poor. Sydenham's chief view was the benefit of mankind.

The early lives encourage activity by illustrations of virtue succeeding against circumstance, whereas the Rambler essays show how man may go wrong by failing to discipline his tendencies to avarice, vanity, ambition and envy. The lives which follow that of Savage are less admiring, though Cave and Browne clearly have some of the qualities of the earlier subjects. The extent of Roscommon's achievement is questioned, Browne's self-delusion is explored and Ascham's love of gaming is dwelt upon. Cheynel's fiery temper is a major failing. Frederick the Great is seen in terms of troop movements, and Cave appears more the successful businessman than a possessor of conspicuous virtues. After the experience of thinking through and writing the life of Savage, Johnson evidently found it less congenial to present a thoroughly heroic pattern. To some extent, of course, occasions produced biographies, and it may be argued that the subjects of the later pieces simply happened not to be models equal to their predecessors. But it is likely there was some change in Johnson's attitude. He defends Drake and Sydenham, for instance, against weaknesses imputed by detractors, but he goes out of his way to find fault with Browne and Ascham, and openly satirises Cheynel. It is a commonplace that Johnson liked to argue with his sources, and he does so in the biographies of Browne and Ascham, but not, when he might have, in those of Boerhaave and Sydenham.

In the process of recreating the life of Savage, with firsthand knowledge and extensive detail he never before had, no doubt human nature came to seem more complex to Johnson. The closest student of the Life of Savage has described Johnson's outstanding impression of Savage as

being "the paradox of the man."⁴ As if to confirm the matured perspective, Johnson warns, in Rambler 164 (October 12, 1751) against the overly favourable portrayal of heroes, for the reason that men will readily underrate and imitate the vices of a great man in order to bear a general resemblance to him.

In the Lives of the Poets, Johnson occasionally describes actions which are heroic while showing that the men who performed them are not. The main episode in the Life of Pope, for example, is the translation of the Iliad. The greatness of the achievement is carefully delineated and roundly praised. But there is no question of presenting Pope for emulation. In that series Johnson recommends only the life of Isaac Watts; the reader may well "copy his benevolence to man and his reverence to God."⁵ But Watts was not a man of bold, innovating spirit or truly distinctive achievement. A hero's life is an extraordinary combination of character, ability and circumstance, and although Johnson does not descend to "perpetual skepticism," his biographies do not, after those early works, describe men in whom exceptional talent and virtuous behaviour coincide.

Documentation

1. These biographies are for the first time gathered together by J.D. Fleeman, ed. Early Biographical Writings of Dr. Johnson (Gregg, 1973).
2. "The Life of Father Paul Sarpi...", GM 8: 581-3
 "The Life of Dr. Herman Boerhaave...", GM 9: 37-8, 72-3, 114-16, 172-6.
 "The Life of Admiral Blake," GM 10: 301-7.
 "The Life of Sir Francis Drake," GM 10: 389-96, 443-7, 509-15, 600-3; 11: 38-44.
 "Some Account of the Life of John Philip Barretier," GM 10: 612; 11: 87-8, 93; 12: 242-5.
 "A Panegyric on Dr. Morin, by Mr. Fontenelle," GM 11: 375-7.
 "An Account of the Life of Peter Burman...", GM 12: 206-10
 "The Life of Dr. Sydenham," GM 12: 633-5.
 Quotations in the text are followed by page reference.
3. GM 8: 491
4. Clarence Tracy in Samuel Johnson, Life of Savage, ed. Clarence Tracy (Oxford, 1971), Introduction, xix.
5. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, ed. G.B. Hill (Oxford, 1905), III, 311.

R.H. HUTTON AND SAMUEL JOHNSON

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In Samuel Johnson: A Survey and Bibliography of Critical Studies, James L. Clifford and Donald J. Greene concede that

there did occur in the middle and later nineteenth century occasional intelligent and searching discussion of Johnson by people who had obviously read his writings with care and responded to them with the amount of thought they require....

One Victorian critic who exhibits these characteristics but who was apparently unknown to Clifford and Greene is Richard Holt Hutton (1826-1897), for the last thirty-six years of his life the literary editor and co-proprietor of the Spectator. Hutton's significance to Johnsonian studies is suggested by the Survey compilers in their judgement on "Johnsonese Poetry," Spectator, May 13, 1876, pp. 619-620, a subleader they describe as "very possibly the most acute criticism of Johnson's poetry before T.S. Eliot's famous essay of 1930..."² The "Records of Articles" in the Spectator office identify this article as Hutton's.³

Yet another Spectator article by Hutton recorded in the Survey without any statement of authorship is "Samuel Johnson," June 15, 1878, pp. 759-760, a general essay on Johnson the man occasioned by publication of Leslie Stephen's volume in the English Men of Letters series. Hutton reprinted it several years later in his Contemporary Thought and Thinkers.⁴

From one point of view it is surprising that Hutton, an extremely prolific journalist and critic,⁵ did not write more on Johnson than these two articles: his friends declared that he bore a resemblance to the great lexicographer in both manner and character. Wilfrid Ward asserted:

The memory of the rugged face...at first sight so little encouraging, of the manner which might for a moment be

mistaken for an uninviting brusqueness, will ever remain for many of us coupled with that of unfailing sympathy and high-minded counsel.⁶

More significantly, Ward pointed out this likeness in character:

Hutton in one of the numbers of The Spectator described our own day as one "in which Society imposes its conventional assumptions and insincerities on almost every one of us." He recommended his contemporaries to learn their lesson from Dr. Johnson, who, "whatever else he was, was always true to himself," who was "more afraid of his conscience than of all the world's opinion"; and who "towers above our own generation just because he had the courage to be what so few of us are - proudly independent of the opinion in the midst of which he lived."

Ward took his quotations from the conclusion to Hutton's 1878 essay, and added, "These words might be used with absolute truth of Hutton himself."

G.W.E. Russell drew attention to another aspect of Hutton's nature which reminds us of Johnson:

He was an independent thinker, if ever there was one, and as honest as he was independent...In homely phrase, you never knew where to have him; he was always breaking out in a fresh place.⁸

This independence reveals itself in connection with religious bigotry. Like Johnson, Hutton frequently rose to the defence of Roman Catholics although he was not himself of that faith, and, as Russell has reported him as saying, was preserved like Dr. Johnson against its attractions by "an obstinate rationality." Perhaps, too, this independence of mind accounts for Hutton's admiration for Johnson's poetry. Though deeply saturated in the very different verse of Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Arnold, Hutton was able to say that often

theories of poetry are constructed, not perhaps intentionally, but still, by the very materials from which they are generalised, necessarily, to exclude... (Johnson's) sonorous and often grandiose verse.... And yet it seems clear to... (me) that no theory of poetry can be good at all which does not keep room for Dr. Johnson's best efforts.¹⁰

Possibly, too, this independence may be seen in the individuality of Hutton's favourite quotation concerning Johnson, which he took, not from Boswell's Life, but from his Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides:

...Dr. Johnson said to Boswell, when asked if it was better to wear nightcaps or not, "I do not know, Sir; perhaps no man shall ever know whether it is better to wear nightcaps or not"....

Hutton quotes this passage half a dozen times in the Spectator over a period of twenty-five years. Since no other contributor is known to do so, the occurrence of the anecdote in earlier anonymous articles in journals which Hutton edited is probably a sign of authorship.¹² We may, therefore, conclude that if Hutton helped to sustain Johnson's reputation, Johnson (in a manner of speaking) aided Hutton by providing clues for the bibliographer attempting to establish the Hutton canon.

Documentation

1. James L. Clifford and Donald J. Greene, Samuel Johnson: A Survey and Bibliography of Critical Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970), p. 8.
2. Survey, p. 9. I am indebted to my colleague, Dr. R.H. Carnie, for drawing my attention to this passage. After submitting this note for publication, I encountered Geoffrey Tillotson's essay, "The Nineteenth Century and the Eighteenth," in Eighteenth-Century Studies in Honour of Donald F. Hyde, ed. W.H. Bond. New York: The Grolier Club, 1970, pp. 383-400. Professor Tillotson remarked simply that in 1876 "Richard Holt Hutton was praising Johnson's poetry as it deserves to be praised" (p. 399). He did not provide any more specific reference than that.
3. I have described these "Records" in "The Spectator Records, 1874-1897," Victorian Newsletter, No. 17 (Spring, 1960), pp. 33-36.
4. Richard Holt Hutton, Criticisms on Contemporary Thought and Thinkers (London, 1894), I, 164-170, where the essay has the somewhat more helpful title, "Mr. Leslie Stephen on Johnson."
5. My bibliography of 3,600 of his identified writings appeared in Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, No. 17 (1972), as the entire issue.
6. Wilfrid Ward, Ten Personal Studies (London, 1908), p. 67.
7. Ward, p. 61.

8. G.W.E. Russell, The Household of Faith: Portraits and Essays (London, 1902), p.202. I have reversed the order of Russell's sentences.
9. Russell, p.204. Cf. Ward, pp. 65-66
10. "Johnsone Poetry," Spectator, May 13, 1876, p.619.
11. I give Hutton's version of the story rather than the verbatim entry in the Journal for September 29, 1773. Cf. G.B. Hill's Boswell's Life of Johnson, Second Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), V, 268.
12. The six identified Spectator articles are "A Holiday in the Tyrol and Switzerland", September 17, 1870, p.1120; "A Summer Driving-Tour," October 2, 1875, p.1230; "Mr. Lowe's Neglected Education," July 22 1876, p.918; "Mr. John Morley on Literature," March 5, 1887, p.319; "The Primrose League," April 21, 1894, p.528; "The Boy-Poet," June 13 1896, p.836. I believe that Hutton had this remark of Johnson's in mind in another identified article, for in "Lord Palmerston," Pall Mall Gazette, March 3, 1865, p.1, he wrote (*italics mine*), "He believed...the three articles of the old Foreign-office creed. Whether he believed aught else to the bottom of his heart, perhaps no man shall ever know." At any rate, this favourite quotation from the Journal is to be found in five anonymous articles. "Lord Palmerston's Political Ethics," Economist, March 23, 1861, p.312; "The Competition for Sir Alan McNab's Soul," Spectator, September 13, 1862, p.1018; "Miss Mulock's Fairy Book," Spectator, May 9, 1863, p.1985; "The House of Commons on Clerical Subscription," Spectator, June 13, 1863, p.2109; "Mr. Babbage's Reminiscences," Spectator, July 16, 1864, p.823.



THE ANTI-HERO IN THE BEGGAR'S OPERA

Mary Kathryn Williams

A hero is a man admired and emulated for his achievements and qualities. He is usually a figure of importance with positive achievement and success. But this paper is not concerned with heroes — only with an anti-hero. An anti-hero conversely is a man who instead of exhibiting largeness, dignity, power, and heroism in life is petty, ignominious, ineffectual, or passive. An anti-hero is a man who does the opposite of the presumed criteria for a hero. In the twentieth century the anti-hero has emerged as a man not scorned for his weakness, but presented as a man exhibiting the purposelessness and loss of values of society in general. It is the contention of this paper that a man of this type, an anti-hero, a man exhibiting the opposite of heroic values, existed in the literature of the eighteenth century in the form of Captain Macheath, the hero of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera.

Macheath is the protagonist of The Beggar's Opera and is indeed an anti-hero. He is admired by the other characters in the play and the audience while he is in truth a scoundrel. This paper will prove that Macheath is an early example of anti-heroism by analysing Macheath's character including what the other characters say about him in the play, what he does, and why this qualifies him as an anti-hero. A discussion of Macheath's self-love and an examination of the critical opinion of him will be included. Modern readers consider the anti-hero to be a twentieth century phenomenon. Yet, here is an example that goes back to the first production of The Beggar's Opera in 1728.

One qualifies as a hero in general terms by being the centre of importance in a narrative. Macheath fits this definition as male lead and the character about which the action revolves. Why then does this paper wish to hang the title of anti-hero about Macheath's neck? Macheath qualifies as an anti-hero because while being the centre of importance he is an utter scoundrel. One might pounce upon this statement and insist that Gay has chosen to have a villain at the head of his cast, but this is not true. Macheath is a scoundrel, but the audience and the other characters in the piece admire Macheath. Why should people admire a scoundrel? Yet, that is the very reason for Macheath's popularity — his rapsallion personality. The fact that Macheath is liked instead of hated

while being a hoodlum qualifies him for the role of anti-hero. What exactly is Macheath and why is he a scoundrel? According to the text Macheath is a highwayman. A highwayman in the eighteenth century was a person who robbed travellers on the English countryside from horseback. This profession presupposes the title thief on Macheath. He is also a philanderer. His flirtatious compromises of Lucy and Polly certainly are not the pure romantic impulses of a hero. Macheath is mentioned in connection with the sexually degrading business of child-getting. He made money getting women pregnant so that they could not be sentenced for their crimes. Macheath prides himself on the fact that he recruits prostitutes for Drury Lane. It is obvious from the script that Macheath is very familiar with prostitutes and thieves. Macheath himself admits that gambling is his downfall. Macheath is also a liar. In the course of the play Macheath is engaged to both Lucy and Polly at once promising the same to both while their respective backs are turned. Lucy is pregnant by Macheath. He promises to marry her knowing at the time that he is already married. Macheath uses his influence with Lucy to aid his escape from prison. The first knowledge the audience has of Macheath after his escape is that he is with a prostitute. The final scene reveals that Macheath has compromised several women with no intention of marrying them. Anyone of Macheath's crimes might be overlooked, but all together they are inexcusable. And yet none of his crimes is so horrible that it offends the audience. He does all of these horrible things and yet the audience loves him as do the other characters. Contrary to the image of hero he is a criminal guilty of the crimes of robbery, licentiousness, childgetting, lying, gambling, philandering, and corrupting women. He is "anti" in that he is a criminal, and a "hero" in the essence that he is the protagonist and the audience and other characters love him.

In the business of proving that Macheath is an anti-hero it is essential not only to know what he is, but also what the other characters in the play think of him. If the other characters admire Macheath can the audience do anything except love him, too? Nevertheless, taking into account that Macheath really is a scoundrel, one may deduce that this admiration for a rogue produces an anti-hero. It is now necessary to prove that the other characters actually do like Macheath. Macheath does not make his first appearance until the final scene of Act I. However, the audience has been introduced to him by the comments of the other characters.

Mrs. Peachum says that Macheath is "so cheerful and agreeable! Sure there is not a finer Gentleman upon the Road than the Captain!"² She obviously respects Macheath knowing what his profession is. Peachum himself says that "The Captain is a bold man and will risque anything for Money." (I,viii,p.525) Macheath's bravery then is not the result of a fine character, but from greed. Peachum later calls Macheath "a great Man. When I consider his personal bravery, his fine stratagem..." (I,xi,p.528) Here again Macheath's bravery is motivated by ill gotten gain. Macheath manifests the bravery one expects from a hero, but the reason for the bravery is clearly the reverse of a hero's reason. Therefore, Macheath is a candidate for anti-heroism. Peachum actually calls Macheath a hero in Act II. "The greatest Heroes have been ruined by Women." (II, v, p.533) Macheath like Samson is undercut by a woman but for an entirely different reason. Macheath is a corrupter of women while Samson was preyed upon by a woman. The guard at Newgate prison, Lockit, refers to Macheath as "Noble Captain" and "Gentleman." (II,vii,p.533) Lockit considers it an honour to have such a fine gentleman in his prison. Mrs. Trapes, a lady of ill repute, says that Macheath is "...as fine as a Lord." (III,vi, p.543) At the end of the play Macheath prepares to die bravely which might be redeeming except that he chooses to die to avoid being wrangled over any more by his harlots. Lucy who gets nothing but mistreatment from Macheath exalts him in the final scene when she says: "There is nothing moves me so much as a great Man in distress." (III,xv,p.548) Lucy's great man is a thief, a robber, a liar, a philanderer, a scoundrel and ultimately an anti-hero.

The characters in The Beggar's Opera also say unfavourable things about Captain Macheath that reveal his true character. The characters admire him while being fully aware of his dastardly character. Mrs. Peachum in the first act having called Macheath a fine gentleman is appalled to find that her daughter has married him. She says to Polly: "If you must, marry, could you introduce nobody into our family but a Highwayman?" (I,viii,p.525) Peachum, too, while lauding Macheath is aware of his profession: "'tis his employment too rob..." (I,x,p.527) Lucy calls him a villain for he has treated her villainously. Polly for all her love is aware of his true nature. "The Captain treated me with so much contempt and Cruelty." (III,viii,p.544) A grand irony develops between the gentlemanliness of Macheath and his deeds. This irony is part of Gay's satire, but in the

creation of Macheath he set a precedent for later characters. He is an admirable robber. Macheath himself is aware of his failings. In Act II Macheath admits his weakness for gambling while exalting his criminal profession. Money, not honour or justice, is his driving passion. He emphatically believes that "Money well timed, and properly applied, will do anything." (II,xii,p.536) The other characters in the play are aware of Macheath's crimes and yet they praise him. Macheath himself is aware and yet the audience loves him. It is important to note that none of Macheath's crimes is heinous nor is he ever shown in a criminal act. The audience knows that Macheath is a thief from what he says about himself. The audience also knows that he is generally praised by the other characters. And yet, they come away liking Macheath. The gap between the admiration for him and his true character is part of Gay's satire, but it is also a very early example of an anti-hero.

There is another aspect of Macheath's character that cannot be overlooked. Macheath is an egotist — a self-lover. He cannot love a woman as anything more than a sexual object adjacent to himself because he is narcissistic. Polly tells Lucy in the last act in connection with their mutual love for Macheath that "The Coquets of both Sexes are Self-lovers, and that is a Love no other whatever can dispossess." (III,viii,p.545) The fact that Gay combines this bit of wisdom in connection with Macheath raises him in stature as a playwright. He has here given psychological motivation for the character of Macheath. In Gay's day narcissism was not recognised as a psychological state. This observation of mankind included in the character of Macheath is similar to the unnamed psychological phenomenon of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. Macheath's narcissism is important in regard to his standing as an anti-hero. A hero is one usually who is selfless whose deeds are to the glory of country or church, and certainly do not fall under the classification of egoism. Macheath loves himself so much he cannot even love a woman. Egoism and selfishness have become parts of the make-up of the modern anti-hero. Macheath sported those qualities in 1728 under the hand of Gay and his genius at recognising those qualities in mankind and imparting them in his anti-hero — Macheath.

If one is going to call Macheath an anti-hero it should be interesting to see if Macheath was considered an anti-hero at the time The Beggar's Opera was first produced.

The critics of the eighteenth century did not, of course, call him an anti-hero since that term is a twentieth-century invention. However, their opinion of him is a clear reference to Macheath as an undesirable being portrayed as a hero. Charles E. Pearce reports that there was a strong Puritan reaction against The Beggar's Opera. Those on the straight and narrow missed the satire in Gay's piece and were appalled "that Macheath was reprieved instead of being properly hanged and going to his death in an edifying manner."³ Sentiment against Macheath and The Beggar's Opera among the religious groups was not confined to the Puritans. Dr. Herring, who was later the Archbishop of Canterbury, "preached against the opera ...censured it as giving encouragement not only to vice, but to crimes, by making a highwayman the hero and dismissing him at last unpunished."⁴ Gay himself looked upon Dr. Herring's sermon condemning The Beggar's Opera as contributing greatly to his fame.⁵ These critics of the eighteenth century while missing the point of Gay's satire have added to the premise of this paper by condemning Macheath for being a criminal presented as a hero. The Monthly Chronicle of 1728 printed a popular song containing these lines concerning the role of Macheath: "To act Macheath more Merit must you bring,?...The gay mock Heroe must our passions move,"⁶ The song in the words 'mock hero' very nearly calls Macheath what he is defined in twentieth-century terms. Macheath as a criminal type qualifies as an anti-hero because he does move the passions of the audience.

Having seen what critical opinion was of Macheath at the time of the first production it will be equally advantageous to investigate the current opinions of him. Sven Armens casts Macheath as a villain with sexual overtones. "He thus swaggers on the stage, a symbol of virile and in one sense natural man, as promiscuous as the beasts and as selfish. He must satisfy his all-consuming sexual drive at whatever cost to others."⁷ Certainly no true hero has ever been portrayed as sexually selfish. Armens' comment alludes to Macheath's selfishness which is part of his egoism, and anti-heroism. William Eban Schultz says that "Macheath ...easily takes first place; it is about him that the story turns and much of the humour is connected. He is a hero highwayman, a character, say what you will, that has always been pleasant for us to read about if not to meet in the open road."⁸ Schultz is contending that

Macheath is the hero of the play, that he is a highwayman, and that the audience likes him, supports the main argument of this paper. It is the dichotomy of the admired highwayman that makes Macheath an anti-hero.

Having examined Macheath's character is it fair to call him an anti-hero, or is the definition being rationalised? It is the opinion of this paper that it is indeed fair to call him an anti-hero after having seen his true criminal nature in comparison to the high opinion held by the other characters and the audience. Macheath's egoistical attitude also contributes to his qualifications. Critical opinion of Macheath, past and present, while not using the term anti-hero does attest to the dichotomy of a hero highwayman. If Macheath can be called an anti-hero, then John Gay must be credited with creating a phenomenon which has had far-reaching effects on twentieth-century literature - the anti-hero.

Documentation

1. Abrams, M.H., A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1971), p.176.
2. John Gay, The Beggar's Opera, in Eighteenth Century English Literature, ed. by Geoffrey Tillotson, Paul Fussell, Jr., and Marshal Waingrow, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1969), pp.520-544. (I,iv,p.522) Further references to lines from The Beggar's Opera are from this edition. The specific acts, scenes, and page numbers will be entered after each line.
3. Charles E. Pearce, Polly Peachum, (New York: Brentano's, 1913), p.155
4. Lewis Melville, Life and Letters of John Gay (London: King and Hutchings Ltd., 1921), p.84.
5. W.E. Schultz, Gay's Beggar's Opera: Its Content, History, and Influence, (New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1923), p.75.
6. William Henry Irving, John Gay: Favorite of the Wits, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1940), p.245.
7. Sven M. Armens, John Gay: Social Critic, (New York: King's Crown Press, 1954), p.140.
8. Schultz, Gay's Beggar's Opera: Its Content, History and Influence, p.273.

RELIGIOUS METAPHORS IN HUMPHRY CLINKER

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While the major metaphorical grouping in Humphry Clinker has to do with Matt Bramble's search for health, Smollett also employs a significant number of religious metaphors in the novel. The development of the religious metaphors, furthermore, parallels and comments upon the movement of the biological metaphors. Constipated and gouty during his stays in the urban centres of England, Matt recovers his health in Scotland and the rural areas of England. Ill, he sees himself in Hell; healthy, he believes his surroundings paradisaical.

Thus, at Clifton Downs Matt curses a rainstorm in which he has been soaked: from "whence it came," he writes, "the devil knows"; and, he continues in the next sentences, "the demon of vapours" is evident in the perpetual drizzle (XI,14). At Bath he attributes the noisy concert at his first apartment to "the devil, that presides over horrid sounds" (XI,46). The houses there look to him "as if some Gothic devil ha(s) stuffed them altogether in a bag" (XI,53). There too the "spirit of insolence among the vulgar" seems to him "like the devil" in being difficult to suppress (XI,115). In London Matt again labels the lack of subordination diabolical, believing it caused by "the demons of profligacy" (XI,133). He finds "the demon of party" responsible for the division in and debasement of literature and taste in London (XI,159). He does hear of two "angels" while in London, but both are obviously fallen ones: the first is an author, "the very angel of dullness" (XI,161), and the second is a politician, who talks like an angel but lacks "consistency of stability of character" (XI,173). On his way to Scotland, Matt visits the "diabolical" despot, Pimpernel (XI,260), and meets Micklewhimmen, whose "'good angel'" helps him knock down women and cripples as he flees during a fire (XI,269).

Upon first entering Scotland, Matt labels the Scots' religious fervour "fanaticism" and "madness" (XI,58), but the longer he stays in the country the more he approves of it. At Cameron he discovers a nearly "perfect paradise" (XII,111), a "Scottish paradise" (XII, 113), which the natives believe is inhabited by "witches, fairies, ghosts, and goblins" (XII,112). In the Highlands he visits Iona, "respected for its sanctity" (XII,121). Finally, he extols the Biblical

learning and disputation of the Scotch Presbyterians as "wonderfully sagacious" (XII,139).

If the ruling deity in urban England is Satan and the deities of the Scottish paradise are benevolent spirits, the ruling deity of rural England seems to be the standard Christian God. For at the estate of Matt's friend, Charles Dennison, Matt's niece Lydia blesses a "'providential'" circumstance (XII,235) for uniting her with her lover, Dennison's son George - who thanks a "'Sacred heaven'" for the union (XII,234). There Lydia writes that "Providence" placed Matt's bastard son Humphry near his father so that he might be saved (XII,242). There too Matt's friend Baynard recognises the interposition of "Heaven" as responsible for his rescue from "disgrace and ruin" (XII 251) and for Matt's delivery of him "out of the hands of the Philistines" (XII,256). Recognising the hand of God in human affairs, the characters accept the moral ramifications of their actions. Thus, Matt expresses shock at the consequences of the youthful "'sins'" which resulted in Humphry's existence (XII,216), Tabitha Bramble extols her brother's son as a "'gift of God'" (XII,217), Matt's nephew Jerry (sic) feels "mortified" when he discovers how wrongly he has treated Lydia's lover (XII,238), and even Lydia expresses her penitence for her slight violation of honour in entertaining George Dennison's advances without the approval of her uncle and her brother. As a consequence of these recognitions, the company is able to unite thereafter in a "family of love, where every sole is so kind and so courteous, that wan would think they are so many saints in haven," as Tabitha's servant Win writes in her own wonderful way (XII,248). In short, the Bramble group moves through an urban English Hell through a supernatural Scottish paradise to an earthly "haven" at Dennison's estate, where they are united by their Christian virtues.

A rather more amusing way of suggesting this development is to delineate the metaphorical differences between Matt's two comic betes noires - his sister Tabitha in the first third of the novel, her husband-to-be Lismahago in the last third. At the outset Tabitha seems to Matt "the devil incarnate come to torment me for my sins" (XI,15) and a "domestic demon" (XI,117). Jerry too finds Tabitha "diabolically capricious" (XI,30) and believes she takes "diabolical enjoyment" in being disliked (XI,92). He presents her as "one of the sister furies that guard the gates of hell" (XI,120). But Matt is able to tame her, and she becomes somewhat less

Satanic. Lismahago is a fit husband for such a woman, for he seems to Jerry "an inhabitant of another world" (XII,136), and when Tabitha first sees him upon her return from Scotland, she screams "as if she had seen a ghost" (XII,136). Matt himself believes Lismahago might "very well pass for the ghost of his father" (XII,146) and compares him to "the prophets of old" (XII,145). Lismahago's passionate outburst to his own nephew, during a visit to his birthplace - "'Degenerate rascal, you have made my father's house a den of thieves'" (XII,145) - equates Lismahago with a somewhat younger Prophet, if we hear in his outburst echoes of Christ's words upon cleansing the temple. The prankster Bullford's characterisation of the old soldier's flight from a second-storey window as "'a fine descent from the cross'" reinforces this view of Lismahago and Bullford's comparison of the lieutenant's clothing with that of "'St. Andrew! St. Lazarus! St. Barrabas!'" also links Lismahago with New Testament figures associated with Christ. Of course, Smollett does not stress this link; indeed, he undercuts it significantly, Matt refusing to accept Lismahago's "assertions as gospel" (XI,156), and Win berating him as "an imp-fiddle, continually playing upon the pyebill, and the new burth" (XII,198). Nonetheless, as a kind of comic Jesus, Lismahago contrasts aptly with the comic Satan he eventually weds. The contrast may also point to the progress of the characters during their journey; they have tamed the diabolical Tabitha and embraced with good humour the Christian virtues Lismahago comically figures.

Documentation

1. Tobias Smollett, Humphry Clinker, The Works of Tobias Smollett, ed. G.H. Maynadier (New York: George D. Sproul, 1908), XI,14. Subsequent references are to volumes XI and XII of The Works and are cited in the text.



GENIUS - A DEFINITIVE EXPLORATION*

Helen Forsyth

What is genius? It is a subject that has engaged an almost universal interest, from the scholar and psychologist to the ordinary citizen, and has even attracted definitions from those accredited with the attribute themselves. Genius not only excites admiration, it rouses curiosity, and from the myriad explanations I have selected those that fall roughly into three groups: those who think it a gift from the gods, those who think it the result of unwearied attention and those who consider it a pathological condition.

Abbe du Bois stated that genius consists of a happy arrangement of the organs and Dryden felt that genius must be born and can never be taught. "I soon found," said Socrates, "that it is not by wisdom that poets create their works, but by a certain natural power and by inspiration." Wendell Holmes maintained that genius is always a surprise, but it is born with great advantages when the stock from which it springs has long been under cultivation, and Haydon thought that genius was nothing more than our common faculties refined to a greater intensity. George Sand was another who insisted that genius is natural.

Joubert was convinced that although genius begins great works, labour alone finishes them, and much in the same strain Hogarth conceived genius as nothing but labour and diligence. Constable rebuked Blake for using the term inspiration when praising one of his studies of a fir tree. "I never knew it before," he said, "I meant it for drawing." Sir Joshua Reynolds considered "inspiration" to be nothing more than hard work combined with the study of great old masters, and Flaubert and Rodin went even further and issued a warning against it! Ben Jonson felt that a good poet is made as well as born, no doubt referring to the conscious elaboration and technical mastery inseparable from all powerful

*A paper read to the Johnson Society of London, on 11th February, 1975.
Chairman: Lewis Raddon, Esq., LL.B., DPA.

manifestations of art, and Siegfried Sassoon agreed with this when he wrote that a man may be born a poet, but he has to make himself an artist as well. Newton confessed that he owed more to a continuous patience than to any other factor, and obviously George-Louis Buffon felt likewise when he judged genius as nothing but a great aptitude for patience. The same thought was echoed by Carlyle when he declared that genius was a transcendent capacity for taking trouble, first of all, and it is well known that Edison considered genius to be one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration. Of this persuasion also was Abel Stevens who said that genius can never despise labour.

Matthew Arnold presumed that genius was largely a matter of energy, and this is substantiated by Thoreau's remark, "The art of composition is as simple as the discharge of a bullet from a rifle, and its masterpieces imply an infinitely greater force behind them". In this category also comes Swift's comment regarding The Tale of a Tub, "Good God! What a genius I had when I wrote that book!" Diderot believed that genius depends on enthusiasm and deep emotion. Enthusiasm is a fire and no doubt Joubert had this in mind when he wrote that there is no light in souls in which there is no warmth.

I.M. Wise illustrates another aspect of genius when he says that genius is inconsiderate, self-relying, and, like unconscious beauty, without any intention to please, and the imperious self-trust of genius is vivid in Constable's statement, "I do not enter into the notion of varying one's plans to keep the publick in a good humour."

A fuller description is given by Canon Winnett who depicts genius as outstanding creative imaginative power. It is creative because it produces what is new as distinct from a re-ordering of what is old. It is imaginative because it belongs to the realm of the spirit and not merely to the intellect. Genius is intuitive rather than ratiocinative. Scientific geniuses have made their discoveries by what can only be described as inspired insight, which, of course, presupposes and does not replace the patient discipline in the laboratory. Another characteristic of genius is the permanence of its influence - the world is different for ever because a genius has appeared in it. Genius perpetually renews itself in subsequent generations - Plato, Shakespeare and Johnson live today through the self-renewing power of genius.

Whipple believed that genius is not a single power, but a combination of great powers. It reasons, but it is not reasoning; it judges, but it is not judgement; imagines, but it is not imagination; it feels deeply and fiercely, but it is not passion. It is neither, because it is all.

De Tours said genius was a nervous disease and Freud diagnosed the artist as an obdurate neurotic who, by his creative work keeps himself from a crack-up, but also from any real cure. Yeats said that great poetry must involve, at some level, a quarrel with ourselves, and D.H. Lawrence stated that art is a form of supremely delicate awareness and atonement. Sara Teasdale affirmed that poetry was the result and relief of emotional irritation and Robert Graves decided that it was the fusion of contradictory ideas.

Macaulay believed that perhaps no person can be a poet, or even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, and Ernst Kretschmer, who strongly felt the psychopathic component in genius, wrote the following sensitive analysis.

The mechanism whereby hybridization produces genius can be clearly and beautifully seen in almost any of the great personalities. In extreme cases the cross-breeding produces just that character of "germinal hostility" of "warring heredities" the important rôle of which in human biology has been so strongly and so rightly emphasised.

There arises a complicated individual psychology in which two abruptly opposed inheritances provide the main structural components and stand, throughout life, in constant mutual strain. This tension works in the first place as a dynamic affect factor. It also produces the unstable equilibrium, the emotional exuberance, and the restless inner drive, which lifts genius high above the peaceful exercise of traditional occupations and forbids it satisfaction with the ordinary pleasures of life. In the realm of the intellect, it produces a great breadth of spiritual activity, a versatility and complex richness of talent and a certain formidableness of personality.

This kind of constitution is most clearly evident when a genius springs from two widely differing parental temperaments, from a mating of contrasting natures.

Genius consists not only in an endowment of great gifts, which are, of course, indispensable, but also, and to a greater extent, in a strained, dynamic quality of the spiritual forces. The value of genius lies in the fact that they are the possessor, largely by inheritance, of a special and peculiar intellectual apparatus: an instrument which, in a higher degree than others, is able to create new values in life and happiness, all of which bear the purely personal stamp of their strange and unique individuality. A genius is the producer of personally stamped, special values.

To straightforward talent there must be added, to make genius, the "daemon", the inner voice, which is founded in the psychopathic element. This is the essence of genius, with its passionate hyper-sensitiveness, its restless mind, its immense intellectual range and its fine distinctions. The psychopathic admixture works almost entirely for the promotion of genius, shaping the personality to a richer, more highly conscious and more complex form, making fine contrasts and restless hostile impulses, and everywhere developing the keenest sensibilities. The abrupt inner antitheses and nervous over-refinement, which the psychopathic strain brings with it, becomes tamed by the weight of the sound part of the personality and is yoked as a driving force, as an enriching influence, in the integrated creative activity of genius. A considerable part of the ordinary, average person is to be found incorporated in men of genius.

Peace of mind and restful emotions have never been spurs to great deeds. The more one studies biographies, the more one is driven to the viewpoint that the psychopathic component is not merely a regrettable, non-essential accident of biological structure, but an intrinsic and necessary part, an indispensable catalyst perhaps, in every form of genius in the strict sense of that term.

It is a correct and widespread belief that genius is born as such. Original spiritual excellence of performance is possible only on the basis of special inherited dispositions, which may be assisted in their development by great efforts and favourable influences of social environment, but which can never be replaced by them.

Behind the outer facade lies the actual primary core of personality, as it was given in the first place, unchanging and immovable, in the inherited disposition.

Kretschmer asserted that the core of every enquiry into genius will always be composed of those famed for artistic creation - poets - and though Schiller declares that genius is ever the greatest mystery to itself, it might be interesting to give two examples of how actual poets feel their minds work when composing.

Eleanor Farjeon agreed that her verse is born as songs, alive and singing their own tunes in her head. The inspiration may come as a flashing vision of beauty, or truth, or emotion. It may arise out of things seen, heard, or held in the hand, or equally, out of some intuition of things not to be apprehended by the five physical senses. It is a sudden brilliant awareness, evoking all that is creative in her to receive and hold, to turn about and make-over an idea, or impression or insight, into that new state which is a poem.

Dr. E.V. Rieu admitted that inspiration came to him as a phrase tumbling into his mind from nowhere, already dancing at its own pace, significant and suggestive enough to capture his attention. The phrase becomes the keystone around which the rest is built up.

Coleridge held that genius is the power of carrying the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood, and T.S. Eliot contended that the artist is more primitive as well as more civilised, than his contemporaries. Close to this idea is that of Erich Jaensch who said that the artist's capacity is for special integration of perceptual and conceptual. He retains, and has developed, an archaic trait of the race: he feels and even sees his thoughts. Jackson Knight confirms this definition in saying that the essence of genius consists in the power to find contacts further back in time beyond the reach of others, and to evoke latent stores of feeling and of meaning in the collective mind of the present.

The unconscious mind would appear to play a very strong part in all creativity and the Lamas of Tibet considered the unconscious as a transcendental consciousness higher than normal consciousness. Wundt declared that the unconscious mind is for us like an unknown being who creates for us and finally throws the ripe fruit in our lap. Lowes stated that at the zenith of its power the creative energy is both conscious and unconscious ... controlling consciously

the throng of images, which in the reservoir, the well of the unconscious, have undergone metamorphosis. Poincaré, when faced with a problem which defeated his most determined conscious efforts, would go to sleep in the hope, frequently justified, that the dreaming mind would find the solution. Marcel Proust wisely pointed out that the imaginative functions hover only round the reality of the past when it is entangled in the reality of the present, and R.W. Gerard agrees with this when he says that the unconscious work goes on only over problems that are important to the waking mind, only when the mind's possessor worries about them, only when he cares, passionately.

Amy Lowell defined a poet as a person of extraordinarily sensitive and active subconscious personality, fed by, and feeding, a non-resistant consciousness. Francis Thompson averred that the poet stands at the very junction lines of the visible and the invisible and can express as he lists the material and immaterial in terms of each other, and Karl Jaspers has pointed out that to make the language of symbols clear is the highest achievement of philosophical thinking.

Poetry is the art of describing one subject in the terms of another and, as such, makes full use of sublimation. Ella Freeman Sharpe argues that sublimation is not a substitute for actual living: it is not living by proxy. It is a representation in some form of cultural value of those infantile wishes that can never become realities, and the poem makes a moment immortal, fixed for ever at rhythmic perfection, unspoiled and unused, and unusable. June Downey carries this idea further when she states that psychology has familiarised us with the notion of art as a compensatory substitution for reality, as one way of gratifying censored or, at least, unfilled desires. But great art involves impersonality, objectivity of point of view and interest in reality. Great art achieves this detachment without losing its emotional content. Miss Downey was convinced that it is the thought element in literature that gives it a range greater than that of any other art, for it embodies philosophies of life, hints at tremendous transvaluations, indulges in prophecy, and can convey all this by subtle suggestion, with no need to seek assistance of laboured argument.

Creative intelligence is the outstanding mystery of the world, but psychology appears to afford no explanation

whatever of artistic talent, and Freud assures us that the nature of creativity will always remain psycho-analytically inaccessible.

But if we cannot analyse creativity, surely no one came nearer to defining genius than that great man, Samuel Johnson, when he wrote:

Genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality without which judgement is cold, and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies and animates.

Dr. Johnson added that not one family in a hundred can expect a poet in a hundred generations, and I am certain that no one realised more than he that genius is the loneliest state in the world.



THE MAKING OF A BOSWELLIAN MUSEUM

Gordon P. Hoyle
Secretary, Auchinleck Boswell Society

A lasting and worthwhile commemoration of one of the greatest biographers of all time is the scheme now in progress by the Auchinleck Boswell Society to restore the ancient Parish Church in which James Boswell, his family and other generations, before and after, worshipped and the mausoleum in which he now lies peacefully at rest. The church will serve as a museum of Boswelliana in his honour.

The Boswell Society was founded by the writer and his two friends on January 7th 1970. Its Honorary Patron is Joyce, Lady Talbot de Malahide and its Honorary President for the year 1975 is Mr. David R. Boswell, the direct male descendant of the biographer's branch of the Boswell family.

The Society now owns both the old church and mausoleum. The church was given by the Church Session of the Barony Church and the mausoleum by the Honorary Patron.

Their restoration is the Society's main objective but not its sole one, since the little town of Auchinleck is now becoming a centre of Boswell pilgrimage.

The history of the Auchinleck Parish may date from before 2500 BC on the site of Kyle Castle. Then in 655 AD at the battle of Gwas, the last of the heathen kings was killed and Christianity was established.

The Celtic cell in Auchinleck was enlarged by Walter Fitzalan, First Steward of Scotland about 1145 to 1165 AD, but the first recorded reference to it was in 1239, when the grandson of Walter Fitzalan, then High Steward, gave it to Paisley Abbey with all its pertinents.

In 1265 Pope Clement IV issued a Papal Bull placing the parish of Auchinleck and Sanquhar under the patronage of the Abbot of Paisley.

After the Reformation, Lord Claude Hamilton was granted the patronage of the Church of Auchinleck, with its titles, church lands etc. The above passed through several hands; 1620 AD to John, Lord Loudoun, confirmed by Parliament in 1638, and lastly to David Boswell in 1700.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland passed an Act stating that further burials inside churches were forbidden. At this time an earlier David Boswell enlarged the church to its present size from 1641 to 1643. A bell dating 1641 was erected in the belfry incised "Jacobus Monteith me fecit. Edinburgh 1641." He was responsible for roofing over the opening through which coffins were lowered into the vault from inside the church, because the structure is of exactly the same type as the vaulted cellars of the Second Auchinleck Keep, built by James Boswell in 1610 AD. An entrance was then made from the outside of the church to reach the crypt by steps leading down to it and hewn out of solid rock.

In 1754 the old church was overhauled and made wind and watertight by Lord Auchinleck (Alexander Boswell) who was also responsible for building the mausoleum. The architect is unknown but a tenuous attribution can be given to William Adam, who made a very similar design for a mausoleum for the Duke of Montrose at Aberuthven, Perthshire. William Adam died in 1748, but the mausoleum could have been completed

after his death, circa 1754, because the north wall of the old church was broken to allow the walls of the mausoleum to be made and then the north walls of the old church were joined to the south wall of the mausoleum.

Previous to the present mausoleum, some other structure may have been on the site from 1634 to 1754 but no records regarding this have been found.

Sir James Boswell, Second Baronet of Auchinleck, in about 1845, inserted into the north wall of the mausoleum his very finely carved Coat of Arms, impaled with those of his wife, the daughter of Sir James Montgomery-Cunninghame, Sixth Baronet of Corsehill.

The old church in its heyday had two lofts with outside stairs, one at each end; the one at the belfry end had a fireplace and was used, as far as we know, by Lord Auchinleck and members of the church concerned with its business affairs. The final steps to reach the lofts were made in the thickness of the three-foot walls.

Sir Alexander Boswell, First Baronet of Auchinleck, carved out his own vault in the crypt during his lifetime. He was killed in the second last duel in Scotland.

Sir James Boswell, Second Baronet, built the present Auchinleck Barony Parish Church from 1836 to 1839, about 100 yards from the old church and then took the roof off the latter. That was 136 years ago after having given 700 to 900 years of religious services to the community.

Though an appeal for £12,000 has by no means been fully met, a remarkable amount of work has already been done to bring the ancient landmark back to useful life. The side walls are now up to their original height of twelve feet. The bell tower, gable-end and weather vane are restored. The clock is that of 1641. All repairs have been carried out in the mausoleum with a new trap door to vaults in the crypt; a wood and glass screen protects the coffins on the ground floor. Electricity has been installed, a pavement has been laid round the church and mausoleum, and the whole area cleaned up by voluntary labour.

Over £1,500 has been spent and another £2,000 will have been used by the end of 1975 to complete the restoration of the Boswell Mausoleum, the masonry work, with its new window

openings and making ready the second gable-end to receive the roof.

But putting a roof on the church is likely to cost over £4,500, not including what has already been spent, and so the voluntary labour so willingly given by youth and local men will have to be supplemented by donations to enable the work to be completed to house the many gifts that have been received. These include books, manuscripts, genealogical trees, portraits of the Boswell family, a Boswellian china punch bowl, a cabinet which belonged to James Boswell in his London House, and Lord Auchinleck's brief box which he carried on his horse-drawn chaise between Auchinleck House and his Edinburgh residence when in session.

The Society will willingly accept gifts of any nature to complement other materials relating to the eighteenth-century furnishings and ornaments.

With the completion of the museum, the small town of Auchinleck will be a worthy place of pilgrimage for those wishing to visit the memorial to the illustrious James Boswell who gave the world the finest biography of his friend, Samuel Johnson, with whom he toured the Hebrides in 1773.

Letters about the mausoleum and the proposed museum should be addressed to:

The Secretary,
Auchinleck Boswell Society,
131 Main Street,
Auchinleck,
Ayrshire KA18 2AF
Scotland.

Visitors will be welcome and can be shown round the old church and mausoleum.



Decorative end-pieces in this issue supplied by courtesy of

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ANNUAL COMMEMORATION 1974

The Annual Commemoration was held in Westminster Abbey on Saturday 21st December at 12 noon. The Very Reverend the Dean of Westminster conducted a brief service in the South Transept and the wreath on Dr. Johnson's grave was laid on behalf of the Johnson Society of London by Sir John Summerson, CBE, FBA, FSA, Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum.

The Commemoration was followed by an informal Christmas Luncheon at the White Hall Hotel, Bloomsbury Square, where at the afternoon Meeting Sir John addressed the Society on DR. JOHNSON'S CONTEMPORARIES IN ARCHITECTURE.



THE NEW RAMBLER AND INFLATION

At a time when many large publications have ceased to exist, The New Rambler with its very modest circulation faces its own financial difficulties. The cost of printing a single annual issue of the Journal today is now more than double that for printing two issues a year when the "C" Serial began in 1966. Additionally, postal charges, paper and binding costs etc. have increased substantially - and are certain to go on increasing. The deficit balance on the Journal Account occasioned by the two large 1972 issues made it necessary to restrict subsequent issues to one a year and to preserve a balance between Johnson Society papers and contributions from scholars overseas.

Costs to the Society have been kept to the inescapable minimum by voluntary efforts. I am especially grateful for the help given by the Hearts of Oak Benefit Society in typing the Journal and for the assistance and forbearance given by my wife and children who, over the last ten years, have helped increasingly with the packing, stamping and despatch of the Journal. Nevertheless, the deficit is still with us. Donations towards The New Rambler would be warmly welcomed.

Hon. Editor/Treasurer
The Johnson Society of London

The Poems of Samuel Johnson

Edited by David Nichol Smith and Edward L. McAdam

Revised by J. D. Fleeman

The 1941 edition of Johnson's poems in this series has been superseded in some respects by the Yale Edition of 1964, which added a number of new pieces to the canon. The Yale text was modernized, however, and it eliminated the important historical record of the publication of each piece. The revised O.E.T. edition is based on a new examination of the manuscripts and original documents, and new information brought to light by recent Johnsonian scholarship has been incorporated in the notes. Second edition £7 *Oxford English Texts*

Memoirs of Dr. Johnson

William Shaw

Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson

Hester Lynch Piozzi

Edited by Arthur Sherbo

This volume presents two highly personal portraits of Johnson. William Shaw shared Johnson's linguistic and literary interests, sided with him in the Ossian controversy, and concentrates here on Johnson as author. He is also the sole source of important information about Johnson's early life, and his study is now reprinted for the first time since 1785. Mrs. Thrale (later Piozzi) and her husband lived at close quarters with Johnson for years, seeing him in many moods. From 1768 she recorded Johnson's more striking observations and drew on this rich material for the *Anecdotes* which resound with the uncompromising vigour of Johnson's voice. Illustrated £4 *Oxford English Memoirs and Travels*

The Providence of Wit

Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts

Martin C. Battestin

This study attempts to account for the distinctive quality of the 'Augustan mode' in literature and art, by exploring the relationship between the idea of Nature and the idea of Art in the period 1660-1760. Professor Battestin discusses the ways in which ideas of Nature's harmony, symmetry, and variety affected the doctrine of mimesis in the art of music, architecture, and gardening. Illustrated £10.75

Oxford University Press

Divinity Sleeps in Stone

If any reader can provide the source of the following lines, please let the Editor know.

An enquirer has made many unsuccessful attempts to identify the author:

Divinity sleeps in stone
Divinity wakes in flowers
Divinity walks in animals
Divinity is conscious only
in human beings.

NEW MEMBERS/SUBSCRIBERS

Readers wishing to join the JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON or to subscribe to *THE NEW RAMBLER* are invited to write to:

The Hon. Editor/Treasurer
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All back issues of the current "C" Serial from No. 1 1966 are still available. Please write for quotations to the Editor.

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gratefully acknowledge

the assistance given
in typing this issue of

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