

THE NEW RAMBLER



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THE NEW RAMBLER

Journal of The Johnson Society of London

Editor: David Parker, MA, M Litt
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From the Editor

There have been no changes in the composition of our Committee in the course of the year, as Dr Grundy, who has been appointed Henry Marshall Tory Professor of English in the University of Alberta, has agreed to continue her membership. She retains close links with the Society. Nor have any new Vice-Presidents been elected.

The new section of this journal which appeared last year - Notes and Queries has attracted no correspondence with the Editor: but of course direct contact may have been established. The section will re-appear when it is called for.

It is gratifying to note how many of our speakers are also members of the Society: and also how many of them are now paying us return visits. It is hoped that both these trends will continue.

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THE PROVINCIAL BUYERS OF JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

Dr Jan Fergus - 20 October 1990

Chairman: Mrs A. G. Dowdeswell

Recollection was made of Lord Harmsworth, a Vice-President of the Society, and of Edmund de Beer, an early member of the Society who had edited definitive editions of Evelyn and Locke.

Dr Fergus, who is Professor of English at Lehigh University, had spoken to the Society in May on Provincial Readers of Fiction (The New Rambler D V page 25).

Dr Fergus said that when she had first been invited to speak to the Society she had intended to deal with the customers for Johnson's works, especially the Dictionary. However, finding only 13 purchasers of the Dictionary, plus one who had a copy bound, she had offered a broader view of the customers of the Clay family of booksellers in the Midlands. For this further paper she would like to talk about the 13 purchasers of the Dictionary and, since they accounted for a quarter of all purchasers of dictionaries, about those which the other three-quarters of customers preferred to Johnson's.

Johnson himself recognised that what the majority of people asked of a dictionary was spelling and meaning, and produced an abridged version costing 10 shillings against £4.10.0 for the original. In 30 years, 40,000 copies of the abridgement were printed compared with 8000 of the Folio. There was a bigger demand for cheaper dictionaries with word lists for spelling and stress only, without definitions. These sold well to school-masters and school-mistresses. The Rev Mr Jemson sent a copy of Dilworth's Spelling Book to Mrs Scriven, at whose school his daughter was being educated, and Mrs Scriven herself bought four copies, and two of Fenning's. Children bought spelling books for themselves, as did tradesmen. Dictionaries containing definitions were bought by students and teachers and professional people. Out of 51 customers wanting explanatory dictionaries, three-quarters chose other than Johnson's, though his sold 12 copies, almost a quarter of the total. Among 20 or so other dictionaries, Fenning's and Bailey's tied for second place. Price could not completely account for preference for dictionaries other than Johnson's, since Bailey's cost 10/- or 12/- and Barlow's cost 15/-. Most lexicographers plagiarised one another, but after Johnson's had appeared, he was the source of borrowing. Turning to Johnson's Dictionary, Dr Fergus said that the 12 customers for the abridged versions, essentially the Dictionary minus the quotations and with shorter definitions, got a better printed, more readable work than the cheaper works. Johnson had claimed that the abridged version omitted many "barbarous" terms, but like the Dictionary itself it did include many slang and "low" terms.

These 12 purchasers included 5 schoolmasters or schoolboys, the headmaster and a master of Rugby School. Most of these people also bought or borrowed novels - e.g. Robinson Crusoe, and the works of Smollett, Richardson, Sterne and Miss Burney. Other purchasers were the gentry, clergymen, a surgeon and a lawyer's clerk, who between them bought novels, scientific works, history, belles lettres, sermons, other devotional works, and magazines, including the Medical Magazine, and the Lady's Magazine, and law books, including Every Man His Own Lawyer.

Two women bought Johnson, Mrs Mirie, who bought primarily devotional works and biography, and Mrs Brooke, an innkeeper's wife, who also bought novels. One other woman bought Barlow's dictionary.

Thomas Freeman, Jnr, gentleman, son of a lawyer, bought the abridgement. He inherited his estate from an uncle, Langton Freeman, an eccentric, who left directions that when he died he was to be laid out on his bed and left in a summerhouse or building in the garden, with all the doors and windows locked up or bolted, painted dark blue, and surrounded by a fence and evergreens.

The most interesting customer was the one who bought the folio on 19 February 1780, Sir Theodosius Boughton of Lawford Hall near Rugby. Months later, almost a year before he came of age, he died so suddenly that poison was suspected, and apparently confirmed some months later after exhumation. Boughton's brother-in-law, Captain John Donellan, was charged with murder, tried and hanged, on not very convincing evidence. Many accounts of the trial were published, and so was Donellan's defence, at his own request. In the indictment arsenic was cited, but at the trial laurel water was mentioned. Even at Eton Boughton had suffered from venereal disease, and frequently doctored himself with mercury. He died after taking medicine given to him by his mother. Donellan afterwards washed out the bottle.

Donellan did not have a good reputation. He had been cashiered from the Army in India and according to local gossip had tried to provoke Boughton into fighting a duel with another man. He had encouraged him to jump headfirst into a mill dam, and while Donellan ran two miles to get help, the miller got him out. In his defence, Donellan said he had saved Boughton's life when he slipped while trying to climb up to the weathercock, and had urged various precautions on him while swimming. He also denied any motive for killing him. Boughton was due to inherit £2000, but in the event of his death while a minor, the greater part of it would have come to his sister, Donellan's wife. But Donellan said that the marriage settlement had provided that he could not touch his wife's money, and since Boughton had promised him two good livings (he had been studying to take orders) he would have had a better income than if he depended on his wife's generosity.

Gossip had noticed that Mr Clay of Rugby had remarked that Boughton had not looked well. This was Samuel Clay, the bookseller from whom both Boughton and Donellan had bought books. Boughton had bought, among others, books on history and zoology, and Captain Burden's Treatise on Stones. Donellan bought sermons, Every Man His Own Lawyer, and various guides, such as The Complete English Gardener and The Complete English Cook, as well as a number of cheap books, almost chapbooks. The Family Physician had allowed Boughton to "quack" himself, and The Toilet of Flora, a work on cosmetics, had been used by Donellan to prepare an aromatic bath for his gouty feet, not to distill poison. (He accused Boughton's mother of administering the fatal medicine.)

Dr Fergus said that an interesting part of her research was finding out about the people who bought the books. As a student of a reading community she found the accounts of the trial revealing about the way the neighbours knew and gossiped about events. It was interesting that so many of the doctors and others who testified at the trial were customers of the Clays. As a student of

bookbuying she was struck by the number of references to books. Some of those cited - and some that were not - could have given dangerous knowledge to Boughton, and could have been informative about laurel water. But these references did confirm the authority that books enjoyed in the period, including Johnson's Dictionary in both its forms.

HAMMOND, JOHNSON AND THE MOST DIFFICULT BOOK IN THE WORLD

Mrs Laura Payne - 17 November 1990

Chairman: Mrs Anthea Hopkins

Mrs Payne was welcomed back on this return visit to the Society: she had last spoken to us in March 1989 on Johnson's Irene (The New Rambler D IV page 22). She was a graduate of Bucknell University and had taken an MA from London University for a thesis on Johnson's Dictionary and his poetic diction. She was at present working on a doctoral thesis on Johnson.

She began by referring to the subjects under discussion at Mr Dilly's dinner party on 15 April 1778. The last topic, according to Boswell, was a discussion between the Quaker Mrs Knowles and Johnson over Jane Harry, who had recently joined the sect, to Johnson's displeasure. Mrs Knowles tried to persuade him not to be angry at or offended by Jane Harry's action, but he would not give way. Jane Harry, he said, had no proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion, a subject that should be studied with care and all possible help, and that she knew little of either her previous or present churches. Mrs Knowles said she had the New Testament before her, but Johnson said she could not understand it, "the most difficult book in the world", which required a lifetime of study. Mrs Knowles said it was clear as to essentials, but not, Johnson said, on controversial points. He gave a reasoned statement on what he believed to be the three basic components of religious understanding, which Mrs Payne called text, Church and faith.

Mrs Knowles chose to validate Miss Harry's conversion with the text of the New Testament, but Johnson said it was a text that needed continual study, aided by as much commentary and illumination by others as possible.

In the Diaries, Prayers and Annals of almost 30 years Johnson gave evidence of the wide-ranging commentaries he had "looked into" while trying to read the Bible "through". As early as 1785 some detractors questioned the sincerity of Johnson's piety, asserting that had he read the Bible more he would not have suffered such mental torture. Johnson however, believing that the New Testament had to be studied like other books, echoed the opinion of Henry Hammond a century earlier, whom Johnson much admired and whose work on the New Testament he advocated.

Hammond was born on 18 August 1605 and educated at Eton and Oxford. He was an exceptionally able linguist and classicist which enabled him to assist his theological arguments by close study of the Church Fathers. Johnson owned Hammond's collected Works and often gave copies to young men taking Orders. Dr Fell, Hammond's biographer, noted that his religion lay not only in preaching, but in daily prayers and the other duties of the clergy. During the

Commonwealth Hammond came to the defence of the persecuted Church of England, which owed to him her continued existence, by his devoted labours in two distinct forms: first his apologetic works on ceremonies, festivals and other aspects of the Church, and his expositions of the Scriptures. In his Paraphrases and Annotations on the New Testament he was concerned to establish the text by drawing on the varied readings gathered by other scholars, not using them to supersede the established text, but to offer alternative readings of the Greek text for those with judgement to decide on the best translation. His expositions were composed of illuminating paraphrases and annotations, including comments on Greek and Hebrew words and customs. For his scholarly practices Hammond had been proclaimed the Father of English Biblical criticism.

There were many similarities between Hammond and Johnson. Both saw the Church of England as edifying and stabilising for society. Both sought to alleviate poverty by charity and hospitality; both encouraged young men on to higher education, Hammond enlisting friends to support at the universities students from families ruined by civil unrest. Both encouraged devotions in their own and their friends' homes.

There was one major difference between them: Hammond never experienced Johnson's mental anguish over religion and salvation. Although Hammond's work for the Church during the Commonwealth put him in physical danger it did not threaten him psychologically. The controversies created by his writings led to further discussions and debates which earned him respect, even of those who wrote against him. Though many had considered Hammond the voice of the Church of England in the 17th century, he was now little known and read. Mrs Payne suggested the reason was that he did not question in his mind the truth of his religion, and remained a man of his moment, not a man for all time. Johnson, like Hammond, advocated faith and works, but Johnson's religious thought linked faith and doubt.

Boswell often despaired of Johnson's religious anguish, saying that Johnson "saw God in clouds". The title page of Hammond's Paraphrases and Annotations on the New Testament offered a better visualisation of Johnson's religious life. It showed two angels kneeling on either side of a table bearing a Greek Testament on a cloth, below it an angel's head and wings, and below that, in Greek, the angels' message at the Nativity. Above it was another Greek quotation from I Peter i 12, and above all a brilliant sun parting a background of clouds. This, she thought, truly represented Johnson's religious thought: the New Testament parting the clouds of his doubt but by no means dispersing them.

CELEBRARE DOMESTICA FACTA: JOHNSON AND HOME LIFE
Dr Isobel Grundy - 15 December 1990
Chairman: Mr John Comyn

Dr Grundy, whose translation to Canada is recorded in the Editor's Notes in this issue, was introduced as a long-standing member of the Society, a member of the Committee and a happily frequent speaker at Members' Meetings. Her paper today is printed in full.

The Latin of my title means something like "to celebrate domestic doings" or "behaviour" rather than facts. When I told our secretary that that was what I wanted to talk about, she welcomed the idea of a cosy and happy topic for Christmas. I felt I was sailing under false colours, because that isn't quite what I have in mind.

I found this motto on the title-page of a book by a friend of Johnson's: The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting, 1753, by Jane Collier. The title of the book speaks for itself, and the Latin motto is printed around the emblematic frontispiece of a cat and mouse. Domestic scenes are not always the kind pictured on Christmas cards.

The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting is a very Augustan and also a very Johnsonian book. Pope, Swift and Johnson all wrote spoof treatises or detailed advice on how to do things which people are not meant to do at all. The modern analogue would be the One-up-manship series. Famous C18 examples are Pope's The Art of Sinking in Poetry, with instructions for missing the sublime and hitting the ridiculous; Swift's Directions to Servants, with instructions for ingenious malpractice, idling and swindling; Johnson's own Idler, on one of those. And Johnson's essays, both in the Rambler and the Idler, are full of uncomfortable pictures of ingenious domestic tormentors: that is, like Jane Collier's, people who make life hard for those in a dependent position.

Domestic life meant family life in the eighteenth century, as it does today: but "family" meant something different from today's standard issue of Mum, Dad, and two children. The Family in those days meant everyone sharing a house, not only old and young, but also rich and poor, since it included both employers and live-in servants: a good representative selection of one's neighbours, in the biblical or Christian sense.

"The Head of the Family" is an expression that probably evokes the Victorians first and foremost; but in the eighteenth century too it was a position of very real power. Johnson's essays about domestic life, like Jane Collier's book, take as their central theme the use - or rather, in nearly all cases the misuse - of power.

Here I must make a general acknowledgement. I have just been reading an excellent Ph.D. thesis, by Glenys Stow, which compares the views of marriage and family life expressed by Johnson and Jane Austen. Our thinking agrees to a considerable extent, and I only hope I can manage not actually to plagiarise from her. One of her major points is that when we talk of Johnson or Austen as a conservative on the subject of family relations, we often forget to approach them not in comparison with our own views but in comparison with what went before them.

What one might call the domestic ideology which Johnson grew up with, the doctrine of the church and of advice-givers generally, was extremely tough-minded about the hierarchical structure of the family; a good family was defined by the obedience and submissiveness of the wife and children and servants, although it was freely admitted that gentle rather than savage exercise of authority was more likely to produce such submissiveness. Lord Halifax, writing his "The Lady" New-Year's Gift, or Advice to a Daughter" (for

a girl who was twelve at the time), tells her "that the supposition of yours being the weaker sex having without all doubt a good foundation maketh it reasonable to subject it to the masculine dominion"; about infidelity he tells her that "next to the danger of committing the fault yourself, the greatest is seeing it in your husband"; about her future children he tells her that their very first rational thoughts "will have no small mixture of mutiny", and that they must be carefully handled: "You are to have as strict a guard upon yourself amongst your children as if you were amongst your enemies." The combined recommendations of care and scrutiny as regards the junior partners and willed blindness about the failings of the boss, adds up to a chilling prescription. A marriage or a family run on these lines would hardly meet our expectations of domestic comfort.

Halifax published this book in 1688, 21 years before Johnson's birth; when Johnson was a child of five, in 1714, there appeared an anthology of advice called The Ladies Library. (It was actually written, it now seems, by Bishop Berkeley, though he put "By a Lady" on the title-page.) This maintains that children "are so much the Goods, the Possessions of their Father and Mother, that they cannot, without a kind of Theft, give themselves away." Of course we know children needed their parents' approval to get married. But it's a shock to hear it phrased in such nakedly commercial language: children are owned by their parents, they do not own themselves.

Compared with Lord Halifax, The Ladies Library already represents a shift towards the more soft-centred. It assures us, "The number of Cruel and Unnatural Parents are so small, that few Children suffer at their Hands". (So that's all right, then!) It cares, more than Halifax, about the possibility of domestic unpleasantness, but its reaction is to deny that unpleasantness exists in any significant quantity.

This is, as it were, about where Johnson comes in. He believes firmly in the religious duty of wives and children to obey, but he has strong views on the propensity of power to corrupt. You can find his views on wives in his sermon number one. (It was customary for a sermon preached at a wedding to dwell on the wifely duty of submission. This might have been good for the behaviour of wives, but what did it do for the behaviour of husbands?) That was the kind of question that Johnson, who always combines imaginative sympathy with psychological analysis, would not fail to ask himself. His writings on family or domestic life scrutinise the behaviour of those in power more vigilantly than that of those owing obedience, and they do not recommend turning a blind eye. In this sermon he says a wife's duty to obey is unpleasing. The word suggests he is thinking of the feelings of the person from whom obedience is demanded, and putting himself in the position of that person, where Halifax called the duty to obey "ungenteel", thinking of how it fitted with the attitudes of a privileged social class. Johnson then goes on rapidly to talk of the more general obligations, the obligations which both partners have in common, of putting up with each other's weaknesses. No doubt he drew, too, on his own experience. He later wrote that his parents, already middle-aged when they married and of different social classes, did not find much pleasure in each other's company, and it is impossible to believe that either of them ever exercised any authority over their brilliant and wayward elder son.

Johnson's pictures of domesticity in his fictional essays are nearly all critical or satirical. They are also, I believe, highly lifelike. He has a zest, amazing to those who think of his element as essentially grand or dignified, for noticing and writing about the trivia of domestic life. He thought Swift's Directions to Servants showed a petty or nit-picking mind, but if he had wanted to exercise it he certainly had the same capacity for pettiness himself. (Hester Thrale found him a pretty demanding house-guest.)

His writings about families show both that no detail escaped him, and also that he was hard on people who could see only detail, and nothing beyond. People like Lady Bustle, who never wished any harm to her neighbours but that their custards should be lumpy, or like Erophyle, who "lives for no other purpose but to preserve the neatness of a house and gardens...the great employment of keeping gravel from grass, and wainscot from dust.... Of three amiable nieces she has declared herself an irreconcilable enemy to one, because she broke off a tulip with her hoop; to another, because she spilt her coffee on a turkey carpet; and to the third, because she let a wet dog run into the parlour." His imaginary pictures of these two middle-aged women are marvellously comic; but each is depicted in relation to younger women - a visitor, the nieces - to whom they are some kind of threat, and so we are invited to judge as well as to laugh. Domesticity as an end in itself is sterile and inhumane, Johnson says. Successful domestic life depends on personal relations rather than on housekeeping.

In an Idler essay evidently written with Jane Collier's book in mind, Johnson makes the judgement more serious, as the victim is more inferior in status: not only younger but a servant. He describes an employer who "never orders any thing in direct words, for she loves a sharp girl who can take a hint." Therefore, says her maid, writing in despair to ask advice of Mr Idler, "If she would have me snuff the candles, she asks me 'whether I think her eyes are like a cat's?' If she thinks her chocolate delayed, she talks of 'the benefit of abstinence.'" When she's having her hair curled, she makes snide remarks about Medusa and snakes, till the maid, (who naturally hasn't read the classics) is baffled, and also at her wits' end as to how to put up with the humiliation of failing these constant, petty tests.

Johnson is vividly alert to the part servants play in the domestic economy. In Rambler No.12 (a heartrending but very funny account of a series of job interviews undergone by a young lady fallen on hard times, who is looking for a place), the last interview is one with a married couple who savour their own affectionate relationship by means of ganging up on the would-be maid and exchanging insulting jokes about her. Their domestic relationship is happy, but they keep it that way by victimizing someone else. Again and again, it seems the domestic setting with its tradition of patriarchal hierarchy leads Johnson to investigate the human propensity to hit those who are down.

He takes such petty bullying very seriously. In Rambler No.149 he writes as a young man who, with his sister, have been left orphans and poor relations in the house of an uncle and aunt who constantly remind them of their inferior station: "There are innumerable modes of insult and tokens of contempt, for which it is not easy to find a name, which vanish to nothing in an attempt to

describe them, and yet may, by continual repetition, make day pass after day in sorrow and in terror." This essay follows on No. 148, about cruel fathers. (They are dated 17 and 29 Aug. 1751. I really wonder if some striking instance of domestic unhappiness had just come Johnson's way.)

Number 148 says that Roman law for a long time made no provision for punishing cruel fathers, because law-givers couldn't imagine that they possibly existed. And, Johnson says, we can hardly believe it now. He didn't agree with the blithe optimism of The Ladies Library, but he understood why people want not to look on the dark side. "If in any situation the heart were inaccessible to malignity, it might be supposed to be sufficiently secured by the parental relation." Domestic life is the acid test: if people can abuse their children, then the evil in the human heart is really something to get upset about.

At the same time, relations with other people are the only thing which can make and keep us fully human in the good sense. The unsociable man, who decides not to take pleasure in the company of other people, "may delight his solitude with contemplating the extent of his power and the force of his commands". Paradoxically, the domestic tyrant is a person in solitude, like the scholar Gelidus, who "spends his time in the highest room of his house, into which none of his family are suffered to enter; and when he comes down to his dinner, or his rest, he walks about like a stranger that is there only for a day, without any tokens of regard or tenderness....for want of considering that men are designed for the succour and comfort of each other...(he) has so far abstracted himself from the species, as to partake neither of the Joys nor griefs of others, but neglects the endearments of his wife, and the caresses of his children" for note-taking and measurement and calculation.

The clause about men being "designed for the succour and comfort of each other" is of course very close to the third reason for marriage given in the Church of England prayer book: "the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and in adversity". (I owe to Glenys Stow the observation that Johnson always writes of this as the ONLY reason for marriage, ignoring the two earlier given, which are the sexual instinct and the bringing up of children.) Johnson's most detailed comment on marriage comes in Rasselas, in what has come to be known as the marriage debate. It is very familiar, but I will just run through it here.

Prince Rasselas and his sister Nekayah, as innocents recently escaped from the sheltered and controlled environment of the Happy Valley, decide when they get to Cairo to conduct systematic research into the best way to achieve happiness in life. They make a gendered division of labour: Rasselas looks at public life and politics (where he finds the game is hardly worth the candle, since failure in politics means imprisonment and execution) while his sister looks at family life. As you know, she finds: "In families, where there is or is not poverty, there is constant discord...." An unpractised observer expects the love of parents and children to be constant and equal; but this kindness seldom continues beyond the years of infancy.... Parents and children seldom act in concert (since their different ages make them see everything differently).... Few parents act in such a manner as much to enforce their maxims by the credit of their lives.... We seldom see that a whole family is virtuous.... Some husbands are imperious, and some wives perverse."

And as you also know, Nekayah's brother refuses to accept her findings ("Surely.... you must have been unfortunate in your choice of acquaintance: I am unwilling to believe....") He tells her she has "surveyed life with prejudice", and in no time they are having a fine brother-and-sister argument ("Dear princess," said Rasselas, 'you fall into the common error....') about how much families argue. This extremely clever and subtle discussion calls up one by one all the hallowed truisms of the established ideology of marriage and debunks them. Rasselas is sure there must be an infallible recipe for marriage, and comes up with a highly traditional one: "Whenever I shall seek a wife, it shall be my first question whether she be willing to be led by reason." "Thus it is," said Nekayah, 'that philosophers are deceived. There are a thousand familiar disputes which reason never can decide; questions that elude investigation, and make logic ridiculous.... wretched would be the pair above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason every morning all the minute detail of a domestic day."

Nekayah does not find, however, that people living alone are any better than married couples; indeed, they "are peevish at home, and malevolent abroad; and, as the outlaws of human nature, make it their business and their pleasure to disturb that society which debars them from its privileges...." - a conclusion that should not surprise us if we remember Gelidus. It is after this that she sums up her findings in the famous sentence, "Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures."

I don't want to depress us all too much. What has Johnson to say on the other side of the question? It is clear that he takes domestic life as a kind of touchstone: a biographer, he wrote, ought to "pass lightly over those performances and incidents, which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestick privacies, and display the minute details of daily life." If people behave badly in their families that is because of the real evil in human nature. There is good in human nature too, however, and that needs human domestic contact to draw it out.

We know very little of Johnson's own domestic life as a child at home with his parents or as a husband at home with his wife. He was a widower before he met James Boswell, Hester Thrale, Fanny Burney, or any of his more vivid chroniclers. We know a great deal about his life among what Hester Thrale called "whole Nests of People who would if he did not support them be starving I suppose." (If Johnson's household was not quite a commune in the 1960s meaning of that word, it was much more like that than like the conventional nuclear family.) "A Blind woman and her Maid, a Blackamoor and his Wife, a Scotch Wench who has her Case as a Pauper depending in some of the Law Courts; a Woman whose Father once lived at Lichfield and whose Son is a strolling Player, - and a superannuated Surgeon to have Care of the whole Ship's Company." Mrs Thrale's account not only brings out her perhaps excusable snobbishness about Johnson's friends and inmates, but also her offended sense that they had been gathering by chance, instead of by blood. What she saw as gathering by chance, Johnson would see as the exercise of friendship. From a twentieth-century viewpoint there is not much to choose between the fact that Johnson's friendship with Mrs Desmoulins stemmed from her father having lived at Lichfield (and been both Johnson's godfather and the doctor - or man-midwife - who delivered him)

and the other fact that the Thrale marriage stemmed from Henry Thrale having been chosen by Hester's mother without reference to Hester herself.

Just as we know less of Johnson's marriage than about his eccentric household, so we get from his works few or no extended studies of marital issues. He writes neither about the way marriages were negotiated, nor about the kind of large family one associates with Victorian novels (though Johnson warmed to such a large extended family when he met it in the form of the Burneys), nor even about married couples. But we do get little vignettes of surprising, often oddly-assorted domesticity, the domesticity of sisters or friends or chance acquaintances. The most famous, again, is that central group in *Rasselas*: the prince and princess, and the male mentor of the one and female confidential servant of the other, later joined by the astronomer whom the domestic love of the whole group, but especially of the young women, had saved from madness. They are a curious example of domesticity, with no roof over their heads, no parlour to keep clean let alone a lawn to keep the gravel off, but brought together most of them by chance and travelling as whim directs them. And the ineradicable day-dreams of each of the three young ones at the end of the book, the fantasies which they now know they are never going to fulfil, are all for an extended family, a larger communal domesticity: the prince wants a little kingdom which he can keep all under his eye like a boy playing soldiers; his sister wants a women's college and Pekuah a convent of pious maidens. They live with domesticity as an education; they dream of domesticity as a retreat.

We even find Johnson ready on occasion to depict domestic life as a refuge from the harsh world outside. This is true of his letters to Hester Thrale at Streatham from Lichfield and other places that he visited, during the years when he thought of Streatham as a second home (even though the same letters also give pleasureable glimpses of the households he visited). But he was perhaps most appreciative of the domestic as an oasis in the desert when he was travelling in the Hebrides late in life. Here is a hospitable island household. "The carpet was then rolled off the floor; the musician was called, and the whole company was invited to dance, nor did ever fairies trip with greater alacrity. The general air of festivity which predominated in this place, so far remote from all those regions which the mind has been used to contemplate as the mansions of pleasure, struck the imagination with a delightful surprise, analogous to that which is felt at an unexpected emersion from darkness into light.... Such a seat of hospitality, amidst the winds and waters, fills the imagination with a delightful contrariety of images. Without is the rough ocean and the rocky land, the beating billows and the howling storm: within is plenty and elegance, beauty and gaiety, the song and the dance."

Because there seem already to be a number of cats in this talk, I am going to put in some more. After the cat and mouse, after the cat's eyes, comes the cat as half of the smallest unit of domesticity which Johnson noted approvingly in Scotland: the aged widowed lady, descended from Robert the Bruce, now reduced to living in a ruined cellar in St Andrews. She "spins a thread, has the company of her cat, and is troublesome to nobody." With the cat, the cellar is domestic; without, it would be a solitude.

That reminds us that in the very essay where he is marvelling how parents can be cruel to their children, Johnson writes about the way affection is aroused in

response to familiarity and to dependence. We feel for a pet, he says, in a way we do not for wild animals, partly because a pet looks to its master for protection or fears his anger, but also because the master sees it "playing his gambols of delight before him": a wonderful description of what it is to be welcomed home by a dog or a cat.

Boswell writes of Johnson's cat Hodge just after he has written of "Johnson's love of little children, which he discovered upon all occasions, calling them 'pretty dears', and giving them sweetmeats". The children and Hodge between them give me my last two points about Johnson's own domestic life: how tender-hearted he was, though he refused to rely on that characteristic as inborn or natural, believing instead that it must be exercised and kept in practice by day-to-day domestic life; and how scrupulous he was about relations between the more and the less powerful. Hodge gives me one further point as well: how little we actually know, after the literally hundreds of biographies, about his own "domestick privacies", as Rambler No.50 puts it. Everyone knows that Johnson had a cat called Hodge; nearly everyone knows that Johnson used to go out himself, instead of sending his servant Frank out, to buy the oysters for Hodge. (Let me remind you hastily that oysters were then a cheap food in the season. This was nothing whatever like feeding a cat oysters today.) There is a general impression that Johnson did this to spare Frank's feelings, who might have felt himself demeaned by having to go shopping for the cat. (Did Frank have particularly sensitive feelings about possible slights on account of being black, having in fact been born a slave?) But what Boswell says is that Johnson did this shopping himself "lest the servants having that trouble should take a dislike to the poor creature" - should in fact, literally or metaphorically, kick the cat. No matter how much Johnson respected potential hurt feelings, even in a human, he was primarily set on preventing the kind of actual persecution he describes in his essays on servants and dependents, even persecution of a cat.

Then there is the fact that Hodge, through no fault of his own, has taken the limelight which properly belonged to some other totally unknown cat or cats, Johnson's favourites. Again you may remember the scene, but I shall remind us all of it because, again, I love its humour. Here is poor Boswell, pursuing his Johnsonian researches through thick and thin, determined not to blench at no matter what hardship or danger. "I am, unluckily, one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own, I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of this same Hodge." So there one day is Hodge, "scrambling up Dr Johnson's breast, apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend smiling and half-whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail." Boswell, no doubt wishing Hodge were a thousand miles way, observed that he was a fine cat. And Johnson replied: "why yes, Sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this;" and then as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, 'but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed.'

So the other, better-liked cats remain nameless and unknown; and Hodge remains as an index of the caution and forbearance with which Johnson used his own domestic power. Johnson defined "To familiarize" as "To make familiar; to make easy by habitude" and also as "'To bring down from a state of distant superiority". These were the two tasks which he expected domestic life to

perform: tasks very unlike those expected of the old-fashioned, hierarchical family structure.

THE SNAIL ON THE WALL: THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF CHINA ON 18TH CENTURY
ENGLAND, ILLUSTRATED

James M. Leicester MA - 19 January 1991

Chairman: C. T. Davis BA MA

Mr Leicester started his talk by showing some slides of the Great Wall of China, which he and his wife had visited last autumn. As he surveyed this wonder of the ancient world he recalled Johnson's antiquarian, satirised in Rambler 82, whose collection of rarities had included water from an icicle on the crags of Caucasus, dew from a banana in the gardens of Ispahan, and a snail that had crawled upon the wall of China.

In citing other Johnsonian references to China, the speaker contrasted Johnson's jocular reference to the snail with his undoubted enthusiasm to visit the wall. He had urged Boswell to make the journey:

Sir, (said he) by doing so, you would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence....They would be at all times regarded as the children of a man, who had gone to view the wall of China. I am serious, Sir.

Mr Leicester doubted that his own children had been raised to eminence; all three, however, have since made their own visits to the wall.

The taste for Chinoiserie in England came into fashion in the late 17th Century, developed in the 18th and culminated in the extravagant orientalism of George IV's Royal Pavilion, Brighton. The increase in trade with China in the 18th Century led to the widespread availability of Chinese goods in Britain - particularly manifest in three inter-related aspects of English life: tea-drinking, homes, and gardens. A 1755 quotation illustrated the popularity of things Chinese in Johnson's England:

The simple and sublime have lost all influence, almost everywhere, all is Chinese or Gothic. Every chair in an apartment, the frames of glasses, and tables must be Chinese; the walls covered with Chinese paper fill'd with figures which resemble nothing of God's creation ... Nay so excessive is the love of Chinese architecture become, that at present foxhunters would be sorry to break a leg in pursuing their sport in leaping a gate that was not made in the eastern taste of little bits of wood standing in all directions.

Johnson defined tea in the Dictionary (1755) as: "TEA (A word, I suppose, Chinese) A Chinese plant of which the infusion has lately been much drunk in Europe." Bowell supposed that no person ever enjoyed tea with more relish than Johnson. His contemporaries were not all of the same mind. Jonas Hanway's violent attack upon the beverage as a source of social and economic evil was spiritedly rebutted in Johnson's review of the work. He confessed to being a "hardened and shameless

tea-drinker....who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight and with tea welcomes the morning." A famille rose teapot once owned by Johnson, recently exhibited at the British Museum, held more than three quarts.

Tea was expensive and highly taxed - smuggling was a lucrative consequence. The cups were small - handles were added later for the European market. Chinese lacquer boxes were used to contain the canisters. Tea-drinking, attended with due ceremony, appealed particularly to women. A slide of Zoffany's group portrait of Lord Willoughby de Broke and his family in the Breakfast Room at Compton Verney illustrated the Chinese Imari porcelain tableware in use. Tea became cheaper and more popular but it took nearly a century before it rivalled beer as a national beverage.

It was important not to spoil the delicate aroma of tea. The East India Company, who first held the monopoly on tea, imported porcelain as ballast to avoid any contamination of the main cargo - tea.

A sequence of slides from the Shanghai Museum (accompanied by a tape of traditional Chinese music) illustrated the range and quality of Chinese ceramics over the centuries. Porcelain, or china, was produced in China about a thousand years before it was made in Europe. In the 18th Century, special luxury artefacts were commissioned by the wealthy; blue and white porcelain was manufactured in bulk for the expanding European market. English families commissioned armorial tableware to be made to order in China. The conventional stylised Chinese landscape evolved with its river landscape, pavilions, bridges and small boats. The Europeans transformed this into the popular willow pattern. A Wedgwood plate with the willow pattern decoration, introduced by Thomas Minton in the early 1790s, served as an illustration - an example of English Chinoiserie the motif for which was not known in China. In turn this was copied by the Chinese market, thus re-copying of western Chinoiserie became more common.

Jugs, dishes, vases, punchbowls, figurines etc. were exported in bulk or made to order - often depicting English scenes or commemorative occasions. Sir Joshua Reynolds was influenced by the prevailing taste for Chinoiserie when furnishing his home in Leicester Fields. One of his Chinese gilt and lacquer cabinets was a squat chest decorated with Imperial dragons. He acquired a blue Chinese Lowestoft dinner service of 150 pieces. His friend, William Chambers, was the author of Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, etc. (1757).

Further slides illustrated the Chinese Room at Claydon House, Buckingham, and, an example from abroad, the Chinese Teahouse at Potsdam.

Thomas Chippendale's The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director, 1754, had an influential section devoted to Chinese furniture. Designs for Chinese chairs and beds were illustrated. David Garrick had owned a bed of the type shown. Chinese bedrooms in National Trust properties in Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Devon provided fine examples of handpainted wallpapers, used as a backcloth for lacquered furniture. A further illustration of a Cruikshank cartoon satirised the king's penchant for Chinoiserie. The Brighton Pavilion used dragons with lotus flowers in their mouths, Chinese scenes in red lacquer and gold, water-lily chandeliers, bamboo chairs and beds.

The third theme, gardens, was illustrated with slides of scenes the speaker had visited in China - in particular the classical gardens of Suzhou. The use of borrowed views, buildings sited to enhance the landscape, rocks, water and reflections, pavilions, bridges etc. were exploited to advantage. An English translation of an account of Chinese pleasure gardens, 1752, strengthened the reaction against formal gardens in England. Chinese pavilions and pagodas became as much a part of the prospect of an English house as Gothic tracery. Sir William Chambers wrote A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening, 1772. He had acquired a love of Chinoiserie during his time in China with the Swedish East Indian Company. In 1757 he was commissioned to lay out Kew Gardens for the Princess of Wales. Sir William's Chinese Pagoda survived the bombs of 1941. The Prince Regent's seven-storeyed Pagoda erected in St James's Park on a great Chinese-style bridge proved less resilient. The firework display celebrating the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte set light to the Pagoda which burst into flames and fell into the Canal.

During the reign of George III some 700 new plant species were introduced to British horticulture - many from China. Floral patterns for tableware were popularised by John Wedgwood, son of Josiah, whose interest in botany and horticulture led to the founding of what is now the Royal Horticultural Society. Examples of English Chinese garden building were taken from slides of a mid-Georgian garden temple in the Chinese style at Woodside, near Windsor; a lake and Temple by Capability Brown at Wotton, Bucks; and his lake formed from a group of pools, in the Chinese style, at Compton Verney, Warwickshire. The Canal and Chinese House at the Ranelagh pleasure gardens was a further example from Johnson's London. Reference was also made to the 18th Century guardian stone lions, resembling examples in the gardens of the Imperial Palace, Peking, to be found today by the lake in Kew Gardens. They were donated to Kew in 1958.

For his concluding slide, the speaker returned to the Great Wall of China. Whilst preparing his talk he had visited Johnson's House on a wet December afternoon and found himself the sole visitor. As he looked out from the attic where Johnson had compiled his definitions of China, Tea, Lacker, etc. for the Dictionary his thoughts turned from a grey Gough Square to the Great Wall. Johnson's expressed enthusiasm to visit the Wall was never realised. But the Great Wall - or at least a brick from it - had in a sense come to him. On display in another part of the house was the piece of the Great Wall presented to the Johnson Club by Viscount Northcliffe in 1926. The speaker said he regretted not having brought a snail to place upon it. He was sure the spirit of old Sam Johnson would have raised a smile.

INTELLECTUAL ECLECTICISM: A RAMBLE THROUGH THE RAMBLER

Professor James B. Misenheimer Jr (Indiana State University)
and Veva Vonler (Texas Woman's University) - 16 February 1991
Chairman: J. M. Leicester MA

Professor Misenheimer is not only a Vice President of the Society, whose frequent visits give us great pleasure but has other interests less well-known to Johnsonians. He has received awards for both teaching and bibliographical studies, and has extended his studies to the Romantics. He is a Vice-President of the Charles Lamb Society. His paper on this occasion, however, is very much Johnsonian. It is given in full.

To say that Samuel Johnson's intellectual interests ranged very widely indeed across the entirety of his career as a writer is to understate both the breadth and the depth of those interests; for in everything that he wrote, a quality of humane concern, deeply conceived and genuinely felt, reveals a fearsome and unique intellect at work. Except for the Dictionary and perhaps The Lives of the Poets, The Rambler is probably the most outstanding repository of what can be called Johnson's "intellectual eclecticism." All 205 of the Rambler essays which Johnson himself wrote range in subject matter from a piece on bashfulness to another on the narrowness of human fame, from character studies to allegories, and constitute an excellent record of his moral earnestness and penetrating insight into human character. Now available in the Yale Edition of Johnson's works as Volumes V, VI, and VII, The Rambler is a source of unending joy and inspiration to anyone who admires the boundlessness of Johnson's thought.

Though Johnson constantly found meaning in the onrush of the world of fact and confusion with which he was surrounded, his own efforts as a professional writer would seem to fall largely into a category which Thomas DeQuincey in the nineteenth century was to call "literature of power." Virtually all, perhaps all, of The Rambler papers constitute "literature of power."

One might wish to recall, before our "ramble," that in his lengthy critical essay The Poetry of Pope, DeQuincey attempts a distinction between what he calls, on the one hand, "knowledge literature" and, on the other, "power literature." The former, the literature of knowledge, is grounded primarily in fact, any change in which can render the literature obsolete. Johnson would probably have considered his Dictionary to fall into this category, for he says in the "Preface" to it, "In hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labor of years, to the honor of my country...." DeQuincey says that an encyclopedia is the abstract of the literature of knowledge, since before a single generation has passed, the work is already superannuated. But exactly the opposite is true of the literature of power, whose purpose is not so much that of teaching its audience as moving its audience. He remarks that "it is in relation to the great moral capacities of man that the literature of power, as contradistinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action. It is concerned with what is highest in man...." Thus Ovid, and Chaucer, and Milton continue to be read, because their works contain the seeds of their own immortality. DeQuincey adds that "the literature of power builds nests in aerial altitudes of temples sacred from violation, or of forests inaccessible to fraud." The Rambler would seem to qualify indubitably as literature of power.

Henry Pettit has commented in his article "Dr Johnson and the Cheerful Robots" that Johnson faced the problems of his time "with moral and intellectual energy" and that he "shows us a pattern of life well and fruitfully spent in a ceaseless inquiry into the potentialities of the human experience." (1) More often than not Johnson had tested the efficacy of his teachings; thus the morality of much of his writing - Rasselas and The Rambler are cases in point - continues to move readers in modern times because it stems in an almost unadulterated form from his own experience. In view of this fact, it is not surprising to find a scholar like John Butt remarking that "Johnson's morality is never bookish; it is confirmed by books, but it is not drawn from them." (2)

Of his own purpose in composing The Rambler, Johnson writes as follows in the valedictory essay of the series:

As it has been my principal design to inculcate wisdom or piety, I have allotted few papers to the idle sports of imagination... The essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no blame or praise of man shall diminish or augment. I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth. (3)

Literature is to edify as well as to delight by its reflection of an immutable design. The best literature would mirror a complete world through its depiction of universal human truths and, as a result, suggest to the reader the depth of the full life and the richness of the human drama. The seriousness with which Johnson views life is complementary to that with which he views literary art. A natural consequence of this outlook is the conviction that authorship entails responsibilities not to be taken lightly. Johnson's firm grounding in the classics, his intense religious beliefs, and his desire to promote the welfare of others convinced him particularly of an author's ethical responsibility. In The Rambler, No.158, Johnson says that "to proceed from one truth to another, and connect distant propositions by regular consequences, is the great prerogative of man" (4) and, he implies, the proper function of literary art. In other words, the author has the responsibility to guide man toward that enlightenment which only truth can provide. Further he recognizes the significant role of literary pleasure in the process of communication between author and audience. In The Rambler, No.168, he remarks that "whoever desires, for his writings or himself, what none can reasonably condemn, the favour of mankind, must add grace to strength, and make his thoughts agreeable as well as useful." (5) Johnson's conception of literature as a pleasurable instrument of moral instruction is reflected in a number of his practical critical judgments. The Rambler becomes then a venue for ideas on both literature and life; and in the richness of its intellectual fabric, it unquestionably qualifies for what DeQuincey was later to call "literature of power," as mentioned earlier.

Even the most cursory perusal of the topics of The Rambler reveals a breadth of the critical examination of ideas reminiscent of the intellectual worlds of Shakespeare and Milton. More than once, in seminar course in the Age of Johnson, we have led our students (we hope not simplistically) through the entire table of contents of this series, and have done so without apology. A recitation of the subjects as gleaned through the table of contents of the three substantial Yale volumes of Rambler papers reveals a deeply introspective, quite eclectic view of the world and of the human condition; and when one is reminded upon savoring and mining the riches of each piece that the essays were almost invariably written under the press of time and hardship, one realizes more fully the quality of the accomplishment.

In the remainder of today's paper, and in view of the intransigent frustration of

what to choose to talk about, I should like to present a list of representative subjects that are found in The Rambler and then examine one type of essay, the epistolary essay, in terms of its personae.

Among the topics upon which one's eyes may fall include the following:

1. The difficulty of the first address, with a consideration of periodical performances.
3. An allegory on criticism.
5. A meditation on the spring.
13. The duty of secrecy, with a view of the invalidity of all excuses for betraying secrets.
18. The unhappiness of marriage caused by irregular motives of choice.
28. The various arts of self delusion.
41. The advantages of memory.
47. The proper means of regulating sorrow.
53. The folly and misery of a spendthrift.
60. The dignity and usefulness of biography.
71. No man believes that his own life will be short.
73. The lingering expectation of an heir.
85. The mischiefs of total idleness.
102. The voyage of life.
114. The necessity of proportioning punishments to crimes.
125. The difficulty of defining comedy, with tragic and comic sentiments confounded.
137. The necessity of literary courage.
144. The difficulty of raising reputation, showing the various species of detractors.
160. Rules for the choice of associates.
165. The impotence of wealth.
169. Labor as necessary to excellence.
201. The importance of punctuality.
207. The folly of continuing too long upon the stage.

And there are 185 others, some of which appear in two parts because of the necessity for thorough analysis and because of the constraints of length for a single essay. One will possibly wish to "ramble," in a supposed solitude, amongst all of The Rambler papers, not just those cited, but, remember, that the rambling person will never be alone. The heart and spirit of Johnson lie here - incredibly, aesthetically, immortally.

And now, to turn to some of the epistolary Rambler essays. In approximately half of Johnson's epistolary essays, the imaginary correspondent himself appears to be the primary concern. That is, the persona is telling his own story with emphasis upon his own feelings, his own actions, or - as is frequently the case - his own foolishness.

Most of the essays are easily included in one category or the other after brief consideration, but the classification of a very small number might be open to question, for it becomes a matter of weighing degrees of emphasis. Some letters reveal enough about the correspondent to distinguish him as a fictional personage; yet the main portion of the letter is devoted to a character sketch of someone

else, thus relegating the persona to the role of observer rather than protagonist. Such a letter is Rambler, No.61, in which Ruricola, a country-dweller, describes Mr. Frolick, who feels superior to the rural inhabitants simply because he has come recently from the city and knows the latest news. The major portion of this essay is devoted to a delineation of the character of Frolick and others like him; Ruricola's feelings are of secondary importance. In Rambler, No.12, however, the character sketches offered by Zosima are incidental to the account of her own plight as an impecunious gentlewoman forced to seek employment as a maid. Thus, Zosima seems more like a protagonist than a mere observer.

The correspondents depicted by Johnson face a wide range of problems. Some solicit advice; but Johnson as essayist rarely comments directly upon any of the letters, although he often deals with the same general subjects elsewhere. The letters in which the fictional writer serves as protagonist frequently approach the form of a short story narrated by the main character. One major theme developed in their stories includes false values and useless activity.

Several of Johnson's personae suffer from the effects of misguided parental influence. As children they were taught to value one goal in life at the expense of all other accomplishments, and at best such shortsightedness has resulted in a severely limited human being. Florentulus (Rambler, No.109) and Papilius (Rambler, No.141), for instance, have grown up to be nothing but dandies as a result of the values instilled by their parents.

Florentulus attributes his unhappiness to the fact that he was the only child of over-solicitous parents who valued social success above all other accomplishments. He was not, therefore, sent to school for fear of being tainted by vulgar scholarship. By the time he was twelve years old, Florentulus had been so well tutored in the manners of society that he had managed to overcome "every appearance of childish diffidence." (6) A few years later he was ready to enter the society of London and he found what he thought to be the ultimate satisfaction in the admiration and caresses of the ladies. His happiness began to wane, however, and Florentulus realized that his existence was empty of lasting pleasures. He sought to change his way of life but discovered to his humiliation that it was too late to begin anew:

I....found that my flatterers had very little power to relieve the langour of satiety, or recreate weariness, by varied amusement; and therefore endeavoured to enlarge the sphere of my pleasures, and to try what satisfaction might be found in the society of men. I will not deny the mortification with which I perceived, that every man whose name I had heard mentioned with respect, received me with a kind of tenderness nearly bordering on compassion; and that those whose reputation was not well established, thought it necessary to justify their understandings, by treating me with contempt. One of these witlings elevated his crest, by asking me in a full coffee-house the price of patches; and another whispered, that he wondered why Miss Frisk did not keep me that afternoon to watch her squirrel. (IV, 219)

Rebuffed by other men, then, Florentulus can only return to the ladies and renew his dedication to their pleasures.

Unfortunately, however, he now finds that his remaining admirers have married or grown too old for the youthful social whirl, and the younger group of beauties are interested in boys their own age. Florentulus is thus "welcome only to a few grave ladies, who, unacquainted with all that gives either use or dignity to life, are content to pass their hours between their bed and their cards, without esteem from the old, or reverence from the young" (IV, 200).

Florentulus concludes his letter with a petulant complaint that he is ignored in age by the women whose pleasure he devoted his youth. "They that encourage folly in the boy," he says, "have no right to punish it in the man" (IV, 220). He has some understanding of his failure, but he is unwilling to accept the blame for it.

Papilius (Rambler, No.141) is at once more aware of his own foolishness and more bitter than Florentulus. Papilius was encouraged in youth to value "good humour" above all else, for he found that it gained him both praise and friends. Upon arriving in London as a young man, he quickly became the darling of the ladies, much as Florentulus had done. Papilius is now fully conscious of the degrading role he chose to play and describes it with obvious disgust:

A lady's wit is a man who can make ladies laugh, to which, however easy it may seem, many gifts of nature and attainments of art must commonly concur. He that hopes to be received as a wit in the female assemblies, should have a form neither so amiable as to strike with admiration, nor so coarse as to raise disgust, with an understanding too feeble to be dreaded, and too forcible to be despised. The other parts of the character are more subject to variation; it was formerly essential to a wit, that half his back should be covered with a snowy fleece, and at a time yet more remote no man was a wit without his boots. In the days of the Spectator a snuff-box seems to have been indispensable; but in my time an embroidered coat was sufficient, without any precise regulation of the rest of his dress. (IV, 386)

False values have led both of these men into socially useless lives, and Johnson obviously views their unproductive activities with repugnance. Edward A. Bloom notes that "some of Johnson's most forceful detestation of the entire breed of idlers is concentrated in the depiction of Papilius....." (7) Yet the poignant side of such men's existence is not ignored by Johnson either. Papilius entreats Mr. Rambler to "consider...and compassionate the condition of a man who has taught every company to expect from him, a continual feast of laughter.... The task of every other slave has an end. The rower in time reaches the port; the lexicographer at last finds the conclusion of his alphabet; only the hapless wit has his labour always to begin, the call for novelty is never satisfied, and one jest only raises expectation of another" (IV, 386-87). The sympathy suggested by this passage and in a subsequent account of the wit's pitiful stratagems to arouse laughter is no doubt laced generously with irony, but Papilius does reveal a degree of self-knowledge, although at forty-five years of age, he feels unable to profit from it. "I am under the melancholy necessity," he concludes, "of supporting that character by study, which I gained by levity, having learned too

late that gaiety must be recommended by higher qualities, and that mirth can never please long but as the efflorescence of a mind loved for its luxuriance, but esteemed for its usefulness" (IV, 388).

Rambler, No.174, presents another foolish man who, as one critic says, "condemns himself that others may profit." (8) Dicaculus, upon entering adulthood, "desired nothing beyond the title of a wit" (V, 155) and set about to accomplish his goal of creating merriment. Willing to go to any lengths to amuse the company, he learned to satirize any weaknesses or mistakes of his acquaintances: "... I was able to relate of every man whom I knew some blunder or miscarriage; to betray the most circumspect of my friends into follies, by a judicious flattery of his predominant passion; or expose him to contempt, by placing him in circumstances which put his prejudices into action, brought to view his natural defects, or drew the attention of the company on his airs of affectation" (V, 157). Not surprisingly, such "wit" eventually cost Dicaculus all his friends, for no one could trust him. Although he recognizes his mistake now, he is condemned to solitude for his folly.

These three men have all led foolish and trivial lives, but Pertinax, in Rambler, No.95, is misled even more dangerously than they by his disputatious parents and has suffered from "an intellectual malady, which, though at first it seizes only the passions, will, if not speedily remedied, infect the reason, and, from blasting the blossoms of knowledge, proceed in time to canker the root" (IV, 143). Pertinax was reared in an atmosphere of discord, for his parents continually argued and taught to him by example "all the arts of domestic sophistry" and "a thousand low stratagems, humble shifts, and sly concealments" (IV, 144). At school and at the university, Pertinax continued to engage in disputes and in time settled upon a career in law. Sent to the Temple, he "declared war against all received opinions and established rules" (IV, 145), and the unhealthy result was a loss of all reason:

It had been happy for me could I have confined my scepticism to historical controversies, and philosophical disquisitions; but having now violated my reason, and accustomed myself to enquire not after proofs, but objections, I had perplexed truth with falsehood till my ideas were confused, my judgment embarrassed, and my intellects distorted. The habit of considering every proposition as alike uncertain, left me no test by which any tenet could be tried; every opinion presented both sides with equal evidence, and my fallacies began to operate upon my own mind in more important enquiries. It was at last the sport of my vanity to weaken the obligations of moral duty, and efface the distinctions of good and evil, till I had deadened the sense of conviction, and abandoned my heart to the fluctuations of uncertainty, without anchor and without compass, without satisfaction of curiosity or peace of conscience; without principles of reason, or motives of action. (IV, 146-47)

Discovering at last that only the ignorant and the wicked were interested in his conversation, Pertinax was shocked into a revaluation of his argumentative practices. He has now "retired from all temptations to dispute," and he reports with relief, "By this method I am at length recovered from my argumental delirium,

and find myself in the state of one awakened from the confusion and tumult of a feverish dream. I rejoice in the new possession of evidence and reality, and step on from truth to truth with confidence and quiet" (IV, 147-48).

Misocapelus, one of several second sons among Johnson's characters, relates in Rambler, No.116, how he was taught by his mother to desire wealth above all else. She described the glories of London and the extravagant wealth of tradesmen so vividly that Misocapelus was overjoyed to find himself bound to a haberdasher, and he applied himself so well to his employment that he soon was a master of his trade. Unfortunately he discovered that his accomplishments did not impress his friends in the country when he returned home for a visit: "... at the first publick table to which I was invited, appeared a student of the Temple, and an officer of the Guards, who looked upon me with a smile of contempt, which destroyed at once all my hopes of distinction, so that I durst hardly raise my eyes for fear of encountering their superiority of mien" (IV, 256). His puzzlement was complete, for he knew that neither of these gentlemen had more money than he, yet they were obviously preferred as company to Misocapelus. His mother attempted to comfort him by reiterating the importance of wealth, but Misocapelus had come to doubt her wisdom and had begun to consider her "as one whose ignorance and prejudice had hurried me, though without ill intentions, into a state of meanness and ignominy, from which I could not find any possibility of rising to the rank which my ancestors had always held" (IV, 257).

Misocapelus, therefore, returned to his job without the enthusiasm he had displayed earlier, and his resulting negligence caused his master to transfer him to an obscure position in a warehouse. After many months, Misocapelus was saved from this dreary existence by the demise of his elder brother, who "died of drunken joy, for having run down a fox that had baffled all the packs in the province" (IV, 258). Now an heir and a gentleman, Misocapelus gladly embarked upon his new life, the vicissitudes of which are recounted in another letter, Rambler, No.123.

In his second letter Misocapelus describes his attempts to prove himself equal to the rank of gentleman, but, as one critic says, he was never able to rid himself of "the taint of trade." (9) After the death of his brother, he did his best to assume the airs of the propertied gentleman. He sadly relates that when he exerted himself to please the ladies, "there was always some unlucky conversation upon ribbands, fillets, pins, or thread, which drove all my stock of compliments out of my memory, and overwhelmed me with shame and dejection" (IV, 295). He ends his letter on a note of resignation, having decided that instead of wasting his life "in vain endeavours after accomplishments which, if not early acquired, no endeavours can obtain," he will "hope to secure esteem by honesty and truth" (IV, 295).

A young woman called Victoria writes in Rambler, No.130, of her mother's emphasis on physical beauty as the only worthwhile goal for a young lady. The girl dutifully heeded her mother's admonitions and blossomed into an extraordinarily lovely creature. At the height of her charms, however, she began to wonder whether something had been neglected in her education:

When I had singled out one (admirer) from the rest as more worthy of encouragement, I proceeded in my measures by the

rules of art; and yet when the ardour of the first visits was spent, generally found a sudden declension of my influence; I felt in myself the want of some power to diversify amusement, and enliven conversation, and could not but suspect that my mind failed in performing the promises of my face. This opinion was soon confirmed by one of my lovers, who married Lavinia with less beauty and fortune than mine, because he thought a wife ought to have qualities which might make her amiable when her bloom was past. (IV, 329-30)

Her mother, however, refused to admit any other necessity than beauty for a woman, and when Victoria's beauty was marred by smallpox, the girl faced an existence robbed of all meaning: "...when I looked again on that face which had been often flushed with transport at its own reflexion, and saw all that I had learned to value, all that I had endeavoured to improve, all that had procured me honours or praises, irrecoverably destroyed, I sunk at once into melancholy and despondence" (IV, 330).

The second letter from Victoria (Rambler, No.133) continues her dismal account. Her mother was ashamed of the girl's scarred face and for some time hid her away while ineffectual cosmetics were vainly applied in an attempt to restore her beauty. At last driven back into society by the boredom of solitude, Victoria found that the men ignored her and the women offered only an insolent sympathy. "None had any care to find amusements for me," she writes, "and I had no power of amusing myself. Idleness exposed me to melancholy, and life began to languish in motionless indifference" (IV, 344). Victoria finally confided her misery to Euphemia, her only real friend, and the letter closes with Euphemia's words of wisdom, which doubtless express the attitude of Johnson himself:

We must distinguish...my Victoria, those evils which are imposed by providence, from those to which we ourselves give the power of hurting us. Of your calamity, a small part is the infliction of heaven, the rest is little more than the corrosion of idle discontent. You have lost that which may indeed sometimes contribute to happiness, but to which happiness is by no means inseparably annexed. You have lost what the greater number of the human race never have possessed; what those on whom it is bestowed for the most part possess in vain; and what you, while it was yours, knew not how to use: You have only lost early what the laws of nature forbid you to keep long, and have lost it while your mind is yet flexible, and while you have time to substitute more valuable and more durable excellencies. Consider yourself, my Victoria, as a being both to know, to reason, and to act; rise at once from your dream of melancholy to wisdom and to piety; you will find that there are other charms than those of beauty, and other joys than the praise of fools. (IV, 344-45)

The implication is that Victoria will heed this advice and overcome her early indoctrination.

False values may lead to useless activity as in the cases of the would-be wits

discussed above, but perhaps the epitome of uselessness is bound in the industry of the virtuoso, the collector of curiosities for no purpose except possession. Quisquilius, who writes in Rambler, No.82, is an extreme example of this type; he is obsessed with his gathering of unusual items and proclaims himself to be "the most laborious and zealous virtuoso that the present age has had the honour of producing" (IV, 65). One scholar calls this essay a superb example of "mad irony without venom," (10) and the following quotations may indicate the aptness of that appellation:

It was observed, from my entrance into the world, that I had something uncommon in my disposition, and that there appeared in me very early tokens of superior genius. I was always an enemy to trifles; the play-things which my mother bestowed upon me I immediately broke that I might discover the method of their structure, and the causes of their motions; of all the toys with which children are delighted I valued only my coral, and as soon as I could speak, asked like Peiresc, innumerable questions which the maids about me could not resolve. As I grew older I was more thoughtful and serious, and instead of amusing myself with puerile diversions, made collections of natural rarities, and never walked into the fields without bringing home stones of remarkable forms, or insects of some uncommon species. I never entered an old house, from which I did not take away the painted glass, and often lamented that I was not one of that happy generation who demolished the convents and monasteries, and broke windows by law.

.....
When I was two and twenty years old, I became, by the death of my father, possessed of a small estate in land, with a very large sum of money in the public funds, and must confess that I did not much lament him, for he was a man of mean parts, bent rather upon growing rich than wise. He once fretted at the expense of only ten shillings, which he happened to overhear me offering for the sting of a hornet, though it was a cold moist summer, in which very few hornets had been seen. He often recommended to me the study of physick, in which, said he, you may at once gratify your curiosity after natural history, and encrease your fortune by benefiting mankind. I heard him, Mr. Rambler, with pity, and as there was no prospect of elevating a mind formed to grovel, suffered him to please himself with hoping that I should sometime follow his advice. For you know that there are men, with whom when they have once settled a notion in their heads, it is to very little purpose to dispute.

.....
But my ruling passion is patriotism: my chief care has been to procure the products of our own country; and as Alfred received the tribute of the Welch in wolves' heads, I allowed my tenants to pay their rents in butterflies, till I had exhausted the papilionaceous tribe. I then directed them to the pursuit of other animals, and obtained, by this easy method, most of the grubs and insects, which land, air, or water can supply. I have three species of earthworms not known to the naturalists, have

discovered a new ephemera, and can shew four wasps that were taken torpid in their winter quarters. I have, from my own ground, the longest blade of grass upon record, and once accepted, as a half year's rent for a field of wheat, an ear containing more grains than had been seen before upon a single stem.

.....
I do not wish to raise the envy of unsuccessful collectors, by too pompous a display of my scientific wealth, but cannot forbear to observe, that there are few regions of the globe which are not honoured with some memorial in my cabinets... I flatter myself that I am writing to a man who will rejoice at the honour which my labours have procured to my country, and therefore, I shall tell you that Britain can by my care boast of a snail that has crawled upon the wall of China; a humming bird which an American princess wore in her ear; the tooth of an elephant who carried the queen of Siam; the skin of an ape that was kept in the palace of the great mogul; a ribbon that adorned one of the maids of a Turkish sultana; and a symeter once wielded by a soldier of Abas the Great. (IV, 65-69).

Poor Quisquilius, however - whose name, incidentally, means "waste or refuse" (11) - has allowed his enthusiasm to lead him to bankruptcy, and he must sell his collection in order to pay his debts. In his calm manner he concludes his letter to Mr. Rambler, "I submit to that which cannot be opposed, and shall, in a short time, declare a sale. I have, while it is yet in my power, sent you a pebble, pick'd up by Tavenier on the banks of the Ganges; for which I desire no other recompense than that you will recommend my catalogue to the public" (IV, 70).

As one scholar says, this "final solicitation, coming from such an innocuous person, arouses our compassion, not our contempt," and Johnson himself found this character to be worthy of additional comment, for in the very next Rambler paper, he considered the virtuoso again and warns that "it is dangerous to discourage well-intentioned labours, or innocent curiosity," for harmless activity is surely preferable to mischief (IV, 71). He concludes that probably the worst he can say is that the virtuoso "may be sometimes culpable for confining himself to business below his genius, and losing in petty speculations, those hours by which if he had spent them in nobler studies, he might have given new light to the intellectual world" (IV, 75).(12)

Vivaculus recounts, in Rambler, No.177, his own encounter with learning devoid of practicality. Upon the death of his father, he inherited enough money to devote his life to "curiosity.... and without any confinement.... to wander over the boundless regions of general knowledge" (V, 168). After some years passed in this delightful activity, however, Vivaculus found that his immersion in books was having ill effects on his personality:

....I began to find my mind contracted and stiffened by solitude. My ease and elegance were sensibly impaired; I was no longer able to accommodate myself with readiness to the accidental current of conversation, my notions grew particular and paradoxical, and my phraseology formal and unfashionable; I spoke, on common occasions, the language of books. My quickness of apprehension

and celerity of reply, had entirely deserted me: When I delivered my opinion, or detailed my knowledge, I was bewildered by an unseasonable interrogatory, disconcerted by any slight opposition, and overwhelmed, and lost in dejection, when the smallest advantage was gained against me in dispute. I became decisive and dogmatical, impatient of contradiction, perpetually jealous of my character, insolent to such as acknowledged my superiority, and sullen and malignant to all who refused to receive my dictates. (V, 169)

Desiring to cure this intellectual malady, Vivaculus hastened to London, where he sought out a group of learned men who met every week to exchange ideas. When he became acquainted with these men, Vivaculus was disgusted by their insularity and egotism, for each one smugly devoted all his energies to some trivial collection. Hirsutus, for instance, collected English books "printed in the black character" (one of which he discussed purchasing from Quisquilius), and Ferratus collected English copper (V, 170).

Vivaculus expresses nothing but contempt for this group, but Johnson, as he did in the case of Quisquilius, seems compelled to defend their activities in another of his rare direct comments upon a letter:

It is natural to feel grief or indignation, when any thing, necessary or useful, is wantonly wasted, or negligently destroyed; and therefore, my correspondent cannot be blamed for looking with uneasiness on the waste of life. Leisure and curiosity might soon make great advances in useful knowledge, were they not diverted by minute emulation and laborious trifles. It may, however, somewhat mollify his anger to reflect, that perhaps, none of the assembly which he described, was capable of any nobler employment, and that he who does his best, however little, is always to be distinguished from him who does nothing. Whatever busies the mind without corrupting it, has at least this use, that it rescues the day from idleness, and he that is never idle will not often be vitious (V, 172).

A "ramble" through The Rambler is always an adventure - open the volumes wherever one will - for Johnson himself, far better than ever he knew, was writing for generations to come, in terms of human values. We salute him - and the readers who are perspicacious enough to perceive the "literature of power" that is before them.

NOTES

1. Henry Pettit, "Dr. Johnson and the Cheerful Robots," Western Humanities Review, XIV (1960), 387.
2. John Butt, The Augustan Age (London, 1950), p.125.
3. Samuel Johnson, "The Rambler," No.208, The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., ed. Arthur Murphy (London, 1801), VI, 396-397. Subsequent references will be cited as "The Rambler."
4. "The Rambler," No.158, VI, 109-110.
5. "The Rambler," No.168, VI, 168.
6. The Rambler, ed. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale

- University Press, 1969), IV, 218. All further references to The Rambler are to this edition and will be cited in the text only by volume and page. (Note: the authors of this paper have consciously and deliberately called attention to both the Murphy edition and the Yale edition of The Rambler, to allow readers to perceive differences in editorial styles.)
7. "Symbolic Names in Johnson's Periodical Essays," Modern Language Quarterly, 13 (1952), 341. This article contains etymologies for many of the Latin names which Johnson gave to his personae.
 8. Ibid.
 9. O.F. Christie, Johnson the Essayist (London: Grant Richards, Ltd., 1924, p.180.
 10. John Louis Worden, Jr., "The Themes and Techniques of Johnson's Rambler," Diss. University of Southern California, 1971, p.236.
 11. Bloom, "Symbolic Names," p.342.
 12. In his book Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), p.167, Paul Russell asserts that in this second essay Johnson offers "an elaborate justification of just such activities as his previous paper has been at pains to deride." The phrase "elaborate justification" seems a bit strong. Johnson frequently presents both sides of a question.
 13. "Johnson's Idler: The Equipment of a Satirist," ELH, 37 (1970), 223.

A BULL IN THE CHINA SHOP OF TASTE: JOHNSON'S PREJUDICE AGAINST THE ARTS
ILLUSTRATED

Professor Morris R. Brownell - 16 March 1991
Chairman: David Parker

Introducing Professor Morris Brownell Mr Parker said he was glad to welcome a distinguished member of the Society. He had been educated at Princeton and the University of California, and having held various professorships had been since 1979 Professor of English at the University of Nevada, Reno. After holding a number of research fellowships here and in the United States, he was now National Endowment for the Humanities Research Scholar at Oxford. He had a great interest in the Arts of the 18th century. His book on Alexander Pope and the Arts of Georgian England was awarded the Gottschalk prize in 1978, and his edition of Gilpin's Thames Tour would be published this year. He was at present preparing a biography of Horace Walpole: A Life of Art. In 1989 Oxford published his book on the subject of today's Paper: A Bull in the China Shop of Taste.

To introduce his paper Professor Brownell showed a slide of Johnson reproving Boswell for writing the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides and the Life. He intended to play Johnson's ghost scolding his biographers for misrepresenting his attitude to the arts.

He said that the anecdotal tradition which established Johnson as a Bull in the China Shop of Taste, deaf to music and blind to the visual arts, was a self-portrait composed of Johnson's delightfully outrageous obiter dicta. Students of Johnson had seldom queried this picture, and he intended to challenge it, and to show that it had been exaggerated and was rooted in principle, not ignorance.

He began with Johnson and music. The musician Dr Burney declared him "wholly deaf and insensible" to what Johnson called "so idle and frivolous a pursuit." Hawkins, Johnson's official biographer, painted the darkest picture, perhaps because he had suffered most from contemporary prejudice against music. Professor Brownell attributed to Johnson's wit his reported comments that music "excites in my mind no ideas, and hinders me from contemplating my own", and on hearing that a particular composition was very difficult, "I would it had been impossible". He found out of character the story of Johnson's returning to Hawkins a manuscript edition of Steffani "with the corrections that turned to ridicule all I had said of him.": Johnson was a ghost writer who gave generous editorial assistance to dozens of writers.

In the Tour to the Hebrides and the Life Boswell was glad to accept Johnson's prejudice against music since he conceived indifference to the Arts to be an innate part of Johnson's character. He showed Johnson enjoying Gaelic songs to the guitar or spinet, though he repeated the tale of his insensibility to music. Johnson in his Journey had admitted to being "exhilarated" by a bagpipe and Boswell caricatured him standing "for some time with his ear close to the great drone." Boswell contrasted his own response to music with Johnson's, and when reporting Johnson's requesting a particular song during an after dinner entertainment at Ashbourne again commented on Johnson's unmusicality. At this point, Professor Brownell delighted his audience with a spirited rendering of the song "Let ambition fire thy mind". He thought it improbable that Johnson had remarked on his insensibility to music at this time, because he was obviously enjoying the entertainment: he considered Boswell had included it to heighten the dramatic impact of the incident. Boswell told Johnson that music often affected him to tears, upon which Johnson commented, "Sir, I should never hear it if it made me such a fool."

Another mythical aspect of Johnson's unmusical Johnson was that practice of an instrument could take away rationality. "Had I learnt to fiddle I should have done nothing else", and "Give away the fiddle to the first beggar man you meet, or you will never be a scholar." Professor Brownell said that many music teachers warned that practising could become mindless, mechanical and unmusical. He thought that Johnson's prejudice indicated his fear of being fascinated by sound without sense.

The legend of Johnson's deathbed conversion to music sprang from Fanny Burney, who among other anecdotes showed Johnson peering closely at the keyboard while her sisters were playing, and when Dr Burney mentioned J C Bach's concert, inquired "Is he a piper?", in this way illustrating his delight in histrionically dramatising his own prejudices in the house of a man dedicated to making musicians socially acceptable. Fanny Burney saw as the "first symptoms... of a tendency to conversion" Johnson's agreement with Dr Burney's assertion in his History of Music that all peoples had a love of music of some kind: "All animated nature loves music....except myself." Another illustration of Johnson playing the role of musical philistine, said Dr Brownell; but Fanny Burney concocted a theory of the conversion of a musical heretic by the ministry of the Burney family. Burney, employed to teach the piano to Queeney Thrale, hoped to turn the Thrales into a musical family, and even to make Johnson also sensible of the power of music. "Sir", said Johnson, smiling, "I shall be very glad to have a new sense put into me."

When Johnson wrote for Burney the dedication to Queen Charlotte of his History of Music he said the hours spent on music had been "neither dishonourably nor unprofitably spent" - he had stopped teasing the author about music as a vain and irrational amusement. He went on to call it the "art that invites corporal and intellectual pleasure." In the dedication to the King which Johnson wrote for an Account of the Handel Commemoration at Westminster Abbey Johnson revealed a glimpse of his real as opposed to his pretended attitude to music when he said that "the delight which music affords seems to be one of the first attainments of rational nature: wherever there is humanity there is modulated sound." But he went on to say that science and nature must assist each other and that "those who are born with the susceptibility of modulated sounds are often ignorant of the principles and must therefore be in a degree delighted by chance." Professor Brownell believed Johnson to be of this company and thought there was no deathbed conversion to music because there had never been a lifetime of musical infidelity.

Dealing with painting Professor Brownell said Hawkins attributed Johnson's indifference to art to his poor sight. He referred to Hawkins' anecdote of Johnson's saying he could never discern the least resemblance between a picture and its subject, and said that Hawkins had failed to recognise Johnson's customary pose of Socratic ignorance, challenging the connoisseur to explain the rational grounds of his taste. He recalled Mrs Thrale's story of Johnson's telling Reynolds it was a pity he spent so much of his "mind" on perishable materials - why did he not use copper? When Reynolds said copper plates were not large enough, Johnson suggested he should use Thrale's copper brewing vats: a dig at Reynolds' claims for the grand style of history painting. Johnson was refusing to admit the division of the arts into "fine" on the one hand and the manual or necessary, such as brewing beer, on the other. Mrs Thrale also reported Johnson as saying that if he sat in a room full of paintings he would not trouble to turn round any facing the wall, unless for the sake of telling Reynolds he had turned them - another Socratic challenge to the untested assumptions of fashionable artists and their admirers.

As to sculpture, Boswell reported Johnson's view that the time spent on statuary was disproportionate to its effect - its value lay in its difficulty. Johnson's prejudices were mis-represented, mis-interpreted and exaggerated: he had no taste for painting and sculpture on principle, not because he was blind or ignorant, or because of aesthetic insensibility.

Professor Brownell then looked briefly at Johnson and landscape. According to Hawkins, prospects and views presented to Johnson's mind "an universal blank", while Mrs Thrale says he hated to hear about them, and about landscaping and gardening. On his Welsh tour Johnson compared the beauties of Hawkstone Park and Ilam in a way that seemed to parody contemporary descriptive language. Johnson's prejudice was not against landscape itself but against falsifying descriptions of it.

In conclusion, Professor Brownell asked two questions: Why did the anecdotalists convert Johnson's healthy scepticism into ignorant prejudice? And why did Johnson enjoy playing the role thrust upon him? It appeared that Hawkins wanted a scapegoat for the prejudice of the literary establishment against his History of Music, Mrs Thrale resented Johnson's teasing of her fashionable tastes, and

Boswell contrasted his own conventional taste with Johnson's independence of mind. Johnson's motives he saw as vanity, role-playing and sheer perversity. Ultimately, his attitude reflected religious principles: the arts might divert, and distract, but could not change the human condition. In the eye of eternity the fine arts were unimportant.

With the practical assistance of Mr Leicester, Professor Brownell illustrated his talk with a number of excellent slides.

JOHNSON VS MILTON: CRITICISM AS INQUISITION

Professor Michael Payne - 20 April 1991

Chairman: Ernest Heberden M.A.

In welcoming Professor Payne as speaker for the second time (he had previously spoken to us in 1989 - The New Rambler D IV page 38) the Chairman introduced him as the John P. Crozer Professor of English Literature in Bucknell University. His publications included books on Blake, Virginia Woolf, The Bible and the philosopher Stanley Cavell. His paper today is given in full.

Johnson's literary criticism manifests two fundamental or instinctual responses to his predecessors, which are reflected with particular clarity in his writings on Shakespeare and Milton. Like Dryden before him, Johnson responds to Shakespeare by imaginatively extending himself in order to appropriate for his own critical and creative purposes what Shakespeare has written. It is not surprising, then, that Johnson's recurring metaphor in his Preface to Shakespeare and his notes to the plays is "licentiousness," a word that sustains the ambiguity, on the one hand, of the desire to respond actively to Shakespeare's repeated invitation to his audience and readers to enter the plays and poems as participants in their creative processes, but, on the other hand, Johnson's insistence on retaining his rational independence as a critic. By accusing himself of licentiousness in his response to Shakespeare, Johnson maintains a balance of love and law, imagination and reason, creative participation and critical judgement. (1) Whereas Johnson finds Shakespeare enticing his audience with the promise of poetic pleasure, he hears Milton calling his reader to the bar of judgment or to intellectual combat. Already as an undergraduate at Cambridge, Milton insisted that one should read the ancient poets in order to put them through the test or trial of truth. (2) Reading and learning for Milton are enactments of a creative and critical agon, trial, or debate with truth as the ultimate prize. Thus, Milton, Johnson insists with an uneasy mixture of admiration and dread, "was a Lion that had no skill in dandling the kid"; he had no time for "milder" virtues. (3) It is not alone, then, a matter of aesthetic, political, or personal distaste that has produced a distinguished tradition of anti-Miltonists. Milton himself insists on a combative critical response. Furthermore, in his poem "On Shakespeare," published among the prefatory material to the Shakespeare Second Folio in 1632, Milton becomes one of the first writers to comment on Shakespeare's capacity to seduce his readers' fancy away from their critical faculties. Both Milton and Johnson, then, seem very much aware of the distinction between the two responses that have shaped much of the reception history of Shakespeare and Milton.

Licentiousness and inquisition, no less than desire and anxiety or love and hate,

are not necessarily responses or critical metaphors that exclude each other, however. Although Johnson's earliest writings on Milton are highly combative, his Life of Milton manifests a deeply imaginative appreciation on Johnson's part for a poet whose political and religious views were alien to his own. Milton's place in Johnson's work has yet to be studied with the systematic attention that has long been given to Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare, yet it is doubtful that any other writer than Shakespeare was an important for Johnson as Milton. (4) In addition to his frequent quotations and allusions to Milton in the Dictionary and in his poetry and prose, Johnson wrote a prologue to Comus (1750), several items relating to the William Lauder controversy (1750-1), six Rambler essays (Nos. 86, 88, 90, 94, 139 and 140) on versification and on Samson Agonistes (1751), and the Life of Milton (1779). Despite Boswell's efforts, the Lauder controversy, however, continues to cloud this work, while at the same time Johnson's active involvement in the affair is of major importance in the development of his critical understanding of Milton. Boswell's account of the controversy, which is the first topic he takes up for the year 1751, is meticulously accurate; but because Boswell takes such great care to remove any suspicion that Johnson was in any way an accomplice in the fraud, he leaves open as many questions as he answers by the brevity and incompleteness of his narrative.

William Lauder was a Scot who had the grotesque misfortune of being turned into a cripple by a golf ball that hit him in the knee while he was watching a match near Edinburgh. The resulting injury required the amputation of his leg. An accomplished classicist, Lauder nevertheless became so embittered by his accident that he was unable to sustain his appointments as either a teacher or a librarian. Apparently in search of new opportunities, he went down to London in 1746. There he worked as a classical tutor and became obsessed with destroying the reputation of Milton. At first the project was clearly sparked by political antagonism. Loyal to the Stuarts, Lauder detested Milton just as he did the Commonwealth and all revolutionaries. In January 1747 Lauder published in the Gentleman's Magazine "An Essay on Milton's Imitation of the Moderns," which simply argued that in writing Paradise Lost Milton was influenced both by the classics and by modern Latin authors, especially Hugo Grotius. (5) Because of his work on the Dictionary, Johnson had apparently turned most of his duties at the magazine over to John Hawkesworth. The April issue included yet another essay by Lauder in a more serious though not yet accusatory tone. Certainly by this time Johnson must have met Lauder, who published again on this topic in June and July, because in the August issue Johnson proposes the publication by subscription of an English translation of Grotius' Adamus Exsul. James Clifford has suggested that Johnson became entangled in what was to be Lauder's forgery both because of "his sympathy for a poor, crippled scholar who deserved help" and because of his "strong prejudice against Milton's political allegiance" (344).

From the autumn of 1747 through 1749 what at first seemed to be a serious scholarly investigation of Milton's classical sources mushroomed into a cause celebre. Although reactions both favorable and unfavorable to Lauder were published in the Gentleman's Magazine, an important letter from Richard Richardson, who had raised the first serious objection to Lauder in August, was kept from publication for five months. Professor Clifford believed this was done with Johnson's approval (344). Certainly by December 1749, when Lauder published An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in His Paradise Lost, using Johnson's Grotius proposal as a preface and ending with a postscript by him,

Johnson had fully identified himself with Lauder's position. That position was that Milton was a plagiarist, that he had stitched into Paradise Lost the work of Latin poets known only to professional classicists, and that rather than being England's great epic poet Milton was in fact a fraud. Johnson also acted on Lauder's behalf by arguing the case in person with the supporters of Milton, including Richard Richardson, another of whose letters was kept from publication in the Gentleman's Magazine, this time for almost a year.

Lauder's obsession was finally and definitively exposed as a fraud by John Douglas' pamphlet entitled Milton Vindicated from the Charge of Plagiarism Brought Against Him by Mr Lauder and Lauder Himself Convicted of Several Forgeries and Gross Impositions on the Public, which was published on 26 November 1750. In order to fabricate his case against Milton, Lauder had inserted passages from William Hog's Latin translation of Paradise Lost into those Latin texts he claimed to be Milton's plagiarized sources. Douglas clearly demonstrates that Lauder was in fact the forger and not Milton.(6) Within two days of Douglas' publication, Lauder admitted to Johnson what he had done. As Boswell puts it, Johnson "now dictated a letter for Lauder, addressed to Dr. Douglas, acknowledging his fraud in terms of suitable contrition" (Life I:229).

The text of Lauder's Essay, as it continued to be issued by his publishers after the appearance of Douglas' pamphlet, is a sad and complex document. On the first page the publishers pasted a brief disclaimer of any further connection with Lauder except to "sell his Book only as a Masterpiece of Fraud." (7) Then follows Lauder's original title page with the quotation, "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme," obviously intended originally to be a heavy-handed anticipation of the case against Milton. Then comes a dedication of his work to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which is signed by Lauder. After the dedication there is Johnson's Preface, as though written by Lauder himself. Although the language of the Preface is in retrospect easily distinguishable from that of Lauder's Essay, Johnson's Preface is in fact the first in a series of deceptions, since there is no notice given, even in the bookseller's augmented text, that any part of it is by Johnson. Furthermore, the argument of the Preface is curiously ambivalent. On the one hand, Johnson writes, Paradise Lost has for "more than half a century" been clouded by "the unpopularity of its author"; yet it has, nevertheless, "attracted the general admiration of mankind." who seem bent on compensating for the work's initial neglect by lavishly praising and boundlessly venerating it. There has arisen "a combat, among men of genius and literature, who should most advance its honour, or best distinguish its beauties." The publication of new editions and commentaries have been "subservient" to this contest of "general emulation."

Having thus described the current state of Milton's reputation, Johnson proceeds to announce the purpose of the Essay to follow. Here the language is both magnificently Johnsonian - indeed, the style seems to rebel against being passed off as Lauder's - but at the same time subtly duplicitous:

Among the inquiries, to which this ardour of criticism has naturally given occasion, none is more obscure in itself, or more worthy of rational curiosity, than a retrospection of the progress of this mighty genius, in the construction of his work; a view of the fabric gradually rising, perhaps from small

beginnings, till its foundation rests in the centre, and its turrets sparkle in the skies; to trace back the structure, through all its varieties, to the simplicity of its first plan; to find what was first projected, whence the scheme was taken, how it was improved, by what assistance it was executed, and from what stores the materials were collected, whether its founder dug them from the quarries of nature, or demolished other buildings to embellish his own (a 2-3).

The argument here is woven into the elaborate metaphor of Milton's poem as a magnificent building or castle with sparkling turrets. The task of rational criticism, Johnson argues, is to investigate the origins of this structure, to look back into "the progress of (the) mighty genius" of its builder. The beginning of the sentence implies that the need for such an inquiry has "naturally" arisen from the "ardour of criticism" that has inspired recent studies of Milton; thus, the present commentary might be thought a further contribution to "encomiastick criticism," of which Johnson will later identify Dryden as the master (*Lives*, I:299), as Johnson will become himself in his *Preface to Shakespeare*. This positive, initial impression is, however, slowly undermined as the sentence progresses, until the reader reaches its final implied question: where did Milton get the materials with which to construct the great edifice of *Paradise Lost*? From the quarries of nature, like Shakespeare, or from the demolition of "other buildings" by iconoclastic or revolutionary, Puritanical acts, such as the destruction of Johnson's native Lichfield? Lauder's fraudulent argument will be that Milton pillaged the work of other poets to gather the material to embellish his own, but in fact Lauder will be stealing from William Hog all the while.

Following Johnson's Preface, the publishers inserted "A New Preface," dated 1 December 1750. In these pages, wedged between Johnson's and Lauder's, the booksellers explain how they came to be deceived by Lauder, and they proceed to supply the references to Hog's Latin translation of *Paradise Lost* that Lauder misrepresents as Milton's Latin sources. Next Lauder supplies a sequence of extracts from letters by him and others, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The arrangement of this material and Lauder's ironic use of the phrase "Milton vindicated" are obviously intended to discredit Richard Richardson, who was the first to question Lauder's accusations in print. Next Lauder prints a three-page chronology of dates of Modern Latin authors in comparison with the dates of *Paradise Lost*. For obvious reasons, he makes no reference to William Hog's Latin translation of Milton's poem. Following the chronology, there is a page advertising Lauder's availability to serve as Latin tutor. The reference here to his "abilities and industry in his profession, (which) can be well attested by persons of first rank in literature" most likely alludes to Johnson and simultaneously indicates one aspect of the motive behind Lauder's fraud. Then follows Lauder's text in which he devotes all of his persuasive powers and misdirected learning to the thesis that Milton was "the most unlicensed plagiary that ever wrote" (163). Lauder concludes his *Essay* by insisting "that a strict regard to truth alone" and the desire "to do justice to those authors whom Milton has so liberally gleaned" (164) constitute his only motives in launching his attack.

The text has appended to it two further items by Johnson, again as though written

by Lauder. The first is a Postscript referring to Dr. Thomas Newton's new edition of Paradise Lost. Johnson confesses that he has not read the book except for one passage in the editor's biography of Milton. What had caught Johnson's eye was a reference to Milton's youngest daughter Deborah, to her ten children, and particularly to Elizabeth Foster, Milton's grand-daughter, who at that time was still alive, infirm, and poverty-stricken. Johnson then proposes a subscription for her relief to which he urges Milton's admirers to contribute. Here, surely, the side of Johnson's character that led him to be deceived by Lauder is revealed. Johnson's charity transcends his animosity toward Milton, just as it had his learning and critical judgment in his dealings with Lauder. The final item in the text, written by Johnson but identified as "by William Lauder, A.M.," is a proposal for printing by subscription an English version of Grotius's Adamus Exsul with "lines imitated from it by Milton subjoined to the pages." This last item unwittingly draws all the threads of the hoax together: Lauder's misdirected learning, his frustrated ambition, his envy of Milton's reputation, Johnson's sympathy for Lauder, his respect for Lauder's classical scholarship, and his own antipathy to Milton at this time. Had Lauder's exposure as a fraud been delayed and the Grotius' edition been published, Lauder would have succeeded in destroying himself by handing over to his critics the evidence of his own deception.

Even after his public confession as a consequence of John Douglas' discoveries, Lauder refused to let the matter rest or to abandon his campaign against Milton's reputation. In 1754 he published a pamphlet that pathetically echoes Douglas' devastating Milton Vindicated. The title of this final attack is King Charles I Vindicated from the Charge of Plagiarism Brought Against Him by Milton and Milton Himself Convicted of Forgery and a Gross Imposition on the Public. Here Lauder's charge is that Milton conspired with the publisher of the King's Eikon Basilike in order to insert a prayer from Sidney's Arcadia into Charles' text, enabling Milton then to attack Charles as a plagiarist.⁽⁸⁾ This, of course, is a transparent attempt by Lauder to project his own fraud back onto Milton. Lauder's growing mental instability is even more obvious in his criticism of Johnson, who, he claims, perpetrated an error on the public by including in the confession he dictated for Lauder to sign a recantation of Lauder's entire case against Milton. This affair ends in an individual human tragedy - Lauder's emigration to Barbados, where he dies in poverty - and in the development of Johnson's more moderate, but still combative, understanding of Milton.

Even before the heat had gone out of the Lauder affair, Johnson wrote six Rambler articles that were his first pieces of serious Milton criticism. Although Johnson still reads Milton against the grain of the dominant "economistick criticism" of his day, his approach is technical and entirely professional. The four articles on versification published in January and February of 1751 advance the argument that the pure heroic measure of English Poetry has the accent fall on alternate syllables. In Paradise Lost, however, the verse is faulty because "Milton seldom has two pure lines together."⁽⁹⁾ If one reads Milton with attention to the music of the poetry, Johnson claims, one cannot help but conclude that his metrical faults are the consequence of his ear being accustomed "only to the musick of the antient tongues" and to his conviction that the English language, in contrast to Italian, is unfit "for smooth versification"⁽¹⁰¹⁾. Although the argument here is another version of the view that Milton's learning - however it is used - devalues his poetic achievement - Johnson is clearly developing a reluctant respect and deep understanding of Milton's poetry. For example, he convincingly argues that

Milton's use of proper names, with their soft vowel sounds, serves a largely musical purpose. Indeed, it appears that Johnson subverts his own initial project of building a technical case against Milton by resourcefully finding reasons for Milton's violation of strict rules of versification and genre. Johnson repeatedly favors Milton over other poets, as in this somewhat surprising conclusion to Rambler 90:

If the poetry of Milton be examined, with regard to the pauses and flow of his verses into each other, it will appear, that he has performed all that our language would admit; and the comparison of his numbers with those who have cultivated the same manner of writing, will show that he excelled as much in the lower and in the higher parts of his arts, and that his skill in harmony was not less than his invention or his learning (115).

These articles first invoke a critical dictum, often thinly disguised as a definition (heroic numbers or tragedy), then they proceed to show Milton violating the critical rule; but finally Johnson is ready to insist that not only despite such violation, but indeed perhaps because of it, what Milton produces exceeds the achievement of those poets who have safely applied to the rule.

Rambler 139 and 140 follow this pattern as well in their assessment of Samson Agonistes, Johnson begins by recalling Aristotle's observations on the structure of tragedy in such a way as to transform Aristotle's description into a law: tragedy "should have a beginning, a middle, and an end" (370). As though preparing to renew his old attack on Milton, Johnson reworks the architectural metaphor that he had so elaborately developed in his Preface to Lauder's Essay:

Whoever purposes, as it is expressed by Milton "to build the lofty rhyme", must acquaint himself with this law of poetic architecture, and take care that his edifice be solid as well as beautiful; that nothing stand single or independent, so as that it may be taken away without injuring the rest; but that from the foundation to the pinnacles one part rest firm upon another(371).

Johnson is here preparing to demonstrate that although the beginning of Samson Agonistes is "beautiful and proper" and the ending "just and regular," it lacks a middle. Before he convicts Milton of having violated Aristotle's "law," however, Johnson anticipates the pardon he will issue Milton: "...If there is any writer whose genius can embellish impropriety, and whose authority can make error venerable, his works are the proper objects of critical inquisition"(371). For Johnson, proper criticism is a trial conducted to detect venerable error, which is the manifestation of genius. Rambler 140 returns to this inquisitorial metaphor in a very subtle way. Johnson anticipates that his criticism will meet with a hostile reception from Milton's admirers. He knows he will be misread and that his criticism will "incur the imputation of envy, captiousness, and malignity"(376). In full expectation of this response, he opens with a quotation from Horace's Satires that refers to the tendency of young men to "fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees"(376). At first this may seem to be a reiteration of the charge against Samson Agonistes, that its action rushes from beginning to end without passing through a proper middle. Johnson, however, supplies two lines of his own verse in order to direct the Horatian accusation not

at Milton but at Johnson's own hostile readers, Milton's unself-reflective admirers:

What doating bigot to his faults so blind
As not to grant me this, can Milton find?

Any reader of Milton who is not a doting bigot, blind to his own faults, and who is attentive to Milton's own desire for an active, critical reception of his work must grant Johnson his critical "inquisition." Such a trial by criticism has at least as much of the desire of the Old Testament Psalmist to be judged in order to have his righteousness confirmed as it has of Johnson's own extensive involvement in the processes of English law.

But few of Johnson's eighteenth-century readers were willing to grant him such an inquisition when his Life of Milton appeared in 1779. Francis Blackburne in 1780 found "virulent malignity" and "political resentment" in Johnson's criticism. William Hayley, who otherwise greatly admired Johnson, also saw "virulence of political hatred," which he mentions in his own Life of Milton (2nd ed., 1796). Joseph Towers in 1786 was somewhat more perceptive in his observation of the "struggle" in Johnson's mind concerning Milton.⁽¹⁰⁾ Certainly there is more conflict in Johnson's Life of Milton than in any of his other prefaces to English poets. In part the Lauder hoax seems to have been a continued embarrassment to Johnson and to have led him to rethink and rewrite what he had contributed to Lauder's publication. Also, the hagiography of Milton's biographers, especially Toland, Richardson, and Newton, ignited Johnson's response. Even more important, however, is Johnson's eloquent acknowledgement of Milton's greatness, superiority, and sublimity.⁽¹¹⁾ The final paragraphs of the Life override all earlier judgments; here Johnson insists that Milton was "master of his language in its full extent; ... from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned." Johnson goes on to say that he "cannot wish (Milton's) work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated." In a crescendo of praise, Johnson ends by recalling that Milton's "great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it is not the first" (137-9). This encomium is all the more powerful because it comes at the end of Johnson's lengthy inquisition, during which Milton is found to be guilty of ordinary human imperfection at the same time that Johnson judges him to be a poetic hero. Unlike Milton's earlier critics, Johnson refused to rush like the young man in Horace's Satire to a hasty verdict either of conviction or acquittal. Johnson had made that mistake in the Lauder affair.⁽¹²⁾ Nevertheless, many readers of Johnson continue to assume his hostility to Milton in defiance of what Johnson actually wrote.⁽¹³⁾

The Life of Milton is clearly divided into two unequal parts in which Johnson devotes two-thirds of his text to biography and one-third to criticism. A recurring theme in the biography is Milton's views of women, particularly his treatment of his daughters, Anne, Mary, and Deborah, who were all children by his first wife, Mary Powell. Johnson passes over the complex family situation in order to ponder misinformed gossip about the girls. In the most detailed modern biography of Milton, William Riley Parker carefully documents what is known about their situation. While the eldest was still in her teens, Milton's children saw him remarry for a second time. Having lived without a mother for almost eleven

years, the daughters apparently developed no affection or even much respect for their step-mother, Elizabeth Minshul. Anne, the eldest daughter, was physically and perhaps mentally handicapped, as well as having a speech impediment.(14) Nevertheless, she was described by Deborah as a beautiful woman, and she married a master builder a few years after her father's death (650). About Mary no information survives, not even the record of her death. Furthermore, none of Milton's early biographers records directly any of the feelings or opinions Anne and Mary had of their father, although accounts of conversations with Milton's widow and his youngest daughter Deborah do survive (650-1). Deborah, who married and had ten children, became a schoolmistress late in his life (585). Although Milton had lost all of the £2000 he had saved from his salary as Latin secretary, because of the collapse of the Excise bank at the time of the Restoration, he nevertheless left an estate of at least that amount to his daughters and widow (583). Milton appears to have invested heavily in the private tuition of his daughters, who were all educated at home as Milton had been himself (585). There seems little doubt that Deborah profitted most from this instruction. Based on conversations with Milton's widow, John Aubrey reports that "Deborah was (Milton's) amanuensis, he taught her Latin, and to read Greek and Hebrew to him." Edward Ward claims to have heard Deborah recite on his request "a considerable number of verses" from Isaiah, Homer, and Ovid (1098). Not only did Johnson not know of these reports - or did not make use of them - his own view of Milton's treatment of his children is tainted by the unreliable sources he uses. Johnson writes that Milton had "a Turkish contempt for females, as subordinate and inferior beings" (I:112), and he cites as evidence the report of Elizabeth Foster, Milton's grand-daughter (I:113) for whom he launched the appeal in the Postscript to Lauder's Essay. It now seems clear, however, that Mrs Foster confused Milton's treatment of his daughters with his brother's. Christopher Milton apparently did believe that it was unnecessary for women to be literate and thus did not educate his daughters (Parker, 1097). Although Johnson reads his sources skeptically when they ascend to hagiography, he does not sufficiently question them when they suggest, however erroneously in this case, Milton's faults.

The two topics about which Johnson speculates at greatest length are Milton's processes of composition and the reception of Paradise Lost. These were of course also Lauder's principal concerns. Johnson begins these speculations by admitting that "neither diligence nor sagacity can discover" the origins of the poem (I:96). This does not stop him, however, either from imagining its compositional genesis or from conceiving of the difficulties Milton faced; his careful revisions of early plans to compose the work as a mystery play or a tragedy; his self-reflective assessment of his "attainments" and "powers"; his constant interruptions from admiring visitors; the physical infirmities of blindness and gout; the absence of a friend or "regular attendant" to receive his dictation; the burden of his belief that his powers were debilitated by the age of the world, the belatedness of his place in history, and the hostility of the English climate; and the illiteracy of his daughters (I:96-100). Finally, having overcome these obstacles and produced Paradise Lost, Milton had to face the coolness of its reception, which Johnson describes this way:

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and enquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception.

But has the case been truly stated? Have lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt? That in the reigns of Charles and James the Paradise Lost received no public acclamations, is readily confessed (I:102-3).

Clinging, however, to his confidence in "the prevalence of genius," Johnson at first argues the case for Milton's neglect: wit and literature had turned to favor the court; no one would therefore defend or praise a regicide; there was not as much demand for books in Milton's time as there is at "present"; the Shakespeare folios sold no better; Milton's "style of versification (was) new to all and disgusting to many" (I:103).

Johnson remains unconvinced by his own arguments. The case he wants to make is that Milton "never felt" that "evil" was done to him by the neglect of the most important work of his life. By the time of the Revolution of 1688, the "reputation and price" of Paradise Lost "advanced" (I:104), but by this time Milton had been dead for fourteen years. Johnson has before him the task of exorcising the specter that haunted Milton himself; this was the fear, expressed in "Lycidas," that he would die too soon to be able to achieve his heroic, poetic quest. The argument Johnson offers is brilliantly and strangely inventive. Until 1688 Paradise Lost was the object of what Johnson calls "the secrecy of love" that had to wait its time before it could break "into open view with sufficient security of kind reception" (I:104). Not only does Johnson imagine this secrecy of love, against all the reasonable evidence he offers for Milton's neglect; but he also boldly imagines that Milton possessed the power of critical clairvoyance, which enabled him to follow the underground course of the reputation of his poem to that point after his death when the secret love would break out of its repressed state into the open recognition of genius. Here is what Johnson writes:

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked his reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation (I:104).

Milton has been waiting all this while for an audience "fit enough though few"; perhaps for an audience of one; perhaps for Johnson, his worthy antagonist, the only one to offer "the impartiality" of judgment that properly manifests a love no longer secret.

What is most often missed in readings of Johnson's criticism is his passion, which manifests itself here in terms that are nothing less than psycho-historical. Johnson clearly knows the ways of "subterraneous" love repressed by "fear and silence." His expansive imagination sees this process not as something individual or strictly personal; an entire historical moment - such as "the reigns of Charles and James" (I:103) - may be the agency of such repressed love or inability to acknowledge genius. Even the most recent criticism of Johnson persists in reducing him to a spokesman of his time(15). The perennial value of Johnson's criticism lies in the depth and candor of his imaginative responses to poetry,

especially when the expression of such responses are themselves poetic. When argument is pursued through metaphor, Johnson's criticism is at its best. Then he takes the greatest risks and responds most generously to what he reads. This is not to say that Johnson's politics and Milton's were after all compatible, that their views of education could be reconciled, that Johnson understood why Milton would not accept any church as a true expression of Christianity, that Johnson responded with sympathetic understanding to Milton's argument for divorce on the grounds that marriage requires mutuality of freedom for husband and wife that cannot be enforced by civil law when there is no love. It is despite - or perhaps even because of - these profound differences of politics, religion, and temperament that Johnson loves Milton and wants to claim, against all the evidence that he can supply, that Milton was always loved and knew it. The verdict in this "case" is that Milton was never wronged but was always secretly, as he is now openly, loved. If one brings to this judgment a recollection of Johnson's involvement in the Lauder fraud, one must suspect that even then there was "subterraneous" love. The issue in that sad episode was not what Johnson knew of Lauder's motives but what he then understood of his own. In his Life of Milton Johnson brings into the open the ambivalent passions Milton arouses in him.

Johnson concludes the biographical section of his Life of Milton with an allusion to his "Prologue to Comus," as though to weave its poetic statement into his prose criticism. The date of the Prologue is 1750, the speaker was Garrick, the source of the words was identified as "the Author of Irene," and the occasion was the benefit for Elizabeth Foster, Milton's grand-daughter. Here Johnson describes the mixed reception of Milton's "victorious lays": initially, there was "universal praise," but at the same time "baffled spite" and silent, "hopeless anguish," all destined to yield "to renown the centuries to come." Milton looks down and sees this anxious acclaim, scorning the earthly honors that he did not seek. Although Milton's poetic "offspring" have been "unknown," "unheeded," and threatened with "want" and "slow decay"; although later poets lack "Miltonian fire" and a "favouring Muse" to inspire their dreams, Johnson nevertheless charges them to "crown desert," despite Milton's indifference to their adulation. All of the essential ingredients of Johnson's criticism of Milton are here: Milton's heroic achievement, the subterraneous admiration mixed with fear and silence, and the final surfacing of acclaim despite Milton's indifference to it.

Johnson devotes most of the critical section of the Life of Milton to a consideration of Paradise Lost. It is difficult to see how so many readers of Johnson have come to misread him and to conclude that he is an anti-Miltonist. Professor John Shawcross, in his article in A Milton Encyclopedia, points out that "Too frequently, if not almost always, Johnson's remarks about Milton have been taken out of full context and the real point he was making has often been obscured." (16) Johnson's commentary on Paradise Lost exceeds, both in its praise and in its understanding of the poem, the writings of the hagiographers who attacked him for "virulent malignity." Nothing in Blackburne, Hayley, Toland, Richardson or Newton comes close to Johnson's admiration, clarity of judgment, or critical insight. Not until Blake wrote his epic poem Milton did any other English writer respond so fully to Milton as Johnson does here. (17) "With respect to design," Johnson writes, Paradise Lost "may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second, among the productions of the human mind" (I:121). As the last sentence of his commentary makes clear, Johnson places Homer first and Milton second as heroic poets only because Homer's chronological

priority made it possible for Milton to learn from him. Milton's moral project - "to shew the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law" - is "the most useful and the most arduous" of poetic purposes (I:122). As a writer of fable, Milton has "equalled every other poet." His subject is more comprehensive than that of any other epic, and "before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away" (I:122). Johnson agrees with Addison that *Paradise Lost* has the advantage of being "universally and perpetually interesting" (I:125). Even the autobiographical passages add to Milton's poem what every reader of the *Iliad* wishes were in Homer's work. When Milton incorporates scientific learning into his poem, he appropriately offers up to his readers the very "spirit of science" (I:127). Indeed, it seems to Johnson that everything Milton set out to do in the poem was perfectly suited to his unique genius:

Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven. But he could not be always in other worlds: he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility (I:127).

Furthermore, Johnson adds, Milton's mythological allusions "contribute variety to the narration"; the "great excellence" of his similes is "amplitude"; his moral sentiments "excel those of all other poets" (I:123); into every line of the poem Milton "breathes sanctity of thought and purity of manners"; the "prevailing quality in the poem (is) sublimity"; indeed, "the poet, whatever be done, is always great" (I:129).

Johnson's sense of the sublime immensity of *Paradise Lost* and of its capacity "to fill the imagination" of its reader anticipates what will be the main emphasis in Romantic responses to the poem from Blake and John Martin to Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom. But even when Johnson proceeds to identify what he calls "the defects and faults" of the poem, in the interest of "impartial criticism" (I:130), he succeeds in illuminating the text he seems to have set out to censure. Because the poem "comprises neither human actions nor human manners" as we know them after the Fall, the reader "beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself" (I:130). Johnson here identifies precisely the difference between the delight of projected imagination, which he had shown to be central to Shakespeare's art, and the sublime experience in reading Milton of being overwhelmed and of having one's imagination glutted. The "awful scenes" of the poem demand either "reverence" or "horror," causing as they do the mind to sink "under them in passive helplessness" (I:131). Johnson is manifestly uncomfortable in being rendered helpless in this way and he seems to struggle to free himself from Milton's grasp. He thus writes his most negative criticism of the poem in flat contradiction to what he has already enumerated as its consummate virtues:

The want of human interest is always felt. Paradise Lost is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions (I:132).

But Johnson soon sets aside his own discomfort in order to return to the metaphor for Milton's poem that he had employed for very different argumentative ends in his Preface to Lauder's Essay:

In every work, one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have its passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed sometimes to revisit earth; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long? (I:134-5)

Whereas the Lauder Preface argued that Milton built his poetic palace with the stolen fragments of other authors, Johnson here argues that Milton's "vigour and amplitude of mind" take second place only to the genius and originality of Homer. Even so, "of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted" (I:139).

In his efforts to call Milton to the bar of judgment, Johnson conducts three successive critical inquisitions. First, in his anonymous Preface and Postscript to Lauder's Essay, Johnson, to his own embarrassment, allowed his political antagonisms and his discomfort with ecstatic responses from encomiastic critics to cloud his judgment. Second, in the Rambler essays, where his legalistic critical metaphor surfaces, Johnson insists on conducting a careful technical examination of Milton's work before rendering judgment. Finally, in the Life of Milton Johnson does more than render his definitive assessment of Milton and of his first century of critics. He also invites judgment of the adequacy of his own responses. Milton was restrained, Johnson insists, "by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction" (I:131), but his "exalted genius and extensive learning" are "the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity" (I:137). Here Johnson convicts himself of imaginative licentiousness, just as he had in his criticism of Shakespeare. Law and love, reason and imagination were for Johnson not only complementary. Carefully reasoned, impartial criticism identifies violations of its laws, as well as instances of "defect," "fault," and "deformity," in order to celebrate the embellishment of these improprieties by imaginative genius. Johnson's critical inquisition is an act of love that finds grace in deformity.

Notes

1. See my "Imaginative Licentiousness: Johnson on Shakespearean Tragedy," The New Rambler, 4(1988/9), 38-48.

2. This view is most clearly stated in his First Prolusion: "Do not then, whoever you are, hastily accuse me of disregarding and altering the statements of all the ancient poets, without any authority to support me. For I am not taking upon myself to do that, but am only attempting to bring them to the test of reason, and thereby to examine whether they can bear the scrutiny of strict truth." ((John) Milton, Private Correspondence and Academic Exercises, trans. Phyllis B. Tillyard (Cambridge University Press, 1932), p.57.)
3. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the Poets (London: Oxford University Press, 1938). I, 115.
4. The most useful recent studies of Johnson's Milton criticism are John Wain. "Reflections on Johnson's Life of Milton," In William Empson: The Man and His work, ed. Roma Gill. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 117-25; J.R. Brink, "Johnson and Milton," SEL 20(1980), 493-503; Stephen Fix, "Distant Genius: Johnson and the Art of Milton's Life," MP 81(1984), 244-64; and Dustin Griffin, Regaining Paradise: Milton in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 203-16.
5. The most detailed accounts of the Lauder affair are James L. Clifford's "Johnson and Lauder," Philological Quarterly, 54(1975), 342-56; and Michael J. Marcuse's "The Lauder Controversy and the Jacobite Cause," Studies in Burke and His Time, 18(1975), 27-47.
6. John Douglas, Milton Vindicated. (London: A. Millar, 1751), esp. pp. 34-5.
7. William Lauder, An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in His Paradise Lost, (London: J. Payne and J. Bouquer, 1750). The pages of the various inserted materials are not numbered consecutively with what Lauder wrote. All of my quotations are from the British Library copy (11822.pp.1), and I have cited page numbers such as appear in the text.
8. John Douglas refutes these arguments in the second edition of Milton Vindicated (London: A. Millar, 1756), pp. 97-8. The British Library's copy (11822.pp.5) includes Lauder's own published version of his offence, An Apology for Mr Lauder in a Letter most humbly addressed to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. (London: W. Owen, 1751). Here Lauder writes that his quarrel "was not with Milton...but with the unfair Preference given him by Mr Pope...over Dr Johnston," the author of a Latin paraphrase of the Psalms (p.20).
9. Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, eds. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss. The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, Vol. IV. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 90.
10. For a full account of these and other contemporary responses, see Griffin, pp. 203-16.
11. Isobel Grundy points out, "Nowhere else in all Johnson's writings does he throw such stress on to the assertion of greatness..." (Samuel Johnson and the Scale of Greatness (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 224.) She distinguishes more sharply than I have between Johnson's final estimate of Milton the man and Milton the poet.
12. It is difficult to discount Sir John Hawkins' eye-witness account of Johnson's reactions to Lauder's work at that time: "I could all along observe that Johnson seemed to approve, not only of the design but of the argument, and seemed to exult in a persuasion, that the reputation of Milton was likely to suffer by this discovery" (Life of Samuel Johnson (London, 1787, 275-6.)
13. See Griffin, pp. 213-6.
14. William Riley Parker, Milton. A Biography. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 936.

15. For example, Martin Maner, The Philosophical Biographer: Doubt and Dialectic in Johnson's Lives of the Poets. (Atlanta: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), esp.p.120.
16. John T. Shawcross, "Johnson, Samuel" (article) in A Milton Encyclopedia, ed. William B. Hunter, et al. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979), vol.4, 165.
17. Dustin Griffin would argue a prior claim in favor of Pope (pp.155-60).

JOHN GAY - POET OF TOWN AND COUNTRY
Dr David Nokes - 18 May 1991
Chairman: Mrs Zandra O'Donnell

Dr Nokes, a Lecturer in English, at King's College London, was welcomed back on this return visit to the Society: he had previously addressed us in 198 , on the subject of Swift (N.R. D I p.35). He was at present working on a biography of John Gay and on a version of Richardson's Clarissa to be shown on television.

He is to provide us with a summary of his paper and it is hoped to include it in the next issue of The New Rambler.

THE WREATH-LAYING

The annual wreath-laying ceremony was held in Westminster Abbey on 15 December 1990, the service being conducted by the Dean, the Very Revd. Michael Mayne and the wreath laid by Dr Isobel Grundy, who delivered the following Allocution.

"This morning we commemorate the 205th anniversary of Samuel Johnson's death; this afternoon there will be a service here of the British Deaf Association. Johnson knew about deafness, as he knew about so many physical disabilities, from personal experience. Congenital deafness was a condition which for centuries had excluded its victims entirely from any kind of normal life. In Johnson's day the lot of the deaf was improving, through the advances of science and understanding.

I should like us to remember today what Johnson wrote of his visit to a pioneering Edinburgh school or college for the deaf and dumb. You remember how he tested one of the students with a mathematical problem which he wrote on her slate; how she solved it in a flash, while Johnson in imagination entered into her feelings, guessing that she might have been insulted, though polite, at the easiness of the test.

It was pleasing to see one of the most desperate of human calamities capable of so much hope; whatever enlarges hope, will exalt courage.

Historical research is terribly limited. We shall never know what that deaf and dumb girl thought of Johnson. We do know it was lucky for her that she didn't live a hundred years earlier, when she might have been treated like an animal all her life, but unlucky that she didn't live today, when she might have had a much

broader and more fulfilled experience. And we know, and it is good in these tough times to remember, that Johnson thought well of the capacity of humankind to enlarge hope, to exalt courage, and to rescue itself from calamities.

I should like to read a prayer which he wrote about issues such as these:

O God who hast ordained that whatever is to be desired, should be sought by labour, and who by thy Blessing bringest honest labour to good effect; look with mercy upon our studies and endeavours. Grant us, O Lord, to design only what is lawful and right, and afford us calmness of mind, and steadiness of purpose, that we may so do thy will in this short life, as to obtain happiness in the world to come, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

After the ceremony an informal Luncheon, organised by Mrs Dowdeswell, took place at the Queen Anne Restaurant, our usual venue of the Vitello d'Oro being closed for refurbishment.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual, ed. Paul J. Korshin, AMS Press Inc., New York, iii, 1990.

This third volume of a welcome new annual is at least as good as either of its predecessors. Its essays are challenging yet accessible, with new ideas striking the eye on most pages and demanding careful thought and assimilation. Its preponderance of excellence over mediocrity is remarkably high. Its cut and thrust of debate sometimes escalates to total war: Donald Greene and Howard Weinbrot are, as either Johnson or Boswell might have said, doughty contenders in the lists of criticism, attacking, respectively, phoney facts and phoney theory. Its reviews are similarly meaty and provocative, though a couple, I thought, were unwarrantably hard to please.

Many things in this volume will be a delight to Johnsonians: James Basker giving Johnson credit at last for his astonishingly sensitive and unorthodox writings on the problems faced by women in patriarchal society; David Venturo bringing informed enthusiasm to his poetic artistry in a manner that is all too rare: Shirley White Johnston extending and deepening our understanding of his criticism by tracing its development to brilliant from merely adequate. Contributions on other topics have equally exciting knowledge and insights to offer, like Anne Himmelfarb on critical dialogues (but she should not have omitted Clara Reeve's Progress of Romance), Mary Waldron on Ann Yearsley the milkwoman-poet (arguing that, far from a conscious proletarian, she was a determined preserver of her middle-class ties), and Mona Scheuermann taking Henry Fielding to task for his representations of women, so much less enlightened than those of Johnson. Scheuermann makes strongly and persuasively some criticisms which needed making, though she underestimates Will Booth's engagingly non-sexist qualities as a husband, and the complexity of Mrs Bennet/Atkinson (who is a heroic friend as well as a typically satirised learned lady).

Professor Greene makes a convincing Mr Valiant-for-Truth, though he does occasionally slide into error. Apart from encouraging healthy and scholarly scepticism about Johnsonian anecdote, he nails some hoary half-truths and misquotations. (It is a pity the volume does not run to cross-references, which would have allowed Greene to correct one or two of his fellow-contributors.) He does a great service in providing detailed evidence that some famous supposed sayings of Johnson had floated free in oral folk culture for generations before Johnson was born, taking up residence like hermit crabs in the image of one high-profile individual after another. He casts doubt on many cherished Johnson stories - yet he too can be humanly fallible, especially on subjects other than Johnson. The Society of Friends did have preachers or "ministers": many of them, as missionaries, travelled all over the world and made wonderful autobiography of their experiences. It was because a large proportion were women (Quakers seriously believed that in Christ there is neither male or female) that the sect was so persistently satirised as lewd. Greene is also unfair to Catharine Macaulay, who cites Johnson in several places in her works, with respect if not agreement. It is a mistake to suppose that hostile contemporary reports on her were accurate; like the Quaker women preachers, she was a threat to received opinion, and therefore attracted just the kind of unfounded gossip which (when it is about Johnson) Greene is so eager to demolish.

It will be apparent that in eighteenth-century studies in general as well as in Johnson studies in particular the role of women is as hot a topic as it was in Johnson's writings and in his talk. The Age of Johnson, III, finds welcome space for the discussion both of women writers and of female characters. Its second polemic, Howard Weinbrot's broadside against reductionist or straightjacketing use of literary theory, is as rousing as Greene's; but, even more than Greene, it tends to falter in its readings of texts by women.

Though Weinbrot talks about rigorously examining evidence, he writes of the RSC's recent production of Aphra Behn's The Rover without noting that John Barker, not Behn, had composed something like one third of the text which the company used. Conversely, he assumes that Teresia Constantia Phillips's autobiography was ghost-written for her, without entering on the evidence. In saying that "it would take very little alteration...to make the narrator (of Behn's Oroonoko) either neutral or male" he bypasses a by now much-debated issue: the way the narrator, as a female, both is and is not a part of the colonial society which savagely punishes Oroonoko; the way she not only offers female sympathy and pacification but is employed by her male compatriots to do so; the slippery way she uses "we" now for herself and Oroonoko and their friends, now for herself and her fellow English; in short, her moral ambivalence, constructed by means not available for a male narrator. Weinbrot, who deplores in others "terminal condescension to one's female subject", himself dismisses as "subliterary" The Woman's Labour by Mary Collier. Although its author, unlike Ann Yearsley, really did belong to the labouring class, the poem is a fairly sophisticated piece of mock-heroic, which makes assured and effective use of classical and other literary reference, balanced against vividly descriptive detail of rough physical work. In the classroom it stands up well to close analysis alongside Gray's Elegy and the respective villages of Goldsmith and Crabbe. All this is likely to affect a reader's receptiveness to Weinbrot's message that critical theory, especially feminist critical theory, should be abolished rather than improved.

Nevertheless, theorists should read Weinbrot; anecdotalists should read Greene. This volume has much to offer anyone with an interest in the manifold ways that the words of Johnson and his contemporaries live on in today's readers - even if the words of the dead are sometimes unwarrantably modified in the guts of the living.

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James Boswell, Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763, ed. Frederick A. Pottle, Edinburgh University Press, 1991. Pp.xxxiii + 370. Index. (ISBN 0-7486-0262-3) £12.95.

On Wednesday, 15 June 1763, James Boswell "breakfasted with Lord Eglinton. We then walked in the Green Park. He said I was the only man he ever knew who had a vast deal of vanity and yet was not in the least degree offensive" (p.279). The immense attraction of Boswell's London Journal, recently reprinted by Edinburgh University Press, is thus perfectly defined. Anybody else so self-regarding and (literally) self-interested, so egotistical, name-dropping and immodest, would exasperate the life out of a reader. This possibility is nullified in Boswell by gusto, enthusiasm, and enormous interest in all life from minutiae to grand scene: his account over nine months in London is irresistible.

Ostensibly written for his teenage friend Johnston, to whom it was sent in weekly packets, the Journal gives a pretty full picture of Boswell's experiences in London together with telling sketches of London life of the time; this despite Boswell's resolve to "be upon my guard to mention nothing that can do harm." (p.40). As he had little to do in the way of employment, he has time to range about the town, to hobnob with various worthies, to spend time in social observation, to hang around coffee houses, to fall in and out of love and, along the way, to sate a libido typically active.

Boswell clearly sets out to make the acquaintance of whoever was worth knowing in London society, the 'glitterati' of that time; for example, he insinuates himself into the company of Garrick, who in a memorable phrase remarks that after their rendezvous over tea, "the cups shall dance and the saucers skip" (p.161). And, of course, his first meeting with Samuel Johnson occurs in this period. In fact, Johnson receives mention fairly early on (28 November 1762), and it is evident from his occasional references that Boswell was determined to meet him. This book is thus a key document in understanding the genesis of the Life of Johnson, as are all Boswell's journals during Johnson's lifetime. Boswell's London Journal also contains some of the trademarks of the Life, such as the rendering of remembered conversation as actual dialogue.

This technique illustrates the importance that Boswell placed in his Journal, whose actual intended recipient was himself. He worked hard at it, making rough notes and working them up with great care at intervals into a natural and flowing finished product that gives the impression of being without artifice. It is early evidence of his powers of composition and exercise for his keen powers of observation and attention to detail, demonstrated on every page.

This edition is a straight reprint of the original Yale, edited and introduced by Frederick Pottle, but in a sturdy paperback. Edinburgh University Press are to be commended for its reissue, as they are for plans to release in paperback at irregular intervals all the Boswell Journals in the original Yale trade editions. The next two planned for release (in Autumn 1992) are Boswell in Extremes: 1776-1778 and the Laird of Auchinleck: 1778-1782, the last of which has never been published in the U.K. Boswellians and Johnsonians alike will want to acquire the ones that they lack, which may be many considering how long ago many were published and the current high second hand prices of most volumes. Edinburgh University Press have kindly agreed to advise those sending their name and address on a postcard of future volumes. Please send your card to: Publicity Department, Edinburgh University Press, 22 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LF.

C. T. Davis

Alan Reddick, The Making of Johnson's Dictionary 1746-1773, Cambridge 1990.

This is one of those rare books which change the face of Johnson studies. It gives us, against all expectation, a wealth of wholly new and (to this reviewer) unsuspected facts; it creates a need for other new books. The Rambler itself urgently needs to be re-read and re-criticized in the light of Professor Reddick's revelations about what was going on in Johnson's life as he launched and wrote those essays which once we used to read as timeless and universal. The preface to Shakespeare and The Lives of the Poets, too, seem certain to carry subtextual reference to the struggles recorded here.

The proximate cause of such thoughts, this book's post-Johnsonian story, is very little to the credit of human nature, though Johnson would surely have relished it. Readers of Sledd and Kolb's 1955 study of the Dictionary may remember (if they are more attentive or retentive than I) that those two scholars had petitioned vainly for leave to examine a large block of Dictionary pages bound up with revision slips hand-written by Johnson and his amanuenses. It seemed likely that this material, a kind of lexicographical Rosetta stone, would yield a key to unlock various secrets about Johnson's manner of proceeding. But its owner, Col. Richard Gimbel, was adamant about keeping it hidden. He was in general a collector of Dickens, not Johnson: he is believed to have acquired this chunk of corrected Dictionary solely in order to keep it out of the hands of his arch-rival A. Edward Newton, a famous Johnson collector who had once - alas! - outbid Gimbel on a Dickens item.

Col. Richard Gimbel died in 1970. Three years later, through the good offices of Herman W. Liebert, his widow gave his Johnson material (called, from a previous owner, the Gimbel-Sneyd copy) to Yale University. Allen Reddick's sleuthing has been directed to making sense of these pages, and also of a British Library interleaved and annotated copy of the Dictionary which Sledd and Kolb worked at and described, but were unable adequately to explain.

A short review is no place to attempt a summary of Reddick's presentation of his evidence. But from my admittedly inadequate bibliographical knowledge, I find

him fully convincing. The Johnsonian story he tells can be more practicably summarized; what happened was roughly as follows. The Sneyd-Gimbel pages and slips were used in later revision of the Dictionary. But (like material from a glacier or a peat bog) they incorporate substantial traces from a very much earlier stage: a Dictionary MS of the late 1740s to 1750. This Johnson evidently abandoned on realising that he was following an unworkable method, and that he would have to begin all over again.

Back to the drawing-board; down the snake to the foot of the ladder. It is dreadful to think of Johnson finding himself in this position in 1749 or 1750. It also compels a new and different understanding of that desire for variety of focus which (along with, as Reddick notes, a desperate need for funds) led him to begin The Rambler. A careful reading of the Rambler with Reddick's account in mind will undoubtedly reconfigure the essays' many discussions of the hopes, toils and disappointments of intellectual endeavour.

The story does not end with first publication. Johnson, it seems, deliberately concealed or minimized the extent of his involvement in revising and altering the fourth edition. Though the changes in such a massive work may be rather like a packet of needles in a haystack, Reddick painstakingly recovers a large enough sample to reveal Johnson's surprising agenda for moralizing and politicising his work, with added quotations from Milton and the Bible (by way, in each case, of concordances), and from seventeenth-century theological writers apparently selected as a means of commenting obliquely on the crisis of identity affecting the Church of England in the 1770s, when the Thirty-nine Articles came under serious attack. He now worked, says Reddick, "with a confidence and dexterity usually lacking in his earlier effort": the work involved a re-engagement with an increased respect for Milton's poetry.

Reddick re-emphasizes things that have been known, but insufficiently remembered: Johnson's originality in defining words by usage instead of by etymology or prescription; the maturation of his brilliant critical powers during the years which separate the Plan from the Preface; his "sense of the Dictionary as an infinitely refinable, though inevitably flawed, text". Reddick also adds new information: Johnson's initial reliance on etymology rather than usage; his early, catastrophic underestimate of the space his illustrations of distinct senses would require; the probable anger and concern of the booksellers at the return after four years to square one; Johnson's impressive "ability to reconceptualize and reshape his project", to rebuild success from the ruins of his first failed attempt.

Reddick also defends the abilities of Johnson's much-maligned amanuenses, and contradicts Sir John Hawkins's belief that Johnson was surprised to find no more money due to him when he finished the first edition. He points to many piquant or distressing subsidiary ironies: Macbean fell into poverty either despite or perhaps because of the publications which may have kept him from better-remunerated work; Benjamin Martin, whose rival Lingua Britannica Reformata must have caused Johnson pain by reaching print ahead of him in 1747, had learned his method of ranking and arranging multiple definitions from Johnson's Plan; the Dictionary (thus influential even before its appearance) was never anything but a disappointing project in terms of the publishers' return on their investment (a fact to make any writer shudder in these days of over-riding attention to the bottom line).

The ironies having to do with Johnson himself are the most plangent. The Dictionary, as described here, was a ceaselessly continuing and ceaselessly disappointing project. In Johnson's many changes of lodging he was accompanied by a massive and probably disordered archive of old work, abandoned but not completed: pages, slips, and notebooks. Johnson seems to have commissioned from his amanuenses many examples of local, dialect, and Scottish usage, which he later rejected, perhaps for lack of space. The BL copy discussed here (part first and part third edition) includes hundreds of revisions which he made himself, but which never appeared in any edition: probably this material was not rejected but simply misplaced or overlooked. Only now can we fully savour the irony in Johnson's preface to the abridged edition: "I may without arrogance claim to myself a longer acquaintance with the lexicography of our language than any other writer has had". The commentators, from Christopher Smart to Thomas Carlyle to W. K. Wimsatt, who have stressed the Dictionary's foursquare, monumental, unalterable quality, have been excusably guilty not merely of false emphasis but of radical error. Reddick calls his book a record of intentions frustrated.

Instead, the Dictionary which stands revealed to us here is a quintessentially Johnsonian work, never concluded, as unfixable as the language itself. Each of its surviving forms (first edition, abridgement, revision, further revision published after Johnson's death) was crucially shaped by demands of the market-place, as well as by such extraneous facts as perceived danger to the Church of England. Much original work from Johnson's hand has never seen print, and seems certain not to do so. Yet any potential editor whose eye may light at the notion a variorum, a salvaged and finally completed Johnson's Dictionary, is surely a projector whose dreams are doomed to vanish in the light of thought. Johnson himself, beginning work at different dates on the same letter of the alphabet in its same interim state, produced entirely different and independent new versions. He has left behind material for a hugely expanded letter B, which would be matched at no other point in the sequence. As he said (in words which title Reddick's last chapter), "The world must, at present, take it as it is."

We are, however, privileged to glimpse in these pages something of how it was, how it was projected to be, and how it never could have been. Shakespeare could be edited, but the language could not be illustrated and defined. Johnson's Dictionary work, as revealed here, falls into one of two patterns: that of the endlessly renewed and renewable task (either Sisyphean labour or self-sustaining development) and that of growth, savage lopping, and renewal and regrowth (or of achievement, reverse, and victory snatched from defeat). Readers will perceive one pattern or the other according to their own disposition. Neither pattern can accommodate closure; each one leads its perceiver to interpret Johnson's work as he interpreted Shakespeare's, in terms of images drawn from natural process.

Some parts of this book are hard to read, but all are worthwhile.
Read it soon!

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Sophie von LaRoche, The History of Lady Sophia Sternheim, Extracted by a Woman Friend of the Same from Original Documents and Other Reliable Sources, Published in the Years 1771 and 1772 by C. M. Wieland, Translated from the German with a Critical Introduction by Christa Baguss Britt, State University of New York Press, 1991.

The heading shows something of how tightly Sophie von LaRoche, author of the first German novel, swaddled her heroine's story in a protective packaging of other people's words. Sophia Sternheim (the German Fraulein von Sternheim became Lady Sophia in one of the first English translations of 1776, but plain Miss Sophy in the other) writes much of her own story in letters to Emilia, one of her reverend foster-father's daughters; it is said to have been "extracted" by another daughter; it is preceded by the story of Sophia's parents; and the whole novel is prefaced by a letter to the author from her sentimental friend C. M. Wieland (second of two fiancées whom her parents had made her refuse), explaining how he had edited, footnoted, and published behind her back the tale which she had sent him for private reading.

LaRoche was an idealistic German nationalist, writing that language for ideological reasons - although she had used it chiefly for communicating with servants, and conducted her intellectual life in French. She deeply admired English culture, manners, and fictional heroines. Her novel is extremely high-toned. Sophia's parents come from different ranks (her father a colonel newly ennobled for his virtues, her half-English mother a baron's daughter); for this reason they mutually conceal their love, intending to stifle it and behave correctly, until he is overheard in secret soliloquy and her *escritoire* is searched. Thereupon her father (his best friend) persuades them that the "noble class must be perpetuated through noble alliances." They marry and live long enough to produce Sophia and to begin her education.

For an English reader, the story comes trailing clouds of Richardson: Sir Charles Grandison is as formative a parent to it as Clarissa. It is a great pity that the present translator has so little time for Richardson (she expresses surprise that so many English and Continental writers and thinkers "seem to have genuinely believed in the moral purity and educational value" of his prurient, titillating and salacious works) and also so little interest in novels by Englishwomen. She believes Sophia Sternheim to be the first female protagonist of a novel to learn, change, and grow, which ignores (to name only the best-known) Eliza Haywood's Betsy Thoughtless and Charlotte Lennox's *Arabella*.

Sophia has hidden compartments in her bracelets, filled with earth from her parents' tomb. She scorns the decadence of the court and the glances of the passionate, rakish Lord Derby, let alone the prince whose mistress her aunt and uncle want her to become; she feels but denies attraction to the high-minded, melancholy Lord Seymour; she botanizes, longs to improve the lot of the peasants, and in teaching her landlady's daughters "brought them to consider themselves fortunate to be chambermaids rather than ladies."

LaRoche must have felt she was refining Richardson. Seymour withdraws, from a very traditional distrust of his beloved's fidelity; shunned and tormented on all sides, she assents to marriage with the Lovelaceian Derby, who provides a phoney parson. Sophia believes she had been "prudent enough....not to leave the house

without first being married", and therefore supposes the rape to be marital rape:

she resisted until my impatience and desire caused me to tear off her clothes from the neck down, and against her will also to accomplish my final purpose. You cannot imagine how upset she was at this liberty which, after all, means so little in our circumstances....She is no longer the creature I loved; I am, therefore, no longer obliged to continue to act what to her I once seemed to be.

Sophia goes on to plumb the depths; but Lord Seymour remains in reserve for eventual reconciliation and marriage, and his uncle, Lord Rich, who also loves her, remains to sacrifice his own claims with heroic nobility and to paint the closing picture:

Happiness beams in his face when he sees his son at the bosom of the best of women, drinking in her virtues with his mother's milk....What blessings, what rewards, those deserve who give us proof that it is possible to fulfill all the demands of morality and that the practice of these duties does not disturb the enjoyment of life's pleasure but rather ennoble and confirms them and constitutes our true happiness in all life's vicissitudes!

Perhaps it is insular to feel more surprise that Thomas Mann and Christa Wolf should trace their lineage to this than that Virginia Woolf and William Golding should trace theirs to Oroonoko or Robinson Crusoe or Pamela. The novel, of course, is anything but insular. Reading Sophia Sternheim is like discovering a long-lost relation: here is one answer to Rambler no.4's demand for novelistic depictions of the highest human virtue; here is a possible influence on the masquerade in Burney's Cecilia, or for that heroine's steady aspiration to do good. Here is provocation for Austen's "pictures of perfection make me sick and wicked."

But it's not necessary to feel sick and wicked all the way through this novel. The translation, as my quotations will show, is sometimes awkward, and never eighteenth-century in flavour. Yet it makes available a novel containing much to involve and delight: Derby achieves some of Lovelace's dash; Sophia's aspirations to virtue (rather than her seamless achievement of it) make a complex and interesting study. She daydreams in Johnsonian fashion of many roles ("prince, princess, minister, court lady, favorite, mother of these children, wife of that man"); she longs to transcend "the usual prejudices of my class"; she struggles with the limitations and pitfalls of sensibility. The interest of Sophia Sternheim remains chiefly historical; but such interest makes it a publication to welcome.

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