

The Johnson Society of Australia Inc. Papers

Volume 10



Melbourne, August 2008

The Johnson Society of Australia Inc.: Papers

Volume 10

Melbourne, August 2008

ISSN 1329-2528

Price: \$10.00 (overseas, add postage)

Published by The Johnson Society of Australia Inc.
PO Box 163, Albert Park, Melbourne, Victoria 3206
JSA Internet home page: <http://www.jsaust.com>

Editor: Paul Tankard

Layout and typesetting:
Barbara Niven
with assistance from Media Relations Pty Ltd

Copyright remains with the individual writers.

The cover illustration shows Samuel Johnson imitating a kangaroo (see Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G.B.Hill, rev. L.F.Powell [Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1934-64] Vol.V, p. 511), from an etching by John Spooner, which is used with the artist's permission.

The Society produces a newsletter, *The Southern Johnsonian*, which is sent to members four times a year. It is also available on the Society's website.

The Johnson Society of Australia Inc.

Patron:	Dr Gordon Turnbull <i>Chief Editor of 'The Boswell Papers'</i> <i>Yale University</i>
President:	Prof. John Wiltshire <i>La Trobe University</i>
Vice-President:	Prof. Clive Probyn <i>Monash University</i>
Hon. Secretary:	Barbara Niven
Hon. Treasurer:	Barrie Sheppard
Publications Editor:	Dr Paul Tankard <i>University of Otago</i>
Newsletter Editor:	Bryan Reid
Committee members:	Bronwen Hickman Denis Le Neuf

Membership of the JSA

Those wishing to join The Johnson Society of Australia Inc. should contact The Secretary at PO Box 163, Albert Park, Melbourne, Victoria 3206, Australia or via e-mail to barbara.niven@bigpond.com and ask for an application form. An application form can also be found at the JSA website jsaust.com.

The Johnson Society of Australia Inc.

Papers

Volume 10

Melbourne, August 2008

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	page 5
<i>David Fleeman Memorial Lecture, 2006</i>	9
Alan Saunders: <i>Doing Philosophy with Samuel Johnson</i>	11
<i>Seminar Papers:</i>	
<i>About the Contributors</i>	23
Kate Burridge: <i>'Corruptions of Ignorance', 'Caprices of Innovation': Linguistic Purism and the Lexicographer</i>	25
Paul Tankard: <i>The False Formosan</i>	39
John Wiltshire: <i>Fanny Burney, Boswell and Johnson</i>	55
<i>List of JSA Publications</i>	66

Introduction

There is never a shortage of people to present talks to the Johnson Society of Australia. The crowded programs at our Annual Seminars testify to the intellectual liveliness engendered by reading (and reading about) Johnson and Boswell.

Many of the presenters are professional scholars, but this is the first volume of the *Papers* in which all contributors have doctorates, and all but our 2006 Fleeman Lecturer are academics. One of the pleasures of studying, writing and talking about Johnson is that he is the locus of one of the few areas of literary scholarship for which there is still an amateur audience. This is a far cry from literary texts that are no longer – or worse, never have been – read for pleasure by anyone who isn't paid to do so.

I would like to encourage members whose studies or professional interests are not literature to consider offering papers at future seminars. In the past we have had contributions from lawyers, journalists, teachers, actors, a dentist, a book dealer, a medical academic and a master mariner. In this volume we hear from a philosopher and cultural critic, and a linguist. On most subjects, Johnson was himself a learned amateur, and would have approved of our wide-ranging membership. It was what characterised his own Club.

15 April 2005 was the 250th anniversary of the publication of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*. One of the papers concerning the *Dictionary* presented at the Annual Seminar of that year was Kate Burridge's and we are pleased to be able to include it in this volume of the *Papers*.

Other contributions to this volume enable us to see Johnson in the context of his social and literary networks, through his relationships with people as different as Psalmanazar and Frances Burney.

Next year, 2009, is another anniversary, an important one: it is the year of Johnson's 300th birthday. Stay in touch with the JSA to hear of the events we are planning.

Paul Tankard
JSA Publications Editor
Senior Lecturer in English
University of Otago
New Zealand

The Johnson Society of Australia Inc.

**The David Fleeman Memorial Lecture
2006**

Doing Philosophy with Samuel Johnson

ALAN SAUNDERS

The David Fleeman Memorial Lecture

The David Fleeman Memorial Lecture is presented annually by the Johnson Society of Australia Inc. in memory of the distinguished British Johnsonian editor and bibliographer who was the Society's first Patron. Each lecture is given by a scholar of international reputation.

The thirteenth Fleeman Memorial Lecture was delivered in Melbourne at the English Speaking Union on 16 September 2006 by Dr Alan Saunders.

Alan Saunders is a writer and broadcaster for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Radio National. He has been responsible for programs including *The Food Program*, *Screen*, *The Comfort Zone*, and currently *By Design* and *The Philosophers' Zone*. He also frequently appears on other programs. His writing and broadcasting interests include architecture and design issues, gardens and food, film and television, and philosophy.

Born in England, Alan studied Philosophy for his B.A. Degree at the University of Leicester (where he was also President of the Student Union) and Logic and Scientific Method for his M.Sc. at the London School of Economics. He came to Australia in 1981 to undertake Ph.D. studies in the History of Ideas Unit at the Australian National University in Canberra. In 1985 he was Frances Yates Fellow at the Warburg Institute, University of London. He joined the Science Unit of ABC Radio National in 1987 and was awarded his Ph.D. in 1989.

He is the author of *A is for Apple* (Random House, 1999), *Australian Food* (1999) and his novel, *Alana*, was published by Penguin in 2002. He has written regular columns for a variety of Australian newspapers and magazines. In 1992, Alan was awarded the Geraldine Pascall Prize for critical writing and broadcasting, and he has received a number of awards for his architectural journalism.

Doing Philosophy with Samuel Johnson

Alan Saunders

It will, I hope, be obvious how odd the title of this talk is. Because, surely, whatever else you do with Samuel Johnson, you don't do philosophy with him.

We can get a fix on this state of affairs if we look at what philosophers do when they do philosophy. There are, of course, all sorts of things they might be doing, but we can possibly narrow it down to just a couple. You – you as a philosopher, that is – might want to address some question about the nature of the world in which we live. This is a very pure approach to philosophy; it involves asking what are essentially rather childish – or, at least, childlike – questions. How, for example, do I know that the world as I experience it is not, in fact, my dream; how do I know that the table on which my hand presses as I write really exists?

The second approach is by way of other philosophers. You read Plato, say, or Immanuel Kant, and you notice something that seems to be wrong, or at least seems to be interesting in a way that nobody has thought of before: there's some discrepancy, or perhaps just something or other that you want to gnaw at. By way of this gnawing, you start to address some philosophical questions of your own.

In the main, the innocent, childlike approach is what philosophers in the Anglophone tradition like to think they are adopting. The other approach, emerging from a study of the glorious dead, is more European, but it's a bit Chinese too: I have a translation of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* which is hedged about with commentaries and commentaries on commentaries. It looks rather like the Talmud, though it might also bring to mind the great medieval philosopher St Thomas Aquinas, much of whose work can be seen as commentary on that of his ancient Greek predecessor Aristotle.

Of course, it never works out quite like this. Perhaps people did ask pure and innocent questions in ancient Greece, but now we have a solid body of philosophical thought to take into account and if you're thinking about any philosophical question, it's going to be very difficult to ignore what other philosophers have said about it. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the great French philosopher René Descartes presented himself as a man sitting alone in a room thinking about the nature of reality, but it's clear that he was deeply versed in the philosophy of his day and that of many a day before his. He just covered his tracks. By Samuel Johnson's time, philosophers were reluctant to acknowledge the possibility that they might have read the work

of any other philosopher: the footnote was out of fashion. However learned a philosopher might be, he (and it was usually a he, of course) wanted to appear as somebody who'd just thought this stuff up for himself.

But where does Johnson stand in all this? It's difficult to imagine him sitting down to address some great general question – Is life a dream? How do I know this table really exists? – but it's equally difficult to imagine him combing the works of René Descartes, John Locke and George Berkeley to see what arose from his reading.

Yet there is, I believe, a tension in his work between the philosopher and the poet. For us, a poet deals in particulars and the philosopher in generalities. Johnson saw things rather differently. For him, the poet is a generalist: he does not, as we are told in his novel *Rasselas*, seek to number the streaks of the tulip. No, the poet speaks general truths about the world.

Now, of course, it's easy to say that what this means is that Johnson wasn't a romantic, but there is more to it than that: there is a question of sensibility that goes beyond the history of literary style. We might perhaps compare here a couple of poems, one by Samuel Johnson and the other by Ben Jonson.

Here is the later Johnson in 1782, beginning his verses on the death of his friend Robert Levett:

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

And here, by contrast, is all of the heart-breaking poem that Ben Jonson wrote on the death of his first son in 1603:

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;
My sin was too much hope of thee, lov'd boy.
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
Oh, could I lose all father now! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,
And if no other misery, yet age!
Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say, Here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.
For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such
As what he loves may never like too much.

The steady, relentless tread of Samuel Johnson's line – the very brevity of the line, which keeps bringing us up short – impresses us with the hopelessness of our situation, but it is very much *our* situation, the common fate of humanity, rather than the particular pain of losing somebody to whom one has been close. Later on in the poem, Johnson does, with a few deft strokes, evoke his dead friend, but there is nothing here like the

very personal – the quite startlingly personal – expression of grief that we find in the poem by Ben Jonson. Of course, to any artist, strong feeling is material: you feel it but you use it and in using it you work at it. There's work clearly apparent in the Ben Jonson poem – the elaborate metaphor of debt, the strikingly proprietorial claim of a dead child as the author's best piece of poetry, classical allusions and plays on Hebrew words – but it is quite without the urge to generalise, to universalise, that we see in Samuel Johnson's verses.

Yet in Johnson's life – and it's impossible not to believe, in his mind as well – particulars kept intruding. Ask yourself whether he had the body of a philosopher. This is a stupid question, of course, because philosophers come in all shapes and sizes: Socrates was notoriously ugly and St Thomas Aquinas was what we today would call morbidly obese; by contrast, the great Spinoza seems to have had dark, rather sad, good looks and, in the twentieth century, Ludwig Wittgenstein had a slim build and somewhat chiselled features. But look at Johnson in the striking picture of him painted by Joshua Reynolds in the 1770s. We see only one of his eyes – the picture is in profile – and it might be merely hooded, but it might also, perhaps, be blind, and we see a man whose hands are held in front of him, the fingers clutching inwards. These could be the hands of a man who is trying to make a point, but they could also be the hands of a man whose body is to him a quivering, convulsive burden, a man for whom abstract thought might be a sheer impossibility – how can you abstract yourself from the world when the world, in the form of your own diseased body, is always so much with you?

Or are they the hands of a complete idiot? This was what some people thought of Johnson when they first met him, particularly before his reputation had begun to precede him. They saw a man whose body rolled around and who was constantly making nervous movements with his hands and feet. Only when he spoke did they realise how powerful an intellect was before them.¹ He was more than ordinarily capable of abstract thought, but he was also a man for whom abstract thought might furnish a retreat from the intractable reality of his own diseased flesh. And he was, of course, a deeply depressive individual: the man who would walk home taking care to touch and count every railing that he passed, a man for whom one of the most abstract of subjects, arithmetic, was a way of keeping a grip on the world.

Before we move on to Johnson's encounter with what we might call formal philosophy, it's worth asking who was doing philosophy in Johnson's time. The places where we needn't look are the universities. In England, there were then only two – Oxford and Cambridge – and they were neither of them intellectual powerhouses. Johnson seems in some respects to

have appreciated his time at Oxford, but it's difficult to think that he would have felt the same had he been a philosopher or a logician. Such philosophers as England could boast in his day were more or less amateurs: aristocrats like the Earl of Shaftesbury; clergymen like David Hartley and William Paley; dissenting preachers like Joseph Priestley and Richard Price (two men of whom Johnson greatly disapproved).

For real, concentrated academic philosophy, we must look well to the north of Johnson's London. That great liberating movement of ideas that we call the European Enlightenment is still too often associated with Voltaire, Rousseau and the salons of Paris. The fact is, however, that the political vanguard of the Enlightenment was in America and the intellectual heavy lifting was being done in Germany and in Scotland. It was in Scotland that thinkers of the calibre of Adam Smith, Thomas Reid, Adam Ferguson and Dougald Stewart could teach in universities and, though David Hume, the very greatest of them (and perhaps the greatest philosopher in the English language), couldn't get an academic chair, there's little doubt that the atmosphere north of the Tweed positively fizzed with philosophical energy.

This, in Johnson's day, was the centre of formal philosophy, and its main challenge was to find a way of refuting the claims of scepticism (or, perhaps, to summon the resolve to acquiesce in them). Scepticism – the view that no claim to knowledge can ever be conclusively justified – had been around since the time of the ancient Greeks; it had been revived in the sixteenth century and then given new force in the eighteenth by David Hume, whom Johnson thought a vain man wanting to merely impress others with his metaphysical oddities.

To put all this in context, it will be useful to turn to a thinker of Johnson's day: Thomas Reid, Professor of Philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen, and a very significant philosopher in his own right. Reid prefaced his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) with a short history of recent philosophy, which, though it has been challenged by later scholarship, usefully encapsulates a contemporary view of these matters. He looks at the work of three great philosophers, all of whom remain on the academic syllabus to this day: John Locke, George Berkeley and Hume. In the late seventeenth century, Locke had argued that there were three sorts of thing in the world: substances, ideas and minds. Substance was what material objects were comprised of. It had extension – which is to say that it occupied space – and it was, though perhaps only at the atomic level, hard and impenetrable. Minds were not substances, though they had location and individuation: my mind is in me and is different from yours, which is in you. Ideas mediated between substance and mind. If you saw a tree, it was because an idea of the tree had been conveyed from the tree to your mind.

The Irish philosopher George Berkeley, however, took issue with Locke's definition of substance and concluded that it was unnecessary. A tree is an idea in the mind – my mind, your mind, or, if nobody else is around, God's mind – and there is no need of a concept of substance to account for such ideas. But neither, it later turned out, is there any need for a mind in which these ideas inhere, because along came David Hume, who, says Reid, 'drowned all in one universal deluge' by observing that, though he was aware of a succession of impressions and ideas, introspection did not reveal to him a mind, his mind, the focus for these ideas and impressions.² So where Locke had shown us a world of substances, ideas and minds, Berkeley had reduced it to a world of ideas and minds, and Hume saw nothing but ideas.

Let me put this another way, and try to make it sound a little less odd than it might seem to be. Let's begin with Berkeley. You see a tree. You see it, you smell it, and, if it's bearing fruit, you taste it. You hit it and it makes a dull sound, so you can hear the tree. You touch it, you press your hands against it and you can feel that it has solidity and substance. You chop it down, perhaps, and see the concentric rings of its trunk. You place a leaf under a microscope and inspect its minutest details. You might now think that you know a lot about the tree – and Berkeley would admit that you do – but does your knowledge in any way go beyond your five senses? No, it doesn't, not even when those senses are magnified by devices like the microscope. Does it help, then, to assume that, underlying all your sensory experiences, there is what Locke called substance? Berkeley would say that it doesn't: the essence of the tree lies in its being perceived. Physical objects are just bundles of qualities and those qualities can exist only in so far as there is some mind to experience them. It follows that material objects exist only if they are perceived. They can exist only in the mind, whether the mind is earthly or divine.

We know, or we think we know, how Johnson responded to this. The story is a famous one, at least to Johnsonians, but it's worth reminding ourselves of the details. The year is 1763 and the voice is, of course, that of James Boswell:

After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it *thus*.'

This is where most accounts of this episode end, and it's easy to see why: it accords with the common view of Johnson as a blunt, bluff, commonsensical sort of fellow. Boswell, however, goes on:

This was a stout exemplification of ... the *original principles* of Reid and of Beattie; without admitting which, we can no more argue in metaphysics, than we can argue in mathematics without axioms. To me it is not conceivable how Berkeley can be answered by pure reasoning; but I know that the nice and difficult task was to have been undertaken by one of the most luminous minds of the present age, had not politics 'turned him from calm philosophy aside.' What an admirable display of subtilty, united with brilliance, might his contending with Berkeley have afforded us! How must we, when we reflect on the loss of such an intellectual feast, regret that he should be characterised as the man,

'Who born for the universe narrow'd his mind,
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind?'³

There's rather a lot going on here, and not all of it is to do with Johnson. The Beattie of whom Boswell speaks was James Beattie, who, like Reid, was a Scottish philosopher who sought to answer Hume. The man of luminous mind who would have addressed these issues had he not been distracted by politics was the great Whig member of Parliament, friend of Johnson and member of Johnson's club, Edmund Burke, who, though he may not have given all his attention to the subject, appears to have been the author of a very favourable review of Beattie's *Essay on the Immutability of Truth*. The anonymous notice – published in 1771 in *The Annual Register*, of which Burke was editor – praises Beattie for vindicating 'the rights of the human understanding' and for opposing commonsense, 'this primitive and fundamental standard of all Truth,' to the 'cheap and lazy scepticism' of the age.⁴

Commonsense – the idea that there are some things which are so fundamental to our thought, even though we cannot prove them – lies at the heart of Johnson's response to Berkeley. His action scarcely amounts to a refutation: Berkeley was as capable as Johnson of kicking stones and of knowing what happens when you do, but he believed that the stone, the foot, and, for that matter, the pain in the foot, were simply ideas in the mind. And if Berkeley could know what Johnson knew, Johnson, I suspect, was able to understand what Berkeley was getting at. His stone-kicking was a joke.

But perhaps there's more to it than that. Kicking a stone – or, for that matter a tree – is a way of saying that it's real in the way that we've always thought it real. You can kick it, and how much more proof do you need than that of its reality and solidity? In the light of my experience of the stoniness of a stone, Berkeley's theories do indeed seem sophisticated, or at least beside the point.

I suspect, though, that for Johnson, Hume was more of a problem. Ask yourself who you are, as Hume invites you to do, and what do you find? Are you aware of yourself? You're looking at a tree, perhaps, so you're certainly aware of the tree, but are you aware of the self who is aware of the tree? Here it might seem

that I, say, have an advantage over a cat or my own eighteen-month-old self: I have language, so I can formulate the sentence ‘I am looking at a tree.’ But what does this mean? It just means that I’ve formulated a sentence while looking at a tree and now I’m thinking both of the tree and of the sentence. There are two ideas in my mind but I’m no closer to the self in whom these ideas are supposed to inhere. Whenever I look into myself, I’m aware of the things I see and I’m aware of the things I hear and of the things I think, but I’m not aware of me.

This is a nearly Buddhist conception of the self: I am a bundle of thoughts and qualities that have come together briefly and will one day be dissipated. It is difficult to believe that this idea would have appealed to Johnson. In the first place, as a depressive, he had always known many times when his own self was too much with him. Secondly, he feared death. Of course, he feared it principally as a Christian of his day was supposed to fear it – because it brought with it the promise of God’s implacable judgement – but he feared it also because of another possibility: not eternal punishment, but eternal nothingness. He simply would not believe the stories (which, by the way, are certainly true) that Hume himself, who expected nothing but annihilation, went to his own death with complete equanimity. ‘It was not so, Sir,’ said Johnson. ‘He had a vanity in being thought easy.’ (*Life* I, 154; 16 Sept. 1777)

Johnson was unfair to Hume. It is too simple to see him and Hume as very different characters, to look at Johnson as a man loud and commanding in company but depressive and obsessive in private, and Hume as elegant and sociable, the welcome and cheerful guest at the finest Parisian salons. But, in fact, if we are to believe Hume (and I don’t see why we shouldn’t), his intensity of gloomy speculation, his relentless reiteration of unanswerable questions, caused him to fancy himself ‘in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness,’ from which he could find pleasure only in the pursuit of mundane pleasures, in backgammon and good company.⁵

Hume’s darkness was a philosophical darkness – the curtains were drawn on the sunlight only when he sat in his study and thought very hard – but it was no less real than Johnson’s. And, in fact, Johnson’s way of seeking to bring light to the darkness was very similar to Hume’s. Business, distraction, company were what Johnson recommended as a cure for those mental scruples ‘which you in your lucid moments know to be vain ...’ (This is from *Rasselas*).⁶ Perhaps he didn’t play backgammon, but he certainly kept good company.

He had no time, though, any more than Hume did, for the consolations of facile, popular philosophy. His contempt for this sort of thing reaches a pitch of literary, emotional and intellectual intensity in his long review of Soame Jenyns’s *Free Inquiry into*

the Nature and Origin of Evil. (Incidentally, the volume of the Yale Edition of Johnson's Works in which the review is reprinted is dedicated, like this lecture, to the memory of David Fleeman.)

Now, in reading this extraordinary and magisterial piece of work, it's important to know what lies behind it. To begin with, Jenyns, whom one can only think of as Johnson's victim, is a good example (by which I mean *representative* rather than *competent*) of the sort of person who did philosophy, or what passed for philosophy, in Johnson's England. He was a country squire and Member of Parliament, a dandy, a wit and a man of letters. His manner is fat with unjustified self-confidence and it is difficult not to believe that Johnson, a man who knew evil – at least the evils of personal circumstances, of bodily and mental infirmity – was offended as much by the style as by the content of Jenyns's work.⁷

But behind Jenyns's prose there lies a poem – Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*, published in 1733 – and behind the poem there stands a genuine and substantial philosopher: Leibniz.

Literature has not been kind to the memory of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a man of universal scientific, mathematical and philosophical genius, who died in 1716, alone and embittered. In England, his thought was taken up by Pope and, to be honest, made bland by him. In France, things were even worse: he was caricatured as the ridiculous Dr Pangloss in Voltaire's famous satire *Candide*. Here is Pangloss in full flow:

Pangloss taught metaphysico-theologo-cosmologonology. He proved admirably that there is no effect without a cause and, that in this best of all possible worlds, My Lord the Baron's castle was the best of all castles and his wife the best of all possible Baronesses. 'Tis demonstrated,' said he, 'that things cannot be otherwise; for since everything is made for an end, everything is necessarily for the best end. Observe that noses were made to wear spectacles and so we have spectacles. Legs were visibly instituted to be breeched, and so we have breeches. Stones were formed to be quarried and to build castles; and My Lord has a very noble castle; for the greatest baron in the province should have the best house; and as pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all the year round: consequently those who have asserted that all is well talk nonsense; they ought to have said that all is for the best.'⁸

There is little here – there is something, but not much – that the real Leibniz could not have agreed with, but his thought is here stretched just enough in one direction for it to look thoroughly silly. So what was the real Leibniz saying?

He was saying that God is perfect in knowledge, power and goodness. Being perfect in knowledge, he was able, before creating the world, to survey all the worlds that he could possibly have created. One of these possible worlds is the actual world, the world that we live in; some of the others differ from it to a large degree

and others to a small degree. The actual world is, of course, the world that God chose to create and, being perfect in goodness, he chose to create it because it was the best of all these possible worlds. Nothing happens in this world which is not consistent with divine reason. Miracles – the parting of the Red Sea, the turning of water into wine – do not violate the laws of nature; they are simply the laws of nature operating in ways that we in our ignorance do not understand. But we have also to remember that great disasters – for example, the earthquake that destroyed the city of Lisbon in 1755 or, for that matter, the more recent tsunami in Asia – have also occurred in accordance with divine order, perhaps because human happiness, though important to God, is not his only concern. Regarded this way, then, Leibniz's philosophy has a rather stern, impersonal appearance. It is by no means mindlessly optimistic, if looked at with sufficient philosophical detachment.

But philosophical detachment is precisely what Johnson refused to deal in: 'Whether evil can be wholly separated from good or not, it is plain,' he tell us in his review of Jenyns, 'that they may be mixed, in various degrees, and, as far as human eyes can judge, the degree of evil might have been less, without any impediment to good.' (399) Leibniz would tell him, of course, that the judgement of human eyes is pathetically limited as compared with God's and Johnson might well reply to this that the judgement of human eyes is the only sort of judgement available to humans.

But Johnson was not really addressing Leibniz. He was addressing Alexander Pope and Soame Jenyns. Sadly, much of what Voltaire put into the mouth of Dr Pangloss, while intended as satire, is curiously like what Alexander Pope (no mean satirist himself, of course) put down in all earnestness in his *Essay on Man*:

Why has not Man a microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, Man is not a Fly.

And:

All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;
All Discord, Harmony not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good:
And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT.⁹

If Samuel Johnson had been a music lover, which he rather emphatically was not, he would have known that in 1751 the Reverend Thomas Morrell had used these last four words – 'whatever is, is right' – in the libretto he provided for George Frideric Handel's great oratorio *Jephtha*. They are sung by the chorus with grim, implacable force, just when it has become clear

that the hero will have to offer up his own daughter as a sacrifice to God. In a way this is an answer to *Candide's* question – if this is the best of all possible worlds, what must the others be like? – because it reminds us that what is right is not necessarily what conduces to human happiness. Another way of putting it is that, if this is the best of all possible worlds, then the others, whatever they might be like, are simply not as good, however bad the actual world might seem to be. Leibniz is concerned, as Pope claimed to be, to justify the ways of God to man, but he is under no illusions that the outcome of the process of justification will always be of comfort to us.

Whether or not Johnson knew his Leibniz, he knew better than to suppose that a universe that is best from God's point of view is necessarily the best from our point of view. Pope and Jenyns think that because this is the best of possible worlds, it ought be possible for all of us to find happiness in our lot. Johnson, who knew what pain and poverty were, will have nothing of this. He is, for example, utterly contemptuous of Jenyns's description of poverty as 'want of riches'. He tells us:

There is another poverty, which is want of competence of all that can soften the miseries of life, of all that can diversify attention, or delight imagination. There is yet another poverty, which is want of necessaries, a species of poverty which no care of the publick, no charity of particulars, can preserve many from feeling openly, and many secretly.

He agrees that some poor people may be buoyed with hope – and who therefore, as Jenyns and Pope want to believe, are not entirely unhappy – but he knows too well the 'motionless dependence' into which the truly poor can sink:

Life must be seen, before it can be known. This author and Pope, perhaps, never saw the miseries which they imagine thus easy to be borne. The poor, indeed, are insensible of many little vexations, which sometimes imbitter the possessions, and pollute the enjoyments, of the rich. They are not pained by casual incivility, or mortified by the mutilation of a compliment; but this happiness is like that of a malefactor, who ceases to feel the cords that bind him, when the pincers are tearing his flesh. (406-07)

And, coming very close to his own experience, he refuses to allow that there are any consolations in madness: 'Every madman is either arrogant and irascible, or gloomy and suspicious, or possessed by some passion, or notion, destructive to his quiet. He has always discontent in his look, and malignity in his bosom.' (408)

You'll perhaps have gathered that I admire Johnson's review so much that I find the temptation just to go on quoting very difficult to resist. So let me summarise. Johnson, I believe, is a philosopher, but he is not a philosopher in the way that many writers of his time whom we now think of as philosophers were

philosophers. He is not, like Leibniz, or, later in the century, Immanuel Kant, concerned with universal laws, whether moral or metaphysical. When it comes to moral philosophy, he is alert to the local and the particular (as, incidentally, was Hume, who was an historian as well as a philosopher). He will not allow with Jenyns that the universe is like a large and well-regulated household in which each member enjoys both the privileges of his place and the knowledge that his subordination, if he is in a subordinate position, contributes to the magnificence of the whole. Why should the magnificence of the universe add anything to the supreme being, who is infinite in power, and can we really know that the happiness of lesser beings is communicated to higher beings?

How, then, are we end this brief attempt to characterise Johnson as a philosopher? Much, I suspect, as he ended his book *Rasselas*: with a conclusion ‘in which nothing is concluded’.

Rasselas, the Prince of Abyssinia, leaves the Happy Valley, not because he is unhappy but because he suffers the want of he who wants nothing. In other words, he suffers a general dissatisfaction. We learn that people we might think of as happy are not happy: the Egyptians built the pyramids merely because such enjoyment of life as they knew was not good enough. We learn also that the causes of good and evil are so much entangled with each other and so much subject to chance, that we cannot make a realistic choice in these matters.

But we also learn from Imlac the poet – he who has told us that the poet does not seek to number the streaks of the tulip – that the poet must be acquainted with every mode of life, that he must estimate the happiness and misery of every condition, ‘observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and trace the changes of the human mind, as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude’. (Ch. X, 27) He must know languages and science and be able to set himself apart from the preconceptions of his age and country and consider right and wrong in an abstract state.

In other words, the poet oscillates between the general and the particular, the abstract and the concrete. Samuel Johnson – whose body and mind were so often diseased, but whose intellect was so powerful – was almost alone among English writers in his ability to negotiate this dialectic. It is this that makes him, in an informal sense, a true philosopher.

Notes

- ¹ See Philip Davis, 'Extraordinarily ordinary: the life of Samuel Johnson,' in Greg Clingham, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997): 4-17.
- ² Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), rpt. in Sir William Hamilton, ed., *The Works of Thomas Reid – 7th ed., 2 v.*, (Edinburgh, 1872): I, 1-270, vid. 18.
- ³ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Rodney Shewan, 2 v. (London: Folio Society, 1968), I, 292 (6 August 1763). The verse quoted is by Johnson's (and Burke's and Boswell's) friend Oliver Goldsmith.
- ⁴ Review of Beattie, *Annual Register for the Year 1776*: 252-260. (Beattie's book appeared in 1770 and the review is dated 1771, but the *Annual Register* was perpetually late in its reviews.) I am indebted for this reference to Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, *The Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967).
- ⁵ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), ed., from the edition of 1777, L.A. Selby-Bigge – 3rd ed., rev. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), bk. I, pt. 4, sec. vii (p. 269)
- ⁶ Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, ed. J. P. Hardy (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), Ch. XLVI, 115.
- ⁷ See Samuel Johnson, review of Soame Jenyns, *Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, in O.M. Brack, ed., *A Commentary on Mr Pope's Principles of Morality, or Essay on Man: A Translation from the French* (1741), in *The Yale Edition of Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol. xvii (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2004): 389-395.
- ⁸ Voltaire, *Candide*, trans. Richard Aldington, in Ben Ray Redman, ed., *The Portable Voltaire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977): 229-328, 230.
- ⁹ Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, Epistle 1, ll.193-94, 289-94.

Seminar Papers

About the Contributors

Kate Burridge

is Professor of Linguistics at Melbourne's Monash University. Before that, she spent nineteen years at La Trobe University. Kate's research interests include the structure and history of English, and notions of euphemism, dysphemism and linguistic taboo. She has written and co-authored four books on language and linguistic issues, and is well known to Australian audiences for her language commentaries on ABC radio and television. She plays the hurdy-gurdy, though she has not yet given the JSA a demonstration.

Paul Tankard

is Senior Lecturer in English at the world's southernmost university, the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. His scholarly interests include Johnson and Boswell, C.S. Lewis and the Inklings, the English essay, and the contemporary transformations of literate culture. He is Publications Editor for the Johnson Society of Australia, and gave the Fleeman Lecture in 2007. He is preparing the first-ever edition of Boswell's journalism, which will be published by Yale University Press.

John Wiltshire

is Honorary Research Associate and former Professor of English at Melbourne's La Trobe University, and President of the Johnson Society of Australia. His publications on eighteenth-century topics include *Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient* (Cambridge, 1991), *Jane Austen and The Body: 'The Picture of Health'* (Cambridge, 1992), and *Mansfield Park* in the Cambridge edition of *The Works of Jane Austen* (2005). He is currently working on *The Creation of Dr Johnson*, to be published by Helm Information. In 2000 he gave the Fleeman Lecture, published as *Jane Austen's 'Dear Dr Johnson'* (2001).

'Corruptions of Ignorance,' 'Caprices of Innovation': Linguistic Purism and the Lexicographer

Kate Burridge

Introduction

I have ... attempted a dictionary of the *English* language, which ... has itself been hitherto neglected, suffered, to spread, under the direction of change, into wild exuberance, resigned to the tyranny of time and fashion, and exposed to the corruptions of ignorance, and caprices of innovation ...¹

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, I explore the concept of linguistic purism. This year marks the 250th anniversary of Dr Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*,² undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary achievements in the field of lexicography, and especially significant for its impact on the emerging standard language. It seems fitting, therefore, to devote some of the discussion here to the golden age of linguistic prescription, which is – in literary history – appropriately dubbed the 'Age of Johnson'. In addition to examples from Johnson's *Dictionary*, I also draw from Archbishop Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, probably the most influential grammar book of this time. But I am concerned here not only with the sort of formal acts of censorship as might be carried out by such gatekeepers of the language as Johnson and Lowth, but also the attitudes and activities of everyday speakers. These might today take the form of letters to newspapers or comments on talkback radio. In this context, ordinary language users act as self-appointed censors and take it upon themselves to condemn those words and constructions they feel do not measure up.

Second, I will argue that concerns for the well-being of the language, and the linguistic censoring and puristic activities that accompany these concerns, belong to our tabooing behaviour generally. I see this behaviour as part of the human struggle to control nature; in this case, a speaker's struggle to define and to manage language and to force 'the boundless chaos of living speech' (to use Johnson's words) into the neat classificatory systems of the Standard.³

Linguistic Purism

Language purism, like any other tabooing practice, seeks to constrain the linguistic conduct of individuals by identifying certain elements in a language as 'bad'. The following include some disparaging labels used by Johnson:⁴

bad (a general term of condemnation; e.g. *vaulty* 'arched',
frautage 'cargo')
familiar (used in conversation, colloquial; e.g. *bear-garden*
'rude', *abominably*)
ludicrous (not fit for serious usage; e.g. *chitchat*, *hussy*)
low (informal, not polite and not suited to dignified
writing; e.g. *frisky*, *funk*)

burlesque ('jocular unsuitable language'; e.g. *grannam* 'grandmother', *ribroast* 'to beat soundly')
barbarous (impure, unsuitable language; e.g. *nowadays*, *slippy*)
cant (the jargon of a group, especially criminal; e.g. *bamboozle*, *higgledy-piggledy*)
unauthorized, *of no authority* (not supported by any authority; e.g. *tufty*, *spick and span*)

Johnson would conjoin labels for those words he felt particularly bad – *fun*, *glum* and *lingo* were branded as 'low cant', *woundy* ('excessive') and *cudden* ('a clown') as 'low bad', *shab* ('to play mean tricks') as 'low barbarous cant'. Other disparaging labels used at this time included *vulgar*, *rude*, *ungenteel*, *inelegant*, *disgustful*, *improper*, *familiar*, *vile*, *rustick* and *country*.

So how is it that words such as these become condemned? Typically, the linguistic elements tabooed are the words and word usage that are believed to threaten in some way the identity of the culture in question. *Authenticity* is the key word here, and it has two faces. One is the desire to rid the language of unwanted elements and to protect it from foreign influences. Borrowings, especially from French, irked Johnson greatly. Words such as *finesse* and *ruse* he described as 'neither elegant nor necessary', *trait* as 'scarce English'. In the *Preface*, he warned that more such borrowings would 'reduce us to babble a dialect of France'.

The other face of purism is the struggle to arrest linguistic change and to retain the language in its perceived traditional form. For example, in Johnson's day the meaning of *sensible* ('having the power of perception') was in the process of giving way to the modern-day meaning ('showing sound judgement'). Such usage Johnson described as 'low'. Johnson was also extremely critical of shortenings, such as *hyper* ('barbarously curtailed from *hypercritick*'); *phiz* ('a ridiculous contraction from physiognomy'); *thro* ('contracted by barbarians from *through*'). He disapproved of the verb *to colour*, 'a low word, used only in conversation.' Presumably Johnson opposed the conversion of the noun *colour* to a verb, just as people today despise coinages such as *to beverage* and *to stretcher*. Also condemned was the verb *dumbfound* – a blended construction combining *dumb* and *confound*. I assume it was the mongrel origins that were at fault here. Other branded entries were plentiful in his *Dictionary*: *clever*, *coax*, *chum*, *horrid*, *mishmash*, *flippant*, *fuss*, *banter*, *simpleton*, and many more. Presumably the worst examples never even made it into the collection. Clearly, many of them were contemporary slang. In the *Preface*, Johnson warns us about 'compliance with fashion' and 'lust of innovation', and entries like that for *shabby* ('mean') are revealing: 'A word that has crept into conversation and low writing; but ought not to be admitted into the language.' The label 'slang', however, was not available at this time to describe such language. *Slang* referred specifically

to the patter of criminals and it wasn't until the early 1800s that the current meaning appeared.

Linguist Deborah Cameron has argued that the prescriptive endeavours of speakers are in fact more complex and diverse than my discussion here might suggest. For this reason, she prefers the expression 'verbal hygiene' over 'prescription' or 'purism'. Cameron argues, rightly to my mind, that all of us have a sense of linguistic values; verbal hygiene is part of every speaker's linguistic competence, as basic to language as vowels and consonants.⁵ The 2004 'Runaway #1 British Bestseller', *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, is evidence of this.⁶ This amusing guide to punctuation has been met by prayers of thanks for its existence by verbal hygienists, or 'sticklers' (as author Lynne Truss describes them) the world over.

With more than 500,000 copies sold in Britain alone, the guidebook attests to the vast number of verbal hygienists out there. They can be found in language associations formed to promote causes as diverse as Plain English, simplified spelling, Esperanto, Klingon, assertiveness and effective communication – even something as esoteric as the preservation of Old English strong verbs (such as *thrive, throve, thriven*). Verbal hygienists are also people who enjoy thinking and arguing about words, who correct the writing of their students and who look things up in dictionaries and usage guides. All these activities are born out of a straightforward urge to improve and clean up the language. But, as is so often the case when aspects of human behaviour are proscribed in this way, it is generally what other people do that ends up on the black-list.

Take a simple example from Australian English and its relationship with a powerful relative, American English. One consequence of the rise of mass media in the global village is that native Englishes, such as Australian English, are now much more open than ever before to worldwide influences. There is a pervasive American dimension to much of what is global; indeed, a clear distinction between globalisation and American cultural imperialism is difficult to maintain. Given this dominance of the United States and the inevitable loosening of ties between Britain and its former Antipodean colonies, it is not surprising to find a good deal of linguistic steamrolling going on. The 'Americanization' of English has been a hot topic in Australia and New Zealand; as in other places, it has been increasing since World War II. There are identifiable influences on teenage slang and more generally on teenage culture.⁷

Many reactions from older folk are hostile. Newspaper articles with headlines such as 'Facing an American Invasion' go on to 'condemn this insidious, but apparently virile, infection

from the USA'. In letters to the editor and talkback calls on the radio, speakers rail against 'ugly Americanisms' – many of which, it turns out, are not Americanisms at all.⁸ Even though in the Australian State of Victoria the spelling reforms of 1969 advocated spellings such as *color* and *honor* without an *-our* ending, writers ignored the edict; '[W]hy should our spelling be changed to follow the American pattern?' one writer complained in a letter to the editor.⁹ Presumably, it was public pressure that eventually forced the *Melbourne Age* newspaper in 2001 to return to the *-our* spelling. And even though many prestigious British publications, including the *London Times*, various editions of Daniel Jones' *English Pronouncing Dictionary*,¹⁰ and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, promote the *-ize* spelling of words such as *legalize*, most Australians reject it outright because it smacks too much of a smarmy deference to America.

Clearly, such lay concerns about language usage are not based on genuine linguistic worries, but reflect deeper and more general social judgements. In this case, the current hostility towards American usage is undoubtedly born of linguistic insecurity in the face of a cultural, political and economic superpower. American English usage poses a threat to authentic 'downunder English' and is tabooed.

The Making of the Standard

Standard languages in general represent a kind of linguistic 'best practice' – a set of behaviours that claims to excel all others. Correctness, precision, purity and elegance are the qualities of the perceived standard. It is the measure of 'excellence' – the 'benchmark' against which all other varieties of the language are gauged. In the case of English, the standard language has been artificially created over many years, not by any English 'language academy', but by a network of different groups that include writers of style guides and usage manuals, dictionary-makers, editors, teachers, newspaper columnists and the like. Their activities have amassed over the years an arsenal of prescriptive texts that promote and also legitimise a single fixed and approved variety. These dictionaries, grammars and handbooks record, regulate, tidy up and iron out. Their neat lists, elegant definitions and fine-spun paradigms necessarily ignore the diversity and variability that is found in any language system. Even histories of the language prop up the linguistic fiction by ignoring this richness. Apart from occasional lip service to regional differences, historical accounts of English have focused overwhelmingly on the making of the present-day standard. The story of the achievements of one variety has become the story of our language.¹¹

Standard English is the variety that is promoted in schools and used in law courts and government institutions; students are expected to use it in essays; ESL instructors teach it to foreign language learners. Speakers are supposed to acquire the standard

rules and those who do not are in danger of being regarded as recalcitrant, lazy and incompetent. They are said to have poor grammar – or worse, no grammar at all. It is even referred to as the *standard language* and not the *standard dialect*. Since dialects are held to be substandard varieties of a language, the label *standard dialect* would seem an oxymoron. For many people, Standard English *is* English. What they think of as the rules of English grammar are the rules of this one variety – more especially its written form. There is a perception that words are not real words until they appear in a dictionary. Speakers will often ask linguists whether something they have heard, or even used themselves, is an actual word or not. Use is not enough to qualify something as language. As Hans von Jagemann put it in his presidential address to the Modern Language Association, dictionary makers and grammarians are believed to build the language:

That the weather clerk really makes the weather probably none but infants believe, but that language is made by compilers of dictionaries and grammars is a conception not confined to the young or ignorant.¹²

As an aside here, dictionary makers of Johnson's time and earlier are famous for creating words. Samuel Johnson himself couldn't resist the temptation and admits to having planted three or four words in his dictionary.¹³ Such 'hot-house' words are then raised and nurtured in the dictionary – even picked up by other collections, by which stage no one would dare doubt the words' existence. Such is the clout of the Standard!

The Early Years of the Standard

The prevailing attitude of the eighteenth century was put by Jonathan Swift in probably what is still the most famous piece of complaint literature in the history of English: *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*.

I do here, in the Name of all the Learned and polite Persons of the Nation, complain ... that our Language is extremely imperfect; that its daily Improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily Corruptions, that the Pretenders to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities, and that in many instances, it offends against every part of Grammar.¹⁴

Swift was one of the most passionate proponents for some sort of regulating body to be set up to ascertain the English language; in other words, to determine correct usage and settle the language for good. Being a writer, he would have been concerned that future generations would not be able to understand his work. In his words: 'If [the English tongue] were once refined to a certain Standard, perhaps there might be Ways to fix it for ever ... I see no absolute Necessity why any Language should be perpetually changing.' And forty years later, Johnson in his *Preface* wrote those now-famous words: 'I found our speech

copious without order, and energetic without rules: wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated.’

Like others of his time, Johnson could not help but contrast English with classical languages such as Greek and Latin. By comparison, English seemed unregulated and unrefined. But it was an unfair comparison. These classical languages existed purely as written languages, preserved in the formaldehyde of handbooks and dictionaries. This meant they lacked the natural flux and variance of living, breathing languages like English – ‘the boundless chaos of living speech,’ as Johnson described it. Against such ossified paragons of linguistic virtue, English compared badly.

These views led to an outflow of prescription for what was proper English. There was usually acrimony involved since what was correct to one writer was incorrect to another; a lot of the argument was concerned with what can probably be regarded as stylistic variations. In his *Elements of Orthoepy* (1784) Robert Nares takes Johnson to task for misaccenting *bombast*, *carbine* and *finance* in his *Dictionary*¹⁵ – Johnson’s recommendations are the accepted patterns today. Curiously, the word *belly-timber* (food) appears in Johnson’s *Dictionary*, but without any disparaging label. Yet it was widely condemned by many at the time for its ‘frivolous nature’ and ‘vile and despicable origin’.

Lip service was paid to the norm of everyday usage, but it was generally ignored or transmuted to mean the usage of a select few, namely, the original scholar and, at best, his circle. As with any act of censoring, these eighteenth-century prescriptive practices were tied firmly to the censors’ own personal beliefs and preferences. (It was such conduct that nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century linguists castigated as unscientific – it gave so-called ‘traditional grammar’ a bad name). Johnson wrote in the *Preface* to his *Dictionary* that lexicographers should ‘not form, but register the language’. He wrote about general agreement, and like the eighteenth-century grammarians, he would doubtless claim to be presenting a consensus of the educated in his work. But when you compare the works of his day, there seems to have been very little consensus on what constitutes good usage: each grammarian presented his own judgements, which often disagreed with those of his fellow grammarians.

This then is the background to the establishment of a Standard. And those prescriptive grammarians seeking to establish it did not themselves always observe their own prescriptions. When Johnson railed against French borrowings, he was objecting to the fashionable use of French among the cultivated upper social classes who peppered their conversations with French words and phrases. Yet his own language was abundantly Latinate in style

(satirised so beautifully by Archibald Campbell in his poem, *Lexiphanes*, in 1767).¹⁶

Other striking instances of inconsistency come from Archbishop Lowth. In his *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, he clearly outlined that strong verbs like *write* and *ride* should distinguish between past tense and past participle forms. Lowth provided lists of what he described as common mistakes committed even by ‘some of our best Writers’:

*He begun, for he began; he run, for he ran; he drunk, for he drank: The Participle being used instead of the Past Time. And much more frequently the Past Time instead of the Participle: as, I had wrote, it was wrote, for I had written, it was written; I have drank, for I have drunk; bore, for born; chose, for chosen; bid, for bidden; got for gotten &c. This abuse has been long growing upon us, and is continually making further inroads.*¹⁷

In his own private correspondence, however, Robert Lowth constantly flouted this grammatical rule. In a letter to his wife he wrote: ‘My Last I wrote in a great hurry,’ and later in the same letter, ‘whose faces and names I have forgot.’¹⁸ Yet Lowth clearly believed that preterite and participle strong verb forms should be kept distinct. In this case, Lowth’s preferred epistolary practice was clearly not best practice. So what was he thinking of?

People have confused past tense and past participle forms of strong verbs since the beginning of the medieval period.¹⁹ Lowth (and other codifiers) condemned the confusion and regulated it by fiat. The standardisation of practice necessarily involves removing variations of this nature. There is no room for linguistic options. Lowth’s grammatical rule now makes it possible to put a tick or a cross beside any strong verb form: speakers cannot vacillate between *begun* and *began* – only one choice carries the stamp of approval. In reality, of course, language usage is not an absolute matter of assigning a tick or a cross. It is much more complicated and far more interesting than that, as Lowth’s own practice shows. We cannot know why in his letters to his wife he violated his own theoretical prescriptions; it is possible (but unlikely) that they were too formal for his intimate correspondence; it was probably not deliberate hypocrisy; most likely he simply did not notice that what he wrote in private correspondence contradicted his public pontificating. Language is simply not amenable to being forced into perfect standard moulds and anyone who attempts to do so will find themselves bemired in contradiction.

Speech communities are extremely complex and language has to cover a huge range of social behaviour. Yet variability and mutability – qualities intrinsic to any linguistic system – do not sit happily within the classifications of a ‘pure’ and consistent standard variety. The label ‘standard’ entails not only ‘best practice’ but also ‘uniform practice’. This is only practical in the

context of the written language, more especially formal written language. The conscious self-censorship that accompanies the writing process has a straitjacket effect that safeguards the language to some extent from the flux and variance that is the reality of language. It is society's dependence on and veneration for the written word that now blinds speakers to this reality. Yet even modern-day publishers and editors, who value linguistic uniformity above all, follow different guidelines in their editing practices. The various publishing houses maintain different standards and will continue to do so to because the social aspects of language work against homogeneity, even in this context. What one group condemns, another cherishes; so there is unlikely ever to be a uniform set of publishing conventions. This is because the Standard is a myth, an abstraction or perhaps, better, an ideal. It does not exist; it is something to strive for.

The Arbiters of Linguistic Goodness

If a sentry forsakes his post and places an army in danger, the penalty is severe. If a guardian ceases to guard and neglects his duty to children, there are few who would not condemn. If a great dictionary forsakes its post as the guardian of our language, how can one avoid disappointment?²⁰

There is another factor that energetically works against uniformity and that is, of course, language change. As soon as he had produced his dictionary, Johnson recognised the futility of his original aim; namely, to 'ascertain' or 'embalm' the language. In his *Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* (1747) he wrote of:

a dictionary by which pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated; by which its purity may be preserved, its use ascertained, and its duration lengthened. (Lynch, ed., 579)

This was an expectation which, as he put it in the *Preface*, neither reason nor experience can justify.

When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, or clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation. (Lynch, ed., 40-41)

He scoffed at the academics of other countries who sought 'to guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders; ... sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride.'

Two centuries later, Robert Burchfield, editor at the time of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, also wrote of the impossibility of stopping continuity and change in language: ‘No form of linguistic engineering and no amount of linguistic legislation will prevent the cycles of change that lie ahead.’²¹ Vocabulary is particularly unstable and dictionary compilers like Burchfield constantly have to redraw the boundary for marginal vocabulary terms. *Yeab-no* is a new discourse marker in English²² – when will it start to appear in our dictionaries?

Even more of a headache for lexicographers are meanings. Modern dictionaries now acknowledge the inaccurate use of many specialist expressions in ordinary language, such as *to go ballistic* – when missiles go ballistic they don’t explode, but coast; *to push the envelope* – an aeronautical expression referring to the gas or air container of a balloon or airship; and *quantum leap* – technically the transition of atoms or electrons from one energy state to another. So, when will they accept that the meaning of *epicentre* has moved beyond the safe confines of geology (where it denotes the source-point whence seismic waves go out) to the more general sense of ‘middle, core’? There is always a murky boundary between use and misuse. When one person uses *epicentre* to mean ‘centre’ it might be condemned as a mistake, a kind of malapropism. But what then happens when more people start doing so?

Aspects of the linguistic system are constantly on the move and reference books that fail to update, cease to be used.²³ And yet if the dictionary makers and handbook writers do acknowledge current usage, there are howls about declining educational standards – a fine illustration of the human capacity for doublethink. The fiery words of the Right Reverend Richard S. Emrich, quoted at the start of this section, were prompted by the release of Webster’s *Third New International Dictionary* in 1961; Bishop Emrich lamented, ‘The greatest of all American dictionaries has been corrupted at center. The greatest language on earth has lost a guardian.’

Thus, in addition to the formally acknowledged guardians, English has many self-appointed protectors like Emrich; arbiters of linguistic goodness who engage in random acts of censoring by writing to newspapers and university linguistics departments, phoning radio stations, or joining associations for spelling reform. These vexatious activists regularly publish lists of linguistic misdemeanours – mispronunciations, misplaced apostrophes, incorrect words, crimes of grammar under headings such as ‘Lamentable Language’, ‘Descent into Linguistic Slobdom’, and ‘Linguistic Junk’.

Such acts are typically provoked by the fact that a celebrity, so-called ‘expert’, or a sizeable portion of the speech community regularly uses the shibboleths. Take, for instance, the current collision in Antipodean English of the two verbs *bring* and *buy*. Increasingly, *bought* is appearing as the past of *bring*, as in, ‘Mr Eric Grant of Glen Iris bought in a couple of his 1975 Bin 389 [a bottle of wine] for evaluation.’ The fact that *bought* now commonly appears in print as the past of *bring* suggests the change is already entrenched. Many people are upset by this state of affairs. Yet most of the same people are truly fascinated by word origins and the stories that lie behind the structures in their language. Why then are they squeamish when they encounter changes happening within their lifetime?

One of the main thrusts of verbal hygiene is conservatism against innovation. Keeping the language ‘pure’ means maintaining it unchanged. People find it interesting that *go* stole its past tense *went* from *wend* and that *to be* is a linguistic mongrel, comprising verb forms from three or even four other verbs; but that *bring* is currently doing likewise is calamitous. Change is fine only if it remains a historical curiosity. No matter what the verbal hygienists may wish for, Standard English may soon embrace the mixed pedigree of *bring* as it did earlier suppletions.

The Standard that has developed from the eighteenth-century prescriptivists such as Johnson and Lowth was a linguistic fantasy – a shining example of linguistic usage that would be more accurately called the ‘Superstandard’ to acknowledge its otherworldliness.²⁴ Even Lowth himself made it clear that the rules he was laying down belonged to something not-of-this-world, but to a more abstract level of language to be distinguished from actual usage or ‘common discourse’, as he described it. In his preface he wrote: ‘It is not owing then to any peculiar irregularity or difficulty of our Language, that the general practice both of speaking and writing it is chargeable with inaccuracy. It is not the Language, but the practice, that is in fault.’ (v-vi)

Yet speakers of English believe in the Superstandard. They believe in, if not the existence, then the possibility of a single correct language system. And such beliefs are powerful – as anyone who has tried to mess with the cherished Standard knows. Speakers want their reference books to tell them what is (and what is not) *correct usage*, because they wish to appear well-educated and eloquently maintain ‘correct usage’. Dictionaries and handbooks that acknowledge change are abrogating their responsibility. So, too, are the style manuals that recognise options. Clearly, language professionals are in a difficult position, as much now as they were in Johnson’s day. After all, they are the shamans who stand between the object of worship and ordinary mortals.

Linguists also mess with the cherished Standard. In the eyes of many in the wider speech community, we are very much a part of a permissive ethos encouraging the perceived decline and continued abuse of the language. The gap between linguists and the wider community is considerable. As books like those by Bolinger and Cameron show,²⁵ the feeling between the two camps is one of mutual distrust; linguistic experts fail to address lay concerns, and lay activists show no interest in listening to linguists. For linguists, language is a natural phenomenon, something that evolves and adapts and can be studied objectively. This stance is resoundingly rejected by others for whom language is an art form, something to be cherished, revered and preserved.

Like other tabooing behaviour, linguistic purism has to do with the solidarity and separating function of language. It is clearly about social status, too. Speakers constantly make negative value judgements about others who use vocabulary, grammar or accents that they view as bad English, castigating such people as ‘uneducated’, even ‘stupid’. This behaviour seems extraordinary in an era that is so obsessed with equality for all and the desire not to offend. The basic human right of respect is understood to mean that people can no longer speak of and to others in terms that are considered insulting and demeaning; yet this behaviour does not extend to the way people talk about the language skills of others. Linguistic prejudices are simply accepted without challenge. Despite the era of egalitarianism, conscious and unconscious discrimination against speakers of non-standard dialects and low-status accents is still rampant.

Matter Out of Place

We can recognise in our own notions of dirt that we are using a kind of omnibus compendium which includes all the rejected elements of ordered systems. It is a relative idea. Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room; clothing lying on chairs; out-door things in-doors; upstairs things downstairs; under-clothing appearing where over-clothing should be, and so on. In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications.²⁶

Mary Douglas’s theory of pollution and taboo offers interesting insights into the relationship between taboo and linguistic purism. As Douglas sees it, the distinction between cleanliness and filth stems from the basic human need for categorisation – our need to structure the chaotic environment around us and render it understandable. That which is dirty is that which does not fit in with our ‘cherished classifications’; dirt is matter ‘out of place’. (189)

The standardisation process forces languages into tidy classificatory systems. The neat lists and elegant paradigms inside the dictionary and handbook provide the perfect counterpart to the ‘boundless chaos of the living speech’ that lies outside. There are no grey areas any more, but clear boundaries as to what is and what is not acceptable. The language is defined by condemnation and proscription of certain words and constructions deemed impure or not belonging. The infiltration of linguistic innovations, lexical exotics, and non-standard features is a transgression of the defining boundaries and poses a threat to the language – as well as to the society of which the language is a manifestation and a symbol. Accordingly, they are tabooed and brushed aside.

Acts that are committed in the name of verbal hygiene also show traces of the same insecurities that lie behind many other taboos – the need to feel in control. Human beings are fearful when they feel they have lost or are losing control of their destinies. These fears are just as acute today as they have been in the past. Medical miracles, designer bodies, IVF babies and quick-fix surgery feed the fantasy that we live in safety. And yet illnesses still arrive out of the blue, caused by unseen microbes and toxins. Many still have no cure. Death remains inevitable. Our endeavours to intervene in language change are just more attempts to take charge and control nature; language standardisation tries to impose order on a natural phenomenon.

There have been individuals who have gone to extreme lengths to engineer logical, consistent, and transparent languages that perfectly match the thinking of their speakers and ditto reality. If one such language could somehow become the first language of speakers, it would inevitably be struck with precisely the same linguistic infirmities as natural languages: the same vagueness, indeterminacy, variability, anomaly and inconsistency.

Mary Douglas concludes her ideas on pollution thus: the moral of all this is that ‘the facts of existence are in a chaotic jumble’. (193) Then so, too, is the language that describes these facts. As linguists have pointed out, a regular and homogeneous communication system would be dysfunctional. Even a standard language can never be a finished product. To create such a work of art is to enter into a partnership with natural processes; prescription would soon render the work sterile and useless.

And here lies the dreadful paradox of taboo and tabooing practices. Puristic endeavours necessarily involve a degree of mental dishonesty that comes from the inevitable contradiction between the linguistic behaviour of language users and the views they hold about their language. *Bad language* can be proscribed and set apart, just like those other aspects of life that make people feel uncomfortable, because they are dangerous and distasteful;

they can be banned from being heard, seen or touched. But not only won't they go away, they are essential to the continuation of life, living, and language.

To wind up, let me bring the discussion back to Dr Samuel Johnson. Towards the end of his *Preface*, Johnson concluded: '[T]ongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration.' Perhaps he was right about governments, but he was certainly wrong about languages. So many of his branded words now flourish in the repertoire of Standard English – *bamboozle*, *chitchat*, *finesse*, *fun*, *glum*, *spick and span*, *simpleton*, to name but a few. Meanwhile, of course, new 'bad' words have arrived on the scene, more 'corruptions of ignorance', more 'caprices of innovation'.

Notes

- ¹ Samuel Johnson, Preface to the *Dictionary*; see Jack Lynch (ed.), *Samuel Johnson's Dictionary: Selections from the 1755 Work that Defined the English Language* (London: Atlantic Books, 2002), 25.
- ² Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar*, 2 v. (London, 1755).
- ³ Much of the discussion in this paper is based on Chapter 4 of *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), a book I have recently co-authored with Keith Allan. As always I am indebted to Keith for his wonderful ideas and suggestions – a finer colleague and co-author doesn't exist.
- ⁴ Some of Johnson's 'low' and 'bad' words are listed in Jack Lynch's edition, *Samuel Johnson's Dictionary*, 642.
- ⁵ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- ⁶ Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004).
- ⁷ For many instances of Aboriginal Australians adopting African American speech and whites with speech mannerisms adopted from American film, TV and music sources, see Wendy F. Allen, *Teenage Speech: The Social Dialects of Melbourne Teenagers* (B.A. Honours thesis, Linguistics Department, La Trobe University, 1987).
- ⁸ Cf. the discussions in Kate Burridge and Jean Mulder, *English in Australia and New Zealand: An Introduction to its Structure, History and Use* (Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998): and Ch. 12 of Kate Burridge, *Weeds in the Garden of Words: Further Observations on the Tangled History of the English Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005).
- ⁹ *The Age* (Melbourne), 9 October 1969.
- ¹⁰ Daniel Jones, *An English Pronouncing Dictionary* – 9th edn, revised with supplement (London: Dent, 1948).

- 11 For alternative histories, see Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English* – rev. edn. (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), and Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill, eds., *Alternative Histories of English* (London: Routledge, 2002).
- 12 Hans von Jagemann (in 1899); cited in Ronald Wardhaugh, *Proper English: Myths and Misunderstandings about Language* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1999), 9.
- 13 See discussion in Lynch (2002), 8.
- 14 Jonathan Swift, *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue: in a Letter to the Most Honourable Robert Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain* (London, 1712; facs. ed., Menston: Scolar Press. 1969), 8.
- 15 Robert Nares, *Elements of Orthoepy: containing a Distinct View of the Whole Analogy of the English Language: so far as it relates to Pronunciation, Accent, and Quantity* (London, 1784).
- 16 Archibald Campbell, *Lexiphanes; A Dialogue, Imitated from Lucian, and Suited to the Present Times, Being an Attempt to Restore the English Tongue to Its Ancient Purity, and to Correct, as Well as Expose, the Affected Style, Hard Words, and Absurd Phraseology of Many Late Writers, and Particularly of Our English Lexiphanes, The Rambler* (London, 1767).
- 17 Robert Lowth, *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* – 2nd edn, corrected (Dublin, 1763) [first edn., 1762], 85-89.
- 18 Cf. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, ‘Robert Lowth and the strong verb system’, *Language Sciences* 24 (2002): 459-470, 473.
- 19 Roger Lass, *The English Language, Vol. III (1476-1776)* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999).
- 20 Richard S. Emrich, Episcopal Bishop of Michigan, 1962; cited in Dennis R. Preston, ‘The story of good and bad English in the United States’, in *Alternative Histories of English*, ed. Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill (London: Routledge, 2002): 134-152, 149.
- 21 Robert Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), 173.
- 22 Kate Burridge and Margaret Florey, ‘“Yeah-no He’s a Good Kid”: A Discourse Analysis of *Yeab-no* in Australian English’, *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 22 (2002): 149-71.
- 23 On dictionaries, see Robert Stockwell and Donka Minkova, *English Words: History and Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), 191 ff.
- 24 For a discussion of ‘superstandard forms’ of language, see Walt Wolfram and Ralph W. Fasold, *The Study of Social Dialects in American English* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974).
- 25 See, Dwight Bolinger, *Language: The Loaded Weapon* (London: Longman, 1980), and Cameron, cited above.
- 26 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 48.

George Psalmanazar: The Fabulous Formosan

Paul Tankard

Psalmanazar's Tale

London has long been the destination for anyone wanting to make a name or a fortune. From Dick Whittington, William Shakespeare and Samuel Johnson to Clive James and Kylie Minogue, people from the provinces, the colonies and elsewhere, have gravitated to the great metropolis. In late 1703 the packet-boat from Holland brought a charming and talented young man, who is now and forever caught half way between fantasy and history. He brought with him – indeed, it was his most valuable possession – the exotic name George Psalmanazar.

The twenty-four-year-old Psalmanazar had – like many homeless or stateless young men at the time – been soldiering in Europe. But he was not any kind of European – his native country, from which he had travelled to France, was in the Far East, the island nation of Formosa. After some years adventuring, he wound up in Holland where, recently, he had converted to Anglicanism. He came to England at the invitation of the Bishop of London, Henry Compton, and was escorted by a clergyman named Alexander Innes, who introduced him to London society. In Britain and Europe, there was much curiosity about the Orient, and Psalmanazar was very welcome for what he could tell of such a remote pagan land. This is, in one of its many senses, his story.

Psalmanazar was the son of an aristocratic Formosan family. He received the best Formosan education, even being taught Latin by his Japanese tutor. One day the elderly tutor confided to his student his intention to leave Formosa and travel the world, even going to the lands of the Christians. The Japanese government, which ruled Formosa, insisted that the Christian nations were savage and cruel, but the learned tutor said this was not the case, and young Psalmanazar implored the tutor to let him accompany him, so that he might be the first Formosan to visit Europe. This was in fact the tutor's plan, for he was not really a Japanese, but a French Jesuit missionary, Father de Rode, who lived under disguise, on account of Christianity having been banned in Japan and its dominions in 1616. So the young Formosan nobleman and the wily old Jesuit left the capital of Formosa, Xternetsa, secretly, in the middle of the night, and Psalmanazar used the influence of his father's name to procure berths on a ship to the Philippines. They lodged in Manila – at what Psalmanazar later realised was a Jesuit monastery – before embarking for the Portuguese town of Goa in India.

After a short stay there, and nine more months at sea, they came at last to Gibraltar. The tutor exchanged his Japanese garb for European clothes, worried (he said) that the knowledge of the Japanese persecution of Christians might cause him some trouble. However, the gear he assumed was, as Psalmanazar learned later, the habit of a Jesuit priest. As Formosan clothes were different from Japanese, and Psalmanazar's in particular were rich and colourful, the young traveller retained his own exotic garb. The two travelled by land across the south of France and came at last to Avignon, where they were welcomed at the Jesuit monastery, and at last Father de Rode revealed his true identity.

The priest told Psalmanazar that he had brought him to Europe so that the young heathen might be instructed in the Christian religion and – if he chose to embrace it – to stay there, and live well at the Church's expense. If he chose not to convert, the Jesuits would assist him to return to Formosa and he would have had a tremendous youthful adventure. Psalmanazar agreed, but he didn't have a lot of choice. His religious instruction began. He was not convinced by the Jesuits' arguments for their brand of faith, a particular sticking point being the doctrine of transubstantiation. But his education continued and he learnt much incidentally about European history and affairs.

Over this time Psalmanazar was generally well cared for, and saw much of the surrounding French countryside, albeit under close supervision. After seven or eight months he was taken on a pilgrimage to Rome for Holy Year celebrations. The Jesuits hoped that this spectacle would induce him to embrace their religion. However, being a rather protestant kind of pagan, he objected that Roman Catholicism consisted mainly of external observances, very like the religion of his own native country which they wanted him to abandon. After their arguments and other persuasions failed, they tried bribing him. All the time, Psalmanazar pretended to a certain level of compliance, but increasingly prepared himself for an escape.

Finally, the Jesuits became impatient, and threatened to turn Psalmanazar over to the Inquisition. It was clearly time to leave the security and danger of his captivity. He disguised himself, without difficulty, as a monk, and bribed his way out of the city. He had made a list of all the towns between Avignon and the ports of Holland, where he hoped to find a ship bound for Japan or Formosa. Through his religious instruction he had learned various Catholic formulae, enough to satisfy any who stopped him. When he passed out of France he escaped the reach of the Inquisition, and abandoned his clerical disguise.

But now, as an apparently stateless wanderer, he had no protection other than his own ingenuity. There were many private regiments moving from war to war around Europe at the time, and the young vagabond was pressed into the service of one of these. Confessing now his name and his true Formosan nationality, Psalmanazar was for a while protected by his regimental captain, who regarded him as an amusing curiosity. When they came to Bonn, he was on the verge of being put back into the hands of Jesuits, but was permitted instead to leave the regiment. He made his own way to Cologne, where he was again obliged to enlist. Again, his Formosan practices made him an object of curiosity among the other soldiers. A contest developed between the clergy of the town – Jesuits, Lutherans and Calvinists – as to which could convert him. But his experience with Catholics enabled him to frame strong Jesuitical arguments against Protestant doctrines such as consubstantiation and absolute predestination.

The regiment moved to Sluys, in Flanders, where Psalmanazar came to the attention of the town governor, George Lauder. The exotic soldier was examined yet again on matters of religion, this time by the local French Walloon (Calvinist) minister, and the Rev. Mr Innes, Anglican chaplain to a Scots regiment. The Calvinist he refuted, but the arguments of Mr Innes he eventually found persuasive; indeed, he devoted eighty pages of the published account of his travels to the reasons for his conversion to the Church of England. Innes baptised him, gave him the Christian name of George (after the governor, who was much amused by him) and wrote to the Bishop of London about his distinguished convert. It was in this way that George Psalmanazar was invited to England. Once there, he told the story of his travels, which I have just related from the detailed account which he very soon published, and of his native land, the mysterious distant island nation of Formosa.

Psalmanazar's Formosa

Formosa, as Psalmanazar describes it in his book, *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa*, published in London in April 1704, was at this time a Japanese dominion. The map in the book depicts Formosa as an archipelago of five main islands and a number of minor islands. The climate was rather like Italy. The nation had traditionally been monarchical with a king or *bagalo*, but had been conquered by the muslim Tartars about 200 years before. They were eventually driven out, when the Formosan people rebelled against the Tartar plan to suppress their native religion. The Dutch established a trade with them (and built a castle called Tyowan), but they betrayed Formosa to the Chinese, and were driven out. Eventually peace was achieved under a Chinese military leader named Meryaandanoo, who by politics and trickery became the Emperor of Japan and Formosa.

Although the country was hotter than England, the people of Formosa were a fair-skinned race, as one could see from George Psalmanazar himself. The labouring classes tended to be darker, because of spending more time in the sun, rather than indoors or in gardens – of which there were many, Formosa being very densely vegetated. Formosans were short rather than tall, and of a stocky build. Psalmanazar describes their clothes, which clearly distinguished the various classes and occupations, and which – unlike the clothes of Europeans – were not subject to fashion. Men wore girdles, coats and open gowns – the number of which varied according to status – with classes below the nobility having bare chests and thighs. They tended to the fine and lavish in everyday arts. The cities, of which there were six in the nation, were rich and walled, and the palaces and houses of the nobles were of stone. The cities had many parks and gardens and were low-rise, with most private houses having two storeys, and a place on the roof from which Formosans daily worshipped the sun.

They were a monotheistic people, with their own religion, which had been revealed to two prophets, nine hundred years before. These two prophets had initially demanded the sacrifice of the hearts of twenty thousand male children. When the people refused, the country was visited with terrible storms, earthquakes, sudden death, and a plague of wild beasts in the cities. After this, a third prophet appeared, named Psalmanaazaar (or ‘Author of Peace’ in Formosan, after whom our young hero was named by his pious parents), and every day for ten days two thousand infants were sacrificed. The prophet delivered a sacred text, the *Jarhabandiond*, and gave instructions for the election of a priesthood and building of a temple. Human sacrifice was an important ongoing aspect of this faith, and there was a complex set of instructions for monthly and weekly sacrifices of boys under nine years of age, adding up to eighteen thousand annually. The Formosan religion involved the worship of the sun, moon and stars, and although his description of the belief system is a bit vague, Psalmanazar devoted many chapters of his book to describing cultic practices, such as the fasts and festivals, ceremonies, temples, the priesthood, and rites of passage. The young Psalmanazar had clearly paid close attention to such matters.

Other fascinating aspects of Formosan life included (for men) the practice of polygamy. A man could have up to six wives, but each one lived, with her children, in seclusion from the others. In fact, there was a great deal of seclusion in Formosa, with complex rules governing who could talk to, see, or be seen with another. The society was elaborately hierarchical. Psalmanazar describes the common diseases of Formosa, including gout and the plague, and notes that the ‘French-pox’ is unknown, he surmises because polygamy was permitted and adultery for-

bidden. In the second edition of the book, readers learned that men were permitted to kill and eat adulterous wives.

In England, and despite his conversion, Psalmanazar continued in the habits and cultural practices of his homeland. He ate only raw flesh, roots and herbs, and prayed in his own language. This all ensured that for a time he commanded a degree of public attention and media interest. The papers monitored his movements; he was invited to parties and meetings to give London society people the opportunity of meeting him and hearing his conversation; he was entertained by the nobility.

For much of London society he was something of a nine days' wonder, and although he persisted in putting his claims before the public for five or six more years, he did so increasingly intermittently. His financial supporters slowly drifted away. Innes abandoned him. Psalmanazar became ever more isolated and was exhausted by the effort required to keep up a profile. He had no training or profession and nothing to fall back on, other than being a professional Formosan. Some wondered why after his European adventure he seemed in no hurry to return to Formosa. Casting about for work, he sank to that customary refuge of the former celebrity, doing endorsements. He helped to market a brand of chinaware. Gradually he became (as Sidney Lee put it in the *Dictionary of National Biography*) 'the butt of much ridicule'. A low point must have been in 1711, when a bogus advertisement was published in *The Spectator*, announcing that,

On the first of April will be performed at the Play-house in the Hay-market an Opera call'd *The Cruelty of Atreus*. N.B. The scene wherein Thyestes eats his own Children, is to be performed by the famous Mr. Psalmanazar, lately arrived from Formosa: The whole supper being set to Kettle-drums.

It takes little imagination to see the young man trapped by the claims he had for years made and allowed to be made on his behalf, wanting to escape the situation and not having the remotest idea how. He must have woken up morning after morning, just hoping that the whole thing would go away.

Psalmanazar's Other Story

So, who in fact was he? For almost everything we know or think we know about him, we are reliant upon Psalmanazar himself. Whereas what I have related so far derives from his *Description of Formosa*, the details that follow are from Psalmanazar's *Memoirs*, published in 1763, after his death and sixty years after the hoax began.

Alexander Innes had, as we have heard, met Psalmanazar at Sluys, a sea-port in Holland, where the young man was a soldier and had already assumed his exotic name and various outlandish practices. Until that time, he had led a wandering life. He was

born in the south of France, in a town near a cathedral city, on the road between Avignon and Rome. Given the shame his hoax may have brought upon his family and home town, he does not anywhere give the town's name. However, later investigators have concluded that no town can be found that fits the various criteria in the description in his *Memoirs*. All his life he suppressed the details of his origins and the name of his family, and in all likelihood nothing more will ever be known of them. His parents were poor and they eventually separated; he was brought up by his mother and educated by monks. He was a precocious child, and particularly fond of languages. He was, he says, spoiled by his teachers; he seems to have never had the opportunities that might have enabled him to make good use of his abilities.

His mother had difficulty in supporting him and he had no inclination to find his own profession, so at the age of sixteen he set out to join his father in Germany. To improve his chances of getting handouts on the road, he hit upon the strategy of adopting a false and more interesting identity. He first passed himself off as a persecuted Irish Catholic, though having no knowledge of either English or Gaelic, he spoke Latin instead and mainly targeted priests. From an early age he had, as Sidney Lee described it, 'a passion for notoriety', and it seems that he took false identities as a means of attracting attention to himself. He walked nearly five hundred miles to the town where his father lived; he does not say precisely where. His father, however, was equally unable to support to him, so he continued to rove through Germany and the Netherlands.

He decided that a more obscure identity would suit his purposes better, and perhaps attract some protection, so he forged a new passport which announced that he was Japanese, and named (however implausibly) Psalmanazaar (the spelling was slightly simplified later). He told this Japanese story to soldiers in the regiments to which he attached himself, and backed up his claims with papers on which he had prepared a complex alphabet and grammar of an invented language; he also adopted odd habits and ceremonies of worship which he would practise for the interest of his fellow soldiers. At this stage it may all have been innocent enough: like the false stories that some people apparently tell about themselves in Internet 'chat-rooms' – where who you are doesn't matter, so you may as well 'be' someone more interesting. At this point, fact starts to meet with the fiction by which he presented himself and his story, and as I have retold it. The hoax took on a new level of seriousness when he came to Sluys and met the chaplain Innes.

Psalmanazar's supposed pagan practices and opinions led him into public debates, which he relished, about religion. The Rev. Mr Innes was, it seems, an unscrupulous chancer who

recognised in Psalmanazar a kindred spirit, and saw opportunities for them both. To put the young man in his power, Innes proposed a simple test. He asked the purported foreigner to translate a passage from Cicero into Japanese, which he did; then taking the paper away, he asked him to do so again. When the differences between the two versions made it clear that Psalmanazar was simply making up his Japanese language on the spot, Innes did not expose or even rebuke him, but simply advised him to be more careful in future. In furtherance of his own schemes, he suggested that he publicly baptise Psalmanazar. This abuse of the Christian sacrament was an action which Psalmanazar later most regretted. Innes then claimed to have converted the young foreigner from his pagan religion to Anglicanism, and promptly wrote off to the Bishop of London to announce this triumph. Furthermore, he suggested to the young man that Formosa would be a more interesting and obscure native land – which was certainly true.

Some months later the invitation arrived from Bishop Compton to bring the exotic convert to London. Once in London, Psalmanazar was well received by the clergy and set up in quarters in Pall Mall under Innes's supervision. There were plenty of sceptics who appeared at his public outings to ask difficult questions, but as no one knew any more about Formosa than he did, he was able to continue to maintain his imposture. In February 1704, he was invited to a meeting of the Royal Society, the leading forum for intellectual inquiry, where it was arranged that he debate with a former Jesuit missionary to China, Father Jean de Fontaney, who was on his way back to France from China and was passing through London. Oddly, Psalmanazar was not decisively defeated or exposed. He exercised his charm and dealt skilfully with troublesome questions, and cast aspersions upon the motives a Jesuit might have in contradicting him, given that it had been another Jesuit who had kidnapped him from his distant homeland. Perhaps too his fabrications were so bare-faced and outrageous as to simply exasperate the scholars. In the meantime he was active on another front.

He owed an account of Formosa to his mainly clerical supporters, and in the space of a couple of months he wrote (in Latin) *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa, an Island subject to the Emperor of Japan*, which was 'Englished' almost as he wrote, and published in April 1704. This is a substantial work of three hundred and thirty pages, with maps, diagrams, and a plethora of detail about history, religion, food, dress, the military, and culture – as well as the equally bogus account of his early life and adventurous journey to Europe, which I summarised earlier. He expended a great deal of energy in refining the language. The book was soon sold out, and was

promptly translated into French, German and Dutch. In March 1705, he was sent at the expense of the Bishop of London to Oxford, where he resided at Christ Church and worked on preparing an expanded second edition of his *Description*. It had been thought he might teach his language to prospective Formosan missionaries, but he kept well out of the way of linguists and spent his recreational hours attending worship with the college's cathedral choir. The second edition of his book was published the following June, adding detailed responses to his critics, and it was followed up by three further pamphlets on Formosan themes.

Why was he believed?

So, where is Formosa? In a sense, Formosa was always, like its most famous citizen, a fiction. Formosa is the old European name for the island of Taiwan – the name is from the Portuguese for 'beautiful', though it not clear whether the name was supposed to refer to the island or its inhabitants. The far eastern end of Asia was the subject of a great deal of conjecture in Europe. Various of its nations and ports had been visited by traders and missionaries, but the knowledge of the relations between them, beyond what was necessary for those narrow purposes, was rather vague. Psalmanazar's pretence that Formosa was subject to Japan, rather than to China, to which it is much closer and was in fact politically attached, was convenient because Japan was more obscure to Europeans than China because of the ban on missionaries.

At the time, the most important source of information about Formosa was a sixty-year-old account (amounting in various editions to no more than sixteen to thirty-five pages) by a Dutch missionary, Candidius. But it was hard to access, and easily confused with other histories, travel stories and accounts of exotic places, told for political or sensational reasons. Psalmanazar seems not to have seen it until putting the finishing touches to his *Description*.

It seems to us surprising that a Frenchman should have been able to pass himself off as Asian. Psalmanazar was by all accounts – and there are not many of them – blond with a fair complexion. Michael Keevak, who has written the most recent and detailed critical study of Psalmanazar, suggests that Europeans had little sense of what an Asian ought or ought not to look like. Asians were not thought to be distinguished by skin colour, which was seen as a characteristic of one's exposure to the sun, rather than to race. Information about the appearance of Formosans was surprisingly nebulous, because their appearance had little bearing on European commercial and colonialist agendas. It has been estimated that before the first decade of the eighteenth century, there had been only two Chinese visitors to Paris, and neither of

them stayed long enough to have been much observed, or for generalisations to be formed about Chinese or Asian appearance. Indeed, the whole idea of being Asian or oriental, as opposed to European or Western, seems not to have been much developed at this time. While some of Psalmanazar's detractors suggested that he looked Dutch, no one said he looked *Caucasian*.

In any case, being a native Formosan, there was no need that he should look much like either a Chinese or Japanese. And Psalmanazar claimed that in any case the upper classes of Formosa – to which he belonged – were much more fair than the labouring classes, on account of living, in the summer months, mostly underground.

An important key to Psalmanazar's success was the Formosan language he developed. It seems clear that Psalmanazar had a gift for languages, speaking French, Latin, Greek, Dutch, English, Italian, German, and (later) Hebrew, at least, and it was natural that he should put this gift to work in the creation of Formosan. Languages are vital means by which peoples and nations define themselves. If there is or was a language, there is or must have been a people to speak it. We see something of this process in reverse with Tolkien's Middle-Earth. It was the desire to create plausible languages which – at least at one level – led the great philologist to create lands, peoples and histories as a setting without which language cannot exist. Psalmanazar's Formosan, from its scratchy beginnings in strange documents, combined with its author's apparent talent for extempore gibberish, evolved under pressure to being highly wrought and self-consistent – like Klingon. The alphabet that he carried in his pocket to show his fellow soldiers, and other handwritten documents, including his translations of the Lord's Prayer, may still be seen in the library of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. But the details of the language as presented in his book were sufficiently plausible for linguists to include Formosan extracts from it in textbooks for the next hundred years.

He was welcomed to London chiefly as a tool in religious propaganda wars. As his first book demonstrated, he was able to testify to the duplicity of Catholic priests, Jesuits in particular, by whom he had been stolen from his distant homeland; he had been exposed to the strongest of arguments for Catholicism and had rejected them, and then was threatened with violence. Then he had been – while still in Catholic Europe – converted through reasoning to Anglicanism, and for years afterwards was supported by the church or pious individuals. It was suggested that it did his case no harm to have been so early subject to criticism from the deists and free-thinkers of the Royal Society. In his *Description of Formosa*, he frequently mentions the tyranny, greed and hypocrisy of Formosan priests; this depiction of

Formosa as priest-ridden also plays to English anti-clericalism and anti-Catholic prejudice. Among the texts in Formosan with which he illustrated his book were the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Catechism, thus appropriating to himself the authority of religion – which of course he also did by the emphasis on his purported conversion to Christianity. Religion, concocted and genuine, obviously remained a constant interest with him, as great proportions of both his books, the hoax *Description of Formosa* and the confessional *Memoirs*, were devoted to religious controversy.

Psalmanazar was obviously a very appealing and plausible story-teller. Even when he claimed too much, his strategy was to stick to his story, never making claims that he would later contradict or admitting to being contradicted by his critics. The inconsistencies between the various genuine if fragmentary accounts of the real Formosa gave Psalmanazar scope to sneak in his own versions. He never contradicted other accounts of Formosa. Instead, he found ways to argue that although they might differ, they did not disprove his own claims. He would say that his opponents had been to the wrong side of the country, the side facing China rather than that facing east, or if people described the coastal communities, he would say that they had not penetrated far enough inland. In his *Description of Formosa* he modestly says, 'I leave it to the unbiased judge to prefer which he pleaseth.'

After Formosa

Although Psalmanazar gradually stopped claiming to be from Formosa, he never claimed to be from anywhere else. He remained for the last sixty years of his life, in a sense, the only Formosan. As his claims became less and less plausible, no one thought it worth their trouble to challenge or expose him. His fraudulence became an assumption; people forgot about it and moved on to other sensations. A reviewer of his posthumous *Memoirs* said, 'The candid and good-natured were on his side; the shrewd and the sensible disbelieved him, but without doing him any injury.'

The Rev. Mr Innes did not stay around to defend or assist him. Promoting the Formosan convert was just one phase of his own schemes for self-advancement, and when Psalmanazar returned to London from Oxford he found Innes had left the capital, having engineered an appointment as chaplain to the English forces in Portugal. We know very little more about Mr Innes. He later became a preaching assistant at St Margaret's Westminster, but it seems he was always prepared to seek dishonest advantage. Boswell mentions the incident (*Life* I, 359 and n. 3), when in 1728 a friend in Scotland sent Innes a book

manuscript, which he published in London under his own name. Before he was exposed in this fraud, he was appointed to a wealthy parish in Essex. In unknown circumstances, he received an honorary degree from one of the Scottish universities.

Psalmanazar was after a time reluctant to do anything to maintain public interest, or even attention. He continued to be modestly supported by subscriptions, but one suspects these were increasingly more in the nature of acts of charity rather than support for his claims. His last public appearance as a Formosan seems to have been when in 1712 he was approached by a paint-maker named Edward Pattenden, and allowed his name to be associated with the promotion of a new kind of lacquer, the recipe for which he was represented as having brought from Japan. It is striking to find how venerable this practice is for washed-up minor celebrities, and that implausibility or disgrace is still no disqualification.

On the one hand, so I imagine, he must have desperately wanted people to forget he'd ever made any claims about Formosa, and that he could move on; on the other hand, he couldn't bring himself to revert to his real or original name – or even to reveal what it was. At least when he was a Formosan he was someone. One can imagine his fear of abandoning this identity; a fear that he might be punished or at least disappoint innocent people who believed in and helped him – or a more simple if metaphysical fear that without that identity he might find he had no identity at all.

He left London soon after the lacquer promotion and embarked on the only other kind of life he knew: soldiering. At the death of Queen Anne in 1714, there were disputes and skirmishes around the country about the succession. Psalmanazar joined a regiment in Lancashire as regimental clerk, still identifying himself as Formosan, but trying as far as possible to say little about it. His manners and education led some of the soldiers to call him 'Sir George', and as a result others apparently imagined he was actually a knight. When in 1717 the regiment was to embark for Ireland, he left them in Bristol. He worked there briefly as a tutor in Latin, and made his way, eventually, back to London. A remaining sympathiser raised one last subscription for him – not so much, perhaps, on the basis of his being Formosan, but simply because he was needy – but it was not sufficient for him to live on. He found work fan-painting, then – something more suited to his talents – doing literary hack-work for a London printer. Notoriety – or even visibility – was the last thing he wanted now, and he buried himself in this sort of work. He was able to claim, or at least give the suggestion, that he bore his now-acknowledged false name as a punishment, that he had forfeited his right to any other. In a sense, his identity as a fraud

became his real name. He was forever and must remain Mr Psalmanazar, the famous – albeit false – Formosan.

It is a further ten years before we hear of him again, when in 1727-28 he is staying in the country, recovering from an unspecified but serious illness at the home of a friend. It is a tribute to him, and to human nature, that he had such a friend. At this time he read William Law's famous book, then newly published, *A Serious Call to the Devout Life* – a book which was read to similar effect at about the same time by the young Samuel Johnson. The reading – and, it must be presumed, his recovery from a life-threatening illness – had a dramatic effect on him. He started writing his confessional (or, supposedly confessional) memoirs. He worked on the book as occasion provided, and did not intend it as a means of renewing the public interest in him, but always intended to publish it after his death. (The Preface to the book seems to have been written many years later, in 1749.)

While some of the following details are not especially important and do not seem to offer much insight to the modern reader, there are so few of them that we may as well pull together the details of his story as fully as we can. He became absorbed in private scholarly tasks that led to his becoming an amateur scholar of Hebrew. This interest did not come to much in terms of paid work. He planned for many years to prepare a scholarly edition of the Hebrew Psalms, with annotations, and in fact ends his *Memoirs* with lengthy reflections on this unfulfilled task. But instead of this work of learned piety. He was absorbed into a succession of large Grub Street labours for booksellers. He wrote most of the book published as Palmer's *General History of Printing* (1732), after its notional author died, having barely started the work. Psalmanazar's name is nowhere in the book. Then for a period of decades from 1735 he was one of many writers engaged on a huge publishing project called the *Universal History*, a work in twenty-three folio volumes that was finally completed in 1765. He prepared the sections on the histories of Spain, Gaul, and the Jews.

A similar encyclopedic compilation in which he was involved was Bowen's *Complete System of Geography*, published in 1747. To this work he contributed the article on 'Formosa' in which, for the first time in print, he confessed the fraud. He did so under the guise of the anonymous author of the article, in whose third-person voice he says that Psalmanazar's account is 'fabulous', as 'every judicious reader must have judged it to have been, [by] the many Absurdities with which it is stuffed' (quoted Kevak, 23). He goes on to claim that Psalmanazar had owned the hoax for many years, though not publicly, and that being now penitent had written a true account of himself, to be published after his death. In 1752, he wrote his will. He published in 1753 a

small theological book, *Essays on the Following Subjects*, on miracles and other topics; on the title page authorship was attributed to 'an obscure layman in town'. In 1763, he ratified his will.

The Man Sought by Sam Johnson

It is in his last guise, as a hard-working, unambitious and (at least at some level) penitent Grub Street hack, that George Psalmanazar comes tantalisingly close to making a more vivid appearance on the stage of history and literature. He achieves a minor role in one of the most famous books of the age – indeed, of any age – James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). To the great disappointment of posterity, he is not exactly *in* the book, as he died in May 1764, aged eighty-four or eighty-five, two weeks before Boswell first made Johnson's acquaintance. But he comes up in conversation, in surprising ways.

Johnson, when he encountered the elderly Psalmanazar in London early in the 1740s, was not the great scholar, essayist, poet, lexicographer and conversationalist, but a young man and an anonymous hack journalist. Anyone making a living in literature must have seemed interesting and enviable to the young Johnson; or perhaps someone making such a precarious living as Psalmanazar struck him as an object lesson. Johnson was usually a stickler for honesty and impatient with scoundrels, and no one would have imagined that Psalmanazar was an obvious candidate for the immense admiration of such a man. Yet Johnson's three contemporary biographers all agree in quoting his extravagant praise of the former Formosan. According to Boswell, Psalmanazar was the man whom the younger Johnson 'sought after ... the most'. Sir John Hawkins says that he was the one man Johnson 'never thought of contradicting', and the close of Psalmanazar's life was that which he most wished his own to resemble. Hester Thrale, Johnson's intimate friend in later life, once asked him, 'Who was the *best* man he had ever known?' Any of various bishops? John Wesley, the founder of Methodism? The humanitarian James Oglethorpe? Johnson knew a great many virtuous people. But, she tells us, "Psalmanazar", was the unexpected reply.'

Michael Keevak (101 ff.) contends that by his piety, diligence and long obscurity, Psalmanazar had regularised his life in a way that Johnson never could, and that Johnson admired him for it. Also, he had – not without pain and embarrassment – adjusted his ambitions to his talents. He may not have been the great Hebrew scholar he aspired to be, but he laboured piously, and if not particularly usefully, at least harmlessly.

There may or may not have been something other than a purely penitential motive in Psalmanazar's holding onto his false name, and other reminders of his former purported exoticism,

such as the ‘venerable long beard, and singular garb’ which apparently distinguished him in his later years (*Monthly Review*, 1764; quoted Keevak 99). Johnson is always prepared to let people cling to harmless vanities – to make an issue of it smacks of the sort of scrupulosity of which he was always wary. Some people, like Hester Thrale, thought Psalmanazar a lifelong hypocrite, and that Johnson was too ready to be taken in by frauds, so long as they pretended to piety. But Johnson’s lack of scepticism is of a piece with his lifelong tenderness towards the poor and troubled, and – more importantly – with his strong suspicion of the ease with which accusations of hypocrisy are made, by people content to have standards no higher than what they can easily live up to. For Psalmanazar did not make use of his name, as a fully-fledged hypocrite might have, to retain anything of his former notoriety. Johnson perhaps understood this seemingly modesty as a token of the sincerity of Psalmanazar’s repentance. Surely a consistent fraud and hypocrite would – once exposed – have told his story in full, made a renewed sensation about his reformation, and perhaps have become the eighteenth-century equivalent of a television evangelist. In such a way, the sins of his youth could be re-framed as simply an early chapter in a success story. Instead, Psalmanazar contented himself with living usefully and unobtrusively, but wore his false name for the rest of his long life as the badge of his imposture and his shame.

For Johnson there was also perhaps a special poignancy in Psalmanazar’s fate. Any person of learning knows – as no one else does – how much they do *not* know; they are aware of how shaky are the foundations of their repute, and of how much circumstance has contributed to any worldly success they might have achieved. For Johnson, Psalmanazar is a man who, when he was young and inexperienced, took inexcusable short cuts to his ambitions, and afterwards lived and suffered with something we all fear: being discovered as an impostor.

A Note on Sources

Psalmanazar's fictitious account of Formosa is taken from his book, George Psalmanazar, *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa, an Island Subject to the Emperor of Japan...* (London, 1704), also the 2nd revised edition (London, 1705). His confession, such as it is, is found in *Memoirs of ****, Commonly Known by the Name of George Psalmanazar, A Reputed Native of Formosa ...* (London, 1763).

Scores of writers dealing with hoaxes have written about Psalmanazar, usually without adding anything of either factual or critical interest to the subject. There have been only four scholarly books on the subject; the best is by Michael Keevak, *The Pretended Asian: George Psalmanazar's Eighteenth-Century Formosan Hoax* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2004). Richard Swiderski, *The False Formosan: George Psalmanazar and the Eighteenth-Century Experiment of Identity* (San Francisco: Mellen Research Univ. Press, 1991), is detailed and interesting, but frustratingly and strangely written. Frederic J. Foley, *The Great Formosan Impostor* (St Louis: St Louis Univ. Press, 1967) is a book of documents, valuable for supplying texts of otherwise hard-to-access contemporary sources.

Other sources I have used include Robert DeMaria, 'George Psalmanazar', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), and Sidney Lee, 'George Psalmanazar', *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1896). Johnson's few but suggestive comments about Psalmanazar are in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*; and in the most compendious edition of the great book – which is the edition I refer to here – there is a useful Appendix; see George Birkbeck Hill, 'George Psalmanazar', *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G.B Hill, rev. L.F. Powell, 6 v. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935-65), III: 443-49 (App. A).

Fanny Burney, Boswell and Johnson

John Wiltshire

This paper is about Frances (or 'Fanny') Burney's relationship to Boswell and to Johnson. It consists largely of quotations but since post-modern critics insist that all writing is a tissue of quotations from other writing, I don't feel the least shame about that.

Frances Burney was born in 1752 and lived until 1840 – a long and extraordinary life, of which her acquaintance with Johnson makes only one episode. If this paper has an argument it is this: that Fanny Burney's accounts of Johnson ought to be much better known than they are, and that her accounts rival Boswell's in their authenticity and dramatic vividness. She knew Johnson for only six years at the end of his life, and in quite different circumstances from Boswell, but I think we can consider Burney's accounts of Johnson almost as interesting, and in some ways more interesting. 'The special skill of Boswell is in his power of giving, not the felicitous phrase by itself, but the dramatic situation in which it was struck out,' wrote Leslie Stephen of his account of Johnson in *Studies of a Biographer*. 'In that he is not only superlative, but, I fancy unique ... Boswell seems to be alone in the art of presenting us in a few lines with a conversation which is obviously as real as it is dramatic.'¹ I would challenge this view, which has been long with us. Burney is at least as fine a mistress of the dramatic situation, and much better at representing that key fact about Johnson which Hawkins (who knew Johnson in the early Clubs) stressed, and Mrs Thrale defined when she wrote in her *Anecdotes* that 'No man loved laughing better.'²

I can best begin to open these questions by reading Frances Burney's account of a meeting with James Boswell outside St George's Chapel, Windsor, one day in 1790. Burney was at this time Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, a position at court which she had been driven into by her friends and which was extremely irksome to her. Boswell was there to cadge materials for his *Life of Johnson* from her. 'We saluted with mutual glee,' she wrote, 'his comic-serious face and manner have lost none of their wonted singularity.' He began by demanding that she resign her position at court – 'it won't do ma'am! you must resign!' Burney hurried away, 'not to have such treasonable declarations overheard, for we were surrounded by a multitude,' and tried to head him off by asking about 'Mr Burke's book'.

'Oh,' cried he, 'it will come out next week: 'tis the first book in the world, except my own, and that's coming out very soon; only I want your help ... You must give me some of your choice little notes of the Doctor's; we have seen him long enough upon stilts; I want to show him in a new light. Grave Sam and great Sam, and solemn Sam, and learned Sam – all these he has appeared over and over ... I want to

show him as gay Sam, agreeable Sam, pleasant Sam; so you must help me with some of his beautiful billets to yourself.’

She tells him she doesn’t have ‘any stores’ to hand, but he persists, and persists, until they reach the railings of the Queen’s lodge. Now, Boswell begins to read a letter of Johnson to himself, ‘in strong imitation of the Doctor’s manner’, which Burney, in other circumstances, might have enjoyed. ‘But Mrs Schwellenberg was at her window, a crowd was gathering to stand round the rails, and the King and Queen and Royal Family now approached from the Terrace. I made a rather quick apology, and, with a step as quick as my now weakened limbs have left in my power, I hurried to my apartment.’³

Let me briefly comment on this passage as writing – as literature. It comes from a document that is both a letter to her sister Susan and a diary or journal. Burney wrote very regularly to Susan and at the same time used her letters as an occasion for keeping a coherent and extended record or memoir of her life. The documents are thus both letters and memoirs: they are private communications, and simultaneously, potentially at least, meant for the public record. Burney (now thirty-eight) has been writing her journal since the age of fifteen, and she is practised at creating dramatic and amusing scenes. This one, with its build-up of tension, its comic suspense and its subject-matter of embarrassment – its comedy made out of embarrassment – is typical of her dramatic gift. You can see why Boswell thought she might help him in presenting ‘gay Sam, agreeable Sam’. It is, I would suggest, comparable with the best of Boswell’s own autobiographical writing. (Much later, in her *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* [1832], the then Madame d’Arblay re-presented the scene, with some interesting variations.)

Frances Burney does possess some ‘stores’ (both letters and memoirs of Johnson – though Boswell was not to know this). But she refuses here, and later, to hand them over. ‘I cannot consent to print private letters, even of a man so justly celebrated,’ she declares. Her grounds are the sacredness of privacy – a privacy that remains sacred, even when the subject is the most famous literary man of the age, and even when Mrs Thrale has published two volumes of *Letters to and from the late Dr Samuel Johnson* two years previously. As we shall see, she was greatly to disapprove of Boswell’s *Life* when it appeared. (And, according to Macaulay, she was even to refuse John Wilson Croker’s much later request to access her memoirs for his famous – or notorious – edition of the *Life* in 1831.)⁴ Burney’s concern for privacy is an extreme form of the culture of the age, when a lady was meant to exist only in the private sphere (hence, for example, Jane Austen’s novels never bearing the name of their author – only ‘by a lady’). When Johnson offered to teach her Latin, she was glad that she was able to decline, because if it were known, she would become

talked about: 'I proceeded to the speedy conclusion – my great apprehension, *conviction* rather, that what I learnt of so great a man could never be *private* ... which to me was sufficient motive for relinquishing the scheme.' (*DL*, IV, 223) Privacy then, is a very acute issue with this writer. Shy, retiring, demure, she was at the same time scribbling endless diaries and journals, which paradoxically display, and reveal, her to us.

Burney had 'scribbled' *Evelina* secretly at the Burney house in London, and had it published clandestinely in 1778. Not even her father Charles Burney knew. An anonymous novel, it quickly became a great success and Dr Burney had to be told. He couldn't keep the news to himself, and soon Mrs Thrale invited Fanny to spend a day with herself and Johnson at Streatham in September 1778. Burney quickly became a great favourite with both Mrs Thrale and – as 'dear little Burney' – with Johnson. Thrilled by this invitation from the great hostess, she gives very full accounts of life at Streatham to her sister. Here is part of her record of that first day:

We had a noble dinner, and a most elegant dessert. Dr Johnson, in the middle of dinner, asked Mrs Thrale what was in some little pies that were near him.

'Mutton,' answered she, 'so I don't ask you to eat any, because I know you despise it.'

'No, madam, no,' cried he; 'I despise nothing that is good of its sort; but I am too proud now to eat of it. Sitting by Miss Burney makes me very proud today!'

'Miss Burney,' said Mrs Thrale, laughing, 'you must take great care of your heart if Dr Johnson attacks it; for I assure you he is not often successful.'

'What's that you say, madam?' cried he: 'are you making mischief between the young lady and me already?' (*DL*, I, 56)

Later they talk about David Garrick and then Sir John Hawkins. 'Why now, Dr Johnson,' says Mrs Thrale, 'he is another of those whom you suffer nobody to abuse but yourself; Garrick is one too; for if any other person speaks against him, you browbeat him in a minute!'

'Why, madam,' answered he, 'they don't know when to abuse him, and when to praise him; I will allow no man to speak ill of David that he does not deserve; and as to Sir John, why really I believe him to be an honest man at the bottom; but to be sure he is penurious, and he is mean, and it must be owned he has a degree of brutality, and a tendency to savageness, that cannot be easily defended.'

We all laughed, as he meant we should, at this curious manner of speaking in his favour ... (*DL*, I, 58)

Johnson then tells how Hawkins refused to pay his share of suppers at the club, since he never ate any:

‘And was he excused?’

‘Oh yes, for no man is angry at another for being inferior to himself! We all scorned him, and admitted his plea. For my part I was such a fool as to pay my share for wine, though I never tasted any. But Sir John was a most *unclubable* man!’
(*DL*, I, 59)

This is one of the best known of Johnson’s verbal coinages, but it isn’t in Boswell’s original *Life*. Its circulation is due to the fact that Birkbeck Hill quotes this passage from Burney in a footnote on Sir John Hawkins.⁵ Burney’s *Journal* is thus treated as an appendage, or supplement, to Boswell’s record. Some modern accounts of Johnson, such as for example, the most recent biography by Robert DeMaria (1993), make no reference to Burney’s record at all. This may be partly because Burney’s journals of this period have never been republished since Austin Dobson’s edition of the *Diary and Letters of Madame d’Arblay* in 1904-05.

‘After dinner,’ Burney writes, ‘when Mrs Thrale and I left the gentlemen, we had a conversation that could not but be delightful, as she was all good-humour, spirits, sense and *agreeability*. Surely I may make words, when at a loss, if Dr Johnson does.’ (Dobson says she wasn’t first in the field: Chaucer had used the word before her!)

I hope these brief specimens suggest the character of Burney’s presentation of Johnson. This is a Johnson at home, relaxed and humorous, delighting in the company of two elegant, literate and clever women – a Johnson teasing, sportive, sociable. ‘He will be seen in this work more completely than any man who has ever yet lived,’ Boswell was to claim in the first pages of his biography (*Life*, I, 30). In many ways, of course, this is true, but there is one major limitation: Boswell is inclined to show Johnson almost exclusively (the famous set-to with Mrs Knowles excepted) in the company of men. This skews our ‘image’ of him towards the autocratic driven-to-dominate ‘Dr Johnson’ ever after.

On the subject of words: at supper time, Mrs Thrale enquires whether Fanny would like anything to eat.

I answered ‘No,’ but Dr Johnson said,

‘Yes: she is used, madam, to suppers; she would like an egg or two, and a few slices of ham, or a rasher – a rasher, I believe, would please her better.’ (*DL*, I, 69).

The next morning Mrs Thrale greets him: ‘Why, Dr Johnson ... I hope you are very well this morning! if one may judge by your spirits and good humour, the fever you threatened us with is gone off.’

‘Why no, madam, no,’ answered he, ‘I am not yet well; I could not sleep at all; there I lay restless and uneasy, and thinking all the time of Miss Burney. Perhaps I have offended her, thought I; perhaps she is angry: I have seen her but once, and I talked to her of a rasher! – Were you angry?’

I think [Burney writes] I need not tell you my answer.

‘I have been endeavouring to find some excuse,’ continued he, ‘and as I could not sleep, I got up, and looked for some authority for the word; and I find, madam, it is used by Dryden: in one of his prologues, he says – “And snatch a homely rasher from the coals.” So you must not mind me madam; I say strange things, but I mean no harm.’ (DL, I, 71)

(Johnson must have consulted his own *Dictionary*, where the passage from *All for Love* is cited.)

It is clear from her reports of these initial meetings that Johnson has taken a shine to Fanny. He is not in the least taken in by her demure air and shyness. ‘She’s a toad,’ he cries, ‘a sly young rogue.’ Strange as it seems, ‘toad’ here seems to be a term of affectionate teasing. She’s a ‘character-monger’, a ‘spouter’ with whom they have lots of ‘mag’ or chatter. They tease her about writing a comedy for the theatre (the way to make your literary fortune in the eighteenth century). Johnson guesses that that is what she is already doing in her room upstairs, and suggests the title ‘Streatham: a farce’. This is ‘good sport i’faith,’ as Mistress Quickly says: in fact I don’t know anywhere in literature – not even in *Don Quixote* – where a continuous series of practical jokes and teasing is so vividly represented, except in Shakespeare.

Just one other example of Johnson’s teasing, again about words: a young man with the name of Rose Fuller is a favourite of Mrs Thrale, though he has not much command of language. Reports Burney:

Then she told me, that he once said, ‘Dr Johnson’s conversation is so instructive that I’ll ask him a question. “Pray, sir, what is Palmyra? I have often heard of it, but never knew what it was.” “Palmyra, sir?” said the doctor, “why, it is a hill in Ireland, situated in a bog, and has palm-trees at the top, whence it is called Palm-mire.” ’ (DL, I, 87).

It is tempting to go on and retail more anecdotes of Burney’s time at Streatham, but let me turn now to Burney’s relationship with Boswell. He too, of course, visited Streatham, and later, when Frances was at court, he was a friend of the figure she calls ‘Mr Turbulent’, the Queen’s Reader. ‘He had lately, he told me, had much conversation concerning me with Mr Boswell. I feel sorry to be named or remembered by that biographical, anecdotal memorandummer, till his book of poor Dr Johnson’s life is finished and published.’ (DL III, 219) This is in February 1787. Memorandummer! There’s a word for you!

As we've seen, Burney gives detailed accounts of life at Streatham, representing whole conversations, and was to give very full reports of many other scenes in her long and extraordinary life. These accounts were written up from brief notes made on her tablets (the erasable ivory sheets) or on scraps of paper; but she regarded it as a gross violation of decorum to take notes while actually in company. Here is her account of Boswell from the last book she wrote, her *Memoirs* of her father, published in 1832 when she was nearly eighty:

As Mr Boswell was at Streatham only upon a morning visit, a collation was ordered, to which all were assembled. Mr Boswell was preparing to take a seat that he seemed, by prescription, to consider as his own, next to Dr Johnson; but Mr Seward, who was present, waved his hand for Mr Boswell to move farther on, saying, with a smile, 'Mr Boswell, that seat is Miss Burney's.'

He stared, amazed: the ... claimant was new and unknown to him, and he appeared by no means pleased to resign his prior rights. But, after looking round for a minute or two with an important air of demanding the meaning of this innovation, he reluctantly, also resentfully, got another chair, and placed it at the back of the shoulder of Dr Johnson ...

The elderly Burney gives a distinctly malicious portrait of Boswell's eagerness to catch everything that Johnson says:

When he met with Dr Johnson, he commonly forbore even answering anything that was said, or attending to anything that was going forward, lest he should miss the smallest sound from that voice to which he paid such exclusive, though merited, homage. But the moment that voice burst forth, the attention which it excited in Mr Boswell amounted almost to pain. His eyes goggled with eagerness; he leant his ear almost on the shoulder of the Doctor; and his mouth dropped open to catch every syllable that might be uttered; nay, he seemed not only to dread losing a word, but to be anxious not to miss a breathing, as if hoping from it, latently or mystically, some information. (*DL I*, 510-11)⁶

Burney in this passage also represents Boswell as 'a school-boy' whom Johnson bosses about in company.

Part of the malice of this account may be due to Burney's resentment at what she perceived as Boswell's betrayal of Johnson in the *Life*. When it came out, and every one was reading it, she was still at court, and she had to explain to the King (who of course had himself met Johnson) that the doctor was a very different figure than the cantankerous man Boswell had represented. 'Dear and excellent Dr Johnson! I have never forgot nor neglected his injunction given me when he was ill – to stand by him and support him, and not hear him abused when he was no more, and could not defend himself! but little – little did I think it would ever fall to my lot to vindicate him to his King and Queen.' (*DL*, IV, 478) But she

too had witnessed Johnson in his most ferociously disputatious mood, as when he went for a Mr Pepys who had the temerity to criticise his 'Life' of Lord Lyttelton.⁷ The quarrel was already brewing when Pepys asked Fanny to head off Johnson's attack, but she was taken by surprise:

Never before have I seen Dr Johnson speak with so much passion; 'Mr Pepys,' he cried, in a voice the most enraged, 'I understand you are offended by my Life of Lord Lyttelton, what is it you have to say against it? come forth, Man! Here am I! ready to answer any charge you can bring.' (367)

Johnson, Burney comments, 'has been long provoked, & justly enough, at the *sneaking* complaints and murmurs of the angry Lytteltonians, & therefore his long excited wrath, which hitherto had met no Object, now burst forth with a vehemence & bitterness almost incredible.' (368) She repeatedly characterises Johnson's vehemence but does not dramatise it. Instead, she dramatises a speech of the comic buffoon Mr Cator, who wants to take part in the quarrel and isn't stopped by not having read the life in question. His contributions 'compelled even the disputants, all inflamed as they were, to Laugh':

'As to this here question of Lord Lyttleton I can't speak to it to the purpose, as I have not read his Life, for I have only read the Life of Pope: I have got the Books, though, for I sent for them last Week, & they came to me on Wednesday, & then I began them; but I have not yet read Lord Lyttleton. Pope I have begun & that is what I am now reading. But what I have to say about Lord Lyttleton is this here; Mr Seward says that Lord Lyttleton's steward dunned Mr Shenstone for his rent, by which I understand he was a tenant of Lord Lyttleton's, Well, if he was a tenant of Lord Lyttleton's why should not he pay his Rent?' (ELJ, IV, 369)

Burney was to use Mr Cator as a model for the figure of Hobson in her next novel, *Cecilia* (1782). This, like the scene with which I began this talk, is an ensemble piece. Unlike Boswell, Burney does not focus almost exclusively on Johnson or present Johnson simply in dialogue with an interlocutor or questioner: her interest is in the whole company, and this includes Mrs Thrale's successful intervention. Burney was shocked at this 'frightful scene', as she called it, of Johnson's wrath even when recalling it two years later. (DL, II, 235; Dec. 1783)

There are many indications that Frances Burney and Johnson became close in the last months of his life, after the marriage of Mrs Thrale to Gabriel Piozzi in June 1784. Burney had tried to dissuade Mrs Thrale from taking the step, and had sided with the daughters, so she lost Mrs Thrale's friendship too. Whatever 'the choice little billets' Boswell supposed Johnson to have written to Burney, only two are extant: they are both pleas for Burney's company. 'I am now scheming to come home,' he writes from Lichfield, on the first of November 1784, 'but the

schemes of the sick are dilatory, and then You must try what comfort you can give to, Dear Madam, Your most humble servant ...”⁸ Burney knew Johnson best, perhaps, in these last weeks of his life. Burney’s record of her meeting with Johnson – sent to her sister – is an intimate account of a public figure. Johnson is ‘very ill’ and is thinking of trying what ‘sleeping out of town might do for him’.

‘I remember,’ said he, ‘that my wife, when she was near her end, poor woman, was also advised to sleep out of town; and when she was carried to the lodgings that had been prepared for her, she complained that the staircase was in very bad condition – for the plaster was beaten off the walls in many places. “Oh,” said the man of the house, “that’s nothing but by the knocks against it of the coffins of the poor souls that have died in the lodgings!” ’ (*DL*, II, 270: 28 November, 1784)

If this material is familiar, that is not of course because Boswell included it in his biography: it comes to us courtesy of his later editors, who are able to do what he could not do, and include the choicest morsels of Burney’s journal in their notes – thus, as I’ve said, treating Burney as a supplement to Boswell.

But Burney’s claims as a memorialist and historian are far higher than this: I doubt whether there is in Boswell a more intimate moment. Burney’s comment on Johnson’s remark is: ‘He laughed, though not without apparent secret anguish, in telling me this. I felt extremely shocked, but, willing to confine my words at least to the literal story, I only exclaimed against the unfeeling absurdity of such a confession.’ She understands that this ‘absurdity’ must have been told to Johnson by his wife herself (and thus that we hear – one of the rarest of moments – Hetty’s characteristic wit). It is a macabre joke that covers – for Johnson as it must have for Hetty – a recognition of the imminence of death. ‘Such a confession’ is an odd phrase. I think the implication is that this ‘absurdity’ stands in for what Burney intuitively understands is Johnson’s confession, made to a woman with whom in this dialogue he speaks his most private thoughts. As John Wain points out in his biography of Johnson, ‘They must have been very close together, their talk running without reserve.’⁹ Only Fanny would have been able to bring up the name of Mrs Thrale, as she does later in this interview, to elicit the cry, ‘I drive her quite from my mind ... I never speak of her, and I desire never to hear of her more. I drive her, as I said, wholly from my mind.’

To change the subject, Burney talks about Ann Yearsley, the milk-woman poet, and elicits some interesting remarks about genius. Burney made several attempts to see Johnson after this,

but was always turned away. Shortly after Johnson's death Charles Burney wrote to Fanny's sister Susan of his own last visit:

'When I came away, he said '*come again*' ... & said 'tell Fanny I think I cd throw the Ball to her yet' – [& his last words were 'Remember me to Fanny']'.¹⁰

What wouldn't Boswell have given to know all of this! But if Boswell makes quite a figure in Burney's life-writings, Burney is almost absent in his. The King was disappointed to find her so little mentioned. One of the few occasions is when Boswell comes across Johnson in a set of learned ladies. Perhaps they said nothing interesting while he was there: at any rate Boswell has nothing to say about them.

Another occasion is in May 1783:

I found him at tea, and the celebrated Miss Burney, the authour of '*Evelina*' and '*Cecilia*' with him. I asked if there would be any speakers in Parliament, if there were no places to be obtained. Johnson. "Yes, sir. Why do you speak here? Either to instruct and entertain, which is a benevolent motive, or for distinction, which is a selfish motive." I mentioned '*Cecilia*.' Johnson (with an air of animated satisfaction) "Sir, if you talk of '*Cecilia*,' talk on." (*Life*, iv, 223)

This is very good of course, and complimentary to Miss Burney. Was she present when this compliment was paid? Did she make any contribution to the exchange? The dialogue is represented as exclusively between Boswell and Johnson. Burney, whether or not she said anything, has vanished. Beside Burney's presentations of Boswell, this looks thin indeed.

I do not mean to impugn Boswell's great achievement. Though the contribution of Edmund Malone to its writing is now recognised, Boswell's *Life* will remain a pioneering work of biographical scholarship. No-one had ever before presented so complete and detailed, arresting and amusing a portrait of a great man. And we, of course, don't care about that transgression of privacy that so bothered Burney and her contemporaries. Burney's journals, on the other hand – copious and detailed as they were, full of portraits and anecdotes – remained private until after her death, and even then were published only in censored and doctored form. Except in the *Memoirs* of her father, she never wrote an account of Johnson for publication. Even parts of her diaries – the complete records of the Streatham years and the years at court – remain unpublished.¹¹

Burney and Boswell, then, had a rocky acquaintance. Burney disapproved of Boswell, and Boswell was probably unaware of Burney's importance to Johnson. On 1 June 1792, after she had escaped from the court, and Boswell's *Life* had been published,

Fanny was invited to a breakfast to meet James Boswell again. She was not altogether pleased by the invitation:

I felt a strong sensation of that displeasure which his loquacious communications of every weakness and infirmity of the first and greatest good man of these times have awakened in me, at his first sight; and, though his address to me was courteous in the extreme, and he made a point of sitting next me, I felt an indignant disposition to a nearly forbidding reserve and silence. How many starts of passion and prejudice has he blackened into record ...

But James Boswell was a match for her:

Angry, however, as I have long been with him, he soon insensibly conquered, though he did not soften me: there is so little of ill design or ill nature in him, he is so open and forgiving for all that is said in return, that he soon forced me to consider him in a less serious light, and change my resentment against his treachery into something like commiseration of his levity; and before we parted we became good friends. There is no resisting great good humour ... (DL, V, 83-4)

There, as ‘good friends’, let us leave them. But one final anecdote. Many years later, in 1815, Burney – now the wife of General d’Arblay, officer in the French royalist army – set out to find her husband, stationed at Trèves, over a hundred miles south of Brussels. Taking the ‘diligences’ or public transport, Burney had to travel from one town to another on a zigzag route that meant much hanging about for the next coach to arrive. In the midst of one especially anxious wait, she recalls a remark of Johnson, made perhaps more than thirty years before, that I think is found nowhere else: ‘An hour, says Dr. Johnson, may be tedious, but it cannot be long.’ (DL VI, 273) A comforting remark, when you have to sit through lots of lectures and papers.

Burney’s memories of Johnson remained with her, even in the midst of the very different scenes of her life thirty years after his death. She is one of the great transmitters of his memory to posterity. She saw him less than Boswell, and her records are never worked up into a full-dress biography, but she certainly deserves to be read on her own terms rather than just co-opted to bolster the illusion of completeness that the editors of Boswell’s *Life*, following their author, strive to create. Hers is ‘gay Sam, agreeable Sam’ indeed, but not just that.

Notes

- ¹ Leslie Stephen, 'Johnsoniana', in *Studies of a Biographer*, 4 v. (London: Duckworth, 1898-1902), I, 125-6.
- ² Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson*, ed. S.C. Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), 116-17.
- ³ *The Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay (1778-1840)*, as edited by her niece Charlotte Barrett; ed. Austin Dobson, 6 v. (London: Macmillan, 1904-05) – hereafter cited in the text as *DL*; IV, 431-33.
- ⁴ Lord Macaulay, 'Madame d'Arblay (January, 1843)', *Literary Essays: Contributed to the Edinburgh Review* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1923): 545-600, 561.
- ⁵ Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. L.F. Powell, 6 v. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-64) – hereafter cited in the text as *Life*; I, 27n.2.
- ⁶ Madame D'Arblay [Frances Burney], *Memoirs of Doctor Burney: Arranged from his Own Manuscripts, from Family Papers, and from Personal Recollections*, 3 v. (London, 1832), II, 190-97.
- ⁷ *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. Lars E. Troide, et al., 4- v. (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, and Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988-) – hereafter cited in the text as *EJL*; IV, 366-371 (June 1781).
- ⁸ Bruce Redford, ed., *The Letters of Samuel Johnson – The Hyde Edition*, 5 v. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992-94), IV, 432.
- ⁹ John Wain, *Samuel Johnson: A Biography* (New York: Viking, 1974), 373.
- ¹⁰ Roger Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 286.
- ¹¹ Edited by Peter Sabor, they are in preparation for Oxford University Press.

JSA Publications, 2008

The David Fleeman Memorial Lectures

- 1994 Ian Donaldson, *The Death of the Author and the Lives of the Poet* (pub.1994)
- 1995 Wallace Kirsop, *Samuel Johnson in Paris in 1775* (pub. 1995)
- 1996 Peter Steele, *Flights of the Mind: Johnson and Dante* (pub. 1997)
- 1997 Clive Probyn, 'Pall Mall and the Wilderness of New South Wales': *Samuel Johnson, Watkin Tench, and Six Degrees of Separation* (pub. 1998)
- 1998 Nicholas Hudson, *Johnson and the Macquarie: An Investigation of 250 Years of Language and Lexicography* (pub. 1999)
- 1999 Kevin Hart, *How to Read a Page of Boswell* (pub. 2000)
- 2000 John Wiltshire, *Jane Austen's 'Dear Dr Johnson'* (pub. 2001)
- 2001 Michael Meehan, *The Journal of Richard Bowyer Atkins*
- 2002 John Hardy, 'Johnson and the Truth', *Revisited* (pub. in *Papers*, v. 7, 2005)
- 2003 Bryan O'Connor, *Boswell and Rousseau: Liberty and Duty* (pub. in *Papers*, v. 8, 2006)
- 2004 Richard Wendorf, *Samuel Johnson Abandons the Capital*
- 2005 Chris Ackerley, *Human Wishes: Samuels Johnson and Beckett* (pub. in *Papers*, v. 9, 2007)
- 2006 Alan Saunders, *Doing Philosophy with Samuel Johnson* (pub. in *Papers*, v. 10, 2008)
- 2007 Paul Tankard, *Reference Point: Samuel Johnson and the Encyclopaedias*

JSA Papers, v. 1-10

Papers, v. 1 (1997)

- 1994: Nicholas Hudson, *Two Bits of Drudgery*
John Wiltshire, *Johnson in the Medical World*
- 1996: Paul Tankard, *Maecenas and the Ministry: Johnson and his Publishers, Patrons and the Public*
Bronwen Hickman, *The Women in Johnson's World*
Geoff Brand, *A Night with Venus and a Year with Mercury: The Germ Theory in the Eighteenth Century*
Henry Gordon-Clark, *Johnson and Savage*

Papers, v. 2 (1998)

- 1994: Nicholas Hudson, *Johnson and Political Correctness*
- 1995 Bryan O'Connor, *The Hypochondriack*
- 1996 Barrie Sheppard, *Johnson and the Cucumber*
- 1997: John Wiltshire, 'All the Dear Burneys, Little and Great'
Merrowyn Deacon, *Johnson and Music*

Papers, v. 3 (1999)

- 1991: John Wiltshire, *In Bed with Boswell and Johnson*
1997: Nicholas Hudson, *Johnson and Physick*
1998: Genny Gebhardt, 'A Violent Passion': *Pugnacity and Prize-fighting in Johnson's England*
Barrie Sheppard, *Johnson, Adam Smith and Peacock Brains*
Greg Veitch, *Johnson and the Industrial Revolution*
1999: Henry Gordon-Clark, *Was Johnson a Thief?*

Papers, v. 4 (2000)

- 1995 Nicholas Hudson, *Johnson and Natural Philosophy*
1997 Philip Harvey, *The Effect of Judgment: Johnson and his Lives of the Poets*
1998 Geoffrey Brand, *Hercules with the Distaff*
Merrowyn Deacon, *Hester Thrale: Is There Life after Johnson?*
1999 Rusi Khan, *Johnson on Life and Death*
John Wiltshire, *Johnson and Garrick: The Really Impossible Friendship*

Papers, v. 5 (2003)

- 1995 Paul Brown, *A New View of Johnson's Putative Psychological Disorder*
1998 Nicholas Hudson, *Johnson and the Animal World*
2000 John Wiltshire, *Johnson and Garrick: The Really Impossible Friendship, Pt. 2*
Barrie Sheppard, *Time, Then and Now*
Anthony Marshall, *Getting to Know the Doctor: A Bookseller Returns to the Johnsonian Fold*
Robert Kemp, *An Amazing Discovery*

Papers, v. 6 (2002)

- 2001 Paul Tankard, *The Great Cham and the English Aristophanes: Samuels Johnson and Foote*
Paul Brown, *William Cowper: Messenger of Grief*
Alan Frost, 'Very Little Intellectual in the Course': *Exploration and Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*
2002 Nicholas Hudson, *Johnson in America*
Clive Probyn, *Johnson and Romance*

Papers, v. 7 (2005)

- 2002 (Fleeman Lecture):
John Hardy, 'Johnson and the Truth,' *Revisited*
2002 Genny Gebhardt, 'Rough Music': *Street Theatre in Johnson's England*
Bryan O'Connor, *Bozzy and Women*
2004 Nicholas Hudson, *Mr Johnson Changes Trains*

Papers, v. 8 (2006)

2003 (Fleeman Lecture):

Bryan O'Connor, *Boswell and Rousseau: Liberty and Duty*

2003 Jan Lowe, *The Man Who Could Write Anything: Oliver Goldsmith*

Chris Morris, 'Worse Than a Gaol': *Seafaring in the 18th Century*

Robert Kemp, *Johnson and Boswell, Inverted*

Papers, v. 9 (2007)

2005 (Fleeman Lecture):

Chris Ackerley, *Human Wishes: Samuels Johnson and Beckett*

2002 Basil Stafford Jr, *Johnson and Painting*

2004 Philip Harvey, *Good Living: The Poetry of Samuel Johnson*

2005 Wal MacDougall, *Three 18th Century Lichfield Poets*

Papers, v. 10 (2008)

2006 (Fleeman Lecture):

Alan Saunders, *Doing Philosophy with Samuel Johnson*

2004 Paul Tankard, *The False Formosan*

2005 Kate Burridge, 'Corruptions of Ignorance,' 'Caprices of Innovation':
Linguistic Purism and the Lexicographer

John Wiltshire, *Fanny Burney, Boswell, and Johnson*

