

THE NEW RAMBLER



JOURNAL OF
THE JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON

1977 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. XVIII

1977

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| ROBERT DODSLEY AND THE JOHNSONIAN CONNEXION Lois G. Spencer | 1 |
| "POETIC HARMONY" - SOME JOHNSONIAN VIEWS Kai Kin Yung | 19 |
| ANNUAL COMMEMORATION 1976 | 32 |
| THE ENCHAINED HEART AND THE PUZZLED BIOGRAPHER: JOHNSON'S LIFE OF SAVAGE Michael M. Cohen | 33 |
| FAMILY AND PILGRIMAGE THEMES IN BURNEY'S <u>EVELINA</u> Emily H. Patterson | 41 |
| DR. JOHNSON'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN Charmaine Wellington | 49 |
| AUCHINLECK BOSWELL SOCIETY | 58 |
| VISIT TO ST. ALBANS | 58 |
| DR. RONALD Mac KEITH | 59 |
| JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON : PRESIDENCY AND SECRETARYSHIP | 60 |

ROBERT DODSLEY AND THE JOHNSONIAN CONNEXION*

Dr. Lois M.G. Spencer

Despite the tribulations of early life in Lichfield, the fact that his father was a bookseller proved to be one of Johnson's few external assets - perhaps, his only one. He belonged by birth and breeding to a fraternity which, particularly as centralised in London, wielded crucial influence in contemporary literature. Johnson's life exemplifies this; at almost every creative phase in his progress, we find booksellers around him, proposing, persisting, prodding, providing, publishing and paying. Of the stationers' threefold functions, one, that of printer, was by now frequently hived off; but bookseller and publisher were still usually one and the same man: someone, therefore, to be courted.

Johnson, early in 1738, addressed himself to Edward Cave, the admired proprietor of the Gentleman's Magazine, saying that he had been asked to dispose of "the enclosed poem" for the benefit of its author, who was in acute financial need. Cave's discrimination, says Johnson, can be relied upon to assess and treat the poem justly. He entreats the courtesy of a reply "tomorrow". His final desperate promise to alter the poem, if accepted, in any way that Cave desires, virtually exposes the pitiful pretence:¹ the poem was London, and he was himself the necessitous poet.¹ A few days later Johnson begs Cave to tell him

by the penny-post, whether you resolve to print the poem. If you please to send it me by the post, with a note to Dodsley, I will go and read the lines to him, that we may have his consent to put his name on the title-page.

Came the sequel:

I was today with Mr. Dodsley, who declares very warmly in favour of the poem which he desires to have a share in, it being, he says, a creditable thing to be concerned in.

Boswell stresses the urgency behind Johnson's disguised and persistent approaches. He was twenty-nine, he had achieved almost nothing, and he badly needed money. He had his London but no purchaser.

Will no kind patron JOHNSON own?
Shall JOHNSON friendless range the town?
And every publisher refuse
The offspring of his happy Muse?

*A paper read at the Johnson Society of London Meeting on 20th March 1976.

Chairman: J.H. Leicester, M.A.

quotes Boswell from Derrick's Fortune: a Rhapsody. Not every publisher; for, he adds, "the worthy, modest and ingenious Mr. Robert Dodsley had taste enough to perceive its uncommon merit", and, "at a future conference, bargained for the whole property of it, for which he gave Johnson ten guineas". So Johnson acquired a publisher who would be for twenty-one years a friend and stand-by.

Robert Dodsley is important, then, to Johnsonians as the publisher of London, The Vanity of Human Wishes, The Vision of Theodore, and Irene; as instigator and promoter of the Dictionary; and as the purchaser, during the week after old Mrs. Johnson's death, of the chapters which appeared as The Prince of Abyssinia. From the outset, the relationship was cordial. Johnson's italics, in reporting Dodsley's opinion of London as a creditable thing to be concerned in, attest that the encouragement has heartened him; indeed, it so emboldened him that he bargained about the price. "I might have accepted of less", he told Boswell, "but that Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem, and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead".

Considering that Whitehead's poem was almost certainly the satire Manners, for publishing which Dodsley was in 1739 imprisoned by Black Rod after censure by the House of Lords, and was released only after costly undertakings, Johnson's claim would prove justified. But his confident "I will go and read the lines to Dodsley, that we may have his name" may also suggest that he recognised Dodsley as one whom an indigent applicant could approach without embarrassment.

One reason for such a belief may appear in Johnson's remark to Boswell two years after Dodsley's death, when the two were talking with Joseph Warton at Oxford. Boswell said that Dodsley's life ought to be written, "as he had been so much connected with the wits of his time, and by his literary merit had raised himself from the station of a footman". Johnson thought that such recall would not please Dodsley's brother and successor, James; "yet Dodsley himself was not unwilling that his original low condition should be recollected", for he had, at the height of his successes, reminded Johnson that he had known Dartineuf well, "for I was once his footman".

Thus menially had Dodsley first introduced himself to London, in verses entitled Servitude, and a collection called The Muse in Livery. By steps to be described, he had raised himself to become proprietor of The Tully's Head, in which bookshop he had installed himself in 1735, three years before Johnson approached him.

It is justly observed by the D.N.B. that "Dodsley's early condition lent a factitious importance to some immature verse". Yet it seems likely that this condition, and the verse which commemorated it, eased Johnson's pride during the introductory phase of their relationship; and Dodsley's progress provides noteworthy parallels and contrasts to Johnson's own fortunes and preoccupations.

The main study seems still to be Ralph Straus's Robert Dodsley, published by John Lane with an author's Preface dated 1910; the book needs to be reworked, and the documentation of Dodsley family papers and of MS letters between Dodsley and Shenstone should since have been printed in full; but one draws upon Straus with the more gratitude for his pioneering achievement.

Dodsley was born in February 1703, at Mansfield, eldest son of a well-read and mathematical schoolmaster who versified his precepts:

Game not in school-time when you ought to write-
Hold in yr elbow; stand fair to ye light.
Join all yr letters by a fine hairstroke-
Keep free from blots yr piece and writing block.⁵

He endowed Robert with his own love of letters, but with little else that proved propitious, apprenticing him to a Mansfield stocking-weaver, with whom he was miserable and, some say, starved. In despair Dodsley broke his articles. Somehow he entered private service, also the milieu of two of his brothers, one of whom, as gardener, subsequently laid out the grounds at Longleat. Among Robert's employers were Sir Richard Howe, of Compton, Glos., Charles Dartineuf, a witty clubman who pursued luxurious ease, and the Hon. Jane Lowther.

Though he would owe much, and always be grateful, to aristocratic patrons, Dodsley was in a sense the Margaret Powell of his day. He records vivaciously what it was like to be "a silly footman" - the early rising, the dirty chores which he loathed, the meticulous donning of wig and livery, the endless errands, and, at last, the ritual of the dining room, where

In order knives and forks are laid,
With folded napkins, salt, and bread.
The side-boards glittering too appear,
With plate, and glass, and china-ware

After 'the smoaking dishes' have appeared, enter the company.

They all sit down, and fall to eating,
While I behind stand silent waiting.
This is the only pleasant hour
Which I have in the twenty-four;
For whilst I unregarded stand,
With ready salver in my hand,
And seem to understand no more
Than just what's called for out to pour:
I hear, and mark the courtly phrases,
And all the elegance that passes;
Disputes maintain'd without digression,
With ready wit, and fine expression;
The laws of true politeness stated,
And what good breeding is, debated.

After the 'happy hour' has gone, Dodsley sets out the tea-tray:

The kettle fill'd, the water boil'd,
The cream provided, biscuits pil'd,
And lamp prepar'd: I strait engage
The Liliputian equipage
Of dishes, saucers, spoons and tongs,
And all th'etcetera which thereto belongs,
Which rang'd in order and decorum
I carry in and set before 'em.

Dodsley wrote these lines before 1732. Gulliver's Travels had appeared in 1726. The ease and point with which the footman-poet uses the adjective 'Liliputian' attest a sensitivity to the essence of a current mode which would characterise some of Dodsley's finest publishing achievements.

It may be that Goldsmith, later a friend of his, remembered these lines when in She Stoops to Conquer, old Hardcastle briefs his boorish servants: "You must not be so talkative, Diggory. You must hear us talk and not think of talking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating." Dodsley, however, thought much about 'The Miseries of Poverty', which, he says,

in a thinking man are intolerably aggravated by the quick sense he has of them...he endures the world's contempt for his mean and sordid habit

and is forced into "rude, illiterate company" which he cannot escape.⁸ A "poor footman", he says elsewhere, "is deprived of friends, fortune, and all the advantages of a liberal education... even his natural genius depressed by the sense of

his low condition". Such experiences may explain his warm response to Johnson's London. This publisher would savour the full meaning of "Oppression's insolence" and of the momentous line which he and Johnson agreed to have set entirely in capitals:

SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPREST.

Dodsley, then, is likely to have been from the first linked in Johnson's mind with the recurring theme of exploitation and deprivation through poverty. That Johnson was himself far better educated than Dodsley could perhaps be some gratification. But even as late as 1757, Johnson would describe Dodsley's one-time plight in terms which resemble Dodsley's own, but that they are loaded with a richness of Johnsonian irony such as Dodsley could never achieve:

Though it be granted that those who are born to poverty and drudgery should not be deprived by an improper education of the opiate of ignorance, even this concession will not be of much use... unless it be determined who are those who are born to poverty. To entail irreversible poverty upon generation after generation only because the ancestor happened to be poor, is in itself cruel, if not unjust, and is wholly contrary to the maxims of a commercial nation. Those who communicate literature to the son of a poor man, consider him as one not born to poverty, but to the necessity of deriving a better future from himself. In this attempt, many fail, and many succeed. Those that fail, will feel their misery more acutely; but... I hope the happiness of those whom education enables to escape from it, may turn the ballance against that exacerbation which the others suffer .

Dodsley's persistence in self-education through reading, and his robust energies, identify him with those who succeed. His sturdy optimism comes out strongly in the well-known lines which he addressed to the ploughman poet, Stephen Duck, whom he reminds that

The Iliad scarce was Homer's first essay;
Vergil wrote not his Aeneid in a day.
Nor is't impossible a time might be
When Pope and Homer wrote like you and me.
'Tis true, more learning might their works adorn;
They wrote not from a pantry nor a barn....

Dodsley and Duck are as yet naked fledglings, learning to chirp, who can only

Hop round the basis of Parnassus' hill...
But fledg'd, and cherish'd with a kindly spring,
We'll mount the summit, and melodius sing.¹⁰

Despite royal patronage, Holy Orders, and a benefice, Duck eventually killed himself and thus may be classed among Johnson's "Those that fail". Dodsley, however, needing advice on his early 'solitude' poem, sought out a pamphleteer whom he admired as Alexander Morton but discovered to be Daniel Defoe, and a very obliging counsellor. Defoe may have been amused to find in the poem a careless butler called Daniel, whose neglect brought about the plundering of his master's cellar. Dodsley tells his fellow-servants that they should "be careful then, as well as just. So may our masters safely us intrust."¹¹ Such lines might appeal to the man who ten years earlier had impressed Man Friday upon a gaping world.

Dodsley soon acquired patrons more influential than Defoe. The gain which could lie in writing "from a pantry" appears in the subscription lists for his earliest publications. A Muse in Livery had ninefold backing from the Lowther family, and was sponsored by three duchesses, two countesses, Sir Robert Walpole, and other celebrities. A second edition was needed within four months. Now and always, Dodsley remained grateful - and humble: "the least, the lowest of the tunefull Train", he called himself in 1745¹². But it seems that success and matrimony began together. On Valentine's Day 1731-2, he married Catherine Iserloo of St. Marylebone. The wedding was at St. James's, Westminster; if Catherine was a fellow-servant, say, a stillroom maid, she would have been practically equipped to assist Dodsley over the famous dinners which followed at the Tully's Head and which Johnson emphatically enjoyed. But she had other, more ecstatic charms which Dodsley's pastoral Muse extolled:

I hear the gay lark, as she mounts in the skies,
How sweet are her notes! how delightful her voice!
Go dwell in the air, little warbler, go.
I have music enough while my Kitty's below.

With pleasure I watch the industrious bee,
Extracting her honey from each flower and tree:
Ah fools! thus to labour to keep you alive;
Fly, fly to her lips and at once fill your hive.

.

But in vain I compare her, there's nothing so bright;
And darkness approaches to hinder my sight;
To bed I will hasten, and there all her charms
In softer ideas I'll bring to my arms.¹³

Connubial bliss continued until Kitty's death twenty-two years later. Johnson then wrote to Thomas Warton:

You know poor Mr. Dodsley has lost his wife. I believe he is much affected. I hope he will not suffer so much as I suffer for the loss of mine... I have ever since seemed to myself broken off from mankind; a kind of solitary wanderer in the world of life ... a gloomy gazer on a world to which I have little relation.¹⁴

Such Byronic misanthropy was far from Dodsley, who says little of his own bereavement.

In the early days of his marriage, Dodsley solicited and gained Pope's advice and help over his satirical playlet The Toyshop, which was performed at Covent Garden on 3rd February, 1735. The success of this sketch, which lacks plot or climax, is less surprising than appears, if one sets it beside the periodical writing of the day, for it gently mocks, with a humour akin to Sheridan's, the type characters whose follies had been frequent topics since the time of Addison and Steele. The play led to several others by Dodsley which enhanced his growing reputation but cannot be discussed in a paper concerned primarily with the Johnsonian connexion. It was published, probably at Pope's instigation, by Pope's publisher, Gilliver, eliciting six editions within a year; the proceeds enabled Dodsley, helped by £100 from Pope and likely assistance from other patrons, to install himself at the Tully's Head in Pall Mall, where, with Vol. II of Pope's works advertised as for sale by him, he began his outstandingly successful and varied career as publisher and bookseller.

Straus lists over 1,100 books published by Dodsley, or bearing his name on the title page, between 1735 and 1764.¹⁵ The list demands up-to-date bibliographical analysis, but can certainly attest the quality and extent of Dodsley's activities. Apart from his renowned connexion with Gray, he was closely associated with Pope, Johnson, Shenstone, Young, Horace Walpole, Burke, Stillingfleet and Sterne. To act as literary midwife to Johnson's Satires, Gray's Elegy and Sterne's Tristram Shandymight suffice for fame, but Dodsley worked also with Akenside, Spence, Lyttelton, Mason, Jenyns, Thomas Sheridan, Gilbert West, Chesterfield, Fielding

Richard Owen, Whitehead (William) and the Wartons. His lasting friendships with several of these clients, notably Shenstone and Spence, were warm and communicative. Among the subjects which appear chiefly to have attracted him (and to varying extents his partners in specific enterprises) are classical studies, especially on Latin writers: the mammoth Virgilian opus of Pitt and Warton was Dodsley's concern. French writers and translations also appear frequently, with emphasis on Voltaire. Science and anatomy recur: Newton and Leibnitz compared, treatises on the microscope, surgery, the generation of heat in animals, and on diet; travel, theology, politics, government administration, trade and commerce, accountancy, and even shorthand concerned him. That he did personally concern himself with much of all this, and with the selection of visually illustrative material, appears from his letters. He seems with vigorous unpedantic ardour to have delighted in self-education, publishing, and creative writing, seeing all these as natural elements of a good life.

La dolce vita counted, too. A very clubbable man, Dodsley enjoyed hospitality and stayed often with friends. Joseph Warton recalled with pleasure the number of eminent men he had met at Dodsley's Tully's Head dinners; Johnson opined that "the true Noctes Atticae were revived at honest Dodsley's house", and most of London's literati appear to have gathered there.¹⁶ The bookshop itself steadily played its part. Here, according to James Dodsley, Robert first suggested to Johnson the project of the Dictionary. Johnson's daunting "I believe I shall not undertake it" did not check Dodsley, who consulted the always helpful Pope, and, fortified by his suggestions, persuaded Johnson and his own professional colleagues to go forward.

Chesterfield, too, had been a helpful patron and supporter of Dodsley, so it was reasonable enough to propose him for a similar role in connexion with the Dictionary. Johnson agreed mainly because he could thus gain time; but Dodsley seems to have under-estimated both Chesterfield's other preoccupations and Johnson's intransigent sensitivity. He had not seen Chesterfield's characterisation of "the Hottentot". Astonishingly, Dodsley, who himself was proprietor of The World, in which Chesterfield's two papers ultimately appeared, retained the friendship of both men. He expressed himself as unhappy about the terms of Johnson's famous letter, which he thought scarcely just to Chesterfield. "Ah, Robin, Robin!", came Johnson's reply, according to a reminiscer in the Gentleman's Magazine of January 1794. "My

attentions to Lord Chesterfield have been unsparingly dealt out. I tell you I have all this time been only gilding a rotten post". Despite the fracas, Dodsley - who seems himself to have supplied or instigated much that belongs to the good patron's role - assisted Johnson to complete the work at Gough Square, and rejoiced in the ultimate splendour of the undertaking and the prestige which accrued to the lexicographer and to the booksellers.

Another venture dear to Dodsley in which he and Johnson were associated was The Preceptor, which was interestingly referred to by R.B. Schwartz in The New Rambler, Spring 1973. This remarkable manual-cum-anthology of cultural education assembles articles, sometimes in essay form, sometimes as dialogue or narrative, on almost every subject which should preoccupy an educated man. It is an approach to an encyclopaedia, and often a very entertaining one, well supplied with maps and diagrams and often lit by eloquence and humour. Dodsley, who designed the whole for use in schools, was here, I think, also a pioneer in adult education; the work is in no sense jejune. He took great pains over the selection of material, even petitioning the king for a special licence authorising the book's use, which was granted. Johnson applauded the production, which, he said, possessed "the Merit of an Original". It appeared in 1748. Johnson contributed The Vision of Theodore, which he afterwards esteemed as the best thing he had ever written and which may have helped to arouse in Dodsley that interest in figurative writing which would lead him later to make a special study and collection of the genre of the Fable. He also wrote for Dodsley a Preface to The Preceptor, which sheds an unusual light upon the gloom-laden figure of Johnson the Usher, since it reveals him as psychologically alert to the problems of pupils exposed to mass instruction. Any teacher, he says, knows

with how much Difficulty youthful Minds are confined to close Application, and how readily they deviate to any thing, rather than attend to that which is imposed as a Task....This Disposition... though it may be in some Degree obviated... cannot wholly be suppressed [so] it is surely rational to turn it to Advantage, by taking Care that the Mind shall never want Objects on which its Faculties may be usefully employed. It is not impossible, that this restless Desire of Novelty, which gives so much Trouble to the Teacher, may often be the Struggle of the Understanding starting from that, to which it is not by Nature adapted, and travelling in Search of something on which it may fix with greater Satisfaction.... When a numerous Class of Boys

is confined indiscriminately to the same Forms of Composition, the Repetition of the same Words, or the Explication of the same Sentiments, the Employment, must either by Nature or Accident be differently received by them;...the Ideas to be contemplated, may be too difficult for the Apprehension of some, and too obvious for others... Every Mind in its Progress through the different Stages of Learning... must either flag with the Labour, or grow wanton with the Facility of the Work assigned; and in either State it naturally turns aside from the Track before it. Weariness looks out for Relief, and Leisure for Employment, and surely it is rational to indulge the Wanderings of both.

So Johnson pleads for individual treatment and a flexible curriculum. He appears rather to have enjoyed writing Prefaces, though he got little money from them. In 1757, Dodsley paid him a guinea for introducing The London Chronicle, or Universal Evening Post, which the Dodsleys were launching in company with Strahan and others. The Preface promises a discriminating, well-informed and judiciously satirical periodical reviewing current affairs, and the venture proved a huge success. But Dodsley early protested against "personal invective of the most scurrilous kind", with which, after the eleventh number, he refused to be connected; and he withdrew his interest and his firm's name, repudiating also any share in what was clearly becoming a very lucrative production.¹⁷ The courtesy with which he wished it well is noteworthy and, set beside his emphatic objections, characteristic of the man. Straus implies that Dodsley saw the invective as a violation of Johnson's prefatory undertaking and therefore withdrew; but since Johnson himself was scarcely outraged, for Boswell tells us that this was the only newspaper which Johnson consistently bought, I think that Dodsley's action was the sequel to his earlier imprisonment by the House of Lords, and that he would not risk more censure on similar grounds.

In an early poem, Dodsley tells how

Room just to study, sleep and eat
Is room enough for me,
Authors, the best in every Art,
My Library should boast;
Not such whose Learnings, but whose Parts
And Judgments shine the most.
And some few Critics, whose impartial Aim
Is justly to commend, and justly blame.¹⁸

He expanded his life far beyond these limits, but was constant to his central passion. Instinctively he worked to share his tastes with and to supply the needs of other like-minded men. He was, fortunately, a born anthologist. As a dramatist of increasingly good repute, he made it his business to assemble a collection of old plays which might otherwise be lost and which, he thought, should be made generally available: "I shall take only one or two of the best from each Authour, as a Specimen of their Manner, and to show the Humour of their Times." After securing 800 subscribers, he produced a 10-volume Collection, for which he himself wrote the well-informed Preface on "The Rise and Fall of the English Stage," and also supplied notes on the selected dramatists. Two more volumes followed, and the Collection, which was re-issued after Dodsley's death by Isaac Reed, was highly esteemed as a valuable contribution to literary history.

Dodsley's most famous anthology was his Collection of Poems by Several Hands, of which the first three volumes (there were ultimately six) appeared in 1748. This was an anthology of modern verse, planned as a winnowing-out for posterity of poems "which seemed to merit a longer remembrance" than their original publication might appear to have warranted. Immense labour went into selecting, procuring and preparing items for the Collection, in which virtually all the major poets of Dodsley's time are represented, surrounded by lesser verse which forms a vivid and fascinating mosaic of eighteenth-century thought and life. Poetically, historically and socially, the Collection has such interest that it, like the Preceptor, ought to be more easily available for the general reader than it is; our shameful apathy wrecks the success of Dodsley's generous design. The two chief studies of it - W.P. Courtney's privately printed study published by Humphrey (75 copies) in 1910, and R.W. Chapman's paper to the Oxford Bibliographical Society of 10th November 1930, also need to be sought out. Chapman reminds Johnsonians that

Gray's Poems were not collected in a popular form until 1768; Johnson's not until 1785, but The Vanity of Human Wishes, the Drury Lane Prologue and some of Gray's Odes were universally accessible because they were in Dodsley.

Otherwise,

The bibliographical evidence would suggest that The Vanity of Human Wishes, like the Eton Ode and Collins's Ode to Evening, must have been almost forgotten for twenty years or more.

Dodsley similarly preserved interesting poems by less known poets - such as The Art of Dancing by Jenyns, Shenstone's Schoolmistress, and Green's The Spleen, which pleased Dodsley but was despised by Johnson. He includes a good measure of light verse which, though slight, is often entertaining, and presents a richness of metrical material which merits closer analysis than it has received.

On Christmas Day, 1762, Dodsley, Boswell, T. Davies and Goldsmith met at 8, Russell Street. "I had seen", says Boswell, "no warm victuals for four days, and therefore played a very bold knife and fork. It is inconceivable how hearty I eat, and how comfortable I felt myself after it." They talked "entirely in the way of Geniuses". Goldsmith opined that recent poetry, compared with that of the last age, was "very poor". He instanced Dodsley's Collection; Dodsley thought it "equal to those made by Dryden and Pope". Goldsmith: "To consider them, Sir, as villages, yours may be as good: but let us compare them house with house, you can produce me no edifices equal to the Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, Absalom and Achitophel, or The Rape of the Lock". Dodsley: "We have poems in a different way."²⁰

The reply is significant. The supreme quality of Dodsley's Collection is the anthologist's sensitivity to and illustrative portrait of the characteristics of contemporary taste, to whose nuances he may have been almost uniquely responsive. Here he differs from Johnson. When, in 1776, Boswell (twelve years after Dodsley's death) reported this conversation, Johnson insisted that Goldsmith and Dodsley must both have meant the same thing, namely, that today "there was no poetry, nothing that towered above the common mark". Boswell: "Does not Gray's poetry, Sir, tower above the common mark?" "Yes, Sir, but we must attend to the difference between what men in general cannot do if they would, and what every man may do if he would." Johnson does not examine this "if", or the relation between it and the current way of feeling; Dodsley experienced it as index to developing attitudes. So when Boswell countered with, "Then, Sir, what is poetry?" Johnson's answer was obscurantist. "Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is; but it is not easy to tell what it is."²¹ Not until a year later would Johnson agree to embark upon a venture which would have immensely delighted Dodsley, and in which Dodsley's own Collection would prove to have done some exceedingly useful spadework - the Lives of the Poets.

Though Dodsley was now recognised as a contemporary poet, he did not include in his Collection anything of his own except a single tribute to the now dead Pope. The energy with which he addressed himself to versifying in a variety of genres must establish him as a poetaster, but the gusto of his efforts, which appears in his letters to Shenstone and in the engaging simplicity with which Dodsley solicited (and seriously pondered) advice on his works, proves him to have been more than a dabbler; he was, with scarcely a flash of poetic inspiration, a devoted and diligent craftsman. He was disappointed with the reception of the first part of his planned epic on Publick Virtue, and desisted, but the Preface to the published section on Agriculture has a blend of humility and dignity which Keats would later exemplify: Dodsley submits the poem to the judgement of the public, explaining that he has worked hard at it and "consulted men as well as books", and will

quietly acquiesce in the general opinion; and must submit to be included among those who have mistaken their talent. But as the difficulties he has had to struggle with would in case of success have increased his reputation; he hopes if he hath fail'd they will soften his disgrace.

The "disgrace" was enhanced by Johnson's view of the epic as a "miserable poem", which did not sell. "My poor friend Doddy said, Publick Virtue was not a subject to interest the age." Johnson said that the poem was "fine blank" (meaning, says Langton, whom Boswell is citing, to express his usual contempt for blank verse). Yet it is sometimes effective, as when Dodsley shows us the farmer, at point of harvest, gazing enraptured on "the end of all his toil, and its reward", until the

echoes shrill

Of winding horns, the shouts and hallowings loud
Of Huntsmen, and the cry of opening hounds
Float in the gale melodious, but invade
His frightened sense with dread. Near and more near
Th'unwelcome sounds approach; and sudden o'er
His fence the tall stag bounds: in close pursuit
The hunter train, on many a noble steed,
Undaunted follow; while the eager pack
Burst unresisted thro' the yielding hedge.
In vain, unheard, the wretched hind exclaims;
The ruin of his crop in vain laments:
Deaf to his cries, they traverse the ripe field

In cruel exultation; trampling down
Beneath their feet, in one short moment's sport,
The peace, the comfort of his future year.
Unfeeling Wealth! ah, when wilt thou forbear
Thy insults, thy injustice to the Poor?
When taste the bliss of nursing in thy breast
The sweet sensations of Humanity?

Cliché-ridden, Parnassian, yes; but the lines have a vividness and feeling which I find difficult to reject. The pastoral theme, however, is the dominant key, and this would certainly not have commended it to Johnson.

One other literary exploit of Dodsley's, which brings him into close comparison with Johnson, must be noticed. Johnson's Irene, says Boswell, was begun during his teaching days, as early as 1736; a draft accompanied Johnson and Garrick on their fortune-hunting expedition to London. Walmsley, to whom Johnson read the tragedy, complained of Irene's excessive anguish: "How can you possibly contrive to plunge her into deeper calamity?", he asked, after hearing the first part.²³ However, he urged Johnson to persevere - with moderation; which he did; the production by Garrick in November, 1748, attests that Irene had been on the stocks for twenty-two years, a factor which might partly explain why Johnson said that he felt, about the nine nights' agony of the performance, "like the Monument". Johnson had eight years earlier asked Dodsley to publish Irene, but Dodsley advised waiting; now, however, he felt that the time had come, and paid Johnson £100 for it. Before 1744, Dodsley, likewise in thrall to Melpomene (to whom he addressed an elaborate Pindaric Ode) showed Pope his plan for a tragedy on the theme of Cleone, which, said Pope, he had himself attempted as a young man but had abandoned. He advised Dodsley to extend his three-acter to five. In the early fifties, it seems, Dodsley obeyed, reading the result to Shenstone at The Leasowes in 1756. Shenstone discerned "extraordinary merit", as did Chesterfield, with other luminaries whom Dodsley consulted. But Garrick, who was expected to produce the play at Drury Lane, dallied, refused, and rejected not only it but Dodsley himself when, as was his custom, for he had long been on the free list, he tried to enter the theatre in the usual way. Garrick seems also to have tried unsuccessfully to enlist Johnson as an opponent of the play.

Straus, drawing on the account by Mrs. Bellamy, the chief actress, tells amusingly of the eventual production under Rich at Covent Garden in 1758. At a trial run-through attended by an eminent assembly of Dodsley's well-wishers, when she

declaimed the line "Thou shalt not murder", Dr. Johnson 'caught me by the arm, and that somewhat too briskly, saying... "It is a commandment, and must be spoken 'Thou shalt not murder'". Mrs. Bellamy, who did not know Johnson, was annoyed at this and at the concern of the audience because she was determined to speak her lines in a manner consonant with the direct, simple diction which Dodsley had laboured to construct. She stayed resolute, and on the first night received such thunderous applause when I seemingly died, that I scarcely knew, or even could believe, that it was the effect of approbation. But upon hearing the same voice which had instructed me in the commandment, exclaim aloud from the pit, "I will write a copy of verses upon her myself", I knew that my success was insured.²⁴

So was that of Cleone, which was extolled for purity, nobility and pathos. It afforded "that most refined and human Pleasure ...of shedding Tears for the misfortunes of others". Straus quotes Churchill to more satirical effect:

Let then with Dodsley wail Cleone's woes,
While he, fine feeling creature, all in tears,
Melts as they melt, and weeps with weeping Peers.²⁵

So did Royalty: "Last night ye Prince of Wales, Prince Edward, and three more of the Royal Family were there", Dodsley told Shenstone, who had furnished an admired prologue for his friend. Garrick was routed, and Rich at Covent Garden was established as a genuine alternative to Drury Lane for the theatre aristocracy. It was all a great contrast to the reception of Irene, and Johnson's unswerving support of Dodsley was tinged with mockery: "Doddy, after the danger was over, went every night to the stage side, and cried at the distress of poor Cleone". Johnson went too, to the first night; "For Doddy, you know, is my patron, and I would not desert him." And he reported to Langton how well the play had been received.²⁶

How, then, do Johnson and Dodsley compare as tragic dramatists? Two instances may illustrate the main contrasts. Here, Johnson makes Mahomet review the nature of women:

For your inferior natures,
Form'd to delight, and happy by delighting,
Heav'n has reserv'd no future paradise,
But bids you rove the paths of bliss, secure
Of total death, and careless of hereafter;
While Heaven's high minister, whose awful volume
Records each act, each thought of sov'reign man,

Surveys your plays with inattentive glance,
And leaves the lovely trifler unregarded.²⁷

Mannered, Latinate, but strong, nervous writing compared
with Glanville's blandishments to Cleone:

Come, come, why were you formed
So tempting fair; why grac'd with every charm,
With eyes that languish, limbs that move with grace -
Why were these beauties given you, but to soothe
The sweet, the strong sensations they excite?²⁸
Why were you made so beauteous, yet so coy?²⁸

No wonder 'She puts him by with disdain'. Yet, whereas
Irene dies amid tumid and excessive histrionics:

Guilt and Despair, pale spectres! grin around me
And stun me with the yellings of damnation!²⁹

Cleone's final speech:

Adieu, my love!
I do entreat thee with my last, last breath,
Restrain thy tears - nor let me grieve to think
Thou feels't a pain I cannot live to cure³⁰

gives the actress full opportunity for pathos - as, indeed,
she has had throughout the play for development; whereas
Johnson's Irene is all too seldom seen. Perhaps as a result
of Walmsley's early strictures, Johnson seems anxious not
to expose her to view more than he must. Dodsley's concern
for simple directness is effective when Cleone appeals to
her little boy:

But come, my love,
Thou wilt not leave me
Child: No, indeed I won't!
I'll love you, and go with you everywhere³¹
If you will let me.

Dodsley left no heir, but could make a child talk naturally.
His little fishes do not talk like whales.

One of his last acts before retirement in favour
of his younger brother James was to assist Johnson in the
Rasselas emergency, acting with Strahan and Johnson. Boswell
complains that £100, plus £25 for a second edition, was too
low a price. Johnson himself, perhaps because of the piecemeal
circumstances, seems not to have thought so; his only personal
comment, when in 1781 he happened upon a copy and looked at

the work a second time, was wholly reasonable: "my Judgement I have found is no certain rule as to the sale of a book."

Dodsley's judgement, however, had proved to be consistently and lucratively sound. It was accompanied by a lifelong eagerness to serve the cause of literature and to use the advantages which his own energies had secured so that others might be helped to succeed. The willingness to be concerned in something creditable from however obscure a source, which marked his first contact with Johnson, stayed with him; his dedication here resembled that of his great predecessor, Humphrey Moseley. Straus quoted a poem by George Keate which tells how Dodsley laboured on behalf of the poets, as might a devoted schoolmaster.

Had nursed them all when they were little,
And brought them forward one by one,
Nay, taught them too alone to run.
"What joy", he cries, "from all disasters
To see safe home my dear young masters...
They'll find me older grown, no doubt,
But Tully's Head will mark me out."³²

To this end he worked very hard, despite the agonising attacks of gout which often immobilised him and which he described as his damnation. Quarrels there were, but these, in a contentious age, were few, and not long sustained: with Dr. Brown, with Garrick, and with the redoubtable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In general, Dodsley was regarded as peaceable and magnanimous - remarkably so in view of the pressure at which he invariably worked and the time he made in which to associate himself with the interests of his friends: it is to Dodsley that we owe what is probably the best and fullest description of The Leasowes. His comparatively early retirement in 1759 may have arisen partly from the handicap of gout and partly from the feeling that James would now be happier at the Tully's Head without him. It clearly was not caused by any diminution of professional enthusiasm. Shenstone's death in 1761 caused Dodsley acute and lasting sorrow; he devoted himself to the editing of Shenstone's works, spending much of his time with their joint friend, Joseph Spence, who carefully watched over Dodsley's failing health. At Spence's house near Durham, Dodsley died in 1764. His monument is in Durham Cathedral, but his true memorial lives in the publications for which he was responsible, and in the achievements of those writers whom he eagerly assisted. Among these was Samuel Johnson.

Documentation

Boswell's Life of Johnson (referred to as Life), O.U.P., 1946, and R. Straus's Robert Dodsley, Lane, 1910 (referred to as Straus) are the main sources used.

1. Life, i, 82. (Probably January, 1738)
 2. ibid., i, 85.
 3. Straus, p.50 et seq.
 4. Life, i, 658 (20 March, 1776)
 5. Straus, p.8.
 6. ibid., p.17.
 7. She Stoops to Conquer, II, i, opening.
 8. Straus, p.12
 9. Review of (Jenyns's) Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil.
 10. Dodsley, R., Trifles, Tully's Head, 1745, pp. 224-225.
 11. Straus, p.22.
 12. Title-page of Trifles.
 13. From "Kitty: A Pastoral". Trifles, pp. 198-201.
 14. Life, i, 184.
 15. Straus, pp. 316-383.
 16. ibid., p. 88 (quoting Warton, J., n.r.)
 17. ibid., pp.96-99.
 18. "The Wish", in Dodsley's A Muse in Livery: or the Footman's Miscellany, 1732.
 19. Dodsley, ed., A Collection of Poems by Several Hands, 1748, i, Preface.
 20. Boswell, London Journal, Heinemann, 1950, p.105.
 21. Life, i, 658.
 22. Agriculture : A Poem, Canto iii, ll.65-84.
 23. Life, i, 68.
 24. Straus, pp. 201-3.
 25. Ibid, p.231, n.r.
 26. Life, i, 217.
 27. Johnson, Irene, II, vii.
 28. Cleone, I, iv.
 29. Irene, V, ix.
 30. Cleone, V, iii.
 31. ibid, II, iv.
 32. Straus, p.152, n.r.
-

"POETIC HARMONY" - SOME JOHNSONIAN VIEWS*

Kai Kin Yung
National Portrait Gallery, London

The appreciation of "poetical melody", to use Dr. Johnson's expression, is common to us all. Indeed, when we are in an exalted mood, we may venture to write down a verse or two. Or if we imagine ourselves a Wordsworth, we may spend half a day sulking and wait for our emotions to be appropriately recollected before we commit them to paper. But in these days of strange noises, what one man interprets as a scream or a screech, another may call harmony. What is poetry to one may well be unintelligible scribblings to others. "The perception of harmony", as Johnson says, "is indeed conferred upon men in degrees very unequal." Fashions change, and so do standards. My aim today is not to present you with any controversial theories, but to consider with you what Johnson regards as general rules which constitute "poetic harmony"; and I should like to begin by borrowing the three definitions of harmony in his Dictionary:

1. The just adaptation of one part to another.
2. Just proportion of sound; musical concord.
3. Concord; correspondent sentiment.

The first definition: "The just adaptation of one part to another" we may apply to the structure of a poem, its subject and its arrangement. To Johnson, composing a poem is like building a house. "Knowledge of the subject is to the poet what durable materials are to the architect." How many poems fail to please us because they appear to be insincere, because the poets are showing off or because they themselves are not completely masters of their ideas? If a person wishes to write a poem about cricket or football, we would expect him to know the basic rules and subtleties of the game. If he wants to mention buttercups and daisies, he must first know where and when they grow. If he wishes to write an elegy, he must first know the character or the achievement of the person whose death he is to lament.

Admittedly, Pope's Essay on Man is the work of a man of very high intelligence. Many of its wise maxims are well known to us:

*A paper read at the Johnson Society of London Meeting
on 18th December 1976.

Chairman: J.R.G. Comyn, Esq.

The learn'd is happy nature to explore.
The fool is happy that he knows no more.

For forms of government let fools contest,
Whate'er is best administered is best.

But, in Johnson's opinion, the poem is not "the happiest of Pope's performances." Metaphysical morality is a new study for Pope, and he has not sufficiently mastered it. His cleverness baffles rather than inspires the reader. In the end, as Johnson says, "the reader feels his mind full, though he learns nothing." The moral of the poem, if we can find it, is probably that man belongs somewhere in the universe, that he has certain functions, and that he knows something, though where and what exactly they are it is impossible to know. Neither does Pope. "It had been vain to ask Pope," says Johnson, "who probably had never asked himself."

The same objection can be raised against Johnson's own poem, London. He is not master of his subject. The best parts are what he feels and what he knows: the falsehood of the stage, the evils of poverty, and the dangers in London at night. But when he digresses into historical allusions and rhetorical reflections, the poem loses its serious impact, because his digressions appear unnatural and insincere.

Knowledge of the subject is primary. The poet must also be consistent in its treatment. He must stick to his subject however tempting the allusions are, as in the case of pastoral poetry:

It is therefore improper to give the title of a pastoral to verses, in which the speakers, after the slight mention of their flocks, fall to complaints of errors in the church, and corruptions in the government, or to lamentations of the death of some illustrious person, whom once the poet has called a shepherd, he has no longer any labour upon his hands, but can make the clouds weep, and lilies wither, and the sheep hang their heads, without art or learning, genius or study.

"Much praise," Johnson says, "has been bestowed" on Milton's Lycidas. But the poem is not without fault; "its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind." The reader knows that neither Milton nor his deceased friend was a shepherd, so it is difficult to imagine them "battening their flocks". Such an improbability "will excite no sympathy". The changeable role of the central character is not only confusing but impious. "The shepherd likewise is now a feeder

of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock."

Basically, it is a matter of taste. But we may bear in mind Johnson's own elegy to his friend, Robert Levet. Milton's pathos is idyllic, whereas Johnson's is personal and direct, as the opening stanza shows:

Condem'd to Hope's delusive mine,
As on we toil from day to day,
By sudden blasts, or slow decline,
Our social comforts drop away.

The structure of epic or tragic poetry is like a grand piece of architecture. It should be "solid as well as beautiful; that nothing stand single or independent, so as that it may be taken away without injuring the rest; but that from the foundation to the pinnacles one part rest firm upon another." It must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. These parts are connected naturally, or to use Johnson's favourite word, "happily".

Johnson praises the tragedies of Shakespeare that "every man finds his mind more strongly seized than by the tragedies of any other writers." With the others, we are pleased by particular speeches, but Shakespeare "always makes us anxious for the event." He always keeps our curiosity going, and we want to read the play through. To appreciate Shakespeare properly, Johnson gives us some very practical and obvious advice - which we often ignore. He tells us to forget about the critics, forget about commentators, read the play first. Once our fancy is on the wing, read the play through and get to feel how Shakespeare presents his story, even though some of the passages may seem difficult to understand:

Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness, and read the commentators.

Reading the play in its proper context is something we frequently forget. How often do we tend to isolate a soliloquy of Hamlet or King Lear and try to interpret the entire play on it, forgetting how and why he is led up to saying it? The same can be said about reading a poem. Read it through first, from beginning to end. Find out first how the poet conjures up his picture or produces his argument. Is it consistent? Is it convincing? Criticism, however brilliant and inspiring, is

secondary to poetry. It is, so Johnson reminds us, "to be ranked among the subordinate and instrumental arts."

Planning is essential for almost all types of poetry. But there are two types in which planning seems arbitrary: the didactic and the descriptive. Johnson's general assessment of didactic poetry can be found in his comment on Pope's Essay on Criticism:

Almost every poem, consisting of precepts, is so far arbitrary and immethodical, that many of the paragraphs may change places with no apparent inconvenience; for of two or more positions, depending upon some remote and general principle, there is seldom any cogent reason why one should precede the other.

Such a poem consists of "homogeneous truths" or "truths respecting the same end". These truths can be presented in various series. How these series are arranged do not affect the final conclusion of the poem. Even for a perfectionist like Pope it is possible to remove one part of his poem and replace it with another, without doing too great an injury to the argument.

The same can be said about descriptive poems. They consist of scenes "which they must exhibit successively, are all subsisting at the same time, the order in which they are shown must by necessity be arbitrary, and more is not to be expected from the last part than from the first." His objection to Pope's Windsor Forest and to Thomson's Seasons is that they are "want of plan". To this, Johnson offers no remedy. There can be no rule as to why one scene should come before another, though compared with tragic and epic poetry, "the memory wants the help of order, and the curiosity is not excited by suspense or expectation."

The curiosity of the reader of The Seasons is excited in quite a different way, not by "suspense" or "expectation", but by "extended scenes" and "general effects" which make the reader's thoughts "expand with his imagery and kindle with his sentiments." This is not the occasion to go into the pictorial effect of Thomson's poetry. But perhaps we should remember that Thomson's enthusiasm (Johnson's word) for nature and his impressionistic technique find their strongest and ablest admirers among the Romantics. It is not surprising that a painter like Turner has great admiration for him. Turner not only writes poems imitating Thomson's style, but sometimes quotes from Thomson's works to illustrate his own paintings. Thomson, as Johnson sees him, is "a man of genius":

he looks round on Nature and on Life with the eye which Nature bestows only on a poet....The reader of The Seasons wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shows him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses.

If the end of didactic and descriptive poetry is not "method", it is "perspicuity". So long as the precepts or the pictures are clearly presented, the poems have done their parts successfully. "Where there is no obscurity, it will not be difficult to discover method."

The second definition of harmony concerns the harmony of sounds: "Just proportion of sound; musical concord." We all agree with Johnson that to give a complete definition of poetry is almost impossible. And if we are pestered with the same question by a man like Boswell, we are tempted to give an easy answer. "Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is; but it is not easy to tell what it is." But I think we all agree that the basic difference between poetry and prose is not ideas or effects. Prose, like poetry, can be instructive as well as pleasing. It can enlighten our understanding, or broaden our imagination. The basic difference is the "melody". The superiority of the poet is, according to Johnson, "that to all the powers which the perfection of every other composition can require, he adds the faculty of joining music with reason, and of acting at once upon the senses and the passions." In other words, "the poetical melody" has the superior power of arousing instantaneously and simultaneously our rational and emotional feelings. To say therefore, like Cowper, that Johnson has a bad ear for poetry, cannot be further from the truth. Whenever Johnson considers the ability of a poet, he often refers to the melody of the poet's verse. For example, he tells us that Pope's St. Cecilia Ode "hangs upon the ear". He accuses Thomson for being "too exuberant, and sometimes may be charged with filling the ear more than the mind." And he says that Young's prosody is so peculiar that he seems not to "have had any direction but from his own ear".

Harmony is "proportionate sounds". So there can be "no harmony in a single sound, because it has no proportion to another." Harmony is relative. Only when we put several sounds together we can say whether their rhythm is smooth or rugged, melodious or harsh. As Johnson quotes from Isaac Watts in his Dictionary: "Harmony is a compound idea, made up of different sounds united."

There are two principal sounds in the English language: the vowel and the consonant. The vowel is usually strong, and, therefore, usually accented. The consonant is usually

weak and therefore usually not accented. No man, says Johnson, can be a poet if he has no knowledge of "accents and pauses." If a poem is to be "melodious and pleasing", it is necessary "not only the words to be so ranged as the accent may fall on its proper place, but that the syllables themselves be so chosen as to flow smoothly into one another." This can be achieved "by a proportionate mixture of vowels and consonants, and of tempering the mute consonants with liquids and semivowels."

Johnson notices that Milton has a peculiar habit of what he calls "elision of one vowel before another, or the suppression of the last syllable of a word ending with a vowel", as in these lines:

Knowledge

Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.

This he does not recommend. It is "unsuitable to the genius of the English tongue." He is also displeased when a line is "clogged and impeded with clusters of consonants," for example, full of sibilants, as in these lines by William Collins:

With short shrill shrieks flits by on leathern wing
and The Year's best Sweets shall duteous rise

and these by Milton

Tripping ebb; that stole

With soft foot tow'ards the deep who had now stopp'd
His sluices...

The gentle sound of the tide has become rather "rough and halting" because of the use of sibilants.

Although Johnson is sensitive to "collisions of consonants, and opening of vowels upon each other", he is aware that in order to prevent the cadence from being monotonous, the accents do not fall in the same places in every line. Moreover, there are occasions when the subjects of the poets are important and complicated enough as "to take off their care from the cadence of their lines." Shakespeare is particularly fond of putting vowels together: the beginning of the famous song in As You Like It

Blow, blow, thou winter wind

and Hamlet's "To be, or not to be..." Perhaps the most striking example is King Lear's storm speech:

Blow winds, and crack your cheeks; rage, blow!
You cataracts, and hurricanoes, spout
'Til you have drenched out steeples, drown'd the cocks!
etc., etc.

Here, Lear's rage within himself as caused by the cruelty and ungratefulness of his daughters finds its full outburst in the stormy weather to which he and his companions are subjected. The harshness of the vowels reflects Lear's inner conflict and torment. Even Johnson himself occasionally sacrifices the cadence of his poetry to the sense. The vowels and consonants in the following lines from his London are not evenly distributed, and their irregularity is a reflection of the poet's bitter sympathy towards those who suffer from poverty:

By numbers here from shame or censure free,
All crimes are safe, but hated poverty.
This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
This, only this, provokes the snarling muse.
The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak,
Wakes from his dream, and labours for a joke;
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.
Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.

Of these twelve lines, only five seem to me pure iambs:

By numbers here from shame and censure free
and The sober trader at a tatter's cloak
and With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze
and And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways
and lastly
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.

The rest are mixed. There are two lines which have only four accents:

Wakes from his dream, and labours for a joke
and Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd

There is one line which has at least six accents:

Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart

(Some may even emphasise the word "more" as well, thus making seven accents altogether). Four times Johnson finishes a line with a vowel and begins the next one with another:

By numbers here from shame or censure free
All crimes are safe, but hated poverty (free/All)
and This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
This, only this, provokes the snarling muse. (pursues/This)
and Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest (distress'd/Sure)
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart (jest/Fate)

Besides "collision of consonants" and "opening of vowels upon each other", there is another element which may create "harshness" of sound. This is the use of monosyllables, as Johnson tells us, following Dryden's idea. Dryden writes:

We are full of monosyllables, and those clogged
with consonants and our pronunciation is effeminate;
all which are enemies to a sounding language.

He even demonstrates this point with this line -

And ten low words oft creep in one dull line

We must, however, not think that Johnson or Dryden maintains that monosyllables cannot compose harmony. Even Cowley, whom Johnson does not particularly admire, sometimes produces "sweet and sonorous" heroic lines which are formed of monosyllables. If Dryden and Johnson had said that "monosyllables cannot compose harmony", they would have to condemn many of the immortal lines in English poetry. Shakespeare is particularly fond of using monosyllables to begin or end a sonnet, as

When I do count the clock that tells the time

and the ending of Sonnet 18:

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

The song in Cymbeline beginning with

Fear no more the heat of the sun

and Othello's soliloquy before he kills Desdemona

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars

Sir Philip Sidney's

With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies

Marlowe's seductive invitation to the Shepherdess

Come live with me and be my love

George Herbert's peaceful opening of his Sunday

O Day most calm, most bright

The fruit of this, the next world's bud

and Edward Young's sad but true observation

The Bell strikes one. We take no note of time

But from its loss.

Johnson's objection to the use of monosyllables is not because they cannot compose harmony, but because monosyllables are of Teutonic origin, or formed by contraction, they commonly begin and end with consonants. While monosyllables can make a line sound more effective and dramatic, they also make the words seem longer. Johnson himself does not seem to be fond of using them. I have not gone through all the poems he has written and counted all the monosyllabic lines. I have only checked with his three most famous poems. Out of the 263 lines in London, only two are monosyllabic. Out of 368 lines in The Vanity of Human Wishes, only four. And out of the 36 lines in Lines on the Death of Dr. Robert Levet, three.

Also related to the subject of harmony of sounds are some of Johnson's views on poetic forms. Almost without exception he insists on regularity and uniformity of lines and stanzas as essential for maintaining musical harmony in poetry. A classic example is in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream where Oberon begins his speech:

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lip and the nodding violet grows.

In his edition Johnson alters the first line to "I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows." By replacing "where" by "whereon" he completes the heroic line. But the emphases are distorted. The reader is forced to emphasise "whereon", and consequently the accents on the last three vowels "wild thyme blows" are weakened.

Uniformity of form produces regularity of rhythm. This helps the poem to become memorable. "The voice is regulated and the memory relieved." It is with this advantage in mind that Johnson makes his comment on blank verse in his Life of Milton:

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the "lapidary style"; has neither the easiness of prose nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance.

He does not, however, suggest that Milton's blank verse should be rhymed. Quite the contrary, "whatever be the advantage of rhyme I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymers." Johnson, in fact, makes the same observation about the other two masters of blank verse who were his contemporaries: James Thomson, poet of The Seasons, and Edward Young, poet of Night Thoughts. The subjects in both these poems, as in Milton's Paradise Lost, are of sufficient significance as to enable rhyme to be spared. One is in praise of God's natural world in all four seasons, and the other is a meditative work on life, death, virtue, friendship, and immortality.

Compared with the hexameter, the English heroic is shorter. The number of accents and pauses is therefore fewer. The music of the line is more difficult to maintain unless, as Johnson says, "all the syllables of every line co-operate together." Without the help of rhyme, and if the subject of the poem is not sufficiently captivating, blank verse becomes dull. Unless the poet is a master like Milton who knows where the lines begin and end, the music of his verse will soon be lost. Blank verse then seems to be verse only to the eye - a common weakness of those who attempt to write free verse!

If the absence of rhyme makes harmony difficult to be achieved in blank verse, the presence of too many, as in sonnets, also in Johnson's opinion makes it so. "The fabric of a sonnet," says Johnson, "however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours which, having great variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed." Those of us who are fond of Shakespeare's sonnets will naturally disagree with this statement. But Johnson's remark is, I think, in many ways directed at the sonneteers of his times. The popularity of the sonnet continued to grow to such an extent that by Wordsworth's time the form had become one to be severely censured. It was Wordsworth who urged

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honours.

But it is interesting to notice that the list of able sonneteers Wordsworth produces consists of, besides Petrarch, Tasso, Camoens and Dante, only three English ones: Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton. Of the many sonnets written in the 18th century, how many can we remember?

As mentioned before, Johnson insists on regularity of lines and stanzas for achieving harmony in verse. So the use of triplets or alexandrines can hardly be expected to be approved by him. Swift in fact goes so far as to ridicule the use of triplets in these lines:

Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts and blood,
Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,
Dead cats and turnip-tops come tumbling down the flood.

Johnson's objection to the use of a triplet is that regularity is broken. "The ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet; but is on a sudden surprised with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces of the margins." The effect of the alexandrine is the same. "It surprises the reader with two syllables more than he expected."

From sound to sense, from melody to meaning, our next point to consider is "poetic diction" which is, to use Johnson's words, "the vehicle of thoughts". This can be related to his third and final definition of harmony: "concord, correspondent sentiment." The word "sentiment", according to Johnson, does not mean "feeling", but "thought, notion, opinion" or "the sense considered distinctly from the language or things; a striking sentence in a composition." That Johnson is the authoritative lexicographer who understands the full force and meaning of words can never be doubted. We may sometimes accuse him of using big words. But we should, like Mrs. Piozzi, remember that he uses them "only when little ones would not express his meaning as clearly, or when perhaps the elevation of the thought would have been disgraced by a dress less superb."

In his Life of Dryden, Johnson has this to say about "poetic diction". He maintains that, with a few exceptions, there was "before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit

to things." The first part of the statement, which concerns the establishment, or rather the lack of establishment, of a diction distinctly poetical before Dryden, is beyond the scope of our present consideration. But perhaps Johnson's position should be briefly clarified. The few exceptions to whom Johnson refers as original, and whose reputations are unaffected by fashions, are Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. To Shakespeare and Milton, the praise can be equally divided "of having first discovered to how much smoothness and harmony the English language could be softened." As for Milton, although he has modelled his versification on the poets of Greece and Rome, "whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety...that from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned."

While Johnson has placed such high esteem on their works, it is understandable that he is doubtful of the ability of their imitators. The intensive study and process of imitating these masters in the 18th century can in some ways be regarded as responsible for the creation of a kind of poetic diction. For by pursuing with great diligence the beauties of these poets, the 18th-century imitators have preserved some of the finest gems in English poetry. Servile imitations, however, cannot as Johnson says "be reckoned among the greatest achievements of intellect." Imitating Spenser is not as easy as "disfiguring the lines with a few obsolete words." How many 18th-century poets, for example, are truly successful Spenserians? Besides William Collins and Thomson, we may perhaps recall certain passages from James Beattie's Minstrel or William Shenstone's School-Mistress. The rest have escaped our notice.

Dryden lived from 1631 to 1700. He saw the rise and fall of the metaphysical poets. While appreciating their knowledge, Johnson seriously objects to their having "no regard to that uniformity of sentiment." They knew about science, geography, medicine, and astronomy, all of which had discovered new horizons in the latter part of the 17th century. To show off their learning seems to be the principal endeavour of the metaphysical poets. They are always looking for images "unexpected" and "surprising". They write more as "beholders than partakers of human nature." They write of love and friendship, but the reader is led to think of an atlas or a telescope.

The second part of Johnson's remark on poetic diction in which he begins by saying that "words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet" concerns a poet's choice of vocabulary. Just as the harmony of sounds is relative,

the harmony of sentiments is also relative. "No word," says Johnson "is naturally or intrinsically meaner than another". It is its context and its association which makes it so. "Words become low by the occasions to which they are applied, or the general character of them who use them; and the disgust which they produce, arises from the revival of those images with which they are commonly united." To avoid being utterly common or vulgar, Johnson advocates a "middle" diction which is above pure colloquialism. He therefore praises Shakespear's comic dialogue:

there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and this poet seems to have gathered his comic dialogue. He is therefore more agreeable to the ears of the present age than any other author equally remote, and among his other excellencies deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language.

At times like ours when it is far too common to find foul and vulgar sentiments in writings, this is still a sane and sensible caution. The point of judgement is not what are the words used, but what they actually convey. Do they offend, or does propriety reside?

"Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing," says Johnson, "must please at once". If the words are too obscure, the sentiment of the verse loses its immediate attraction. One of the causes of obscurity is therefore the use of "hard words", or technical and scientific terms. These are to be avoided because few readers will understand them. "A science cannot be taught but by its proper terms, but is it always necessary to teach the art."

The world progresses, so our vocabulary increases. What are regarded as "hard words" at one time are common at another. The question to ask is whether we, as readers, are ignorant and lazy, or is the poet deliberately obscure. Coleridge tells us that before we understand an author's ignorance, presume ourselves ignorant of his understanding. Johnson has given us the answer. "Poetry is to speak an universal language." When hard words are used, always ask whether they will be understood, not by the privileged few, but by the general public.

It is impossible to summarise the poetical achievement of any period. But one of the most favourite censures against 18th-century poetry is that it is too much to do with filling the ear than the mind. A few classical

allusions, combined with some pleasant sounds, may be called poetry. Johnson was aware of this and was impatient to declare "Poetry is a luxury." It was time some principles should be established. "To judge rightly of an author," he writes, "we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them." Much of what he writes concerning "poetic harmony" is to serve this purpose. The 18th century, like any other period, had its own traditions and experiments. It was a time, largely due to Johnson's Dictionary, and to his frequent exertions, when the country was proud of her own language and her own poets. What Johnson did was to encourage this and while doing so helped the public to find out the faults and merits of English poetry. His message was to learn from others - masters like Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare - but learn wisely. Write naturally and simply. Write, as he did, according to one's own conscience. Only the test of time is the true judge of any work of art.

ANNUAL COMMEMORATION 1976

The annual ceremony was held in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, on 18th December by courtesy of the Dean and Chapter. A wreath was laid on Samuel Johnson's grave by K.K. Yung, Esq., of the National Portrait Gallery and formerly Curator of the Birthplace Museum, Lichfield. In his Address, Mr. Yung concluded:

On behalf of the Johnson Society of London I have the honour of placing this wreath on the tomb of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who died 192 years ago, as a tribute to his memory. While every year brings in new findings of his great knowledge and understanding, let us remember that among his many achievements may be claimed one above most writers - the ability to make scholarship inseparable from life. He himself was example of his written principles: philosophic, wise, modest, humorous and charitable. He was a poet in the full sense of the word. He knew, experienced, and taught the great art of living, and his life was one of virtue, diligence, love and faith.



THE ENCHAINED HEART AND THE PUZZLED BIOGRAPHER:

JOHNSON'S LIFE OF SAVAGE

Michael M. Cohen, Murray State University, Kentucky

I am not a fixed character, for I am constantly enlarged by my own experiences. Any definition of the self must allow for this enlargement. The nature of the self derives from the way in which it turns experience into knowledge -- that is, into readiness for action.

I have begun with this quotation from Jacob Bronowski's little book of American Museum of Natural History Lectures called The Identity of Man because I believe that Bronowski's notion of identity, with a few slight reservations, was also Samuel Johnson's. Johnson takes a view of man which sees experience as enlargement, or at least modification, of the self. Experience is assimilated and turned into some kind of knowledge ideally, though it may also modify in other ways. Repeated action -- good, bad, or merely trivial -- may harden into habit. In any case a difference of some kind is to be expected. The most caustic criticism Johnson can level against another writer, and the kind which steeps every page of his review of Soame Jenyns Inquiry, is that of writing as if he had not lived in the world, of ignoring experience of actuality in attempting to make a philosophical system neat.

Johnson certainly looked at his own experience as formative and modifying, even very late into life. In the very moving prayers and meditations which he recorded, he continually chastises himself for failing to profit from what has happened to him. On the other hand, in the early Life of Barratier (written four years before the Life of Savage), we find him saying that "to prolong life, and improve it, are nearly the same," because prolonged life is an opportunity for profit from experience and the doing of good works.

If I am right about Johnson's attitude here, then Richard Savage must have been especially fascinating to him, because Savage, as Johnson's Life continually illustrates, did not learn from his experience, and throughout his life he displayed a kind of incorrigibility which might have exasperated anyone, let alone an eternal sceptical student of existence like Samuel Johnson.

There is no doubt of Johnson's sincerity in the sentiments he expresses in Rambler No. 60 on biography; he certainly felt that it was a most useful species of writing and that it more than any other form could provide "lessons applicable to private life." But the most revealing phrase in the entire essay is that in which he talks about the power of biography "to enchain the heart by irresistible interest". The Life of Savage seems to me to illustrate the phrase well. Johnson is fascinated by Savage because Savage did not learn from his experiences. He did not seem to be affected or touched by them at all; he did not change. Johnson apparently could not understand this. From the first sentence of the biography he tries to find explanations for it, but he must ultimately acknowledge that he has failed to do so. Yet he knows Savage's inability or unwillingness to change or be changed; he has known his subject at first hand. I believe this puzzlement conditions Johnson's whole approach in the Life of Savage.

Ordinarily critics talk about Johnson's biographies as solidly in the tradition of Plutarch, Suetonius, More, Roper, et al — works which have truths not merely about remarkable individuals but applicable to all of us — some especially fashioned to produce their moral lessons, but many (Johnson's among them) simply deriving them from the unmanipulated material. I think we ought to realise that the Savage biography signals a new tradition — not always in agreement with Johnson's later remarks about biography — which emphasises the subject's uniqueness, even oddness, and which is not necessarily productive of lessons either cautionary or exemplary. We should not forget that in the Idler essay discussing biography Johnson puts the eagerness with which biography is read before the ease with which its lessons are applied. And it is that irresistible interest which he had already mentioned in 1750 and displayed six years before that in writing of Savage, that can take precedence to govern both the choice of subject and the approach of the biographer. This emphasis on the innate interest of the subject, quite divorced from whatever can be derived from his conduct, has implications not only for biography, but for other forms as well, and I shall mention some of these implications later.

But let me begin with the question that sooner or later occurs to each student of Johnson as he reads the Life of Savage: why did Johnson accept Savage's story about his birth, apparently without doubts? If we take Clarence Tracy's answer — and Tracy as Savage's modern biographer knows more about the evidence than anyone else — it was because Johnson had no reason to think otherwise; no one had seriously

challenged Savage's claim, and the Countess of Macclesfield had not attempted to answer it or defend herself at all.¹ This, coupled with the friendship of Johnson and Savage, as well as Johnson's assessment of the basic veracity of his friend (near the end of the Life), these may have been enough. But I believe that Johnson's treatment of the Macclesfield affair, like his approach to most of the events in the early part of the Life (up until Savage's conviction for the Sinclair murder), results from his attempt to find a rational explanation for Savage's character.

Johnson does not regard Savage as a monster. He knows him capable of acts of charity remarkable by anyone's standards, as the example of Savage's relieving the woman who had testified against him at his murder trial shows — Johnson calls this, in one of his inimitable phrases, "an act of complicated virtue." Even in his careful record of Savage's shortcomings Johnson does not find him blameable; one gets the impression that it would be easier if he could. When Johnson summarises the extraordinary misfortunes to which Savage was subject,² there is always an implication that if they had made the man malicious, it would be easy to understand that effect. But he was not malicious; he was simply incorrigible.

The story of Savage's birth, told in detail in the first pages of the Life and recurred to like a leitmotif throughout, looks like an attempt to explain rationally some aspects of Savage's character. The explanation itself is irrational (and does not seem to explain the effect): the Countess is as much a puzzle to Johnson as Savage himself is.

It is not indeed easy to discover what motives could be found to over-balance that natural affection of a parent, or what interest could be promoted by neglect or cruelty. The dread of shame or of poverty, by which some wretches have been incited to abandon or to murder their children, cannot be supposed to have affected a woman who had proclaimed her crimes and solicited reproach, and on whom the clemency of the legislature had undeservedly bestowed a fortune, which would have been very little diminished by the expences which the care of her child could have brought upon her. It was therefore not likely that she would be wicked without temptation, that she would look upon her son from his birth with a kind of resentment and abhorrence; and, instead of supporting,

assisting, and defending him, delight to see him struggling with misery, or that she would take every opportunity of aggravating his misfortunes, and obstructing his resources, and with an implacable and restless cruelty continue her persecution from the first hour of his life to the last. (502)³

Even more astonishing was the Countess' telling Earl Rivers that his son was dead when the Earl, on his deathbed, wished to provide for the boy; Johnson says this is "perhaps the first instance of a lye invented by a mother to deprive her son of a provision which was designed him by another, and which she could not expect herself, though he should lose it." (504)

Once Johnson begins describing Savage's literary career, Sir Richard Steele is introduced almost immediately. Again Johnson seems to be searching for influences formative of Savage's later complete lack of prudence. After the two Steele anecdotes, illustrative of an author's hand-to-mouth existence in the early part of the century, comes Johnson's application: "Under such a tutor, Mr. Savage was not likely to learn prudence or frugality." (508)⁴ The episodes themselves are genuinely comic; one of them even finds its way into two different comedies later in the century.⁵

But Johnson does not leave the Macclesfield story as he takes up Savage's adult life. Mentions of the Countess continue throughout the biography, but there is a kind of climax after Savage's murder trial. Johnson has been building toward it, asking the reader rhetorical questions such as the following: "if they deserve death who destroy a child in its birth, what pains can be severe enough for her who forbears to destroy him only to inflict sharper miseries upon him; who prolongs his life only to make him miserable; and who exposes him, without care and without pity, to the malice of oppression, the caprices of chance, and the temptations of poverty; who rejoices to see him overwhelmed with calamities; and, when his own industry, or the charity of others, has enabled him to rise for a short time above his miseries, plunges him again into his former distress?" (511-12)

The most malicious and inexplicable act of the Countess is her attempt to block Savage's pardon after his conviction for murder. And masterfully, Johnson begins his comment on this section: "Thus had Savage perished by the evidence of a bawd, a strumpet, and his mother" (521) Johnson makes the word an ironic insult, capping as it does his speculations about the unnaturalness of her conduct.

The tone of the latter half of the Life is different from that of the first. For one thing, though Savage has disappointments afterward, the murder trial is his last real catastrophe, and its effects are averted by the help of the Countess of Hertford, who intercedes to gain him a pardon. For another, Savage had been acquiring for some time the friendship of many people whom Johnson lists. These friendships continued in most cases until the end of his or their lives, to Savage's great benefit. Anne Oldfield, for example, pensioned him at fifty pounds a year until her death in 1730. Others such as Robert Wilks, Aaron Hill, and Pope, became friends and benefactors to him. Queen Caroline herself pensioned him after the publication of his "Volunteer Laureate," so that there was scarcely any interruption to his yearly fifty pounds of assured income.

The change in tone reflects a change in Johnson's own attitude toward Savage. Throughout the first half Johnson had sympathised with Savage both imaginatively — because of Savage's extraordinary history and misfortunes — and personally as well — because much of Johnson's own experience could be seen mirrored in that of Savage. Donald Greene points particularly to the injured pride which prompted Savage to refuse a suit of clothes and Johnson a pair of boots (at Oxford),⁶ but other examples could be shown: both men, for instance, hated to leave company because of the reflections to which they were subject when left alone. Greene goes so far as to suggest that the book is "a kind of self-psychoanalysis," (115) a view which — though I think it exaggerated — is not quite so extreme as that of the critic who sees the Life as a collection of archetypal situations in which the narrator allies himself with Savage in a masculine coalition "against the evil mother and all the other 'daughters of Eve' who seem to conspire in the hero's moral defeat."

But if there are many things in Savage's life which evoke Johnson's sympathy, there are also many advantages — including many friendships and acts of support — which Savage had and which Johnson must have imagined he could have made better use of. His sympathy flags almost visibly when he reports Savage's use of the Queen's pension: at first it would be sufficient to keep only "an exact economist from want" (550), but very soon Johnson is calling the money "a salary which, though by no means equal to the demands of vanity and luxury, is yet found sufficient to support families above want, and was undoubtedly more than the necessities of life require." (556)

Johnson, after all, was working assiduously for Edward Cave, the one man who had really befriended him in London, while Savage had systematically alienated numbers of benefactors. Johnson reprints the whole of the insolent letter Savage sent Cave from Bristol in answer to the publisher's attempt to give him good advice.

I have suggested that Johnson's approach in the Life of Savage has implications for later biography and for various kinds of imaginative literature as well. When Donald Stauffer published his Art of Biography in Eighteenth Century England in 1941, he included a section on "Biography and the Romantic Spirit," and I suspect that is the heading under which these remarks belong -- if hunting for "romantic tendencies" were not so justly out of fashion in eighteenth-century studies. Primarily the Life shows Johnson putting into practice ideas about biography which he seems to have held throughout the more than forty years during which he practised the form. The idea he reiterates most often is that the man who knew the subject is best equipped to write the biography -- the Life of Savage is the best illustration of the truth of this attitude, which is implicit in the Rambler essay on biography in 1750, explicit in the Idler essay of 1759, and repeated in conversations with Boswell and Thomas Warton in 1771 and 1776. Moreover, though Savage was far from obscure when Johnson was writing of him, this biography comes closer than any of the others to illustrating the idea that any man's life makes a useful subject for the form.

But the Life of Savage is also a case study. James Clifford says in several places that the great value of this work is that it presents the facts of Savage's case in enough detail to enable a modern psychoanalyst to make judgements on his personality type. Johnson himself refrains from judgement. I have suggested that he refrains not only because Savage is unique in his experience, but also because some deeply held belief of his own about the nature of man and his progress through the world is challenged by Savage's behaviour.

Johnson's grappling with the case of Savage is a paradigm for biographers after him because he becomes a kind of psychic historian, and one who does not suppose the mysteries of personality easy to fathom. For other writers the Life demonstrates how intriguing such a personality could be, how

much power the odd, eccentric, perhaps even pathological aspects of the mind might have "to enchain the heart by irresistible interest." It hardly seems a great jump to go from here to the minds of madmen and idiots.

Documentation

1. Tracy, in his biography of Savage, admits to not having been able to settle finally the question of Savage's claim. He believes it is true, however, and suggests that the burden of proof is with those who oppose it, citing the lack of success of those who have tried and the Countess of Macclesfield's silence in the face of Savage's charges over many years - The Artificial Bastard : A Biography of Richard Savage (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1953), pp.vii-viii. No significant change of heart or new evidence shows up in Tracy's introductions to The Poetical Works of Richard Savage (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1962) or The Life of Savage (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Criticism on the Life of Savage before 1969 is listed in Samuel Johnson : A Survey and Bibliography of Critical Studies, by James L. Clifford and Donald J. Greene (Minneapolis : U. of Minnesota Press 1970), pp 194-97. Studies since then include William Vesterman, "Johnson and the Life of Savage, ELH, 36 (1969), 659-78; John A. Dussinger, "Style and Intention in Johnson's Life of Savage," ELH, 37 (1970), 564-80; James B. Misenheimer, Jr., "Samuel Johnson's Life of Savage : A Survey," The New Rambler, 10, ser. C. (Spring, 1971), 18-26. Among general studies, there are discussions of the Life of Savage in Donald Greene, Samuel Johnson (New York : Twayne, 1970); Leopold Damrosch, Jr., Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1972); and John Wain, Samuel Johnson (New York: Viking, 1974). A facsimile of the 1748 second edition of the Life (revised by Johnson) was published by Scholar Press in 1971.
2. Such summaries are frequent in the Life; here is an example:
So peculiar were the misfortunes of this man, deprived of an estate and title by a particular law, exposed and abandoned by a mother defrauded by a mother of a fortune which his father had allotted him, he entered the world without a friend; and though his abilities forced themselves into esteem and reputation, he was never able to obtain any real advantage, and whatever prospects arose were always intercepted as he began to approach them. The King's intentions in his favour were frustrated; his dedication to the Prince, whose generosity on every other occasion

was eminent, procured him no reward; Sir Robert Walpole, who valued himself upon keeping his promise to others, broke it to him without regret; and the bounty of the Queen was, after her death, withdrawn from him, and from him only. (565)

3. My page references to the Life of Savage refer to that published in Samuel Johnson : Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, 3rd ed., ed. Bertrand H. Bronson (San Francisco : Rinehart Press, 1971).
4. Studies which should be consulted concerning Johnson's use of anecdotes in the biographies are Clarence R. Tracy, "Johnson and the Art of Anecdote," UTQ 15 (1945), 86-93, and Robert Folkenflik, "Johnson's Art of Anecdote," in Racism in the Eighteenth Century (Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, vol. 3), ed. Harold E. Pagliaro (Cleveland and London: Case Western Reserve U.P., 1973), 171-81. See also Folkenflik's review of Tracy's edition of the Life, where the Steele anecdotes are discussed particularly - PQ, 51 (1972), 705.
5. The Good Natur'd Man and The School for Scandal. See especially Arthur Friedman's note to the Goldsmith scene where the bailiff episode occurs (III,i) in Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 45n.
6. Greene, Samuel Johnson, pp. 114-15.
7. Dussinger, "Style and Intention in Johnson's Life of Savage," p.566.
8. Young Sam Johnson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p.277, and From Puzzles to Portraits: Problems of a Literary Biographer (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1970), p.131. The analyst was Edmund Bergler, in "Samuel Johnson's 'Life of the Poet Richard Savage' - A Paradigm for a Type," American Imago, 4 (1947), 42-63.



FAMILY AND PILGRIMAGE THEMES IN
BURNEY'S EVELINA

Emily H. Patterson
San Diego State University, California

Ronald Paulson has found that two thematic structures, the family and the pilgrimage, inform the mid-eighteenth-century English novel. From Robinson Crusoe to Peregrine Pickle, including Clarissa, and especially Tom Jones, relationships within a family explain character and action and provide the context out of which develops the second pervasive structure, the pilgrimage, in which the hero departs on a journey from the Eden of his family, either voluntarily or by expulsion. His journey then becomes his attempt to find that lost Eden. In either case, his fall was fortunate, for he tests his mettle, educates himself, and gains a new Eden that would have been impossible had he not left home.¹

Paulson's study ends with Smollett, but in the thirty years that yet remain in the eighteenth century, Fanny Burney's Evelina (1778) carries on the family and pilgrimage themes of the earlier novels. Near the close of Evelina, after Lord Orville has heard the seventeen-year-old heroine, Evelina, accept his declaration of love, this proper young baronet asks her if "she depends wholly on herself" or upon some other person whom he should speak to in her interest. Evelina replies: "I hardly know, my Lord, I hardly know myself to whom I most belong."² This curious little rejoinder lies at the heart of Evelina, because the concern of the work is self-identity; the heroine must learn who she is.

Burney begins the dramatised action of Evelina early in the heroine's seventeenth year, but she devotes the first four letters of this wholly epistolary novel to events prior to Evelina's birth, even as far back as the time of the marriage of Evelina's maternal grandparents, since the reader must know the reasons for Evelina's ignorance of her parentage. In particular the reader must understand why Evelina is the victim of others' unconcern and why the elderly Reverend Mr. Villars of Berry Hill in rural Dorsetshire has reared Evelina since birth, especially when he knows that both her father and grandmother are living. The relationships within Evelina's family will activate the plot and the pilgrimage will move it forward; however, not until

nearly the end of the novel is the stigma upon Evelina's birth removed and the mystery solved of why Sir John Belmont had refused to acknowledge Evelina his daughter and had raised another in her place.

Burney relies upon Evelina's foster parent, Villars, to relate the events of two previous generations which have shaped Evelina's character and the course of her life. Villars, who had been tutor to Mr. Evelyn, Evelina's grandfather, recalls this young man's unfortunate marriage to an uncouth French barmaid. Evelyn died but two years later, leaving the upbringing of their infant daughter, Caroline, to Villars, rather than to her ill-bred mother. When Caroline was eighteen, Villars had complied with her deceased father's instructions and allowed her to live in Paris with her mother, now remarried to a Monsieur Duval. The mother's and stepfather's attempts to force Caroline to marry Duval's nephew had driven the young woman to consent to an unwitnessed marriage with a profligate nobleman, Sir John Belmont. When he soon after abandoned her and denied their marriage, Caroline had fled back to Berry Hill to Villars's protection where she had died in giving birth to Evelina. Villars, who had tutored the father and reared his daughter, then reared Evelina to young womanhood.

In the first letter of Evelina, Burney plunges the reader into the midst of a family contretemps. Madame Duval, whom Villars describes as "still as vulgar and illiterate as when her first husband, Mr. Evelyn, had the weakness to marry her" (p.12), is now importuning Villars to send Evelina immediately to her in Paris. Villars blames Evelina's vulnerability on her family's actions prior to her birth, and specifically on her father's denial of his marriage and Evelina's existence. But Burney delves deeper and uncovers a still prior action that had caused Sir John to act in this manner: when Caroline had married him without her parents' approval, Madame Duval had vengefully withheld from Caroline the legacy her late father had left her. Sir John's denial of the marriage had been his revenge on the Duvals. Evelina is blameless, but she must suffer for her mother's fall, which reenacts the Adam and Eve myth, the sin of disobedience of the parent, even though Caroline Evelyn's parent is the unsuitable Madame Duval; likewise Caroline's father's fall is a sin against the parent, here the Heavenly Father, as Sir John desecrated the sacrament of marriage. Behind these two falls is Grandmother Duval's fall, the withholding of the legacy, a violation of her late husband's wish. Still Burney traces back to a fall that precedes all others, a fall of deeper consequence. Prior to the

disobedient acts of the mother, father, and grandmother, Evelina's grandfather had disobeyed his tutor or "father," Villars, by marrying in defiance of Villars's advice. This misalliance had brought into the family the French woman, whose failure as a wife and mother had caused her own daughter's elopement with a husband who deserted her.

After Villars confides to Lady Howard his modest plans for Evelina (he wants only to see her married to a worthy husband), he informs her that Evelina is heir to two large fortunes, but Sir John's denial will prevent Evelina's inheriting the one, and her grandmother's inclination to distribute the other among her London relatives will deprive Evelina of the other. Villars clarifies Evelina's economic plight: although she is the only child of a wealthy baronet, her present income cannot support her in London or attract a husband of the fashionable world.

Despite Evelina's lack of fortune Burney will not allow her heroine to fade into undistinguished domesticity in rural retirement. Rather, Burney will send her on a pilgrimage; it will begin purportedly as a journey of introduction into London high society, but soon it will change into a quest for a specific goal: a father's recognition that will bring prestige and fortune. Evelina's pilgrimage will command the bulk of the novel, since it will not achieve its goal until Evelina has left Villars in Berry Hill, has made two extended visits to London - the first with the socially-esteemed Mrs. Mirvan, the second with Madame Duval - and a third trip in the late summer to Bristol Hotwell and Clifton with Villars's longtime friend, Mrs. Selwyn. Before this pilgrimage ends, Evelina has hobnobbed with the highborn in the fashionable world of nobility and gentry and suffered their snubs, has experienced the life of the lower middle class with Madame Duval's illbred relatives and endured their squabbles and taunts, has endangered her chastity and her life, and has won the hand of the eminent Orville, even before her high birth and fortune have been confirmed. Only after these events does Sir John, now reformed and repentant, explain to the mystified Evelina how a dishonest servant had deceived him into raising another infant in place of his own daughter. The emotionally charged recognition scene takes place, but before the wedding of Evelina to Orville can be solemnised, Evelina's father has also acknowledged an illegitimate son, made a special financial settlement upon him independent of Evelina's, and betrothed him to the fictitious daughter, the "Miss Belmont" whom Sir John had reared as his own. By the time Evelina has given

her father her mother's deathbed letter - a letter which Villars had held sealed and unread these seventeen years - Sir John has already made Evelina his heir, thus meeting the two conditions, recognition and inheritance, that Lady Belmont had set for granting him her forgiveness.

Because of its compelling motivation, Evelina delivers more than the promise of its sub-title, "The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World." When the plot is stripped to its bare bones, it discloses a mechanism activated by the quest for two fortunes. The quest is of Villars's authoring, for it is he who is stung by the unequitableness of Evelina's modest income and sequestered life. He writes to Lady Howard: "Consider, Madam, the peculiar cruelty of her situation; only a child of a wealthy baronet, whose person she has never seen, whose character she has reason to abhor, and whose name she is forbidden to claim; entitled as she is to lawfully inherit his fortune and estate, is there any probability that he will properly own her? And while he continues to persevere in disavowing his marriage with Miss Evelyn, she shall never, at the expense of her mother's honour, receive a part of her right, as the donation of his bounty" (pp. 18-19). It is Villars who sends Evelina on the first stage of her pilgrimage by allowing her to accompany the Mirvans to London. Villars gives his permission reluctantly, out of a latent fear that Madame Duval might by chance meet Evelina there, which could offend the woman and alienate her fortune. Once Evelina has settled into the routine of parties and theatre of the London social season, the very event that Villars fears does happen, when Evelina accidentally encounters her grandmother outside a theatre. Villars warns Evelina not to incur her grandmother's wrath: "Conduct yourself towards her with all the respect and deference due to so near a relation, remembering always, that the failure of duty on her part, can by no means justify any neglect on yours Be careful, therefore, that no remissness of attention, no indifference of obliging, make known to her the independence I assure you of ... " (pp. 54-55). Mrs. Mirvan serves Villars's interest by protecting Evelina's chances for the Duval inheritance when Mrs. Mirvan warns Evelina that Madame Duval's rage, should Evelina decline to accompany her to the opera in the Haymarket, may end in "a total breach." Mrs. Mirvan's judgement proves accurate when Madame Duval informs Evelina, who did accept the invitation, that had she not, she might "have been a beggar for ... [her] pains" (p.87). Again it is Villars's fear of offending Madame Duval that prompts him to allow Evelina

to go a second time to London, even though her grandmother is the most reprehensible of chaperons and the visit breaks off abruptly. When Villars consents to Evelina's departure on the third and last stage of her pilgrimage, he sends her to Bristol Hotwell with the warhorse, Mrs. Selwyn, denizen of many London social seasons. Mrs. Selwyn rings a triple victory: the winning for Evelina of the Duval fortune is but one part, since it is dwarfed by the amplitude of Sir John's acknowledgement of Evelina as his daughter, which Villars stage manages, but without leaving Berry Hill. He depends most on Mrs. Selwyn, despatching her on numerous errands and providing her at the right moment with a crucial document and a witness to effect Sir John's recognition of Evelina and his naming her his heir.

Even though Villars delegates his authority to surrogate parents, or chaperons, he never relinquishes his control over Evelina during the three stages of her pilgrimage. The first and third stages are undertaken with surrogate parents of Villars's choosing; the second, ironically, is without a proper surrogate, even though Madame Duval is a blood relative. Her lack of qualifications renders her unfit for her self-assumed role, and the crisis that abruptly terminates her tenure demonstrates it. Even Evelina's first trip, under the admirable Mrs. Mirvan, had exposed Evelina to embarrassments so searing that her education had to begin at once, if she were to start her slow ascent of the social ladder.

Evelina's sheltered country life has not prepared her for sophisticated London society. Once in London, her inexperience gets her into awkward situations, especially when she doesn't know how to refuse a stranger's invitation to dance at a private ball or how to fend off the bold approach of Sir Clement Willoughby at a public assembly. Sir Clement is the villain of the novel, but his noble birth blinds Evelina to his wickedness. Since Evelina's exposure to society also develops her snobbery, she tries to conceal from Sir Clement her vulgar relatives, her grandmother and the Branghtons, the latter a family consisting of Madame Duval's nephew, a silversmith, his son and two daughters, who live over their shop. Their petty meannesses, coarse speech, and loud laughter offend Evelina's sensibility. She is mortified at the thought that Sir Clement should see her with them. This snobbery, together with Evelina's failure to grasp the nature of Sir Clement's character, brings her to near-disaster on that very evening that Evelina follows Mrs. Mirvan's advice and accompanies Madame Duval and the Branghtons to the opera.

Evelina's discomfiture begins when she observes their inability to find the entrance to the Haymarket; she smugly observes that they refuse to ask her assistance and call her "country cousin" even though she is "the only person of the party who had ever before been at an opera" (p.89). Their haggling over the price of tickets and their tittering during the performance humiliate Evelina. When she meets Sir Clement as they are leaving the theatre, Evelina is so eager to escape before he can observe her companions that she accepts his offer to escort her home. Once in his coach, he attempts to seduce her. Only after she tries to leap from the moving vehicle does he relent. Evelina admits to Villars that her "own folly and pride" had brought her near downfall (p.100).

Evelina's blindness to Sir Clement's true nature and her shy fondness for this handsome baronet can be blamed on her heredity. Her Grandfather Evelyn had shown much the same failure of judgement in allowing himself to be beguiled into marrying a beautiful but vulgar French woman. Surely Evelina's blindness to Sir Clement's motives and her panic at fleeing the theatre in such haste are reminiscent of her own mother's hasty decision to agree to a private marriage ceremony with Sir John; likewise Evelina's impetuosity in readily accepting as genuine a letter forged by Sir Clement recalls Madame Duval's gullible acceptance of still another forged letter confirming a friend's imprisonment for treason. Perhaps Evelina's even greater error of judgement is her persistent concern for Sir Clement's opinion of her. Evelina accuses her grandmother of precipitate judgement with its consequences: "... And so little does she reflect upon circumstances, or probability, that she is continually the dupe of her own - I ought not to say ignorance, but yet, I can think of no other word" (p.141). The passage is richly ironic, for it is Evelina who is as often the dupe of her own ignorance, disdaining her safety in a foolish concern for what Sir Clement thinks of her. Villars warns her that Sir Clement is "artful" and "designing," and that his pretended passion "has neither sincerity nor honour ... and [borders] upon insult" (p.115). Yet when Sir Clement does meet her crude relatives, it is to Evelina's credit that she observes that he alters his usual suave manner to her when she is with illbred people. Despite this perspicacity, later in the story Evelina is still embarrassed when Sir Clement finds her lodging with Madame Duval in unfashionable Holborn.

Villars consents to Evelina's visiting London a second time only after Madame Duval has threatened to disinherit her. Villars writes to Lady Howard of his decision: "The violence and vulgarity of this woman, her total ignorance of

propriety, the family to which she is related, and the company she is likely to keep, are objections so forcible to her having the charge of this dear child, that nothing less than my diffidence of the right I have of depriving her of so large a fortune, would have induced me to listen to her proposal" (p.163). Villars prescribes the narrow limits of Evelina's freedom: Evelina "cannot too assiduously attend to Madame Duval herself"; but at the same time she is "to mix as little as possible with her associates" (p.164).

With the return to London Evelina resumes her pilgrimage, only under quite different circumstances. Unlike the first trip, which was undertaken within the protecting arms of Evelina's extended family - for Mrs. Mirvan was as caring of Evelina as any parent could have been - this second journey plunges Evelina into a hostile environment with a chaperon whose every act threatens her well-being. Madame Duval compels Evelina to accept the company of the Branghtons and to suffer their churlish behaviour, as they seek the pleasures of Vauxhall, Marylebone Gardens, and Kensington. At last the Branghtons' impudence brings Evelina's outraged protest when the son commandeers Orville's coach, involves it in an accident, and uses Evelina's name to gain admittance to Orville's home, to make late apologies and to solicit Orville's purchase of silver from his father's shop. Evelina's spirits sink so low that she falls ill and returns to Berry Hill to stay with Villars until Mrs. Selwyn takes her to Bristol Hotwell.

The third and last stage of Evelina's pilgrimage resembles the first with Mrs. Mirvan, for the chaperon is Villars's choice, a surrogate parent who is as solicitous of Evelina as was Mrs. Mirvan. When this last stage is completed, Evelina has gained a noble husband, a baronet father, two fortunes, and a secure position in the circles of high society. Her pilgrimage has brought her not only acceptance into the world to which she rightfully belongs, but it has also brought her the knowledge of her own identity. She gains a home with her father, even though she will never occupy it, since she marries Orville at once; further she wins the most eligible of London bachelors, solely on her own merits, and with no help of birth or fortune. Evelina's pilgrimage occurs within the family in stages one and three; but outside it with Madame Duval, who failed as surrogate-parent-chaperon, just as she had failed as a real mother to Caroline Evelyn. Only Villars's own appointees, Mrs. Mirvan and

Mrs. Selwyn, protected Evelina with parental concern, as within an extended family. Yet, despite his able choices, Villars is a fallible patriarch, for in his desire to secure for Evelina two fortunes, he pushed an inexperienced girl into dangers that imperilled her safety. Villars's financial ambitions turn the novel; without them there would have been no second visit to London with its near-catastrophic end, which, in turn, created the need for recuperation at Bristol Hotwell. With these turns of events, Burney showed that Evelina had acquired the manners and ease to move into Orville's world. Her virtue and amiability, however, had already been acquired under Villars's roof, and unlike a code of city etiquette, they were appropriate to either world. Once she had demonstrated her ease, the confirmation of her birth and fortune were but reminders that her ease was owed to her having always rightfully belonged in this world, and that her dislodgement from it had been only temporary.

Evelina's pilgrimage won her a lost Eden, but not an Eden that she herself had lost; rather an Eden of which she had been unfairly deprived by her grandfather's preposterous marriage, which had brought into the family an infamous woman who destroyed her own daughter and attempted to do likewise to Evelina. At length Madame Duval does make an atonement of sorts by restoring to Evelina her grandfather's fortune; Sir John does likewise by acknowledging his marriage and Evelina as his heir. The sins of the fathers are at last requited when Evelina, now Lady Orville, enters her new world.

Documentation

1. "The Pilgrimage and the Family: Structures in the Novels of Fielding and Smollett," in Tobias Smollett: Bicentennial Essays Presented to Lewis M. Knapp, ed. G.S. Rousseau and P.-G. Boucé (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 57-78.
2. Frances Burney, Evelina, ed. Edward A. Bloom (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p.353. Subsequent quotations from this work are noted in the text by page number in parentheses.



DR. JOHNSON'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE
EDUCATION OF WOMEN

Charmaine Wellington
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Johnson dreamily said to Boswell one day, "If I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman; but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation."¹ Such an amiable companion would be a rare find in the 18th century, for most females were not sufficiently educated to supplement such wide-ranging conversation as the Great Cham's. Hardly any lower class woman would be a likely candidate. In charity schools,² they were taught a smattering of reading and writing along with a large dose of utilitarian subjects, like sewing and spinning, and Church of England catechism. Secondary education was withheld from them entirely. Middle and upper class women were not taught more, merely better; reading and needlework were emphasised equally. For the genteel lady, a course in simple arithmetic or French might be added. But generally the cultivation of a woman's reason and genius was left to the indulgences of a doting father oblivious of social custom or the daring of a devoted brother. Because a woman of the 18th century was to study "what was useful or agreeable, not abstract subjects or the works of genius",³ women of an intellectual calibre suited to Johnson's requirements were relatively unique. Seeing it as a practical benefit to society and a service to the cause of virtue, Samuel Johnson supported the liberal education of women.

Because Johnson found intellectual attainments a significant addition to a woman's character, he generally bestowed his esteem upon educated women. One of this group was Elizabeth Montagu, literary patroness, critic and author, and Queen of the Bluestockings. As leading lioness of one of the most important salons of later 18th-century England, Mrs. Montagu's prestige with the literary world was high. Yet Johnson's ambivalent attitude towards Mrs. Montagu was shared by almost everyone.⁴ Johnson recognised her reputation and teased Fanny Burney as a rising wit to throw Elizabeth Montagu from the pinnacle. He objected, however, to her fame as a critic, saying of her Essay on Shakespeare "I have indeed not

read it all....I will venture to say, there is not one sentence of true criticism in her book....none shewing the beauty of thought, as formed on the workings of the human heart."⁵ Neither did he approve her fame as a scholar, although he chuckles at her unwillingness to expose herself in front of him: "Sir, [Mrs. Montagu] has not read [Gibbon's History]: she shews none of this impetuosity to me: she does not know Greek, and, I fancy, knows little Latin."⁶ In short, Mrs. Montagu was one of those "people whom one should like very well to drop, but would not wish to be dropped by."⁷ Dr. Johnson sneered at her vanity, perhaps resented the riches with which she bought literary influence, but in his kinder moments spoke up about those qualities in her which lent her the influence she had: "Mrs. Montagu does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs. Montagu is a very extraordinary woman; she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated; it has always meaning."

Johnson was more consistently benevolent towards those female intellectuals who, like himself, had made a trade of their wit. Most important of these were Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, Miss Fanny Burney, and Mrs. Lennox.¹⁰ Johnson met Elizabeth Carter, the Greek scholar whose translations of Epictetus are still reprinted, while they were both working for Cave on the Gentleman's Magazine. Together they translated Crousaz's Commentary on Pope's Essay on Man. Johnson "composed a Greek Epigram to Eliza [Elizabeth Carter], and think She ought to be celebrated in as many languages as Lewis le Grand."¹¹ Hannah More, whom Mrs. Thrale labelled "the cleverest of all us Female Wits,"¹² was introduced to Johnson by Joshua Reynolds' family. Johnson was highly complimentary of her literary efforts and "could repeat all the best stanzas [of her Sir Eldred and The Bleeding Rock] by heart."¹³ When her poem on the Bluestockings was being passed around the literary circles, Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale: "Miss Moore [sic] has written a poem called Le Bas blue; which is in my opinion, a very great performance."¹⁴ Johnson's intimacy with Fanny Burney began after her publication of Evelina. Johnson compared the work favourably to Pope's Windsor Forest and said "Harry Fielding never did anything equal to the 2nd Vol: of Evelina."¹⁵ Charlotte Lennox, one of many impoverished authors whom Johnson assisted professionally, was crowned with laurels by him during his all-night celebration of the publication of her first novel.¹⁶ In writing on her behalf to Donald Tuttle, Johnson said: "You were never called to the relief of a more powerful mind. She has many fopperies, but she is a Great genius, and nullum

magnum ingenium sine mixtura [great wit is sure to madness near allied]."¹⁷ Boswell gleefully records Johnson's comparing the Thrales to Mrs. Thrale's disadvantage: "It is a great mistake to suppose that She is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant; but he has ten times her learning: he is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a schoolboy in one of the lower forms."¹⁸ But that Johnson respected Mrs. Thrale's wit, robust literary tastes and learning is above question. Indeed, intellectual qualifications seemed to be primary in Johnson's mind when he picked female friends; he even describes his first love, Molly Aston, as "a beauty, a scholar, and a wit."¹⁹

Johnson not only liked the women around him to be intelligent, informed conversationalists, but promoted the education of women. One of the primary objects of interest to Johnson when he was travelling was the educational level of the citizens, and he frequently enquired into the learning possessed by women he met. While in France, Johnson "looked into the books in the lady's closet."²⁰ (His contempt for the frivolous romances he found there moved the lady to lock away her apartments from any other enquiring eyes.) Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands shows him presenting a copy of Croker's Arithmetick to promising young Miss M'Queen, remarking upon the polyglot wife of Colonel Macleod of Talisker, analysing the limitations on the education of young women of Skye, and beaming his approval of an Edinburgh deaf woman's skill in arithmetic.²¹ Johnson was enthusiastic about discovering Miss Maclean of Mull, whose wide range of abilities he praised to Boswell: "in short, she can do everything."²² Johnson says in his Journey: "Miss Maclean [of Mull], who was born and had been bred at Glasgow, having removed with her father to Mull, added to other qualifications, a great knowledge of the Earse language, which she had not learned in her childhood, but gained by study, and was the only interpreter of the Earse poetry that I could ever find."²³ To a scholar interested in the history of the written and spoken language in Scotland, Miss Maclean's knowledge was noteworthy.

Johnson's interest in the state of female education went beyond simple approval when he found it; he frequently advised and encouraged the education of his friends' daughters.²⁴ Mrs. Thrale records Johnson's response when Boswell "consulted him whether he should give his Daughters a liberal Education or not - To be sure said [Johnson] let

them learn all they can learn — it is a paltry Trick indeed to deny Women the Cultivation of their mental Powers, and I think it is partly a proof we are afraid of them — if we endeavour to keep them unarmed."²⁵ Years later, Johnson asked about his favourite's progress in her studies: "I suppose Miss Veronica is grown a reader and discourser."²⁶ In a letter to Mrs. Thrale, Johnson approved Sophy Thrale's delight in arithmetic as "a science suited to Sophy's case of mind" since she "loved metaphysics more than the Muses. Her choice is laudable as it is uncommon," says Johnson, "but I would have her like what is good in both."²⁷ He gives June Langton, the daughter of his friend, the kindly advice, "I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you care not to read."²⁸ A wide and intensive cultivation of young female minds was, Johnson believed, fitting and just.

Dr. Johnson consequently condemned the suppression of the female intelligence as petty and socially retrogressive. In awe-inspiring tones, Johnson censored Milton's "Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education."²⁹ Such attempts to control women by keeping knowledge from them was cowardly and futile: "Some cunning men choose fools for their wives thinking to manage them, but they always fail... Depend upon it, no woman is the worse for sense and knowledge. Men know that women are an overmatch for them, and therefore they choose the weakest or most ignorant. If they did not think so, they never could be afraid of women knowing as much as themselves." Boswell, undecided "whether... he meant to say a polite thing, or to give his opinion,"³⁰ is later assured "that he was serious in what he had said."³⁰ Indeed Johnson believed that the education of women would benefit society and both sexes. It would have strengthened his parents' marriage, for "had my mother been more literate, they had been better companions."³¹ And it would operate in part by giving women a broader appreciation of men's worth. In *Rambler* 75, the learned persona, Melissa, speaks of what learning she has gleaned from conversation with:

that species of men whom the ladies generally mention with terror and aversion under the name of scholars,

but whom I have found a harmless and inoffensive order of beings, not so much wiser than ourselves, but that they may receive as well as communicate knowledge... From these men...something may be gained, which embellished with elegance and softened by modesty, will always add dignity and value to female conversation; and from my acquaintance with the bookish part of the world I derived many principles of judgement and maxims of prudence.³²

Men who would exile women from the bookish part of the world degrade themselves and weaken the social fabric.

Dr. Johnson frowned on attempts to bar women from intellectual society in part because he saw the weaknesses of the alternative mode of learning offered them. He sneered at the superficialities which substituted for genuine education, calling the ladies' boarding schools in which young women were taught accomplishments "Roosts for Ignorance."³³ In Rambler 75, Johnson implied the unwillingness with which a woman of character would submit to such shallow education, and with characteristic dryness suggested that such training worked at cross-purposes to significant study: "To these attainments which custom and education almost forced upon me, I added some voluntary acquisitions by the use of books."³⁴ The female accomplishments to which upper class women were educated — painting, music, drawing, geography — Johnson called "Frippery" and "Spangles." "Such Tricks says he have no Power at all to advance Intellect, they neither grow out of a Character nor sink into one, they are apparently stuck on the Surface."³⁵

Johnson's commitment to education as a character-building process is clear in his vehement criticism of female frivolity. He never approved of feminine simple-mindedness, scorning one of his female acquaintance, Miss Peggy Owen, as "empty-headed" and saying of another "insipid beauty would not go a great way."³⁶ Johnson as explicitly condemns female shallowness in Rasselas. While visiting the homes of several citizens, Nekuyah notes: "The daughters of many houses were airy and chearful, but Nekuyah had been too long accustomed to the conversation of Imlac and her brother to be much pleased with childish levity and prattle which had no meaning. She found their thoughts narrow, their wishes low, their merriment often artificial."³⁷ And Pekuah, describing the women in the Arab's harem, said, "As they had no knowledge, their talk could take

nothing from the tediousness of life."³⁸ The uninformed narrowness of mind to which uneducated or miseducated women fell prey eroded the female character and detracted from the benefits human beings hoped to find in one another's company.

The education which Dr. Johnson approved inculcated virtues which would elevate the individual spirit and serve him or her in society -- "a solid Understanding" which could grasp and employ "principles of judgement and maxims of prudence." Such an education functions "not to deck the Mind with Ornaments, but to protect it from Nakedness; not to enrich it with Affluence, but to supply it with Necessaries."³⁹ He disparaged a woman who "had no more common Sense than a Baby...having spent her Youth in acquiring Embellishments which were useless, instead of a solid Understanding."⁴⁰ Mere knowledge is not of itself sufficient; he disapproved of Dr. Lawrence's daughter who "knows Greek surprizingly but She knows nothing else" because "surely an empty Pate adorned with Literature will do but little for the Wench: Tis like setting Diamonds in Lead methinks."⁴¹ More than being provided with empty knowledge or superficial accomplishments, young women "must be taught to think."⁴² They must not be asked to forgo the significant for the trivial, to "resign all curiosity after right and wrong, for the art of scalding damascenes."⁴³ If a young woman yearns to "divide her time between the acquisition and communication of wisdom," she will serve both private virtue and public benefit. She will be "more virtuous in every respect" for her better cultivated understanding⁴⁴ and will "raise up for the next age models of prudence and patterns of piety."⁴⁵

Johnson was articulating a bias of his era when he said "a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched will be willing to give all he has to get knowledge."⁴⁶ Yet his support of liberal education for women ran counter to public opinion. Boswell, whose politics were often more liberal than Dr. Johnson's, "humbly differed from him" when Johnson "maintained to me, contrary to the common notion, that a woman would not be the worse wife for being learned."⁴⁷ Johnson's insistence upon teaching Latin to Queeney Thrale and Fanny Burney caused a furore at Streatham. While Mr. Thrale thought it was "better to each of them than a Thousand Pounds added to their Fortune,"⁴⁸ "Dr. Burney did not like his Daughter should learn Latin even of Johnson..., because she would have been as wise as himself... and Latin was too Masculine for Misses."⁴⁹ (Mrs. Thrale calls him "a narrow Sould Goose-Cap" for that.) Fanny Burney herself, who

timidly hid her books when someone entered the room for fear of "being thought studious and affected,"⁵⁰ complained of having to "devote so much time to acquire something I shall always dread to have known."⁵¹ In supporting liberal education of females, Johnson was locking horns with an increasingly influential faction, primarily middle-class, which maintained that women "must never aspire to write a good letter. If they happen to have any learning they must keep it 'a profound secret.' It is unbecoming even to offer an opinion on political matters."⁵² Thus Dr. Johnson, Tory supporter of social hierarchies, promoted the progressive cause of female education in the face of strong conservative opposition.

Johnson's support for the education of women, while seemingly another of the contradictions which are the bane of Johnson scholars, is nevertheless consistent with his anti-Deistic theory of social stratification. First, Johnson believed that subordination was the natural outgrowth of an inequality of abilities. Johnson revealed this bias when Boswell asked him, "What is the reason that we are angry at a trader's having opulence?" Johnson replied, "Why, sir, the reason is...we see no qualities in trade that should entitle a man to superiority."⁵³ Any subordination based upon artificial distinctions, such as the talent for accumulating money, violates our sense of justice. Since "the original difference in minds...is nothing in comparison of what is formed by education"⁵⁴ withholding education from some minds produces an artificial and therefore unjust inferiority. Second, Johnson felt that "the natural inequality of mankind may be the cause of subordination, but utility is its justification."⁵⁵ The neglect of the education of woman only minimises her individual utility. Unrestrained by reason, she readily falls prey to "the poor pleasure of worthless praise."⁵⁶ Unimproved by instruction, she is incapable of contributing to the social community. If the system of social subordination is sustained by employing each individual's abilities, the social fabric can only be strengthened by the cultivation of the female intellect. In this, as in other social and political issues, Johnson's humanism took precedence over his conservatism.

Documentation

1. James Boswell, The Life of Johnson ed. R.W. Chapman, corrected by J.D. Fleeman (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p.845.
2. According to Sir Charles Mallet, "Education, Schools, and Universities," in Johnson's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of His Age, ed. A.S. Turberville (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), II, p.211, in the time of George I, 22,000 boys to 6,000 girls attended charity schools.
3. Mallet, p.225.
4. Chauncey Brewster Tinker, The Salon and English Letters: Chapters on the Interrelations of Literature and Society in the Age of Johnson (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1915), pp.139-141.
5. Boswell, Life, p.413-14.
6. Ibid., p.910.
7. Ibid., p.1122.
8. Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, 1776-1809, ed. Katherine C. Balderston (1942; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), p.622, reports that Johnson explained Mrs. Montagu's dislike for his "Life of Lyttleton" thus: "It was only because he had not flattered her by any notice of her three Dialogues added to my Lords "
9. Boswell, Life, p.1278.
10. Ibid., p.1278: "I dined yesterday at Mrs. Garrick's, with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney. Three such women are not to be found: I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superiour to them all."
11. Samuel Johnson, in a letter to Edward Cave, in April 1738, in R.W. Chapman, ed., The Letters of Samuel Johnson (London: Oxford Univ. Press 1952), I. p.11.
12. Mrs. Thrale, p.699.
13. Mary Alden Hopkins, Hannah More and Her Circle (New York: Longmans, Green and Co. 1947), p.58, and Tinker, The Salon, p.182.
14. Samuel Johnson in a letter to Mrs. Thrale, on 19 April 1784 in Chapman, ed., Letters, III, p.157.
15. Mrs. Thrale, p.329.
16. Duncan Isles, "Johnson and Charlotte Lennox," New Rambler CIII (June 1967), 34-48, details the motives and extent of Johnson's literary aid to Charlotte Lennox.
17. Samuel Johnson in a letter to Donald S. Tuttle, on 10 July 1781 in Chapman, ed., Letters, II, p.431-2.
18. Boswell, Life, p.349. However, A. Edward Newton, The Amenities of Book-Collecting and Kindred Affections

(Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1931), p.222, notes:
"It was Mrs. Thrale rather than her husband who formed the Streatham library. Her taste was robust, she baulked at no foreign language, but set about to study it. I have never seen a book from her library — and I have seen many — which was not filled with notes written in her clear and beautiful hand."

19. Sir Chartres Biron, "Dr. Johnson and Women," Fortnightly Review, n.s. CVI (Aug.1919), 308.
20. Boswell, Life, p.648.
21. Samuel Johnson, Journey to the Western Islands, and James Boswell, Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, ed. Allan Wendt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p.27, 56, 78, 122, respectively.
22. Boswell, Journal of a Tour, p.324.
23. Johnson, Journey, p.102.
24. Ramblers 109 and 138 are devoted to tales of young men and women ruined by parental misdirection of their education.
25. Mrs. Thrale, p.171-2.
26. Boswell, Life, p.664.
27. Samuel Johnson in a letter to Mrs. Thrale on 29 Nov. 1783 in Chapman, ed., Letters, III, p.109.
28. Boswell, Life, p.1275.
29. Samuel Johnson, "John Milton," Lives of the English Poets, I (New York: Dutton, 1968), p.93.
30. Boswell, Journal of a Tour, p.262.
31. Biron, p.309.
32. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, eds., The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: The Rambler (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), IV, p.29.
33. Mrs. Thrale, p.465.
34. Bate and Strauss, eds., p.28.
35. Mrs. Thrale, p.36-37.
36. Boswell, Life, p.750, and Journal of a Tour, p.265.
37. Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, in Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1971), p.641.
38. Johnson, Rasselas, p.687.
39. Samuel Johnson, "Preface" to The Preceptor, Samuel Johnson's Prefaces and Dedications, ed. Allen T. Hazen (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1937), p.179.
40. Mrs. Thrale, p.36-37.
41. Ibid., p.169.
42. Ibid. p.465.
43. Bate and Strauss, eds., III, p.278.
44. Boswell, Life, p.719.

45. Johnson, Rasselas, p.708.
46. Boswell, Life, p.324.
47. Ibid., p.406.
48. Mrs. Thrale, p.393.
49. Ibid., p.502.
50. Mme D'Arblay (Frances Burney), Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney; Being the Johnsonian Passages from the Works of Mme. D'Arblay, intro. and notes, Chauncey Brewster Tinker (1911; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), p.17.
51. Ibid., p.115.
52. Gordon Rattray Taylor, The Angel Makers (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1974), p.118-119. This faction was powerfully represented by Dr. John Gregory, whose A Father's Legacy to his Daughters was warmly received upon first publication in 1774 and was still so influential in 1792 that Mary Wollstonecraft rebutted it at length in her Vindication of the Rights of Women.
53. Boswell, Journal of a Tour, p.330.
54. Boswell, Life p.688.
55. Robert Voitle, Samuel Johnson the Moralist (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), p.106.
56. Bate and Strauss, eds., IV, p.6.

AUCHINLECK BOSWELL SOCIETY

The Annual Dinner on 19th August at the Royal Hotel, Cumnock, was attended by 56 members and guests including 11 Boswells. The President for 1977, Mr. James H. Leicester, received the badge of office from the immediate Past President, Mr. James Irvine Fortescue. Before proposing the toast, "The Immortal Boswells", the President conveyed best wishes from the Johnson Society of London to the Auchinleck Boswell Society and later addressed the gathering on "Johnson, Boswell and the Popular View". Mr. Albert Boswell of Prince Edward Island, Canada, will be the incoming President for 1978. The official opening of the new Boswell Museum at Auchinleck is planned for the late spring of 1978.

VISIT TO ST. ALBANS

On 17th September, members of the Johnson Society of London were entertained to tea at Waterend Barn Restaurant as guests of the proprietor, Mr. Richard Thrale - a member of our Society. An enjoyable day was made the more memorable when our host presented each member of the party with a copy of his book A New Thraliana: A Chronicle of the Thrale Family of Hertfordshire.

DR. RONALD Mac KEITH DM, FRCP : 1908 - 1977

Dr. Mac Keith's death on 30th October robbed the Society of one of our most loyal and distinguished personalities. A member of long standing, he served continuously on the Committee from 1963 and, characteristically, always took an active part in the affairs of the Society notwithstanding his demanding professional commitments. Had he been spared, he would have opened 1978 with a paper on Isaac Watts. More widely known was his research into Johnson's medical history. We vividly recall his talk on "Samuel Johnson, My Patient" (New Rambler, June 1958). "Samuel Johnson's Childhood Illnesses and the King's Evil" (Medical History X, Oct. 1966), jointly with Dr. Lawrence C. McHenry, Jr., was further evidence of his specialist interest. Acting on a suggestion from Dr. McHenry, it was he who tracked down the death mask of Johnson at the Royal Literary Fund and was instrumental in securing a more appropriate resting place for it in the National Portrait Gallery. His paper first appeared in the June New Rambler 1966. We recall, too, that it was through Dr. Mac Keith that Sir Russell Brain accepted the invitation to address our Christmas Meeting of 1961.

Few members outside the medical profession were fully aware of Dr. Mac Keith's international recognition as a paediatrician or of his outstanding pioneer work in linking physical and psychological paediatrics. His appointments as paediatrician to Guy's Hospital, the Tavistock Clinic and the Cassel Hospital, his work with spastic children as Director of the Medical Education and Information Unit of the Spastics Society, his editorship of Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology were universally recognised and honoured.

At a memorial meeting, Conway Hall was filled with a host of friends and colleagues who gathered to pay "A tribute to Ronnie". The many facets of his career and interests were brought together in readings and recollections by various speakers. The Rev. Dr. Robert Winnett, representing our Society, read from Johnson's Life of Boerhaave. Also present were Miss Pye, Miss Pigrome, Rev. Hodgess Roper, Dr. David Brown and J.H. Leicester.

Donations, mentioning the Society, please, to The Charles Hawkins Fund for Handicapped Children, c/o Dr. Brian Neville, The Newcomen Centre, Guy's Hospital, London, SE1 9RT.

J.H.L.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

On the death of Dr. L.F. Powell in July 1975, recorded in the 1975 issue of the Journal and commemorated in the fine tribute by Mr. J.S.G. Simmons in the 1976 issue, the Society had no hesitation in inviting the Dean of Westminster, the Very Revd. E.F. Carpenter, MA, BD, PhD, to accept the vacant office of President of the Johnson Society of London.

Dr. Edward Carpenter became a Vice-President in 1970 and we are greatly indebted to him for the interest he has always shown in our annual wreath-laying and commemoration at Westminster Abbey, first as Archdeacon and latterly as Dean of Westminster. It is a great pleasure to us to know that we shall have the benefit of his continuing interest in the Society.

REVD. F.M. HODGESS ROPER

At the end of the 1976-77 Season, the Revd. F.M. Hodgess Roper intimated his wish to give up the office of Honorary Secretary which he had held for the last six years. He came to the secretaryship on the resignation, after many years, of the late Mr. A.G. Dowdeswell, and guided the Society through a difficult period of change. There was especially the necessity to break with our established meeting place and the search for a new one, culminating in the successful negotiations for our use of the fine Hall of St. Edmund the King Lombard Street, which we now enjoy.

The Society owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Mr. Hodgess Roper for keeping the annual programmes going under conditions which were often difficult and unpromising despite his living so far out from London and finding himself a great deal busier in his so-called retirement than he had envisaged on accepting office. Mr. Hodgess Roper has agreed to continue as a member of the Committee and we are pleased that his valued counsel will still be available to us.

ELECTION OF HONORARY SECRETARY

Our new Secretary, Miss S.B.S. Pigrome, MA, was elected at the Annual General Meeting in March 1977. In addition to the new printed programme for the 1977-78 season she also produced some helpful guide notes for the St. Albans visit in September. We wish her every success in her new office.

J.R.G. Comyn

The History of Rasselas

Prince of Abissinia

Samuel Johnson

Edited by Geoffrey Tillotson and Brian Jenkins

Johnson composed this mock Eastern tale in the evenings of a single week so as to have money to send to his dying mother. He managed this feat because the theme of the work, embodied in the Johnsonian conversations, had been his main concern ever since he had begun to think – the question of how best to live one's life. This paperback edition of the Oxford English Novels text, which was first published in 1971, contains a critical introduction, a chronological table, a select bibliography, and short explanatory notes. The hard-cover edition remains available. £1.50 *Oxford Paperbacks*

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Essays and Poems and Simplicity, A Comedy

Edited by Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy

'Professor Halsband and Dr. Grundy have edited what would probably have pleased Lady Mary, and certainly pleases us, most of all, her collected Essays and Poems This is the most entertaining of all her volumes, for it is the most herself.' Sir William Haley in *The Times* £14.50

The Violet in the Crucible

Shelley and Translation

Timothy Webb

'The virtue of *The Violet in the Crucible* lies in its ability to evaluate the intrinsic merit of such passages in their own right and also to relate the translations to currents in Shelley's life and to the development of his original poetry.' *The Times Literary Supplement*. £12

Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes

Edited by Ernest de Sélincourt

'A classic of committed prose about a passionately loved landscape . . . this is the archetypal book for the Lake District connoisseur. Ernest de Sélincourt, who did so much on Wordsworth studies, provides the introduction, and, in my opinion, draws attention to the most important points and passages in Wordsworth's guide without a single failure of taste. De Sélincourt is as excellent a guide to Wordsworth as Wordsworth is to the Lakes.' Melvyn Bragg in *The Times*. £1.50 *Oxford Paperbacks*

Oxford University Press
