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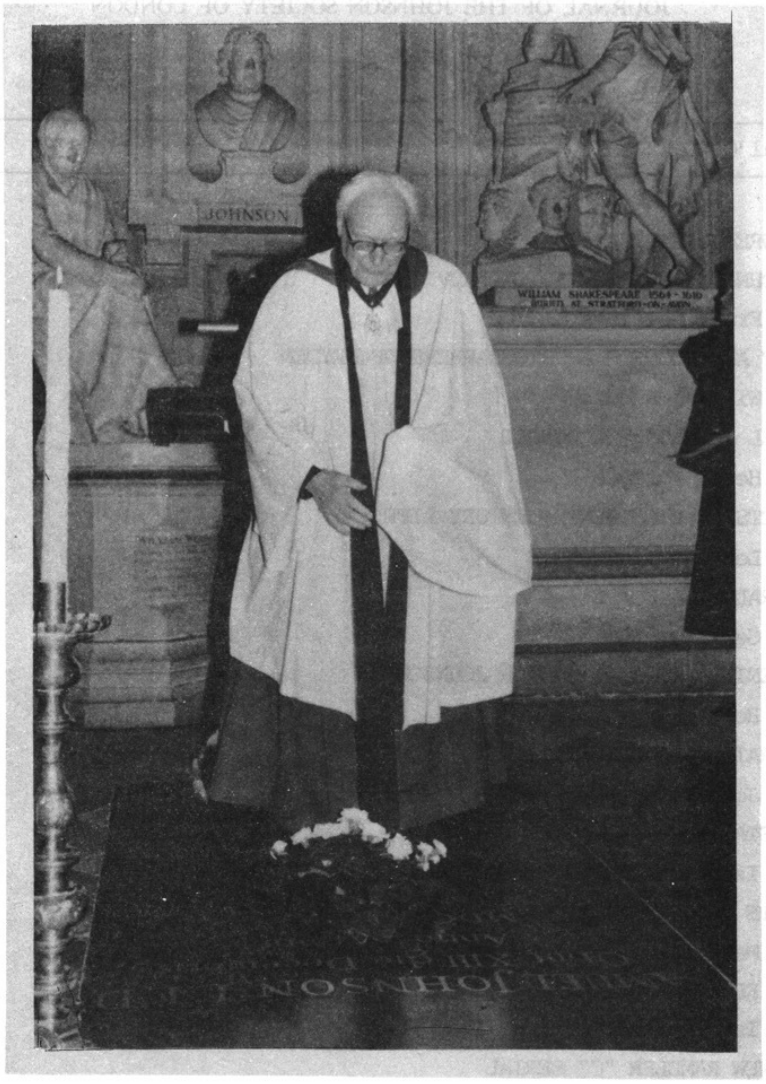

The wreath laying by the Dean of Westminster
Bicentenary Service
Westminster Abbey, 15 December 1984

DR. JOHNSON AND HIS MEDICAL ADVISERS*

Dr. Frank Collings, MMSA

We admire Johnson as a scholar, poet and man of letters. We suffer with him as he struggles against great odds, and rejoice when his genius triumphs over difficulties. Not least among Johnson's handicaps was his poor health and a chronological list of his possible and putative maladies is provided.[1]

Johnson had a high regard for the medical profession and wrote:

> I believe that every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusion of benificence and willingness to exert a lucrative art where there is no hope of lucre.

Dr. Johnson had many medical advisers; a few were famous, others were lesser men whose names have been rendered immortal by their association with him.[2] Six deserve special mention: Robert Levett and Dr. Thomas Lawrence, who were his chief medical advisers until towards the end of his life; then two physicians, Dr. William Heberden and Dr. Richard Brocklesby, and two surgeons, Mr. William Cumberland Cruikshank and Mr. Percival Pott. Boswell wrote that Johnson had "a peculiar pleasure in the company of physicians". Certainly several of his friends and members of the Club were medical men. Some were successful as doctors, and others, like Bathurst and Goldsmith, singularly unsuccessful. So that Johnson wrote, "a very curious book might be written on the fortune of physicians".

Apart from his doctors, however, he also received medical assistance from several other sources. During his childhood, his parents, relatives and family may be included. In times of psychological stress Johnson relied upon the help of a few well chosen friends: Edmund Hector, John Taylor and Hester Thrale in particular.

Johnson himself was more than "a mere dabbler in physic". His knowledge of medicine was partly due to his association with so many medical men, especially Robert James and Thomas Lawrence, but also because of his wide reading for the writing of several medical biographies and the extensive study required for the vast number of medical quotations in the great Dictionary. We often find Johnson quoting medical authorities such as Mark Akenside and George Cheyne.

* An illustrated talk given at the Johnson Society of London Meeting on 17th March, 1984. Chairman: Mrs. Helen Forsyth.

Boswell begins by taking us back to Lichfield where at four o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesday, 18th September, 1709, a baby boy was born to Sarah and Michael at their home above the book shop in Bread Market Street. The parents had married rather late in life three years before; Michael was fify-two and Sarah aged forty when she was delivered. The obstetric risks at that time were considerable, for the art of midwifery was hardly developed until much later in the eighteenth century. We must be thankful, therefore, that Michael obtained the services of a first-rate man-midwife, the thirty year old George Hector, who was a surgeon at Lichfield. Even so, the infant was born "almost dead" after a difficult and dangerous labour. But Hector gave comfort and encouragement with the words: "Here is a brave boy!"

Dr. Samuel Swinfen was lodging in the Johnson household at that time and became one of Sam's godfathers. Joan Merklew, who lived only a few minutes' walk away in George Lane, was employed as wet nurse. While staying there the baby developed an eye infection and returned home after ten weeks, "a poor diseased infant, almost blind".

The parents coped with various infections which assailed the infant, including a nasty abscess of the buttock and ear infections which may have resulted in deafness in the left ear. Michael probably used any simple household remedies from stock in his shop.

By his second year poor little Sam had developed scrofula or the King's Evil, a tuberculous infection of the lymph nodes of the neck, first diagnosed by Dr. Swinfen and probably contracted from infected cow's milk. In the Dictionary, Johnson defines the King's Evil as: "a scrofulous distemper in which the glands are ulcerated, commonly believed to be cured by the touch of the King". As an example he gives a quotation from Wiseman's Surgery which suggests that sore eyes were frequently regarded as a complication of the King's Evil. Richard Wiseman was surgeon both to Charles I and Charles II. He was a great advocate of the Royal Touch.

We cannot be sure of all the remedies tried but we know that Sam was taken to see Dr. Thomas Atwood, an oculist from Worcester, and that an issue was cut in his left arm and kept open until he was six years old.

Imagine the despair of his parents, and the hope engendered by the celebrated Lichfield physician, Sir John Floyer, when he recommended that the child should be taken to London to receive the Royal Touch. Floyer was physician to Charles II, gave the first description of emphysema in 1745, wrote an early treatise on geriatrics, and an important work on asthma which Johnson had occasion to borrow from the

Cathedral Library at Lichfield towards the end of his life. Floyer constructed a special watch to count the pulse - an early "stop watch" - and he was a great advocate of cold baths!

Sarah had a wretched journey to London with Sam; but when all the formalities were completed she took him to St. James' Palace where on the 30th March, 1712, he was touched by Queen Anne in company with about 200 others. A gold touch piece was hung by a white ribbon around his neck.

By the age of eight his neck had healed, and Sam had managed to survive the usual childhood ailments, including a mercifully mild attack of smallpox.

By his 'teens he had become a big-boned, ungainly youth scarred by the scrofula with defective vision and weighed down by guilt and destructive self-criticism. His nervous tics, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations were making their appearance.

When he was nineteen, a stroke of good fortune enabled him to go up to Oxford where he had the company of his friend and old school fellow, John Taylor. However, by the age of twenty Johnson was clinically depressed, walking mile after mile, to alleviate the "vile melancholy". He sent a detailed description in Latin to Dr. Swinfen which resulted in that disastrous breach of medical confidentiality and the awful prognosis of future madness or loss of reason, which haunted Johnson ever after.

His return home due to narrowed circumstances was soon followed by the death of his father. He tried to carry on the business, but later became an under-teacher at Market Bosworth. Then followed one of the worst periods of depression, when Johnson became virtually "ship wrecked". Fortunately, he was saved by a young surgeon in Birmingham, his old school fellow, Edmund Hector, nephew of the man-midwife. Hector rescued Johnson by his friendship; he persuaded him to translate Lobo's Voyage to Abyssinia and actually wrote it down while Johnson dictated from his bed.

Not long after this, while still in Birmingham, he met Elizabeth Porter. About ten months after her husband, Harry Porter, had died, leaving her a widow with three children, Sam aged twenty-six and Tetty aged forty-six were married, on July 9th 1735.

In 1737 after the Edial venture had failed, Johnson set out with David Garrick to try his fortune in London, but soon after their departure, Nathaniel died, plunging Sam into a further episode of depression.

Having spent most of Tetty's small fortune, he now lived in straitened circumstances, but apart from his depression it seems that he enjoyed reasonably good health.

It was in the late 1730s that Johnson contributed numerous articles to Edward Cave's Gentleman's Magazine, including a translation of the life of the famous medical teacher, Herman Boerhaave, who had recently died. Boerhaave had made Leyden the foremost centre of medical education in Europe. The biography mentions the qualities essential to a great physician: compassion, humility, learning and faith. In 1742 he wrote the life of Thomas Sydenham, "The English Hippocrates", who was born in Dorset in 1624. Among his best known works are his "Medical Observations" and his "Treatise on Gout" in which he gives a brilliant description of an acute attack, writing from painful personal experience. And there can be little doubt that Johnson suffered some very acute attacks himself. St. Vitus's Dance, or Chorea, was also described by Sydenham, and it is of interest that Boswell thought Johnson's odd movements were caused by this. Most now accept the opinion of Sir Joshua Reynolds who considered that the nervous "tricks" were psychological in origin.

Between 1741 and 1742 Johnson assisted Dr. Robert James with much of the biographical material included in his enormous Medical Dictionary. Dr. James was famous for his fever powders, which incidentally were thought by some to have contributed to Goldsmith's death. Johnson wrote the dedication to Dr. Richard Mead that celebrated physician who "lived more in the broad sunshine of life than almost any man". Mead was the first physician to encourage the apothecaries. He met them in the coffee houses, Tom's in the morning and Batson's in the afternoon, to discuss their cases and, for a fee, gave advice about treatment. Thus medical consultations began ahd the relationship between consultant and general medical practitioner was established.

By 1747 work on Johnson's great Dictionary had commenced and about this time we have the first mention of his beloved friend, Dr. Richard Bathurst, whose father had brought Francis Barber back from Jamaica. Poor Bathurst despaired of making a success in practice and became army physician in the expedition against Havannah where he died from a fever in 1762. Bathurst may have given Johnson advice on minor medical matters, and we remember how he tried unsuccessfully to treat the unclubbable Sir John Hawkins when he had toothache.

Another friend was the Reverend John Taylor whom he found a great comfort and psychological support although they seemed to have so little in common. A few days after the publication of the last Rambler, on the 17th March, 1752, Tetty died. They had been married seventeen

years. In his grief, he turned to Taylor: "Let me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great."

The population of London towards the end of the eighteenth century numbered about half a million and was served by about 150 physicians (a very superior breed!), almost twice as many surgeons and many more apothecaries. In addition there were numerous quacks, "vain, boastful, artful, tricking pretenders to physic".

Perhaps it is a little unkind to introduce at this point Johnson's humble friend and apothecary, Robert Levett; because although unqulaified and "an obscure practitioner in physic among the lower people", a quack he most certainly was not.

Levett was born at Kirkella, near Hull, in about 1705. Although of humble origin, his ambition was to become a doctor. By working in a linen draper's shop he managed to save enough to travel to Paris and became a waiter in a coffee house frequented by physicians. In this way he gleaned all the medical knowledge he could. After meeting Johnson in about 1746 he became his apothecary and Johnson used to say that he would not be satisfied though attended by the whole College of Physicians unless he had Levett with him. After his most imprudent marriage had ended in disaster, this extraordinary man joined Johnson's odd ménage along with the peevish Anna Williams, Elizabeth Desmoulins, and his black servant, Francis Barber. We can imagine the Doctor and Robert Levett taking breakfast together and drinking numerous cups of tea at No. 8 Bolt Court, before the apothecary left to go on his rounds. Hawkins described Levett as

> one of the lowest practitioners in the art of healing that ever sought a living by it. His person was middle-sized and thin; his visage swarthy, adust and corrugated, his conversation except on professional subject, barren. . . . he might have been mistaken for an alchemist, whose complexion had been hurt by the fumes of the crucible and whose clothes had suffered from the sparks of the furnace.

On the 17th January, 1782, at the age of seventy-eight quite suddenly he died. "And so ended the life of a very useful and blameless man," wrote Johnson. The following year Johnson wrote a deeply moving poem in memory of his humble friend whose single talent was so well employed in caring for the down-and-out in London, always attending the sick with alacrity - "no summons mocked by chill delay".

The year 1755 saw at long last the publication of the Dictionary, that vasta molle superbus, containing quotations from numerous doctors and men of science, for example: Dr. John Arbuthnot, Sir Thomas Browne,

George Cheyne, Sir John Floyer, Gideon Harvey, Sir Isaac Newton, John Quincy, Samuel Sharp and Richard Wiseman.

Johnson called Arbuthnot "a most universal genius" and thought he was one of the first among eminent writers of the reign of Queen Anne. He frequently quoted from Arbuthnot's "The Nature of Ailments", 1731 and "The Effects of Air on Human Bodies". The Dictionary contains numerous quotations from Sir Thomas Browne's Pseudodoxia Epidemica or Vulgar Errors.

Another great scientist and philosopher frequently quoted is Sir Isaac Newton, 1642 - 1727, especially Newton's Optics. John Quincy, a London apothecary, wrote The English Dispensatory and the Lexicon Physico-Medicum which was much referred to by Johnson. Samuel Sharp's textbook on Surgery and also the works of Cheselden are occasionally quoted, and Gideon Harvey's (1640 - 1700?) Morbus Anglicus, or the Anatomy of Consumptions.

Not long after Boswell's first meeting with Johnson in Tom Davies's back parlour, they were often seen at the Mitre Tavern; and this is where they used to meet another important man of letters, a native of Ireland, who had studied medicine at Edinburgh - poor Oliver Goldsmith. Vain of his appearance, often beaten down in conversation, and most unsuccessful as a doctor, yet the author of The Vicar of Wakefield, and of whom Johnson was to write the epitaph "Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit".

There is an amusing passage in Boswell's Life where Robert Chambers, a legally qualified friend of Johnson, tried to give advice one day in May 1773, when Johnson was dining with him and Boswell at the Temple. Chambers began to advise various remedies until stopped in his tracks by Johnson (fretted by pain): "Pr'ythee don't tease me. Stay till I am well, and then you shall tell me how to cure myself."

From 1766, at the age of fifty-seven, Johnson's health began to decline and he was not well enough to undertake the journey to Scotland in 1769. However, he seems to have been remarkably fit again when he set out for his tour of the Hebrides in August, 1773, at the age of sixty-four. He enjoyed good health while in Scotland, but he was careful to collect some medicine from an Apothecary's Shop in Montrose, where he was mistaken for a physician.

While Johnson was in Scotland he twice referred to one of his favourite medical authors, George Cheyne, 1671 - 1743, a remarkable character who enjoyed too much of the good things of life so that eventually he weighed about 32 stones. He improved dramatically when he went on a strict diet and tried the waters at Bath. His Short History

of Gout earned him the title of "The Gout Doctor", and he also wrote on depression or The English Malady, and his Essay on Health and Long Life was published in 1725.

We now come to one of the most important of Johnson's physicians, one who covers more years than any other - "the learned and worthy" Dr. Thomas Lawrence who was first mentioned in Boswell's Life in a letter from Johnson to Bennet Langton in 1758. Thomas Lawrence was born in 1711 in the Parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster. He was the second son of Captain Thomas Lawrence, R.N. by his wife Elizabeth of Kinsale, in Ireland. Thomas was educated at first in Dublin and then later attended the Grammar School in Southampton. In 1727 he was admitted as a Commoner of Trinity College, Oxford, and studied Anatomy under the brilliant teacher Frank Nichols, who had also taught William Hunter and Richard Bathurst. Incidentally, it was probably Bathurst who introduced Lawrence to Johnson. Lawrence succeeded Nichols as Lecturer in Anatomy at Oxford. He studied at St. Thomas's Hospital and lectured in Anatomy in London until displaced by the famous Hunter Brothers.

Dr. Lawrence is mentioned in a well-known letter from Johnson to Hill Boothby dated December 1755, which is a splendid example of Johnson, himself, acting as medical adviser. He writes: "Give me leave, who have thought much on Medicine to propose to you an easy and I think very probable remedy for indigestion and lubricity of the bowels. Dr. Lawrence has told me your case." He goes on to recommend finely powdered orange peel to be taken a scruple at a time in various ways, but adds cautiously, "I would not have you offer it to the Doctor as mine. Physicians do not love intruders."

Lawrence was a fine classical scholar and Johnson often wrote in Latin verse when seeking his advice.

Elected as President of the Royal College of Physicians in 1767, Lawrence held office for seven consecutive years during a very stormy period in the College's history.

Gradually Johnson's health deteriorated and by January, 1777, his breathing was so bad that he had to sleep sitting up in a chair. Lawrence sent him to a Surgeon who bled him 12 ounces, but that night when he became worse he rose and opened the vein himself and bled a further 10 ounces. He wrote: "Frank and I were a bit awkward, but with Levett's help we stopped the stream."

Johnson often wanted to try various remedies, but always sought his doctor's blessing. For example, he determined to try Ipecacuanha, as described by Mark Akenside, but after taking the maximum dose he felt

no better. Then, in October, 1778, he wrote to Dr. Lawrence: "I am much distressed in the night and have lately had such an account of Musk that I wish to try it, unless you think it improper. If you consent to the use of it, my request is that you send your servant ... to the Apothecaries' Hall to buy it. I may then expect to have it good."

In January, 1780, the death of Lawrence's wife gave occasion for one of Johnson's finest letters. Soon afterwards, Lawrence's health began to fail and he became deafer and deafer. He developed angina, and then had a stroke. However, Johnson still sought his advice and Mrs. Thrale described an extraordinary consultation at his Essex Street practice when, since Johnson was rather deaf and panting with asthma, and Lawrence stone deaf and unable to speak after his stroke, they resorted to writing little notes to each other in Latin. Johnson complained that the remedy was too feeble and wrote, "You are timide and gelide." To which poor Lawrence replied, "It is not me, 'tis nature that is gelide and timide."

By June, 1782, Lawrence was so ill that he had to retire to Canterbury where he died a year later on the 6th June, 1783, just a few months after Robert Levett. Johnson wrote "Lawrence is the best man I have known."

After Levett's death, Robert Holder became his apothecary, and two other doctors, Sir Richard Jebb and Sir Lucas Pepys, both connected with the Thrales, succeeded Dr. Lawrence and provided medical care for a time.

In the first half of 1782, Johnson was "battered by one disorder after another". Unfortunately, it seems that he had inadvertently given offence to Jebb, but by June he was writing: "This morning to my bedside came dear Sir Richard. He told me that if I went to Oxford, I should strengthen the constitution by bark, tame the cough by opium, keep the body open and support myself with liberal nourishment." It was Jebb who had looked after poor little Harry Thrale when he died from appendicitis in 1776 and he also looked after Queeney.

Jebb was an eccentric man, but established a well to do practice around Parliament Street and is frequently mentioned in Horace Walpole's letters. He attended the Duke of Gloucester so successfully that when King George III was ill he asked for Jebb. On being told that because of Court etiquette he must have his physician-in-ordinary, the King snorted: "Don't tell me of your ordinaries and extraordinaries, I will have Jebb!"

Dr. Pepys was a Londoner, educated at Eton and Christchurch,

Oxford. He had studied medicine at Edinburgh and was later elected physician to the Middlesex Hospital. He became physician-in-ordinary to the King in 1777 and was created a baronet in 1784. Sir Lucas was said to have been a man of great firmness and determination and was physician-general to the army for many years until superseded. He lived to the age of eighty-eight.

Johnson came under his care in March, 1783, when staying at Mrs. Thrale's house in Argyll Street. When Boswell called for the first time since Henry Thrale's death, Johnson was pale and ill. Dr. Pepys visited and Boswell recorded: "I preceived that he was but an unruly patient for Sir Lucas Pepys said, 'If you were tractable, Sir, I should prescribe for you.'" However, the following day, Johnson had taken Dr. Pepys's pills and further bleeding was forbidden.

Pepys was a great advocate of sea bathing and developed an extensive practice in Brighton where he had been physician and friend to the Thrales for many years. His brother, William Weller Pepys, was called "Prime Minister to Mrs. Montagu", the Queen of the Blue-Stocking circle. Pepys had looked after Ralph Thrale who died from meningitis while at Brighton. He also treated Henry Thrale who died from apoplexy in 1781.

After her marriage to Piozzi, Hester, when in Milan, received news of Johnson's death. She wrote to Sir Lucas Pepys asking for any information for her Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson. In fact, it was Sir Lucas who precipitated the first open quarrel between "Bozzi" and "Piozzi" over Mrs. Montagu's Essay on Shakespeare. In 1787 Pepys wrote to Mrs. Piozzi in Dresden saying that when she returned it might be more discreet for her to stay at Bath for a while and that she should change her name to "Salusbury". Hester ignores his advice and never forgave him for his impertinence.

In June, 1783, the same month that Dr. Lawrence died, Johnson suffered a stroke. Having retired to bed after a busy day, he awoke in the small hours of the morning of the 17th June with an odd feeling of confusion and indistinctness in the head lasting half a minute or so. He was very alarmed and to test the integrity of his mental faculties he composed a prayer in Latin. Then, to his dismay, he found he was unable to speak. He tried drinking some wine and put himself into violent motion once or twice, all to no avail. At dawn he rang for Francis, made signs for pen and ink and wrote a note to Mr. Allen, his next door neighbour. He sent messages to two doctors, Dr. Heberden and Dr. Brocklesby. It was to his old friend, The Reverend John Taylor, that he wrote saying that he thought his case was "not past remedy" and asking him to bring Dr. Heberden with him.

The two doctors and Mr. Holder, the apothecary, duly arrived. Blisters were applied to his neck and back, Johnson insisting on the prescription from the Edinburgh Dispensatory. Two days later a formidable diffusion of Cantharides was applied to his head on Dr. Heberden's instructions. The manuscript of Heberden's case notes, Index Historiae Morborum, preserved in the Library of the Royal College of Physicians, includes a description of Johnson's stroke and makes fascinating reading.

Perhaps of all Johnson's medical advisers Dr. William Heberden was the most distinguished. Johnson called him the "Ultimus Romanorum", the last of the learned physicians. Heberden was born in London in 1710. He graduated at Sr. John's College, Cambridge, where he practised for some years before deciding to settle in London. He is described as a modest, gentle, deeply religious and very lovable man. Very skilful as a clinician, he was one of the first to describe angina pectoris and he is remembered to this day for the eponym given to osteo-arthritic nodules of the fingers called "Heberden's nodes". Heberden practised from Cecil Street in the Strand, and also attended Henry Thrale and Dr. Thomas Lawrence. He lived to the age of ninety-one.

Now it seems that Dr. Pepys must have taken umbrage when Johnson called in Heberden and Brocklesby, but what was he to do? He could not afford to miss Heberden's skill, and Dr. Brocklesby was his friend and near neighbour. And, as Johnson wrote: "to call in three had made me ridiculous by the appearance of self-importance".

Of course it is never easy to take over a case from another doctor to whom the patient has been as devoted as Johnson had been to Dr. Lawrence. And after Jebb and Pepys, he was fortunate enough to find his wonderfully kind "physician-in-ordinary", Dr. Richard Brocklesby, who was born in Somerset of Quaker parents and educated in Ireland. After studying in Edinburgh he went to Leyden and graduated M.D. in 1745.

By July Johnson had made a sufficiently good recovery from his stroke to be able to spend a fortnight in Kent with Bennet Langton, and to finish sitting for his portrait to Francis Reynolds in August.

However, heart failure caused by high blood pressure soon resulted in severe breathlessness and this was further compounded by the emphysematous condition of his lungs and past history of bronchitis. As a result he had swelling of the legs and ankles, or dropsy, which was first observed by Dr. Pepys. In addition, for the past year or two he had another problem, a swollen left testicle, which he thought was a hydrocele or a collection of fluid adjacent to the testicle and which could simply be drained. On the 30th July, 1783, he wrote to his surgeon,

Mr. Cruikshank, asking him to drain it for him.

William Cumberland Cruikshank was a Scot. Educated at Edinburgh and later at Glasgow, he eventually decided to study Medicine joining William Hunter as his assistant at the famous Windmill Street School. Later, as Hunter's partner he became a great success as a teacher of Anatomy. Johnson thought highly of this gentle, somewhat nervous surgeon, calling him "a sweet blooded man", and commending him to Sir Joshua Reynolds as successor to Hunter on his retirement as Professor of Anatomy at the Royal Academy.

At the beginning of August, Cruikshank tried to drain the swelling but, to Johnson's dismay, a sarcocele was diagnosed. A second opinion was sought, therefore, from the distinguished surgeon, Mr. Percival Pott, who was on the staff of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Pott is famous for the eponym "Pott's fracture" of the ankle and "Pott's spine", or tuberculosis of the spine.

We can imagine Johnson's anxiety about the risks entailed by surgery and yet at the same time understand his impatience for action. Percival Pott recommended an expectant policy and, with masterly inactivity, went off to Lincolnshire. Johnson, who had planned to go to Wiltshire, decided by the end of August to postpone his visit to Salisbury no longer and set out on the 82 mile journey by stage coach taking 15 hours and arrived at Heale House to stay with his friend, William Bowles. From Salisbury he wrote a progress report to Dr. Brocklesby and also asked him to keep an eye on Miss Williams whose life was drawing to a close.

On the 9th September, Johnson wrote a detailed description of his case and sought a further opinion from his friend, Mr. John Mudge, a celebrated surgeon from Plymouth. Reynolds and Johnson had stayed with his father, Zacariah Mudge, Prebendary of Exeter, on their visit to Devon in 1762. Johnson wrote: "Tell me what is to be done. Excision is doubtless necessary and painful, but is it dangerous? The pain I hope to endure with decency, but I am loathe to put life into much hazard." Mudge advised immediate surgery.

To add to his problems, by the end of September, Johnson developed his most severe attack of gout and, as if that were not enough, he then suffered toothache and had to have a tooth extracted. In October, he was hobbling about with two sticks, or keeping his leg elevated on a pillow. Mr. Mudge still advised surgery although the sarcocele was subsiding. On his return Mr. Percival Pott declined to puncture it saying: "one would not carry fire and sword further than is necessary". And Pott was right. The swelling slowly went down.

By December the dropsy was advancing up his legs and thighs and the breathlessness was more troublesome in spite of taking more opium on Dr. Heberden's advice. In the early part of 1784 Mr. Pott and Mr. Cruikshank made incisions in his legs to drain the oedema. On February 11th Johnson wrote to Boswell asking him to consult some Scottish physicians about his case. Boswell wrote off at once sending the same letter to each doctor. He received five opinions including a reply from that very amiable baronet, Sir Alexander Dick, who was by then eighty-one years old. Johnson and Boswell had stayed with Sir Alexander at Prestonfield House on their Scottish tour. Since his retirement Sir Alexander had concentrated on his gardening and he tactfully acknowledged Boswell's request for advice and sent Johnson a present of his best rhubarb. Johnson received a medical packet from Boswell and an excellent Consilium Medicum from Dr. Thomas Gillespie of Edinburgh, who was Lord Auchinleck's doctor.

Dr. William Cullen, one of Scotland's greatest physicians, who was largely responsible for the 1774 Edition of the Edinburgh Pharmacopoeia sent his advice. He had been in partnership with William Hunter and was eventually appointed Professor of Medicine in Glasgow and later Professor of Chemistry and Medicine in Edinburgh. A further opinion came from Professor John Hope who had been Professor of Botany and Materia Medica in the Edinburgh School of Medicine. And, Boswell also sought the opinion of Dr. Alexander Monro, Secundus, a member of that remarkable dynasty of doctors spanning eight generations. He had been appointed Professor at the age of twenty-two lecturing at the Edinburgh School for fifty years.

Johnson was very grateful for all the polite attention and kind advice received from these Scottish doctors in absentia, but it must have been a little trying for Drs. Brocklesby and Heberden. He seems to have received some relief from Vinegar of Squills and possibly Digitalis and had a remarkable diuresis in February so that by March 1784, apart from his persistent cough, he was feeling very much better. In fact, in June he felt well enough to visit Oxford but by the 16th he had to return home again feeling unwell.

He wrote to Lucy Porter to say that he would be at Lichfield, "bringing a poor, broken, unwieldy body, but I shall not trouble you long". He spent about five days at Lichfield but could scarcely walk about. Then, in August, he went on to John Taylor's and found him busy as usual on his farm at Ashbourne. The dropsy advanced inexorably and he felt he was running a race against death, but he put up a tremendous fight - "I will be conquered; I will not capitulate".

In spite of Squills and Diacodium the dropsy continually encroached and he wrote to Dr. Brocklesby, "O, for an efficacious diuretic". He tried Tincture of Cantharides and asked again about Ipecacuahna. In September he wrote: "Your Squill pills are perfect bullets". At the end of March he made a further journey to Lichfield.

Johnson kept a Medical Journal - the Aegri Ephemeris - from July until November, 1784, and so we have a detailed account of the progress of his disease during this time. When his cardiac asthma became "tyrannical" he wrote to Brocklesby for help and by November 6th the oedema was visibly increasing and so he decided he must return to London.

Towards the end, two more doctors assisted, Dr. William Butter and Dr. Richard Warren. Butter had been Taylor's doctor in Derbyshire until he settled in London in 1782. The cheerful Dr. Richard Warren who came from Suffolk and was the son of an Archdeacon, became very successful as Court Physician and attended the King. When, in his usual bland style, he said he hoped Johnson was better, he received the reply: "No, Sir; you cannot conceive with what acceleration I advance towards death".

Throughout his final illness Johnson relied upon Dr. Brocklesby, and many instances of his kindness and generosity are known to us. When in June 1784 Boswell and Reynolds were endeavouring to arrange for him to winter in Italy, Johnson told them with tears of gratitude that Brocklesby had offered him £100 a year for life: and he had also been prepared to let him have an apartment in his own house in Norfolk Street. And it was from Dr. Brocklesby that Dr. Johnson sought a truthful prognosis. We recall his discussion with Boswell at a much earlier date when he had denied the lawfulness of telling a lie even to a sick man for fear of alarming him, saying: "You have no business with consequences; you are to tell the truth". Poor Brocklesby hesitated at first, but Johnson asked for a direct answer and so the kindly physician, having first asked whether he could bear the whole truth whichsoever way it might lead, told Johnson that he could not recover without a miracle. "Then," said Johnson, "I will take no more physic, not even my opiates, for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded."

About ten days before his death he told Brocklesby that he had been "as a dying man all night", and then quoted from Macbeth beginning: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased ...".

The last three weeks of Johnson's final illness from November 20th were described by the Rev. John Hoole who visited him assiduously

and who, with John Taylor, gave him much spiritual comfort. Drs. Heberden, Brocklesby, Butter, and Mr. Cruikshank were in attendance, along with Mr. Holder the apothecary. When the Rev. Hoole wrote recommending Dr. Galloway, an irregular physician, as an expert on the dropsy, Johnson declined the offer, saying it was too late for physicians, regular or irregular. A day or so before he died he required hourly help to sit up in bed and to move his painful legs, and he sipped some cider and water. He grumbled about his male nurse who had been engaged by Sir John Hawkins, saying that he was "an idiot ... and as sleepy as a dormouse".

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 13th December when Francis went into the bedroom, his master asked him to open a cabinet and pass him a small drawer containing a case of lancets. With one of these Johnson stabbed his legs and later used a pair of scissors plunging them into the calves of each leg. He lost about 10 ounces of blood. Mr. Cruikshank and his apothecary were summoned immediately. A few days before when Cruikshank had scarified his legs Johnson had cried out "Deeper - deeper - I will abide the consequences; you are afraid of your reputation, but that is nothing to me".

That evening as life ebbed away he uttered the words, "Jam Moriturus" and soon afterwards at a quarter past seven, quite peacefully, he died.

Two days later the young Dr. James Wilson performed a post-mortem examination for Mr. Cruikshank who had himself prepared Dr. Johnson's death mask. Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Butter and Mr. White attended the autopsy and a full account of this was recorded by James Wilson. Dr. Heberden wrote details of the post-mortem in his case book and both these manuscripts are preserved in the Library of the Royal College of Physicians. A nephew of the two Hunter brothers, Matthew Baillie, wrote a book on morbid anatomy illustrated with various plates, one of which demonstrates the emphysematous lung of Dr. Samuel Johnson.

In a Codicil to his last Will and Testament Johnson left instructions that Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Butter, Mr. Cruikshank and Mr. Holder should each select a book from his library to keep as a token of remembrance.

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Documentation

1. Dr. Johnson's Putative Maladies.

NEONATAL ANOXIA
IVth CRANIAL NERVE PALSY
CONGENITAL OCULAR TORTICOLLIS
OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM
REPEATED UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS
OTITIS MEDIA DEAFNESS LEFT EAR
CHILDHOOD EXANTHEMATA
SMALLPOX
SCROFULA (TUBERCULOUS CERVICAL LYMPHADENITIS)
PHLYCTENULAR CONJUNCTIVITIS
MYOPIA AND ASTIGMATISM
OBSESSIONAL NEUROSIS
ENDOGENOUS DEPRESSION
NERVOUS TICS (? TORSION DYSTONIA)
SINUSITIS
LARYNGITIS
RECURRENT BRONCHITIS
? PNEUMONIA
GALL STONES
GOUT
HYPERTENSION
SENILE AORTIC CALCIFICATION
ASTHMATIC BRONCHITIS AND EMPHYSEMA
COR PULMONALE
OBESITY
CYSTIC KIDNEYS ? RIGHT HYDRONEPHROSIS. RENAL FAILURE
"STROKE" (LACUNAR INFARCTION IN DISTRIBUTION OF LEFT MIDDLE CEREBRAL ARTERY)
SARCOCELE (?INFECTED, LOCULATED HYDROCELE)
VARICOCELE
? ANGINA PECTORIS
CONGESTIVE CARDIAC FAILURE (CARDIAC ASTHMA, DROPSY AND ASCITES.)

2. Dr. Johnson's Medical Advisers.

George Hector (Surgeon and Man-Midwife)
Dr. Samuel Swinfen 1679-1736
Dr. Thomas Atwood (Oculist)
Sir John Floyer 1649-1734
Robert Levett 1704-1782 (Apothecary)
Dr. Thomas Lawrence 1711-1783
Sir Richard Jebb 1729-1787
Sir Lucas Pepys 1742-1830

Dr. Richard Brocklesby 1722-1797
Dr. William Heberden 1710-1801
Mr. William Cumberland Cruikshank 1745-1800
Mr. Percival Pott 1714-1787
Mr. John Mudge 1721-1793
Robert Holder (Apothecary) died 1797
Sir Alexander Dick 1703-1785
Dr. Thomas Gillespie died 1804
Dr. William Cullen 1710-1790
Dr. Alexander Monro, Secundus 1735-1817
Dr. John Hope 1725-1786
Dr. William Butter 1726-1805
Dr. Richard Warren 1731-1797

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SCOTT AND JOHNSON AS BIOGRAPHERS OF DRYDEN*

William Ruddick
Department of English Language and Literature
The University of Manchester

On Easter Eve 1777 Samuel Johnson was waited on by three London booksellers, Davies, Strahan and Cadell, with the proposition that he should write biographical and critical notices to preface a series of selections from the English poets. Johnson was less concerned with schemes for future publications than with the state of his soul at that moment, for he always took the Sacrament on Easter Day in as scrupulously prepared a state of mind and spirit as he could arrive at. He rapidly agreed to the booksellers' proposals and sent them on their way. "I treated with booksellers upon a bargain, but the time was not long." he noted in his Diary.

But the proposals had interested him, and once Easter was over he set to work, gathering material for his biographies. And for the next four years, until he completed his task in time for the Easter of 1781, Johnson was often working very hard indeed. He had few reference books or manuscript sources to rely on as he considered the lives and reputations of seventeenth and eighteenth-century poets, and though there were occasional windfalls, such as the loan of the manuscript of Spence's Anecdotes from the Duke of Newcastle, he often had little more than his personal memories of over forty years of literary life and the London book trade to draw on. Johnson was a pioneer, facing a pioneer's difficulties, and later biographers and critics have had good reason to look lightly on his shortcomings and to bless him for his very substantial, various and extensive achievements. And if anyone should think Johnson's approach outmoded, one can point out the fact that (to mention only one instance) Johnson's biography of Addison has provided the basis and quite a lot of the actual framework for at least two critically respectable accounts of that writer (by Jane Jack and Bonamy Dobrée)[1] within the last thirty years.

Johnson wrote his biography of Dryden in the middle months of 1778. It was the work of a mature author and an elderly man (Johnson was 69 years old) whose long writing career was fast drawing to a close. Exactly thirty years later, in April 1808, another life of Dryden was to appear, the work this time of an author who, while not exactly young in years (for he was already 36 years old) had been rather a slow

* A paper read at the Johnson Society of London Meeting on 20th October, 1984. Chairman: Dr. I. M. Grundy.

starter and was only now taking the decision to devote the main part of his time and mental energies to literature. This new biographer was Walter Scott.

Scott and Johnson are, on the face of it, as unlike as chalk and cheese. One trembles at the thought of Johnson's critical strictures on Waverley or The Lay of the Last Minstrel (let alone Harold the Dauntless or The Pirate: the mere titles suggest the likely vigour of the Johnsonian response). But there are points of similarity, in spite of all the differences. Both men were sincere believers in the ethical value of literature, both were intensely patriotic, both were propelled by personal circumstances towards a life of copious literary composition, and both published in a wide variety of genres and modes. And though Johnson cannot be imagined approving of much of Scott's original composition in verse and prose, Scott felt a very real admiration for Johnson's work. So a consideration of the relationship between Scott's and Johnson's biographies of Dryden may be of interest, for Scott had the earlier account very much in mind as he worked.

When he came to pen his remarks on Dryden's character, Johnson lamented the fact that "of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little" (286).[2] He ends this section of his biography with a sad reflection:

> So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestic manners of a man, whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critic and poet. (287)

Johnson had tried to gather materials for a life when he was himself a young man, and he'd got almost no first-hand recollections from surviving acquaintances of the poet at all. Johnson's biography of Dryden gathers together valuable information from printed materials, but its real strength, I feel, lies in the criticism which it incorporates. The biographical part sometimes comes close to padding out the paucity of facts with lengthy passages of vituperation from contemporary satires on the poet, which Johnson seems to include as much for the amusement which they afford him as for any other reason. And because his biography is prefacing a collection of Dryden's poems Johnson doesn't feel called upon to spend over much time upon a subject which wearied him, Dryden's theatrical career:

> I wish that there were no necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole series of his dramatic performances. (238)

The phrase "the meanders of his mind" says all that needs to be known of Johnson's opinion on that part of Dryden's career. He chooses simply to "enumerate" the plays, only pointing out special circumstances concerning their creation, or stylistic features of note.

Johnson recognised the desirability of judging the literature of a past age with an accurate sense of its historical context in mind:

> To judge aright of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. (288)

But although he had gone much further than this is equating the context of literature with a historic intellectual context in the Preface to Shakespeare over a decade earlier, he seems satisfied in the main with a social, even an economic context (as the quotation just given suggests) in his biography of Dryden. Sometimes he draws on his knowledge of earlier literary and social history:

> But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. (258)

He maintains that the two theatres for which Dryden wrote were "mansions of dissolute licentiousness", thereby excusing at least in part the indelicacies of his stage comedies. Elsewhere he draws on his knowledge of the book trade in the late seventeenth century, picked up from the reminiscences of older men during his early years in London:

> The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. (285)

The condition of the stage and the book trade, Johnson suggests, affected both the nature and the quality of Dryden's art.

But the most important section of Johnson's Life of Dryden, I would maintain, comes late on, when, in his criticism of Dryden's writings (and after what seems an almost intentionally short and general treatment of his critical prose: excellent within its limits, but unspecific), Johnson embarks on a description of Dryden's characteristics as a writer of poetry and rises to a glowing encomium on his skill as a master of the verse translation:

> The veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry. (293-4)

So maintains Johnson, and he makes it clear that Dryden achieved this above all in that translation of Virgil, concerning which, he declares, "the nation considered its honour as interested in the event." And, he adds, "The hopes of the public were not disappointed."

Johnson's Dryden, to my mind, is a kind of secular John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Messiah of eighteenth-century poetry, Alexander Pope - whose translations from Homer receive the highest praise as the final tuners and perfectors of Augustan poetic style. And in order to allow the impact of these assertions to be felt as a culmination to a process of gradual improvement Johnson seems to hold his praise of Dryden's translations just a little in check.

When Walter Scott embarked on what was to be the first complete edition of Dryden's works, he admitted in his "Advertisement" or preface that "In the Biographical Memoir, it would have been hard to exact, that the Editor should rival the criticism of Johnson." His biography is, indeed, happy to base its critical standards on the Johnsonian ones, only trying to amplify Johnson's illustrations where possible and striking out independently only where Johnson had had little to say because of being chiefly concerned with Dryden's poetry. Scott's mind tended to be conservative in its literary opinions and he was content to go along with Johnson's occasional mockery of the Metaphysicals (which Scott broadens into ridicule more than once) or his notoriously low estimate of pastoralism and the elegy. The critical foundations for Scott's work are Johnsonian, as he freely admits, yet in reading the younger and later biographer one soon sees that there is an unconscious but very real difference between the two critics. Many of the issues which had engaged Johnson's mind most closely no longer seem of any great consequence to Scott, for the Classical focus has grown weaker over thirty years. The Unities, for example, which Johnson had wrestled with in the Preface to Shakespeare, can be ignored when Scott comes to discuss the heroic play. Scott is far more interested in Dryden's and his contemporaries' awareness of other traditions, such as Spanish drama and seventeenth-century French romances, which they drew on heavily in their plays of the 1660s and '70s. Scott admires Dryden's translations, and makes some shrewd points about the difficulty he faced in trying to strike a balance between "literary" and colloquial language in them. Scott has, too, the benefit of a greater familiarity with the old literatures than Johnson had, and so is able to pick out mistranslations in Dryden's versions of Chaucer and Boccaccio. But he clearly does not think of Dryden's translations as lying at the heart of a poetic and stylistic reformation as Johnson had done. For him the real interest of the translations and verse tales lies in their quality as poetic narratives. As a collector of Border Ballads and as a verse narrator

himself (his second romance, Marmion, appeared only a month or two before his biography of Dryden) Scott found Dryden's light, fast-moving, flexible verse, especially in the Fables, highly congenial. His own verse has Drydenesque characteristics, and when he says that in adapting Chaucer's Knight's Tale:

> the account of the battle itself, its alternations and issue - if they cannot be called improvements on Chaucer, are nevertheless so spirited a transfusion of his ideas into modern verse, as almost to claim the merit of originality. (421)

Scott says something which might be applied to his own handling of ballad material and medieval romance in his contemporary verse narratives.

In his "Advertisement" to the Life of Dryden Scott paid tribute not only to Johnson's criticism but also to the antiquarian researches of Edmund Malone, who had edited the Critical and Miscellaneous Prose Works of John Dryden in 1800. Malone's biography and notes were, in Scott's private opinion, valuable but ill-arranged. He was not sure that he could dig out more facts, but he believed he could arrange and use Malone's material far better. Also, as the "Advertisement" declares:

> Something seemed to remain for him who should consider these literary productions in their succession as actuated by, and operating upon, the taste of an age, where they had so predominant influence. (vi)

Scott wished "to connect the life of Dryden with the history of his publications, without losing sight of the fate and character of the individual".

In addition to what Malone had disinterred, Scott had access to the Luttrell Collection of late seventeenth-century pamphlets, to the resources of the British Museum (much expanded, of course, since Johnson's day) and the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh. He also had learned antiquarian helpers including George Ellis, Richard Heber and, in one very well-informed letter, William Wordsworth. Naturally a great deal of what was discovered went into the introductions to individual poems and plays, but the new facts also fed into the introductory biograpy, which affords a much more certain grasp of the historical context for some of Dryden's works than Johnson had been able to offer.

But the impression still remains that Scott saw his task as a

critic (as he declared it to be) as essentially supplementary to Johnson's. The two areas in which his criticism is most original and most solid are those which Johnson seems to have chosen (quite understandably, since he was introducing a selection of poetry) to say relatively little about.

On the drama, Scott is interesting because he is so obviously interested himself. He had read (and survived, rather to his own amazement) the interminable French romances of De Scudéry and La Calprenède, he knew the Spanish drama, and he describes the strange hybrid which they begat with evident relish, as well as a lawyer's understanding of the kind of chop-logic which they display:

> The most applauded scenes in these plays turned upon nice discussions of metaphysical passion, such as in the days of yore were wont to be agitated in the courts and parliaments of love. Some puzzling dilemma, or metaphysical abstraction, is argued between the personages on the stage, whose dialogue, instead of presenting a scene of natural passion, exhibits a sort of pleading, or combat of logic ... (104)

From fencing Scott draws a neat analogy to characterise a typically involved passage of repartee:

> Thus, in the following scene between Almanzor and Almahide, the solicitations of the lover and the denials of the queen are expressed in the very carte and tierce of poetical argumentation. (104)

Scott also writes excellently on the subject of Dryden's critical prose. The congenial nature of Dryden's mind and method to him becomes clear when he admits that critical principles may not have been reduced to a regular system as in the work of French writers of Dryden's day, but then

> they are said to possess the best possible rules for building ships of war, although not equally remarkable for their power of fighting them. (448)

A touch of nationalistic humour pardonable in a biographer writing in the middle of the war against Napoleon, and one which both Dryden and Johnson would probably have enjoyed! Returning to his main line of argument, Scott insists that although Dryden's "doctrines" are "Scattered, without system or pretence to it ... it is impossible to read far ... without finding some maxim ... which every student of poetry will do well to engrave on the tablets of his memory." (450)

Scott's praise of Dryden's essays as "the most delightful prose in the English language" sits happily along with Johnson's conclusion that

> Dryden is always another and the same, he does not exhibit a second time the same elegances in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. (293)

As I have already suggested, Scott finds qualities in Dryden's narrative verse and critical prose which seem to prefigure characteristics of his own modes of writing. The spectacle of the great miscellaneous author and man of letters of the late seventeenth century (really the first such author of any celebrity), of his struggles and his ultimate success, seems to have been a major factor in encouraging the youngish Edinburgh lawyer to devote himself more completely to literature. Scott's son-in-law and biographer, J. G. Lockhart, made the point in his Life of Scott in 1837:

> It was penned just when he had begun to apprehend his own destiny ... and I doubt if the entire range of our annals could have furnished a theme more calculated to keep Scott's scrutinising interest awake, than that which opened to him as he contemplated step by step the career of Dryden.[3]

Perhaps Johnson also felt the same relevance in Dryden's story when, as a young man, he tried to collect verbal records of the poet for a biography. The old Samuel Johnson's Dryden was the great tuner of English numbers; he who prepared the way for Alexander Pope. One can only speculate on what the young Johnson's Dryden might have been, for the life was not written. Its place as a record of the struggles of the man of letters in adversity and (with hindsight) an apologia for the literary character of the biographer himself was taken by the life of a lesser versifier, Richard Savage. Savage's biography exists in its own right as the life of an unfortunate individual: it also serves as an assertion of what the writer for money, cursed, like Savage, with an unstable and almost unmanageable emotional temperament, might hope to do, and might or might not be able to do in the Grub Street world of Curll and Lintott. For Scott the energy, the inventiveness, the narrative art and the temperamental ebullience of Dryden were all encouragements to hopefulness in the pursuit of literary success. But between Dryden and himself there stood the figure of an intermediate great, various and productive man of letters, whose biography of Dryden provided a basis from which any sensible biographer ought to work. Scott's Life of Dryden does use Johnson's work as a basis: his views are frequently

identical with Johnson's, since fuller knowledge has not shaken their authority, and his most independent critical judgements lie in areas where Johnson had been least engaged as a biographer and critic. But I find in Scott's biography two signs of the new Romantic sensibility, which were to characterise his later criticism and his fiction. First, there is the fuller development of that insight into historical situations and contexts which Johnson had said the critical biographer should strive for: and secondly an unacknowledged, almost instinctive shifting away from neo-classical preoccupations towards an interest in earlier literature as a revelation of the self of its creator, and a means of achieving self-discovery for the reader through sympathetic identification with an earlier author's activities and achievements.

Documentation

1. The reader who is interested to see how well Johnson's line of argument and basic critical position can still serve intelligent critics of Addison may consult Jane H. Jack's "The Periodical Essayists" in From Dryden to Johnson (volume 4 of The Pelican Guide to English Literature) ed. A. R. Humphreys (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1957), pp. 217-229, and Bonamy Dobrée's section on Addison (pp. 102-120) in English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740 (volume 7 of The Oxford History of English Literature), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1959.
2. This and subsequent page numbers refer to volume I of Lives of the English Poets, ed. Arthur Waugh (World's Classics, 1952). Scott references are numbered as in volume I of The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart., (Cadell, Edinburgh, 1834).
3. J. G. Lockhart, Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. (one volume edition, Cadell, Edinburgh, 1842), p.157.

Samuel Johnson died in the evening of 13 December 1784, two centuries ago. He is a more suitable patron saint for the English than our Palestinian soldier-saint, George, or that other candidate for the role, Thomas à Becket. For one thing Johnson spoke English. More than that, his work as lexicographer and Hercules of English literature helped to make English the world language that it has become. . . .

From The Times leader "An English Saint Remembered", 13 December 1984.

S A M U E L J O H N S O N

Dr. Johnson is an honour to mankind.

Rev. Martin M'Pherson.

All great men are an honour to their land,
But you are more - an honour to mankind -
For you allowed your genius to expand
Until it reached a breadth few others find.
Your brilliant mind was governed by your heart,
Your heart was governed by your brilliant mind,
They formed a dyad no event could part
And after death their glory was enshrined,
For Boswell wrote your Life and brought to view
The mercy that your judgement never lacked,
The primacy of virtue that was true
To every aspect of your every act,
The culminating goodness that became
Immortal as the letters of your name.

Helen Forsyth

ASPECTS OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON LIFE

Leon Garfield - 21st January 1984
Chairman: Maj-Gen M. H. P. Sayers, OBE

The Chairman introduced Leon Garfield as a well-known author of children's books, with an eighteenth-century background, who had served in the RAMC during the war as a biochemist. He had won the Whitbread Book of the Year Prize in 1980, one book had been filmed, two had already been televised and a third was starting the next day. More recently he had completed Edwin Drood and written a novel in Dickensian vein.

The speaker began with an account of his "unacademic" researches into the eighteenth-century background of his books. He had found a good deal of revealing information in laws against current abuses: rubbish in the street, open cellar doors, broken pavements, shops by churches, bullocks and mad dogs in the streets, beggars, profanity, decay of the city, second-hand clothes stalls in Moorfields. Bills of Mortality showed various causes of death - fewer murders and hangings than one might expect: the commoner causes were consumption, convulsions, fever, smallpox, old age, measles, drowning, falls, suffocation, choking, and poison. Another fruitful source of information was an account of the burial customs of Lamplighters, and the trades of Linkboys, and apprentices.

Using these as a basis and coupling with them the story of Johnson's compassionate care of a drunken prostitute, Mr. Garfield had included as one of the items in his book, The Apprentices, the story of "The Lamplighter's Funeral", which he read to members. It was a vividly presented account, with a hint of the supernatural about it, of how an unknown urchin took the place of a lamplighter in a funeral procession, went to live with him in a room full of biblical texts on "light", became informally apprenticed as a linkboy, and witnessed the unnamed Johnson episode, finally bringing in an even smaller waif for succour.

The reading and subsequent discussion were greatly enjoyed by members, and Mr. Cecil Farthing expressed their thanks for such an unusual and imaginative "paper".

GENERAL OGLETHORPE

Geoffrey Lewis AIB - 18th February 1984
Chairman: Lewis Raddon

The Chairman introduced Mr. Lewis as a person of many interests who had pursued a varied career and was now a lecturer on politics.

General James Edward Oglethorpe was born in 1696, into a family originating before the Conquest at Bramham in West Yorkshire. A staunch supporter of the Stuarts during the Civil War, his Grandfather, Sutton Oglethorpe, was heavily fined and lost his estates after the battle of Marston Moor in 1644. At the Restoration Oglethorpe's father, Sutton Oglethorpe Junior, served under Monmouth against the Scottish Covenantors, but fought against him during his Rebellion. Refusing to swear allegiance to William III, he lost his military offices and in 1692 fled the country when a warrant was issued against him as a Jacobite. Returning in 1698, he took the oath, becoming M.P. for Haslemere until his death in 1702. His son Theophilus succeeded to his estates and also served as M.P. for Haslemere from 1708 to 1713, when he joined the Jacobite Court. James Edward, the next heir, also represented Haslemere from 1722 to 1754.

He early made his mark as a champion of the oppressed, and in the five years following 1723 sat on 42 Parliamentary committees. Among the abuses he tried to ameliorate was the system of press ganging seamen, and he worked to improve the appalling conditions in prisons, especially the debtors' prisons of the Fleet and the Marshalsea. The Insolvent Debtors' Relief Act abolished spunging houses and required creditors to contribute to the maintenance of debtors. As many freed debtors had no means of support, Oglethorpe joined others in obtaining from the King a Charter establishing the colony of Georgia in America. He sailed with the first settlers in 1732 and established the first settlement at Yamacraw bluff, 18 miles up the Savannah River, where the town of Savannah was afterwards laid out. After settling some Lutherans at Ebenezer near Savannah, he returned to England in 1734, to consult the Colony's Trustees, bringing with him some Indian Chiefs from tribes he had befriended. On his next visit two years later he took with him Charles and John Wesley. Charles served as his Secretary, but John, besides becoming Rector of Savannah worked for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel evangelising the Indians.

On return from his next visit home, Oglethorpe took with him a Regiment of 700 men, and became involved in the War of Jenkins' Ear.

Returning to England he was court-martialled on various charges, but acquitted. He was raising recruits for Georgia when the Young Pretender began his advance towards London. Oglethorpe was ordered to attack the Scots, but missed them, again being court-martialled and again acquitted. He became a full general in 1765. He was friendly with Goldsmith, Boswell and Johnson, who would have liked to write his biography.

When the American Revolution approached Oglethorpe was offered a command in America, but refused as he did not wish to fight against his colonists. He died on 30 June 1785 in his eighty-ninth year. His wife, Elizabeth Wright, whom he had married in 1744, died two years later, and both were buried at Branham, Essex.

Dr. Grundy concluded the discussion which followed by thanking Mr. Lewis for his excellent paper which had demonstrated history by shewing its best effect in details related to the individual, and had produced an interesting parallel between Oglethorpe and Johnson in their championship of the oppressed.

THE ENIGMA OF PORT AND DR JOHNSON

Ross Wilson MA Th L, Hon Schol. Trinity College, Melbourne
14th April 1984
Chairman: J H Leicester MA

The Chairman said that as a member of the Society with many contributions to meetings and to the New Rambler behind him, Mr Ross Wilson needed no introduction. In the past he had dealt with the Dictionary and drink, London brewing, whisky and brandy; today his topic was "The Enigma of Johnson and Port".

Johnson's best known comment on wine was "Claret is the liquor for boys, port for men ...", and the "Enigma" resolved itself into the question, "How did Johnson come to praise and encourage Port, a low church Whig wine, and disparage the high church Tory wine, Claret?" The solution appeared to depend on the simple economical factor that port was cheaper because the dues on it were lower.

In explaining how this came about, Mr. Wilson skilfully led his hearers through an extremely tangled web of dynastic marriages, international politics involving the balance of power in Europe aimed at curbing the growing ascendancy of Louis XIV in Europe, and a series of

wars with titles remembered from school history: the Hundred Years War, the Seven Years War, the Thirty Years War, the War of the Grand Alliance, the War of the Spanish Succession, and even that old friend Jenkins' Ear.

Mr. Wilson said that part as we knew it was a fortified wine from the Upper Douro exported through Oporto, but the wine of which Johnson could drink three bottles without ill effect was a plain table wine rather like a rough Burgundy. Only during the second half of the eighteenth century did it become really heavily fortified though the process had begun about 1715.

Port, in whatever form, was only one of the wines reaching England from what by the mid-thirteenth century was the kingdom of Portugal, with its capital at Lisbon. In 1095 Portugal was a county of Leon awarded to Count Henry of Burgundy for assisting King Alphonso to drive out the Moors, as part of his daughter's marriage dowry. In 1294 Portugal made a commercial treaty with England, and these friendly relations continued with Edward III and Richard II and under the Lancastrian kings. The Anglo-Portuguese alliance had been cemented by John of Gaunt's marriage of his daughter to John I of Portugal, and by English aid to Portugal against Spain.

The Burgundian line died out in 1383, and the succeeding line followed an expansionist policy which ended in the decay and disintegration of the country, leading to a takeover by Spain in 1580, following a series of diplomatic marriages which had put the Hapsburg Philip II on the Spanish throne. In 1640 the "60 years' captivity" of Portugal ended in a war against Spain under John IV of the Braganza dynasty, not concluded until 1668.

In 1654 John IV made a most favoured nation treaty with Cromwell with valuable privileges for the English "factory" or association of merchants in Portugal, and this connection was preserved by the marriage of Catherine of Braganza to Charles II.

When Charles II of Spain died in 1700 the number of claimants to the throne combined with the meddling ambitions of Louis XIV led to the War of the Spanish Succession, in which England was represented by Marlborough. Portugal had wished to remain neutral, but was induced to recognise the claim of Philip V, the grandson of Louis XIV, and protected a French fleet in the Tagus against England. Britain countered by sending out John Methuen, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, to renew the Portuguese alliance, achieved through the Methuen Treaty of 1703. This detached Portugal from the French alliance and made her for 150 years a

commercial and political satellite of Britain. Its most far-reaching provisions admitted Portuguese wines, including Madeira, into Britain at much lower duty than French or German wines in return for English textiles and woollen goods, which particularly suited the land-owning Whigs. The Lisbon merchants did well out of the Treaty: at first with sweet wines, later with wines from the Douro district. But by about 1750 the Lisbon factors were getting complaints about the quality of the wines reaching England, and King Joseph installed the Marquis of Pombal, who was for a time Portuguese Ambassador in London, as a reformer both of the whole governmental system and of the wine trade. The Lisbon factors were not so pleased with the resulting strict control and limitation of the Douro wines, but Pitt was involved with the Seven Years' War and would not intervene. Although increasingly heavy and fortified, port had been long entrenched as a wine favoured by a country governed and supported by Whigs - as Mr. Wilson said, for decades England was awash with Whig port, and Tory Johnson was brainwashed into preferring it to Claret.

Mr. Comyn concluded the following discussion by thanking Mr. Wilson for his interesting and illuminating paper.

PORTRAITS OF JOHNSON

John Kerslake - 17th November 1984
Chairman: Cecil Farthing OBE FSA

The Chairman introduced Mr. John Kerslake as a former member of the staff of the National Portrait Gallery for three decades, the author of the standard work on early Georgian portraits, and of many exhibition catalogues, including that of the NPG Mr. Boswell Exhibition in 1967.

Mr. Kerslake said that he proposed to offer a short survey of the present state of art historical knowledge of the main portraits of Johnson and indicate some of the problems involved. Collaboration with other disciplines could often help art historians.

The iconography of Johnson began with Boswell's footnote in the Life listing the artists who had shown "zeal to extend and perpetuate his image" - Nollekens, Reynolds, Frances Reynolds, Opie and Zoffany

(though this last was now unknown). He added two drawings by Trotter and 18 engravings after the painters mentioned, but had no reference to Barry, or the portrait probably owned by Dr. Taylor of Ashbourne.

Between 1752 and 1756 Johnson met the greatest of British portrait painters, who was to paint him no less than four times, and who changed the very nature of the portrait: what had been a conventional image produced in Reynolds' hands some of the most personal, moving and intimate portraits in British art. There were however gaps in the history of Johnson's portraits. Reynolds' work was comparatively well documented between 1752 and 1789 by his "sitter books", in which he listed appointments (though some were purely social), and his "ledger books" containing payments for sittings. Some of these records were missing however, including those for years when Johnson might have been included.

The first known portrait of Johnson was Reynolds' first portrait, with the Dictionary, given to Boswell by Reynolds in 1789 and first published in 1791 as an engraving in the Life. According to Boswell it was painted about 1756, soon after the publication of the Dictionary. When he first met Johnson in 1763, Boswell found that he had a "perfect idea" of his figure from that painting. Such a painting at that time would have cost 24 guineas and Johnson could not then have afforded that sum: it might therefore have been commissioned by someone else, or have been a gift from Reynolds. The earliest known reference to this portrait occurs in the manuscript of the Life, begun in 1786. Here there were differences from the printed text, where for example the picture was referred to as the "first portrait his friend did for him" (compared with "of him" in the MS), which suggested that the portrait should have gone to Johnson, though it seemed to have remained with Reynolds.

Since Boswell did not meet Johnson until 1763 or Reynolds until 1769 it was not clear how he could have seen it. Another problem with this portrait was the extent to which it might have been altered. It was clear from the various states of Heath's engraving of the portrait that changes were made to the plate to satisfy Reynolds, who thought that the face was not old enough. There was no suggestion that the painting had been altered at that time, yet when it was cleaned and restored in 1976 by the NPG it appeared that minor alterations had been made to the clothes, that a table had replaced an earlier green cloth, and the Dictionary and other items on the table had been added, as well as an arm to the chair. Had Reynolds himself at some time updated the portrait as he had done in other cases? Was the table a nineteenth-century addition to make it resemble the engraving more closely? A deleted note

in Boswell's draft referred to the portrait's having been left unfinished, so was it completed between 1786 and 1789? Mr. Kerslake believed that the Dictionary, the quill and the inkstand were right for 1756 and was glad that they had only been painted out experimentally. Mr. Yung's catalogue to the Arts Council Exhibition dealt with the problem.

Reynolds' second portrait of Johnson, in profile, with gesticulating hands, was painted in 1769 and exhibited at the RA in 1770, the first portrait known to the public, with one of Goldsmith, both bought by the Duke of Dorset. It combined Reynolds' classical vein - art improving nature - in the head with art observing nature in the hands.

Reynolds' other two portraits of Johnson - the one reading near-sightedly ("Blinking Sam"), which belonged to Malone, and the Thrale portrait from Streatham, of which a copy went to Johnson's friend Beauclerk, were both painted in the 1770s, the first not engraved before 1787, the Thrale type mezzotinted in 1779. Mr. Kerslake suggested 1775 and 1778 respectively, but said there was a jigsaw of conflicting references.

Touching briefly on other main portraits of Johnson, Mr. Kerslake said that the apparent age indicated could possibly help in dating Reynolds' portraits. The Haverford portrait - reputedly painted for Dr. Taylor of Ashbourne - had at one time been attributed to Reynolds, but this was doubtful on stylistic grounds. It probably dated from the 1770s, since it bore some resemblance to the Nollekens bust of 1777. He thought the study by Barry for his murals for the Royal Society of Arts must be from life, though there was no proof of sittings. The Opie was painted in 1783, and the Townley engraving of it was described by Boswell as "one of the finest mezzotints that were ever executed".

The talk was illustrated by excellent slides of the pictures discussed, and was followed by a short discussion. Anthea Hopkins proposed a vote of thanks for such an intriguing and enlightening paper.

WELLCOME SYMPOSIUM

To mark the Bicentenary of Dr. Johnson's Death, the Royal Society of Medicine and the Johnson Society of London jointly arranged a Symposium on "Vigorous Remedies": Samuel Johnson and 18th Century Medicine, held at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, on 10th February 1984. Dr. Grundy's paper follows.

THE STABILITY OF TRUTH*

Isobel Grundy, MA, DPhil

The reason we are gathered here, I take it, has something to do with Samuel Johnson's remarkable position as a literary writer who thought scientifically. He did think this way, in our meaning of the word. (His word for what we now call science was philosophy; when he used the word science he meant not exclusively knowledge about the laws governing the material universe but all knowledge, including that of what human beings do and what they make.) As a writer Johnson actively sought to promote knowledge of all kinds; he never supposed that advancing one kind of knowledge might discourage another; but neither did he ever suppose that to know the truth was an easy matter. In his poem The Vanity of Human Wishes (probably his greatest single piece of writing) he speaks directly to one of his imagined characters, the ambitious young scholar: "proceed, illustrious Youth, / And Virtue guard thee to the Throne of Truth".[1]

Johnson's scholar really needs that guard. He sets out like a quest hero, a knight of chivalry, to pursue Science to its sources - and every imaginable social and intellectual force is ranged against him. Beauty wants to shoot him with the arrow of love; the difficulty of his task may frighten him; disease, sloth, and melancholy are out to get him; even something that sounds good, like praise, may "relax" him and prevent him from reaching his goal. But at least that goal sounds both solid and precious: the Throne of Truth. It sounds very like the title of my essay.

Johnson uses the same kind of language again and again about truth, even in quite different and far less formal kinds of writing. Here is a quotation from a letter written about ten years after the poem: "Let us endeavour to see things as they are .... Whether to see life as it is will give us much consolation I know not, but the consolation which is drawn from truth, if any there be, is solid and durable, that which may be derived from errour must be like its original fallacious and fugitive."[2]

In each case Johnson contrasts the stability of truth with something else: in the poem with the dangers and difficulties of the quest, in the letter with the fallacious consolations of error. He had what I take to be the scientist's habit of distinguishing carefully between appearances and their causes; he recognised the complexity of chains of causation, and of the task of tracing them accurately; he recognised also the laziness, the prejudices, the emotional bias, and all the other motives that are likely to make human pursuit of truth less than single-minded.

* A paper given at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, 10th February, 1984.

Johnson's first published work was a translation of a book of travels in Abysinnia, by a Portuguese missionary, Father Jerome Lobo: as an account of lands where white men had hardly penetrated, it added to human - well to Western European - knowledge. In his preface Johnson praises the original author for giving his readers

> no romantick absurdities, or incredible fictions; whatever he relates, whether true or not, is at least probable .... He appears, by his modest and unaffected narration, to have described things as he saw them, to have copied nature from the life, and to have consulted his senses, not his imagination. He meets with no basilisks that destroy with their eyes, his crocodiles devour their prey without tears, and his cataracts fall from the Rock without deafening the neighbouring inhabitants.[3]

Notice the phrase "whether true or not". Johnson is cautious; he has never been to Abysinnia; he cannot take it upon himself to say whether the book's account is true, only that it is not obviously false. His attitude to evidence has something of the lawyer and something of the scientist.

Johnson would give Lobo high praise for consulting his senses because he would not suppose this an easy thing to do accurately - not even about crocodiles and waterfalls, let alone human matters more likely to tempt us to tinker with our results. He praises Shakespeare's drama because it is "the mirrour of life ... he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious extasies, by reading human sentiments in human language". So his praise of Shakespeare is accompanied by a splendid account of other dramatists: they love to invent "such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topicks which will never arise in the commerce of mankind", to take such characters and "to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered".[4] In an allegory of Truth and Fiction he writes, "Truth is, indeed, not often welcome for its own sake; it is generally unpleasing because contrary to our wishes and opposite to our practice".[5]

Johnson followed Locke in believing that all knowledge must be built on the data supplied by our senses. He added to Locke the opinion that the imagination and the passions often present us with strong motivation for doubting or re-arranging our sense-impressions. Like many writers of the period, he responded strongly to the invention and perfection of the instruments for supplementing the senses. He used both the microscope and telescope as images for methods of gathering data for social and literary criticism. Writing a satirical

essay about a group of characters taking the waters at Tunbridge Wells, he says that this confined environment exaggerates their "minute peculiarities" as the "glass that magnifies its object contracts the sight to a point". When, on the other hand, critics approach a great work of literature, they need a wider view: "Parts are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed; there is a kind of intellectual remoteness necessary for the comprehension of any great work in its full design and its true proportions".[6]

But specialised methods are no guarantee of accuracy. In Rambler 176 Johnson rebukes both microscopical and telescopical critics. One kind "employ their whole attention upon minute elegance, or faults scarcely visible to common observation.... they never conceive how small a proportion that which they are busy in contemplating bears to the whole". The others "see with great clearness whatever is too remote to be discovered by the rest of mankind, but are totally blind to all that lies immediately before them".[7] Other instruments designed for accurate measurement can also be used to promote inaccuracy:

> Every man is prompted by the love of himself to imagine, that he possesses some qualities, superior, either in kind or in degree, to those which he sees allotted to the rest of the world; and, whatever apparent disadvantages he may suffer in the comparison with others, he has some invisible distinctions, some latent reserve of excellence, which he throws into the balance, and by which he generally fancies that it is turned in his favour.[8]

So the investigator of his own character has faked his scientific investigation. But pure wilful evasion of truth (like that of Julius Libri, cited by Johnson, who refused to look through Galileo's telescope and "see the experiments by which [his errors] were confuted")[9] is only the most extreme of all our failures to reach it. "Virtue guard thee to the Throne of Truth" - Johnson presents the search for truth in his poem as the most noble aspiration open to human beings, and as a life-time's project: but he also presents all those internal and external forces ranged against it.

The lifelong quest was Johnson's own. In Rambler 125 he eloquently describes the hunger after knowledge:

> It would seem impossible to a solitary speculatist, that a human being can want employment. To be born in ignorance with a capacity of knowledge, and to be placed in the midst of a world filled with variety, perpetually pressing upon the senses and irritating curiosity, is surely a sufficient security against the languishment

> of inattention. Novelty is indeed necessary to preserve eagerness and alacrity; but art and nature have stores inexhaustible by human intellects; and every moment produces something new to him, who has quickened his faculties by diligent observation.

His next paragraph speaks with concern and pity of those with an "apprehension not apt to admit unaccustomed ideas or [an] attention so stubborn and inflexible as not easily to comply with new directions".[10] Diligent observation, new ideas and new directions all came easily to Johnson. The volume of his Diaries, Prayers and Annals[11] is studded with prayers composed for the occasion of taking up some new study - philosophy, languages, law - asking that the study may produce good effects. Boswell's Life reflects what a staggering amount he knew about how many topics from the extremely abstruse to the practical, mechanical, or domestic. His works are an unequalled mine of information for the reader. As a young man he wrote his reports of the debates in parliament almost entirely out of his own head, since parliament had decided that to report its proceedings constituted contempt; the result is an ongoing many-sided discussion of both internal and international affairs, rich in facts, even richer in exposition of the aims and principles which animated the two major parties and their various factions. His Dictionary offers the same two kinds of richness: definitions which anatomise each word, catching and distinguishing each varying shade of usage, and illustrative quotations from authors which compose a huge varied picture of the way words have been used, and the way in which styles, assumptions, and attitudes have changed around, as it were, each particular word. His other essentially descriptive works, the various biographies, the Journey to the Western Islands, and the innumerable journalistic pieces (reviews, dedications written for friends' books, essays on the best architectural form for the new Blackfriars Bridge or the best route for the coronation procession of 1760) all exercise the art of building a composite truth out of fact and the interpretation of fact. Even his fiction (Rasselas and various essays and short tales) and his literary criticism perform a rather similar task.

In Rambler 16 Johnson invented an allegorical story to explain how fiction began: he recounted how Truth was constantly ignored and rejected by mortals, who preferred Falsehood, until the nine Muses wove her "a loose and changeable robe, like that in which Falsehood captivated her admirers; with this they invested Truth, and named her Fiction."[12] In this robe Truth proves a popular success. Fiction, you notice, is not the name of the robe; it is the name used by Truth while she is wearing the robe. The allegory beautifully expresses Johnson's view of truth - of, if you like, the scientific principles which do underlie both the natural world and human behaviour - as complex, hiding their stability

under changing appearances. For Johnson the challenging task of distinguishing truth from error is always accompanied by the no less difficult task of charting the disguises and apparent instability (in the chemical sense) of Truth herself.

Johnson scholars believe nowadays that Boswell was mistaken in presenting Johnson's opinions as monolithic or unchanging throughout his life. His political and some other opinions, we now find, did (as one would expect) change and develop over the course of his long writing and thinking career. Yet in some ways anyone at all, not only Boswell, will find him remarkably consistent. He was twenty-six when he wrote that praise of a satisfactory travel book that "copied nature from the life", whose writer "consulted his senses, not his imagination". He had his sixty-third birthday on the expedition to the Hebrides which he wrote up in his Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland. The book describes itself in its last sentence as "the thoughts of one who has seen little"; in fact it is almost a sociological or anthropological treatise, and seen in that light it is positively racy (though readers who expect it to be largely Johnsonian conversation and bons mots, like Boswell's account of the same trip, are going to be disappointed). Johnson writes in full awareness of the Highlanders' recent history: their feudalism, their Jacobitism; the punitive measures lately directed at them by the government in London; the fact that forty years earlier they were a society without roads and therefore without the wheel. He searches open-mindedly for proven examples of the second sight, or for written literature in Gaelic, but finds none. He enquires into statistics of income, emigration to America, numbers of livestock, staple diet. But so far we might say that any competent journalist could have done as well - or as Johnson said of a historical, non-satirical work by Swift: "He had to count ten, and he has counted it right."[13]

The special quality that informs Johnson's Journey, I believe, is a recognition that the truth is not so stable after all - or at least that it is relative. The reason he says in his last paragraph that he's seen little is that his past experience has been chiefly of cities; he lacks the most appropriate standards of measurement; someone with wider knowledge of rural life might have understood more about this very special example of rural life. But in fact Johnson makes a great point of setting aside London standards. Having stayed one night at a village consisting of three huts, he later buys milk at a village "consisting of many huts, perhpas twenty". (He has already explained with careful precision that "A hut is constructed of loose stones, ranged for the most part with some tendency to circularity.") When he has to dismount and lead his pony over a broad expanse of marsh, and observes from the lie of the land that the marsh "might without much expence or difficulty be drained", he scrupulously adds "But difficulty and expence are relative

terms, which have different meanings in different places."[14] The Journey provides many examples of this scrupulousness.

As a number of huts might seem few or many according to whose eyes were counting them, so the more complex structures of society are seen differently. Johnson describes with detachment that feudal, patriarchal clan life which so many of the English were just beginning to feel romantic about:

> The inhabitants were for a long time perhaps not unhappy; but their content was a muddy mixture of pride and ignorance, an indifference for pleasures which they did not know, a blind veneration for their chiefs, and a strong conviction of their own importance.

There is nothing here that factually contradicts the picture of mediaeval Highland life which was about to blossom in a thousand novels written mostly in the south of England, but I suppose the writers of the novels would not have recognised it. Johnson, though, knows that his viewpoint, that of the convinced modern Londoner, is not the only one possible, and he supplements his picture like this: "An old gentleman, delighting himself with the recollection of better days, related, that forty years ago, a chieftain walked out attended by ten or twelve followers, with their arms rattling." (Has Johnson said those were better days? no: but he has found an eye-witness who now sees them as better days.) Like the dictionary-maker he had been, he concludes his taking of evidence by finding in two successive sentences two different definitions of the chieftain's bodyguard: an "animating rabble", a "formidable retinue". We have Johnson's voice, the old gentleman's voice: several witnesses; multiple picture.[15]

Johnson was a tireless seeker after truth-telling: about individuals as well as about places and societies. About truth in biography I believe his attitude may have shifted over the course of his life, but only a little. In his early years in London, after he had praised Father Jerome Lobo for not romancing and not exaggerating, he wrote for the Gentleman's Magazine a series of brief lives of great men which belong to a genre - a dying or at least a weakening genre at the time - whose stock-in-trade was exaggeration. I refer to the kind of life-story which, like the life of a saint, is told to inspire. When he wrote these lives for the GM Johnson was always working from a source which he adapted and compressed; and some of the sources were actually eulogies on the recently-dead. His life of the great Dutch physician Boerhaave was of this kind, though his life of Sir Francis Drake clearly was not. The interesting thing for me is that these sources of Johnson's do from time to time verge on "romantick absurdities, or incredible fictions". For instance, the life of Drake which he was following (by

Nathaniel Crouch, 1692) makes him a sort of superman, not only brave, compassionate, far-seeing, etc., but also indifferent to profit and entirely free from boasting or vanity (both unlikely qualities for an Elizabethan privateer). The more recent heroes all rise above the love of money, too; many of them suffer from envy and injustice in life and excruciating pain as they approach death, but they rise above these. They are virtually without weakness. And whereas Johnson could have toned down these elements in his sources, he actually heightened them.[15a] Now I think it most unlikely that Johnson, even as a hard-pressed young journalist paid by the page, would have stooped to falsify; I think it more likely that he really did believe at that stage of his life that a few exceptional individuals really may rise so far above the ruck of ordinary humanity as to embody all the qualities which Samuel Johnson most admired.

So I find that Johnson's views about telling the truth in biography shifted, probably before he wrote the life of his friend Richard Savage in 1746, certainly before the Lives of the English Poets. In the first paragraph of the first volume of this work, published when he was seventy, he explains very clearly what it is that these lives are not going to be like, and he does so by referring to an earlier biography of his first subject, Abraham Cowley. This, he says, was "a funeral oration rather than a history" (cf. his own early lives) written "with so little detail that scarcely any thing is distinctly known, but all is shewn confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyric".

So the Lives of the Poets shun both confusion and panegyric. For instance, Cowley was noted for passionate commitment in theory to the ideal of rural retirement - a trendy ideal which Johnson devoted much attention throughout his life to combating - and the earlier biographer (it was Thomas Sprat of the Royal Society) had written of his longing for solitude as most high-minded. Johnson quietly supplies detail (Cowley had thought at first of "some of the American plantations", but in the end went only as far as Chertsey), just as when Sprat says his father was a citizen Johnson supplies the detail that he was a grocer. Johnson does not go over to the side of another earlier writer on Cowley, who said that he retired because he was "discontented" at not landing some important post. He does not take sides; he just firmly draws the line between the distinct and the indistinct: "So differently are things seen and so differently are they shown; but actions are visible, though motives are secret."[16]

As well as confusion, the Lives of the Poets shun panegyric. Their many passages of warm, generous praise - of the greatness of Paradise Lost, of Dryden's grand style, of Addison's middle style - are always balanced with criticism, both of these writers' works and of their behaviour as men: Milton's republicanism was harsh and envious;

he fought for liberty for men but was a tyrant to women; although Paradise Lost is the world's greatest poem after Homer, no reader ever wishes it longer than it is; Dryden's plays are fatuous, and his pamphlet warfare demeaning; Addison's poetry and his play are rather undistinguished; his essays are "perhaps the first of the first rank", but that middle style "never blazes in unexpected splendour".[17] The truth Johnson presents in the Lives of the Poets tends to be double-edged. His great men, too (the mighty poets, the ones whose achievement he really reverenced, Milton and Dryden and Pope in the Lives, Shakespeare in the preface to Shakespeare), are presented in a manner diametrically opposite to the way Carlyle presents his great men sixty years later in "Heroes and Hero-Worship". "Only human", "all too human", are the phrases that spring to mind in reading the major lives in Johnson's collection; and this helps to explain another curious aspect of them. Scholars are still arguing to this day about what Johnson means in those lives: is he praising Paradise Lost or attacking it? is he sympathetic to Pope or hostile? is he condescending to Shakespeare or reverential? The response to the Journey is just as various: is Johnson appreciative of the Highlanders and their life or scornful? You can select your scholarly article to support either side.

In several important ways, then, truth as Johnson presents it in his mature writings lacks stability. Firstly, it depends on human observation, on consulting those senses which are intimately bound up with the rest of the organism. Secondly, the materials for knowledge of human affairs are not only widely scattered or closely concealed but are also subject to constant, rapid erosion by time. In his life of Addison Johnson says that a biographer may sometimes have to suppress certain aspects of the truth in order to avoid giving a pang to survivors; it becomes both necessary and right "rather to say 'nothing that is false, than all that is true'". But this necessary curtailment of truth threatens his whole enterprise: it is 'the great impediment of biography'.

> History may be formed from permanent monuments and records; but Lives can only be written from personal knowledge, which is growing every day less, and in a short time is lost for ever .... The delicate features of the mind, the nice discriminations of character, and the minute particularities of conduct are soon obliterated.[18]

Thirdly, truth is capable of being contradictory. Johnson puts this comment in the mouth of the sage Imlac in Rasselas: "Inconsistencies ... cannot both be right, but, imputed to man, they may both be true."[19] It would be easy to make a collection of Johnson's aphorisms in which every one would contradict any of the others. So the sentence I quoted

earlier ("Truth is indeed not often welcome for its own sake") could be set against this from another essay: "every man hates falshood, from the natural congruity of truth to his faculties of reason."[20]

Here we may pause for a moment. Johnson sees human nature as including the faculty of reason, which has a natural congruity with truth and the search for truth. It would seem, he says in Rambler 125, that this search would be enough to keep human beings happy and occupied for life. But the reader of Johnson learns to know that whenever he says it would seem reasonable to expect some cheerful result, he is always going on to disappoint our expectations and prove the seeming inaccurate. His observation throughout his life never ceased to report to him that human beings are more unhappy than happy, always forming restless longings for what they do not have. That reason which is congruous with truth is only part of our nature, and the rest of the organism is unstable. I have already quoted a passage of his comment on how we fudge the evidence when we set out to compare our own abilities with those of other people. In another essay a few weeks later he went further:

> To lay open all the sources from which error flows in upon him who contemplates his own character, would require more exact knowledge of the human heart, than, perhaps, the most acute and laborious observers have acquired.[21]

Here we have two stages in the search for truth: that of the man who seeks to know himself, on whom error flows in from every side; and that of the psychological theorist, who strives, equally imperfectly, to chart its flow.

Johnson writes sometimes as one, sometimes as the other. Much of the unique power of his moral essays (and I think that apart from The Vanity of Human Wishes they are his greatest works) stems from the fact that he puts himself under the microscope so regularly, so that his writing not only charts discovery but enacts the search. What Johnson does in his essays as regards the workings of his own psyche is analagous to what he did in scientific experiments with the hairs on his own forearm.

Again and again in his Rambler essays Johnson starts from an aphorism, a traditionally accepted piece of wisdom about human nature, and tests it, examines it, sometimes explodes it and sometimes passes it, with or without modification, as worthy of assent.[22] This practice nicely exemplifies his rather double attitude to the wisdom of the past. On the one hand he is always ready to challenge it: to submit it to actual experience, which, he said, was the great test of truth. On the

other hand he is immensely respectful of the "hereditary stock devolved to [us] from ancient times, the collective labour of a thousand intellects". No-one, he says, can hope to contribute much to this hereditary stock, but every thinking mind can hope to contribute just a little. As the hereditary stock devolves, parts of it are replaced by other parts: "A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. ... Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten"; the works of writers who advance knowledge "are always lost in successive compilations, as new advances are made".[23] Again, a double view of truth: on the one hand a perpetual, immensely valuable heirloom; on the other hand a body progressively growing, changing and replacing its parts. This, I submit, is a composite picture of truth which convinces the literary and the scientific mind alike.

Documentation

1. Lines 141-2 (Poems, ed. David Nichol Smith and Edward L. McAdam, 2nd ed. Oxford, 1974, p.122).
2. Letter 116, to Bennet Langton, 21 Sept. 1758 (Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, Oxford, 1952, i. 111).
3. Quoted from W. Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson, London, 1977, p.139 n.
4. Preface to Shakespeare (Yale Works, vii, 65, 63).
5. Rambler 96 (Yale iv. 149).
6. Idler 78 (and 83), Preface to Shakespeare (Yale ii. 243, 258, vii. 111).
7. Yale v. 167.
8. Rambler 21 (Yale iii. 115-116).
9. Rambler 31 (Yale iii. 169 and n.3).
10. Yale iv. 299.
11. Yale i.
12. Yale iv. 152.
13. Boswell, Life, ed. G. B. Hill and L. F. Powell, Oxford, 1934, repr. 1971, ii. 65.
14. Yale ix. 164, 35, 42, 32, 68.
15. Yale ix. 89, 90.

15a. See Richard R. Reynolds in New Rambler, 1975.

16. Ed. G. B. Hill, Oxford, 1905, i.1, 10. 15.
17. ii. 148, 149.
18. ii. 116.
19. Chapter viii.
20. Rambler 20 (Yale iii, 110).
21. Rambler 28 (Yale iii, 152).
22. See my article in Samuel Johnson, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. I. M. Grundy, 1984.
23. Rambler 121, life of Dryden, Rambler 106 (Yale iv. 282, 203; Lives, i. 411).

A NOTE ON GABRIEL PIOZZI AND HIS WIFE'S WRITING

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Because the marriage of Hester Lynch Salusbury Thrale and Gabriel Piozzi was primarily a love match, based on what she later described as "the fervid and attractive passion which made twenty years passed in Piozzi's enchanting society seem like a happy dream of twenty hours",[1] and because Piozzi himself, totally absorbed in his music, in no way shared his wife's literary and intellectual interests, biographers of her have tended to portray him as almost entirely uninvolved with and unconcerned about her writing projects. He has generally emerged as puzzled and rather bemused by her endeavours, vaguely sympathetic toward anything that she wanted to do and tolerant of her pursuits without in the least understanding or appreciating them.[2] Actually his attitudes toward her writing seem to have been more complex; in addition, he did more than simply support her by allowing her to do as she wished without his interference.

Several of Hester Piozzi's accounts make clear her husband's central role in her decision to write the biography of Samuel Johnson which began her publishing career. Soon after learning of Johnson's death, she recorded in the Thraliana in early 1785 that "Piozzi says he would have me add to the Number" of planned biographies.[3] In a letter to Sir James Fellowes in 1815 she indicated that her husband, indignant at peremptory requests from Johnson's executors for Johnsoniana from her, "spirited me up to give my own account of Doctor Johnson, in my own way"; the autobiographical collection which she assembled for her adopted son (c. 1810) has Mr. Piozzi actually dictating the letter of refusal to the executors for her.[4] His encouragement was particularly vital to her undertaking the project because her fear of negative reactions to him was a major deterrent to her. She noted in the Thraliana that she wanted to write the biography, but hesitated because "I think my Anecdotes too few, & am afraid of saucy Answers if I send to England for others - the saucy Answers I should disregard, but my heart is made vulnerable by my late Marriage, and I am certain that to spite me, they would insult my Husband". (II, 625)

Despite his encouragement on her first project, in 1791, after they had been married for seven years and she had published three books,

she portrayed Piozzi in the Thraliana as unenthusiastic about her publishing. Writing that he would not let her print her dialogue "Una and Duessa", she commented: "The truth, is he would rather tear ten Guineas out of Cator,[5] than a Hundred out of my Brains" (II, 813). In a marginal gloss on the same page, one of the rare conjugal comparisons from which her first husband emerges positively, she noted that "Mr Piozzi has his own Country Prejudice against writing Ladies - Mr Thrale would have liked me to enter the Lists exceedingly; - so runs the World away." She added that "Piozzi likes the Money I get well enough, but dislikes ye Manner of getting it; he married a Dama not a Virtuosa he says." A peaceable, retiring man, Gabriel Piozzi undoubtedly disliked the controversies which he had learned from experience that his wife's productions inevitably aroused. She explained that he did not want "Una and Duessa" printed "for fear of making Enemies, & such Stuff" (II, 813). Later, in a similar vein, she wrote that it was better that her masque Floretta had not been staged because "Mr Piozzi would have been miserable lest the Public might hiss it - and more Miserable still, lest our Enviers & Enemies should get it hiss'd to spite us".[6]

Although such attitudes towards her writing may well reflect both Gabriel Piozzi's basically noncombative nature as well as the residual Continental patriarchalism she attributed to him in her marginal gloss, they can in addition quite easily be read as showing his desire to spare her from distress or humiliation. Some of his reactions seem to have stemmed as much from genuine concern for her feelings as from his own ego. She explained in a manuscript autobiography which she wrote late in life for William Augustus Conway that "Piozzi, like Portia, permitted me not to sleep by his side with an unquiet soul",[7] and he well knew how much literary quarrels disturbed his volatile wife. Indeed, his interventions into her literary affairs tended to occur at times when she was attacked or hurt. He undoubtedly urged her to write the biography of Johnson because he recognised her anger at negative English public opinions of her character and behaviour and sympathised with her desire to answer her critics. He was the one who stopped her from battling in print with critics of her fifth and last book, Retrospection.[8] That his intervention reflected care for her feelings is suggested by her comment in the Thraliana on his concern that critical reviews of the book had vexed her (II, 1027, n.2). When Floretta was finally rejected by the theatre managers, she wrote that she was sorry, but that Piozzi was angry (II, 829). Whether or not he entirely understood her literary enterprises, he remained in many ways supportive of her efforts and interests. In 1795, for example, he presented her with the new octavo edition of the Spectator, Tatler, and Guardian (II, 943). After her difficulties in finding the material she needed from Retrospection, her popularised history of the world, she wrote to her

eldest daughter that "Mr. Piozzi says if I was to undertake any thing ever again (which I shall not) the best way would be to take a House at Oxford & study in some College Library".[9]

Gabriel Piozzi was no George Henry Lewes or Leonard Woolf, but neither was he an uninvolved spectator of his wife's literary forays. For a man who found himself with a Virtuosa when he would undoubtedly have preferred a Dama, he responded gracefully and generously with encouragement and support. The genuine affection for his wife apparent throughout their relationship is reflected in the role he played in her literary affairs, which, though a minor one, shows both an interest and concern for which he has failed to receive proper credit.

Documentation

1. Hester Piozzi, Autobiography, Letters, and Literary Remains of Mrs. Piozzi, ed. A. Hayward, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London: Longman et al., 1861), I, 305. Hereafter cited as Hayward.
2. See, for example, James L. Clifford, Hester Lynch Piozzi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), pp. 341, 400, 404; Mary Hyde, The Thrales of Streatham Park (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977), p.268.
3. Hester Piozzi, Thraliana, ed. Katharine C. Balderston, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), II, 625. Hereafter cited within the note by volume and page number.
4. Hayward, II, 125; MS. Eng. 1280, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, II, f. 33. Reference by the permission of the Librarian of the Houghton Library.
5. John Cator was an administrator of Henry Thrale's estate who had acted as financial agent for Mrs. Piozzi and her daughters.
6. Gwin J. Kolb, "Mrs. Thrale (Piozzi) and Dr. Johnson's The Fountains: A Fairy Tale", Novel, 13 (1979), 77.
7. C. E. Norton, "Original Memorials of Mrs. Piozzi", Atlantic Monthly, 7 (May 1861), 618.
8. Clifford, p. 404.
9. Clifford, p. 400.

One of the commemorative postmarks for the Bi-Centenary.

J. D. Fleeman, A Preliminary Handlist of Copies of Books associated with Dr. Samuel Johnson (Oxford Bibliographical Society Occasional Publication no. 17), 1984. Price £5.

Nine years ago Dr. Fleeman edited the sale catalogue of Johnson's library in facsimile; he included a check-list of surviving copies of items from that sale which provided a fascinating comment on the whole list. The sale, one suddenly realised, was only a momentary acceleration of a continuous process. Johnson's books, outliving their owner and his generation, have many of them remained "in midst of other woe" to gladden the hearts of collectors contemporary with ourselves.

This Handlist fills in the picture in more detail. Even Johnson's ownership was only an episode in the lives of many of his books. He owned or gave shelf-space to books which had belonged to Sir Justinian Isham, Milton, Lewis Theobald, and others. He picked up odd volumes at sales to furnish out the library at Streatham Park. Dozens of authors presented him with copies of their own works; some gave less interested gifts, Boswell inscribing Hammond's Elegies as "from his most affectionate and grateful friend". Johnson gave away huge numbers of books, by himself and others. Baretti, Birch, Percy, and the Royal College of Physicians could each boast a presentation copy of Sir Thomas Browne's Christian Morals from Johnson; only Charles Burney had to buy his at the sale. In a copy of Irene an unknown hand noted "Presented to me in an affectionate manner by the great and good saml. Johnson, L.L.D. 29th Decr. 1772". Johnson inscribed his wife's name in a volume of the collected Ramblers only four days before she died, and "eight and forty hours" before his own death he presented Philip Metcalfe, who had just helped him draw the deed of trust for Frank Barber, with a copy of South's sermons.

One volume mentioned here was a unique creation, four of Johnson's separate works bound together; it was unbound, and its corporate life ended as its components resumed their individual identities. Many of these changes of ownership were recorded by inscriptions. James Beattie, for instance, presented Johnson with a copy of the 2nd edition of his Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism, 1771; at the sale (not an occasion for a young girl to attend) it was bought for Queeney Thrale by William Seward, her friend and Johnson's. Each of these transactions is recorded twice over in the volume. Eighty years after it was published Queeney, now Viscountess Keith, gave it to the much younger Caroline Hamilton Gray, who in noting the fact in her inscription noted also that Lady Keith had been Johnson's "scholar".

Some of these volumes relate interestingly to Johnson's own scholarly labours. There are volumes marked up in preparation of the

Dictionary (as well as an edition of Hakluyt annotated by an angry lexicographer in the 1830s who had just expended a lot of work on it only to find that a different edition would have been preferable). On a set of Shakespeare, Edward Roberts wrote "This copy, filled with marginal MS notes by the late Styan Thirlby, was lent by Sir Edward Walpole to Dr Johnson who lost the 6th volume. Sir John Hawkins promised Mr Roberts it should be delivered faithfully to him, if ever found. E.R."

We are told where these trophies rest: many are in the capable hands of private owners, or Johnson's house in Gough Square or his birthplace in Lichfield. Many, however, remain uncaptured - Dr. Fleeman's word is "unlocated" - including plenty which have been sighted in modern times but then lost to view again. The Bible with which Johnson allegedly knocked down Osborne was seen at Sotheby's in 1977, another in 1825; another, which Johnson gave to a lady of Swindon, appeared circumstantially in Heffers of Cambridge in 1951 bearing its "metal clasps and corner pieces"; another was in 1909 owned by a gentleman of Tunbridge Wells and put on exhibition at Lichfield: all these have vanished, though other Bibles which belonged to Johnson adorn the British Library and the Hyde Collection.

Legend has it that these books have lived through stirring times: one was employed to inflict bodily harm on a bookseller; another, a defence of Quakerism, was allegedly itself the subject of an attack. "Tradition states that, losing his temper, Dr. Johnson threw the volume on the floor, and put his foot on it, in denunciation of its statements." They must find the libraries and glass cases very quiet. I hope that those not yet tracked down have evaded their natural predators and continue to live eventful lives in the freedom of changing ownership. It seems highly likely that Johnson was impelled to give Sir Edward Walpole's vol. vi of Shakespeare to a deserving recipient. Probably the same thing happened to the volume which he borrowed from the Pembroke College library in 1729 and which has never been heard of since. Books, those shy creatures, are adept at concealing their traces as they pass from hand to hand.

Dr. Fleeman, however, has been an untiring tracker, an expert observer of their movements. What a delightful slim volume is this of his, which can combine such lore and legend with the solid candour of scholarship that tells us what exactly is known and what, regrettably, has slipped out of our ken or has not yet been brought into it.

Isobel M. Grundy

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Samuel Johnson, ed. Donald Greene (The Oxford Authors), 1984. Price £6.95.

Four different, modern, single-volume anthologies of Johnson's works exist already, and no wonder. They are not only useful; they are essential. To keep Johnson accessible, to preserve unimpeded the rights of way that will lead new readers into the difficult, exhilarating exploration of his writings, no other tool will serve. To a mind seeking to meet him one can say "Read Rasselas" as one might say "Read Gulliver's Travels" or "Read Tristram Shandy", but one cannot say it with the same confidence that the introduction will be effective. Johnson is too various to be adequately represented by any one of his works, and the different grounds on which he may be admired and enjoyed - or, indeed, on which he may spark the energy of intellectual conflict - are as many as there are individuals in each new generation of readers and thinkers.

At the Pembroke conference Professor Donald Greene referred with justifiable satisfaction to this anthology as the fullest available selection of Johnson, and with truth. In 840 pages, including notes and suggestions for further reading, he offers a choice more generous than any of his competitors. Teachers the world over must, like myself, have regularly expended anxious consideration over the question of which of these selections to recommend students to buy, bearing in mind the conflicting claims of completeness, quality of editing, personal preference, and not least of course expense. Professor Greene cannot entirely do away with that burden of choice, but he has earned our gratitude by lightening it significantly.

Johnson's own view that to "choose the best among many good is one of the most hazardous attempts of criticism" applies with equal aptness to choosing works for an anthology, and to choosing one anthology from the field. Even this volume's strongest advantage, that of comprehensiveness, involves from some concomitant disadvantages. Though it is remarkably good value, it is not the cheapest option available. It is just a little too fat to lie open with ease and flexibility, or to make light of the hardships that befall books which are dipped into again and again rather than read once right through and then retired. There is danger, as Professor Greene admits, that some readers "may be alarmed at being urged to extend their Johnsonian horizons" to take in this "fairly large sampling".

But if this volume demands intellectual energy, and demands it in a manner not to be evaded, it does no more than its author himself. He has never offered us short cuts, which is no doubt one reason among others why, as Professor Greene so deeply deplores, the Johnson of Boswell's Life continues to rival or surpass in popularity the Johnson

of Johnson's works. This anthology should be recommended not to intellectual stay-at-homes but to explorers; and even to the most experienced Johnsonian it is likely to offer some paths seldom or never trodden before.

Chronology, "the eye of history", dictates the order of the volume, with the exception that the poetry is placed first. Here in particular, the combination of imaginative choice with the unchosen necessities of sequence have produced some most thought-provoking results. "On the Death of Robert Levet", with its tightly-reined intensity of feeling, follows on the almost shockingly light-hearted burlesque treatments of death-as-poetic-justice in "An Extempore Elegy" and "A Short Song of Congratulation". Here the complexity of Johnson's emotional range is suggestively displayed. The first poem in the volume, a translation from Horace which was probably a school exercise, exults in the poet's triumphant, superhuman immortality. Its first stanza ("From th'envious world with scorn I spring, / And cut with joy the wond'ring skies") expresses that literary "fever of renown" which Johnson's mature writings so persistently wrestle with; its last stanza ("I without funeral elegies / Shall live for ever in my verse") awaits its contradiction in the last poem printed here, again a translation from Horace, which sombrely insists on the mortality even of virtue, even of eloquence. Here the selection enacts that parabolic movement - mount, shine, evaporate, and fall - which is in itself Johnson's favourite image. The insistent rhythms of that last, Horatian poem ("The changing year's successive plan / Proclaims mortality to man") follow immediately after a Latin poem rendered by John Wain into a quite different, modern movement ("The branches made / a hiding place: the bending trees concealed / the water in a day-time darkness"). Here the juxtaposition raises complex, fascinating questions about the respective parts played by image and by sound in Johnson's poetic effects. (Wain's translations rise gallantly to an impossible challenge. How I should like to see his bold alliterative version of Johnson's poem about Scaliger set side by side with Mary Lascelles's even bolder imitation: his "that rare man, erudite, lofty, rigorous, / worthy of weightier work" with her "old man Scaliger ... work of many winters".)

Johnson's Latin poems, often so startlingly personal, deserve to be better known, and have been available only to those who can afford to allot a whole volume of their library to Johnson's poetry. Other works offered to us here are even harder to possess by other means. In prose too Professor Greene has begun at the beginning, with an undergraduate exercise which interestingly suggests Johnson's mature mind. He gives us, printed for the very first time as Johnson's, the essay with which the Gentleman's Magazine introduced its plan, so deflating of British parliamentary dignity, to report the debates in the august Palace

of Westminster as those of the Senate of "Magna Lilliputia". We meet the familiar life of Savage too (as near complete as the general reader needs it) standing between two less familiar works which could have been placed here to high-light each a different quality of "Savage": the introduction to The Harleian Miscellany for its scholarly dwelling on factual detail and "The Vision of Theodore" for its imaginative depth and allegorical implications. We meet the preface to the Dictionary and a marvellously well-chosen fragment of its text (including both faith and fall) following the Idler and preceding Rasselas. (At this point, it must be confessed, a cavil arises: why not remain faithful to chronology, why not place the Dictionary after the Rambler and before the Idler?) But no Johnsonian could ever expect to find no faults in any literary work at all. This volume will serve well both new readers and old admirers of Johnson.

Isobel M. Grundy

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Valerie Grosvenor Myer, (ed.). Laurence Sterne: Riddles and Mysteries. Vision and Barnes and Noble, £12.95. (pp. 184)

Johnson's verdict is well known: "Nothing odd will do long - Tristram Shandy did not last." But he was speaking only a few years after the novel came out. Judged by his famous standard, formulated in the Preface to Shakespeare, that "no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuation of esteem", Tristram Shandy has indeed lasted. It delights and fascinates its readers still. But, as Valerie Grosvenor Myer says in her sensible introduction to the present collection of essays, "the notorious ambiguity of the book makes it a candidate for fashionable critical approaches" which can make Sterne a slave to Lockean associationism on the one hand, endlessly poking fun at Locke's concepts but ultimately incapable of detaching himself from them, or a pioneer Deconstructionist on the other, with all sorts of anachronistic and biographically untenable interpretations foisted upon him.

The collection of essays under review is intended to guide its readers in their own explorations of the past, offering information about issues which, its editor believes, have attracted too little attention. The book's title is, in a sense, a misnomer, since all its "riddles and mysteries" have to do with Tristram Shandy and the Sentimental Journey is not considered at any length, but this is a minor cavil. The first two essays get things off to a lively start, for they deal with different aspects of Sterne's ribaldry. Melvyn New (one of the editors

of Tristram Shandy: Annotations in the Florida Edition of Sterne's works) speculates amusingly on the cunning complexity of some of Sterne's sexual joking, while warning (very sensibly) that in this kind of annotation a complete tracking down of all Sterne's fun can never, thankfully, be achieved. Jacques Berthoud's "Shandeism and Sexuality" shows how "a word may be ruined as easily as a virgin" with a foray into the depths of Slawkenbergius's tale which shows how Sterne excites the reader with his innuendo and sets him searching after complexities of unstated meanings.

After these excitements a more decorous tone settles over the volume with Alan B. Howes's discussion of Sterne's attitude to the two comic traditions of Rabelais and Cervantes. The former he characterises as "comedy of reference" and, though Sterne does make use of it, Tristram Shandy's "Comedy of obsessions, cross purposes and comic clashes" is shown to be much more frequently derived form Cervantes's "comedy of character". This closely-argued, well-documented treatment is followed by Edward A. Bloom's and Lillian D. Bloom's exploration of the hidden processes of development and change which lie beneath the apparently chaotic narrative surface of the novel. Characters discourse but cannot engage in true dialogue, they are the victims of obsessions or obsessive memories, and only the remoreseless movement towards death, "an ultimately prevailing entity" draws the story towards unity.

The second part of this collection of essays begins with one on Sterne's attitude to the philosophy of Locke by W. G. Day. Day points out the equivocal nature of Sterne's response to Locke's theories of consciousness and apprehension, showing how he frequently creates verbal mayhem by his alterations in passages of near-quotation. If and how this verbal study affects one's sense of Sterne's "conceptual indebtedness" to Locke is left in the air, rather, but as a study in verbal comedy the essay carries conviction.

Roy Porter's "Against the Spleen" looks at eighteenth-century medical beliefs to see how Sterne's demonstration of "the covered ways, the nervous pathways between mind and body" is enriched both by the new Cartesian concepts of mind-body dualism and older theories such as those of the humours and the animal spirits. The essay carries its learning lightly, and so does Valerie Grosvenor Myer's own discussion of what "animal spirits" were thought to be at the time when Sterne was writing. These are two unusual and particularly rewarding studies.

"Part Three: Interpretation" has a piece on "Tristram Shandy and the Art of Gossip" by Bruce Stovel which seeks to show how Sterne "recreated in his novel the satisfactions found in the familiar, everyday

activity of gossiping" with the creation of that special sense of intimacy that gossip requires. Mark Loveridge ponders on the nature of liberty in Tristram Shandy and notes how its characters finally become liberated from the forms (and the quotations) of past literature in Volume 9 of the book. K. G. Simpson looks at the relationship between time, space and values in the novel, developing further some of the speculations on order already raised in the Blooms' essay.

In a final section, Park Honan offers interesting remarks on Jane Austen's close reading of Sterne, noting that "he rolled out a comic world for her" which she was pleased to incorporate within her own. W. G. Day closes the volume with a very useful annotated bibliography of books and articles concerning Sterne, published since Lodwick Hartley's last bibliography, which stops in 1977.

A varied and useful collection of essays, in short. It covers so much ground that one is surprised to note that it is itself quite modest in size. May one hope for a successor one of these days on A Sentimental Journey?

Manchester University — William Ruddick

Royal Society of Arts Symposium

As a sequel to the Bi-centenary celebrations, a Symposium to commemorate Samuel Johnson's association with the Society was held at the Society's House, John Adam Street, on Friday 18th January 1985. Professor John Abbott, a member of the Johnson Society of London, was unable to attend but his contribution was presented by Professor Thomas Jambeck on "Johnson's Membership of the Society Reconsidered". Other papers given were: "Johnson's Interest in Mechanical Spinning" by James Harrison; "Johnson and Porcelain Manufacture" by J. V. G. Mallett; "Barry and Johnson" by D. G. A. Allan; and "Samuel Johnson's Funeral Monument" by Ann Saunders. The papers appear in the August 1985 Issue of the Journal of the Royal Society of Arts.

J.H.L.

Isobel Grundy, (ed.). Samuel Johnson: New Critical Essays. Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1984. Price £14.95. (pp. 208)

This collection of essays sets out to be revisionary rather than revolutionary, presenting from Johnson's vast range of writing some aspects which have been least well recognised and which have the strongest contemporary interest.

Dr. Grundy's opening contribution, "Samuel Johnson: Man of Maxims", examines various writers' thoughts on aphoristic wisdom including Johnson's own sustained statement in Rambler 71. He draws lavishly on other thinkers but constantly tests their conclusions. "From his base in aphorisms", Dr. Grundy observes, "he sets sail on his voyage of exploration; in the concision and solidity of aphorism he often brings his chain of argument to rest. The natural flights of his mind are both from maxim to maxim, and from test to test."

Robert Folkenflik's essay, "That Man's Scope", avers that "one of the things that makes Johnson most humanly admired is the sheer range of his interests." He cites as disparate examples Johnson's enthusiastic discussion on the wonders of glassmaking in Rambler 36, and elsewhere his interest in the law, evidenced by the substantial help he afforded Robert Chambers in preparing his Vinerian law lectures at Oxford. Yet, within his universal knowledge, there were some areas - especially the religious - in which he refused to allow others to meddle. There were limitations too, but as the writer concludes: "Look at Johnson's limitations long enough, and you often come once again upon his breadth of spirit." He concludes: "No one is very likely to take Johnson's measure."

Paul J. Korshin in "Johnson and the Scholars" examines what scholarship involved in Johnson's day, what he thought of his contemporaries and what they thought of him. Johnson's wide acquaintance, both personal and through reputation, was very wide; he refers at various times to almost every English scholar of any distinction. Johnson was all that a scholar was in his day ... and much more besides.

"Johnson on 'The Rise of the Novel'" by Mark Kinkead-Weekes argues that the dearth of Johnson's criticism of the novel - a form so new in 1750 that the Rambler does not know how to name it - is out of all proportion illuminating not so much of novelists as of the nature and quality of Johnson's own sensibility. He examines the differences between the 1750 standpoint and the later critical judgements following Johnson's immersion in Shakespeare. The earlier and later Johnson may differ in emphasis, but there is deeper consistency beneath.

Robert Giddings writes on "The Fall of Orgilio: Samuel Johnson as Parliamentary Reporter". He argues that Johnson's Debates are of

outstanding interest in his output- fascinating evidence of his political thinking, and impressive examples of the political journalist's art at a very early stage of its development. The fall of Orgilio (Sir Robert Walpole) was nigh when Cave first employed the young Johnson in St. John's Gate. The war with Spain brought Walpole's career to catastrophe. "Johnson's account of these final scenes is more moving than his unsuccessful attempt at tragedy, Irene." The Debates are also seen historically as "an important staging post in our progress towards parliamentary democracy."

Continuing the political theme, Howard Erskine-Hill writes on "The Political Character of Samuel Johnson". He considers Boswell's political portrait of Johnson in the Life as presenting Johnson as a Tory along the lines of Johnson's own independent statements of what a Tory was - often referring to him as a more extreme Tory than he shows him to have been when he comes to set down Johnson's actual views. The issue of Jacobite sympathy is reinstated as being of central Johnsonian concern. London and The Vanity of Human Wishes - separated by the two sensational events of the fall of Walpole in 1742 and the landing of Prince Charles in the Highlands in 1745 - are critically re-examined and given a topical dimension in their historical and biographical contexts.

"The Essayist, 'Our Present State', and 'The Passions'" by J. S. Cunningham looks at the picture presented chiefly in the Rambler essays of the nature of our "present state" with special reference to the passions as instruments of both good and evil. "Present state", here, refers not to our immediate and changing circumstances, but to the essential nature of temporal human life.

The one Essay devoted to a particular work, as opposed to a genre is "Rasselas and the Traditions of 'Menippean Satire'" by James F. Woodruff. He argues that "Not only does it make sense to see Rasselas as Menippean satire in a modern critical context, but there is a good possibility that Johnson himself might have looked on it as connected with that kind of work." He demonstrates Johnson's acquaintance throughout his life with works from this tradition: "Often he can be shown not merely to have known them but to have liked and admired them." The characterisation in Rasselas, he observes, "frequently described as wooden yet in context somehow right" is consistent with Menippean satire dealing less with people as such than with mental attitudes.

In "Johnson and Commemorative Writing" Mary Lascelles omits Johnson's formal epitaphs, in Latin, preferring to dwell on his occasional commemorative writing: "those occasions which he grasps and turns to one opportunity after another for commemorating friend or benefactor." His practice is set against a background of his theory - an interest first declared in 1740, in "An Essay on Epitaphs" contributed to The Gentleman's

Magazine. This illuminating essay ends with a moving reflection on an example of Johnson's "most spontaneous and most deeply characteristic" commemorative writing - his glowing tribute of gratitude to Gilbert Walmsley in the Life of Smith.

This collection of Essays, skilfully sequenced, sets out from the assumption that Johnson is easy to love but hard to understand. In furthering our understanding it makes a valuable contribution to ensuring that the diligent reader continues the quest with renewed delight.

J. H. L.

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Iain Finlayson, The Moth and the Candle: A Life of James Boswell, Constable, London, 1984. Price £9.95.

Iain Finlayson takes his cryptic title from Johnson's remark to Boswell as they watched a moth flutter round a candle and burn itself. "That creature," said Johnson, "was its own tormentor, and I believe its name was BOSWELL." The words assume prophetic significance when we recall that they were spoken just twelve weeks after Boswell had survived the rebuffs of the first meeting with Johnson in Tom Davies's back parlour. The friendship had advanced sufficiently for the older man to take the trouble to travel to Harwich with the young Boswell before his departure for Holland and the start of the many adventures and amours vividly described in the book.

The moth motif appears again, nine years later with Boswell now well established on the London scene. "When Boswell is not with Johnson, he was with Dempster, Paoli, General Oglethorpe, David Garrick, Samuel Foote, Lord Mansfield, Lord Mountstuard, any number of Scotsmen making good in another country, Oliver Goldsmith, and Bennet Langton - the great, the gay, and the ingenious, endlessly discussing, gossiping, and disputing. At the centre of it all is Boswell: fluttering moth-like from one candle to another, occasionally singeing his wings when he presses too close to Johnson's flame and setting it guttering."

In compiling this new biography, the author acknowledges his debt to D. B. Wyndham Lewis's The Hooded Hawk and Frederick A. Pottle's James Boswell, The Earlier Years. Thirdly there are Boswell's own records, particularly the Journals, which Mr. Finlayson draws on copiously and dextrously to allow Boswell to speak or shout for himself - thus preserving the all important tone as well as content of the narrative. The author's own colourful and, at times, colloquial turn of phrase enlivens an authoritative text uncluttered with footnotes. Boswell's resilience, for example, is described pugilistically: "Boswell, time and again, came back off the ropes for a further dose of punishment."

Twenty seven illustrations, including portraits of the principal characters, add to the attraction of the text. The text itself frequently juxtaposes Boswell's own words with the author's own perceptive gloss or succinct generalisation. The spirit of Boswell's own lines of happy self-advertisement, for example:

> He has all the bright fancy of youth
> With the judgement of forty and five;
> In short, to declare the plain truth,
> There is no better fellow alive.

is admirably caught in the observation: "O rare and rarefied James Boswell, possessed of every capacity for life and £200 a year." Boswell throughout appears in his many moods and many roles - whether rake, romantic, writer, libertine, lawyer or laird. Elsewhere we are told: "This is typical of Boswell in Italy: passion, pandaemonium and piety." At times the biographer essays his own creative speculation in keeping with his prime source - Boswell himself. Here Boswell entertains the Corsicans with his flute playing and Scots tunes, then attempts an Italian translation of Hearts of Oak: "It was quite a joyous riot. I fancied myself to be a recruiting sea-officer. I fancied all my chorus of Corsicans aboard the British fleet." Finlayson adds his own jeu d'esprit "And Boswell, no doubt, swam into view across his mind's eye, resplendent in gold lace and a cocked hat, the seasickness five miles out of Leghorn quite forgotten."

There are occasions when we would wish to say, "Well, yes ... but" on encountering some of his generalisations: "he turned to fiction and produced a novel, Rasselas ... thrown off, hurriedly and casually"; or, "The undisguised pleasure Johnson took in triumphing over the most modest antagonist ..."

Boswell is depicted as a man in quest of personal fulfilment and identity: "He wanted to be Johnson, or Paoli, or Lord Auchinleck, or Sir David Dalrymple, or Rousseau, or any one of a hundred models of achievement. Boswell wanted to be solid." Did he fulfil his expectations? Alluding to the Life, Finlayson concludes: "That he did his best, and that his best in one area of his life at least was superlative, he never had the satisfaction of knowing. In that sense, and in that sense only, he had failed: he never loved himself as much as he loved and was loved by others."

For those encountering Boswell for the first time outside the confines of the Life and before, during, and after the Johnson years, or for the seasoned Boswellian, this book provides an absorbing and entertaining delineation of a complex character. In the year when Samuel Johnson rightly dominated our thoughts, Mr. Finlayson has brought Boswell vividly before us not just as adjunct to Johnson but as a man existing very much in his own right.

J. H. L.

Kai Kin Yung, with essays by John Wain, W. W. Robson, David Fleeman, Samuel Johnson 1709-84. The Herbert Press, London 1984. Price £9.95.

This book is based on the catalogue for the exhibition held at the Arts Council's premises at 105 Piccadilly in 1984. The exhibition was proposed by the Chairman, Sir William Rees-Mogg, as the Arts Council's contribution to the commemoration of the bicentenary of Samuel Johnson's death, and was selected by Kai Kin Yung.

The exhibition followed a chronological pattern, divided into eight sections. The first seven concerned Johnson's life: 1. Lichfield, Oxford and the Midlands; 2. First years in London; 3. Lexicographer; 4. Widower; 5. Pension, Boswell, and The Club; 6. The Thrales and Streatham Park; and 7. Last years. The final section comprised some biographies by his contemporaries. The focus was on two main features: Johnson's method and career as a writer, and the principal portraits of him from life.

In his excellent introduction to the book, Mr. Yung observes that "as a man and a writer, Johnson's principles were consistently sincere, honourable, and pure" and cites his aspiration to be "numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth". The evidence of how he struggled within himself to achieve these ideals, and the documentary proofs of the peculiar qualities of his genius had remained untraced or undetected for over a century. Of the manuscripts shown in the exhibition, nearly all have been rediscovered in this century. The manuscripts of London and The Vanity of Human Wishes were shown for the first time in this country.

The earliest known portrait of Johnson by his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, c. 1756, did not appear until his 46th year when he had achieved national recognition with the publication of the Dictionary. During the remaining 28 years of his life there followed portraits by twelve artists including, Reynolds, James Barry, Nollekens, James Northcote, Frances Reynolds, John Opie and Zoffany.

To visit this comprehensive and cornucopean collection was akin to a reunion of widely scattered old friends, or seeing in the flesh familiar faces known only from reproductions. And there was Johnson's silver teapot; his Diploma as Master of Arts of Oxford, 1755; the "Catalogue of the Valuable Library of Books, of the Late Learned Samuel Johnson"; or the Probate Copy of Johnson's will, to name but a few of the many treasures on show. There, too, was the evocative death-mask bust of Johnson which for me stirred memories of a quarter of a century ago when I accompanied Laurence McHenry up the long flight of stairs to the third floor of the Royal Literary Fund offices off Ludgate Hill to

see it for the first time.

The 114 exhibits are fully described and related to the Johnson story. A further enhancement is the inclusion of three splendid articles on major topics. John Wain writes on "Reason, Bias and Faith in the Mind of Johnson" and shows Johnson abandoning neither faith nor reason in an age "faced with the apparently irreconcilable split between traditional faith and the ascendant rationality". He sees him as being at odds with his age and yet "its greatest single representative".

W. W. Robson explores "Johnson as a Poet" and considers why his poetry appears to be little read or discussed today. "His poetry has been thought to be abstract, colourless, conventional. It is marmoreal and inscriptional, unlike his lively talk. He is thought to have regarded poetry as the application from outside of melody and pattern to thoughts that could as well have been composed in prose." This account of Johnson as poet he believes to be quite false and ably demonstrates his refutation.

David Fleeman writes on "Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, 1755". The various stages in compiling the Dictionary are chronicled, throwing new light on the procedures followed by Johnson and his assistants in the garret at Gough Square. The work was a major achievement of his age: "Johnson's Dictionary remains a monument in English literary history because it still bears the stamp of an individual, and because it remains our only major dictionary compiled by a writer of distinction."

To assemble such a comprehensive exhibition within one display in London was no mean achievement. Kai Kin Yung's devotion and enthusiasm in compiling the catalogue was itself a major contribution to the commemoration year both as a record of a unique exhibition and as a valuable thesaurus of Johnsonian memorabilia.

J. H. L.

"He is the greatest conversationalist in British history, so influential that some of the most successful modern television figures practise their art in terms of his conversational methods. Without Samuel Johnson, Robin Day would not exist."

William Rees-Mogg.

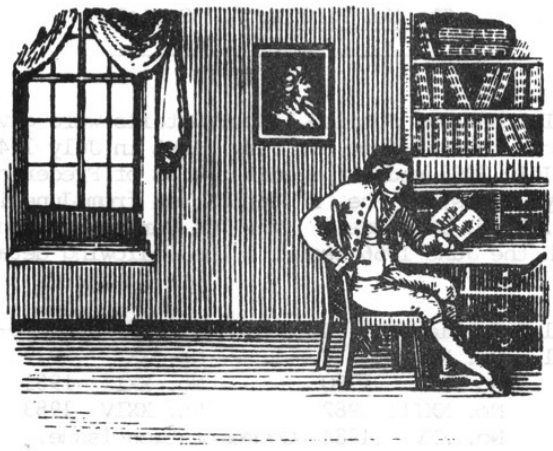
The New Rambler "C" Serial

In the 1978 Jubilee Issue, details were given of all the previous issues of the Journal from the very first in July 1941 (Serial "A" which ran until July 1955 under the editorships of Frederick Vernon, William Kent, and A. Lloyd Jones). The "B" Serial ran from June 1957 to January 1966 under Revd. F. N. Doubleday. The "C" Serial began under the present editor with the June 1966 Issue. The following details bring the previous list up to date:

Serial C Supplement: Golden Jubilee Issue 1928-78, 1978.
Serial C No. XIX 1978 No. XX 1979
No. XXI 1980 No. XXII 1981
No. XXIII 1982 No. XXIV 1983
No. XXV 1984 Commemoration Issue.

In completing the "C" Serial, I should like to wish every success to our new editor, Mr. David Parker, B Litt, MA. It would be remiss of me not to express my appreciation to those, particularly from overseas, whose words of encouragement over the years have meant so much despite the trials and tribulations; Philip Mahone Griffith, Arthur Rippey, Clarence Tracy and the late James L. Clifford amongst others spring to mind. My thanks, too, to the many friends and colleagues who, owing no allegiance to the Society, have volunteered help in practical ways. To John Baker who drew the elegant JSL monogram from the editor's original rough design, Mark Coppens for help with artwork; Mrs. S. Gold and the Hearts of Oak Insurance Group for invaluable secretarial help, and to my children - now grown up - who individually or as part of the chain gang became involved in production duties. Finally to Norah, my wife, for typing the bulk of all the "C" serial - often in the small hours of the morning after a long day of teaching and coping with the children - and for her sustained forbearance in sharing the house with The New Rambler and not citing Johnson in divorce proceedings.

J. H. Leicester.



Deign on the passing World to turn thine Eyes,
And pause awhile from Letters, to be Wise.
Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) *The Vanity of Human Wishes*

He who does his best, however little, is always to be distinguished from him who does nothing.
Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) *Rambler 164*

SOUVENIRS

To mark the Bi-Centenary Year, The Johnson Society of London offered a commemorative medallion and a pendant and chain, both in nickel silver. The medallion was also available in solid golden bronze in the form of a glass paperweight and as a small mahogany box.

The Commemorative Medallion

Postcards featuring quotations from Johnson and designs by Thomas Bewick were also produced. Two examples appear on the facing page.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The photograph of the Dean of Westminster on page 2 is reproduced by courtesy of The Sunday Telegraph. All other photographs by J. H. Leicester.

COMMEMORATION SECRETARY

The Johnson Society of London has good reason to acknowledge all the hard work of the Chairman and Committee, our Secretary, and others in contributing to the success of the Bi-Centenary Year. Particular thanks, however, must go to our Commemoration Secertary, Dr. Isobel Grundy, for her outstanding efforts both during the preparatory planning stages and throughout the memorable year. We are all deeply grateful to her.

JHL

Johnson's statue in the little garden of St. Clement Danes. The inscription on the front panel reads:

SAMUEL JOHNSON LLD

CRITIC ESSAYIST PHILOLOGIST
BIOGRAPHER WIT POET MORALIST
DRAMATIST POLITICAL WRITER TALKER
BORN 1709 DIED 1784

THE GIFT AND HANDIWORK OF PERCY FITZGERALD FSA
AND ERECTED BY THE REVD S. PENNINGTON MA
RECTOR OF ST CLEMENT DANES 1910

THE COMMEMORATION YEAR

Joint Meeting with the Historical Association

Saturday 19 May 1984

At 11 a.m. on Saturday 19 May 1984 between 40 and 50 members of the Historical Association and the Johnson Society of London met at what they thought of as the Essex Head in Essex St, although its signboard proclaimed it the Edgar Wallace. This was the venue of Johnson's last Club, instituted in December 1783. After coffee and biscuits the company made their way along Fleet Street to St. Paul's to view Johnson's monument by John Bacon. On the way they viewed a number of sites associated with Johnson, including that of the Devil Tavern, where Johnson gave an all night party in honour of Charlotte Lennox's first book.

There were more tangible remains at the rebuilt St. Clement Danes, where they inspected Johnson's statue newly cleaned under the auspices of the Johnson Society of London; the Temple, where the Master gave an instructive talk on the church and its history; the birthplace of the Rambler and the Dictionary at Johnson's House in Gough Square, and the courtyard of Stationers' Hall.

In the afternoon, Professor Michael Port of Queen Mary College gave a very interesting illustrated lecture on "Johnson's London", especially in its physical aspects. How many of his listeners had known before that if you wanted to build a house you didn't just call in a builder, but you had to employ your own bricklayers, carpenters, tilers, and so on? Both parties to the expedition agreed that it had been well worth while.

S.B.S.P.

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River Trip to Greenwich, 7 July 1984

The idea for this trip came from Mr. Lewis Raddon, who with his mind on Johnson's and Boswell's river trip to Greenwich on 30 July 1763 suggested it as something the Society might like to do one July. Then Dr. David Fleeman suggested that we should lay on something in London to precede the conference at Pembroke College, Oxford, from July the 8th. So Greenwich was chosen, and turned out to be just the

thing, partly because of the energy and resourcefulness of Mrs. Zandra O'Donnell, who lives there. She contacted the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society, who in the event supplied us with not one guide but two, and she found an excellent lunch-place, the Greenwich Steak House.

Most of the party gathered at Westminster Pier at 10.15, and managed with remarkable absence of fuss to get themselves gathered, counted, and embarked on a single group ticket (we were, after all, travelling at a group rate) without any of the problems which I had feared. The morning river trip was a dream of peace and beauty, with a running commentary which was actually interesting and amusing. Mrs. O'Donnell was standing at Greenwich Pier to welcome us, and the group moved off to sample the various delights of the Twinings Exhibition on the Cutty Sark, and the pictures in the Queen's House. After lunch, and after seeing not only St. Alphege's Church (by Nicholas Hawksmoor) but also the end of a wedding ceremony which set the architecture off to great advantage, our two guides gave us a choice of a longer or shorter guided historical walk. Despite the extreme heat a large number of people of all ages took the more energetic option and climbed the hill, to be rewarded with fascinating new knowledge about some of the finest domestic architecture in the country, and the Observatory, and Lord Chesterfield's house, and a prehistoric pagan burial ground which lies unsuspected under the grass with children disporting themselves over it. There was still time for the most energetic to take in Sir James Thornhill's Painted Hall at the Royal Naval College.

It is an uncommon and delightful experience to spend so much time among scenes that have changed so little since Johnson saw them. Some of us perhaps remembered with envy that when he went there in 1763 the voyage back to London was chilly enough to cause Boswell discomfort. Johnson, he said, was impervious to cold. But I don't believe even he could have braved the heat with any more gallantry and enjoyment than our party of more than 40 people gathered from London, Japan, and North America.

I.M.G.

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Samuel Johnson Bi-Centenary Conference

Pembroke College, Oxford, 8-13 July 1984

About twice as many people came to the conference as the organiser, Dr. David Fleeman, had expected, yet everything ran with no confusion. The daily programme consisted of a morning of seminars

with two short papers each and a welcome, busy, talkative break for coffee, afternoons free with excursions laid on to places of eighteenth-century interest, a 5.30 lecture, and a dinner "fit to ask a man to" as the final item in a splendid sequence of daily hospitality. All this in Johnson's college: we went in and out through the archway under his rooms, seeing as we came out into Pembroke's little street the elegantly imposing mass of Christchurch looming over us; we gathered for meals and lectures on long dining-hall benches which were not quite so uncomfortable as they looked, and for some of the seminars in the library which was also housing a most interesting exhibition of Johnsoniana; we indulged the delights of conversation in the stone quadrangles surrounded by vivid window-boxes and hanging baskets of flowers. It would be invidious to pick any for special praise among the 20-minute seminar papers; a number of them were even more stimulating and entertaining than the lectures, later in the day, by Professors Howard Weinbrot, Donald Greene, and John Hardy. Everything was a pleasure. Only one thing went wrong, and that a cause of merriment: the bus that went not to Stowe House but to Stow-on-the-Wold!

I.M.G.

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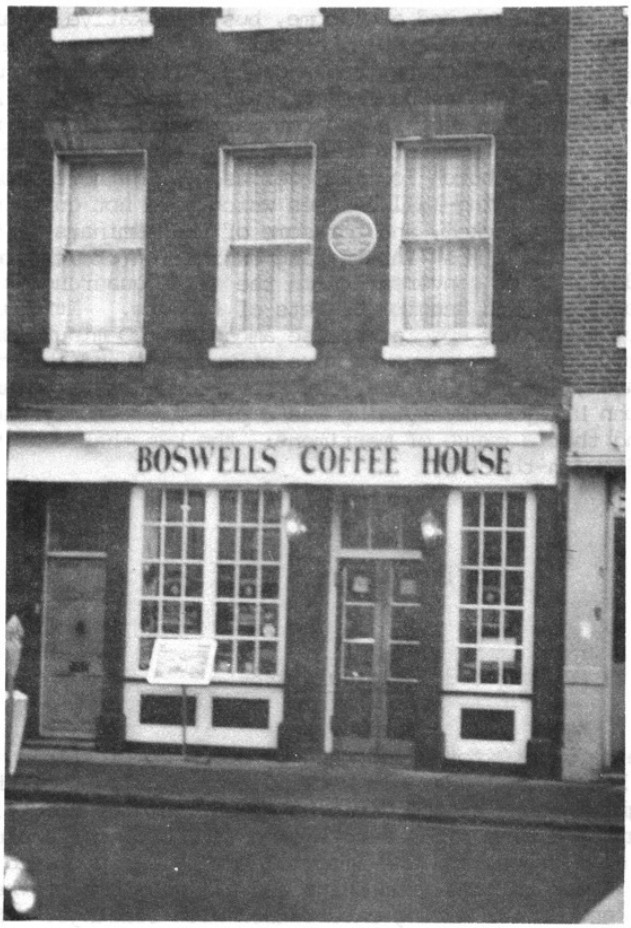
Lichfield 13-15 July 1984

Five days in Oxford, and then by coach to Lichfield, for a less academic but very pleasurable weekend, the highlight of which was the Friday night Banquet at the Civic Hall, attended by about 140 people. Bishop was drunk and clay pipes were smoked (and some got broken). Canon Winnett said grace, and the Immortal Memory was proposed by Mrs. Donald Hyde. Speakers came from China and all quarters of the globe (except Peru), and Marius Goring entertained with readings. Saturday brought a visit to Ashbourne, with its splendid church and school, once Dr. Taylor's home, and a performance of Messiah on baroque instruments, followed by fireworks. On Sunday morning civic dignitaries and academics in their robes led a procession to and from the Cathedral for a Festival Eucharist. "An Evening with Hester, Bozzy and Sam" in the Civic Hall converted to a theatre rounded off the proceedings.

It was gratifying to discover that those attending the Conference at Oxford and/or Lichfield included 25 Johnson Society of London members and Vice-Presidents, and that by the end of the Conference or very soon after 17 new members had joined.

S.B.S.P.



Boswell's Coffee House, Russell Street, Covent Garden

The Greater London Council blue plaque reads:

In this house occupied by THOMAS DAVIES Bookseller
DR SAMUEL JOHNSON first ~~met~~ JAMES BOSWELL in 1763

THE BI-CENTENARY COMMEMORATION

During the week which saw the 200th anniversary of the death of Dr. Johnson on 13 December 1784 the event was commemorated in various quarters. On 13 December itself the British Library invited representatives of the Johnson Society of London to a Private View of their small but satisfyingly representative exhibition of the Life and Works of the greatest literary figure of his time. On the preceding two days the BBC had made their contribution with a documentary discussion presented by Professor Christopher Ricks on Radio 3 and a dramatised Life of Johnson on Radio 4.

On Friday 14 December about 20 members and friends of the Society shared in the Lichfield Johnson Society's Banquet at the House of Commons, being received by Patrick Cormack, M.P. The Immortal Memory was proposed by Lord Denning, and a toast to the House of Commons, whose reports Johnson had concocted in his earlier days, was proposed by the Society's Vice-President, Dr. David Fleeman, with a response by the Speaker. The guests were toasted by the Society's President Dr. Carpenter in a characteristically charming speech, and the reply by Lord Hailsham concluded a memorable evening.

Saturday 15 December belonged to the Johnson Society of London.

At 10.30 a.m. on a bright but cold morning a large number of people gathered in Russell Street, Covent Garden, outside Boswell's Coffee House, formerly Tom Davies' Bookshop, where Johnson and Boswell first met, for the unveiling of a plaque by Mr. Robert Robinson, a past President of the Johnson Society, who spoke wittily and briefly.

A record number of 150 members and friends sat down to the annual Christmas lunch which followed at the Vitello d'Oro. In the absence of the President on Abbey business, grace was said by Canon Winnett. The event was clearly enjoyed by all present, and a pleasant touch was added by an invitation brought by a representative of the Johnson Society of Oslo to the President and Chairman of the Johnson Society of London to become members of that Society.

At 3.0 p.m. everyone adjourned to Westminster Abbey for Evensong. The Service followed the normal order, but the lessons were read by Mr. John Comyn and Dr. Isobel Grundy, and Johnson's Sermon No. 11 was read by Dr. George Rylands of King's College Cambridge, colourful in his academic robes. The congregation then transferred (as far as possible) to Poets' Corner, where the laying of the wreath by Dr. Carpenter was

preceded by the reading by the Society's Vice-President Professor James Misenheimer of a commemorative sonnet by a member of the Society, Helen Forsyth. Before the final prayers Dame Peggy Ashcroft read the concluding lines of The Vanity of Human Wishes.

On Sunday 16 December those who could attended Morning Service at Johnson's church, St. Clement Danes, conducted by the RAF Resident Chaplain, the Rev. Roger N. Kenward. The Service included readings from the Idler and the Rambler and some of Johnson's prayers, his last one being sung in the setting by Sir William Harris. The Address was given by the Very Reverend David Edwards, Provost of Southwark.

Thus concluded the official commemoration of the anniversary of the death of Dr. Samuel Johnson, but it would not be inappropriate to add that on 6 December Sotheby's had offered for auction two unpublished original letters from Johnson to his friend Sir Robert Chambers, Judge of the Supreme Court of Bengal. On 4 October 1783 he wrote: "I hope you do not think that I have ever deserved to be forgotten ..."

I think we can guess the answer to that.

S.B.S.P.

BIDDING PRAYER FOR THE JOHNSON BI-CENTENARY

O GOD, Father of us all, we give thanks to Thee for the life and Christian commitment of Thy servant Samuel Johnson. We gratefully remember his humility and steadfastness which shone through doubt and, at the end, overcame fear. We pay tribute in Thy Presence, to his force and facility, both in speech and the written word, dedicated to the enhancement of virtue; his sympathy and understanding for the less fortunate who found life hard. We thank Thee that he survived, without bitterness, the struggles of his early years; that he overcame difficulties of temperament which could have led to near complete breakdown, but through Thy grace, freely bestowed, achieved sanctity and holiness.

May his example inspire us so to order our daily pilgrimage that we set our sights on Thy perfect Kingdom and with him enter into the fulfilment of those who find in Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

From the Order of Morning Prayer to Commemorate the Bi-Centenary of Samuel Johnson held on Sunday 16th December 1984 at St. Clement Danes, London.

THE JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON

1984-85

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