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Johnson, nature, and women: The early years

Elliott, Helen Yvonne, Ph.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1994

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JOHNSON, NATURE, AND WOMEN

THE EARLY YEARS

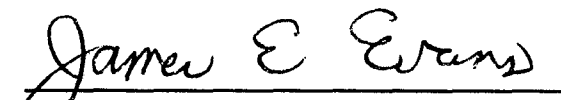
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Helen Yvonne Elliott

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Critics enamoured of James Boswell's Life of Johnson have too frequently overlooked the empathy Samuel Johnson's work reveals toward women and other creatures of nature caught in the patriarchal web of eighteenth century domination. This dissertation focuses on Johnson's youthful poetry beginning with his earliest verse, "On a Daffodill," and concluding with London, his first major poem. These selections reveal his inability to resolve his role as a functioning male in a repressive society which discourages his desire for direct and nurturing relationships with women and nature that deal, not with heroic abstractions, but with personal involvement.

The introduction reviews the various critical responses to Johnson and his attitude toward women and nature. Chapter one, centered in the Annals and a Latin poem about his childhood, provides the natural and cultural background of Johnson's early years in Lichfield. Chapter two, developed from a detailed reading of "On a Daffodill," reveals his equalitarian concern for women, flowers, and himself. Chapter three, based in "Festina Lente" and the Annals, details his deep veneration of the mother as protector in an environment symbolized by dangerous cliffs and waters. Chapter four, shows the maturation of his idea

of masculine and feminine relationships in a difficult and puzzling world. Chapter five reveals the young Johnson's dissatisfaction with the corruption of city life and his desire to return to the pastoral, maternal countryside.

This study of the youthful Johnson and his combining of women and nature offers insights into his later work, such as Rasselas and his other allegories, The Rambler, and A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, all of which continue to reveal his support for the cause of female education, the ecologically sound use of the environment, and the humane treatment of all living creatures, thus emphasizing his desire for connection and not division.

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APPROVAL PAGE

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INTRODUCTION

JOHNSON AND THE CRITICS

Samuel Johnson employed the antithesis in his prose and poetry and included what we now call humanistic dualism in his personal life (Fussell 24). According to Paul Fussell, Johnson is representative of those eighteenth century scholars and writers, who, like their literary predecessors of the Renaissance, exhibited a "dichotomous" nature:

The dualistic habit of mind persists in ethical conservatives through all the political and social vicissitudes of the eighteenth century. Antitheses swarm everywhere: this and that, wit and judgment, reason and passion, art and nature, city and country, ancient and modern, uniformity and variety, sublime and beautiful. (115)

Therefore, it's not surprising that Johnson's work and his life have often raised controversies among the critics, for nothing contributes more to argumentation than the apparent necessity to choose one extreme or the other. His appreciation or repudiation of nature and his respect for or domination of women are two areas in which readers have responded with critically opposing interpretations.

Those critics who look primarily at Boswell's Life find that Johnson prefers city dwelling to country life and looks with suspicion and disdain at women who attempt to function publicly and prominently in society. "When a man is tired

of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford" (859) -- so cites Boswell in his Life of Johnson, and so quotes Donald Greene at the beginning of his essay "The Logia of Samuel Johnson and the Quest for the Historical Johnson." This logia or "saying" (5) implies that civilized badinage is preferable to nocturnal bird song and art in all its forms is superior to the rolling green hills and flat fields of England's countryside.

Greene asks, however, if we can truly trust Boswell's citing of these sayings as the final word on Johnson's opinions and thoughts of life in general and humankind in particular. No one seems to know how much of Johnson's conversation in the Life is in his own words and how much has had "the 'wit' . . . later supplied by Boswell" (Greene 3).

In "Dancing Dogs, Women Preachers and the Myth of Johnson's Misogyny," James G. Basker finds a similar problem in the traditionally held view of Johnson's attitude toward women. Basker cites the excessive emphasis too often placed upon famous quotations from Boswell:

Johnson's reputation as a misogynist continues to linger, and the cornerstone of that reputation is his well-known remark to Boswell: "A woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on its hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprized to find it done at all." (63)

Hence, Basker argues,

It is easy to forget the number of Johnson's important friendships with women, his lifelong appreciation of female intelligence and learning, and his active help for so many women writers. (64)

In "Johnson and Women: Demasculinizing Literary History," Annette Wheeler Cafarelli explains yet another difficulty in understanding Johnson's attitude toward the female or the feminine. If "much of our image of Johnson is the product of Boswell's investment in depicting Johnson as a man's man" (61), the result has been to alienate women. Cafarelli explains that

the goal of . . . [her] study is to reclaim Johnson for women readers and at the same time to shed light on the process of evaluating historical representations of women. Close examination of the implications of passages of biographical narrative will illuminate some of the difficulties of reading and relying on biographical testimony, and will offer strategies for restoring a fairer gendering to literary history. (63)

In her research, she has discovered that readers have also labored under the continued responses of later, even twentieth century critics, who wish to perpetuate a "masculine" (64) picture of this great individual:

In modern times, the walking dog anecdote is usually brought out to deride inappropriate enterprises, often gleefully advanced as an authority for justifying exclusion of women from new fields of endeavor. At the same time, it has the more serious consequence of alienating women from old fields: emphasis on such anecdotes excludes women from the favorable perception of Johnson, and acts as a deterrent depriving women of

the pleasure of reading his works and reinforcing the male territorialization of Johnsonian studies and related fields such as eighteenth-century studies and Romanticism. (64)

Two predictable results of such a separation of Samuel Johnson from over one-half of the human population have occurred: First of all, antagonism has arisen among women who can find no reason to waste their time reading a man whose derogatory comments about their sex are so widely known; second, deification has taken place among those men who wish to retain chauvinistic tendencies that they can thus support because of the well-known opinions of such a widely-accepted authority in so many fields as Samuel Johnson (Cafarelli 64).

According to John J. Burke, Jr., in "The Unknown Samuel Johnson," the simple solution to the controversy over the authentic Johnson points to a close reading of the man's own voluminous texts (3-7). Burke, like other critics (Lipking, "What Was It Like to Be Johnson?" 35), believes that "if we are going to know Johnson better, we must read him, and that is a point Johnsonian scholars have been insisting upon for more than three decades, with some effect" (7).

In "On the Relation of Ideology to Form in Johnson's Style," Michel Baridon explains "that the members of the fraternity borrow most of their watch words from the Life" (86), but a consultation of Johnson's texts does not entirely solve the problems in interpretation. We find that

even those who do read Johnson continue to have difficulty coming to a consensus. As far as Johnson's attitudes toward women are concerned, critical opinions are varied.

One early and diverting exploration of Johnson's relationship to women is the 1895 publication of W. H. Craig's Doctor Johnson and the Fair Sex: A Study in Contrasts. By reading both Boswell and the many letters from Johnson to women of all types, Craig concludes that "Old and young, gentle and simple, all good women, all innocent children, were somehow drawn by a mysterious gravitations to the terrible doctor" (9-10). For all the evidence that these creatures "discerned the beautiful soul within the man" (14), Craig is positive that, although Johnson

might own them [women] to be clever, well-read, witty, and so forth; . . . he drew a marked and unflattering distinction between their mental capacity and that of the rougher sex. He never took them quite seriously, or affected to conceal from them his sense of their inferiority. (16)

On the other hand, what seems to be Johnson's low evaluation of the human female's rank and degree suggests a misreading for Isobel Grundy in "Samuel Johnson as Patron of Women." For her, Johnson's apparently two-edged response to women lies at the crux of patronage:

Patronage, broadly as Johnson used the concept, itself falls within a broader category: that reciprocated care and benevolence which he saw as almost the highest

human activity -- high because it imitates the divine. . . . Johnson liked to grant not only whatever goods might lie in his power -- shelter, money, food -- but also the power to gain. This he offered by nourishing talent, by fostering confidence, and by insisting on professional standards. Most of his male contemporaries were chary of offering women this second kind of help; willing to grant goods, they were possessively retentive of the power to gain. Today the second kind of gift or patronage looks the more valuable of the two. (61)

Which of these two views is the more accurate reading? Is Johnson the patronizing male, or is he the patron offering invaluable assistance to a worthy human? As Lawrence Lipking explores the Rambler essays in "What Was It Like to Be Johnson?" he provides us with a third possibility:

The Rambler does not distinguish the moral predicaments of his female correspondents from those of the rest of the human race. This might be taken as stark insensibility or as the highest of compliments -- he does not talk down to ladies. (51)

Those critics who have looked at Johnson's texts that include comments on nature have also formulated a plethora of interpretations that often conflict in type and degree. Some have found the good doctor aesthetically oblivious to nature. In "Dr. Johnson on Flowers," Vernon Rendell asserts that "his depreciation of pastoral poetry [was] . . . partly due to his indifference to the beauties of Nature" (404), but in "The Cham on Horseback," Baker says that "Johnson was, in fact, quite prepared to recognize and

admire both sublimity and beauty in natural scenery" (79).

Other critics credit Johnson with an appreciation of nature, but the extent of his connection to his environment has raised other questions. Was Johnson essentially the empiricist that Thomas Curley finds in The Journey to the Hebrides ("Philosophic Art and Travel in the Highlands" 183-219), or was Johnson, in addition to being a careful observer of mountains and trees, "a country boy . . . [who] well knew that 'mankind have a strong attachment to the habitations to which they have been accustomed'" (Baker 87)?

These critics provide a sampling of the diverse readings of Johnson's relationships with women and his attitudes toward nature, but at this time, no criticism exists that connects these two major elements of his life. Even though we have psychological, archetypal, and even economic readings of eighteenth-century literature, Johnsonian critics, for the most part, seem to prefer a very focused and therefore limited reading of his work. Such careful studies are necessary and helpful, but perhaps it is time to put the many parts of Johnson's life and work -- each too often touted as representing the "real" Johnson -- into perspective by composing a synthesis of his attitude toward nature and women. Only in a composite -- perhaps a collage -- can we hope to avoid a one-dimensional, Boswellian Johnson, one too often, as Lipking explains,

enclosed within a "frame . . . suspended somehow outside the world of process and time" ("What Was It Like to Be Johnson?" 42).

Other areas of eighteenth-century study have benefitted from an interdisciplinary approach that attempts to see the whole and not just the part, to place the synchronic evidence concerning the human and his or her response to the world into a diachronic view of literature and life. One such critic, Laura Brown, writes, concerning the drama:

Literary and theatrical historians have produced some of the broadest and most useful studies of the drama by describing its relationship to the political history of the period, to the survival of classical and Renaissance themes and motifs, or to the intellectual background of the age. (xii)

Even so, she has difficulty placing her book, English Dramatic Form 1660-1760, in the criticism of her time:

My essay finds both shape and direction. It addresses major questions that cannot even be asked in the context of the predominant assumptions of contemporary criticism in the field. . . . It is a history neither of the theater, of the repertory, nor of dramatic taste. (xii)

Such an approach holds promise for the study of Samuel Johnson's attitudes toward women and nature. Since gender and domination lie at the basis of this study, it's not surprising that psychology is important. Nancy J. Chodorow's Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory offers a broad analysis of the relationship between men and women

specifically, and man and nature indirectly, that is complex enough to be applicable to Johnson's struggle to find his own identity and place in the world. Chodorow explains her view of feminism in terms of psychology:

When I speak of feminist theory, I mean something more holistic and pluralistic -- encompassing a number of organizational axes -- and at the same time not absolute. In my current view, feminist understanding requires a multiplex account . . . It is the focus on relations among elements, or dynamics, along with an analysis and critique of male dominance, which define an understanding of sex and gender as feminist, and not just the exclusive focus on male dominance itself. . . . An open web of social, psychological, and cultural relations, dynamics, practices, identities, beliefs, in which I would privilege neither society, psyche, nor culture, comes to constitute gender as a social, cultural, and psychological phenomenon. (5)

Thus, Chodorow documents the necessity of examining a wide range of forces that are constantly at work in any society.

If we look at Johnson's writing in the traditional argumentative way that seeks to remove opposition, we too often tend to eliminate that which appears divergent or atypical within his writing and his life. However, frequently that which seems unusual is a clue to an understanding of the subject as a whole. Removing the different and the surprising results, not in a portrait, but in a caricature in which specific qualities that create a whole person are deleted because of their lack of consistency; what remains becomes exaggerated into a burlesque mask that leads to the creation of a legend and

not to the understanding of a human being. For much too long we have read critics who have created our image of the bumbling, brilliant Johnson as an incisive mind caught in a defective body, the veins on his forehead distended as he ate voraciously or argued to a similar pitch, his hands and feet moving in an uncontrolled fashion.

To apprehend the complexity of Johnson's attitudes toward women and nature, we must read with care a multitude of texts, both his own original writings and those in fields related to spiritual, intellectual, and emotional matters concerning humankind and the earth. For critical models for such a literary cross-reading that relates these subjects to the printed page, however, we have to move out of the traditional criticism concerning eighteenth-century English poetry and prose, which has tended to be synchronic, and look into approaches of other periods and other climes. Perhaps the encrusted stereotype of the reasonable male writer of the 1700s, that bugbear abhorred by the nineteenth century romantic, still guards the reading process and dulls the senses of the current audience so that nature in the eighteenth century remains, for the most part, well-combed in landscaped gardens and neatly dissected in smoky laboratories. Perhaps as readers we see too frequently the more obvious image that we have been conditioned to expect rather than what the writer has put on the page. Perhaps a wider perspective can contribute to the discussion of

Johnson and domination, the man and women, the writer and nature. Perhaps we can follow Philip Edward Baruth's suggestion in "Recognizing the Author-Function: Alternatives to Greene's Black-And-Red Book of Johnson Logia":

Johnson is one of the first figures in English letters to be both a professional author and a recognized master of the art of conversation, and in this bifurcation, he invites multi-level analysis. (42)

Certainly we should recall Leopold Damrosch, Jr.'s statement in Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense:

One must . . . recognize that Johnson is simply not consistent throughout a career of nearly five decades, or even, perhaps, at any single moment during that career. . . . his complex view of life is probably not a single 'view' at all -- the phrase makes one think of the prospect from a single window, always the same -- but rather the varied expression of an unusually interesting personality. (104)

Because Johnson lived and communicated in so many different ways on so many different subjects, it's not surprising that for a whole picture of Johnson, women, and nature that we look to other fields for perceptions and insights that a singularly literary approach could not yield. For helpful models that use interdisciplinary methods to explore women and nature in literature, fortunately, we do have such texts as Annette Kolodny's The Lay of the Land (1975). She ranges widely across the centuries of the written boundaries of America, looking into

the poems of Freneau, the prose of Crèvecoeur, and the fiction of Cooper. She considers literally and historically the events and the characters within these selections that reveal the changing role of nature in the lives of the Americans. She reads metaphorically to discover what is implied as well as what is stated, what is sub-text as well as what is text.

Primarily, she discovers the link between women and the land as perceived and forged by the explorers, settlers, and writers of early America:

America's oldest and most cherished fantasy: [is] a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine--that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification -- enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction. (4)

Kolodny finds that conflicts develop between the need to admire and support on the one hand and the desire to control and dominate on the other with varying shades of both running the range of the scale. Kolodny concludes that literature and ecology are tightly bound together:

The choice is ours: whether to allow our responses to this continent to continue in the service of outmoded and demonstrably dangerous image patterns, or whether to place our biologically -- and psychologically-based "yearnings for paradise" at the disposal of potentially healthier (that is, survival-oriented) and alternate symbolizing or image systems. (159)

Her emphasis on image, in relation to the content of the texts, is exciting and enlightening because she realizes the value of this critical approach in interpreting the writer's explicit and sometimes unconscious attitudes toward the subject at hand -- in this case women and nature, survival and domination. Thus, she connects feminism and ecology by looking at image, and then she reports the dangers inherent in any society's unquestioned acceptance of such mental pictures as fact and truth.

In the end, she believes, we must be held accountable for the effects of our prose and poetry. According to Kolodny, we must "take responsibility for the metaphors we choose and, hence, in which we live, and make of them a means to our survival" (159). Thus, the text and the subtext are equally informative, and the study of imagery takes on new importance and meaning, whether it focuses on poetry, fiction, or drama.

And what does her particular study reveal? Americans, she believes, have used the images of nature as female to the detriment of the environment, treating the land as a powerless woman, open to danger and ravishment (7). It is intriguing that Kolodny emphasizes the connection between women and nature in American literature and the transport of such attitudes from their European origins. She writes,

Colonization brought with it an inevitable paradox:
the success of settlement depended on the ability to

master the land, transforming the virgin territories into something else As a result, those who had initially responded to the promise inherent in a feminine landscape were now faced with the consequences of that response: either they recoiled in horror from the meaning of their manipulation of a naturally generous world, accusing one another, as did John Hammond in 1656, of raping and deflowering the "naturall fertility and comelinesse," or, like those whom Robert Beverley and William Byrd accused of "slothful Indolence," they succumbed to a life of easeful regression. (7)

Those Europeans left in the Old World were still dealing with their environment, the natural aspects of which they saw in feminine terms, and such views continued well into the eighteenth century. In Interior Landscapes: Gardens and the Domestic Environment, Ronald Rees writes about one specific event that dramatizes the connection between women and one part of nature, the garden:

By the end of the eighteenth century, women were so closely identified with gardens that the association gave rise to a new kind of picture, the lady in a garden, usually embroidered in silk. In conventional embroidery, the most colorful expression of the keen female interest in gardens and plants was the "landscaped" dress: "The bottom of the petticoat [had] [sic.] brown hills covered with all sorts of weeds, and every breadth had an old stump of a tree . . . round which were twined nasturtiums, ivy, honeysuckles, periwinkles, convolvuli and all sorts of twining flowers." The wearer was the duchess of Queensberry and the observer the eagle-eyed Mary Delany. (111)

Similarly, writers, painters, courtiers, and lovers found both flattering and dangerous links between the woman and the environment, and in these natural images that such individuals created in their art we can discover the

conflict between domination and submission played out in a social and political context.

Like the other writers of his time and those of preceding periods, Johnson united women and nature in complex ways. However, many of the existing studies of his use of imagery accept without question the stereotypes of Johnson as the logical, reason-centered legend of the eighteenth-century, the Augustan patriarch. For example, in The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke, Paul Fussell explores metaphors of "The Depravity of Man" and "The Redemptive Will." He believes "the humanistic myth of dualism . . . operates by assuming that life at its centre is a perpetual conflict, 'contention', as Johnson puts it, 'between pleasure and virtue'" (141). Hence, Fussell asserts, the metaphors of "Strategy and Tactics" (139-170), the imagery of warfare, are invaluable in understanding Johnson:

Of all the Augustan humanists, Johnson is undoubtedly the most learned in the exact technical materials of warfare, just as he seems the most ready to exploit them in ethical images. Life is combat to Johnson, and the combat is moral. (Fussell 147)

While Fussell's points are well-taken, other plentiful, and less strife-ridden, metaphors do exist in Johnson's writing. In "The Fictions of Romantick Chivalry": Samuel Johnson and Romance, especially in the sections entitled

"Following Johnson to the 'Enchanted Wood' (54-91) and "Johnson's Romance Metaphors" (92-110), Eithne Henson discusses images that reveal his love of this genre. She provides a discussion of natural imagery, such as "precipices" (88) and "caves" (89), both of which she includes in Johnson's "landscape of the mind" (93).

While war metaphors may show us one part of Johnson's wide interests and one facet of his complex nature and while romance images reveal yet another, an exploration of his mental pictures drawn more generally from external nature -- flowers, plants, trees, animals, and planetary spheres -- as well as those created from his understanding of women and the feminine always provides us with an even more complete view of the man and presents both as source and resolution for many of the conflicts which Johnson faced.

While Fussell may remind us that Johnson in Rambler 151 encourages his reader to remember that "'nature may be regulated, and desires governed'" (94), Johnson's gentler images of cultivation assure us that warfare is not the only constant in eighteenth century life. Indeed, if we use Eisler's terms in The Chalice and The Blade, we may find that Johnson's attitudes toward women and nature often have less in common with patriarchal or male-dominated institutions than with "partnership societies" (75), where women and men both contribute to a happy sharing of goods and services.¹

By moving inductively through Johnson's early work, by observing the literary tradition in which his writing appears, by discovering important connections to later selections of his prose, we can determine how his attitude toward women and nature developed. By examining his own texts and by recording those natural images, by putting Johnson into his own time frame from the perspective of humankind's changing relationship with the natural world, by allowing his emotions and ideas to fluctuate within the writings that we have before us, by refusing to attempt to freeze any idea as "the" one and only dominant Johnsonian construct, we may find a progression of thought that offers parameters for this exciting and challenging connection, one that illuminates Johnson's attitude toward the natural world, which in all its divergent parts includes rocks and rivers, blades of grass and oak trees, the female and the male, and even Samuel Johnson himself.

A thorough exploration of this complex topic would require many years and several volumes to complete; therefore, a more limited focus for this dissertation is essential. Since the seeds of the adults that we become lie in the earliest events of our lives, it is reasonable first of all to explore the cultural influences of Johnson's childhood and youth -- those years that Clifford in his biography of Johnson designates as the Young Sam Johnson, "from his birth to the publication of The Vanity of Human

Wishes, the first published work to bear his name on the title page" (ix). Although fascinating anecdotes from friends and family exist in many sources, including James Boswell's Life (1791) and Hester Thrale Piozzi's Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson (1786), the most valuable record of specific incidents in Johnson's life and of his understanding of these happenings is his Annals, perhaps begun in 1765 (McAdam xv). In the introduction to the Yale edition of Diaries, Prayers, and Annals, E. L. McAdam explains that "the autobiographical fragments and notes, as well as his prayers, which are often closely bound up with the day's activity or the crisis of his life, present an intimate picture" (xi) of this great writer. Similarly, the work that Johnson produced as a young man reveals directly and indirectly his perceptions of his world and of himself. Specifically, his poetry, among the most neglected and traditionally, the least valued of his work -- perhaps because many of the lines relate to women and nature -- provides fruitful ground for a study of Johnson's developing attitudes toward the feminine and the natural world. In his occasional verse written for and about friends and companions, among the poetic lines of his tragedy Irene, and in the rich imagery of his satire London, we can follow the maturing Johnson as he attempts to resolve the conflicts of gender, nature, and self.

CHAPTER I

THE SENSUOUS INFANT, FAR-SIGHTED PATRIARCHS, AND THE WORLD:
NATURAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

When a scholar approaches any topic, that person is bringing into the study, deliberately or subconsciously, a personal philosophy that directs, first, the focus of the problem at hand and, second, the materials from which that critic draws premises and supports for major points of discussion. When the methodology and the concepts are traditional to that particular field, the reader of the study can more easily assume a familiar ground from which to consider the opinions and perceptions of the critic.

In the case of Samuel Johnson, for example, those literary studies by such writers as W. Jackson Bate, Paul Fussell, and James L. Clifford have at their base the traditional view of Samuel Johnson, the Augustan philosopher, the masculine sage of the eighteenth century, even though their opinions concerning his work may vary widely. However, when the approach is less in keeping with that which has gone before, a consideration of the philosophical bent of the scholar can prove helpful. Until fairly recently, there have been few places for women in Johnsonian studies, especially for those critics who wished to deviate from the presentation of major ideas in a

masculine context. Happily the fifth volume of The Age of Johnson (1992), a publication that has been open to multiple readings of this great author from its first volume in 1987, points to the ever-increasing interest in Johnson's work from the feminine perspective. In this edition Annette Wheeler Cafarelli, Toni O'Shaughnessy Bowers, and Gay W. Brack consider Johnson's relationship to the masculine and the feminine as dictated by past critical readings, his perceptions of motherhood, and his role as a husband.

As a woman, I cannot locate either my philosophy or my study in the traditional Johnsonian material, which neither provides a place for women nor offers the space in which to allow such an examination to develop, although I find many of those writers dedicated to this approach helpful in the various ways that this paper so clearly shows. As a woman who is concerned with the environment, I discover my primary sources in the juncture at which feminism, history, ecology, and psychology meet. Thus, those writers, both male and female, that I find central to my interpretation of Johnson's early works, including his Annals and his youthful poetry, provide information that comes together in this convergence of ideas in which the key issue is frequently the placement of women and nature in the cosmic view and the resulting value attached to such positions.

Traditionally, the question of Johnson's view of the human's place in creation led immediately to a consideration

of Johnson, the humanist, as in Fussell's work. While we may learn much about "man" in this context, we will find little here about women and less about nature as the physical environment in which all life exists. However, a feminist and ecological approach offers insights into Johnson's life and works that reveal the conflict between what was accepted as the masculine, which was strong and dominant, and the feminine, which was submissive and weak, for the way that we perceive ourselves as a part of nature reveals what we understand about conflict and cooperation.

Conflict was rampant in the eighteenth century, as the desire to see and write everything in terms of antithesis suggests. This splitting of the world into binary opposites has had a long history. Traditionally, Fussell explains that such dichotomous thinking, which goes back at least to the classical period, implies as its central issue the superiority of man to the rest of the natural world:

Man is significantly distinguished from other creatures, according to Aristotle, by his impulse to know and learn. To Cicero, he is distinguished by his awareness of causality. To the Christian, man is differentiated from animal by 'soul'. (28)

However, today ecologists and feminists look at the implications of creating such a dualistic philosophy and society. One major question exists: does a line need to be drawn at all? And another follows, if division must occur,

where does the thinking individual draw the line between the human and the non-human? In Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility, Keith Thomas explains the past consequences of splitting the world into two sections in which one part was considered superior. Not only was the treatment of the nonhuman world often brutal and inhumane, with masculine pursuits directed toward

hunting, domestication, meat-eating, . . . and the wholesale extermination of vermin and predators. But this abiding urge to distinguish the human from the animal also had important consequences for relations between men. (41)

"American Indians," "the Irish," "the mad," "and women were also near the animal state" (42, 42, 44, 43). "Once perceived as beasts, people were liable to be treated accordingly" (44).

In England, Thomas explains, "bridles for scolding women; cages, chains and straw for madmen; halters for wives sold by auction in the market" were all acceptable ways for those in power to deal with "the common people" (45), who had few or no legal rights. According to "Timothy Nourse in 1700," the best means of control was to treat them like dumb brutes, "to bridle them, and to make them feel the spur too, when they begin to play their tricks and kick" (Thomas 45). In such texts negative patriarchal domination between animals and other humans is documented.

That the link between women and animals was long-lived is also evidenced by an article in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1756. At a country fair in Norfolk, a man solved a disagreement with his wife by trading her to a grazier "provided he [the grazier] would let him [the husband] choose one out of the herd" (qtd. in Hill 119):

Accordingly they met the next day, when she was delivered to the grazier with a new halter round her neck, and the husband received the bullock, which he afterwards sold for six guineas. (qtd. in Hill 119)

To complete the picture, we must also note that the wife reportedly agreed to the business transaction.

While many of these practices may have begun quite early in human history, Carol Merchant believes that the scientific revolution lessened man's respect for nature and increased his desire and justification for domination of all "sub-species," including women. In The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution, she explains that the scientific attitude negatively heightened the differences perceived between man and the rest of creation.

Although differences and divisions have been cited for many years, as Fussell and others have noted, the prevalence of empiricism negatively altered what had been, to Merchant, in many cases a gentle and respectful view of nature as "a kindly and caring motherly provider, a manifestation of the God who had imprinted a designed, planned order on the

world" (6). Such a veneration, Merchant believes, came about when "human beings . . . lived in daily, immediate, organic relation with the natural order for their sustenance" (1) and disappeared with the domination of scientific thought. This "nurturing earth image" (2), which she calls the mythic view of nature, offered "a cultural constraint restricting the types of socially and morally sanctioned human actions allowable with respect to the earth" (2) while "the new images of mastery and domination functioned as cultural sanctions for the denudation of nature" (2).

Like Merchant, Paul Shepard sees the positive qualities of the organic philosophy, which he calls mythic, and the dangers of the scientific, which takes a "linear" (57), historical view of the universe. The latter results in a civilization that finds "other cultures . . . erroneous" (57) and "masculine and feminine . . . [as] opposing. Society, he believes, sees itself as nomadic, pastoral and patriarchal" (57).

At the heart of the increased authority of domination that came about in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and culminated in the nineteenth when the sun never set on the British empire was, according to Merchant, Francis Bacon's justification for "investigation" (172) and

manipulation of the environment. She explains how the idea of nature, once a revered part of the cosmos, becomes, under Francis Bacon's tutelage, a subject for exploitation:

The new man of science must not think that the "inquisition of nature is in any part interdicted or forbidden." Nature must be "bound into service" and made a "slave," put "in constraint" and "molded" by the mechanical arts. The "searchers and spies of nature" are to discover her plots and secrets.
(Merchant 169)

Through his female images, Merchant writes, Bacon "transformed the magus from servant to its exploiter, and nature from a teacher to a slave" (169). Merchant explains Bacon's approach in The Masculine Birth of Time, in which he personifies nature as a woman and defines her "three states -- at liberty, in error, or in bondage" (170):

She is either free and follows her ordinary course of development as in the heavens, in the animal and vegetable creation, and in the general array of the universe; or she is driven out of her ordinary course by the perverseness, insolence, and forwardness of matter and violence of impediments, as in the case of monsters; or lastly she is put in constraint, molded, and made as it were new by art and the hand of man; as in things artificial. (qtd. in Merchant 170)

While no one disputes the long-ranging effect of this great thinker, Carolyn Merchant finds elements in Bacon's writing that are troublesome to ecologists and feminists as well. She explains that

Much of the imagery he used in delineating his new scientific objectives and methods derives from the

courtroom, and because it treats nature as a female to be tortured through mechanical inventions, strongly suggests the interrogations of the witch trials and the mechanical devices used to torture witches. (168)

She provides a sample passage from Bacon's work:

For you have but to follow and as it were hound nature in her wanderings, and you will be able when you like to lead and drive her afterward to the same place again . . . but likewise for the further disclosing of the secrets of nature. Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object. (qtd. and Italics in Merchant 168)

What is the problem with scientific investigation?

Perhaps the difficulty lies in the harshness with which Bacon attacks nature which he pictures as feminine. Bacon seeks to use nature without concern or even thought for its eventual survival. Thus, his figurative language reveals his severe and domineering attitude to women and his environment.

Merchant's exploration of Bacon's influence in scientific practice and literary image is convincing, but is she overstating Bacon's penchant for domination? In an interdisciplinary study, it is necessary for the scholar to accept the work of those specialists who can provide the materials for synthesis. However, since this particular point -- that certain men and power have treated women and nature equally with superiority and brutality -- is central to my work, we should, therefore, examine Bacon's work that

is not a part of Merchant's argument in order to ascertain her fairness in her condemnation of his negative combination of nature and women, to the detriment of both.

First of all, Bacon's references to women in his short essays, New Atlantis, and Novum Organum are few and brief. Although he censors Agamemnon's "sacrificing of his own daughter" (14) in "Of Unity in Religion," the source of that allusion, he offers little in the way of support for women's worth. In New Atlantis daughters provide needlework for the Tirsan (275), and young women walk in procession with the young men who serve the father, but "the women only stand about him, leaning against the wall" (278). The mother can attend important public functions, but she remains "in a loft above, on the right hand of the chair with a privy door, and a carved window of glass, leaded with gold and blue, where she sitteth, but is not seen" (276). Bacon can write "Of Marriage and Single Life," but his major point is the effect of the relationship upon the man, not the woman. His scientific understanding of nature seems quite thorough, but his appreciation of such blooms most proficiently in the garden, "the purest of human pleasures," (190), a place where man's hand is seen as the creator, a retreat where all is laid out for the pleasure of men.

Just as Merchant has suggested, images are important to an understanding of his work. In "Of Unity in Religion," war may not "propagate religion" (14), for such is "to bring

down the Holy Ghost, instead of the likeness of a dove, in the shape of a vulture or raven" (15). In "Of Revenge" he compares the innate tendencies of some men to anger to "the thorn or briar, which prick and scratch, because they can do no other" (17). In "Of Goodness, and Goodness of Nature," he gives an adage, "Neither give thou Aesop's cock a gem, who would be better pleased and happier if he had had a barley-corn" (51). In "Of Nobility" he writes of the joy of seeing "an ancient noble family, which hath stood against the waves and weather of time!" (55). Thus, many of his figures of speech are extremely traditional in type, and none offers a gentle, sympathetic view of nature, which he can manipulate in his gardens and use as images in his prose. For this study, however, one of his most telling images, which focuses on women, appears in Advancement of Learning:

Knowledge may not be as a courtesan, for pleasure and vanity only, or as a bond-woman, to acquire and gain to her master's use; but as a spouse, for generation, fruit, and comfort. (17)

Nothing that I can find in Bacon's work in any way changes the interpretation that Merchant has so clearly presented in her well-received text. I do not discover contradictory writing that shows a progressive change in Bacon's apprehension of the position of humans in society. Throughout his work, Bacon's concern for women and nature

has the same central focus -- their usefulness for men; for him neither exists without its relationship to the masculine.

As Merchant has asserted, Bacon's influence on the rest of the educated community was extensive. Many scientists believed with Lancelot Andrewes that "animals had no rights . . . They 'can have no right of society with us . . . because they want reason'" (qtd. in Thomas 21).

"Vivisection, thought Isaac Barrow, was 'a most innocent cruelty, and easily excusable ferocity'" (qtd. in Thomas 21). Needless to say, it is more difficult to "experiment" with and "manipulate" that which is like ourselves. It is much easier to dissect that which is lower, more barbaric -- whatever the term those in power wish to apply to the Other. It is easier to dominate that which is inferior.

Thus, I accept Merchant's premise that science, for all its value in removing diseases and providing information about the environment, encouraged a direct and bitter control of anything not perceived as masculine. I accept the ecological criticism that explains that the scientific/historic approach lends itself to division, separation, and "fragmentation" (Shepard 57). I define the organic/mythic appreciation of the existing world as one in which all parts are unified and in harmony with each other. Thus, I will use the terms, mythic or organic and

scientific, to distinguish between those sympathetic to nature, including women, and those bent on domination.

In The Chalice and the Blade Riane Eisler clarifies the social and ecological effects of these two views. She explains that those people who see life as scientific and historic fall into "the dominator model, . . . [that which] is popularly termed either patriarchy or matriarchy -- the ranking of one half of humanity over the other" (xvii). However, unlike the traditionalist in eighteenth studies, Eisler does not leave the opposing sides at odds with each other. She offers another, an alternative apprehension of nature and society:

[In] the second, . . . social relations are primarily based on the principle of linking rather than ranking, [and] may best be described as the partnership model. In this model -- beginning with the most fundamental difference in our species, between male and female -- diversity is not equated with either inferiority or superiority. (xvii)

Her second category, which emphasizes partnership, parallels the mythic or the organic, that which attempts to unify instead of divide.

Of these two types of societies, the first has predominated. Although the possibility of a matriarchy in the past has been the subject of debate among sociologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists (Eisler 24-5), certainly no one can question that men within various types of patriarchy have ruled throughout historical times.

If we apply these two dualistic sets of terms -- organic, mythic, or partnership and scientific or dominant -- to Johnson, we may expect to find the latter mode within his life and early writing. In 1777, according to Boswell, Johnson said "that he had once an intention of giving an edition of Bacon, at least of his English works, and writing the Life of that great man" (871). Brownell writes that "Bacon's works were in Johnson's library, and Bacon is a frequently cited source in the Dictionary" (20).

However, Johnson's attitude toward women and nature is certainly not as simple as that presented in Bacon's texts. From what we can discern in Johnson's work, for him the relationship between the two was as complex as the term nature itself, for which he provides thirteen definitions, as well as examples and illustrations, in his Dictionary of the English Language, a primary text without equal in an exploration of his beliefs. Nature, he admits, "occurs so frequently, with significations so various, and so difficulty defined" (Dictionary) that he has decided to include Boyle's eight definitions for additional clarification under definition thirteen. Johnson's definition six, one of the most comprehensive, deals specifically with all beings in the exterior world, such as birds, flowers, stones, ponds, and trees. Johnson calls this concept "The compass of natural existence"; his illustration comes from Glanville: "If their dam may be

judge, the young apes are the most beautiful things in nature" (Dictionary). Thus does Johnson document his respect for the scientific mind.

However, if we apply the methodology that Merchant and Eisler provide for us to the youthful Johnson's life and work, we find that his understanding of humans in relation to other creatures of nature changed over the years. Johnson's placement of himself, as well as that of other living beings, especially women, did not appear full-blown or remain consistent. As a young man, he was influenced in a myriad of ways, including immediate experiences in the natural world as well as secondary encounters in the poems, essays, and narratives that he read. In The Dialectic of Freedom, Maxine Greene explains that in human development,

The effects of early experience survive, along with the sedimentations of meaning left by encounters with a changing world. There are the effects of environment, class membership, economic status, physical limitations, as well as the impacts of exclusion and ideology. The growing, changing individual (no matter how reflective and autonomous he/she appears to be) always has to confront a certain weight in lived situations, if only the weight of memory and the past.
(8-9)

Each of these elements is apparent in Johnson's life as the young boy, hindered by visual problems, grew up in a middle-class home in Lichfield, England, at the beginning of the century in which the conflicts between the organic or mythic

and the scientific had great human and ecological implications, even for people living in a small town in the Midlands.

Certainly the distance between town and country was not great. When Johnson was born, Lichfield was surrounded by fields and steeped in the traditions that were centuries old, many of which had had their basis in a veneration for nature. In Dr. Johnson's Lichfield, Mary Alden Hopkins notes that by 1709, "Lichfield had emerged from a tangle of wood, wars, saints, and plagues, although the crude discipline of stocks, ducking stools, and bridles for scolds persisted" (12).

In Young Sam Johnson, James L. Clifford describes the continuance of the old vegetation festivals under the guise of the Christian holiday of Whitmonday, "when there was a saturnalia of feasting and fun, known for miles as the "Greenhill Bower" (28). The bower itself had been removed, as a result of Puritan condemnation, from "the churchyard" (28) to "an open space on Greenhill" (28), but "The ancient festival of the 'Bower' [which] is believed to have originated in heathen times" continued to be part of the lives of the townspeople (28).

On the one hand, "in the eighteenth century, . . . Fairs and Exchanges . . . still remained at the heart of merchant life" (Braudel, The Wheels of Commerce 81), and these celebrations were more than financial institutions.

"Fairs meant noise, tumult, music, popular rejoicing, the world turned upside down, disorder and sometimes disturbances" (85). Indeed, if such occasions did go back in France to "the distant age of the great Celtic pilgrimages" (82), it's not surprising that part of the events included a veneration of nature with the idea of the bower and a celebration with greenery and flowers in which the participants in the "tumultuous procession" carried "posies [which] were originally figures of saints . . . [and] later . . . symboliz[ed] the craft companies which exhibited them" (Hopkins 204-5).

In fact, Lichfield, like other religious centers of England, had direct ties to the Celtic past, for at

The actual site of the cathedral . . . the ancient Britons practised their pagan rites . . . [where] An immense stone buried immediately behind the high altar of the present cathedral may have been the altar-stone of their primeval temple.

(Lichfield Cathedral 2)

Thus, the people of Lichfield knew the general origins of bringing in the spring with the festive greenery of the earth, so the old times when humans had seen themselves more closely connected to the natural world had not totally disappeared, even in a town where, like much of England, "Great projects were afoot in industry, agriculture, and engineering. . . . [and] The study of sciences was accelerated" (Hopkins 48).

The myths and stories still remained in a town living in legend as well as in historical fact. In Lichfield, Johnson had a wealth of natural and cultural experiences from which to create his "world picture" (Tillyard). As in all parts of England, the ancient and the modern, both literally and figuratively, lived side by side. An old tale from the distant past existed in the same town and possibly at the same table where guests talked as well about the latest scientific discovery.

That the Johnson family was to some degree acquainted with new and modern ideas is apparent from Johnson's writing. Within his own family, the emphasis often centered about the newly scientific instead of the traditionally organic, thus encouraging the development of the patriarchal, the dominator, instead of "the partnership model" (Eisler xvii).

In his Annals, written perhaps between 1765 and 1772 (McAdam xv), the aging Johnson reminiscences about the joys and the difficulties of his early life. According to E. L. McAdam, this text, also entitled An Account of the Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, from his birth to his eleventh year, written by himself, is an important source for understanding Johnson's early life:

It is one of two known fragments of autobiography, and was probably written for Johnson's own satisfaction, since some of his interjections, like "dear Mother,"

are so personal that it is unlikely that he intended the work for publication or even the perusal of friends. (xiii)

The Annals "was first published in London in May 1805 by Richard Wright" (xiii).

Within these intriguing few pages, we witness the decisions concerning Johnson's birth and care, made by his family, particularly his father. Here we find the growing importance of modern, especially medical attitudes, in Lichfield, where the progressive and well-educated choice often fell to science.

Perhaps Michael Johnson's occupation had a great deal to do with the father's up-to-date approach. He distributed a certain amount of the local knowledge in his role as bookseller. In Samuel Johnson: A Personality in Conflict, Irwin explains that many of Michael Johnson's customers associated his trade with his own intellectual abilities:

'Johnson, the Lichfield Librarian, is now here,' wrote the Reverend George Plaxton, chaplain to Lord Gower, from Trentham in 1716; 'he propagates learning all over the diocese, and advanceth knowledge to its just height; all the Clergy here are his Pupils, and suck all they have from him: Allen cannot make a warrant without his precedent, nor our quondam John Evans draw a recognizance sine directione Michaelis.' Plaxton's satire does not conceal a kindly regard for the Lichfield bookseller whose advice was sought wherever he went. (6)

Perhaps such a reputation for knowledge encouraged Michael Johnson to believe that he knew what was best within his own

family. Certainly, he seemed to prefer the new and the modern in relation to his son's birth. The first four sentences of Johnson's Annals suggest such an interest:

My mother had a very difficult and dangerous labour, and was assisted by George Hector, a man-midwife of great reputation. I was born almost dead, and could not cry for some time. When he had me in his arms, he said, "Here is a brave boy." (3)

These lines emphasize the acceptance in Lichfield of the new attitudes toward birth, a natural condition of life traditionally controlled by women. In this English town the male-midwife, instead of the traditional female practitioner, was a relatively new innovation. For a parallel reading and situation, we can consult The Account Book of Richard Latham 1724-1767, edited by Lorna Weatherill, in which we find for the year 1726 a fee paid "for the midwife office, Mrs Gill, at the birth of the child the 19th of February" (9). Of this family, Weatherill writes, "the Latham family were typical of many thousands of householders and tradesmen in the North West, the North Midlands and elsewhere in the eighteenth century" (xi). From such records it is apparent that the traditional female midwife was still part of the country scene, even though the male counterpart was flourishing in towns far removed from London.

At Johnson's birth seventeen years earlier, the male mid-wife held a well-respected, stable position in the community. Clifford says that "George Hector . . . whose

house was not over a hundred yards away, was . . . as ready to set broken bones, cure tumors, or treat scalded legs and dog bites as to deliver babies" (6). Here birth takes its place among the small disasters and ills of a community with a man presiding over all situations as they arise.

Such a link of the pregnant with the diseased was not traditional, nor was the replacement of the female midwife with the male originally accepted as a positive act. Birth should have seemed a natural occurrence, but scientifically it became an unusual condition connected to injury and illness. That the selection frequently lay in gendered opposition is clear from the literature of the period. Often there was a conflict between the husband and wife as to the proper method of birth supervision to engage, and frequently from historical documents, we find that the husband, and science, were often the victors.

If we turn for a literary perspective to Tristram Shandy (1759-67) by Lawrence Sterne, we find the debate flourishing in Yorkshire, England, in the decade after Johnson's birth. In this novel the two types of practitioners, the male- and female-midwives, are championed in the Shandy family by a father who prefers science and a mother who favors tradition. A passage from the novel reveals the battle over Tristram's delivery in 1718:

As the point was that night agreed, or rather determin'd, that my mother should lye-in of me in the

country, she took her measures accordingly; for which purpose, when she was three days, or thereabouts, gone with child, she began to cast her eyes upon the midwife, . . . and before the week was well got round, as the famous Dr. Maningham was not to be had, she had come to a final determination in her mind, -- notwithstanding there was a scientifick operator within so near a call as eight miles of us, and who, moreover, had expressly wrote a five shillings book upon the subject of midwifery, in which he had exposed, not only the blunders of the sisterhood itself, -- but had likewise superadded many curious improvements for the quicker extraction of the foetus in cross births, and some other cases of danger which belay us in getting into the world; notwithstanding all this, my mother, I say, was absolutely determined to trust her life and mine with it, into no soul's hand but this old woman's only. (34)

If a famous doctor cannot be had, then the mother wants the traditional female attendant, but the father wins the day, and Shandy's mother is reduced to a silent creature skulking about open doors trying to hear a bit of information about her own life as her husband talks to other men about the birth of the child that she is carrying.²

The dark humor of this narrative, in which the child suffers at the hand of science, frequently points out the differences between the new and the traditional, the dominator and the subjected, but historical information concerning pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare in the late 17th and early 18th centuries is even more helpful to our understanding of the role of science in the lives of ordinary people in general and in our apprehension of such in the Johnson household as well. As we combine the Annals with data gleaned from historical documents, we find that

Johnson's birth, as far as it was possible, was removed from the sphere of women and controlled by men who professed a scientific knowledge.

Although such an intervention in the birth of a child might seem a minor intrusion, such was not the case. The change from the female to the male mid-wife had wider repercussions. In the early 17th century, according to Patricia Crawford in her essay, "The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-century England," one of many essays collected in Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England, the mother received a kind of respect based to a degree on the religious idea of motherhood rooted deeply in the Catholic church with the reverence toward Mary. However,

the authority of a husband in the household was strengthened after the Reformation Protestantism changed certain emphases in the Christian faith, but did not challenge the basic premise that women were inferior, and therefore should be subject to men. In the long run male authority in the household was enhanced. (8-9)

As the husband's power increased and as the scientific method, controlled by men, prevailed, women lost status both in the family and professional life, even in areas that they had long held strong, especially childbirth. According to Crawford,

A newer source of hostile comment on mothers came increasingly from medical practitioners. In their

attempts to distance themselves from the unqualified, and to establish medicine as a profession, they tried to discredit women's traditional knowledge as midwives as foolish. The debate between the confident professional doctors and the midwives contributed to a devaluing of women's traditional skills. Doctors also sought to replace women's authority in matters maternal with their own methods grounded in 'scientific' knowledge. (Crawford 13)

With the male practioners of the early periods, there was usually no sharing. Just as science separated the natural world into men and lesser beings, the male-midwives, eventually to become doctors, made the gap between themselves and women wide and deep. Chodorow says that "[i]nstitutionally and culturally, men have often managed to overcome the dread of women through a devaluation of whatever women do and are" (36), and since the female midwives did have success in helping women in childbirth, the most effective response to these practioners venerated within the community was to make them appear base and ineffectual.

During their early married life, the Johnsons must have been well aware of the controversy concerning the male and the female midwife. Perhaps, as most biographers of Johnson have stated, because Sarah Johnson was older, the expectant couple feared that the woman midwife would not be as competent, even though the records for such births were impressive: "In the vast majority of deliveries. . . whatever the midwife's technique, the birth proceeded

smoothly and swiftly, producing a living child in a matter of hours" (Crawford 74-5). When the Johnsons engaged the medically oriented male-midwife, they did more than select one person over another. They chose what must have seemed modern and safe over what appeared traditional and old-fashioned. Michael, and perhaps Sarah, took what was once a woman-directed activity and gave the authority to a man of science.

The male-midwife, however, did offer one important aid to successful childbirth: the forceps (Crawford 22), a new form of technology that could save the lives of the babies. Unfortunately, the female mid-wives were not allowed to use this life-saving instrument. Women, disabled perhaps by some deeply hidden inherent weakness of mind or body perceivable only by men, were forbidden a mechanical tool, and thus the separation between the old, woman-based organic way of delivery and the masculine-centered technological method was lengthened and made, by newly developing tradition, rigid and fast. As a result, a woman in delivery had a choice: men and forceps or women and all the other skills, including herb-lore and natural crafts.

Whatever the reason for the male-midwife in the Johnson household, Samuel Johnson's birth became controlled by men and science, and thus Sarah Johnson was denied the traditional female assistance in the birth of her son. Such a change involved more than just the presence of the male

practitioner in the hours of delivery. Adrian Wilson describes the gendered implications of traditional childbirth (70) as "constituted on the one hand by the presence of gossips and midwife, and on the other hand by the absence of men" (73). "In the eighteenth century, as a result of the new 'man-midwifery,' male medical practitioners began to criticize many aspects of the ceremony of childbirth" (83), such as the length of time after the birth required for recovery and the return to wifely duties of all type and the churching of the women (83). Natalie Zemon Davis argues that at the time of birth and the month after, "'subjection . . . might be reversed temporarily during the lying-in period, when the new mother could boss her husband around with impunity'" (qtd. in Wilson 86), and she could, with societal approval, refuse her husband "two of the customary fruits of marriage: physical labour and . . . sexual services" (87). Such a situation, Wilson believes, many husbands, disdained.

What is unfortunate is that there was, in the first place, a battle between male and female midwives. When the knowledge of the woman's long-standing experience in childbirth was available to the male-midwives, they, instead of offering partnership, in Eisler's terms, a realistic and practical trade of information and tools, demanded and

eventually took total authority in the birth process, just as the husbands and fathers exerted more and more power over their wives and children.

Such attempts at domination were hardly to be pleasant or peaceful. In his Annals Johnson records information about the acrimonious arguments of his parents because neither his mother nor his father seemed willing or able to understand the other; his home life increasingly became a testing ground for two people attempting to win the day in a silent and deadly contest of opposition. Johnson writes:

My father and mother had not much happiness from each other. They seldom conversed; for my father could not bear to talk of his affairs; and my mother, being unacquainted with books, cared not to talk of any thing else. Had my mother been more literate, they had been better companions. She might have sometimes introduced her unwelcome topick with more success, if she could have diversified her conversation. (7)

The family was divided, and since Michael Johnson's solution was often to disappear, the child was left with his mother.

As an adult, Samuel Johnson was able to see that the disunity in his family came, at least in part, from the distance between their educational backgrounds, and the lack of female education, we know, was a result of the lack of existent rights at that time. Johnson's experience at home, however, did not cause him to remark on his mother's lack of intelligence or encourage him to believe that women were acceptable fields of conquest and domination. Instead he

looked at her life and encouraged the education of women in all that he wrote, as Jean Hagstrum notes in "Johnson and the Concordia Discors" (48). Such progressive ideas were in tune with early feminists. In The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain, G. J. Barker-Benfield explains that "a series of writers insisted that if . . . 'women had . . . liberal instruction, . . . they would be . . . capable of reaching any intellectual attainment'" (2).

Similarly, in "Samuel Johnson as Patron of Women," Isobel Grundy cites the many encouraging words that Johnson gave to young women concerning their improvement. She especially praises his constant support of women who were of average abilities as well as those who were of clearly superior intelligent:

Johnson's rarity lay in his attention not to the exceptional but to the representative. It lies less in his urging Burney to ambition than in his repeating the same thing with her sister Susan; . . . less in his literary chat with Hester Thrale than in his bothering her daughters about their mathematics and astronomy as well as their letter-writing. This constant, even if light-hearted, attention to widespread potential may have been useful, as it was rarer, than any celebration of extraordinary female genius. (63)

Not all people, however, agreed that women were capable of learning. In a less than kind response, in 1674 Malebranche asserted "'that women were intellectually inferior . . . because of the greater sensibility of the

nerve fibers in their brain'" (qtd. in Barker-Benfield 23). An article in The British Apollo explained "'that women . . . [were] too delicate . . . to endure the severity of study, the drudgery of contemplation, the fatigue of profound speculation'" (qtd. in Barker-Benfield 23).

Thus, Johnson was quite progressive concerning the education of women, perhaps because he saw in his own family the dissension that came about as a result of his mother's lack of formal learning, and again he wished for partnership and harmony, not domination. He did not imply that his mother should be silent or say less in the presence of her husband, like the pitiful wife in Tristram Shandy. Johnson looked for a way to equalize his parents' relationship, and he believed, sensibly and rightly, that acquired knowledge was that method. If his mother had been literate, then his parents' relationship would have been happier. The idea of female education became a constant with Johnson, as emphasized much later in Rasselas, in which he extends the idea of literacy to all women. In this novel, the princess and servant alike are certainly capable of learning whatever subject comes into their hands.

In his Annals, Johnson suggests the need for less distance, more equality between his parents, and though he came from a home of disagreements and separation, he favored a harmonious relationship among people, such as the type put forth by Eisler. Even though his parents follow the

domination mode, Johnson encourages the model of peaceful sharing of ideas among people of similar gifts and intellectual attainments.

Johnson's encouragement of female education relates to his attitudes toward nature as well, for domination of what is seen as inferior spread over large segments of European history. If Eisler's and Merchant's ideas hold true, as Johnson sees women, so will he see nature. If Bacon found women and nature worthy of domination (Merchant 164-190), does Johnson do the same? Johnson's sympathy for women suggests that he would be more in tune to the natural environment in which he lived than would men who attempted direct control of women.

Here a conflict seems to arise. Supposedly Johnson disliked nature. Many Johnsonian legends center about his negative statements concerning gardens and landscapes. However, in spite of the puzzling Boswellian anecdotes of the aging Johnson who, many critics believe, disdained nature, we find evidence in his own writing and in stories of his early life that reflects the direct and happy connections he made to what he would later define as "the compass of natural existence." The concern for harmony in personal relationships does have its parallel in his involvement with his physical environment.

Of Johnson's childhood Carlos Baker makes the following reasonable assumption:

Johnson, after all, was a country boy, and he well knew that "mankind have a strong attachment to the habitations to which they have been accustomed." The country for him meant the environs of Lichfield, or other familiar haunts in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, where, if he could not enlarge his imagination with new scenes, there were at least old friends, revivifying air, and the prospect of doing "execution upon all the summer fruits." (87)

In Young Sam Johnson, James L. Clifford has collected stories about Johnson's early adventures. Clifford is careful to avoid the generalizations that have made Johnson into the city-loving, nature-hating legend of the literary world. We learn that Johnson, with his companion, Edmund Hector, "roamed about the streets and neighboring fields, [and Johnson] took delight in jumping" (50).

Tree climbing was another diversion which did not depend on good eyes, and when he was in his fifties he astonished Frances Reynolds and some other ladies and gentlemen by the ease with which he was able to swarm up a large tree. (51)

The ice-skating stories of his early life are now part of the legend, and in his Annals, Johnson remembers that he would visit his nurse as a young boy "and eat fruit in the garden, which was full of trees" (4).

In Johnson's own words we find the strongest evidence for his perceptions of nature in a short but insightful poem about his early swimming experiences in Stowe Pool in Lichfield. Clifford writes that Johnson "Coming back as an older man . . . was distressed to find the spot sadly

altered, and he expressed his nostalgic feeling in some Latin verses" (30):

The glassy stream still flows through green meadows, where time and again in boyhood I bathed my tender limbs. Here my arms were tricked and puzzled by the rough current, while my father with mild voice taught me how to swim. Branches used to form a hiding place there, and a leaning tree concealed a secret stretch of water in daytime darkness. Now the old shadows have perished under hard axes, and the watery fields open to eyes far off. The untired stream, however, keeps perennially to its course. (qtd. in Clifford 30)

How much can we really learn from such a short passage? After all, we have here only eighty-nine words -- certainly more than the many Boswellian logia traditionally used to substantiate, in lengthy critical papers, Johnson's love of London, his hatred of the country, and his condemnation of the abilities of women -- but eighty-nine words all the same. And yet these lines provide us with the meeting point of the older man looking back upon his younger years.

Criticism is often a reconstruction of a time past through an understanding of the material that we have before us. Just as an archaeologist -- without pain or destruction to the subject at hand -- can use a few pertinent shards of pottery to provide information about a vanished society, so can we find in a few lines of verse suggestions of the world that existed at the time that Johnson lived.

One advantage of an interdisciplinary study is that the same material -- poem, play, or novel -- can be viewed from

several perspectives, and thus, a single text can yield a variety of related readings. If we view these lines in more than one way, we can discover a great deal about Johnson's attitude toward his environment, perhaps much more than a cursory reading suggests.

From a literary perspective, this particular poem affords us with the opportunity to lay to rest the old, recurrent controversy concerning Johnson's inability to perceive nature. The most basic question in this debate asks whether Johnson could experience the external world in any meaningful way. Logically, if he can't see trees and rocks, then the whole discussion of Johnson and nature, according to some critics, becomes a moot point. Because of his visual limitations, many scholars have argued, Johnson was not able to perceive nature, so how could he have numbered the streaks of the tulip even had he so chosen?

Certainly, throughout his life those who knew him best referred to his difficulties with his sight. Boswell on one occasion details an argument between Johnson and Thomas Percy concerning the accuracy of the descriptions in Pennant's text Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides (931-35). Since both Percy and Johnson had read the text and traveled the land under debate, neither could gain the advantage. Johnson defended the author's abilities, but Percy attacked the book's worth. However, Percy concluded, "'But my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I

do'" (932), and thus, Johnson, according to Boswell's narrative, had to yield to a sharper eye.

Since Johnson is not with us in body, we cannot discover through medical examination just how well he could see, but obviously, we can speculate. Critics always have. Often they have used what they would like to see as Johnson's physical problems to justify or repudiate some philosophical concern. Some readers who viewed with abhorrence what they saw as Johnson's dislike of nature have used his vision as a way to admire the man in spite of his apparent insensitivity (Rendall 403-5). He simply couldn't see nature. Others make his visual limitations the basis for negative comments about his evaluation of life.

In "Samuel Johnson and the Art of Observation," Donaldson says that "What Johnson was physically incapable of doing coincided with what he reckoned to be scarcely worth doing; merely observing natural phenomena" (781). Donaldson asserts that "the myopic Johnson" was "almost blind since infancy in his left eye and . . . [had] severely impaired vision in his right," and "as an adult regularly burnt his wig by reading as close to his candle as he could" (781).

Not all critics, however, accept that Johnson was incapable of relating to his natural environment. Baker reminds us that the older Johnson traveled about, not just to talk to other people, but to gather knowledge for himself:

Johnson's roving had a multiple purpose: to establish truth for himself and others by firsthand observation; to see rare natural curiosities; to obtain a temporary suspension of his own melancholy; to speak with wise men; to study alien societies; 'to mingle with the world'; and finally, not to see 'fine places, of which there were enough in England, but wild objects -- mountains, waterfalls, peculiar manners; in short, things which he had not seen before.' (76)

Similarly, in Samuel Johnson's Attitude to the Arts, a corrective of Johnson as the "blind" despiser of all visual and aural arts (4), Morris Brownell reminds us "that Johnson . . . toured the Hebrides with Boswell, Wales and France with the Thrales, and nourished ambitions . . . to travel to Ireland, Italy, Egypt, India, and China" (153). Indeed, Johnson's dairies and journals from these later periods include much specific visual examination, such as his description of his journey with the Thrales to North Wales in July 1774. He writes of his visit to Dovedale:

It is a place that deserves a visit, but did not answer my expectation. The river is small, the rocks are grand. Reynard's hall is a cave very high in the rock, [it] [sic] goes backward several yards, perhaps eight. To the left is a small opening through which I crept, and found another cavern perhaps four yards square; . . . There is a rock called the Church, in which I saw no resemblance, that could justify the name. (168)

Again and again Johnson provides such written evidence of his personal observations. Brownell says of his descriptions, "The hater of prospects and natural scenery was a theorist of natural description more penetrating than Gilpin" (4).

This controversy concerning Johnson's sight is, in the last resort, useless and beside the point. A fallacy lies at the heart of the whole issue. All of these arguments make the terms seeing and perceiving equal. In The Machine in the Garden, Leo Marx says that in the early 1700s some writers

[took] for granted the assumptions of the new sensational psychology. It is a commonplace that the emphasis of the so-called nature poets upon sensory perception and, above all, upon the influence of visible nature, had been prepared by John Locke and the theory of mind expounded in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690). Locke was widely interpreted to mean that visual images were the primary, if not the exclusive, form in which men gained knowledge of external reality. To popularizers and literary men it seemed that Locke was identifying perception with seeing, and ideas with visual images. (82-3)

Such is a human reaction for those people with reliable vision, for humans tend to value that sense above all others, but the consequence of the emphasis upon sight resulted in a prejudice against those whose vision was impaired -- a reaction that Locke could not have foretold when he developed his theories of perception. Today, this concern about Johnson's "sight" continues to pervade too much of the criticism about Johnson.

To circumvent this straw man too often put up as a reason to separate Johnson from nature, let us examine the Latin poem once more. In this passage Johnson notes what he could see, the dark and the light, the smoothness of the

water, and even the distant vista of the stream, but this translation also reminds us of the other senses that the body possesses. As other sentient creatures do, Johnson uses his vision, but he is more than his eyes; he takes pleasure in nature, but what is his approach to his natural world?

With Merchant's and Eisler's organic world view in mind, let us consider Johnson's reactions to his environment. In this poem he records both a nurturing spirit in the water that bathes his "tender limbs" (30) and an opponent against whose currents he can successfully contend. The soothing water provides comfort and ease, but the currents prove a fitting adversary, one which challenges but does not harm:

The glassy stream still flows through green meadows,
where time and again in boyhood I bathed my tender
limbs. Here my arms were tricked and puzzled by the
rough current, while my father with mild voice taught
me how to swim. (30)

The first statement shows Johnson as a part of the landscape, an instance of organic philosophy that unifies all under the guise of life. However, as he tests his arms and legs against the motion of the water, he attempts a kind of dominion of nature, but even so, his response has no lasting detrimental effect on his environment. Indeed, the translation of the poem in the Yale edition is even more specific in its detailing of the boy's reaction:

To this place, through green meadows, winds the clear stream where so often as a boy I bathed my young body. Here I was frustrated by the awkward movement of my arms playing me false when, with a kind voice, my father taught me to swim. (343)

The buoyancy of the water that would keep the child afloat becomes the gentle adversary against which he must struggle to make his body move as he would wish. However, it is not nature that needs to be overcome but his body that requires discipline and practice to function appropriately within the stream. Thus, the young Sam Johnson is both a part of and separate from the water of Stowe, but the whole learning process is overseen by his father who "with mild voice taught" (Clifford 30) the child to swim. Thus the boy, the father, and the place blend together in a past, almost mythic, time of contentment and unity, and Johnson seems a happy part of the natural world where his early experiences imply a physical enjoyment of a body touched by the pleasant beauties about him.

Just as Johnson wished for a quiet and harmonic relationship between his parents, so did he enjoy in reality the pleasure of becoming part of a natural scene. What this poem and all of these anecdotes imply is that Johnson was a sensuous creature like most children and that the natural world was important to him. Indeed, these adventures in the

fields and ponds of Lichfield suggest a healthy, an organic connection to his world that can contribute to a positive self-image.

The passages that Johnson has written and the stories of others concerning his early life present a child alive to his natural environment and happy in the activities that are available in small towns and in country life. Johnson touched, tasted, and participated in his world. Thus, whether or not he perceived his world is not a sensible question. Of course he did. With whatever gifts or limitations that we have, we experience our natural environments, and Johnson was no different. How Johnson felt about his experiences in the fields and ponds is, however, an important consideration.

Within the poem, Johnson records his adult concerns about his childhood setting, but he does a great deal more besides. The poem recalls a time when Johnson returns to Lichfield and searches for those surviving elements within the landscape that he knew as a young boy. Happily the stream is full and still flowing in its original path, "untired . . . [and] perennially to its course" (trans. in Clifford 30).

At first, we might find such a comment strange, for why shouldn't the waters be much as he had remembered them? If, however, as an interdisciplinary study allows, we turn to another view of the same subject, we can discover more about

domination in Johnson's world. If we know something of the history of gardening, we find that Johnson's concern about the water and trees related to new trends or fashions in the human's perceptions of the natural world, and thus we are able to recreate intellectually the attitudes toward material nature of which Johnson would have been well aware.

According to David Jacques in Georgian Gardens: The Reign of Nature, any stream in England was in real danger of being redirected to complement what William Kent advocated as the Natural Style of gardening (Jacques 17). The intent was not to make the waterways more functional or safer for nearby inhabitants. The purpose was solely to reflect what was considered the most tasteful arrangement of the landscape of the time.

When Johnson is pleased that no one has decided to channel the water into other places, a possibility that was all too likely in the eighteenth century, he was opposing the ever more controlling hand of man in the environment. Even Anna Seward of Lichfield, a woman noted for her concern for nature, was impressed by "the charming effect attained by serpentineing a muddy rivulet into The Serpentine, in Hyde Park" (Hopkins 183).

Jacques explains that the re-ordering of rivers had occurred in the 1730s with "The Serpentine at Kensington Gardens and the river at Chiswick" (33-4). At Rousham, William Kent was fortunate because "the River Cherwell . . .

. serpentized naturally" (Jacques 37), but he did make sure that "the views over the countryside were opened out, and embellished" (37) in order to satisfy the desire for the new type of gardening desired by its "owner, General James Dormer" (37).

Thus, nature improved and generalized was far superior to nature left untouched by the human art. Johnson, the adult, does not appreciate such stylish alterations. Perhaps it was the hypocrisy in pretending that what had been dramatically changed was in its natural state that upset his sensibilities. In his Dictionary, definition one of natural is clearly in line with what he wishes to see in his childhood environs: "Produced or effected by nature; not artificial." Similarly, to be artificial is in definition one "made by art; not natural," in definition two "fictitious; not genuine," and in definition three "artful; contrived with skill."

Indeed Brownell believes that it is Johnson's "distrust of descriptive accounts of seats, gardens, and pictures that proliferated in the eighteenth century" (156), more than his dislike of the land, that made him appear to scorn, not the natural world, but man's sophisticated theories concerning it. Such an assertion seems sensible because greater problems than preference or aristocratic taste are revealed by the Latin poem, when it is read in context of the times. It is not Johnson's childhood adventures which produced a

direct and immediate appreciation of nature that proves troublesome, but it is the meaning that such joy entailed for him as an adult in the eighteenth century.

What the poem expresses is not only Johnson's childhood connection with the immediacies of nature but his adult sympathy with his surroundings as he remembers his childhood. As we looked at the boy in the gentle waters of Stowe, let us now look at the adult recalling those years. In the translation of the poem in the Yale edition, we read Johnson's unhappiness because the womb-like protection of the enclosed pond has been opened up, exposed to immediate apprehension by any person strolling along the banks.

Johnson writes poignantly of the change:

The branches made hiding places and the hanging tree
concealed the secret waters with shadows by day. Now
the old shadows have been destroyed by harsh axes, and
the naked bathing places are open to distant eyes.
(343)

Part of what makes a natural space enclosed is trees, and in the Latin poem, Johnson expresses a sadness at the demise of the willows. The axes that cut them were "harsh," and the trees didn't just die; they were destroyed. In Lichfield, Anna Seward, a woman that Johnson disliked intensely, had a similar fellow feeling for this part of nature. She "was passionately devoted to trees" (Hopkins 183):

When . . . the order went forth that every other tree
should be felled because so much foliage made the

houses dark and gloomy and shaded the gardens overmuch, she cried out that the Dean's Walk would look like a mouth with every alternate tooth extracted and there would be no refuge from the sun upon a summer's day. She felt that a horrid spirit of renovation was abroad. (Hopkins 184)

However, even Seward was convinced by "Humphrey Repton, the landscape gardener, [to] cut a vista through the Palace shrubbery to afford a view of Stowe Pool, Stowe Vale and the Stowe villas and gardens" (184).

Of course, this modification in nature was, on the surface a change in fashion. It was in vogue to profess that a few trees and a wide expanse of greenery were more aesthetically pleasing than a forest. If, however, we look at the social and psychological implications of Johnson's attitude toward the enclosed and private as opposed to the public and open, yet another facet of eighteenth century thought becomes apparent. According to John Barrell in "The Public Prospect and the Private View," perceptions of nature were not separated from other values of the time, including ideas about politics, for appreciation of the panoramic view became the hallmark of an intellectual, aristocratic mind (Barrell 90). Barrell adds, "According to one system of classification, the representation of such landscapes is an instantiation of the political capability of the public man" (98).

Barrell explains that the concern with immediate and distant experiences with nature marked the intellectual and

social ranking of the man (81). Barrell carefully details just what such attitudes meant to those people living in the eighteenth century:

[A] correct taste, here especially for landscape and landscape art, was used in this period as a means of legitimating political authority, . . . [which] is rightly exercised by those capable of thinking in general terms; . . . of producing abstract ideas -- . . . out of raw data of experience. The inability to do this was usually represented as in part the result of a lack of education, a lack which characterized women and the vulgar; . . . because women are generally represented in this period as incapable of generalising to any important degree. (81)

Such attitudes held great significance for anyone who enjoyed an immediate relationship with nature. When Johnson writes about the childhood joy of feeling the water about his arms and the pleasure he derived from eating fruit as opposed to the boredom he experienced in later life by looking at a vista artificially spread wide before him, he was, by the end of his life, marking himself as "vulgar" (Barrell 88) and self-interested if not feminine. The measure of a man's sensitive appreciation lay in his ability to get "pleasure" . . . [from the] panoramic" (Barrell 88). It is the poor, the limited, and the "vulgar" that are closely connected with immediate nature (88). Barrell explains that "those who can comprehend the order of society and nature are the observers of a prospect, in which others are merely objects" (90). Thus a limited view is

that of the workman plucking fruit, and an extended view by the liberal man includes the workman and the landscape (89)

Since, as many psychologists and ecologists have shown, the woman is closely connected with nature, she becomes, not an observer with the men but a part of the environment to be acted upon (Merchant, Ortner, Thomas). Hence, the enjoyment of the tree-shaded pond as opposed to the viewing of an open vista becomes socially unacceptable and sexually suggestive of a private and hidden place, whether the retreat be a woman's womb or a hidden garden, all signifying an unworthy escape to the personal, the sensual, and the domestic. And yet Johnson must have known that such artificial standards set up by those with money, education, and power were false. Throughout his life Johnson, for all of his enjoyment of the immediate, was quite capable of writing moral texts to educate his readers, and he was equally willing to open his purse to all in need. He could enjoy fruit and intellectual conversation. As an adult he could listen to women's conversation with zest (Cafarelli 90-5) and contemplate their other possibilities as well (Hagstrum 46-7). By direct experience, Johnson would know that the physical ability to see in the distance would have nothing to do with the abstract ability to discover what is important and necessary to society as a whole, and thus a conflict develops.

He understands the value of his own intellect and compassion for others, and yet he knows that by the dictates of his times, a "liberal" or free man (Barrell 88) will value the distant and contrived. Just as society implied that the ability to see and appreciate panoramic views denoted the best political servant, so did the apprehension of such real landscapes and painted representations suggest the intellectual ability to form abstract thoughts:

Such men as Harris, Campbell, Reynolds and Fuseli . . . [believed that] the power to abstract, as metaphorized everywhere in the power to comprehend and organize an extensive prospect, is a testimony of the ability to prefer and to promote an art which itself promotes the public interest, as opposed to ministering to the private appetites and interests of particular men.
(Barrell 92)

Of course Johnson would have believed in his own ability to generalize, for that word and concept was the basis of his poetic theory, and no one has ever accused his writing of being too specific or narrow. Is it not surprising that in his longest poem, The Vanity of Human Wishes, considered traditionally as his masterpiece, the mature Johnson begins with his two famous lines, "Let observation with extensive view, / Survey mankind, from China to Peru" (ll. 1-2). Yet, his limited sight and his early country adventures would have made him more inclined to relish the direct experiences with trees, flowers, and fruit, all of which

denoted the vulgar as opposed to the socially, politically, and intellectually acceptable.

What was the mature Johnson to do in the midst of such conflicting and erroneous ideas about nature and his own happy experiences? Intellectually he would refuse to "trivialize" nature (Hepburn 69) with pathetic fallacies in his writing, but he could not ignore landscape entirely. Reasonably enough, as Morris R. Brownell explains in Samuel Johnson's Attitude to the Arts,

Johnson's theory of landscape insists on comparing notions and facts in order to regulate imagination with reality. . . . No one expounded more clearly or practised more astutely the art of scientific discovery in landscape than Samuel Johnson. (179)

Many of the intellectuals of his world emphasized not so much connection with nature as man's proper relationship to environment, but what they asserted with both gardening and art was that distance is preferable to intimacy. Remoteness requires separation, and designating certain types of people as sub-human makes control and domination by the far-seeing patriarchal system much easier. As distant landowners observe slaughter scenes, blood fades, cries soften, and tears disappear entirely.

The whole picture reduces the importance of the suffering of the individual, but throughout his life and his writing, Samuel Johnson had difficulty removing himself from the immediate. As the child in his Annals, he sees conflict

in his family resulting from the desire to control, and he wishes for harmony. As an adult returning to the childhood scene, he still evinces a gentleness and respect for the environment which gave him much pleasure. Perhaps, if we have to make a choice, being myopic is a great gift because, unlike many men of his time, he never lost his sympathy for the human, individual in nature, and when he is teased by all the people who remark on his refusal to enjoy the vistas, he is repudiating much more than just an effete enjoyment of a panoramic scene.

Again and again, the youthful Johnson refuses the dominator model brought forth in science and in the arts, and he establishes time after time his belief in the concept of partnership (Esiler), a direct and happy sharing with his world. Thus, it is not Johnson's connection to nature that is the problem. It's society's interpretation of such a tie.

CHAPTER II
VIRGINS, FLOWERS, AND THE YOUNG MAN
NATURE: THE EMBLEM OF THE SPIRIT

The conflicts that anecdotes from Johnson's childhood and youth reveal, when read against the cultural biases of his time, appear in even more specific ways in his early poetry. From his own writing and from the historical information available concerning the times, we find that Johnson, born at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was caught between the passing of the old, organic world and the solidifying of the new scientific universe which encouraged manipulation of the environment and distancing of the individual.

He details his birth directed by the male scientific representative in Lichfield and provides discordant information about his early childhood. He creates a portrait of a child well-adjusted in a happy physical environment, but he also reveals a young boy upset by the parental acrimony within his own family. He enjoys the immediacy of nature, but he also finds his personal value and his own sensory experiences derided and scorned by the societal dictates of his time. How did he resolve the difficulties that he encountered?

As an intelligent man, Johnson knew the value of science, and he realized that the eighteenth century was full of inventions and accomplishments that made life better, advancements that J. H. Plumb in England in the Eighteenth Century: 1714-1815 and J.V. Beckett in The Agricultural Revolution have documented. Similarly, Fussel says that "Any humanist, Johnson included, knows that a sedan-chair beats walking and that the world is the 'better' for the extirpation of the bubonic plague" (4). While we must remember the numerous positive references to Johnson's walking, we know that he would be happy to see the end to the disease and pain that he encountered in everyday life.

However, accompanying the beginnings of industrialization and the progressive movement of science was the idea of objectivity, which became more entrenched within Western culture. Just as art in gardening and painting stressed distance, science began to distrust the subjective experience and response. Levi-Strauss explains that finally "Only . . . the intellect" (6) could be trusted. Levi-Strauss believes "this was probably a necessary move, for experience shows us that thanks to this separation -- this schism if you like -- scientific thought was able to constitute itself" (6).

The costs of the shift from mythic to scientific thinking, however, were dangerously high for any creature not a Western European male with power and authority,

and the young Johnson certainly fell into this category. Since the social dictum to divide the world up into the masculine and all others -- thus effectively putting women and the rest of nature in an inferior position -- was so clearly and frequently expressed, Johnson must have felt compelled, perhaps subconsciously, to dwell orally and consciously in the patriarchal camp even though much of what he did and wrote clearly shows empathy for all living creatures.

In fact, if we look at his youthful English poems beginning in 1724 or 1725 with "On a Daffodill" and ending with the verses written before "The Vanity of Human Wishes," his mature poetic masterpiece completed in 1748, we will find the feminine and the natural combined in ways both surprising and complex. In his verse of this period, only four poems include no images that relate either to women or nature; four refer directly to women in terms other than natural imagery; six connect women and nature specifically; four deal with nature and the poet; and five relate women to plant images. These poems show the effect of his reading and his social and cultural experiences upon his developing thoughts concerning his world.

That Johnson finds a bond between women and nature is not unusual. In The Death of Nature, Carol Merchant says that "woman and nature have an age-old association -- an affiliation that has persisted throughout culture, language,

and history" (xix). Of course, both men and women are equally caught up in nature and culture, but the perception of patriarchal society has been throughout the ages and, according to Ortner and many other critics, throughout the world (75), that women, perhaps because of their bearing of children and physical cycles, are more earth-bound than men (73-4). Such attitudes expose women, as well as other elements of nature, as suitable grounds for manipulation and domination. In "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture," Sherry B. Ortner explains that part of the difficulty in acquiring equal rights for women has been "that women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture" (73). In "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," the first essay in Woman, Culture and Society, Michelle Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo writes that

Women are more involved than men in the "grubby" and dangerous stuff of social existence, giving birth and mourning death, feeding, cooking, disposing of feces, and the like. Accordingly, in cultural systems we find a recurrent opposition: between man, who in the last analysis stands for "culture" and woman, who (defined through symbols that stress her biological and sexual functions) stands for "nature," and often for disorder.
(31)

Pope's Goddess Dulness is a literary example of a masculine construct of such a creature.

Since women are a part of nature, and most seem inclined to admit this fairly obvious fact, the difficulty

that has arisen is in the reaction among those Western men who seem to believe that because of perceived differences between the two sexes, men are intellectually, socially, and politically superior. If we remember Barrell's assertions concerning nature, domination, and the panoramic view (81-102), we can understand that women in the eighteenth century, like common men compelled to physical labor for their living, were forced into an immediacy with nature that was more obvious and less tasteful to well-bred observers. The unhappy consequence of this alienation of men from women and nature "is the fact that male, as opposed to female, activities are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultural systems give authority and value to the roles and activities of men" (Rosaldo 19). It's surprising that no matter what the activities are, as they vary from culture to culture, no matter what the women and men do, whether the "women grow sweet potatoes and men grow yams" (19), it is what the men do that is the valued occupation.

These ideas have been so carefully documented and supported by in-field studies by sociologists as well as by texts by many historians and psychologists that the connection between women and nature has become a cultural if not "factual" given. According to Keith Thomas, "sentiments about animals, say the anthropologists, are usually projections of attitudes to man" (40). "The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw many discourses on the animal

nature of the negroes, [sic--capitalization] their beastlike sexuality and their brutish nature" (42). The situation for women was no different:

Women were also near the animal state. Over many centuries theologians had debated, half frivolously, half seriously, whether or not the female sex had souls, a discussion which closely paralleled the debate about animals and sometimes echoed at a popular level . . . Jane Austen was in a long tradition when she described her sex as 'poor animals', worn out by annual childbearing. (Thomas 43)

"Both the women's movement and the ecology movement are sharply critical of the costs of competition, aggression, and domination arising from the market economy's modus operandi in nature and society" (Merchant xx).

At this point, we must consider, then, the manner in which Johnson fuses women and nature within his poetry. Does he retain the traditional demeaning patriarchal view, or does he continue the affinity for both that he exhibited as a young boy and suggested as a mature man reminiscing about his past? If we eliminate Mr. Duck (Bate 18), a poem of dubious collaboration, "On a Daffodill: The First Flower the Author Saw this Year," is his earliest extant verse and one of three poems that combine not only the general categories of women and nature, but more specifically, women, flowers, and the poet himself. These flower-women

poems are among his earliest, occurring between 1724 and 1731, years in which he wrote only 19 English poems as a whole.

These poems, however, many critics have found trivial. Bate judges "On a Daffodill" inferior to two other poems written about this time, "Festina Lente" and "Ode on Friendship," because these "two best . . . have one thing in common that helps to explain their immediate superiority over the 'Daffodil.' They are on moral subjects" (63).

Perhaps one reason why scholars have had difficulty appreciating these lines lies in the traditional nature-hating image created by Boswell and critics who desire, as Cafarelli maintains, "to masculinize Johnson" (61), and thus flowers and women have been considered unworthy of serious study. In reference to "On a Daffodill," Bate, for example, argues that "the flower is intellectually conceived -- not seen concretely -- in its relation to process and time" (62). Indeed, for support, Bate cites the mature Johnson: "'Should I wish to become a botanist, I must first turn myself into a reptile'" (qtd. in Bate 62) -- i.e. a creature too closely associated with immediate nature, an animal incapable of abstractions and helpful generalizations about life. When Bate applies the reptilian comment to this poem, he misses subtle but important details concerning Johnson's description of the daffodil. "There is," Bate insists,

"admittedly nothing distinctive to the daffodil, as contrasted with other flowers" (62).

A close reading of the lines, however, reveals that Johnson was working from direct experience and that such a fact would emphasize yet again Johnson's appreciation of the natural world. The entire title, "On a Daffodill: The First Flower the Author Had Seen That Year," states that Johnson was looking at his environment, and it is not surprising that the young man, with a winter behind him, was gazing about the gardens and yards in Lichfield. It is not surprising that he saw a daffodil, for it is one of the most common early bloomers in the English spring. M. Grieve, an English herbalist, writes that this flower "grows wild in most European countries" and that it is easily recognizable for "its green, linear leaves about a foot long, and golden terminal flowers" (254). Indeed, it would be very unusual if Johnson could have strolled about Lichfield, which was noted for its gardens (Hopkins 186), without seeing the bright medium-sized bloom and the deep green leaves.

What is a bit startling, however, is Donaldson's comment concerning the poem. These lines, he believes, "prompt one to wonder whether Johnson actually had seen a daffodil that year, or indeed in any year" (788). It is true that Johnson does not give his reader the naturalist's description that M. Grieve provides, but it is also correct to say that the existing details in the third stanza do

relate specifically to the type of flower that he has observed:

May lambent zephyrs gently wave thy head,
 And balmy spirits thro' thy foliage play
 May the morn's earliest tears on thee be shed,
 And thou impearl'd with dew appear more gay. (ll.9-12)

The first two lines take note of the major qualities of the daffodil. Many flowers can survive fairly harsh winds, especially if the blooms are small in comparison to the stems that bear them. However, the daffodil has a heavy bloom that nods and moves in the breeze like a head on a thin neck because, although the stem is relatively large at the bottom, it becomes quite small just at the point where the flower is attached, and the hollow stem itself is easy to bend or crease. Therefore, the poet asks for gentle breezes to touch the "heads" of these plants, and he notes in his general way, the foliage that Grieve says is composed of "green, linear leaves about a foot long" (245). These leaves would certainly wave as "balmy spirits" moved through them.

For a youthful poet, Johnson has done quite well with his small note to accuracy. He has found that which is specific to the daffodil, and thus as a young man he has practiced what he later had Imlac in Rasselas praise as the primary aim of such writers:

"The business of a poet, . . . is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind."
(43-4; chapt. 10)

Johnson does not note the minute differences that occur from flower to flower, nor does he emphasize any variation in hue that this particular blossom might have.

However, we have no reason to doubt that Johnson in his own way perceived a daffodil in early spring. In his poem, he, like the accepted intellectuals of his day, provided the details of the type of flower that he observed, even if his was based on a close and immediate experience with one small blossom.

We find, too, that the young man who sees the flower also maintains certain of the old, organic attitudes regarding the natural environment. He comes to observe, not to cut, to enjoy, not to dissect or conquer. His first hand experience with the flower brings to his mind other beauty that he has witnessed. He moves from looking at a real flower to making associations between the bloom and what seems to him a similar being -- women.

Since the masculine connection of women and nature has been a constant in civilization, Johnson seems to be accepting the traditional concept that the two have more in common than do men and nature or men and women. However, if

we look closely at the poem, we find that Johnson combines the two in an innovative, egalitarian fashion. Just as the sensuous young Samuel Johnson was in sympathy with the beauty of the physical landscape of his childhood, just as he as a child enjoyed the sweetness of fruit, the shade of his famous willow, and the coolness of the water in Stowe Pond, so did he as a youth begin to find positive similarities between the beauty of nature and women.

Let us look at the poem, then, in terms of such a connection. In the first stanza, the narrator sees a daffodil, "the first flower" (4) of the year, and he praises its appearance: "Hail lovely flower, first honour of the year! / Hail beautiful earnest of approaching spring!" (ll. 1-2). He notes its fragile beauty and the danger of "rude blasts" (l. 7), which may threaten its short stay on earth, but for a moment he puts aside the perils and storms and frosts and lets his mind move, as poets' thoughts often do, to various associations. The flower is so lovely that in stanza four, he hopes that it will have an audience of similar creatures, "throngs of beautiful virgins" (l. 14) to admire it.

The beauty of the flower, as well as its delicacy, conveys to Johnson's mind the purity of lovely maidens, and the thought of virgins brings forth, in stanza five, Cleora,

a woman who figures in other Johnsonian works, including "Ode on a Lady," "possibly Rambler 15," and "Adversaria" (Waingrow qtd. in McAdam 3).

While Johnson appears to be making natural associations between the flower and the woman, the linking of two has had a long and involved history in literature and language, both of which he may have been aware. Indeed, following his definition of daffodil, Johnson, the mature lexicographer, includes a quotation from the botanist Philip Miller (1691-1771) (Dictionary of National Biography 420), which employs the scientific language of a woman's genitalia and that of a flower in many of the same terms:

This plant hath a lily-flower, consisting of one leaf, which is bell-shaped, and cut into six segments, which incircle its middle like a crown; but the empalement, which commonly rises out of a membranous vagina, turns to an oblong or roundish fruit.

What is intriguing is that botanists equated the genitalia of the woman and the flower but failed to retain the human masculine nomenclature for what became the stamens and anthers. Not only did the scientific terminology of the time emphasize the similarity between women and flowers, but literary tradition celebrated virginity, that most perfect period of feminine beauty, in terms of the flowers of nature.

And yet Johnson's poem was written by a young man of fifteen or sixteen. What did he know then of literary

tradition, of the verse of English poets? If we can believe what Boswell writes about Johnson's knowledge, the youthful poet was well-acquainted with a variety of texts. Johnson, "speaking generally to Boswell about growing older" (1763), said, "'In my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now'" (qtd. in Bate 76). Lipking, in a similar vein, writes,

[that] most scholars agree that Johnson seems rather anomalous or out of place in the Age of Johnson Even in his own time he appeared a bit of a throwback . . . Johnson was born over a bookshop, and the reading he began there and continued at school may have enlisted him in a generation before his own, that of the late Renaissance, as well as in the epoches of Greece and Rome where British schoolboys spent so much of their time. (46)

That Johnson had experience with English poets before the eighteenth century is documented by many critics (McAdam 3).

That these texts would have included poems about women and flowers is certain, and now we must remember Bate's comment that this poem, which includes women and flowers, is not related to "moral subjects" (63). Such a statement is intriguing since the two topics have had a long literary and cultural tradition that has at its base sexual morality. If we read Johnson in the context of his times, we can learn much from the literary models with which he was familiar, for like many other eighteenth century writers, he was well aware of what had gone before him.

From a literary perspective, we know that women and flowers have been the center of much of the verse in the Western world for centuries. In England, both in daily life and literature, women and flowers appear together at least as early as the Middle Ages. In her text, Lilies of the Hearth: The Historical Relationship Between Women and Plants, Jennifer Bennett explains that "woman-as-flower was delicate, sexually passive, fleetingly beautiful and cherished" (12). As subject matter, the woman as flower could be religious or sexual -- the age-old division of the two types of women -- virgins and whores. Although the early religious texts do extoll the flower-like virgin, another common use of the flower was its human, not its spiritual, relationship to sexuality.

One of the most famous and influential narratives concerning man, flower-woman, and sexuality is "the allegorical romance" (Drabble 843), Roman de la Rose, by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Here the courtly lover cheerfully details his sexual prowess. He "cut a little into the bark," "scattered a little seed on the bud," "made the whole tender rosebush widen and lengthen," and finally "plucked, with great delight the flower from the leaves of the rosebush" (Dahlerg 353-4). Any thoughts or responses from the flower, before or after the sexual

experience, are, of course, omitted. The act itself, an example of domination, has objectified the woman into flowery genitalia.

Similarly, other early poets wrote about the woman-flower connection.³ Chaucer, in The Legend of Good Women (1386), creates a narrator who is enamoured of an English daisy which he delineates in terms of courtly language. Two centuries later, in The Faerie Queen (1590; 1596), Spenser describes Belphebe in whose face "her cheekes the vermeill red did shew / Like roses in a bed of lillies shed" (2. 3. 22-7). Shakespeare questions the reality, if not the morality, of having one ideal form of woman composed in floral terms as he writes Sonnet 130, in which his "Mistress's Eye Are Nothing Like the Sun." "I have seen roses damasked, red and white" (l. 5), he explains, "But no such roses see I in her cheeks" (l. 6).

Although Shakespeare attempts to move the portrayal of women away from the Petrarchan ideal, many later poets continued to see women as flowers. Milton, for example, prefers the more traditional ground, and in the seventeenth century, he again equates flowers and the Petrarchan woman in his epic Paradise Lost (1667). In Book IX, Eve works alone, surrounded by flowers, with the ever-watchful Satan waiting for his moment with the still innocent beauty. She is "Herself, . . . [the] fairest unsupported Flow'r, / From her best prop so far" removed (IX. 425-33), for Adam is at a

distance from her presence. Within Eden, the most beautiful flower garden every created, lives Eve, the most luscious flower of all, a woman alone, weak, unprotected. She, like the flower in Romance of the Rose, is certainly plucked, but here Satan is the deceiver only to happy to provide her with worldly knowledge, intelligence so powerful that when Adam hears that Eve has eaten the forbidden fruit, "From his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for Eve / Down dropp'd, and all the faded Roses shed" (lX. 892-3).

When the youthful Johnson writes his poetry about women and flowers, he has before him a long tradition in which a multitude of poems cojoin women and flowers. In these lines male writers describe -- or in a few fortunate cases deliberately refuse to create -- women in the guise of flowers. From a literary perspective, the poem may be a lyrical tribute to the Virgin Mary, a long and sexually successful seduction of a flower-woman as in Romance of the Rose, or a relatively brief but revealing description within an epic, such as Paradise Lost. Thus, the poet may have a flower that symbolically represents a woman as Legend of Good Women or an unfortunate woman who exhibits the quality of the flower as in Paradise Lost. No matter the form, no matter the movement from flower to woman or from woman to flower, the metaphor or simile remains the same: women are blooming beauties, caught within the solidity of the earth, exposed to masculine pursuers.

However, the most direct models for Johnson's text are probably those lyric poems that were written in the seventeenth century. As flowers and women came together throughout the poetic and ordinary languages of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, so do they intertwine within the period just before Johnson's birth. Since Johnson was born at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it's not surprising that he was influenced by the writers who preceded him. According to McAdam, Johnson's early poems contain "distant echoes of seventeenth-century verse, with which Johnson was familiar" (Poems 3). Among the many types of seventeenth century poetry that exist, those that contain the best known type of carpe diem, "a motif . . . which usually advises the enjoyment of present pleasures" (Preminger 103), frequently connect women, flowers, and sex. Within these sometimes delicate and often not so subtle attempts at seduction, many impassioned would-be-lovers lay siege to the object of their desires.

A small sampling of the most popular of such lyrics illustrates the woman-flower, seduction mode. In "Cherry Ripe," a poem with a sexually suggestive title, Thomas Campion describes a young girl's physical maturation as hopeful gardeners wait for the perfect moment of ripeness, and Herrick urges his "Virgins, to Make Much of Time" (1648) --"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may / . . . this same flower that smiles today, / Tomorrow will be dying"

(11. 1-4). In Herrick's poem the virgin and the buds go together because they have beauty, fragility, and shortness of life, and of course, as The Romance of the Rose narrates, both can be plucked by an ardent admirer, and no one seems even to notice or to care that the blossom of a flower, once separated from its stem and roots, dies. The bud itself, suggestive of youth, emphasizes the masculine desire for the innocent and immature, no matter the cost.

As the physical flower has petals that protect the delicate reproductive organs of the bloom, so does the woman possess genitalia. Her beauty, like that of the flower is transitory. Therefore, all of these courtly poems which encourage the young "to seize the moment," deal with the fleeting beauty of the woman who must have her flowers or fruits tasted before the delicate flush disappears forever from her face and she remains behind, an old body, faded and forgotten.

And so speak the poets who provide literary models for a young English man of fifteen or sixteen. For all the variety in verse, the position from which most of the poems were written stressed domination and power. How was the youthful Johnson to respond? Lichfield had respect for the old pre-Christian traditions of flower and bower, but his reading told him that highly respected poets defined women in terms of sexual prey. They, like flowers, were quickly plucked and swiftly discarded. What does Johnson's

verse reveal about how the young writer formed his world picture? Are his young women, as Jean H. Hagstrum asserts in "Johnson and the Concordia Discors of Human Relationships", really "chillingly conventional" (40)? Does Johnson deviate from the traditional seduction mode of flowers and women?

In his first youthful poem, Johnson, like the poets before him, senses the passage of time in "Sol's bright chariot" (l.22), but he describes his women in a gentle and supportive way. The virgins that come to his mind have, at first, the beauty of a flower and the power of a goddess:

May throngs of beautiful virgins 'round thee crowd,
And view thy charms with no malignant eyes:
.....
If mix'd with these, divine Cleora smile,
Cleora's smile a genial warmth dispense;
New verdure ev'ry fading leaf shall fill,
And thou shalt flourish by her influence. (ll. 13-20)

Johnson demands no physical connection with the woman. He does not ask Cleora to give up her virginity to him or to anyone else. Such a poem is even more surprising when we consider that he was a young man -- certainly not a child -- in a boys' school. What would be more reasonable than that he would accept the male posturing that came with the poetry that he read? How ingrained acceptable sexual behavior is within human culture. How often parents try, through gender neutral toys, to soften the lines between that which is seen as feminine and that which is designated

masculine only to find that young children are already socially programed in very rigid ways.

In the eighteenth century, when many people desired to maintain traditional attitudes, what is unusual in Johnson's poem is the sensitive way in which he responds both to nature and women. He does, of course, conceive of himself as separate and different from women. However, while it is psychologically essential for people "to attempt a sort of outer perspective . . . [because] The self is constituted by the way it differs from the other" (Lipking 37), in this poem Johnson can do so without attempting domination.

In Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory, Nancy Chodorow explains that

Developing a sense of confident separateness must be a part of all children's development. But once this separateness is established, one's relational self can become more central to one's life. Differentiation is not distinctness and separateness, but a particular way of being connected to others. This connection to others, based on early incorporations, in turn enables us to feel that empathy and confidence that are basic to the recognition of the other as a self. (107)

Thus, writers who see women as separate and available for conquest tend to make them prey, not human companions. Johnson, who clearly finds Cleora worthy in ways more than her beauty, attempts no sexual manipulation or force. He recognizes her "as a self" (Chodorow 107), and he does not fear making a "connection" (107) to her.

As a mature writer, Johnson, the lexicographer, provides definitions and examples that echo this early kindness toward women perceived as flowers: defloration, in definition one, is "the taking away of a woman's virginity" and in definition two, "a selection of that which is most valuable"; to deflour is "to ravish; to take away a woman's virginity" and "to take away the beauty and grace of anything." A "deflourer," Johnson writes, is "a ravisher," and his example is from Addison: "I have often wondered, that those deflourers of innocence, though dead to all the sentiments of virtue and honour, are not restrained by humanity" (Dictionary).

Thus, Johnson, in his dictionary, retains the cherished male idea of the importance of female chastity, but at least the youthful Johnson does not attempt literary seduction, and it is intriguing, in light of Eve in the Garden of Eden, to consider what Cafarelli notes concerning the Life of Milton in which an older Johnson scoffs at Milton's desire for three virgin brides. She believes that Johnson finds Milton's emphasis on chaste brides ridiculous, for he "fosters no sentimental illusions about Milton's marriages" (99) as the following selection shows:

All his wives were virgins, for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband: upon what other principles his choice was made cannot now be known, but marriage afforded not much of his happiness." (131)

We can see Johnson's sympathy with women -- virgin or not -- beginning in this early poem. While Herrick and Campion -- at least in print -- separate themselves from women or the Other and look forward to some man triumphing in the brief beauty of conquest, Johnson connects himself to the woman in a more egalitarian fashion: "Cleora's self, fair flower, shall fade like thee, / Alike must fall the poet and his theme" (ll. 27-8). Time itself, the early enemy of woman alone, becomes, with Johnson, a great leveler of all earthly creation.

In "On a Daffodill," the young Johnson may use the language of courtly lovers to show his appreciation of both women and nature; he may emphasize the common attributes of Cleora and the flower; however, he attempts to conquer neither. He reads the existence of both as if they were texts, but he does the same for his own life. His view is more like the organic, partnership consideration of nature (Eisler and Merchant), and he includes all living creatures in his poem, flowers, women, and self alike.

If we turn our attention to another aspect of the poem, the religious implications of Johnson's lines, we can learn even more about his idea of women and nature and his appreciation of their nature. For centuries one masculine vision of the woman has been as temptress, that creature who pulls the God-seeking man from heavenly concerns to sensual pleasures. Here, perhaps, is one reason why the earlier

poets may have refused to include women in "moral" (Bate 63) verse. Woman and nature were sometimes seen as matter as opposed to spirit. Like many concepts that unfortunately seem obviously true to many people, this idea has ancient roots in the masculine thinkers of religious history. Philo Judaeus, a "Jewish philosopher . . . who died about 50 A.D." (Eiselen, Lewis, and Downey 97) "takes Adam and Eve as representing two elements within human nature: he says that Adam represents the mind (nous), the nobler, masculine, and rational element, which is "made in God's image"; and Eve represents the body or sensation (aisthesis), the lower, feminine element, source of all passion" (Elaine Pagels 65) St. Augustine, perhaps because of his own difficulties with the flesh (Pagels 105), writes that

there is an attractiveness in beautiful bodies, in gold and silver, and all things; and in bodily touch, sympathy hath much influence. . . . Upon occasion of all these, and the like, is sin committed, while through an immoderate inclination towards these goods of the lowest order, the better and higher are forsaken. (St. Augustine 26)

Women's bodies have often been presented as polluted. In The Foul and the Fragrant, Alain Corbin explains that even the smell of a woman could be dangerous. "Henri III, it was said, remained in love with Mary of Cleves after breathing the odor of her linen in a closet where she had just changed" (45), and throughout all societies menstruating women have been feared and/or seen as unclean

(Rosaldo 31-8). Since women were the Other, or that with which sex is possible, often they were considered fleshly temptations. Nigel Davies explains that

A new wave of repression, emblematic of the rise of the Protestant bourgeoisie, began in the seventeenth century and continued into the nineteenth century. The flesh became once more the root of all evil. (267)

When male writers separate themselves from flowers and women, these poets are implying the need to conquer and dominate women who are no more than tempting sweet flowers, sensuous delights, which distract them from their real and necessary work and lives, the Renaissance conflict of the private and public life. However, the young Johnson sees a flower and unites himself with nature and women. What he implies in his poem is that we learn more from sharing in our relationships with others than from our attempts to gain and maintain control.

Johnson, unlike the courtly lovers, does not separate love poetry from so-called moral verse. In his poem "To a Daffodil," we really find an example of the second type of Carpe Diem, a kind of "Christian writing" which combines literature and religion and which acts "as a persuasion to goodness" (Perminger 104). If we look at the traditional verse of this type, we frequently discover a poet and

flowers, but Johnson's combination of man, woman, flower, and moral is unusual and powerfully supportive of all concerned.

Herrick, on the other hand, may use a daffodil to talk about the shortness of life just as he employs rosebuds to signify beauty and brevity of existence in "To the Virgins," but he doesn't put all three into one poem as does Johnson. Herrick writes religious verse or courtly poems. The two types -- the heavenly and the earthly -- he keeps apart. Herrick "weep[s] to see" the flowers "haste away so soon" (ll. 1-2), just as Johnson "behold[s] the shriveling blossoms die, / So late admir'd and prais'd, alas! in vain!" (ll. 22-3). Both employ nature to emphasize moral and/or spiritual truths: life is short and death is quick; however, in his verse, Johnson blurs the distinction between the two types of carpe diem, the religious and the secular, when he includes women in lines that teach moral lessons.

His gentle attitude and kind tone imply a direct enjoyment of beauty without the overt or covert attempt to dominate or seduce. Even as a young man of fifteen or sixteen (McAdam 3), at a time when sexual experiences must have been part of his hopes and fantasies, Johnson is able to realize his separateness from women and yet observe that the connection between women and flowers should go beyond the bloom, and he does not make light and humorous sexual verse at their expense. While the Cavalier poets usually

see the sexual possibilities of women, Johnson values the human qualities of his female friends as well, and his first poem takes women beyond a delicate blossom to something more substantial, and thus this early poem becomes an important beginning in the study of Johnson's attitude toward women and nature.

His view of Cleora fits very well into "the organic theory [which] was the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe" (Merchant 2) in a pre-scientific world (2). Thus the scientifically-oriented Johnson that we hear so much about in his later life has little interest in his early years in manipulating his environment or women. In his poem, the flowers grow naturally. They are locked into the earth and exist unprotected from the wind; however, the woman Cleora, whose image the flower brings to Johnson's mind, may act as a beneficent presence on the natural elements about her. She can make what was barren fertile, and Johnson's earliest poem shows the human's relationship to nature as one of kindly benefactor.

If we move the discussion onto ecological grounds, we must consider not only what Johnson has said in his poem, but what his choices may mean in his view of the world as well. In Nature and Madness, Shepard explains that the Hebrew, Greek-Roman view of the world filtered through into

modern times. He says that "[t]he central dogma of the West insisted on a separation of spiritual matters from the phenomena of nature" (70), and indeed, Johnson does see the end of the natural world of his poem.

The happy symbiotic relationship of flower, poet, and woman has at its roots an eventual decay for all concerned because nothing material can last forever. As a rational and Christian thinker, Johnson realizes that the physical world must end, that as the flower withers, Cleora must die, but he concludes "Alike must fall the poet and his theme" (l. 28). Cleora and the flower have in common the brevity of their beauty, and he and Cleora and the flower have in common the brevity of life. All share the fate of the poem and its "theme" (l. 28), "the transience of the arts, an abiding theme of Renaissance humanism" (Brownell 38). A flower is different from a woman, and a woman differs from a man, and yet, in his poem, Johnson finds the similarities, and thus equates the lives of the three and adds the limited value of art. What the lines imply is a closeness of the writer with the subject matter of his text.

In this youthful poem, Johnson has one clear message: all living creatures have equally the same destiny: all must die. And we have come full circle. "On a Daffodill" is a poem about the truths of life. Its purpose, in fact, is to point a moral, and Bate's dismissal of "On a Daffodill" in favor of "Festina Lente" and "Ode on Friendship" because

they, unlike Johnson's floral tribute, have an "immediate superiority" (63) that rests in the judgement that "they are on moral subjects" (63) is in error.

Johnson's poetic use of creation is related to the emblematic interpretation of nature so frequently used by the Protestant poets of the seventeenth century in which people discovered truth in nature (Lewalski 187). For these writers, whether they were moralists adding a few sentences to the illustrations of emblem books (188) or whether they were religious poets attempting to explain the ways of God to people by observing "plants, animals, birds, fish, and reptiles" (188), the emblem was any natural phenomena that could provide insight into problems of life and faith.

Whatever these emblems might be, however, they differ from simple figures of speech, such as allusions and other metaphors and similes, because the writers who drew these comparisons believed that they were discovering truths about spiritual life by observing nature. Lewalski explains that

[t]he sacred-emblem books, especially books by Protestants, moved resolutely away from Neoplatonic esotericism. These theorists did, however, reinforce the view of emblems as grounded in the divine order of things rather than simply in the conceits of human wit --that is, as symbols or allegories found, not made.

(185)

Thus nature was a theater for the Protestant poet. He or she could look at the world and find God's hand visible in every leaf and flower and root.

Johnson's benign observation of nature for its moral and spiritual truths is a gentle use of the environment as opposed to what Carolyn Merchant has explained as the harsh result of the scientific attitude that takes root so firmly in the Renaissance and seventeenth century and blooms so fully in the Age of Reason.

If we look ahead to the mature Johnson, we can see the culmination of Johnson's gentleness toward all life. In Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense, Damrosch considers Johnson's negative response to Jenyns' Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil, the implications of which suggest a cruel God who enjoys seeing blood sports much like that enjoyed by European sportsmen (82-5). Such behavior was extended to the scientist who attempted exploration of the cells of living creatures. To such practice Johnson objected. He opposed, in the first instance, any process that had pain as its side effect. As Hangstrum explains, in Idler 17, Johnson writes:

Among the inferiour professors of medical knowledge, is a race of wretches, whose lives are only varied by varieties of cruelty; whose favourite amusement is to nail dogs to tables and open them alive; to try how long life may be continued in various degrees of mutilation. (55)

Some critics have found Johnson's own experiments with life limited. Fussell, for example, responds to Johnson's

negative written statements concerning science in a perceptive observation:

This Johnsonian low assessment of scientific knowledge would seem to indicate more accurately his real feelings on the subject than any inferences drawn from his trivial interest in home-made chemical experiments, the condition of dried orange peelings, or the rate of growth of his own fingernails. (17)

Many critics seem to believe that such evidence acknowledges Johnson's desire to study philosophically and theologically the human's place in the world because such aspects of life are more important, loftier aspirations. However, from all that Johnson has written, we find that the manipulation of the creatures of the natural world sickened him, and since he did not enjoy witnessing pain and agony -- as Damrosch notes in Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense (84) -- in Johnson's pursuit of science he could but perform experiments on what he knew was his only truly willing subject -- himself. Hence, again he pays public attention generally to that which is presumed helpful to mankind -- science -- but specifically he finds more to condemn than to praise or even to condone.

This gentleness comes out again and again in his writing. Johnson uses a more delicate turn of phrase to discover and explain the world he sees about him in this, his first poem, but he does have a pragmatic and Protestant

view of the environment. He never questions what seems to him an obvious truth -- that the world is made for the use of humankind, whether physically in attaining creature comforts or symbolically by finding connections to constant certainties, such as death.

However, his poem does not bristle with the need to expose, dissect, or control what he sees. His lines include the joy which the personal observation of nature brings the viewer. His "throngs of beautiful virgins" (l.13) will "view the thy charms with no malignant eyes" (l. 14), and his tribute to the English daffodil puts the Egyptian flowers in his allusion to shame. Johnson mixes the flowers and Cleora so that people are a part of nature, but the women come with smiles and not shears. Thus his poem is gentle literally and figuratively, and his attitude toward both women and nature here is more equalitarian than that of the Cavalier poets or the early scientists. Johnson, Cleora, and the flowers equally share time and space on earth in a way that is quite advanced for such a young man.

If we stop here, we can say unequivocally that Johnson sees both nature and women as positive. Johnson's first poem has as its focus the lovely flower, but the subject is death, which "'has always been considered as the great enemy of human quiet, the polluter of the feast of happiness, and embitterer of the cup of joy'" (Sermon 25 qtd. in Damrosch 71), Johnson finds the world of living creatures totally

and equally united in death. The ending of all matter, including the poet and the woman, introduces another problem as well. What is the position of the human if the end of life is a certainty? Here Johnson implies a conflict between enjoying the physical aspects of life and fearing first death and then retribution, an opposition that will follow him throughout his writing. Perhaps it is this Christian concern with the finitude of the earth and all its inhabitants that even in this relatively positive poem about nature and women points to a later questioning of the role of the exterior world.

When Johnson looks at nature and women, he is sure to find beauty in both. However, his view of nature includes as well what he has learned from reading, and in one brief allusion to Egyptian flowers he reveals an attitude of superiority to other types of people. Unlike the daffodil, the Egyptian flowers have no colors, no shapes, no names. In lines fifteen and sixteen, Johnson provides a contrast to English blossoms: "Then scorn those flowers to which the Aegyptians bow'd, / Which prostrate Memphis own'd her deities" (ll. 15-6). Johnson neither sees these blooms he has taken from his reading, nor does he value them, but he is well-aware of what he believes is the Egyptians' responses to such botanical specimens.

In The Splendor that Was Egypt, Margaret A. Murray explains that

The Egyptians loved their gardens so much that one of the usual prayers was that after death they might return and sit in the shade and eat the fruit of the trees they had planted. (83)

Murray describes a people who appreciate their flowers; however, Johnson believes, as have many who have attempted to understand ancient customs, that these misguided people worshiped the elements of the natural world. In his poem, he writes that the Egyptians bowed to their flowers. While his lines praise the English daffodil as superior to the generalized Egyptian flowers, his words still imply what to him can be a misuse of nature.

His first definition of nature makes this point clearly: "An imaginary being supposed to preside over the material and animal world." Likewise, one of Boyle's definition is similar: "Nature is sometimes indeed commonly taken for a kind of semi-deity. In this sense it is best not to use it at all" (Dictionary of the English Language).

As a child, Samuel Johnson enjoyed the fruit, the water, the ice, the plants in and about his native town. As he matured, he had to decide just what his appropriate response to his surroundings should be. Is a childish sensuous enjoyment of the environment a reasonable part of a Christian man's life? As a much older man in response to Hester Thrale's comment that "'One Man. . . was profligate,

followed the Girls or the Gaming Table,'" Johnson replied, "'Why Life must be filled up Madam, & the man was capable of nothing less Sensual'" (qtd. in Sachs 4).

That he grew to distrust the joys of certain physical pleasures is evident again and again in his work. Brownell cites Johnson's response to music in the Prefaces:

The science of musical sounds, though it may have been depreciated, as appealing only to the ear, and affording nothing more than a momentary and fugitive delight, may be with justice considered as the art that unites corporal with intellectual pleasure, by a species of enjoyment which gratifies sense, without weakening reason; and which, therefore, the Great may cultivate without debasement, and the Good enjoy without depravation. (qtd. in Brownell 15-6).

By the process of elimination, then, other sensual delights were not as spiritually encouraging or as intellectually stimulating, and the enjoyment of the environment, bird song excluded, positively flourishes in its providing of ways to "gratify" the tactile, the olfactory, and the sense of taste, none of which seem worthy of human cultivation.

Why is Johnson so hesitant to release himself to the enjoyment of his body? Of course, religion plays a major part, as does pride in his intellectual abilities. Such a man, as he matured, would wonder if childhood pursuits in pond and tree were sufficiently serious for an educated adult. Closely connected with such a question would logically fall an evaluation of the role of the human's place in creation. Just where do the boundaries of

humankind end? How much separation from the physical environment is essential for the role that Johnson wishes eventually to play in English society?

CHAPTER III

MOTHERS, THE PATRIARCHY, AND JOHNSON

THE NURTURING BODY: "FESTINA LENTE" AND THE ANNALS

Conflicts concerning nature and women become even more apparent as we continue to read Johnson's youthful poetry against the background of the Annals. The choices that he makes, probably in subconscious reaction to what he reads and hears in Lichfield, are important ones, for Johnson's verse and autobiographical sketches reveal an increasing distance between himself and much of the rest of creation; and nature, used symbolically instead of emblematically, becomes, on the surface, ornamentation. Since all nature is finite, perhaps Johnson, as a Christian, wonders how he can find the eternal in trees and flowers without falling into the heresies of non-Christian religions that often include what must have seemed to him a pantheistic reverence of the natural world.

We know that by the end of the eighteenth century, such a distant removal from nature would have had social and political implications as well. Close observation of and participation in natural activities would mark the vulgar man (Barrell 88), and the ability to enjoy the panoramic would distinguish the liberal man capable of making valuable generalizations about life (88). Since few ideas occur in a

flash, no doubt the atmosphere of the time would have reflected such attitudes consistently for an earlier period.

Perhaps, as Ortner explains, such a distinction between direct experience of nature and the panoramic view has sexual suggestions as well. According to Ortner, "By postulating that women are seen as closer to nature than men, men . . . [are] seen as more unequivocally occupying the high ground of culture" (83-4). Thus enjoying the "relatively unmediated, [the] more direct" (Ortner 82) may seem to members of the patriarchy more womanish and less masculine. Perhaps even as a young writer, Johnson sensed that a literary man whose physical vision was limited should keep to the classical use of symbolic nature since all the verse that he read favored sight to the unhappy exclusion of other senses which Johnson could have employed more confidently.

Thus, Johnson's topics follow eighteenth-century prescriptions, and he no longer composes any English poems centered in direct experiences of nature in its natural state that allows him to extract moral truths from emblematic observations of flowers and trees. However, underlying what seems to be traditional attention to such abstract ideas as reason and passion are suggestions of conflict in a society based on domination and control. When we turn from "On a Daffodill" to "Festina Lente," "probably a school exercise" (Mc Adam 15), we discover a

poem that includes nature in a landscape devoid of all beauty. Johnson's narrator has moved from the happy childhood of flowers and fruits to a place more troublesome. Yet this poem contains ideas that are clothed in natural imagery. Within his figurative language -- the "cliffs" (l. 5), "floods of rage" (l. 8), and a flowing "spring" (l. 9) -- are tropes that solidify the negative abstractions of his life.

Although Johnson is no longer using the material world for eternal truths, his employment of the natural world as symbol is important. In "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," Ronald W. Hepburn explains that "the human inner life has been nourished by images from the natural world" (71). Ironically, just as Johnson seems to move from the immediate world of nature, the pleasure-giver, he turns yet again to nature, the symbol-maker (Fussell 5). Just as the water and the fruit once nourished his body, so do the images that come from the physical world of experience, no matter how bleak the new events appear to be, give voice to his imagination.

In "On a Daffodill" Johnson writes many lines of happy verse describing flowers, spring, the dew, and Cleora, but he ends in a few words devoted to impending death. In "Festina Lente," however, only a few amusing words take us into the poem, and a certain lightness of touch that begins the lines disappears completely in the first third of the

first stanza. In this poem, the problems in life are represented by a barren and treacherous landscape where one slip could lead to disaster. The narrator provides a warning to the reader:

Observe your steps; be carefull to command
Your passions; guide the reins with steady hand,
Nor down steep cliffs precipitately move
Urg'd headlong on by hatred or by love. (ll. 3-6)

Bate notes that for Johnson "the image of 'cliffs' has a strong symbolic association with danger" (64). Cliffs can be found only in context with mountains, and at the time that Johnson was writing, these elements of nature were negative in the extreme. Jacques explains that "During the mid 1720s . . . the prevailing wisdom was that mountains were the rubbish of creation" (30), and even "Alpine scenery, was barely explored despite the flood of English tourists to Italy after the end of the wars with France in 1713" (29). More to the point, Michael Macklem, in The Anatomy of the World, explains that seventeenth century thinkers linked mountains to original sin:

In the Sacred Theory [Thomas] Burnet reformulated the accepted doctrine that the fallen earth is the natural estate of sin. Specifically, he suggested that the characters of terrestrial disorder are mountains and seas. (6-7)

Therefore, it's not surprising that the narrator in Johnson's poem wants down, and it's not unusual that the

poet gives no room to details of such a useless place which may even imply evil, for "mountains are the 'ruines of a broken World' . . . [and] they signify the curse on the earth for the sin of Adam" (Macklem 8).

Symbolically, then, what Johnson has been taught is worthless becomes in his poetry a representation of something to escape, and to emphasize the dangers in descending such tall obstacles, he uses natural symbols. Of course, as Fussell explains, the ability to employ symbols has always been considered one quality of Humanism -- as seen in an eighteenth century context -- for "the symbol-making power" (5) is one of "the quintessential human attributes" (5).

For all the attention to reason in the eighteenth century, writers knew then that symbols in poetry are not logical accouterments to writing. Hepburn explains the human's use of symbols:

They are annexed not in a systematic, calculating, craftsmanlike fashion, but rather through our being imaginatively seized by them, and coming to cherish their expressive aptness, and to rely upon them in our efforts to understand ourselves. (71)

What is ironic, then, is that as Johnson writes about the superiority of reason, he must use pictures that come from his own natural and imaginative experiences. In "Festina Lente" Johnson uses nature in a generalized, or as Bate misguidedly says of "On a Daffodill," in an

"intellectually conceived" (62) fashion, but to do so, Johnson must resort to images that have "no simple one-to-one correlation between mental state and natural item" (Hepburn 73). Thus poetry which once transformed the tangible experience into the abstract concept now changes the intangible idea into the concrete form to imply the meaning of the verse.

This shift suggests a removal of Johnson from the sensuous life of his childhood and earliest teen years to a location, only a short linear time later, within his own mind composed of societal and philosophical constructs which, ironically, still requires nature, albeit it generalized and abstracted. Hepburn explains how the symbolizing process works:

The forms of nature are annexed in imagination, interiorized, the external made internal. . . Through these, the elusively nonspatial is made more readily graspable and communicable. We speak of depths and heights -- in relation to moods or feelings or hopes or fears: of soarings and of gloom. (73)

"Our aesthetic experience of nature," Hepburn believes, "is thoroughly dependent on scale and on individual viewpoint" (78).

What these symbols in "Festina Lente" imply for Johnson is that difficulties or problems that occur in the lives of adults have no simple solutions. For some reason, perhaps religious, perhaps cultural, the beauty of nature cannot act

as succor against unhappiness, but the horrors of life can be expressed in dangerous natural imagery.⁵ As "Robert Alves wrote in 1794," Johnson exhibited a "melancholy of imagination . . . [in] even his earliest productions. . . . In nature he always described the most awful or solemn scenes" (Damrosch, Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense 59).

In "Festina Lente," how does Johnson respond to this fearsome environment that he has created? Traditionally, people have reacted to threats in one of two ways. Freud explains that one of the sources of danger and unhappiness can come "from the outer world" (Civilization and its Discontents 28). We have a choice, he says. One can "defend oneself. . . single-handed" (29) or unite against nature, "thus forcing it to obey human will, under the guise of science" (30). Freud, like Bacon, uses similar terms of domination in an attempt to defeat, to win over nature, but such attitudes, Eisler reminds us, lead to discord.

A third way to react to the environment, however, is to avoid the either-or fallacy Freud proposes and find a more peaceable approach to our surroundings. In The Dialectic of Freedom Maxine Green explains that

There is, after all, a dialectical relation marking every human situation: the relation between subject and object, individual and environment, self and society, outsider and community, living consciousness and phenomenal world. This relation exists between two different, apparently opposite poles; but it presupposes a mediation between them. (8)

Here we find Johnson, who, even in the midst of his abstracted difficulties in the intellectualized landscape of "Festina Lente," finds a middle ground. He makes no attempt to dominate external nature, but he does warn his readers about the problems in life:

Observe your steps; be carefull to command
Your passions; guide the reins with steady hand,
Nor down steep cliffs precipitately move
Urg'd headlong on by hatred or by love:
Let reason with superiour force control
The floods of rage, and calm thy ruffled soul.
Rashness! thou spring from whence misfortunes
flow! (ll. 3-9)

In this dangerous situation, he neither encourages people to appeal to a god, nor does he suggest a new scientific or technological way of removing his metaphoric cliffs, nor does he invite his readers to discover inventions to make the descent safer. The question for him is not to transform the perilous land that he sees but to navigate it safely. He advises people to look within themselves for the means of a safe descent, but they must be careful to select the correct human tool.

It's interesting that although exterior nature is to be navigated and not controlled, human nature, clothed in images of floods and springs, needs a firm hand. The eighteenth century humanist, Fussell explains, "assumes that there is no help for man but within himself" (10), and in this poem, Johnson, although he had no idea of humanism, a

term applied much later in time, does tend toward that position. The young poet says that within their minds, people have reason which is a "superiour force" (l. 7).

However, emotions exist as well. Both love and hate (l. 6) can impede progress if they are allowed to rule. Both "rage" (l. 8) and "rashness" (l. 9), which can cause "misfortunes" (l. 9), are symbolized by water images which must be held in reign by reason. Thus, Johnson, through his natural images, extends to the human mind a restraint that he does not apply to exterior nature, the cliffs and mountains of his poem. In this poem, the humans are the only living creatures in a barren, treacherous landscape. All beauty has disappeared, and the elements of nature have become potential harmful symbols.

Again, however, equality of humans features prominently in the lines. In "On a Daffodill" all must die, and in "Festina Lente" all people face difficult problems. Just as in "On a Daffodill" nothing can avoid physical annihilation, in this poem, no one has total authority over her or his initial placement in life. The first lines of "Festina Lente" read, "Whatever course of life great Jove allots, / Whether you sit on thrones, or dwell in cots, / Observe your steps . . . " (ll. 1-3). Hence our position in life is determined, at least in some degree, by a force Johnson here names Jove.

These light lines, apt for a schoolboy, especially the colloquial cot, act perhaps as the sugar to attract those readers who might have been put off by a direct moral introduced seriously in the first few lines, but as Johnson writes, the poem becomes, as in "On a Daffodill," more serious in tone by the end. Similarly, the acknowledgment of "great Jove" in line one seems a quick quip, an offhand nod at poetic tradition. And yet, as in "On a Daffodill," the underlying thoughts of the poem turn much darker as we consider a more than superficial reading of the verses in which a polarization of the masculine and the feminine occurs, and in light of Johnson's tendency to offer dialectical elements, we must consider the qualities that this deity exhibits.

That the creator of this empty landscape is male is reasonable, perhaps, in a Protestant writer of the eighteenth century who perceives of God in such a way. However, this deity has made a joyless land full of danger for his inhabitants, and if we consider Jove's classical origin, we may discover just what his powers really are. Johnson identifies "great Jove" (l. 1) as the controller of fate and life, and this god, also known as Jupiter or Zeus, was the son of Cronus or Saturn. "Zeus dethroned [his father] . . . and seized the power for himself" (Hamilton 24). How dangerous life must be when even the son cannot be trusted to care for the father. How strange the world when

the creator is also the destroyer.

If we follow Gross's interpretation of Johnson's personality as she reveals it in This Invisible Riot of the Mind, we could say that Johnson hides this perhaps unconscious thought, this father-death, this apparently common Oedipal impulse, within other less difficult lines; but whatever the source of the images, the danger remains for the reader-life traveler. The very deity that has put people into their various natural families is Jove, who has killed his father; and he is not to be trusted because now he has become that which he has killed, an authority figure, and the world that Jove has made sounds very hard and firm-edged.

In a world that seems as irrational as the one that Johnson has drawn for us, the movement away from personal reason must have seemed especially life-threatening. Reason, which Johnson later personifies as feminine in "The Vision of Theodore," he defines in his dictionary as "the power by which man deduces one proposition from another, or proceeds from premises to consequences; the rational faculty; discursive power." The second definition of passion is a "violent commotion of the mind." Emotion, he defines as "disturbance of mind; vehemence of passion, pleasing or painful" (Dictionary). Even as a young man he was beginning to fear the result of ideas and associations

freed from thoughtful consideration, that imaginative force that allows poetry to exist in the first place. What is the distance between inspired leaps of genius and mental derangement? Gross explains the historical view of the central place of reason:

As "vitiating judgment," madness was traditionally associated with sin or departure from God-given reason. Even in the eighteenth century, this concept was not entirely differentiated from the medieval Christian notion of demonic possession. (26)

Thus, a curbing of the natural passions is necessary to prevent disaster. To emphasize this point, Johnson includes examples of people who have reacted in various ways to danger. Fabius was "cautious" (l. 17) and successful, but Flaminius (l. 15) was rash (l. 9) and defeated. The most unusual example for this study, however, is the first specific illustration which follows Johnson's apostrophe to rashness and a listing of the general effects of this adversary to reason:

Parent of ills! and source of all our woe!
Thou to a scene of bloodshed turn'st the ball,
By thee whole citys burn, whole nations fall!
By thee Orestes plung'd his vengefull dart
Into his supplicating mother's heart. (ll. 10-4)

Although the word parent here refers to rashness, the term is suggestive of parental relationships, and Johnson does have both a father and a mother in his poem. Just as he includes Cleora as a beneficial "influence" (l. 20) on her

environment, a virgin who can by her smile "a genial warmth dispense" (l. 19) throughout the flowers and trees about her, so does he bring into "Festina Lente" a woman of considerable power. However, this woman introduced into a landscape devoid of beauty and joy cannot be the lovely virgin of "To a Daffodill." Of necessity she must be a female of greater experience. She is Clytaemnestra, the husband-slayer, known from more than one Greek tragedy.

To which Clytaemnestra is Johnson referring? How did Johnson learn of this old Greek tale? We have a choice. The most obvious seems Aeschylus's Oresteia, known in England with "Standlye's edition of the plays in 1662" (Drabble 9) because it has the greatest focus on Orestes's choice in slaying. Let us first of all examine just what this play as source would mean to our understanding of the mother-murderer in "Festina Lente."

In the lines of Johnson's poem, the queen follows Jove, the distant father-murderer from Greek mythology. If it is acceptable for the youthful poet to admit within his lines, a rather light-hearted Jove, who has committed patricide, it is not permissible for Johnson to applaud Orestes for a matricide that removes the only woman in the poem. Because both a father and a mother occur within this poem, we must consider Johnson's reactions to the value of each. What makes the difference in these two types of murder? Specifically, why can the son kill the father without

censure but not the mother? What does such a preference in a poem of figurative nature tell us about Johnson's view of women? Why does he even include the feminine in the first place?

The subject of these lines is the superiority of reason over passion, and according to Johnson, Orestes is guilty of a heinous crime committed in a moment of rashness, but is Johnson's assumption correct? As a student-poet, Johnson, as he did later (Gross 6), seems to have had difficulty apprehending the difference between reason and emotion as evidenced by his implications concerning Orestes's motivation in the slaying of Clytaemnestra. Johnson believes that rashness causes Orestes to kill his mother, but if we look closely at the play itself, we will find that the situation is not as simple as Johnson implies.

Edith Hamilton explains that Orestes was faced with a conflict, for "it was a son's duty to kill his father's murderers. . . but a son who killed his mother was abhorrent to gods and to men" (244). Orestes, then, "must choose between two hideous wrongs" (244). He does not raise a knife against his mother in blind passion. He ponders the best answer to his unfortunate dilemma, and acts, not in rashness but after contemplation. Johnson defines rash as "Hasty; violent; precipitate; acting without caution or reflection," but at no time does Orestes behave in such a fashion.

The inclusion of Orestes introduces the conflict within society between the masculine and the feminine principles of ancient Greece. Just as in other works that we have considered, we find in this play the masculine connected to society and women joined to nature, the opposing forces dictated by tradition. Many critics believe that Aeschylus evinces a situation that forces people to choose between the social or patriarchal with Agamemnon and the natural or maternal with Clytaemnestra. According to Eisler, the play, because of Athene's support of Orestes, "justifies . . . the shift from partnership to dominator norms . . . [and demands that] the shift to male dominance must be accepted by every Athenian" (80). Thus Aeschylus is defending patriarchal rule.

In this sense, exonerating Orestes means refuting the feminine, and in these lines rings the original call to the masculine dominance that becomes so powerful in Johnson's time as Tristram Shandy reveals in what we hope is a facetious argument of respected churchmen attempting to determine whether a mother is really related to her child.

On the surface of this poem, the young Johnson seems to follow the patriarchal tendency to emphasize that which tradition has deemed masculine at the expense of that which society has described as feminine. His poem is devoted to reason, he writes again and again; reason, that abstract idea, is the "triggering subject" (Hugo 4) of his poem, but

"the real or generated subject, [that] which the poem comes to say or mean" (4) implies that the distinction between reason and emotion is a difficult one to make.

Johnson supports the mother and not the son on the grounds of uncontrolled emotion. Johnson says that Orestes's lack of reason and possession of passions are the motives behind his slaying of his mother, but in light of the play itself and the critical responses to it, reason and masculine powers kill the mother, avenge the father, protect the son, and retain the patriarchy. Certainly no one seems less "rash" than does Orestes as he tries to think, not feel, his way through his difficulties.

Thus, when Johnson makes the mother reasonable and the rest of nature representative of emotions gone awry, he lends support to the feminine principle, and his poem, which begins by praising reason, loses its continuity within a patriarchal system. What seems on the surface to be quite unusual, however, does have a kind of "reasoning" at its base. In Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology, Rosemary Reuther explains that "Male culture symbolizes control over nature in ambivalent ways" (76):

The symbol of nature is . . . ambivalent or split. Nonhuman nature can be seen as that which is beneath the human, the realm to be controlled, reduced to domination, fought against as font of chaos and regression. Nature can also be seen as cosmos, as the

encompassing matrix of all things, supported by or infused with divine order and harmony, within which gods and humans stand and in which they have their being. (75-6)

The first idea points to the scientific view of nature, and the second to the organic. What Reuther believes is that both of these ideas can exist in the same person. In other words, Johnson is terrified by the problems that all people confront in life, and these he clothes in the language of a dangerous landscape, devoid of any pleasure or aid. The cliffs and the barren landscape are examples of "nonhuman . . . beneath the human, the realm to be controlled" (Reuther 75) just as rashness, symbolized by life-giving water out of control, represents the perilous dissolution of control within the human mind.

Clytaemnestra, the mother, is the "cosmos, . . . the encompassing matrix of all things. . . in which . . . [all] have their being" (Eisler 76). The queen reminds Orestes that his being originated with his creator, the mother, and the implication is that it is not reasonable to kill that which makes new life. Johnson is right -- Orestes has not acted in a rational way. All lives are fraught with problems and rocky paths. The only sure protection is the mother, that which gives life and protection to children and does not, like Agamemnon, take it away. Thus Johnson's definition of rashness as "foolish contempt of danger; inconsiderate heat of temper; precipitation; temerity" does

fit the situation, and his illustration from Denham is apt:
 "Nature and youth hot rashness doth dispense, But with cold
 prudence age doth recompence."

However, the method by which we arrive with Johnson at this decision is in opposition to the honor-hero actions of the patriarchal system. Of the older Johnson, Gross writes, "Spurred by his own ambivalent relation to obedience and authority, he found that Reason was not master in its own house" (6). Here we see the very beginning of such attitudes in his youthful poetry. He has tried to act sensibly according to the dictates of his society by praising reason, that English measure of maturity and intelligence.

George Rosen sums it [reason] up from the medical perspective: "For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the touchstone was reason and its right use. Reason provided the norm. . . . Endowed with reason, man was expected to behave rationally, that is, according to accepted social standards.
 (qtd. in Gross 38).

However, Johnson's emotional connection to the feminine slips out in his allusion to Orestes. According to what ruling men had pronounced as masculine, Johnson has failed in his response to the choice between reason and emotion. Johnson has put natural family ties above justice, the very old idea of nurturing nature above the newer Greek ideal of the city and reason, matters of the hearth (Humphreys 15) over the sophisticated life of Apollonian city dwellers (2).

If "Festina Lente" has emphasized the dangers of life -- the power Johnson once felt when the currents tested his limbs in the Stowe pool, the winds Johnson once feared when he saw the fragile beauty of the spring daffodil -- instead of the momentarily enjoyment of finite beauty, one element remains consistent in his early writing, and that is the appreciation of the feminine.

Here we see the development of the saving feminine principle that originates in "On a Daffodill" and culminates in such later prose as "The Vision of Theodore" and "The Fountains," in which all help and aid come from abstract qualities personified in women of various strengths and abilities. Clytaemnestra has demanded justice for the murder of her child in a society in which the father has total control over the fate of his family. Legally she has no right to protect her own children. Legally, as presented in Sophocles' Oedipus, the father can expose new-born infants to the elements or in Aeschylus' Oresteia, he can offer daughters up for sacrifice for political exploits. The father in classical Greece and in eighteenth century England was all-powerful. With Aeschylus as a model, then, Johnson is making wide and important decisions concerning the value of the role of the masculine and feminine in Greek society and in his own world.

However much this reading would solidify Johnson's position as pro-woman, we must also look at the other

possible sources of his Orestes as well before we can be sure of Johnson's sympathy. Another alternative is Euripides's tragedy by the same name. We do know from Boswell that Johnson read Euripides first as a young man at Oxford (52), and as late as 1784, on a day when "he was not well" (Boswell 1306), he "said very little, employing himself chiefly in reading Euripides" (1306). Damrosch explains that such careful attention to Greek tragedy was not the case with many critics during Johnson's life, for "as time went on voices were openly raised against it" (34). Damrosch quotes Cumberland who "expresses shame for his boyish admiration" (35) for classical drama.

And what does this new direction to Euripides matter? If the source of Johnson's attention to Orestes is from Euripides's Electra, what differences would necessarily occur in Johnson's approach to the masculine and the feminine? In Introduction to Classical Drama, Moses Hadas writes that Euripides frequently focused his tragedies about the problems of those who usually have less power or respect. As a consequence,

his plays were not highly regarded by the judges; where Sophocles won the prize in almost every competition, Euripides is credited with only four firsts, and one of these may have been for a revival after his death. Even a masterpiece like the Medea took only a third. . . in his sympathy for all victims of society, including womankind, Euripides is unique not only among the tragic poets but among all the writers of Athens.

(69-9)

Thus, if Johnson's Orestes does come from Euripides, its source is a tragedy by a playwright who finds the murder a heinous crime, and Johnson's connection to women is even stronger, for he prefers repeatedly throughout his life to read a man who, unlike Aeschylus, constantly supports that which is antithetical to the heroic mode.

Damrosch explains that such a sympathetic response to the mother's plight was rare in the eighteenth century. He cites one anonymous reviewer of Sophocles's play in 1759:

"Surely, nothing was ever so calculated to excite horror, as the catastrophe of this tragedy, which is, in all respects, tremendously sublime There is something dreadful in the circumstance of a son's imbruing his hands in the blood of his parent."

(qtd. in Damrosch 33)

Of this critic, Damrosch states, "Whoever this writer was, his open-minded perceptiveness places him in a small minority" (33).

Thus, as a young man, Johnson is among the few in his time who admittedly stress and state the negativity of the emotions that watching characters, such as Clytaemnestra in Greek tragedy, and Ophelia and Desdemona in Renaissance drama, suffer horrifying deaths. Such a youthful Johnson is in keeping with his continued avoidance of witnessing the painful, especially that of women, throughout his life. Hence, the allusion in "Festina Lente" is but one small

instance which is representative of Johnson's positive regard for women and for the feminine in society.

What is the basis of Johnson's veneration of the feminine? Since he has always emphasized the value of observation and experience, it's probable that he found worthy female models early in his personal life. Since we wish to see his attitude toward the mother and father --the child's first experience with the feminine and the masculine -- we can turn yet again to his account of his own life, the Annals, a parallel reading that can enlighten us first as to Johnson's personal experiences and second help us to understand his support of the female in all of his writing, including "Festina Lente."

Just as the Annals has provided us with the attraction of many of the people in Lichfield to the modern scientific employment of male mid-wives, so do these later entries reveal important insights about Johnson and his mother and father, and thus about his view of society and nature. The Annals offers information about Johnson's childhood as well as his interpretations of the events that he recounts. Here we may discover that which Johnson might not have been able consciously to own.

Gross says of Johnson's narrative of his own life:

His autobiographical writing entitled "Annals," surviving in fragments as a kind of stream-of-consciousness narrative, yields a wealth of meaning behind its apparent simplicity. As he recreates

enigmatic scenes from childhood -- ones obscurely remembered or evidently absorbed from descriptions of others -- we detect powerful feelings of fear, shame, love, pain, anger, pride, emerging with all their original strength and clarity. (40)

On the one hand we have the rather complex task of interpreting "the meaning behind . . . [the] apparent simplicity" (40) of his life, but even that undertaking cannot be accomplished in situ. It would be much simpler to look only at his autobiographical material, but if we want to understand the place of the heroic in his life, we must turn to one more source as well, yet another strand in the threads that wove together Johnson's view of the human's place in society -- that of the legendary hero.

According to Lacan, there are at least two psychologies working in the autobiography of any personality. First there is the personal narrative that we find in Johnson's work, and then there are the legends and myths of a society that reflect the prevailing personality of the nation. Lacan believes that we can learn about individuals from what they write about themselves and equally from what people have preserved "in traditions. . . and even in . . . legends which, in a heroicized form, bear [the individual's] history" ("Function and Field as Speech and Language" 50). Thus the story of any individual is both his own autobiography and the "legends" (50) which his society has preserved. Lacan explains that for Europeans both tales and

autobiographies contain a certain heroic tone, and since Orestes is a tragic hero, we might consider society's and Johnson's appreciation of the noble protagonist in fact and fiction.

That English society valued the heroic is clear, especially since wide-spread education of women did not exist in a land that esteemed men and patriarchal control above all. The most highly respected poetry, for example, has been the epic beginning at least with Homer's Odyssey and Virgil's Aeneid in the classical world and continuing with the anonymous Beowulf and the Chanson de Roland in later Europe.

Fussell explains that in the eighteenth century, "everybody read epic" and other types of "military history" to such an extent that the survival of Homer and Virgil "would have been sufficient . . . to keep the image of the siege fully accessible to the eighteenth-century imagination" (142). Thus does Fussell stress part of the influence of the war-images in eighteenth century culture and in Johnson's intellectual development, but Fussell is certainly accurate in the importance of heroic literature.

We find that Johnson was no exception to this intense reading of chivalric life. Boswell, for example, includes Johnson's "translation of part of the Dialogue between Hector and Andromache" (40) and various quotations and discussions of Virgil. Therefore, we would expect Johnson

to praise the hero wherever he appears in epic or tragedy, for, as Damrosch explains, scholars, such as "Dryden saw tragedy and epic as much the same thing" (14) as did "Hobbes in 1650, Kames in 1762, and Cumberland in 1807" (14).

Although Johnson was in exalted company in his enjoyment of the heroic and chivalric in such great works, he also perused less exalted forms. When he advised Hester Thrale as to the kinds of stories suitable for children, he said, "'Babies do not want . . . to hear about babies; they like to be told of giants and castle, and of somewhat which can stretch and stimulate their little minds'" (14). As a child, Johnson was overwhelmed with the ghost scene in Hamlet (Thrale 16), but always he enjoyed adventure stories. Even his least literary reading concerned itself with the heroic code if only in romances. Boswell writes,

Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore, who was long intimately acquainted with him, and has preserved a few anecdotes concerning him, regretting that he was not a more diligent collector, informs me, that 'when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry, and he retained his fondness of them through life; so that (adds his Lordship) spending part of a summer at my parsonage-house in the country, he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance of Felixmarte of Hircania, in folio, which he read quite through. Yet I have heard him attribute to these extravagant fictions that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession. (36)

Gloria Sybil Gross explains that Johnson "read and took great pleasure in romance and adventure tales, such as the Morte d'Arthur, Guy of Warwick, Don Bellianis, and Amadis de

Gaul" (299). Perhaps Eithene Henson in "The Fictions of Romantick Chivalry": Samuel Johnson and Romance does the most thorough job of exploring the full range of Johnson's connection to the romantic by examining both his reading and his writing in terms of romantic setting and characterization.

From all extant records, we find that the old tales of chivalry and narratives of honor enticed and tempted Johnson to spend hours living in worlds where the code was masculine and definite. As Lacan says, we can find out a great deal about individuals by reading the legends of their countries ("Function and Field as Speech and Language" 50), and if we consider the relationship between what we read and how we act, we often find a correlation (Meeker 36-41). It is not surprising, then, that Johnson enjoyed stories of chivalry. Anecdotes of his life affirm his love of romances, the tales of the honor of heroes and the beauty of maidens, but he seems aware of the impracticality of attempting to be a hero within the normal day-to-day life of a middle-class Englishman in the eighteenth century or does he?

On the one hand, Johnson was a masculine part of a society that valued tragedy, the hero, a code of honor, and reason and abstract thought over emotion. That the hero is

worthy of praise his entire society seemed to affirm, and that Johnson attempts to follow suit his poetry seems to imply (See Appendix A).

Let us examine Johnson's place first within his family and then in society. If Johnson is truly in tune with the patriarchal system of domination, he will stress his relationship with his father. In a heroic-patriarchal society, Lacan explains,

It is in the name of the father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law.

("Function and Field of Speech and Language" 67).

That Western society favors the father over the mother is clear in the designated social ordering of names. Until recently, the masculine was the acknowledged link with both family and society, and thus the man's name always appeared first as in Mr. and Mrs. Even the mature Johnson, in Lives of the Poets, follows the same format. In volume two, "Mr. EDMUND SMITH was the only son of an eminent merchant, one Mr. Neale, by a daughter of the famous baron Lechmere" (1). "William King was . . . the son of Ezekiel King, a gentleman" (26). "Joseph Addison was born on the first of May, 1672, at Milston, of which his father, Lancelot Adison, was then rector" (79). Even when he doesn't know the father's name, Johnson lists the father generally in the initial position: "John Hughes, the son of a citizen of

London and of Anne Burgess, of an ancient family in Wiltshire, was born at Marlborough" (159).

Even his poem "Festina Lente" begins with Jove. Therefore, we would expect, when we look at Johnson's writing about his life, to find the father's name quite near the beginning of the text. However, when Samuel Johnson begins his Annals, he provides in the first sentence the time, the place, and then his mother's difficult problems with his birth. Indeed, references to the father do not occur until the third paragraph, and when Michael Johnson does appear, he is in the full patriarchal middle-class pomp and glory so frequently cited by critics:

My Father being that year Sheriff of Lichfield, and to ride the circuit of the County next day, which was a ceremony then performed with great pomp; he was asked by my mother, "Whom he would invite to the Riding?" and answered, "All the town now." He feasted the citizens with uncommon magnificence, and was the last but one that maintained the splendour of the Riding. (3-4)

In his Annals, is Johnson praising the heroic father? When Johnson writes about his father teaching him to swim, he remembers the "mild voice" (Clifford 30). When he talks to Mrs. Thrale, his father becomes a mentally unstable failure:

A very pious and worthy man, but wrong-headed, positive, and afflicted with melancholy, as his son, from whom alone I had the information, once told me . . . Mr. Johnson said, that when his work-shop, a detached building, had fallen half down for want of money to repair it, his father was not less diligent to lock the

door every night, though he saw that any body might walk in at the back part, and knew that there was no security obtained by barring the front door. "This (says his son) was madness, you may see, and would have been discoverable in other instances of the prevalence of imagination, but that poverty prevented it from playing such tricks as riches and leisure encourage.
(6)

It's not surprising that Sarah Johnson was concerned about finances, and if Michael Johnson, full of "melancholy" (Thrale 6), would not speak about the bare necessities of livelihood, then her frustrations must have been great. The conflict, of course, affected the son. Gross believes that because of the unhappiness between his parents, Johnson developed a negative response to anyone with the power to dominate:

Here is the salient feature of his intrapsychic life, expressed in the quick resentment and easy provocation we recognize as characteristically Johnsonian. Of this archaic impression of being victimized by figures in authority, Freud writes: "People who harbour phantasies of this kind develop a special sensitiveness and irritability toward anyone whom they can put among the class of fathers. They allow themselves to be easily offended by a person of this kind." (41-2)

If we consider these domestic problems in light of Freud's interpretation of masculine personalities, then logically Johnson, who is not very positive directly or indirectly about his father, would respond with distance, if not disdain, toward Jove, the father figure, in "Festina Lente." If society demands that the father support the family and refuses to provide the means by which the mother

can easily assume such responsibility when the man cannot fulfill cultural expectations, then a father who has heroic tendencies but cannot pay the bills must be a failure, and for all that Johnson sees positive qualities in Michael Johnson, he had to acknowledge his father's weaknesses.

However, whether or not Sarah or Michael Johnson was the better parent is not a value judgement that I wish to make. As Bowers says, "Whether Sarah Johnson was a good mother . . . can hardly be decided at this date" (138). How can we ascertain who is to be blamed or praised for certain qualities within Samuel Johnson? The questions at this point are first how did Johnson understand his relationship with his parents and second how did such perceptions affect the masculine and feminine constructs of his intellectual world? In spite of his public support of the masculine patriarchy, is there anything in the Annals that helps us account for his loving attention to Clytaemnestra and his lack of concern for Saturn, the deposed god, in "Festina Lente"?

We know from Shepard that the historical-scientific way of seeing the world often creates a culture in which "masculine and feminine seem to be opposing" (57). Certainly many modern critics encourage unnecessary arguments instead of contributing to a common pool of information about writers and texts. Certainly in his conversations concerning women and nature, Johnson frequently stooped to

the either-or fallacy, a simplification that made winning an argument an easier task.

However, just as his early poems imply a strong connection with the feminine, so does his Annals reveal a concern and admiration for the female specifically and indirectly a connection with the natural world. The conflict within Johnson that multiple critics have noted arises not from the mother-hate so clearly defined by Irwin but from the institutions which governed the parents as harshly as Hunter chastised the boys he taught (Boswell 33).

Johnson's early life is peopled primarily by his father and his mother. No doubt Michael Johnson was attempting with all his might to be the successful provider of his family as dictated by society. No doubt he was imbued with all the desire to be the heroic model within his family and his town. Is this the man to whom Johnson looked when he daydreamed about chivalric deeds? And what then of his mother? Is she the damsel in distress or the ogre too often painted by twentieth century biographers? Can we find a viable and positive role for women in Johnson's life and work? According to Henson, in Johnson's work we must lament the absence of any females who act as heroes:

This pervasive romance imagery, functioning at many different levels in Johnson's writing -- whether deeply buried in Latin etymology or externalized as Spenserian allegory -- clearly expresses significant truths about his perception of the human condition. It is a perception that seems to exclude women; the solitary

adventurer, journeying through a dangerous landscape of deserts, labyrinthine forests, gulfs, and precipices, encountering multitudes of assailants, phantoms, enchanted castles, and seductive enchantresses, must, in eighteenth-century terms, be male. Chivalric, or even quixotic, metaphor is rare in the many periodical articles that concern women, including the movingly dramatized presentations of women in real distress; and there are no Britomarts among Johnson's knights. (226)

However, we know that Johnson was intrigued by the Amazon, for in his dictionary he often cites both Sidney and Spenser. For example, after defining womanish as "suitable to a woman," he includes a quotation from Arcadia taken from the section in which Musidorus responds to Pyrocles's attempt to get close to a woman by donning the attire of an Amazon. Johnson's quotation cites Pyrocles who says, "Neither doubt you, because I wear a woman's apparel, I will be the more womanish."

Similarly, when Johnson defines womankind, he adds a quotation from the same source, "Musidorus had over bitterly glanced against the reputation of womankind." In the same manner, Johnson defines to womanise as "to emasculate; to effeminate; to soften," and the illustration is again from The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, this time from Musidorus's invective against women: "This effeminate love of a woman," he tells Pyrocles, "doth womanise a man." The section from which the citation is taken reviles women to a greater degree. Pyrocles may become "a launder, a distaff spinner, or whatsoever other vile occupation their idle

heads can imagine and their weak hands perform" (327). However, the point of the narrative is that right love strengthens both men and women in times of distress, and in Renaissance literature, such as the Faerie Queen, women warriors abound.

If we expect to find the heroic in Johnson's autobiography, can we discover it in the depressed Michael Johnson? If the father is not the hero of his boyhood years, who is? Let us consider Sarah Johnson. In The Female Hero in American and British Literature, Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope assert that

any author who chooses a woman as the central character in the story understands at some level that women are primary beings, and that they are not ultimately defined according to patriarchal assumptions. (12)

Perhaps we have found the heroic woman in Sarah Johnson, for she appears much more frequently in Johnson's work and speech than does his father. Since we have so much documentation of Johnson's love of the romantic and since women prove so important in his writing of all types, perhaps Johnson's portrait of his mother in the Annals is really that of what Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope call "the female hero." Interestingly enough Pearson and Pope include one major reference to Johnson in their discussion of Evelina (1778):

It is no accident that this work, which fundamentally reinforces female submissiveness, was hailed by such illustrious chauvinists as Dr. Samuel Johnson as a praiseworthy novel. White upper-class male reviewers, publishers, and critics, themselves conditioned by traditional sex roles, assume that literary works that teach women the traditional female role are meritorious. (180)

What is ironic is that Pearson and Pope seem unaware that one of the earliest designations of the term "female hero" is itself in Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language. Johnson defines hero as "a man eminent for bravery" and as "a man of the highest class in any respect; as, a hero in learning." Similarly, he defines two words relevant to the feminine counterpart: a heroess, an archaic term, is "a heroine; a female hero," and heroine is "a female hero."

Thus, in such definitions, Johnson equalizes the two terms. The only difference lies in the physical gender and not in emotional or intellectual attributes. Physical strength, that one differentiation that Johnson makes between men and women, is not a part of either definition.

Therefore, a woman can be a hero, and if we read the Annals carefully, we can discover that Sarah Johnson's life includes many elements of the heroic. On the one hand, she does not attempt the knight errantry of the Red Cross Knight, but on the other, she does represent the pattern of female hero, "increasingly hopeful, sloughing off the victim role to reveal . . . [her] true, powerful, and heroic identif[y]" (Pearson and Pope 13).

While many of the qualities of the hero as cited by Pearson and Pope seem to fit much of Sarah Johnson's personality -- "courage, skill, and independence" (8) -- her manner in playing out these characteristics is not the direct, forthright attack so cherished by such masculine heroes as Beowulf as he grasps the arm of Grendel or even the physical prowess exhibited by Britomart. Rather Sarah Johnson is more like the Quixotic or more specifically the comic hero that Robert M. Torrance describes in The Comic Hero.

This kind of heroic model was immensely popular in the eighteenth century. Henson explains the role of "the mock-heroic version of romance" (12) during Johnson's lifetime:

The influence of Cervantes on eighteenth-century writers has been very fully explored, and in studies of the development of the Quixote figure from the buffoon of the seventeenth century to the martyr of the mid-eighteenth Johnson is often noted as the first writer to speak of him with pity. (72)

Henson finds Quixotic characters throughout Johnson's work as well, including the lives of Collins and Savage (65-6), but it is in Sarah Johnson's story that I believe that the truly comic-hero exists and successfully routes all foes. What, we might ask, is the value of such a position? How does the comic-hero act as a link between women and nature, domination and submission?

On the surface, this topic may seem far removed from the discussion of women and nature, but just as our public functions and traditions mark what is important in our lives, so does the literature that we read, write, and imitate tell what we understand about the structure of our society (Meeker 51-63). Joseph W. Meeker in The Comedy of Survival explains that the choice between the reading, creating, and living out of the heroic or the comic position has had and continues to have serious repercussions for people and for the natural world as well. Meeker traces the role of the comic character throughout several types of literature, but he focuses on the comedy and the tragedy in which the two polarized positions are more apparent. Meeker believes that an emphasis upon tragedy and the heroic mode in Western thought has ended with a conflict between comedy-survival and death-honor. Survival, he explains, is a biological necessity (41), and honor is a patriarchal construction:

Comedy demonstrates that humans are durable, although they may be weak, stupid, and undignified. As the tragic hero suffers or dies for ideals, the comic hero survives without them. (39)

Such an assertion means that at the end of tragedies, such as Aeschylus's Oresteia, plays that usually involve the need for control -- Eisler's "dominator model" considered in a

literary construct -- the stage is steeped in blood, including that of the innocent as well as the guilty (Meeker 68-75).

A censure of this element of tragedy occurs specifically in Johnson's later literary criticism, for he frequently laments the undeserved suffering of worthy characters, usually women, such as Ophelia and Cordelia. In his notes on Hamlet, for example, Johnson describes Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia as "so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty" (1011) and ends the discussion in praise "of Ophelia, the young, the beautiful, the harmless, and the pious" (1011).

Similarly, Johnson favors the feminine in his notes on King Lear. Concerning the conflict among contemporary critics as to whether or not Cordelia should live or die, Johnson cites the advantages of both positions, but he concludes,

If my sensations could add any thing to the general suffrage, I might relate, that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor. (704)

One great reward of the comedy is that justice is often more evenly meted out. In comedies, people live, and even if domination reasserts itself by the end of the drama, often there is a marriage signaling the fertility of new families and life to come.

And what of Johnson's parents? Although, with all her pride in the worldly success and wealth of her family, Sarah Johnson seems to support the patriarchal system as it exists, Johnson shows us that indeed she is, in her own drama, a comic hero, dissembling, shrewd, and above all, successful and alive at the ends of all her exploits except old-age.

Sarah Johnson's plight as a hero of any type is not an obvious one. Pearson and Pope explain the basic assumptions that have traditionally been applied to the hero:

Our understanding of the basic spiritual and psychological archetype of human life has been limited, however, by the assumption that the hero and central character of the myth is male. The hero is almost always assumed to be white and upper class as well. The journey of the upper-class white male -- a socially, politically, and economically powerful subgroup of the human race -- is identified as the generic type for the normal human condition; and other members of society -- racial minorities, the poor, and women -- are seen as secondary characters, important only as obstacles, aids, or rewards in his journey. (4)

Sarah Johnson, of course, fits none of these, and as a consequence, she should appear as "secondary" (4). In the first few sentences of his Annals Johnson shows the conflict between the scientific, dominator model and the more organic earth-centered partnership. That her family seems modern in its approach to life, we know from the first part of the Annals when the attraction to science removed the birth of the child from the traditional sphere of the women.

However, Johnson records that his mother had to be convinced of the necessity of the second innovation -- that of putting him into the care of a wet-nurse. In the Annals, Johnson writes, "I was, by my father's persuasion, put to one Marclew, commonly called Bellison, the servant, or wife of a servant of my father, to be nursed in George Lane" (4). A cursory reading would find nothing heroic, comic or otherwise, in these words. However, the battleground of the women of the eighteenth century was not on the field of honor but in the bedrooms and living rooms of their own homes, places where few Johnsonian critics have elected to enter. Johnsonian biographer John Wain's rephrasing of this passage, for example, is intriguing:

Michael Johnson, twelve years his wife's senior and a man accustomed to taking charge of practical matters, gave instructions for the child's nursing. He was to go to a foster-mother to draw the nourishment in which Sarah was deficient. (18)

How did Wain discover the unfortunate state of Sarah Johnson's nursing abilities? Of course, since she was an older woman who had had a dangerous delivery, for whatever reason the danger existed, it is entirely possible that she did have difficulty nursing. Similarly, Bate writes that

Eager that the frail baby should be as well nourished as possible, Michael urged that they employ a strong and healthy wet nurse. Sarah, who may have doubted her own ability to nurse the child adequately, agreed. (6)

Actually from the text, we don't know that the danger of the delivery was due to Sarah's age, although such may have been the case. She was older still when Nathaniel was born, and yet we have nothing about his birth or her difficulties, although perhaps such information was in the material that Johnson burned before his death.

However, from what we do have, in opposition to both twentieth century biographers, we don't know that Sarah Johnson was unable to nurse her child or that she even wanted him taken away. It seems odd that if the mother could not supply the milk, that persuasion by her husband was necessary. If there was no milk, then there would have been no choice, and the statement would have read -- Out of necessity, I was put . . . Then to safe-guard her son, she would have been willing to part with him.

Since we have no recorded statement of the need to remove the child, we might consider other possible reasons for Michael Johnson's desire for the wet-nurse. In "The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England," Patricia Crawford explains that in the early 17th century women were encouraged by men and women alike to nurse their own children. People, such as "John Dod and Robert Cleaver in 1606" believed that "a mother should breastfeed her child herself because 'this is so naturall a thing that even the beasts will not omit it'" (Crawford 11). In "Critical Complicities: Savage Mothers,

Johnson's Mother, and the Containment of Maternal Difference," Toni O'Shaughnessy Bowers says that "[p]erhaps the single most important touchstone by which maternal virtue was measured in the first half of the eighteenth century was maternal breastfeeding" (119).

One reason, however, for preferring the wet-nurse over the mother was social. Bowers quotes "Richard Allestree (whose 1673 Whole Duty of a Woman was one of the most influential conduct books of the period)" (118). Allestree maintained that

Whether or not a mother breastfeeds shows whether she retains the "Affection and Tenderness" "implanted" by "Nature" or is among the vitiated upper-class women who fail to breastfeed their own children because of a vain belief in their own "State and Greatness." "No other motive," Allestree is sure, could "so universally" prevent noble women from following "the impulses of Nature." (119)

Thus, women of the upper class often had wet-nurses, so that a man with social aspirations, as Michael Johnson appears to have had, as evidenced by his political experiences, might think that such a practice would elevate his standing in the community. Crawford explains that "In some wealthier families, a wet nurse was employed [and] that the practice of wet nursing was increasing during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries" (24), the very time of Johnson's birth. Bowers, citing Fildes as well, believes "that Sarah herself wanted very much to breastfeed the baby,

and like a real-life Pamela was overridden in her desire by her husband" (144).

We can, however, look for other reasons for parents making choices in child care. One fact in favor of mothers nursing their own children was birth control. Women who nursed did not become pregnant as rapidly as those who did not. In "Wet Nursing and Child Care in Aldenham, Hertfordshire, 1595-1726: Some Evidence on the Circumstances and Effects of Seventeenth-Century Child Rearing Practices," Fiona Newall explains that "low, but not artificially controlled, marital fertility rates" came about (122-3) because "'mothers in England . . . suckled their infants for between 15 and 18 months'" (122-3).

Since a nursing mother, for either of the above reasons, did not get pregnant as rapidly, perhaps Michael Johnson wanted other children, especially since this first son was doubtful in health and his wife was growing older. Thus, he argued for the wet-nurse idea. If either of these reasons contributed to his decision, he was putting the welfare of his living son beneath the desire for social acceptance and/or additional children.

No matter the reason, the result of his decision is the removal of the child from his natural mother after her removal from a woman-centered birthing experience. Apparently, Michael Johnson controlled his household with a firm hand. However, this life again is not what it appears,

and Samuel Johnson provides in his own autobiography part of the story of Sarah Johnson. If Johnson professed throughout his life his support for the patriarchal system, in his autobiographical writing he favors, not the man attempting heroic control, but the woman fighting for the survival of her son. What we have is the choice between the hero, that creature that Johnson had so admired in his tales of chivalry, and the comic-hero, that other kind of creature that hopes to survive (Meeker 46-7).

Sarah Johnson is the comic-hero. That her husband is in control is, on the surface, clear; that she refuses to remain within all the boundaries that he has set is less obvious. When multiple social systems attempt to control Sarah Johnson's natural responses to her son, she goes underground to insure his survival. When her son is put out to wet-nurse, she does not stay home, imprisoned by the attitudes of her time. She may have agreed to the separation, but she does everything that she can to mediate it, and like the hero, she sets out daily on her quest, facing opposition at every turn. Johnson writes,

My mother visited me every day, and used to go different ways, that her assiduity might not expose her to ridicule; and often left her fan or her glove behind her, that she might have a pretence to come back. (5)

Like Quixote, whose adventures were often greeted with mirth by the spectators, Sarah Johnson faced the snickering of the

people in Lichfield, but even the gangling knight has been more kindly treated by most twentieth century critics.

Just as we have witnessed the general lack of approbation with which many have reacted to Sarah Johnson, in interpretations of specific passages within Johnson's work, we find even more perplexing readings. Bate, for example, writes of the mother's continued visits to her son:

Meanwhile, despite a reasonable confidence that the baby in a few weeks would return home in healthy condition, his mother could not refrain from visiting him daily in order to be sure that there was no neglect, however small. So at least she said, probably not wishing to confess that it was simply fondness drawing her. It may tell us more about Sarah than her neighbors that she was afraid that these daily visits would expose her to ridicule. . . And, lest Mrs. Marklew think her foolish, she would often, said Johnson, leave "her fan or glove behind her." (6-7)

Perhaps the above selection says more about Bate than about Sarah Johnson. Did he expect her to wait patiently for "a few weeks" for the child to "return home in healthy condition"? What new parents are content to allow such a distance without necessity? Indeed, Bowers, like Cafarelli, notes the hostility of "twentieth-century critics" (134) toward the women in Johnson's life. Of the material on motherhood, Bowers writes that

Twentieth-century critics have felt less obligated than Boswell did to take note of Johnson's remarks in praise of his mother; they have also had access to the Annals. As a result recent biographers have presented an even less positive portrait of Sarah Johnson as a mother. (134)

Bowers examines the attitudes of several critics and ends with Irwin, who "does not mention that Sarah was 'unable' to breastfeed her baby because Michael did not allow it" (134).

If we look again at Bate's response, we see a similar attitude -- "It may tell us more about Sarah than her neighbors that she was afraid these daily visits would expose her to ridicule" (6). That Sarah Johnson fears ridicule explains a great deal about the people who were about her. Bate seems to believe that, since rationally and reasonably she could expect her son to be returned to her safe, then she doesn't need to see the child daily.

The natural, organic view would assume that a new mother, if not the new father, would be exceedingly and realistically fond of the child, desiring to keep the infant nearby and safe. That the neighbors would find Sarah Johnson foolish in her love of the child speaks of a society that is losing its warmth and sympathy for other creatures, perhaps as a result of the increasing stress on objectivity and distance so necessary to the intellectual, upper-class male. What is intriguing is that such conditions foster the need for the woman-mother, in this case Sarah Johnson, to find ways to be successful in a society that all too often finds women laughable. It is not the heroic mode that these women frequently attempt. By necessity, it is the comic, for that is the mode of survival.

In his discussion of the comic hero, Meeker explains that "organisms and comic heroes change their structure or behavior only in order to preserve an accustomed way of life which has been threatened by changes in the environment" (45). When the baby is removed, Sarah Johnson has had her home uprooted, and she changes to fit the times. She finds ways of overcoming the distance between her and her child. Meeker makes connections to biological changes:

Whatever may threaten the continuity of life itself is considered by evolution to be expendable and subject to modification, whether it be gills or social rituals. To evolution and to comedy, nothing is sacred but life. (46)

Sarah Johnson's determination is that her son will have proper care and thus live, and she employs subterfuge to assure his safety.

Ironically, the result of the separation in the Johnson's case is not what the father expected. Just as Shandy has a child with a broken nose thanks to the new science of male-midwifery, Michael Johnson has a son, not healthy, but ill with "the scrofulous sores" (Annals 5) that afflicted the baby's body and sight. Samuel Johnson tells us, "In ten weeks I was taken home a poor, diseased infant, almost blind" (5). What we learn, then, that as in the preference for the scientific birth, the movement in child-care among middle-class families seemed to be away from that

which had been perceived as natural and maternal toward that which was controlled and masculine, and in Johnson's case, the child suffers.

The documents contain nothing about what the father says, either about his wife's actions or about his son's problems, but as Samuel Johnson grows older, the mother takes on yet another level of the comic hero: she goes against what must have been her professed religious beliefs. When Samuel Johnson was three, he suffered greatly from "the scrofulous sores . . . from the bad humours of the nurse" (5). He writes, "I was taken to London, to be touched for the evil by Queen Anne" (8). This event doesn't sound likely for the scientifically based Johnson family living in the Protestant town of Lichfield, but the fact that the mother, a woman, goes to the queen, another woman, for help is suggestive of a fitting connection between those who would help the suffering.

Medicine must have failed the family at this point, and so someone, evidently Sarah Johnson, turned to folk cures. The idea of divine healing by royalty was almost as old as the Green Bower in Lichfield's spring's festivals, so the belief system that had been in force in the family was replaced by a yet more ancient tradition. Boswell writes that Johnson's "mother yield[ed] to the superstitious notion, which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this country, as to the virtue of the regal touch . . .

This touch, however, was without any effect" (32). Boswell says to Johnson, "In allusion to the political principles in which he was educated, and of which he ever retained some odour, that 'his mother had not carried him far enough; she should have taken him to Rome" (32).

And yet, the Protestant Johnson commends her piety, and it is with her aid that he learns "first . . . of a future state" (Annals 10). And yet she has gone against established religion, but perhaps because of her love of him, Johnson finds nothing to criticize in this behavior. Meeker writes that for the comic hero "All beliefs are provisional, subject to change when they fail to produce harmonious consequences. Life itself is the most important force there is: The proper study of mankind is survival" (48). From what we can see of Sarah Johnson in the text, in reality she did what she could to keep her child alive.

In Johnson's account, Sarah Johnson has another difficulty in the way of her pilgrimage to London. Johnson explains that "My mother, then with child, concealed her pregnancy, that she might not be hindered from the journey" (8). In such a condition, Sarah Johnson must have been determined to provide any available help for her sick child. We might ask where Michael Johnson was during this period. Perhaps the whole event was against his "belief system" as well (Meeker 48). Perhaps he believed, as did other men of this period, that children were the responsibility of the

mother until they were seven (Crawford 13). For whatever reason, the pregnant Sarah Johnson goes alone with her small son in a carriage to London.

Not only does she accomplish the trip alone, but she again employs deceit to make her quest, her journey possible. Torrance says that the comic hero "is the paragon of multiplicity and craft" (15), and Sarah Johnson seems no stranger to such deeds. She has created false reasons for visiting her infant son, and now she must put on a kind of disguise to pretend to be that which she is not. Social mores dictate that a woman who is pregnant should stay home, but like the comic hero, Rosalind in A You Like It and many other women throughout literary and actual history, Sarah Johnson maintains a kind of masquerade dissemblance, in her case to find a cure for her son as she hides her shameful pregnant condition.

The results of Sarah's journey are important. Although the touch doesn't cure Samuel Johnson, unlike the ministrations of the wet-nurse, the father's choice, the Queen's hand, the mother's provision, doesn't injure him either. Again we must stress the result of feminine action. According to Pearson and Pope,

The female hero's powerless position in patriarchal society and her freedom from the negative effects of

male socialization may cause her to be more realistic and less destructive than her male counterparts. (10)

Such seems the case in Samuel Johnson's home.

Johnson reveals yet a third way that Sarah Johnson works against established systems to safeguard her child during the stay in London. She is a woman on a quest for supernatural aid for an ill son, a serious and an important mission. Sarah Johnson has overcome Protestant opposition to the nature of her quest, societal mores concerning the pregnant woman exhibiting herself in public, and finally even the legal system that comes under her scrutiny.

Johnson writes,

She bought me a small silver cup and spoon, marked Sam. J. lest if they had been marked S.J. which was her name, they should, upon her death, have been taken from me. She bought me a speckled linen frock, which I knew afterwards by the name of my London frock. The cup was one of the last pieces of plate which dear Tetty sold in our distress. I have now the spoon. She bought at the same time two teaspoons, and till my manhood she had no more. (10)

In the first case, Sarah Johnson was, according to her son, a frugal woman, but he explains to Hester Thrale that "he should never have so loved his mother when a man, had she not given him coffee she could ill afford, to gratify his appetite when a boy" (17), so to him, she expressed a loving desire to share even more than she possessed.

In this situation, Sarah Johnson resembles the comic hero. If, for example, we look at Henson's discussion of

Don Quixote, comic hero extraordinaire, we can see similarities to Sarah Johnson. Henson writes,

The mock-chivalric discourse in Don Quixote, which does question the code of chivalry, is itself subverted. Quixote, a central questing figure motivated by the radical altruism of chivalry -- that is, prepared to attack all kinds of entrenched power to redress the wrongs of the powerless -- moves through an alien and unpredictable world at the mercy of chance. (112)

Who is more "powerless" than a child? What hero was more understanding of those in need than Quixote? Henson cites Samuel Johnson's response to this unforgettable knight: "Quixote's 'generous mind' and his sense and virtue' are as significant as his delusions in Johnson's perception and use of the figure" (73). Henson notes Johnson's later description of Quixote in the Life of Butler:

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote that, however he embarrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem; wherever he is or whatever he does, he is made by matchless dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible. (210)

Johnson does no less for his mother. She may have been on what must have seemed to most of the people who knew of it a hopeless and useless mission, but it is from goodness and love that she goes. Similarly, in the middle of a strange pilgrimage, she shows her intelligence by assuring that English laws will not take from her son that which she wishes him to have, for what belongs to a wife really is her

husband's property, and thus, to make sure that no one -- who else but her husband or his creditors -- would remove anything from her child's possession if she died, she has the gift monogrammed so that the items are legally his. Like the comic hero Don Quixote, she is a combination of the ridiculous and the intelligent, i.e. a human. Since she is only a woman, her primary recourse is to the comic if she wishes to live. The heroic, as Meeker tells us, usually ends in death -- albeit it with some kind of honor, usually couched in patriarchal abstractions (38).

However, in the eighteenth century, death for women seldom came from military encounters, although some women in disguise did fight in wars, but Sarah Johnson has no connection with that kind of combat. Since she is pregnant, she is preparing for a not-too-distant struggle of her own, the birth of her second child, and her thoughts, as of any person facing possible death, are real and immediate. Crawford explains that

Many women approached childbirth with fear. The words of the preachers, that women should expect and prepare for death were not encouraging . . . Although Schofield has argued that, in fact, maternal mortality rates were not very high, a 6 to 7 per cent risk of dying in childbed, no pregnant woman could be sure that she would be among the fortunate survivors. (22)

Since Sarah Johnson had had such a difficult time with the birth of her first child, it's not surprising that with a sick child at her hand and another waiting to be born, she

should be concerned both about her own death and her children's survival, and thus she provides a gift that could, and was, sold for money during times of financial distress. Thus, in all the anecdotes that Johnson provides, it is Sarah Johnson who acts heroically, although happily in a comic way.

What finally do the Annals tell us about the adults in Samuel Johnson's early life? First of all his father was a relatively strict man, intent on having his own way, concerned about public opinion as his celebration feast implies. He was a man who separated his wife from other women during her first delivery, gave his child over to a dangerously contagious wet nurse, absented himself on most of the major occasions of his life that Samuel Johnson records, and even "discourage[d] . . . [Johnson's] mother from keeping company with the neighbours, and from paying visits or receiving them" (Annals 10) because he "considered tea as very expensive" (10). Sarah Johnson "lived to say, many years after, that, if the time were to pass again, she would not comply with such unsocial injunctions" (10).

According to Boswell, Michael Johnson, his son said, "was a foolish old man; that is to say, foolish in talking of his children" (31) when they supposedly did anything that could earn public praise, such as the lyric that Samuel Johnson was supposedly written upon "good master duck" (Boswell 30). In the Annals Johnson records a complaint

that the father made when he went to bring his son home from school: "He told the ostler, that he had twelve miles home, and two boys under his care" (20). Other than for a few references, such as the swimming experience, Samuel Johnson makes little direct connection between himself and his father except to fear inheriting his father's mental problems. It is the negative of his father he wishes to escape.

On the other hand, throughout Johnson's early life, it is his mother who worked hard to keep him alive. Like the comic hero, she did whatever she deemed necessary to the survival of her children and to their development as they grow older. In fact, according to Thrall, Johnson said of his mother:

She was slight in her person, . . . and rather below than above the common size. So excellent was her character, and so blameless her life, that when an oppressive neighbour once endeavoured to take from her a little field she possessed, he could persuade no attorney to undertake the cause of a woman so beloved in her narrow circle. (9).

The "father Michael died of an inflammatory fever, at the age of seventy-six, . . . their mother at eighty-nine, of a gradual decay" (8). Meeker says that "the lesson of comedy is humility and endurance" (49), and Sarah Johnson certainly endures. Apparently she injures little with which she comes

into contact, and her nurturing influence is at the base of what Johnson feels when he refuses to excuse Orestes's behavior in "Festina Lente."

In this poem Johnson emphasizes instead the need for humans to "adapt" (Meeker 49). He supports the mother instead of the father. The surface text praises reason, but the sub-text celebrates the emotional concern a mother feels for her child. Thus, it is not surprising that in "Festina Lente" one small example of rashness paradoxically becomes Orestes's unfortunate decision to kill his mother. From personal experience Samuel Johnson has learned that it is the feminine principle that keeps life moving, if not always happy, but on no deliberately conscious level can he acknowledge that it is the heroic masculine system of which he must of physical necessity be a part that brings despair and death.

As he grew older, however, he began to acknowledge more directly the joy that occurs in the private sector of life. The younger Johnson loved adventures and tales of chivalry and throughout his life, he did enjoy such reading. As an older man, according to Boswell, Johnson did effect a change. Johnson said of the classics,

I do not think the story of the Aeneid interesting. I like the story of the Odyssey much better; and this not on account of the wonderful things which it contains; for there are wonderful things enough in the Aeneid; --
 . . . The story of the Odyssey is interesting, as a great part of it is domestick. (1234)

Boswell, in the "Advertisement to the Second Edition," compares Samuel Johnson to Odysseus and praises him for similar "virtus" and "sapientia" (The Life 7).

Damrosch explains that "Unlike the earlier Augustans, who reproached themselves for not being heroes, Johnson constantly reminds us that heroes are only men" (94). In application to tragedy, Damrosch writes that "By 'domestic tragedy' he does not mean simply the tragedy of insignificant people" (94) but what he "is really saying [is] that all men, great or small, feel emotion equally in their 'domestic' life, and if anything he is attempting to raise littleness, not to belittle greatness" (95).

However, I think that domestick in Johnson's sense has another meaning when applied to the epic. In The Dictionary he defines the term first as "belonging to the house; not relating to things publick" and second as "private; done at home." Although Johnson does not elaborate on this point concerning the domestick in the Aeneid, and even though the raising of all people to equal terms is important, when we look at the comic instead of the traditional hero, we may find that Odysseus is more in keeping with what Johnson seems to have viewed as reality. Torrance's reading of the epic is in accordance with the way that Johnson has portrayed his mother:

Odysseus is a different sort of hero . . . His endless deceptions and ingenious fabrications . . . are both

creative acts of an inexhaustibly fertile imagination responding with exuberant vitality to the unforeseeable challenges of life and hard-headed stratagems for survival in an insidious world where the superhuman strength and courage of Achilles or Ajax no longer suffice. (16)

Like Odysseus, Sarah Johnson has found her methods of staying alive, and her son has recorded these comic-heroic acts in the Annals. In "Festina Lente," he has condemned Orestes and society; he has venerated what Western society has seen as the feminine presence in human nature. Although he attempts heroically in this poem to control those emotional outbursts that could hinder his climb down a mountain, that "rubbish of creation" (Jacques 30), he cannot leave the feminine behind, that "supplicating mother's heart" (l. 14).

If, indeed, Johnson does sense the great advantages that his mother has gleaned for him, why is he in such conflict concerning his relationship to her? Critics cite again and again the long absences from his mother over a twenty year span. Indeed today such material has become the basis of the Freudian interpretation of Johnson's relationship to his parents. Gross provides us with one such example:

Though he did not suffer from a lack of love, he was oppressed by a clumsy directed love, the victim of his father's irregular attentions, now doting, now aloof, and his mother's overprotective, fretful anxiety. (12)

George Irwin, in his book, Samuel Johnson: A Personality in Conflict, believes that Johnson's dislike of his mother created emotional disturbances because "to hate the person whom one has from the first moments of reason been taught to honour . . . [is] so repellent that mother-hate is usually repressed before it impinges upon conscious mind" (50).

Is such a portrait, however, the real picture that Johnson presents of his mother? Anecdotal records provided by Hester Thrale on this subject give us additional insight into Johnson's early life. He said to Thrale,

"Poor people's children, dear Lady (said he), never respect them; I did not respect my own mother, though I loved her: and one day, when in anger she called me a puppy, I asked her if she knew what they called a puppy's mother." (21)

But does Johnson hate his mother? Irwin's interpretation of the famous puppy passage is particularly troubling. When he writes that Johnson admits to being a sullen child who "had . . . learnt to answer back" (23), Irwin provides the following example given to Thrale: "'One day, when in anger she called me a puppy,' he said, 'I asked her if she knew what they called a puppy's mother'" (24). What is missing here? Irwin has omitted the first few words of the episode which includes the motive for Johnson's acknowledged disrespect for his mother -- "'Poor people's children, dear Lady (said he), never respect them; I did not

respect my own mother . . ." (21). Therefore, when Irwin states that Johnson was taught to honor his mother, the critic is refuting Johnson's own testimony that he has not been taught respect for Sarah Johnson.

The system in which Johnson and his family lived did not encourage veneration for the poor or the female. The conflict in Johnson as to whether to love and/or respect his mother is in many ways directed by the power of the patriarchal system in which they both lived. By nature, he must love his mother, and he does because all her actions are centered in deep affection for him. However, how can he respect that which society demeans, poor people and women, and yet be the hero of a patriarchal society?

If we look to Toni O'Shaughnessy Bowers's essay, we find a more complex study of Johnson and his concept of motherhood. Bowers believes that Sarah Johnson is an example of the nurturing provided by the best of mothers. The good mother loves emotionally and provides materially for her child (127). However, society makes this desire difficult. Sarah Johnson is caught in a system that legally, economically, and socially inhibits the power of the woman either to earn or to control money.

This condition is but one more step away from the unification of humans in the natural world. Money represents a removal from the direct goods derived from human interaction with the environment. Thus we can see

Johnson's mother as another victim of the objectification of nature, the pulling away from the environment, the direction of life toward the abstract and intellectual which Fernand Braudel details in The Wheels of Commerce. He explains that the early economic development of European countries, fairs and exchanges, provided a direct way for people selling that which they had grown and/or made (81-92), but specialized crafts and "the middleman" (64) created a monied economy that centered worth in currency. Thus a mother, who has neither trade, craft, nor liquid assets is devalued as is the businessman, like Michael Johnson, who fails in his economic endeavors and is remembered primarily as Samuel Johnson's father. In The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth Century England, John Feather provides examples of booksellers in the English countryside and asserts that "the best known, for purely extraneous reasons, is Michael Johnson of Lichfield" (13).

Not only is the Johnson family torn by a painful silence by two people who cannot communicate with each other, but the household is financially unsound. Clifford details Michael Johnson's economic straits -- his "trouble . . . over taxes" (71), his problems with the tannery (71) - and concludes that "the fact that Sam never liked to talk about his early family life is a sign that these years had left scars" (74).

Just as Samuel Johnson was born at a time when society turned away from the organic view of nature and toward the scientific view of the environment, so did he witness the transformation of land as central to existence itself into money as the medium of any purchase. Once owning or working the land meant life and trade for essentials. Land became the tangible asset translated in terms of coins that it could produce. In essence, land grew money. Johnson is a part of a country which, in the eighteenth century will find London "an important national and international market" (Rude, Hanoverian London 25) and "until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, . . . the world's leading financial centre" (33).

Thus Johnson is forced, by a patriarchal society and an unhappy marriage that encourages his father to spend a great deal of time away from home, to grow up under the protection of a woman who is regarded, because of her gender, as not worthy of education or interesting conversation. That she is brave and loving is not particularly in her favor because of her low social status, but these admirable qualities cause Johnson to identify with and love her. Thus, he loves what he cannot respect, and when he doesn't respect her, he cannot respect himself. At the heart of the problem is money. "'Poor people's children,'" he says to Hester Thrale, "'never respect them'" (21), and this is precisely the point of the anecdote that Irwin fails to note.

This monied economy is part of the conflict within Johnson. He senses and sees the dismal effects of the patriarchal system as well as its spectacular successes. He remembers both the protection of his mother and looks forward to his expected place in the future as a man in society at which time he must forgo those qualities that his society has classified as feminine. Thus he is torn between the two.

What is ironic is that it is first Sarah's money and then his wife's that gain for Johnson much of his early livelihood. Bowers reminds us that Sarah Johnson's "independent fortune" (128) provided Samuel Johnson with his Oxford experience and that throughout her life, her financial support was constant:

Sarah maintained the family bookshop in Lichfield for many years after her husband's death, during a period when her son was himself for months at a time without any earned income. According to Bate, in 1740 the seventy-year-old Sarah mortgaged her house in Lichfield in order to provide economic assistance to her impecunious son. . . (128)

The conflict in Johnson's attitude toward mothers, then, is not the lack of love that he had as a child and as an adult. It is that the society in which he lives says that it is the man who makes money and cares for the family while Johnson's personal experience tells him that without women he could not have survived physically, emotionally, or financially.

What is sad is that such conflicts based on a world view that divides creation into the feminine and the masculine come from no natural causes. As far as science has been able to ascertain, there are no masculine or feminine qualities other than physical characteristics. Chodorow explains that the qualities of the masculine and the feminine vary from culture to culture, that in one society women are artistic and in another the men reserve that pleasure for themselves (23-4).

Therefore, those personal qualities that Johnson tries to deny, perhaps because they appear feminine in his society -- his enjoyment of immediate experiences, his sympathy with all creatures that he encounters, his emotional responses to events and situations within his own life and that of his friends -- are simply traits of his individualistic nature. He suffers, not because he is flawed, but because he refuses to accept what he himself is: a man who could appreciate and identify directly with nature and women, and thus he becomes yet another victim of patriarchal social constraints.

When we ask, as have the many critics who have written about Johnson, why the good doctor spent twenty years away from his mother we have an answer. It is not the "mother hate" (50) of Irwin who asserts "that Johnson did not love his mother as he protested he did" (Irwin 4). It is not what Wain identifies as "The resentment of Sarah

[which rested in] . . . her failure to give him love and emotional security" (105). It goes beyond even Bower's comment that "the nagging guilt Johnson felt for the last twenty-five years of his life about his 'unkindness' to his mother" (129).

What keeps Johnson away is the unqualified love that he always proclaims for his mother's kind attentions and his own difficulties resolving what his society would have seen as womanish concerns. In his life the comic hero, Sarah Johnson, has been successful and the tragic hero, Michael Johnson, a failure, and society dictates that Samuel Johnson must emulate his father. What was he to do?

Chodorow explains the psychological trauma facing young boys in Western society:

Internally, the boy tries to reject his mother and deny his attachment to her and the strong dependence upon her that he still feels. He also tries to deny the deep personal identification with her that has developed during his early years. He does this by repressing whatever he takes to be feminine inside himself, and importantly, by denigrating and devaluing whatever he considers to be feminine in the outside world. As a societal member, he also appropriates to himself and defines as superior particular social activities and cultural (moral, religious, and creative) spheres -- possibly, in fact, 'society' and 'culture' themselves. (51)

According to Chodorow's analysis, the conflict in Johnson rested, not in his hatred of his mother but in his total professed love and his unacknowledged constant respect for her efforts in his life. However, Western society

encourages sharp boundaries to be drawn up between people so that the individual can function independently. Of course, no one ever functions without support and understanding from others, but the myth is that people must be able to act alone, even though few of us ever do.

During his life Johnson experienced a connectedness with the creatures about him that, in Freudian terms, did not lend itself to an independent and self-sufficient nature. Freud could not understand a friend who felt God as "a sensation of 'eternity', a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded" (Civilization and its Discontents 8), and he found puzzling the idea that a person could have a feeling "of belonging inseparably to the external world as a whole" (9). Certainly a sense "of belonging" (9) sounds much like Merchant's organic world, like Shepard's mythic cosmos, like Johnson's sympathy with all about him. Freud believed, however, that "normally there is nothing we are more certain of than the feeling of our self, our own ego" (10).

Johnson, on the other hand, gives evidence of experiencing this union with others and the world. Freud admits that he has found the sense of being one with another in only one situation --

an unusual state, it is true, but not one that can be judged as pathological. At its height the state of being in love threatens to obliterate the boundaries between ego and object. Against all the evidence of

his sense the man in love declares that he and his beloved are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact. A thing that can be temporarily effaced by a physiological function must also of course be liable to disturbance by morbid processes. (11)

Johnson was a man who professed adherence to the masculine, domination-based world of the eighteenth century and who within himself hid his sympathy and sharp connection with what society deemed the feminine principle that could lead to a world of partnership and sharing (Eisler xvii) because he was sexually a man and because his society dictated that he conform for any kind of worldly success. Indeed, he asserted as an adult that only a blockhead wrote for anything but money. Therefore, just as he attempted to remove himself from the joys of external nature, so did he remove himself from the strongest female presence that he knew, his mother.

CHAPTER IV

THE WOMAN, TRAGEDY, AND JOHNSON

If the mother in the Annals protected Johnson from real dangers, as he matured, he looked to young women to ease the turmoil and pain that their very presence often created first in the poems written after his visit to his cousin Cornelius Ford at Stourbridge in 1725 (Bate 44) and second in his tragedy Irene begun in 1736 (McAdam 109) after his marriage to Elizabeth Porter. These lines of verse are even more crucial in our understanding of Johnson and gender than the earlier poems because of Johnson's relative silence in texts dealing with his private relationships with women. Although we have countless episodes and anecdotes documented by Boswell, Thrale, and a host of other friends and acquaintances concerning Johnson's attraction to and for the opposite sex, there are few first-hand autobiographical sketches that provide us with the kind of material about courtship and marriage that we can find about parental relationships in his Annals.

From other sources, we do know that as a young man he did enjoy the company of women. Boswell writes that Johnson, during his teens, "was enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young Quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses, which . . . [was not] recover[ed]" (66), and Bate notes that Johnson

"had been in love with Ann Hector, Edmund's sister" (59); David Garrick's later descriptions of Elizabeth Johnson are legendary.

However, if we wish first-hand written accounts of the youthful Johnson's perceptions of women, we must turn to his verse. In 1726 he furnished the epilogue "'intended to have been spoken by a Lady who was to personate the Ghost of Hermione,'" as the title stated, for "'some young ladies at Lichfield having proposed to act 'The Distressed Mother.'" In this poem, like Pope in "The Rape of the Lock" (1714), Johnson categorizes the different kinds of women, and as he has done repeatedly throughout his verse, Johnson unites women and nature. Here Johnson creates women, who like flowers, in "a blooming train . . . give despair or joy." They "Bless with a smile, or with a frown destroy" their would-be lovers (ll. 1-2). These two types of women, both virgins, are judged, appropriately for a hopeful young man, by their attitude toward their suitors: either the maidens will reject or accept the proposals. Johnson situates his gentle virgins in a happy land: "For kind, for tender nymphs the myrtle blooms, / And weaves her bending bough in pleasing glooms" (ll. 14-5). After death these loving creatures will find a heaven paved, not with gold, but with "perennial roses [that] deck each purple vale" (l. 16). The scornful maids" will find "No fragrant bow'rs, no delightful glades" (l. 12) when they die, for they have torn

the hearts of young men, and in doing the unnatural thing by refusing their human male counterparts, they have distorted the cosmic harmony.

This way of perceiving women as dual-natured has ecological implications as well. In the poem, the virgins in their various gardens are but one step removed from what Merchant explains as a masculine view of the earth as

A kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe. But another opposing image of nature as female was also prevalent: wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts, and general chaos. Both were identified with the female sex and were projections of human perceptions onto the external world. (Merchant 2).

In this poem Johnson makes additional connections to the dual aspects of women when he alludes to myrtle (See Appendix B), Aphrodite's tree (Dictionary), for this goddess "beguiled all . . . laugh[ing] sweetly or mockingly at those her wiles had conquered" (Hamilton 32). How will the young women in Johnson's poem respond? Will scornful virgins create a desert of despair and face banishment to a barren landscape not unlike that of "Festina Lente," or will loving young women accept their suitors and live forever in a flowery heaven?

Within the classical rhetoric of the poem, however, Johnson offers a prosaic and yet nurturing comment to all young women. Just as Johnson implies in the epilogue that

love between men and women is the natural choice so does he understand the lengths to which young women would go to attract their suitors. Just as Johnson preferred his pond at Stowe unchanneled and free, just as he suggests the restraining of human and not external nature in "Festina Lente," so does he encourage young women to maintain a beauty untouched by artificial means. In his lines, the kind and loving nymphs or virgins should "use no foreign arms, / Nor tort'ring whalebones [to] pinch them into charms" (ll. 22-3).

During Johnson's lifetime, clothing was directly related to sexual morality, and the strict lacing of the woman's figure was often seen as indicative of her virtue. As late as 1740, Reverend Mr. Wettenhall Wilkes, in A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady, gives the following advice:

Never appear in company, without your stays. Make it your general rule, to lace in the morning, before you leave your chamber. The neglect of this, is liable to the censure of indolence, supineness of thought, sluttishness --and very often worse.

The negligence of loose attire
May oft' invite to loose desire.
(qtd. in Hill 18)

Johnson, on the other hand, desires young women, attractive in their original state, undisguised by human means, who will be kind and supportive. Their final reward for maintaining their original beauty and for loving young men

is everlasting: "unfaded still their former charms they shew, / Around them pleasures wait, and joys for ever new" (l. 26-7).

He ends with yet another entreaty encouraging a receptive attitude on the part of the happy maidens:

Then melt, ye fair, while crouds around you sigh,
Nor let disdain stil low'ring in your eye;
With pity soften every awful grace,
And beauty smile auspicious in each face;
To ease their pains exert your milder power,
So shall you guiltless reign, and all mankind adore.
(ll. 42-7)

So much in the poem seems positive concerning women and nature; however, the beautiful virgins must smile and smile, giving pleasure, not pain, and if they do what the men want -- accept and comfort them -- then these women will rule. Again and again Johnson makes appeals to women to give him, not their virginity, but their nurturing protection. Since his early life has shown him that the feminine principle, specifically his mother, has never failed him, he continues to expect or at least to hope for a similar help from the women that he encounters.

In "On a Lady Leaving Her Place of Abode; Almost Impromptu" (1731), Johnson re-introduces Cleora by name, but unlike her role in "On a Daffodill," in this later poem she becomes not a virginal flower but a powerful force that acts and reacts in an unexpected and yet a traditional way. In these lines, the narrator is concerned, not with her

presence but with her absence. Cleora has left the narrator behind, and winter has taken over the land in another world of hardship and pain. If the virgin in "To a Daffodill" could enhance the world, then the departure of such a force can debilitate it. She is likened to the "departing sun" (l. 1) that leaves "The northern shores to clouds and frost" where "The chill inhabitant repines, / In half a year of darkness lost" (ll. 2-4). The return of the sun and of the woman will "bless . . . [the narrator] with continu'd day" (l. 12).

In this poem there is no observed object in the environment with which Johnson interacts. Here what Johnson knows about nature has become generalized, as in "Festina Lente," and again all beauty and flowers have disappeared. Again the man is alone in his natural environment, and without the sun or the woman, he is cold and unhappy. Here woman becomes, not a fragile flower with gentle powers, but a sun with force and vigor. He, not she, is open to danger. She, not he, can prevent loss and unhappiness (See Appendix C). Johnson ends the poem of his vanished Cleora with a reference to "happy Russians" (l. 9) who await "revolving springs" (l. 10). The narrator, too, awaits Cleora's return which will "bless . . . [him] with continu'd day" (l. 12). She retains her role as the sun, the ruler, the controller of the situation.

In the majority of his early poems, Johnson pays tribute directly and indirectly to women and nature, and as he matures, he continues to evince his deep sympathy and interest in the position of women. As a young man, settled with his wife in the unsuccessful school that her money had established for him, Johnson looked about for a way to make his and Elizabeth's fortune in London, and yet again he turned to the feminine, this time in the form of Irene. The tragedy "was written in 'great part' at Edial," and Johnson "brought it, unfinished, to London in March 1737." His "first draft . . . may be largely assigned . . . to the winter of 1736-7," but he was revising it as late as June 1746 in "marginal notes" (McAdam 109).

Since these dates fit smoothly into his years as a new husband, we might logically assume that this play, centered in women and nature, includes many of his attitudes toward marriage. We might conclude that just as Johnson supported the mother or the feminine as opposed to the son or the masculine in "Festina Lente," so does he, as a young husband, develop a powerful central woman character in his play.

Scholars, however, have responded as variously to the marriage between the youthful Samuel Johnson and his quite senior Elizabeth Porter in July 9, 1735, as writers have continued to do in the multiple analyses of his relationship with his mother. In "Tetty and Samuel Johnson: The Romance

and the Reality," Gay W. Brack explains that many critics have emphasized Johnson's loving nature and Elizabeth's flaws: "her drinking, alleged drug use, and constant demands for money" (147). Garrick created little scenes in which he lampooned the relationship between the Johnsons, and George Irvin has decided that Johnson rapidly became "a somewhat disillusioned husband" (71).

However, Wain thinks the marriage "realistic and sensible" (65) from Johnson's perspective, and Bate emphasizes the attractive portraits of the woman presented similarly by Hester Thrale, Lucy Porter, and Samuel Johnson himself (151). The difficulty in ascertaining Johnson's exact feelings for his wife, however, lies in his almost total silence concerning his marriage either in his biographical materials or other texts. Irwin (69) and Brack (151) believe that such an absence is evidence of difficulties between the two. Brack writes that since Johnson did not include information about his upcoming marriage in a letter to a friend, he was forming a dubious relationship, "a passion of which Johnson was [not] particularly proud, or in which Tetty felt very secure" (Brack 151). By primarily investigating anecdotes about the marriage and concluding with the laudatory epitaph in which Johnson cites Elizabeth as "a Woman of beauty, elegance, ingenuity, and piety" (qtd. in Brack 168), Brack concludes "that Johnson did contract a marriage based on affection --

a 'love-marriage' -- with Elizabeth Porter" which became "'conflicted'" and ended in alienation (168).

However, all proofs of this type must rest on secondary information; therefore, a more reasonable approach seems to conclude that the play, Irene, written during the early part of his marriage and the poem to "To Miss ----- On Her Playing Upon the Harpsicord," written in 1746, the last year of documented revision of Irene (McAdam 109), all point, as Hagstrum asserts, to Johnson's understanding of a mutually emotionally and sexually fulfilling love (39-53). What we can do, however, is to explore how his treatment of women in drama is similar to and different from that of other playwrights, and in this way discover his perceptions of gender and nature as they run in parallel courses or coincide within his tragedy, his first and only attempt at drama.

"The source of Johnson's only play was Knolles's Generall Historie of the Turkes, 1603, where the action takes place between the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the death of Irene in 1456" (McAdam 109). In his version Johnson includes both a woman as a protagonist and nature as meaningful ornamentation in both characterization and thematic function as Johnson continues to refine his view of creation and the place of humankind therein.

If what critics call the occasional verses, written as McAdam asserts, "for the social purposes of his friends"

(77), put women in central positions, Johnson's tragedy, a more serious literary effort, does no less. With all the tender care of his mother in his early life, with all the reciprocal sympathy in his relationships with women that we have seen expressed again and again in his earlier verse, we can certainly understand why his play would contain a woman in the major role.

And yet critics continue to be puzzled by the drama. Just as so many readers have rejected the shorter poems that focus on women and nature as atypical, so have many critics found his only play a failure. Damrosch says, "In general Irene was dismissed because it was boring, a criticism, as Johnson often observed, against which there is no answer" (110). Chella Livingston begins her essay, "Johnson and the Independent Woman: A Reading of Irene" with the following comment:

The devotee of Johnson returns to Irene with the hope that, on the second or third reading, it will become a more convincing drama. Hope is dashed: Irene fails to move the reader. Inflated diction, wooden characters, and heavy-handed morality conspire against the author and contemporary audience. Despite its failure as a drama, however, Irene is worth re-reading for what it tells us about the young Johnson's concept of women.
(219)

As Livingston states, at the least, the woman as protagonist compels us to look closely at the action of this play, and perhaps, through an examination of women and nature, we may find, as does Marshall Waingrow in "The Mighty Moral of

Irene, that the play "for all that it appears a loaded debate with a foregone conclusion, dramatically uncovers a complicated action and a complicated moral" (81). Indeed, I find the tragedy a thoughtful commentary on Johnson's view of the world and the human's place therein.

With Johnson, one consistently helpful approach is to discover the literary tradition into which his varied and multitudinous writing falls. How is his play different from and similar to those dramas that have gone before it? Since Johnson was not only a poet but also a critic, we might examine the play in terms of dramatic history, whose origins lie in Greek culture and whose first great critic was Aristotle. According to Boswell's comments of 1780, Johnson "used to quote, with great warmth, the saying of Aristotle recorded by Diogenes Laertius" (1074), and in November 1784 Boswell, in his praise of the range of Johnson's literary accomplishments, includes one of Johnson's "schemes," for possible literary projects, which the doctor gave to Langton (1363). Within this list Johnson included "Aristotle's Rhetorick, a translation of it into English" and "Aristotle's Ethicks, an English translation of them, with notes" (1364), but no poetics was mentioned, perhaps because the text had been "repeatedly edited, translated, and supplied with commentaries" since "the beginning of the 16th cent[ury]" with "the most popular being the one by

Castelvetro (1570)" (Drabble 690). Since Johnson was well-acquainted with much of Aristotle's texts and since the Poetics had been so well-known for at least a century before Johnson's school days, we might assume his knowledge of this text look at Johnson's tragedy in terms of Aristotle's precepts.

First of all, the title of Johnson's tragedy suggests his willingness to forego the dictates of classical proprieties. The very idea of the female protagonist goes against Aristotle's classical dictums as defined in the Poetics:

In respect of Character there are four things to be aimed at. First, and most important, it must be good. Now any speech or action that manifests moral purpose of any kind will be expressive of character: the character will be good if the purpose is good. This rule is relative to each class. Even a woman may be good, and also a slave; though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless. The second thing to aim at is propriety. There is a type of manly valour; but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness, is inappropriate. (53)

Of course, people in the eighteenth century were greatly interested in classical literature, but their attitude toward the dramas was not often one of reverence.

In Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense, Leopold Damrosch concludes that Johnson and "most of his contemporaries" "judged it by . . . modern drama, and inevitable found it wanting" (185). If Damrosch is correct in his assumptions, then ignoring Aristotle's limitations on character would not

have been difficult for the youthful Johnson and by the production of the play in 1749 (McAdam 110), fashion would have justified his choice, for "as time went on voices were openly raised against" Greek tragedy (Damrosch 34).

However, we must remember that in this way Johnson was different as well. Euripides, that playwright, who "in his sympathy for all victims of society, including womankind" (Hadas 69), was one Greek writer that Johnson continued to read throughout his life (Boswell 1306). Therefore, whether Johnson is deliberately ignoring the rules of Aristotelian tragedy as it pertains to women as tragic heroes, or whether he is following Euripides, who looked with understanding eyes at those too often disdained (Hadas 68-9), in Irene Johnson is providing the women in his play, in their guise of tragic characters, an open and a public forum for debate and growth.

Johnson's drama has its English predecessors, a specific type of drama of the time, the she-tragedies. In "A Critic Formed: Samuel Johnson's Apprenticeship with Irene, 1736-1749," Katherine H. Adams provides three literary antecedents for Johnson's drama: "the heroic tyrant in his first drafts," and "the homiletic tragedy and 'she-tragedy' traditions as exemplified by Jane Shore in A Mirror for Magistrates (1559), by A Warning for Fair Women (1559), and Heywood's A Woman Kilde with Kindnesse (1603)" (192). Such dramas, according to Laura Brown, are the

progeny of the Affective Tragedies written near the end of the seventeenth century. These earlier plays,

[w]ith the advent of Otway, Banks, and Southerne, . . . are brought to their logical conclusion by the depiction of a domestic situation and the designation of a passive, innocent female protagonist or, in the absence of an appropriate woman, a Stupid Hero who is at the physical and psychological mercy of her or his environment. (70)

Certainly Irene is a "domestic" play because the plot is turned away from the Greek invasion again and again as women and men attempt to find love among the ruins of a civilization. As Damrosch explains, in many plays of the late seventeenth century we find action which moves away from war and duty, including Dryden's famous All for Love (1678) (114) and Nicholas Rowe's Jane Shore (1714).

In his Life of Rowe, the older Johnson writes only one element of praise for this particular play, but it is an important one concerning the heroine: "Nor does [Rowe] . . . much interest or affect the auditor, except in Jane Shore, who is always seen and heard with pity" (76). Thus the circumstances of Jane Shore's predicament move Johnson. Brown says of this heroine,

We judge Rowe's Jane Shore not by her social status -- as a private woman she has none -- and not by her simple victimization -- though pathos figures largely in her fate -- but by her tested virtue, which is defined and applauded in her action and substantiated in her martyrdom. (145)

Much of this statement applies equally to Irene. Both women are victims, the first of a system that has no place for undutiful wives and isolated ex-mistresses, the second of a world that makes women the booty of masculine wars. Similarly, Jane Shore and Irene succeed or fail as protagonists because of their attention to virtue. Brown explains that these plays provide us with a "paragon protagonist" whose "coherent internal moral code . . . determines our expectations" and encourages us to apply the lessons that we learn by watching the tragedies to our "everyday apprehension of the real world" (145).

That Johnson's Irene contains "a coherent internal moral code" (Brown 145) seems relatively obvious. The apparent choice for Irene is difficult. She can hold fast to her religion and face death, or she can embrace the Muslim faith, marry an emperor, and thus, damn her eternal soul to hell. Her choice is moral in the extreme. As Damrosch explains, "Johnson's subject is a religious crisis that occurs at the moment when a mighty civilization falls" (124).

If we can discover all the positive ways that Johnson's play resembles the English tragedies that precede it, why have audiences repeatedly condemned his drama? What does Johnson's play lack that other "successful" plays of its kind include? What did the theater-goers expect to see in the limited engagement of a drama entitled Irene? What do

critics hope to read? If the play is truly a she-tragedy, a descendent of Affective Tragedy as Laura Brown defines it, then the primary role of the audience is as the witness to pain and despair: "The unique and defining characteristic of this form is its dependence upon the audience's pitying response" (Brown 69). However, this particular aspect, especially of the she-tragedy, is totally lacking in Johnson's play. One of the earliest responses to the tragedy recognizes this strange omission. "Boswell recorded in his [London] journal before he had met Johnson" (Damrosch 110) these words:

"Dempster, talking of Irene, a tragedy written by Mr. Samuel Johnson, said it was as frigid as the regions of Nova Zembla; that now and then you felt a little heat like what is produced by touching ice."
(qtd. in Damrosch 110)

Although Johnson praises Rowe's ability to touch the audience emotionally, he himself rarely wanted to be moved to pity by the observation of another's pain. As we have seen in his responses to the murder of Clytemnestra, Ophelia, and Desdemona, he never enjoyed seeing others suffer, and perhaps such was the motivation when he failed to be present at the death beds of his mother and wife. Therefore, if any audience, whether in the theater or before the printed text, hoped to wallow in pathos or bathos, that spectator/reader was sure to be disappointed.

In Johnson's time, his friends instinctively understood what was different about his tragedy. According to Damrosch, David Garrick, who "was alarmed by its philosophical frigidity," attempted to brighten up the play by "propos[ing] some enlivening additions which Johnson indignantly rejected" (109): "Sir, . . . the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels" (Life 140).

That Johnson and Garrick have different purposes for the play is clear. Garrick, the theater manager, wants action and dialogue that will move the audience, but clearly Johnson doesn't have the same objective in mind. Several important issues come to light here. First of all, from Garrick's view point, plays should be dramatic -- hence a kind of cathartic tragedy -- so people expect to see some action that stirs the emotions, but Johnson is concerned with showing thoughtful choice here, as he had been in "Festina Lente." Second, for some reason, watching women suffer, albeit it in a drama or in Samuel Richardson's novels, especially Clarissa, seemed a favorite English pastime, a vicarious pleasure of sublimity without personal pain that Johnson eschews in his own work.

From Johnson's position, then, it's reasonable that the protagonist herself is not the "passive, innocent female" (Brown 70) of earlier drama, nor is she the "paragon protagonist" that Brown finds in other she-tragedies of the

eighteenth century (145). Thus it's not surprising that neither Irene nor Samuel Johnson appears in the index of Brown's text, English Dramatic Form From 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History. One major reason is that Johnson's play doesn't fit any strict category. His female protagonist is a woman powerful enough to charm a Turkish king away from his royal duties. She is fearful, ambitious, and avaricious. She prefers power to compassion, money to noble poverty, and life to death -- none of which is typical of any kind of heroine, except possibly Moll Flanders, in the literature of the eighteenth century. However, Irene comes to an understanding of her own nature within the play as she changes from the woman who asks why she must damn her soul to pacify a foreign emperor into the lowly creature who sells her friends for a crown and life. On the other hand, she lacks the bombastic rhetoric of many tragic heroes, especially those of Dryden, and therefore, her intelligently realistic portrayal caused the audience to protest against her death when Garrick put Irene's murder openly on the stage.

Now, instead of asking yet again what Johnson's play lacks, we might turn the question another way and consider what Irene has that such characters as Jane Shore could never possess. In his criticism of Rowe's tragedy, Johnson writes,

I know not that there can be found in his plays any deep search into nature, any accurate discriminations of kindred qualities, or nice display of passion in its progress; all is general and undefined" (76).

The quality that Irene exhibits, as do most thinking individuals, is the ability to change. Johnson has evolved what is termed the she-tragedy from a story about a suffering female to a tale about an individual making moral choices. Thus, if the play had as its center, a steadfast, flawless woman, such as those typical of many such tragedies, where would be the temptations of life, the bane of all human nature? By its nature, tragedy usually compels the hero to discover something about her or his own personality or soul by the end of the play, and static characters rarely do so. Thus, although Johnson, as Damrosch explains, is not troubled by "a priori rules" (165), in the case of the protagonist, he does follow the dictates, not of domestic tragedy, but of traditional tragedy.

If we are to find the woman, like Jane Shore, who has faced her temptations and put that element of her life behind her, we must turn to Aspasia, Irene's foil. However, Aspasia could not be the tragic hero because she has no flaw, no fall from grace, and thus no opportunity to realize her own shortcomings, of which she has few. Before Aspasia would give up her religion or her honor, she would die, and where is the depth of feeling that such fidelity produces?

The alternative would be to present Aspasia as the tragic heroine who refuses the emperor, and then the audience could have what it really wanted -- to watch in a she-tragedy the torture of the poor woman as we suffer the horrors of Jane Shore's death. However, Johnson is not sadistic, and thus he eliminates what emotion could come from seeing the pain of a selfless human being. He deserves applause for refusing to gather his audience about yet another feminine bear-baiting. His play is to encourage thought, not passion, and thus he continues in his tragedy what he believed in his early poetry, especially as stated in "Festina Lente."

To do justice to Irene's position, Johnson allows her, like her masculine counterparts in traditional tragedy, to have responsibility, to some degree, for her own fate. The flaws within her character and the poor moral decisions that she makes lead her to disaster and death, and her deliberate differences from Aspasia occur from the beginning of the play when Cali describes the first appearance of Irene at Mahomet's court:

Just in the moment of impending fate,
 Another plund'rer brought the bright Irene
 Of equal beauty, but of softer mien,
 Fear in her eye, submission on her tongue,
 Her mournful charms attracted his regards,
 Disarm'd his rage, and in repeated visits
 Gain'd all his heart; at length his eager love
 To her transferr'd the offer of a crown.

(I. II. 117-24)

Thus, it is primarily because the two women are equal in beauty but unequal in spirit that only one is a tragic hero. Because Irene has fear, her tragic flaw, because she is "softer" in that respect, she is more human and supposedly we, as audience, can understand the difficulties that she has in the consideration of the best decision that she can make, and in the end we can appreciate her failing in the attempt to be honorable. This deliberation allows her to make a "nice display of passion in its progress" (Life of Rowe 76) as she attempts to rise from fearful captive to powerful queen.

While the very use of women as prisoners makes Aspasia and Irene helpless within the power of these base Turkish intruders, Irene in the play itself and Aspasia in the antecedent action are not "passive" in the she-tragedy sense (Brown 154). Both Aspasia and Irene have free will which they elect to use throughout each scene. Aspasia refuses, in the face of death, to become Muslim, but Irene is seduced by what Mustapha calls,

Those pow'rful tyrants of the female breast
 Fear and ambition, urge her to compliance;
 Dress'd in each charm of gay magnificence,
 Alluring grandeur courts her to his arms,
 Religion calls her from the wish'd embrace,
 Paints future joys, and points to distant glories.
 (I. IV. 12-17)

If a masculine protagonist is tempted by pride and ambition, then fear and ambition make Johnson's hero rise above the

pathetic downtrodden she-heroine. Irene weighs her choices, and decides, after her argument with Aspasia about honor and religion that

Ambition is the stamp, impress'd by Heav'n
To mark the noblest minds, with active heat
Inform'd they mount the precipice of pow'r,
Grasp at command, and tow'r in quest of empire.
(III. VIII. 111-4)

Irene decides to betray her friends to Mahomet, and here she fails in honor to her friends and in fidelity to her religion. She is indeed little different from women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who marry for prestige and money and not for love. For Irene, the play is not, as James Gray asserts in "'A Native of the Rocks" : Johnson's Handling of the Theme of Love," primarily a love story; it is a tale about the need for position and power. Although a romantic interest does exist with the secondary characters Aspasia and Demetrius, in Irene's case, she doesn't even have an "ill-begotten love" for Mahomet (Gray 119), for Irene loves nothing, perhaps not even herself. "She abandons her purity, her country and her friends: she does not adopt any faith or attachment" (Adams 193). It is her failure to pledge allegiance to anything but her own physical survival that contributes to her fall from grace. Waingrow writes "that it is the heroine's very detachment from the temptation to love that lends her distinction" (89). Thus Johnson's heroine is not overcome with sentiment

or even the emotions of honorable love. She must thoughtfully decide what is best in her life, for her mind is not cluttered with that most unsettling of human passions -- love. Therefore, her negative choice is one made, at least to some degree, logically.

In consistent traditional fashion, however, Johnson shows the positive alternative to Irene. Aspasia has been offered all that her companion falls prey to, and yet Aspasia has something that Irene has not -- a lover in the form of Demetrius -- and it is at this point that a love story does come into the tragedy. Of Johnson's expressions of love, James Gray says that "if we examine his poetry, we find that the word love appears more frequently than any other noun, even more than life or death or fate or virtue" (106). All of the types of love that we have seen in the occasional verse containing women seem to come together in Irene. Just as many of the women in the social contexts in which Johnson wrote his verse have power, so do the women in this play. The love affects the men either negatively or positively. Just as the women in such poems as "An Epilogue to The Distrest Mother" can either "Unpitying see them [the suitors] weep" (l. 8), or "With pity soften every awful grace" (l. 44), so must Irene and Aspasia decide the fates of their would-be lovers.

Gray believes that Johnson's early poem "An Ode on Friendship" explains that "friendship is civilized and

human, love primitive and uncontrolled . . . [love is] a basic, instinctive and even dangerous force" (107). And yet such a reading fails to account either for the variety of love or women within the play.

Just as Johnson classifies women as two types in "An Epilogue to The Distrest Mother," so does he provide, as Gray explains (116-120), the various aspects of what people call love in his tragedy. However, for all its many insights, Gray's essay relies too much on what he sees as the "dualities in the love relationships" (117):

The pure, saintly, self-sacrificing love of Aspasia for Demetrius, linked closely to her loyalty to the Greek cause, and the nefariously self-serving and synthetic passion of Irene for Mahomet, bound up as it is with her disloyalty and apostasy: love triumphant as against love-degraded. (117)

The relationships in Irene are more complex than such a reading allows. In the play, Johnson distinguishes among many types of love: love of country, God, sovereign, another human, and self. Just as Johnson considers the place of the human in creation to God and other creatures, so does he evaluate the types of relationship that can occur between men and women in ways that reflect his knowledge of England's literary past.

Traditionally, one fear of men has been the distraction of women. In book two of Spenser's The Faerie Queene, for example, Acrasia has prepared a bower of "love" that

is a fatal temptation for those knights who haven't the power to resist her. When Guyon comes upon the scene, he finds a "young man sleeping by her" (II. XII. 79), who has put aside duty, for "His warlike armes, . . . / were hong upon a tree" (II. XII. 80-1). Johnson, who, as we know read Spenser, offers a similar kind of love, one that through its working upon the man destroys whatever kind of honor he once possessed. This basest type of what some people call love appears near the end of the play when Abdalla suddenly feels an improper attraction to Aspasia. Hagstrum writes that "the infidel Abdalla is inflamed to lust by her very presence" (49-50).

This is a passion that has just sprung up, seemingly from nowhere, and it rapidly turns into an obsession that causes the man to direct his attention away from the business at hand -- the removal of Mahomet from the throne and the protection of the Turkish lands. Cali, his superior in treason, accuses Abdalla of having "Some petty passion! some domestick trifle!" (III. I. 7). Cali belittles personal ties, such as wife, friend, and family. These, he says, are "Unprofitable, peaceful, female virtues!" (III. I. 12).

Abdalla responds truthfully that such feelings are important, that "the laws of kindness" are the "bonds of nature" (III. I. 16), but Abdalla becomes rash, and his weakness lies in his spirit. He says to Cali,

Know'st thou not yet, when Love invades the soul,
 That all her faculties receive his chains?
 That Reason gives her scepter to his hand,
 Or only struggles to be more enslav'd?
 Aspasia! who can look upon thy beauties?
 Who hear thee speak, and not abandon reason?
 (III. I. 38-43)

As he continues his speech, Abdalla compares his emotions to elements in nature -- "the lioness distress'd by hunger" (III. I. 50), "the swelling waves when tempest rise" (51), the trembling ground "when subterraneous fires" (52) fight their way to the surface. His feelings are natural, he says, and instinctive, and this is the one kind of love that can, as Gray explains of love in general, be "a basic, instinctive and even dangerous force" (107).

Abdalla sees Aspasia, and he desires her sexually, but what can he know of the woman beneath the beauty, what does he really care? He moves without deep thought, and he betrays the traitor Cali to Mahomet, not out of honorable design, but out of desire to attain Aspasia. His rashness turns to weakness as he refuses to fight Demetrius for the woman, and finally in his effort to protect himself and his dreams of Aspasia, Abdalla goads Caraza and Hasan into the over-hasty slaying of Irene, and thus insures his own death when Mahomet learns that Irene has been faithful to the Turks.

Similarly, in a more fully developed relationship, Johnson shows this desire of the physical without concern

for the spiritual or emotional in the longing for conquest that Mahomet feels for Irene. That Mahomet is easily moved by beauty is apparent because he abandons the idea of seducing Aspasia when an equally beautiful but less religious woman appears. Gray explains that "Mahomet, . . . is obsessed with a raging, almost savage, passion, first for Aspasia, then for Irene, the two 'captive beauties'" (117). Like Abdalla, Mahomet quickly develops a new passion. Like Abdalla, Mahomet is concerned for the exterior shell and not the inward beauty. When Mahomet attempts to bribe Irene with all kinds of monetary rewards and regal power, she responds with a very important question:

Why all this glare of splendid eloquence,
Must I for these renounce the hope of Heav'n
Immortal crowns and fulness of enjoyment?
(II. VII. 11-4)

Is earthly gain, she asks, enough to pay for eternal damnation?

To this question Mahomet has ready answers. He seems rather pleased by these concerns because he is certain that she has nothing to fear because since Irene is a woman, "Heav'n has reserv'd no future paradise" (II. VII. 17) for her. She is a "lovely trifler unregarded" (II. VII. 23) by a god who "Records each act, each thought of sov'reign man" (II. VII. 21).

Mahomet compares her to all of what he considers the ornaments of nature -- flowers, shells, and birds. Just as the bird has as its purpose by God "to flutter and to shine, / And Chear the wary passenger with musick" (II. VII. 37-8), so Irene's job is to make a man's life more pleasant. Hagstrum writes,

Mahomet calls the idea of a heavenly reward for women a "vain rapture," since for him they possess "inferiour natures" and are formed as sexual creatures solely for the purpose of giving earthly delight. There is no "future paradise" for them, and they end their brief careers in "total death." Only man is sovereign, and only he must therefore worry about futurity. (49)

Not too many years before the play was written, even English clergymen debated the possibility of souless women. While Johnson would never have believed such heresy, could he have agreed that women had no major function in life that did not include men? If he believed in the brief masculine enjoyment of young women, he would have been similar to the Cavalier poets who used flower-women poems for seduction. Blossoms and virgins are to be enjoyed and cast aside. However, Johnson gives Irene powerful words as she refutes the Emperor's assertions:

Then let me once, in honour of our sex,
Assume the boastful arrogance of man.
Th' attractive softness, and th' endearing smile,
And pow'rful glance, 'tis granted, are our own.
Nor has impartial Nature's frugal hand
Exhausted all her nobler gifts on you;
Do not we share the comprehensive thought,
Th' enlivening wit, the penetrating reason?

Beats not the female breast with gen'rous passions,
 The thirst of empire, and the love of glory?
 (II. VII. 49-58)

Thus women, although their appearance is pleasing and attractive to men, have all the virtues as well as the vices of men. Women can think deeply, speak wittily, and yearn fiercely for distant power.

Since Irene has spoken of reason, then Mahomet shifts to other gifts that might tempt this creature into his arms. He apologizes for thinking that she would spend her time working

To tune the tongue, to teach the eyes to roll,
 Dispose the colours of the flowing robe,
 And add new roses to the faded cheek. (II. VII. 61-2)

In essence, Johnson says through Mahomet, too many women waste valuable hours maintaining an artificial facade to attract men, and Mahomet is content to allow Irene different pastimes. His gifts, he assures her, can include power, security, royal reign, or even a perfect garden for retreat where "ev'ry warbler of the sky shall sing" (II. VII. 86) and where "ev'ry fragrance breathe of ev'ry spring" (II. VII. 87).

Is this, however, the type of love that is healthy to both the man and the woman? What is the effect that Irene has on Mahomet? Gray writes that Mahomet's "love" "temporarily deflect[s] him from his imperial duties" (117).

Even though Mahomet is an emperor and Abdalla a lowly soldier, both men respond to their surface attraction to women in the same way. Just as Abdalla loses his resolve to act his part in the rebellion, Mahomet turns away from his duty as a ruler. When Mahomet learns that Demetrius and Leontius are meeting with Cali, we see for a moment the power of the fierce ruler, but then Irene comes near him, and immediately his desire for worldly action disapates. He explains his plight to Mustapha:

At her approach each ruder gust of thought
Sinks like the sighing of a tempest spent,
And gales of softer passion fan my bosom.
(II. VI. 91-3)

The love that he has for Irene is not a wholesome passion that will strengthen his "resolve" (II. VII. 90). Gray writes that "Irene and Mahomet are . . . symbols of infidelity and . . . [a] love which the poet had described as 'parent of rage and hot desires'. . . , little better than prostituted lust" (117).

Thus, Mahomet's infatuation weakens him disastrously. At the end of the play, when he finds Irene dead, he laments his sorrow:

Remorse and anguish seize on all my breast;
Those groves, whose shades embower'd the dear Irene,
Heard her last cries, and fann'd her dying beauties,
Shall hide me from the tasteless world for ever.

Yet ere I quit the scepter of dominion,
 Let one just act conclude the hateful day.
 Hew down, ye guards, those vassals of destruction.
 (V. XII. 45-51)

Although he has civil war and invasion on his hands, he seeks revenge for the death of Irene, an action he himself had ordered. His foray into love has produced the effects that Musidorus once feared for his friend Pyrocles -- the weakness produced by association with the feminine, an inability to act when public necessity demands.

This part of the play, then, is the tragedy. Irene, because of her fatal desire for life and power, is willing to sacrifice her honor, her friends, and her religion.

Nichol Smith says

Irene is represented not as a helpless victim of the Sultan's passion [as in Johnson's main, if not sole, source, Richard Knolles' The Generall Historie of the Turkes], but as the mistress of her fate. . . . Irene yields, and pays the penalty. . . . Her death is exhibited by Johnson as the punishment of her weakness.
 (qtd. in Waingrow 81)

Damrosch writes that Irene "has betrayed her country and her faith to gain the glory promised by Mahomet" (133), and as a consequence, she must be deceitfully represented to the man who wants her, and thus in his order for her death, she has brought about her own unhappy end (133) and his destruction as well.

In this case, Johnson has produced a woman as true tragic hero, and her very actions make her worthy of such a

position and such an end. Chella C. Livingston, however, believes that Irene's death has another cause: she simply can't be allowed to survive. Livingston writes that "Irene is the type of assertive female whom the young Johnson found not only distasteful but also threatening and thus disparaged within the play" (221). Certainly Irene is "assertive" (221) at times, but Johnson condemns not her forwardness, especially her spirited defense to Mahomet of women's psychological and spiritual nature, nor does he demean her predicament, which is hazardous in the extreme. What he does condemn is her softness, that inclines her to make immoral choices that allow her to abandon her faith and accept a marriage without love.

And what lies at the center of this betrayal of all that Irene should hold sacred? What is the tragic flaw of this Johnsonian hero that causes her to desire power and position? It is fear of dying, and as Damrosch explains, Johnson "is at great pains to represent the fear of death as rational" (76). Irene is naturally concerned about the death that she will face if she continues to deny Mahomet, but she can't help such emotions she tells Aspasia. However, Aspasia is steadfast in her loyalty to god, country, and lover. Positively it is Aspasia who is strong and unyielding. In fact, she says to Irene during their discourse concerning fear:

The weakness we lament, our selves create,
 Instructed from our infant years to court
 With counterfeited fears the aid of man;
 We learn to shudder at the rustling breeze,
 Start at the light, and tremble in the dark;
 Till Affectation, rip'ning to belief,
 And Folly, frightened at her own chimeras,
 Habitual cowardice usurps the soul. (II. I. 26-33)

Women are naturally strong. They are taught as children to be afraid, and thus they simply have to overcome societal conditioning, not natural tendency. Irene responds that Aspasia has exceptional courage that allows her soul to "Soar[] unencumber'd with our idle cares, / And all Aspasia but her beauty's man" (II. I. 36).

It is not, then, as Livingston asserts, that "Johnson applies a double standard not only to distinguish divine and human justice but also to separate male and female virtue" (221). I do not believe that "Irene appears doomed for violating the social order" or because "she chooses to act, usurping the male's privileged virtue" (Livingston 221). It is the actions that Irene chooses to make that come from her fatal flaw that allow her to be a tragic hero. When Johnson acknowledges that fear is a learned response, he is taking the position of "eighteenth-century . . . feminists" as explained by G. J. Barker-Benfield in The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain: "From the seventeenth century they argued that 'custom and prejudice, not Nature, exclude women from public life'" (2). "As Wollstonecraft had it in 1792, women were made weak,

'artificial beings,' reared 'in a premature, unnatural manner'" (Barker-Benfield 2). Thus Johnson's direct statement through Aspasia supports yet again the potential so frequently destroyed in young women by their unfortunate childhoods. As Johnson's mother was limited in her education, so has Irene been denied the proper nurturing that would have removed excessive fear from her heart. The natural state of women was a controversial subject, and Johnson strongly supports the writers of his century and before who believed that "'liberal education'" and "'learned conversation'" were the missing elements in the woman's desire for "'intellectual attainment'" (Barker-Benfield 2)

Physical fear, Aspasia believes, is learned, but what is natural to Johnson is that all people fear death in some way. From what we can know of Johnson's life, the act of death was not troublesome to him, for we have many examples of his courage in the face of bodily danger. It was not the dying itself that terrified him, but the aftermath. Since Irene is a woman, however, she has been conditioned to have physical fear as well, and like Johnson, as a Christian, she must equally have fear of judgment and possible damnation. Thus, the situation in which she finds herself is perilous in the extreme. She doesn't want to die in the first place, and since she is contemplating giving up her religion in order to save her life, then she is also putting her soul in jeopardy.

It is this second fear that caused Johnson the greatest disquietude (Damrosch 71-9). As an older man, in 1777, To Boswell's question, "'Is not the fear of death natural to man?'" Johnson answered, "So much so, Sir, that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it'" (416). In 1777, he said to Boswell,

"Sir, you are to consider the intention of punishment in a future state. We have no reason to be sure that we shall then be no longer liable to offend against GOD. We do not know that even the angels are quite in a state of security; nay we know that some of them have fallen. It may, therefore, perhaps be necessary, in order to preserve both men and angels in a state of rectitude, that they should have continually before them the punishment of those who have deviated from it." (876)

Therefore Irene, in danger from a learned fear of physical death has great motivation to stay alive, and marriage to an emperor would certainly postpone danger for a considerable period of time or at least as her beauty bewitches the emperor. From Johnson's view point, if even angels may be in danger of damnation, what then of young women tempted by power? Irene's situation is horrifying and her choices are truly between living and dying on at least two levels -- the physical and the spiritual. Her situation and choice, then, are worthy of the tragic tradition.

However, as Katherine Adams explains, the play also is "homiletic" (192), and Johnson's lesson has several levels. What provides help for people, as he reveals through

Aspasia, is the succor that love can offer, and it is here that many critics misunderstand Johnson's intention concerning the relationship between women and men. Johnson wants to show not just woman alone but woman in connection with the rest of creation as well. It is humans in society that interest Johnson. Therefore, at the center of Aspasia's strength is not just her own considerable power but also that which comes from the love between her and Demetrius.

This love is more than the "undefiled Christian love" (117) that Gray has discovered. Hagstrum explains Johnson's view of ideal love as personified by these two different people:

How shall we describe the contrasting elements of concordia discors in this, the noblest of all human relationships? The answer is obvious, though only implied in Johnson's play. Individually and together, Aspasia and Demetrius embody both austere, martial virtue and also soft, yielding, heart-melting love.
(50)

The bond comes from a desire for mutual sharing. Aspasia explains to Irene the source of her power, her buttress against fear: "Each generous sentiment is thine, Demetrius" (II. I. 38).

Does Aspasia's love of Demetrius and her benefits from their relationship make her a "self-effacing female" (221) as Livingston asserts? Perhaps the more important question is just what Johnson is saying about the relationship

between men and women in the play. If physical desire without love and assent to marriage for power and life itself without affection produce the tragedy of Irene, the balanced relationship between Aspasia and Demetrius creates the comedy of the play.

Livingston believes that Demetrius and Aspasia are Johnson's ideal couple, reflecting conventional notions about the nature of a sound relationship. "The man actively dominates, and the woman passively supports him" (229). Ironically in none of the early poems about women and nature do we find the woman a passive support. Are we to believe that, in the midst of verse about the power of women over men, in the middle of a play about women's sometimes deadly effect on men, that we will find Aspasia "passive"?

While Livingston perceptively points out the value of Elizabeth Porter to "Johnson's idealized treatment" of Aspasia (229) and the necessity of his wife's "emotional support" (229), Johnson's portrayal of Aspasia is not "the traditionally male idealization of the female" (230). This woman is capable of doing everything except bearing arms, and in the time in which Johnson lived, indeed, even in this century, the woman's position in wars is still contended. Johnson allows Aspasia intelligence and courage.

On the surface, then, in literary terms, Johnson has provided, for the most part, an egalitarian relationship between Demetrius and Aspasia. In a very perceptive comment

concerning the characters in the play, Gray says that what might have been "identified in some commentators' minds with the masculine principle, and . . . with the feminine . . . [here] . . . apply equally to the main characters of the play, male or female" (117). First of all, the relationship is not the rigid and unyielding structure that Livingston has presented, nor is it the totally heroic relationship that Hagstrum has discovered. It is true that Demetrius is "motivated by honor, loyalty, religion . . . that "'the pow'rful voice of love inflames'" him (II. IV. 19), . . . [and] that his very patriotism is energized by his passion" (Hagstrum 50). Later in the play Aspasia does encourage Demetrius to fight heroically against the enemies of religion and country.

Thus, unlike both Mahomet and Abdalla who are "unmanned" by their lust for foreign women, Demetrius is strengthened by Aspasia's love, just as she is by his. When Mahomet -- the Turkish foil -- faces the death of Irene, he cannot take positive action for his country, but Demetrius is always able to resolve his fears in the midst of both love and war. At the beginning of the play when Demetrius believes Aspasia a captive or a corpse, he is momentarily unable to consider the best course of action. However, although he believes that he has lost Aspasia forever and admits that her loss has caused ". . . tempestuous grief [which] o'erbears / . . . [his] reasoning pow'rs . . . "

(I. I. 77-8), he is able to put his personal grief aside and consider the state of Greece.

At this point, Johnson elucidates the benefits of right love -- the complimenting within a relationship of weaknesses and strengths. At the beginning of the play, it is not the call to arms that Aspasia has inspired in Demetrius but a suitable caution. This moderation in his behavior is, in large part, something that he has learned from Aspasia. She tells Irene that Demetrius must be dead because he has a reputation for reckless honor and courage:

Too well I know him, his immod'rate courage,
Th' impetuous sallies of excessive virtue,
Too strong for love, have hurried him on death.
(II. I. 45-8)

And yet when we see him, he is in disguise, more like a comic-hero, hiding, not attacking, so that he can help Cali take the throne, and thus provide possible safety for Greece. Similarly, in battle, he doesn't lose his reason. While others about him are taking revenge, he refuses and sets Carazan free, and this forgiving action causes Carazan to allow Demetrius to escape when the Greeks and Cali are under attack by Mahomet's men. Concerning an episode in Act three, scene three, Damrosch writes,

Here the characters borrow and develop each other's language. . . . Prudence and love act through them, whether in conflict, as Cali thinks, or in harmony, as Demetrius does. (117)

This "prudence" is but one of the results of reciprocal love. Demetrius's control continues even when he, through Cali's help, finally sees Aspasia. While Mahomet becomes overwhelmed by Irene's beauty, Demetrius is able to love and work at the same time. When Aspasia refuses to be separated from Demetrius when the time approaches for him to rejoin his men, she pleads that they will die together, but Abdalla cautions her to restrain her passion: "Your careless love betrays your country's cause (III. XI. 10); Demetrius twice replies to her entreaties with the conditional "If we must part" before he makes his final speech of this act:

Reproach not, Greece, a lover's fond delays,
Nor think thy cause neglected while I gaze,
New force, new courage, from each gaze I gain,
And find our passions not infus'd in vain.
(III. XI. 19-22)

Thus her love for him inspires Demetrius to thoughtful but not excessive heroic action, a kind of power with reasonable restraint, an unlikely quality in a traditional hero, and his love for her helps Aspasia to remain firm when she is tempted first by Mahomet and then by Abdalla.

By the beginning of Act IV, Aspasia again has her fears of their separation under control, and she encourages Demetrius to "purge well thy mind from ev'ry private passion" (IV. I. 6) -- good advice to a man who must concentrate on staying alive. Similarly Demetrius replies that she is an important part of his life:

Thou kind assistant of my better angel,
 Propitious guide of my bewilder'd soul,
 Calm of my cares, and guardian of my virtue.
 (IV. I. 10-2)

Thus balanced love does not become the distraction from duty that Greeks, Romans, and other traditionalists feared. Such a positive attitude toward love is not foreign to Johnson. "Bronson suggests that Aspasia resembles Elizabeth Porter, and that the play is Johnson's marriage offering" (qtd. in Damrosch 123). Perhaps Bronson is correct.

Damrosch, on the other hand, believes that in the play love "is represented as a motivating force for the entire action" (123); I think, however, that in this tragedy Johnson portrays life as a wide range of experiences that all people endure or enjoy; in the episodes that make up such human existence, right-directed love always acts as a mutually beneficial support. Too often, Johnson implies, people cannot control the problems about them. In his play, his lovers encounter raging battles, civil wars, dangerous emperors, and unhappy separations. In the midst of such difficulties, individuals must make personal decisions. It is love that helps people who are caught up, as we all are, in circumstances of national and communal concerns. Johnson's drama suggests that a balanced love can positively act as aid and succor in times of distress.

In his perceptive essay "Johnson and the Concordia Discors of Human Relationships," Jean H. Hagstrum explores

the way in which Johnson believes that happy couples maintain differences within a stable relationship. Hagstrum notes the similarity between "To Miss ----- on Her Playing upon the Harpsichord, . . . " and other literary works that contain similar lovers, such as Aspasia and Demetrius in Irene. Of the 1746 poem to Miss Carpenter, Hagstrum writes,

Johnson recalls Manilius' famous phrase discordia concors, which he was to use or adapt later at crucial moments in his criticism of both art and life The ancients seemed to derive the idea of discordant harmony (or harmonious discord) from nature -- from its clashing elements and its drive toward unity. Johnson is of course not averse to learning from nature. (40)

Similarly, from this poem, Hagstrum, cites lines from the following passage:

Thou see'st one pleasing form arise,
How active light, and thoughtful shade,
In greater scenes each other aid;
Mark, when the diff'rent notes agree
In friendly contrariety. (ll. 26-30)

The two -- male and female -- can work in harmony although they are different. Here Johnson creates a loving pair whose deep emotion happily affects their every action, an example of "hetero-sexual compatibility" (Hagstrum qtd. in Livingston 229). Thus the two are supporters of each other's weaknesses and sharers in each other's strengths, and the section of the play about these successful lovers concludes in their happy escape and the probable marriage that will result. Johnson's tragedy has ended as a comedy.

He has provided the moral choice for his readers: right action and life or wrong action and death; proper love and a balanced existence or base attraction and failure in all aspects of life, and the "love-plot" is not just an "obligatory" nod at traditional tragedy (Damrosch 125).

Thus women are, in this instance, portrayed positively. Aspasia is intelligent and sensibly loving, and Irene, certainly not the down-trodden female of Rowe's Jane Shore, is witty, ambitious, and in a very human sense, fearful. Had Irene been more perfect, she would not have fulfilled the role of the tragic hero. Had Aspasia been more flawed, she would not have acted as a suitable foil. Both women together provide a relatively realistic view of Johnson's view of the moral choices in the world in which he lived. As Marshall Waingrow explains in "The Mighty Moral of Irene," the play "appears to argue a double moral standard, one for politics and one for personal virtue, but in effect the action of the play enmeshes the two moralities" (87). Thus a sense of honor remains constant for our characters whether the situation is political, social, or spiritual.

Hence, we have discovered what Johnson's play contains what others of his time did not -- women who are intelligently realistic in many ways. Against all the usual decorum of tragedy, the innocent and pure -- usually the females -- do not suffer unduly or die in his play. Irene, in fact, has brought about her own death. In this sense,

Johnson has created a very thoughtful and logically consistent moral play. Livingston writes,

It can be argued that, since Johnson's ostensible concern is to heighten Christian devotion, Aspasia embodies divine inspiration and selfless love. But the message implicit in her characterization is that desirable women behave like her and are rewarded with love and even life, unlike the rewards of a haughty Irene. (231)

Although I never find Irene truly "haughty," I do believe that the difficulty in the play does lie primarily in characterization. The problem does not stem from the mixing of comedy and tragedy since the two equal life, nor does it arise from the relationship between Aspasia and Demetrius which is inoffensive since a kind of sharing does exist between the two lovers. In so many ways Johnson has come close to understanding women and the various roles that they might play in society as intelligent, loving, thoughtful individuals. At least Johnson's women think as well as feel. In fact, Johnson deserves praise for equalizing the power of women and men in so many important ways.

According to the essays in A History of Private Life, at the end of the eighteenth century, the feminist movement began to take at least one turn toward a separate but equal doctrine exemplified by Hannah More, "a member of the Bluestockings" and a friend of both Johnson and Garrick (Hall 55). In "The Sweet Delights of Home," Catherine Hall

cites More's "conversion to serious Christianity" (55) as the basis for her belief that the world was divided into two spheres:

The Evangelical man was . . . a person with responsibilities and cares in the public world. The woman, however, was . . . centered in her home and family . . . More elaborated the observable biological distinctions between men and women into a series of characteristics that she labeled "naturally" masculine and feminine. (58)

What must have seemed to her as progressive and emancipating for women culminated, by the middle of the nineteenth century, in "the good homemaker[s]" (Hall 81) and "'angels of domesticity'" (Perrot 10).

Though Johnson did recognize the dissimilitude between women and men, his writing does not place the two into two arenas of action, nor does he provide, except for physical strength, any major difference between the sexes that would privilege one above the other. Indeed, in one sense Irene is a basic definition of gender and the working out of the relationship between men and women -- a most apt topic for a young husband, as Hagstrum asserts, who was happily acquainted with "'the little disagreements ' . . . [which] may indeed have been cherished as a contribution to a wholesome concordia discors" (45) that included the joys of "a sexual component" (46) as well. Therefore, when Johnson provides his characters with evidence of that love which is the basis of Demetrius' and Aspasia's appropriate response

to each other, and with thought or reason as well, he seems to have created that balance, that concord in discords that his earlier poem introduced.

Unfortunately, however, if we look closer, we find that the way that the characters do think in this play becomes progressively patriarchal, and it is in this area that Hagstrum is insightful in explaining Johnson's view of the ideal woman. She is both "a Christianized Athena and a Christianized Aphrodite," a woman free from the weaknesses produced by the inequities of education and social privilege, a "new woman [who] must rise to the challenge of Dryden and take her place alongside man as a heroic heroine in love" (50). Thus, the established heroic code, Hagstrum asserts, is the important organizing principle beneath Johnson's work. It is the woman who must change into the model hero. She has all the qualities necessary -- if education is added --to make her masculine in everything but physical power. As Hagstrum writes, "But for all her heroic virtue, Aspasia is deeply and unmistakably a woman" (49). Johnson, he believes, "certainly never wanted them [women] to desert their softness" (48).

Thus, the very systems that put women in bondage and kept them there are, from the context of the play, to continue with modification but with continued power. And what is wrong with the heroic ideal we might ask? After all

it has given us Beowulf and all the other warriors who have lived and died by its code. In the foreword to Joseph Meeker's The Comedy of Survival, Konrad Lorenz writes,

The fundamental theme of all literary tragedy is given by the conflict between moral and natural laws. In the attempt to conform to nature, be it only in the forgivable endeavor to survive, the tragic hero cannot avoid breaking moral laws and so incurring a guilt which, according to the precepts of tragedy, must be expiated. (16-7)

Because Irene is a tragic hero, she is doomed to fail from the beginning of the drama, and Johnson's decision to write this kind of play forces Irene and Aspasia into the masculine precept of being required to choose survival or honor -- a decision, it is true, often reserved for male characters. What equalizes women, Johnson says, is that they put aside fear and any irritating trifles, which are the product of wrong teaching, such as too much attention to toiletries, and become, as Hagstrum explains (50), beautiful, heroic, women-men.

Such a generalization is reasonable in light of Johnson's interest in the Amazon as evidenced by his quotations from Sidney and in his consideration of women who fight. Livingston cites Johnson's definition of the term, which includes "virago" (223) and believes that when Irene speaks of this legendary race of women, Johnson's "mere use of the word . . . raises negative associations damaging to any female contender in a male world" (223). However, the

subject of the crossing of gender lines was not unusual in Johnson's work. In his notes on Midsummer Night's Dream, he makes an intriguing statement concerning young men acting women's parts, when he provides an analysis of Flute's unhappiness with his part in the trademen's play: "Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have beard coming" (Johnson 140). Johnson writes,

This passage shews how the want of women on the old stage was supplied. If they had not a young man who could perform the part with a face that might pass for feminine, the character was acted in a mask. . . . It is observed in Downes's Memoirs of the Playhouse, that one of these couterfeit heroines moved the passions more strongly than the women that have since been brought upon the stage. (140)

Johnson's attention toward the sexes seems more to be one of interest than of judgment. His work implies that he loves and respects women but that he is aware that much of the rest of his society does not. How can he choose between the masculine and the feminine, for he seems to believe that, in good Augustan terms, he must have one or the other but not both. Therefore, his women become all that men deem important -- intelligent, rational, and yet attractive. The ideal woman would, like Aspasia, put honor and religion above love, for she would have died rather than give up her religion or her chastity, even though acquiescence might have prolonged her life until rescue could ensue. It's only in Johnson that a woman can hold out for the honorable

choice, remaining steadfast in all reasonable ways, and yet be rescued by a fitting knight in whose love she equally enjoys a happy future -- no suffering innocents here.

Similarly, Irene attempts to think through her situation but with fear as her motivational force, she foregoes honor, accepts her "pagan" marriage, and thus anticipates losing her chastity and defeats herself in the end. Hence virtue is again rewarded, and that which prevents her from suitable choices is the result of inappropriate feminine schooling. Thus women are like men but suffer from coercive societal strictures, and Johnson doesn't truly advocate removing that which has restrained them. The framework remains; a few laws change; the masculine world of the eighteenth century is continued unabated.

Since Johnson accepts, at least consciously in Irene, the framework of the patriarchal authority which has provided so much hardship in his own life in matters dealing with the feminine, does he do so with nature as well? Let us turn to the consequences of the tragic view in the natural world.

Meeker explains the tragic view from a literary ecological viewpoint: "Tragic literature and philosophy . . . undertake to demonstrate that man is equal or superior to his conflict" (38). The tragic situation often includes "three . . . assumptions . . . -- the existence of a

transcendent moral order, the assumption of human supremacy over nature, and the importance of the unique human individual" (59).

Apparently, Johnson believed in the first and third as his tragedy directly shows. We know that as Johnson grew older, he was increasingly concerned with control and moderation, both of which he found very difficult in his own life. In creating Aspasia and Demetrius, he praises the concordia discors of love and honor perfectly balanced as they only can be in fiction.

At the center of this harmony in the play is, once again, the suitable control of human emotion. The idea of balance requires authority of one kind or another, whether in the environment or within the human psyche. In its literal meaning, balance comes from the positioning of equal weights on either side of a stationary base. Johnson's base is the patriarchal society of which he is a part -- whether it is the social or the religious aspect of his life. When we attempt to balance a scale, we must add to or take away material until what is left is equalized. What Johnson removes in this play is audience-induced emotion. While the painful torture scenes of the main character -- in this case Irene -- are fortunately absent, so too are the enjoyable and lighter passions that the love between Aspasia and Demetrius could produce.

It's ironic that the central idea of Johnson's tragedy lies at the heart of the difficulties that many critics have had with the drama. Near the beginning of this study of Irene, we considered Livingstone's statement that a "Hope is dashed: Irene fails to move the reader" (219). It is hard to "move the reader" when the entire text of a play is to remove the excess that leads to the projection of emotion on the stage. Aspasia has lost fear, and Demetrius has moderated his zeal. Balance and harmony are, in the final analysis, indicative of a quiet contentment -- an emotional state difficult to stage.

However, Johnson's refusal, consciously or not, to allow emotion of any type to develop within his play does show the influence of patriarchal attitudes in his life. While he believes that women and men are equally intelligent and capable, while he does assert that most problems with women are a matter of education and not of natural inferiority, he cannot allow either the woman or the man the kind of passion that would make the play more exciting to the audience, perhaps those very differences, according to Hangstrum, that in Johnson's life "were recollected in a tranquillity that made them seem spicy rather than nasty or mean" (46). Because these people are heroic in the play, perhaps they cannot have the accompanying irritations that concordia discors also provides. Because Johnson is always looking for the general and not the particular, they cannot

possess eccentricities that will mark them as humans, for "the critics were never tired of repeating that it was the poet's duty to avoid the minute and particular and concentrate on the general" (Sutherland 23). Generalized emotion has little impact. We know that Demetrius and Aspasia love because they tell us, but we don't feel that brightness, that welling up of joy in any positive way. The very removal of the pitiful suffering heroine -- certainly a positive note in the drama -- seems unfortunately to be accompanied by the absence of the enjoyable emotions associated with the witnessing of passionate love -- the extremes of pain and pleasure are thus both eliminated.

Such a situation is intriguing in light of the kind of man that Johnson was. Gray explains that

By all accounts he was warm-blooded, deeply affectionate, and very much aware of women, though the expression of his vibrant sexuality was subdued and repressed by circumstance that are well known. (106)

Of course, as this study has shown, the reasons for his repressions, do not, I believe, lie, as Gray asserts, so much in his own appearance and certainly not in his wife's later problems as in his concern with "loss of self-control" (Gray 106). Just as Johnson doesn't enjoy seeing suffering in print or on stage, neither does he like to experience it,

and the many critics who find this absence in Irene do understand Johnson's problem but not the solution, and neither does Johnson.

He is caught within the dilemma of which he often writes -- the conflict of passion and reason -- and in his work, if not in his life, he always attempts the restrained and the thoughtful. In A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry, James Sutherland explores the apparent disparity in Johnson's expression of emotions. Sutherland differentiates between public and private discourse. Johnson may speak without thought, but he never writes without deep consideration:

His poetry was more deliberately submitted to the public. The eighteenth-century poet's consciousness of this public inhibited the expression of emotion, unless it was of a recognized and acceptable kind. . . . it is clear that the more private and personal emotions . . . a man kept . . . to himself, or unburdened . . . only to a friend. (67-8)

Therefore, yet again Johnson accepts that which society demands -- restraint. In his major characters, then, he will produce the men and women that behave within the bounds of polite society. Irene, who cannot curb her fear of death or her desire for power and wealth, will die, and Demetrius and Aspasia, who have moderated their behavior and emotions through the positive that each has had on the other, will live. If men and women are basically the same -- as his work has consistently shown to this point -- then his

characters will be equalized as well. The Christian ideal, he implies, is that everyone thinks and all emotions, for both men and women, are kept well-ordered. Ironically, not even the audience of the eighteenth century favored in its verse that balanced propriety in moral behavior that it avered in its public and private life. It is not that Johnson's play failed by eighteenth century standards but that it succeeded too well.

If Irene reveals the complexity of Johnson's understanding of men, women, and society, the play's text reveals just as thoroughly Johnson's intellectual apprehension of the proper place of nature in the life of a Christian. In his writing and his life, his attitude toward nature reflects the same stringent rectitude that is apparent in his attitude toward human relationships.

Sutherland makes an insightful comment about poetry in this time period: "What is characteristically absent from eighteenth-century poetry (and, indeed, from all the arts of the period) is the sense of immediate, direct contact with experience" (75). We have seen how, in Johnson's poetry and non-fiction, he has put aside much of the joy of nature just as he has curbed his emotions, and Irene is perhaps the clearest representation of Johnson's view of the natural world. He has separated, by this time, creation into human and non-human, a step above the frequent division into a certain class of ruling men who control every inferior

creature, including women. In the characterization of his tragedy, Johnson has continued his use of dangerous nature as symbol and informative figurative ornamentation, and in this way he contrasts the worlds of the Turks and the Christians.

However, just as critics have failed to note the importance of nature and/or women in much of Johnson's work, so have many neglected that which would show a contrast between the cultures. Damrosch, for example, finds little difference between the two enemies. "Johnson virtually ignores the contrast between two great civilizations . . . The religious conflict that remains . . . exists only in the minds of the main characters" (114). Waingrow is closer to understanding the importance of the differentiation between these two groups of people when he cites Boswell's recalling of Johnson's statement that "'there are two objects of curiosity, -- the Christian world, and the Mahometan world. All the rest may be considered as barbarous'" (Waingrow 81).

Indeed, as Damrosch points out, Johnson has changed the original story of the play and has created another emperor entirely. "Johnson . . . presents Mahomet as a civilized and indeed anxiously conscientious monarch who is depressed by the thought that Irene's conversion to his religion is not sincere" (112). He is far removed from the ruler who "contrived an instructive spectacle, and 'with one of his

hands catching the faire Greeke by the haire of the heade, and drawing his falchion with the other, at one blow stricke off her head'" (qtd. in Damrosch 112). We know that Johnson believed that people were everywhere alike except in their customs, so instead of creating barbarians, he has given us women and men who may be mistaken in their philosophies, and one major difference between the Christian and the Turk is their apprehensions of nature.

As we have examined the types of love within the play, we have touched upon two ways in which Johnson has connected nature negatively to the Turks. Abdallah sees his love of Aspasia as instinctive as a hungry lion, as uncontrollable as "swelling waves" and volcanic earthquakes (III. I. 50-3). What is Cali's call to rational thought in the face of such emotion? "Let us reason" (III. I. 31), he argues, but his former minion cannot hear.

Such outbursts of emotion parallel one of the many Christian ideas concerning the world itself. In The Anatomy of the World, Michael Macklem explains that in the seventeenth century the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo supported the Christian idea that creation was imperfect, for "the planets move at irregular velocities" (12) and "the moon is an imperfect sphere with mountains and valleys" (12). Thus, "the world was committed to the disorder of sin" (12). Therefore, reason and balance are not located specifically in nature, and the man who justifies his rash

actions because they are like other aspects of nature has not discovered the redeeming quality of Christianity which is to restore goodness and innocence in the world.

Similarly, Mahomet is in error, for he draws analogies between humans and other earthly creatures. He values Irene just as much as he does "fairest flow'rs" (II. VII. 31), "speckled shells" (II. VII. 32), and the "feather'd wand'rers of the sky" (II. VII. 34). If, for Johnson, the Christian view of love between men and women brings into life a happy, lasting harmony, a Turkish relationship offers base desires and exploitation. How long will Abdallah's excessive passions continue unabated? How long will Mahomet enjoy the simple beauties of flower, bird, and shell, none of which seem to last any longer than a young woman's beauty?

The fury of nature is not limited to the passions of life. Johnson shows us that the analogies that we draw to nature can be deceptively dangerous. It is a misreading of the world picture, he implies, to believe that if we are, like Mahomet, kings that we are equal to the most powerful parallel in the natural world. For Johnson, "the sun, the king, [and] primogeniture" (Tillyard 10) do not "hang together" (10) with "the war of the planets . . . echoed by the war of the elements and by civil war on earth" (10). There exists no echoing bond that connects one sphere with another except in the minds of Mahomet's followers.

Such is the case negatively explained in the Turks' view of the cosmos. In the play one function of figurative nature is to emphasize the power and fierceness of Mahomet, the Emperor of the conquering army. When Cali, the Vizier, greets his ruler, the words are intended to flatter: "Hail, terror of the monarch of the world, / Unshaken be thy throne as earth's firm base" (I. IV. 1-2).

These people have no doubt as to the solidity of the earth, and in a delicate time of civil unrest, Cali draws a comparison between what is the most dependable of structures, the world. Similar lines express a feigned concern for Mahomet's personal longevity: "Live till the sun forgets to dart his beams / And weary planets loiter in their courses" (I. IV. 3-4).

Thus Cali moves beyond the earth unto the sun, which is central to most cosmic views because of its great energy. If the sun, now personified as "he," no doubt drawing a masculine similarity between the two centers of various life, "forgets" to shine, then the effect will ripple throughout the universe causing planets, enervated by the loss of light, warmth, and physical equilibrium to falter, pausing here and there in their orbits.

Similarly, in Act II, when Abdalla, Cali's cohort in Turkish treason, attempts to convince Irene to become Moslem and marry Mahomet, the force of the emperor again is the focus of discussion:

At his dread name the distant mountains shake
 Their cloudy summits, and the sons of fierceness,
 That range unciviliz'd from rock to rock,
 Distrust th' eternal fortresses of nature,
 And wish their gloomy caverns more obscure.
 (II. II. 28-32)

Mahomet influences not only the men and women in his realm, but his power reaches beyond the human-centered unto the natural world. What is ironic is that Cali, the instigator of the civil unrest, pretends to hope that Mahomet's "throne" will be as "unshaken . . . as earth's firm base" (I. IV. 2) while Abdalla says that the name of Mahomet causes the earth to tremble. It is, then, Mahomet who will cause his own "earth" to shake, his own "throne" to totter, his own planets to "loiter" when he allows his enjoyment of flowers and birds, his Irene, to turn him from duty. Cali and Abdalla hope Mahomet will fall, and part of his destruction will thus lie in his own actions.

Part of Mahomet's problem is that he believes the hyperbolic flattery that his followers give him. He connects the natural settings of the political areas that still lie unconquered as reasons for Cali's postponing a holy pilgrimage:

What! think of peace while haughty Scanderbeg
 Elate with conquest, in his native mountains,
 Prowls o'er the wealthy spoils of bleeding Turkey?
 While fair Hungaria's unexhausted valleys
 Pour forth their legions, and the roaring Danube
 Rolls half his floods unheard through shouting camps?
 Nor couldst thou more support a life of sloth
 Than Amurath. (I. V. 13-19)

Both the natural environment and the human-drawn boundaries of countries will be conquered by his might.

Cali counters with another nature simile that warns about the dangers of stretching power beyond its strength: "Extended empire, like expanded gold, / Exchanges solid strength for feeble splendor" (I. V. 37-8). Again Mahomet believes in his almost superhuman power:

Preach thy dull politics to vulgar kings,
Thou know'st not yet thy master's future greatness,
His vast designs, his plans of boundless pow'r.
When ev'ry storm in my domain shall roar,
When ev'ry wave shall beat a Turkish shore,
Then, Cali, shall the toils of battle cease.
(I. V. 39-44)

As a god or deity creates its worlds, the emperor makes "vast designs" and "plans of boundless pow'r." Then, no matter where winds and rains fall or oceans ebb and flow, the land will belong to Mahomet. Such is the conceit of the Turkish ruler who forgets his prayers, boasts of his own abilities, and falls prey to the attractions of an infidel Christian love.

The danger, then, is understanding the ways that humans truly exist within the framework of the natural world, and the methods by which men and women can know whether they are reading nature as they should or whether they are projecting, like Mahomet, their own desires and passions onto the storms, mountains, and animals about them.

The Christian, Johnson implies, has a better approach. Nature offers such heroes as Demetrius and Leontius methods of revealing their own cosmic views that Johnson would find more wholesome and reasonable. Leontius is concerned because Greece had no omens from nature to warn of the disaster of the Turkish attack:

. . . The sons of Greece,
 Ill-fated race! So oft besieg'd in vain,
 With false security beheld invasion.
 Why should they fear? -- That power that kindly
 spreads
 The clouds, a signal of impending show'rs,
 To warn the wand'ring linnet to the shade,
 Beheld without concern, expiring Greece,
 And not one prodigy foretold our fate. (I. I. 28-35)

Humans, Leontius says, should expect at least as much warning from God as the deity gives to the birds before an approaching storm. The Greeks had nothing to help them face their enemies.

Demetrius explains that people don't need nature to explain future dangers. It is the reasonable mind that should read in the lives of humans the forthcoming storms:

A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it.
 A feeble government, eluded laws,
 A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
 And all the maladies of sinking states.
 When publick villainy, too strong for justice,
 Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
 Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,
 Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard?
 When some neglected fabrick nods beneath
 The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,
 Must Heaven dispatch the messengers of light,
 Or wake the dead to warn us of its fall? (I. I. 36-47)

Demetrius says that people can look logically at the corruption of the government and the vices of the public figures to judge rationally the health of a nation. God has no need to provide comets, eclipses, and other "messengers of light" whose signs can be misused by charlatans and fools. Thus, to the eighteenth century Johnsonian Christian dressed in Greek garb, natural phenomena are elements of superstition, not omens. Hence, Johnson has moved from the early poet who found sensual enjoyment and spiritual truths in nature to the thoughtful Christian intent on reason.

And what is Johnson's position toward nature? In both "On a Daffodill" and "Festina Lente," nature is marked with decay, as Macklem explains, a creation, in which "the heavens as well as the earth, [are] in a 'sensible decay and mortality'" (12). However, at the end of the seventeenth century, this pervasive idea championed by Burnet came under attack by such writers as "Herbert Croft, Bishop of Hereford" (Sutherland 27) and "John Ray, divine, author of a popular treatise on The Wisdom of God" (28), in which he asserts that nature, including its mountains, reflect in no way the damaging consequences of Original sin. Thus, Johnson, as he moves from problems symbolized by decadent nature in cliffs and mountains, approaches a more scientific view of the world. It has its own existence, and is of

practical and reasonable use complete within itself without requiring human interpretation or interaction to justify its existence.

Thus, in writing about people mistaken in their apprehension of nature, Johnson creates Turkish people who believe that deities meddle directly in human lives. Cali, like Mahomet, has his plans and his designs. He hopes to use Demetrius and Leontius to help remove Mahomet from his throne. The Vizier wishes to delay the meeting between Aspasia and her lost love Demetrius, and while he and Abdalla are talking to Aspasia and Irene in the garden, Abdalla sees the two Greeks walking toward them and informs Cali, who then sends everyone away. In a soliloquy Cali speaks of plans:

How Heav'n in scorn of human arrogance,
Commits to trivial chance the fate of nations!
While with incessant thought laborious man
Extends his might schemes of wealth and pow'r,
And tow'rs and triumphs in ideal greatness;
Some accidental gust of opposition
Blasts all the beauties of his new creation,
O'erturns the fabrick of presumptuous reason,
And whelms the swelling architect beneath it.
Had not the breeze untwin'd the meeting boughs,
And though the parted shade disclos'd the Greeks,
Th' important hour had pass'd unheeded by,
In all the sweet oblivion of delight,
In all the fopperies of meeting lovers;
In sighs and tears, in transports and embraces,
In soft complaints, and idle protestations.

(II. III. 1-16)

Humans are not gods, whatever Mahomet might think, and Cali knows only too well that he must be aware of all possible

accidents and threats to his plan. Inadvertently, not deliberately, the breeze and the trees tell of Demetrius's and Leontius's presence.

Again we have discovered irony in a nature image. Earlier in the play, when Cali questions Demetrius about the honor and courage of Leontius, Demetrius responds that his friend is the most stalwart:

Sooner these trembling leaves shall find a voice,
And tell the secrets of their conscious walks;
Sooner the breeze shall catch the flying sounds,
And shock the tyrant with a tale of treason
(I. II. 26-9)

When the breeze becomes the "voice" of the trees, the leaves part and in a treasonous way reveal the presence of Leontius and Demetrius. Thus, what Demetrius has said about omens and nature is accurate. Signs in nature are hard to interpret, and causes difficult to ascertain. Therefore, we can hear Johnson say, it's better to leave such interpretations strictly alone.

Indeed, while Irene is trying to decide just how angry God will be if she gives up her religion for another, she looks about her and attempts to read his message in the garden:

See how the moon through all th' unclouded sky
Spreads her mild radiance, and descending dews
Revive the languid flow'rs; thus Nature shone
New from the Maker's hand, and fair array'd
In the bright colours of primaeval spring;
When Purity, while fraud was yet unknown,

Play'd fearless in th' inviolated shades.
 This elemental joy, this gen'ral calm,
 Is sure the smile of unoffended Heav'n. (V. II. 1-9)

Aspasia, however, warns her of the variable disposition of natural elements. Just as Irene may look happy and serene as she sings and smiles, she is afraid within her soul.

Similarly, Aspasia tells her,

Thus, on deceitful Etna's flow'ry side,
 Unfading verdure glads the roving eye,
 While secret flames, with unextinguish'd rage,
 Insatiate on her wasted entrails prey,
 And melt her treach'rous beauties into ruin.
 (V. II. 33-7)

In such a consideration of humanity, although Johnson often says that all men are equal except for the variety in their cultural accouterments, he does see Christian nations as superior. In his discussion of primitivism, Horigan explains the attitudes of the Europeans as they came into contact with other people. Some believed in the idea of the noble savage while others saw these people as wild men very close to animals:

For the early Christians, however, the idealization of "savages" constituted a problem . . . for not only were they not Christian -- and , moreover, held responsible for the martyrdom of early evangelists --but any notion of a pure and natural life, of a fundamental goodness unrelated to the divine doctrine of life in the Garden of Eden, could only conflict with established religious authority. (55)

Thus, even in the eighteenth century, Johnson could only see the Egyptians in "To a Daffodill" or the Turks in Irene as misguided, even though he might respect and/or enjoy some elements of their culture -- their courage, their natural cunning, their adaptation to their own habitants.

One way Johnson is determined to differentiate himself from the Turk in Irene is in the reading of nature.

"Savages, though they might be considered human, were clearly regarded as inferior to civilized Europeans -- civilization, of course, being equated with Christianity" (Horigan 60), and while some Englishmen might read God's will into nature, even with the examples of the Protestant poets of the seventeenth century before him, Johnson, as an adult, could not. This refusal to see nature in such terms becomes increasingly important if we consider that according to Katherine H. Adams,

In the first draft and presumably in the first completed version, Irene's adoption of Mohammedanism is given a primary focus . . . [but] this conflict and the implied ultimate condemnation of Islam were finally not topics that Johnson, who had pleaded in the preface to Lobo's Voyage to Abyssinia (1735) for fairness in judging other nations, wished to develop and he removed such discussions from the play. (192-3)

Thus, just as there is a contrast in the types of love that appear in the play so are there contrasts in the Turkish and Christian Greek view of nature. Near the end of the play, Demetrius, Leontius, Abdalla, and Cali are

preparing to rescue Aspasia, and in the description of the troops waiting to aid the escape, the Greeks are direct and realistic. Leontius says, "Our bark unseen has reach'd th' appointed bay, / And where yon trees wave o'er the foaming surge / Reclines against the shore.. . " (IV. III. 1-3).

However, Abdalla does more than describe the weather; he interprets its meaning: "The fav'ring winds assist the great design, / Sport in our sails, and murmur o'er the deep" (IV. III. 6-7). The Christians look at nature and see it for what it seems to be, but for the Turks, the natural environment is capable of sympathetic responses, and thus the pathetic fallacy has important meaning in the differences between the two cultures as far as nature is concerned. This contrast echoes the inclusion of the Egyptian flowers in Johnson's earliest extant poem, "On a Daffodill." The Egyptians, Johnson writes, "bow'd" (l. 15) to their flowers, while he used the English blooms to point truths about life by using the plants in an emblematic way.

By the time of Irene, nature provides the setting of the play, but any interpretations of the physical environment are supplied by the Turks in the play and not by Christians. Thus, Johnson has removed his characters from a direct and constant relationship with the environment. Certainly we do not have to read nature as prophetic omens of future happenings to be sympathetic to the environment, but Johnson's reduction of the Christian's

natural world to waterways of escape, brief interludes of restful beauty, and simple impressionistic settings shows his removal from a serious, conscious involvement of nature at this point in his writing. When Johnson elevates Irene to the male hero position, he is placing her within a structure that is not natural to any human being, including men. Thus, what looks positive is negative. As he elevates women, he devalues nature. The new position for Irene leads not to freedom but to death, and Aspasia can live only if she is confined by the moral precepts of her society. Everything within the play is controlled, not by natural instincts and desires, but by what patriarchy has determined is moral, and all creatures that fear damnation must not step beyond the boundaries so set. Thus Johnson has truly made women the equal of men. All are caught within the social system.

The problem with such a presentation, according to Meeker, is that literature perpetuates the idea that the tragic mode is superior to the comic, "that choices [must] be made among alternatives" (45), that "only humans can sin by departing from the moral order" (55). Meeker explains

that tragic heroes themselves do not generally contend against their natural environments, nor are they exploiters of nature. . . the elements of nature are merely used by the poets to represent the inner struggles within the character of the hero. (58)

Certainly we have found that such is the case with Johnson. What happens is that such a negative use of nature promotes a distancing of the human from the environment and encourages "the long and disastrous warfare between mankind and the natural world" (Meeker 63). Since Johnson is divided within himself -- reason and passion, good and evil, hope and fear -- for all that his life experiences tell him that sharing is better than conquering, for all that he makes intelligent and nurturing steps toward a partnership world, he still follows the external forms of patriarchy -- traditional literary forms, established religion, and an evaluative, structured society in which too many people suffer.

CHAPTER V

JOHNSON AND THE PASTORAL IMPULSE

To this point, Johnson's changing vision of women and nature is a poetic example of the difficulties rational thinkers faced when they attempted to divide the universe into the civilized -- the man and the masculine [including in Johnson's case, woman made man] -- and nature -- everything else. In Nature and Culture in Western Discourses, Stephen Horigan argues that

During the eighteenth century, it was deemed possible -- through the use of systematic classification based on observation and analysis -- to distinguish humans from animals with scientific rigour [even though] the criteria put forward to establish that distinction were still by no means clear. (50)

It comes as no surprise, then, that the youthful Johnson replaces nature as emblem in "To a Daffodill" with nature as symbol in such poems as "Festina Lente." As he matures, Johnson, the sensuous child, becomes Johnson, the young poet who once saw what Paul Shepard calls the mythic, "eternal and recurring patterns" (56) in his surroundings. Throughout his life, however, both his religious and cultural orientations encourage a separation of the human from the non-human, and consciously or not, Johnson allows this distance to deepen.

Gross explains the development of such a restraint in early modern English life. From the Renaissance the conflict between a healthy personal psychology and "rigorous sanctimony" (5) had produced "repressive views" (5) within the individual:

For Augustan intellectuals, much feted analogies between the hierarchal government of the mind and subordinating offices of the state extolled the sovereign power of cool Rationality: the passions, just as the rude, tempestuous rabble, were no more than snarling derivatives of the subhuman, to be duly muzzled and confined. And despite far less parochial attitudes of the Georgians, now amply impressed by the iconoclasm of Locke, Hume, and the philosophes, the enclaves of irrationality were still jealously guarded by doctrinaire policies in modern dress as well as hidebound reductionism. (6)

Johnson's early veneration of both women and nature, an attitude that reflected the organic, egalitarian appreciation of the cosmos, changed over the years. Increasingly in his writing, he gave superior power to the woman, the female savior to whom he appeals in verses in which his problems --his need to succeed in a profession, his desire to make money for his family, his fears that he will not name, even to close friends -- appear in the symbolic precipices, the chilling winds, the barren fields of his interior landscape. Johnson does not seem to allow his view of sentient life to go beyond the human. By the 1730s nature for him has several functions, but few exist for positive enjoyment and none are spiritual.

In Irene begun in 1736, nature for the Christians acts first of all as a neutral commodity. This pragmatic Christian use of nature in Irene, such as the power of the tides to carry the Greek boats to safety, is paralleled, on the other hand, by the Turks' belief that nature provides clues to the gods' attitude toward human behavior.

However, in the non-Christian world, nature, in the form of the hidden garden, offers yet another service of bowers and trees, flowers and vines. When Mahomet apologizes for not realizing the inherent value of Irene's mind and soul, he offers her all the temptations he can imagine -- fame for her abilities, power for goodness and mercy, even freedom for Greece -- and then, almost as an afterthought, he adds,

To state and pow'r I court thee, not to ruin;
Smile on my wishes, and command the globe.
Security shall spread her shield before thee,
And Love infold thee with his downy wings.
If greatness please thee, mount th' imperial seat;
If pleasure charm thee, view this soft retreat;
Here ev'ry warbler of the sky shall sing;
Here ev'ry fragrance breathe of ev'ry spring:
To deck these bow'rs each region shall combine,
And ev'n our Prophet's gardens envy thine:
Empire and love shall share the blissful day,
And varied life steal unperceiv'd away.

(II. VII. 80-91)

In marriage to Mahomet, Irene would have a choice either as a powerful monarch active in the social and political scene in the royal court or as a retiring, contemplative nature lover in a secluded private retreat. But is there perhaps a

longing for the discrete protection of a secluded place? We know already how much Johnson enjoyed the enclosed banks of the pond in Lichfield, the sensual pleasures of nature as a youth. His garden in Irene must be tempting to all that see it.

Such a retreat to the lost Edenic paradise is an age-old theme in literature. In English Pastoral Poetry, James Sambrook details the history of writing that answers this yearning: "Descriptions of kindly landscapes are, doubtless, almost as old as European literature itself; there is, for instance a description in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter of the lovely field in which Proserpine walked" (1).

That Johnson creates beauty in Mahomet's garden is obvious. He details the pleasures from the aromas as well as the sights and sounds, emphasizing as few other poets did, the entire immersion of the individual into nature just as he does when he provides his memories of swimming in the Stowe. Although Johnson has acknowledged this beauty so tempting to sensuous enjoyment, he has made the site Turkish, and these people, the writer repeatedly tells us, are in error concerning their close "pagan" identification with nature; thus Mahomet's offer of relishing an existence where "varied life steal[s] unperceiv'd away" (II. VII. 91) is certainly the last thing that a Christian heroine should choose. Gross writes of the play, "Apart from its moral and religious implications, the play illustrates the emotional

axiom that every enjoyment must be paid for with painful guilt and self-destruction" (45).

Since Johnson openly rejects the pastoral "impulse" (Marx 9) in this play and since he later touts the advantages of city life -- especially of London -- in his conversations, many critics find it difficult to explain the desire for the pastoral retreat so important to his first major poem London: A Poem in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal (1738), which was published just two years after Irene:

F. W. Bateson . . . considers Johnson's view of the country vis-a-vis London "a pretended enthusiasm." Paul Fussell writes that it would be "naive . . . to imagine that Johnson, the wild enthusiast for London, is personally committed" to his assertions about nature in London. (Nath 221)

Many of these discussions are often based on oft-repeated quotations from Boswell's Life of Johnson, one of which is dated September 30, 1769, thirty-one years after the poem was published:

"The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom." (405-6)

A second, and even more famous, occurs eight years later on September 20, 1777, when Johnson reasonably challenges

Boswell's suggestion that life in London could eventually pall:

"Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." (858-9)

What is the bridge between such conversational retorts as these and the poem London completed in 1738?

We know that the second statement is a quick response to Boswell's assertion, and Johnson himself admitted that in his youth he often took the side of the opposing argument because it offered so many opportunities of producing irrefutable and shocking results. We might consider that he is simply assuming a position for argument's sake, and yet such a generalization would require a narrow-mindedness of gargantuan proportions, for Johnson's love of the city is legend and based in remarks too numerous to mention. Many other critics maintain that Johnson's poem is simply an imitation of a classical model. Often London does parallel the lines of Juvenal. In fact, part of the enjoyment of the verse, according to Clifford, lies in the fact that "every educated reader of the day would have known Juvenal backward and forward . . . A poet could presume on such general knowledge and use it" (188). Specifically,

Where he followed Juvenal most closely, he insisted, as had Pope in his imitations, on having the relevant Latin passages put at the bottom of the page, so that

the adaptation might be better enjoyed. . . . But he was also ready to shift the whole tone of the poem, to use Juvenal merely as a basis for his own special pleading. (Clifford 188)

Indeed, nothing in Johnson's life or writing implies that he was so bound by tradition that he would sacrifice his own opinions for literary precedent. Furthermore, we have no direct evidence to show that Johnson is insincere in what he has written in this poem. In "Johnson's London Re-examined" Prem Nath considers such a possibility, and he convincingly concludes that

Johnson in his imitations of Juvenal's third Satire imitates both art and nature. He imitates art in as much as he makes Juvenal his general model. And he imitates life in the sense that he provides his own illustrations and topics in London. (213)

Nath explains that critics have "alleged that . . . [London] does not voice Johnson's own opinions and feelings" (218). The difficulty lies in the lines that refer to Sir Robert Walpole. However, Nath believes that in politics,

There will be factions, and the adherents . . . are obliged to hold stock-in-trade views . . . Johnson in his London is writing thusly, and there is no reason to suspect that there was any external pressure on him to write in the way he did. (218)

If we believe, like Nath, that Johnson is honest in his writing of London, what conditions could lead to the composition of the poem? The most common explanation is that the political situation in England did demand

attention, and satire is the most reasonable and popular eighteenth century for encouraging reform. Nath explains that "the political perspective of the poem is Johnson's addition to it; it has no parallel in Juvenal. . . .

[Johnson] was not the first to write against Walpole and his administration" (217). Johnson is following the Pope of the 1730s, producing satires and epistles in imitation of classical models to satirize Walpole's England.

While this portion of the poem is extremely important, other elements, several more personal, tell us about the replacement of country life with existence in a densely populated city as the provincial Johnson moves into a cosmopolitan world. When Johnson married Elizabeth Porter in 1735, he showed every intention of living near his birthplace, for Edial Hall, the site of his school, is less than a mile from Lichfield (Rossiter 370). However, when his hopes for a successful teaching career began to fade, he turned to other possibilities, and the one that he chose was a young writer's dream. He would compose a great work that would be met with acclaim; he would go to London; he would be famous. These optimistic goals Bate explains in a very pragmatic way:

Feeling guilty that -- far from improving Tetty's fortune -- the school he had started was simply draining it, he turned to the only other alternative, writing; not small pieces, journalistic or in verse,

but a full-dress blank-verse tragedy that, if performed, would not only make money but might also make his reputation. (156-7)

Knowing as we do today the talent of Samuel Johnson, we might consider such a move rational, but the odds for success for a poor, unknown writer in London in the 1730s were very small indeed. In "1700 Londoners numbered 555,000 -- a tenth of the English population" (Braudel, The Perspective of the World 365). On the surface, the large eighteenth century cities, such as Amsterdam, Paris, and London, offered untold possibilities for enjoyment and advancement:

These great urban centres appealed . . . strongly to interest and imagination . . . [and] individuals hoped to be able to take part in the spectacle, the luxury and the high life of the town and to forget the problems of everyday living. These world-cities put all their delights on display.

(Braudel, The Perspective of the World 31)

Johnson was but one of thousands captivated by the thoughts of succeeding in a cosmopolitan area. When he first arrived, by all reports, he was not disappointed in what he saw. According to Clifford, "On this first trip to London he was apparently more interested in becoming acclimated to city life" (181) than in looking for work. His exploration of the city "proved so fascinating that . . . Without his wife . . . to urge him to work . . . he

wandered about the streets, watching the people and dreaming of what he would accomplish someday" (181).

However, the lighted brilliance of the city warns as well as welcomes, and like the majority of the recently arrived citizens, Johnson found little encouragement. When he came to London with his play Irene, he was bringing to the public, not the later writings that he dashed off so quickly, but the product of many hours of effort. Boswell describes part of that process:

In the course of the summer [of 1737] he returned to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson, and there he at last finished his tragedy, which was . . . slowly and painfully elaborated. A few days before his death, while burning a great mass of papers, he picked out from among them the original unformed sketch of this tragedy, in his own hand-writing, and gave it to Mr. Langton. (78)

Johnson's tragedy, unlike much of his writing, was dear to him throughout his life, and the London reception was very cold indeed. Boswell explains in one sentence the response to the written play in 1737:

Mr. Peter Garrick told me, that Johnson and he went together to the Fountain tavern, and read it over, and that he afterwards solicited Mr. Fleetwood, the patentee of Drury-lane theatre, to have it acted at his house; but Mr. Fleetwood would not accept it, probably because it was not patronized by some man of high rank; and it was not acted till 1749, when his friend David Garrick was manager of that theatre. (81)

Clifford notes that "a year and a half later, when he [Johnson] grew desperate . . . [he] tried to sell the

copyright of the play" (235). Whatever the reason for the absence of the play on the London stage -- the lowliness of Fleetwood's nature as "a show-business shark of the worst type, who had patience for nothing except pantomimes" (Wain 84) or Johnson's mismanagement, or "'diffidence'" as Cave asserted to Birch (qtd. in Clifford 235), Irene was not produced, and Johnson was a failure. His single goal for the London move was not realized.

What was a strong, young, unemployed man to do in London? When he first arrived in the city, he visited Wilcox, "a bookseller" (Boswell 74), who "eyed his robust frame attentively, and with a significant look, said, 'You had better buy a porter's knot'" (74 n2).

Johnson, however, refused to give up what he believed that he did well for the paltry but quick payment for physical labor. If a produced tragedy was not possible, why then he would turn his hand to something less exalted, perhaps a shorter piece that Cave, the editor of The Gentleman's Magazine, might use. "Johnson's first contribution appeared in the issue of March, 1738" (Clifford 187), but Johnson was not readily employed at the time of the writing of London, for Cave waited until "Johnson gained some local reputation by a separate publication of his own" before he "became one of the editor's most trusted assistants" (187).

Part of Johnson's impetus in writing the poem, then, was practical. Bate says, Johnson wrote London as

an exercise of talent, understandably designed to make an immediate appeal -- to compensate for the failure of Irene, and make money for himself and even more for Tetty, who had placed such trust in him, or at least to get a toe hold on to a shore or bank of reputation.
(173-4)

However, to believe that London was created only for money and fame is no better than accepting that Johnson wrote insincere verse to get published. If we combine the various motivations suggested by Nath, Highet, and Clifford, we get a reasonable explanation for the composing of the poem. Johnson needed the money, so he used his own unhappy experiences to write in a mode popular at the time in imitation of Juvenal, an author whom he had read as a child (Boswell 53). Johnson selected a text that fit the situation in which he found himself. There was no need for insincerity. In a letter to one of his benefactors, Gregory Hickman, Johnson writes "'that versifying against ones inclination is the most disagreeable [sic] thing in the World'" (qtd. in Nath 218). Johnson's own experiences make such an action unnecessary. He had all of his midland scruples and natural excursions to place beside the corruption of the city.

Clifford explains that "London is a young man's poem. It breathes the ardor, the vehemence, the keen sense of

right and wrong of youth" (194), and the emotional surety of the pastoral is fitting for what Johnson himself must have felt as he faced an unsympathetic London. Like Juvenal, Johnson was responding to personal affronts to his self-worth, or as Finch says, a "sense of insecurity" (356).

In Juvenal the Satirist, Hight explains of London's prototype that "the ideas are largely Juvenal's own, although the experience of disappointment, renunciation, and relief was partly his and his friend Martial's" (68). As Juvenal creates Umbricius, an "old friend" who laments the problems of Rome where people "live in perpetual dread of fires and falling houses, and the thousand perils of this terrible city" (Juvenal 33), Johnson invents Thales who scorns the "vice" (l. 5) of London, "a city on . . . the brink of a collective madness . . . focused [on] ambition and greed" (Varney 205). Since Johnson was so concerned about keeping himself and his wife alive in a very dangerous city, why would he not be drawn to the pastoral idea of safety in a place removed from streets where people were killed by wagons, animals, and humans alike (Clifford 175-8)?

Now it's fairly obvious why Johnson did not write a work containing pastoral elements before 1738, just as it is apparent why this year is a reasonable period for the production of such verses. He had to have time to leave the small town of Lichfield behind, time to attempt to conquer

the city, to make London acknowledge his abilities, time to fail to acquire the money that could have made his wife and mother financially secure, time to be desperate about his prospects as a writer.

However, it is always difficult for people to acknowledge that their problems could, at least partially, be their own fault. How could such a talented man be rejected? Geoffrey J. Finch explains that "there is something slightly absurd in the very fierceness of Thales' assertion of independence and moral superiority. . . the reader senses a strong sniff of sour grapes" (356). Like Juvenal, Johnson locates the failure to succeed, not within his or his characters' own being, but within the evil walls of the city.

If Rome was legendary for its decadence in the classical world, London was equally open to moral criticism in the eighteenth century. Clifford explains that Johnson was just one individual in a long progression of writers who saw

Juvenal's third satire on the follies and rottenness of Roman life as a model for a modern work. Boileau had adapted this same satire to describe Paris; Oldham had turned its pointed shafts against the English capital. (188)

Thus Johnson did more than write for profit in this case. He was showing his world the dangers of urban life as Juvenal had before him. Highet explains that Juvenal's poem

has as its theme . . . the power and the vileness of the big city" (65). However, he asserts, "Not all cities . . . are denounced in this way" (66):

The denunciation of city life . . . does not appear, or at least reach its full force, until the city has grown so rich and populous that, instead of being part of a healthy regional complex (city-towns-villages-countryside), it has become an international megalopolis, a floating island, a world in itself. (67)

Such was London in the eighteenth century. Braudel explains that the power of London lay first of all in its "outsize dimensions," which were so overwhelming "that the other cities hardly began to exist as regional capitals." Braudel points to Arnold Toynbee's belief that "in no other western country, . . . did one city so completely eclipse the rest" (Braudel, The Perspective of the World 365).

And at the center of the city lived the poor who died in great numbers. Rudé explains that it was years before the population grew because of the natural reproduction of its inhabitants (Hanoverian London 5). It was the influx of those hopeful thousands from the towns and villages of England that made the city grow (5), and it was the deaths of the poor that filled the cemeteries of the city. At its core, London was dirty, dangerous, full of the poor

miserable people addicted to gin and given over to despair that Hogarth often drew into life in such prints as Gin Lane (1750-1) and that John Gay depicts in The Beggar's Opera (1728).

In Dr. Johnson's London Dorothy Marshall describes the state of many of these people who came to the city for new jobs and better lives:

The metropolis was a great employer of casual, untrained labour that depended only on physical strength. Fielding wrote of the infinite number of chairmen, porters, and labourers, all leading a hand-to-mouth existence, whose means were quite insufficient to maintain their families and who, only too often, drank away whatever little sums they earned. (220)

Until well past the middle of the eighteenth century, she explains, the city was a horror for the poor -- illnesses, including venereal disease that destroyed individuals and families (222-3); crimes often practiced to buy enough bread to survive (221); and child abuse ranging from the infant deaths often caused by "gin-sodden" nurses (227) to the apprentice exploitation by unscrupulous masters (228-9).

Rudé emphasizes the horror of the lives of these small children:

The greatest mortality was among children of under five years of age, reaching a figure of three in four of all children that had been christened between 1730 and 1749. . . . [To] the excessive consumption of spirits, particularly of gin, between the 1720s and 1740s, . . . the House of Commons in 1751 attributed the deaths over the past dozen years of 9,323 children per annum. (Hanoverian London 5-6)

What sensitive man could see the despair about him and not respond? The Johnson who later told Hester Thrale that had he had children, he "should have willingly lived on bread and water to obtain instruction for them" (17) saw these little ones without even that small sustenance to eat. Why should we be surprised, then, that the poem is overwhelmingly Johnson's own?

Finch says that London "is the most deeply felt and powerfully moral work that Johnson produced," for his responses to the misery of others "come from a vein of personal experience that Johnson did not tap in such an undiluted form again" (354). Finch adds, "The scars of poverty run deep in London, and they are the source of the most powerful parts of the work, but in a way the moral dilemma caused by lack of money were equally as tortuous for Johnson" (357).

Even when the time of his deep, grinding poverty was over, Johnson could still recall the nights of walking to keep warm (Bate 178-9), and in the year 1770, according to Boswell, Dr. Maxwell "for many years the social friend of Johnson" (434) spoke of Johnson's attitude toward the poor: "'He frequently gave all the silver in his pocket to the poor, who watched him, between his house and the tavern where he dined'" (437).

As a young man he saw the problems that a monied society entailed, and he put his observations into Thales's lament:

Since worth, he cries, in these degen'rate days,
Wants ev'n the cheap reward of empty praise;
In those curs'd wall, devote to vice and gain,
Since unrewarded science toils in vain;
Since hope but soothes to double my distress,
And ev'ry moment leaves my little less;
While yet my stiddy steps no staff sustains,
And life still vig'rous revels in my veins;
Grant me, kind heaven, to find some happier place,
Where honesty and sense are no disgrace. (ll. 35-44)

In "these degne'rate days" (l. 35), greed has invaded the hearts of the people and contaminated the city. Here in London, as in the past, men may have education and learning -- Johnson refuses to include a disparaging remark about the intellectual life, even though Juvenal sarcastically refers to the "poets spouting in the month of August" (Juvenal 33) -- but in Johnson's time people in power refuse to reward such honest and important endeavors as scientific discovery. The products of learned minds could make life better for English citizens. However, the city has taken what the young men have offered -- Johnson and Thales alike -- and given nothing in return, so the young writer from Lichfield mourns his poverty through the words of his friend in exile: "Ev'ry moment leaves my little less" (l. 40).

Even though much of the city is poverty-stricken, Thales still possesses a small store of funds, and he is

sensible in leaving before even that meager sum disappears. Marshall explains that even "respectable" people (221) could lose all that they had very quickly in London. She writes,

Even if newcomers survived physically, London was full of traps and temptations for the unwary. One of the grimmest hazards was the danger of being imprisoned for debt, not in theory as a punishment but to prevent the debtor from absconding. (222)

Just as Juvenal places the unfairness of unshared profit at the center of his poem in which he includes "bitter contrasts between rich and poor" (Hight 68), so does Johnson repeatedly refer to the dangers of money throughout the poem, and he later tells Hester Thrale, "'Poor people's children, dear Lady . . . never respect them'" (21).⁵

In Johnson's poem Thales has almost been ruined financially, but he is not alone in experiencing London's immoral way with money. Johnson cites undeserved pensions, bought votes, unfair taxes and lotteries, greed, and extravagant clothing (ll. 51, 52, 58, 62, 73), all of which he considers the product of a polluted city. Thales comes to the conclusion that the pastoral, non-economic life is best.

As Fussell says, "the humanist [is] suspicious . . . [of] facile analogizing between material and moral 'improvements'" (4). What is material is not always or even often moral. Thales instructs his friend, the narrator:

Turn from the glitt'ring bribe thy scornful eye,
 Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy,
 The peaceful slumber, self-approving day,
 Unsullied fame, and conscience every gay. (ll. 87-90)

The answer to Thales's dilemma is to flee. In the pastoral retreat money would not have the power that it does in a city where the food has to be brought in from the countryside, where people are separated from nature. Who would not choose to leave such a perilous life?

And yet with the reputation of Johnson's dislike of the pastoral set before them, many critics cannot accept that Johnson would in all truth prefer the country life at any time. However, in "Samuel Johnson's Ambivalent View of Classical Pastoral," Robert C. Olson makes a convincing case for Johnson's appreciation of this genre. Olson believes that

Contemplation is not an end in itself in Johnson, as it may be in the life of a Virgilian shepherd, but meditation as renewal of the spirit for the impending life of action is something that Johnson accepts as a legitimate and valuable pleasure. (40)

In this way, the action in London is created. Thales is in need of regeneration on many levels.

Oddly enough critics have frequently scorned the genre dedicated to the desire to flee city life. Preminger says of the pastoral,

Perhaps most critics agree with Edmund Gosse that the "pastoral is cold, unnatural, artificial, and the

humblest reviewer is free to cast a stone at its dishonored grave." But there must be some unique value in a genre that lasted 2,000 years. This long-lived popularity, it seems, derives from the fact that the shepherd -- a simple swain, with whom everyone may easily identify himself -- deals with a universal subject -- something fundamentally true about everyone. Thus the complex is reduced to the simple; the universal is expressed in the concrete. (603)

Of course the reduction of problems must play a part in the desire for the pastoral. Existing in London was more difficult than living in Lichfield. In 1779 when Johnson spoke of the poor, he explained that the large number of deaths from starvation "happens only in so large a place as London, where people are not known" (Boswell 1031). It is harder, he implies, to let a neighbor in a small town starve than to allow masses to die.

But the primary reason for the desire for the pastoral escape is a reconnection with what the city does not have, and that is nature. In The Machine in the Garden, Marx says that "the ruling motive of the good shepherd, leading figure of the classic, Virgilian mode, was to withdraw from the great world and begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape" (3). Marx believes that a "yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, an existence 'closer to nature,' . . . is the psychic root of all pastoralism" (6).

Indeed the impulse to escape such problems is very human, but psychologists, even in modern times, have often

denied the power of this desire. Freud, like many of the critics who cannot accept that anyone could be dissatisfied with the sophisticated life of a great metropolitan, writes with disdain of the pastoral impulse:

Three sources of human sufferings [exist], namely, the superior force of nature, the disposition to decay of our bodies, and the inadequacy of our methods of regulating human relations in the family, the community, and the state . . . [one reaction is] a point of view which is so amazing that we will pause over it. According to it, our so-called civilization itself is to blame for a great part of our misery, and we should be much happier if we were to give it up and go back to primitive conditions. (43-4)

The implication of Freud and literary critics who demean the pastoral is that nothing in nature can meet the advantages of city life. The very words that we use to describe the pastoral, such as "retreat" (Marx 23), imply a cowardly refusal to face the realities of existence. Freud says that "the man of action will never abandon the external world in which he can essay his power" (40). Freud writes,

The hermit turns his back on this world; he will have nothing to do with it. But one can do more than that; one can try to re-create it, try to build up another instead, from which the most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others corresponding to one's own wishes. (36)

"What puzzles him [Freud] most is the implication that mankind would be happier if our complex, technical order could somehow be abandoned" (Marx 9).

What many of these writers fail to see is that it is the separation of humans from nature that results in a terrifyingly deep unhappiness that forces the necessity for a return to a rural setting. That such a desire occurs implies that city life has eliminated something fundamental to human health, both physically and mentally. It is the removal from the mythic, the organic view of life that has produced the historical, scientific view which has cut the bond between humans and the rest of nature (Shepard 56-7).

And here Johnson is no exception. We have seen his gradual separation from his environment, a move encouraged by the rational age in which he lived. If he were happy, if those who lived in cities were content, then his choice and that of modern life would be a positive one. However, the constant presence of the pastoral in literature emphasizes the emptiness of an attempt at a totally reasonable, patriarchal, objective, intellectual life and a desire, not for separation, but for unity. Marx explores Freud's understanding of this conflict between nature and culture:

Freud's answer -- an avowedly speculative one -- is that such attitudes are the product of profound, long-standing discontent. He interprets them as signs of widespread frustration and repression. . . . he assumes that every social order rests upon the denial of powerful instinctual needs. (9)

Perhaps the natural state, instincts included, has its positive aspects (Marx 9). Even in the eighteenth century,

writers were aware of what they had lost by moving to the city. Barker-Benfield explains the contemporary concern with urban life in her discussion of English Malady (1733), a book by George Cheyne in which the future friend and physician of such writers as Samuel Richardson explains the contaminating influence of London:

Upon my coming to London, I all of a sudden changed my whole Manner of Living. I found the Bottle-Companions, the younger Gentry, and Free-liers, to be the most easy of Access and most susceptible of Friendship . . . nothing being necessary . . . but to be able to Eat lustily and swallow down much Liquor. . . I grew daily in Bulk. (qtd. in Barker-Benfield 11)

Barker Benfield explains the relationship between the pollution of the city and of Cheyne's body:

Cheyne's diagnosis of the effects of his own luxurious and corrupting life also corresponded to his representation of Britain in 1733; it was suffering from "Luxury," too. His vision was shaped by a pseudo-historical contrast between the putative health of a pastoral age and the sickness engendered by subsequent economic success. (12)

Since Cheyne's book was published in 1733, five years before Johnson's poem, it would be very surprising if Johnson was without total knowledge of the interest in the concept of London as a physically polluted and morally dangerous environment. With this idea in mind, Johnson's pastoral impulse is not just a nod at the type of writing that young men often do, nor is it an insincere attempt at satirizing London to follow literary fashion. The poem is, in many

ways, part of the conversation of the time -- is the pastoral countryside healthier and less corrupt than the city? Certainly Cheyne believed such to be the case.

In London Johnson's narrator concurs. Far from London, Thales will be able to "breathe in distant fields a purer air" (l. 5). The words purer air do imply a contrast to the moral corruption of the city where honesty is no social or political virtue:

Here let those reign, whom pensions can incite
To vote a patriot black, a courtier white;
Explain their country's dear-bought rights away,
And plead for pirates in the face of day;
With slavish tenets taint our poison'd youth,
And lend a lye the confidence of truth. (ll. 51-6)

Indeed, in his sixth definition of pure, Johnson explains the term as "free from guilt; guiltless innocent" (Dictionary). Of all the critical writing about this poem, perhaps the most traditional approach is to focus on the political difficulties that would account for the desire to breathe freely in a pure land.

However, no metaphor works well unless it has its abstractions firmly rooted in concrete or physical reality in the way that Johnson always required of figurative language. Thus, pure air in this poem must first be the material that humans must breathe, and the air of freedom can come logically from that symbol as the clean air of freedom in a political state in which all people hope to

share. Johnson's first definition of pure is "not filthy; not sullied" and the second "Clear; not dirty; not muddy" (Dictionary).

In reality London would have had little pure air in the eighteenth century. Modern historians and Johnson's contemporaries would agree. Cheyne, for example, saw the physical dangers of the city as clearly as the financial corruption. Barker-Benfield writes:

His own unhealthy corpulence corresponded to London's. It is "the greatest, most capacious, close and, populous city of the Globe." In contrast to the "sweet, balmy, and clear Air of the Country," London's atmosphere and streets were full of the discharges of human activities: the fumes of workshop and domestic fires; the lavishly burned lamp oil and candles, the exhalations of breaths and crowded bodies (both alive and dead); the "Ordure" of human beings and animals as well as other piles of dirt and waste in cesspools, slaughterhouses, and stables It was the opposite of the simple, pastoral, and unstimulated world of the wished-for past and one which Cheyne termed "natural." (14)

Who would not want to leave the stench of the city behind?

Doubtless Johnson, coming from a country town, would have rapidly taken in the polluted environment about him.

Clifford describes the scene that would have met

Johnson's eye:

London in 1737 was a noisy, brawling, sprawling, dirty place with over half a million inhabitants. Few of the streets were well paved, and pedestrians had to pick their way through mud and garbage, being careful to avoid worse things pitched from the windows above. The

stench from the filth and offal, sluggishly flowing down the channel in the middle of the roadway, must have been overpowering. (175)

Just as money and commerce were topics of Johnson's day, so was an honest concern about the quality of the air. According to Corbin in The Foul and the Fragrant, the public had long been interested in the "deodorization" (90) of cities. The idea of "pure air," was so important a topic in Europe in the early eighteenth century that in "An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies," printed for Tonson in 1733, Arbuthot explains that "'Every animal is adapted to the use of fresh, natural and free air,' . . . young animals lacked that tolerance, born of habit, which allowed the city dweller to withstand 'artificial air'" (qtd. in Corbin 13). "Breathing air that was not loaded with a noxious burden was being claimed as a natural right" (Corbin 13).

Thus Johnson's symbolic use of "a purer air" (l. 6) is an apt choice both literally and figuratively. What is really intriguing here, however, is that we have the first major positive images of the natural world since "To a Daffodill." We have seen how Johnson has usually refused to anthropomorphize nature in his poetry or ascribe spiritual intent to heavenly bodies in Irene. In "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," Ronald Hepburn writes that "to be 'fundamentalist,' literalist

about 'messages of nature'" is to "trivialize" (75) the natural world. However, Hepburn believes, no appreciation of nature, "no aestheticizing of natural objects can occur . . . unless we have discovered metaphor" (74). If we follow Hepburn's reasoning concerning human response to nature, Johnson's employment of natural images is intelligent and sensitive. Johnson has realized the similarities between nature and humans as evidenced by his images, but he has refused to interpret the value of nature in human terms. Thus he avoids the pathetic fallacy. From two perspectives -- the literary and the ecological -- Johnson's images are important guides to his view concerning nature. If what critics take as the central message -- that the political and social scene of England is corrupt -- what is also apparent is the physical presence of the symbol, the literal, impure of London in the eighteenth century.

The sullyng of the physical environment is but part of the danger of the human's alienation from nature. The mental construct of humans as separate from their environment produces bitter and ironic results. We have seen that from the time of Bacon the mythic, organic view of nature has been gradually replaced by the scientific, historic concept of linear progression that values money, power, and individualistic endeavor above all other assets. The gain, perhaps, is the technology which allows people increased freedom to act within the physical environment.

The loss is the destruction of that environment, of that inherent structure of which all people are a part, no matter their desires and arguments to the contrary.

If such an alienation, at its strongest in cities, produced happiness and health, then perhaps we could justify the movement toward patriarchal domination of the environment. However, the result of separation of people from the natural world is often what we find in Johnson's London: poverty, illness, injustice, cruelty, and mutilation of creatures in nature.

In the midst of danger and emptiness, where is a young man to turn? In the past, when Johnson had difficulties, he petitioned women directly and indirectly for aid: his mother and his wife in real life and all the women of his early verse. However, city life has destroyed even the succoring female. The pretty virgins so respectfully lauded by Johnson expire as rapidly as flowers taken from their stems. In this city, a young woman is the prey of treacherous men:

Others with softer smiles, and subtler art,
Can sap the principles, or taint the heart;
With more address a lover's note convey,
Or bribe a virgin's innocence away. (ll. 75-9)

Johnson sees the city complement of Cleora, the feminine focus of "On a Daffodill," seduced and, as Hogarth reminds us in The Harlot's Progress (1732), probably destroyed by

eventual poverty and disease. Gay creates creates a similar picture in The Beggar's Opera (1728) in Polly Peachum and her song of flowers and women:

Virgins are like the flair flower in its lustre,
Which in the garden enamels the ground;
Near it the bees in play flutter and cluster,
And gaudy butterflies frolic around.
(Air VI, ll. 1-4)

However, the aftermath of the bees' activity is deadly for young women who have been "plucked" (l. 5). They end in "Covent Garden," where a defiled young woman ". . . fades, and shrinks, and grows past all enduring, / Rots, stinks, and dies, and is trod under feet" (Gay ll. 7-8).⁶ That such fictional portrayals are representative of the time is supported by factual accounts of the eighteenth century. From a historical perspective, Marshall explains the fate of unmarried, sexually experienced women:

Streetwalkers were recruited from many sources. The country maid, seduced by her master or her master's son, was a stock figure in contemporary plays and novels. So were the young gentlewomen who, in Goldsmith's lines, "stoop to folly and find too late that men betray." Some were the victims of Fleet marriages. Others had no resource to which to turn. . . . Many of them were very young. Fielding writes of girls aged twelve to sixteen, "half eaten up with the Foul Distemper." (235-6)

In London, one other woman, an antithesis of Johnson's pious mother, completes the short catalogue of the dangers of city life:

Here malice, rapine, accident, conspire,
 And now a rabble rages, now a fire;
 Their ambush here relentless ruffians lay,
 And here the fell attorney prowls for prey;
 Here falling houses thunder on your head,
 And here a female atheist talks you dead. (ll. 13-18)

One of the most important memories of Johnson's life was his mother's early religious teachings. He includes the story in his Annals:

I suppose that in this year [1712] I was first informed of a future state. I remember, that being in bed with my mother one morning, I was told by her of the two places to which the inhabitants of this world were received after death; one a fine place filled with happiness, called Heaven; the other a sad place, called Hell. That this account much affected my imagination, I do not remember. When I was risen, my mother bade me repeat what she had told me to Thomas Jackson. When I told this afterwards to my mother, she seemed to wonder that she should begin such talk so late as that the first time could be remembered. (10)

The contrast between the religious mother and the atheist woman is striking. The first offers the hope of eternal life, and the second brings death of two types: she talks her listener to death, perhaps by boredom or, if the sheer force of her argument wins the day, by defeat, and since she does not believe in God, she attempts to convince people of restructuring beliefs so that after physical death, their souls will be eternally damned.

Since the city offers little solace for Johnson at this time of his life, he must find help in some other source, and traditionally the answer to the corrupt city is the

pastoral impulse that appears in Juvenal's Third Satire. Those critics who find so much difficulty with the direct opposition to the city -- the country -- again select those areas that support a narrow and burlesqued view of a complex man. Indeed, Morris Brownell writes that

The myth of Johnson's disgust for landscape is as firmly rooted in the popular anecdotal tradition as the camomile: the more the legend is trampled upon, the more vigourously it flourishes . . . But the myth is constructed, like all the tenacious fables of Johnson's prejudices, from his own statements, lovingly embellished by his biographers and anecdotists. (153)

Brownell asserts, however, that Samuel Johnson "was a discriminating observer of landscape . . . [whose] . . . philosophy of natural description that will bear comparison to fashionable aesthetic creeds of his time" (154). What Johnson dislikes is not the environment but the "falsifying description" (155) that often accompanied the eighteenth century nature lover's forays into wood and field.

Just as he prefers to see nature for what he can understand -- its pragmatic and attractive elements -- in Irene, so does he continue to avoid what Hepburn calls the "trivializing" of nature by assigning human values to it that do not exist (75). This assignation is very different from the symbolic use of nature, which sees similarities between human life and other aspects of nature to make specific points. To Johnson, the latter is acceptable; the former is not.

In the poem, once the decision to leave the city has been made and the reasons for such a choice catalogued in suitable detail, the exile must be on his way. How will he choose to leave this prison of poverty, decay, and sin in which the worthy, the pious, and the virginal have no reward? Again, when necessity or preference dictates, Johnson adapts his literary model. Juvenal's Umbricius leaves by road with "all his goods and chattels . . . packed upon a single wagon" (33). Such a mode of transportation was reasonable for the Romans who had magnificent roadways. However, the pragmatic Johnson understood the inadequacy of using an exact parallel.

Roads were notoriously bad in the early eighteenth century, both those within the capital and those converging on it. In London they were ill-paved and heavily congested, for in 1739 [just one year after the publication of the poem] there were already 2,484 private carriages and 1,100 carriages for hire.

(Rudé, Hanoverian London 22)

Only one English form of transportation could equal the superiority of the Roman road -- the river -- and in London, this could mean only the Thames. Thales will depart, not like Umbricius by road but by water on a ". . . wherry that contains / Of dissipated wealth the small remains" (ll. 19-20).

What is interesting here is what Johnson does not include about the Thames. In reality, the Thames was, much of the source of trade that made London the monied giant

responsible for death and destruction within the city.

Although Johnson's London details the greedy practices of those in power, his poem ignores the river's major role as the center of successful commercial navigation. According to R. Douglas Brown in The Port of London, the Thames rested in the middle of English trade:

With the eighteenth century, reliable statistical information about shipping movements and about the trade handled in London is available for the first time. It demonstrates the dominant position of the port at that period. London handled 77 per cent by value of all foreign trade in 1700. Almost half the imports arrived in foreign vessels, and they carried about 38 per cent of exports. London . . . had 560 registered vessels, totalling 84,882 tons, with 10,065 men. (44)

Rude provides a similar description of the river's importance to English trade:

London was, in fact, not only by far the greatest port in Britain (handling over three-quarters of the nation's trade in 1700), but she remained, throughout the century, the largest centre of international trade, the largest ship-owner and the largest ship-builder in the world; through her markets, her trade and her shipping, she became, in the course of it, the world centre of insurance and banking and, by the end of the Napoleonic Wars, she had even eclipsed Amsterdam, for long her rival, as the money market of the world.
(Hanoverian London ix-x)

Here would seem to be an appropriate place to increase the invective of his satire and follow literary tradition as well. When Juvenal's narrator and Umbricius go just outside the city's boundaries, as do Thales and his friend in

Johnson's poem, the two Romans enter a grove that has been destroyed. Highet explains that Juvenal is sad at the desecration of the land:

The two friends turn off the road into a little park, Egeria's Glen, outside the city walls, to talk in peace. Once it was a sacred spot, holy and enchanted, where the ancestral priest-king Numa met the goddess Egeria and learnt songs and spells from her. Now, says Juvenal, it has been ruined . . . the cave of the nymph . . . has now been spoilt by modern improvements, the grass and the native stone overlaid by expensive marble in the baroque style, gorgeous and unreal. (69)

Johnson could have made a clear parallel here concerning the negative effect of commerce upon the banks of the Thames, for the river has been changed almost from its beginnings. Indeed, Rolt explains that "Practically the whole course of the Thames between Richmond and the sea has been determined and prescribed by man" (4) for two main reasons: "firstly the conversion of marshes into rich farmland, and secondly the improvement of the river as a commercial highway" (5).

One other similarity exists between the two situations in the two poems. Juvenal's grove, as well as having been improved by "marble" (Highet 69), has also been over-run by "beggars" (69), "a settlement of Jews . . . not . . . merchants, but something much poorer and less stable, beggars and fortune-tellers like gypsies in modern times" (69).

However, as Johnson pointedly turns his eyes away from the economic desecration of the waters about London, so does

he refuse to include the details of those who lived and worked along the shores and on the docks of the Thames.

Marshall, describes the scene:

Except for small enclaves, most of Wapping and Shadwell further to the east, with Limehouse beyond it, were full of smallhouses, chandlers' shops, brothels, cheap lodging places, and taverns and alehouses. Though small oases of better houses occupied by merchants or manufacturers who still lived by their warehouse or workplace were to be found, most of the inhabitants were rough and poor -- lightermen, porters, and every kind of casual labourer. Further east along the Thames the East India Company dominated the riverside hamlets of Poplar and Black wall where the shipyards in which the East Indiamen were built were situated. Here, too, were brothels and drinking shops for crews coming ashore after their long voyages. (34)

Although Johnson plots an accurate geographical course with Thales and his narrator as they travel east toward the sea, Johnson carefully blanks the canvas once the two friends remove themselves from the city proper and the discussions of the corruptions of London. It is here that the real pastoral element of the poem begins. We remember that for Johnson the ponds and waters of Lichfield held a central place in his childhood memories, so much so that he wrote a Latin poem upon his remembrances. Here is one element of nature that Johnson seems to hold sacred.

The first major pause for Thales and the narrator as they move along the river is Greenwich, which is outside London. Although today a borough of London, when Daniel Defoe defined the boundaries of the capital,

He calculated that the whole extent of the new circumference of London might stretch for thirty-six miles, enclosing the cities of London and Westminster, the borough of Southwark, and such newly absorbed villages as Deptford, Islington and Newington -- though he excluded Poplar, Blackwall, Greenwich, Chelsea, Marylebone and Knightsbridge.

(Rudé, Hanoverian London 2)

Here Johnson's narrator and exile are just far enough away from the city proper to avoid the tainted airs of London. Here the two friends, like Juvenal's characters, have "turn[ed] their backs . . . and look for the quiet of nature" (Higett 69). Here the Thames, that most commercial of all waters, and Greenwich, a future suburb of London, become again the sacred site of England's most blessed monarch, Queen Elizabeth I, and again, Johnson has turned to the feminine to renew the spirit deadened by separation from the natural world as well as from thoughtful emotion and loving care.

Just as the barge can carry Thales to his pastoral escape, so can reflections upon this river of the past remove the two men from their present existence in a difficult world and slip them into the Golden Age of England's Renaissance. Both psychologically and traditionally, the return to a Golden Age is an understandable response to modern stress. Sambrook explains that

[In] The familiar Graeco-Roman notion of cyclical world-ages with the no less common Graeco-Roman

tradition of a former golden Age . . . Men lived together in perfect amity, without toil, dishonesty, sickness, or old age, and the earth, without cultivation, yielded its fruits in abundance. (22)

The narrator explains the relief with which he and Thales find themselves in a part of England seemingly designed to encourage the happy lives of men:

On Thames's banks, in silent thought we stood,
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood:
Struck with the seat that gave Eliza birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth:
In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew,
And call Britannia's glories back to view. (ll. 21-26)

For Johnson the River Thames has called up the historical past of his country. The picture of Elizabeth with her courtiers sailing upon the Thames in her royal barge is but one of the connections between the river and the queen who was born in Greenwich. In the poem, the narrator stands on the land and remembers in his first calling up of the best of a list of English monarchs, a queen. Just as Johnson has provided us with the importance of women in poems, journals, and tragedy, again he balances the patriarchal rule of Walpole with female benevolence.

Against the martial successes of Edward III (ll. 99-100), "victor at Crecey" (McAdam 53), and Henry V (ll. 120), the conqueror at Agincourt, Johnson places the peaceful reign of Elizabeth I (ll. 21-30) in greater and more reverent detail. She offers a counterbalance to the

warrior kings in London, and she replaces the dangerous and unfortunate women in the city and the poem with a powerful and benign ruler. Thus, the "female atheist" (l. 18) and the seduced virgin (l. 78) later are banished by her royal presence. Elizabeth I is the virgin Cleora and the other young women of Johnson's occasional verse brought to royal heights.

She retains her virginity. However, like the women to whom Johnson appeals in "An Ode on a Lady Leaving Her Place of Abode; Almost Impromptu" and later in "A Winter's Walk," she is also powerful. Elizabeth I combines intellectual abilities with religious piety. According to Boswell, in 1780 Johnson used the queen as one example to illustrate informed spiritual awareness:

Of Queen Elizabeth he said, "She had learning enough to have given dignity to a bishop;" and of Mr. Thomas Davies he said, "Davies has learning enough to give credit to a clergyman." (1074)

In this way Elizabeth becomes like the mother Johnson might wish to have had: one with learning as well as religious zeal.

In The Public Speaking of Queen Elizabeth: Selections from Her Official Addresses, George P. Rice explains that "During the early years Elizabeth's fine mind was being carefully and tastefully trained" (27). Elizabeth was both well-read and publicly religious, two qualities she combines

in her speech proroguing or discontinuing Parliament in 1585. She speaks directly to "the usual legislative audience of some five hundred" (84):

Look you, therefore, well to your charges. This may be amended without heedless or open exclamation. I am supposed to have many studies, but most philosophical. I must yield this to be true, that I suppose few, that be no professors, have read more. And I need not tell you that I am so simple that I understand not, nor so forgetful that I remember not. And yet amidst my many volumes, I hope God's Book hath not been my seldomest lectures, in which we find that which by reason, for my part, we ought to believe. (Rice 84-5)

However, it is more than for her intellectual and religious attainments that Johnson might have found the queen admirable. The womanly qualities that Johnson praises in his writing are the very ones that the queen reveals in her public speech. Rice writes that the Age of Elizabeth I "stood between two epoches in the history of social and scientific development, a time of fundamental changes in ideas about man and his universe" (3), just as the eighteenth century forged the link between the England of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century and the industrialized nineteenth century. As a woman in this period of change, and as a queen as well, Elizabeth speaks directly of the characteristics that would make her a fit ruler for England.

Many of these points she presents in her address "to the men encamped at Tilbury on August 9, 1588" (Rice 96).

First, like Aspasia in Johnson's Irene, she concedes the one limitation of her sex. Her remarks, "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman" (96), sound much like Aspasia's words:

Heav'n, when its hand pur'd softness on our limbs
Unfit for toil, and polish'd into weakness,
Made passive fortitude the praise of woman. (3.8. 42-4)

However, Elizabeth completes her statement with an assertion of her own merit:

But I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than an dishonor should grow by me, I myself will take up arms; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. (96)

Like the women of Johnson's life and writing, she is willing to protect and lead those in need. The natural imagery in the lines concerning Elizabeth I point to the dual nature of virgin and mother:

On Thames's banks, in silent thought we stood,
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood;
Struck with the seat that gave Eliza birth,
We kneel, and kiss the concentrated earth. (11. 21-4)

First of all, the idea of flood has several meanings in Johnson's lexicon -- "a body of water; the sea; a river," "A deluge; an inundation," a "flow; flux; not ebb; not reflux" (Dictionary), or the word can refer to the

heavy menstrual flow of a woman. The Thames is a body of water, as definition one implies, but the words in connection with Elizabeth I also imply the regenerative possibilities of both the land and the queen.

The flood is silver, defined by Johnson as "a white and hard metal, next in weight to gold" (Dictionary). It is interesting that with the idea of Elizabeth the precious metal is silver and not the expected gold of the Golden Age, and yet, in the adjective definition of silver, Johnson says that the term is "white like silver" or "having a pale lustre" (Dictionary). Elizabeth I's title was the virgin queen, and the word silver or white is appropriate to the sexual reputation of this woman. In this sense, Elizabeth I resembles one of the virgins of whom Johnson has written, but in this poem, she becomes, as she did for so many of her people, a virgin mother rather like the Virgin Mary, a sexually innocent woman who gives birth, but Elizabeth I's offspring is a healthy and loving country.

That Elizabeth considered herself in the role of mother is supported by an excerpt from a revised speech delivered in 1558 (Rice 114) concerning Parliament's desire for her marriage. The "Latin text [is] in William Camden, The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, Late Queen of England, 3d ed. (London, 1675)" (Rice 117):

I have made choice of such state as is freest from the incumbrance of secular pursuits and gives me the most leisure for the service of God: and could the applications of the most potent princes, or the very hazard of my life, have diverted me from this purpose, I had long ago worn the honors of a bride I have long since made choice of a husband, the kingdom of England. And here is the pledge and emblem of my marriage contract, which I wonder you should so soon have forgot. [She showed them the ring worn at the accession.] I beseech you, gentlemen, charge me not with the want of children, forasmuch as every one of you, and every Englishman besides, are my children and relations Should it be my lot to continue as I am, a Virgin Queen, . . . I desire no better character nor fairer remembrance of me to posterity than to have this inscription on my tomb when I come to pay my last debt to nature: "Here lies Elizabeth, who liv'd and died a Maiden-Queen." (117-8)

Thus Elizabeth I is everything a woman can be, married and virginal, innocent and motherly, weak in arm and strong in mind and spirit. As descendants of the British subjects that have come before them, Thales and the narrator are her "children," and when the poet writes, "We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth" (l. 24), many images and emotions come to the surface. The earth is naturally of God and is therefore sacred; this particular earth, "Greenwich," implies growth and health in the word green; the queen, the land, and the mother, unpolluted by evil actions of humans, can bring forth goodness in the list of glories that Johnson provides as England's successes, including those of commerce, military might, and religious constancy.

Elizabeth I writes in "'The Golden Speech' of 1601,"

Of myself I must say this: I was never any greedy, scraping grasper, nor a strait fastholding prince, nor

yet a waster; my heart was never set on worldly goods,
but only for my subjects' good. What you do bestow on
me I will not hoard up, but receive it to bestow on you
again. (Rice 107)

The negative parallel to Johnson's catalogue in Thales's
words is striking:

Since worth, he cries, in these degne'rate days,
Wants ev'n the cheap reward of empty praise;
In those curs'd wall, devote to vice and gain,
Since unrewarded science toils in vain;
Since hope but soothes to double my distress,
And ev'ry moment leaves my little less;
.....
Grant me, kind heaven, to find some happier place.
(ll. 35-43)

In the same physical place, where in a different time a
queen-mother increased and rewarded her children-subjects,
the present kind of governmental officials subtract from and
lessen the English people.

And again, the poem becomes centered in money. If the
direct pollution of the land and the air are more obvious in
the removal to the country, the relationship of money and
land are more subtle but no less important. Certainly the
London society that Johnson sees about him and that he has
created in this poem seems a world gone awry, the world that
Cheyne details in his English Malady. Freud wondered if
whole societies might "'have become neurotic'" (qtd. in
Shepard 4), and many people in the eighteenth-century seem
to agree that such is their city. Finch says,

Whatever the reasons for Johnson's divided self . . . to Johnson the young idealist, severely virtuous, it was a horrifying place, but to Johnson the potentially talented writer anxious to make his way, it was the only place to be. It was a tension that . . . he was never able to resolve, and the poem London was the first real product of it. The problem for Johnson coming to the city was to reconcile the demands of a deeply puritan nature with the desire for success.
(359-60)

For Johnson, his poem London reflects the need to heal within the individual that which the city has injured, but it is far more than the vice that he sees in London. It is his separation from the natural environment and all the positive good that he has experienced in his life. Therefore, it's not surprising that Johnson turns to that from which he has alienated himself under the pressures of society and religion -- nature -- and to women -- those humans who have never failed him.

People do not often run away from a balanced and happy life. It is only when existence has gotten out of plumb that people look, as do the narrator in London and his friend Thales, for an alternative to correct that which is out of focus. It is not, then, strange, that a solution with Eliza and the land comes into their minds. Their retreat is to the past, perhaps to the time of the country's success, perhaps to the saving grace of the mother.

And where might Johnson fashion this retreat? First of all, the land must be "from vice and London far" (l. 5), but these general words could imply many suitable pastoral

places in the world. However, the poet and the narrator are British for all their horror at eighteenth century city life. Therefore, it is not surprising that Thales selects "Cambria's solitary shore" (l. 7) as a retreat. Since Cambria is the Latin name for Wales, Johnson makes yet another connection to his classical model. McAdams explains that "Boswell thought these lines showed English prejudice against Ireland and Scotland" (48), but McAdams believes that "they are only the standard contrast between the poor but simple rural life and the vicious and dangerous life of the city" (48).

The designation may have political overtones as well. In the first case, many Scottish and Irish people went to London seeking a better life. It would be the height of irony to have his friend go to a country that seemed determined in great numbers to immigrate. On a similar note, on July 29, 1736, two years before the poem was published, "rioting against the Irish" (Rudé, Paris and London 205) in "Shoreditch and Spitalfields" (204) began because Irish workmen had replaced English laborers (204-5). Sir Robert Walpole notes that the rioters' "'cry and complaint was of being underworked, and starved by the Irish: Down with the Irish, etc." (qtd. in Rudé 205). On July 28 and July 29 the number of protesters rose "to be 2,000 in number" (qtd. in Rudé 205). With such economic problems based in nationalistic feeling, it is not

surprising that Johnson selected another site for his pastoral retreat. "Anti-Scottish feeling was shorter-lived. Whatever its exact origins, it was strong in the 1760s" (314), and Rudé says little about the Welsh at all.

Even though the selection of place may have had such contemporary attitudes as these as a base, the designation of the pastoral escape also has implications from an environmental viewpoint as well. Thales is in actuality choosing a home that is on the edges of civilization, not even in the highlands of England or across a body of water to what probably seemed a foreign place, but in a rural retreat fairly closely connected to England.

In his discussion of the first of Virgil's eclogues, Leo Marx distinguishes between the two types of renunciation of city life, the pastoral and the primitive:

Tityrus embodies the pastoral ideal. Here, incidentally, the distinction between the pastoral and primitive ideals may be clarified. Both seem to originate in a recoil from the pain and responsibility of life in a complex civilization -- the familiar impulse to withdraw from the city, locus of power and politics, into nature. The difference is that the primitivist hero keeps going, as it were, so that eventually he locates value as far as possible, in space or time or both, from organized society; the shepherd, on the other hand, seeks a resolution of the conflict between the opposed worlds of nature and art. Since he often is the poet in disguise -- Tityrus represents Virgil himself -- he has a stake in both worlds. (21-3)

Such a view makes Johnson's writing of the pastoral even more reasonable. He is definitely not a primitive, for

every natural possibility that he suggests in London is pastoral. He certainly has no desire to go "beyond the bounds of culture" (Horigan 50-65). Horigan explains that

The theme of primitivism, and its corollary, the 'noble' savage, are related to a long tradition of myth and poetry which goes back to the beginnings of written history. Descriptions of foreign peoples as noble savages, living a happier and more virtuous life beyond the bounds of civilization appear in the writings of both Homer and Herodotus. (51)

Such people have no place in the pastoral where the shepherds have a much closer tie to what writers would consider the civilized life. Marx explains the pastoral landscape:

It is a place where Tityrus is spared the deprivations and anxieties associated with both the city and the wilderness. Although he is free of the repressions entailed by a complex civilization, he is not prey to the violent uncertainties of nature. His mind is cultivated and his instincts are gratified. Living in an oasis of rural pleasure, he enjoys the best of both worlds -- the sophisticated order of art and the simply spontaneity of nature. (22)

He is, indeed, in control of his environment, and perhaps such is the additional attraction of the pastoral. There the environment is, in pathetic fallacy, often protective of the human, or the human is able to control the land and his life there, or both. The wilderness, like the city, offers often unmanageable dangers. What those seeking asylum desire most is control of their lives, not the helpless exposure to unkind elements or dangerous animals. Johnson,

like most pastoralists, finds the "middle ground somewhere 'between,' yet in a transcendent relation to, the opposing forces of civilization and nature" (Marx 23) more suitable for an Englishman.

In actuality, according to Dorothy Marshall in Dr. Johnson's London, Londoners had already made good their somewhat contrived and artificial escape from the city. "Anyone who was decently dressed and had a few shillings to squander could in such places [as St. James's Park] mix on equal terms with the greatest in the land" (Marshall 150). There, Grosely writes,

Nature appears in all its rustic simplicity: it is a meadow, regularly intersected and watered by canals, and with willows and poplars, without any regard to order. On this side, as well as on that towards St. James's palace, the grass plats are covered with cows and deer, where they graze, or chew the cud . . . this gives the walks a lively air, which banishes solitude from them when there is but little company: when they are full they unite in one prospect, the crowd, the grandeur, and the magnificence of a city, as wealthy as populous, in the most striking contrast with rural simplicity. (qtd. in Marshall 151-2)

Again the similarity between Juvenal's Rome and Johnson's London is striking. Rees explains that "Urban Romans who could afford to indulge their tastes made the garden the heart and center of their worlds. The larger houses looked inward to gardens and courtyards, turning their backs to the street" (4). Similarly, of the English capital, Rudé writes that

Londoners also liked to go farther afield: a favourite excursion was to go to Epsom and Tunbridge, or to Dulwich and Sydenham Wells, to drink the waters Of all short outings the favourites were visits to the fashionable pleasure gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, which lay within easy reach of Westminster . . . The gardens continued to be fashionable until early in the next century. (Hanoverian England 73)

Many of the wealthy people "continued to draw incomes from rents or tolls or from the sale of grain or wool or cattle" (38), and the "London aristocrats took time off from their London duties or social round to seek the relative peace and quiet and the more salubrious air of the surrounding country-side" (47).

Again, what was realistically the natural experience was, for the poor, an artificial experience, and as Marshall explains, the wealthy were always contriving to create gardens and parks, such as Kensington and Kew, which were away from the great unwashed (154), and after dark some of the gardens, such as St. James's, became "less reputable" (152), a place "darker than even the murky gloom of the surrounding streets, which made it the haunt of soldiers off duty and their molls" (152), a place dangerous to the respectable and the pious. Thus, except for the wealthy, even the natural outlets of eighteenth century London were far from ideal, and London's natural setting is filled with sexual promiscuity of the most lewd and basest sort.

If not even the attempt at the pastoral retreats within the city proper can be of any aid, then, again, the direct

removal is the next step. What does the narrator expect to find in Wales that does not exist in London? What is the pastoral desire? If the words escape and retreat determine the ideal land, then other terms such as succor and support seem reasonable. In Johnson's life, as difficulties are recollected in his poetry, when he was in distress, he petitioned powerful female figures for aid. This time is no different. In his life he chose his mother and his wife, but in his poem, the women in London are either too weak or wicked to help themselves or anyone else. From the past he chooses Elizabeth I, and in literature, he chooses the pastoral retreat, "a symbolic motion away from . . . civilization" (Marx 10).

What is the connection here between women and the land? We have seen throughout this study that Johnson has equated women with various elements of natural creation -- always powerful, often nurturing and kind. The pastoral retreat is but one more disguised feminine succor as art, history, and psychology have shown us.

In Places of Delight: The Pastoral Landscape, Cafritz, Gowing, and Rosand provide a wealth of paintings from the Renaissance, the English Golden Age of the Eden retreat. Certainly in these country pastorals, themes revolve around many types of people -- saints in the wilderness, philosophers, shepherds, and scientists (22, 33, 30, 34, 35) -- but the focus of many of these scenes, as in many of the

literary escapes to rural life, is the woman, frequently nude, often plump, and always beautiful.

Many of these paintings include unclothed females alone in fruitful settings or attended by suitably dressed young men. One example is "Giorgione's or Titian's Concert Champetre (Rosand 29). David Rosand describes the painting:

Two young men bracketed by a pair of nude women, set apart from and yet very definitely within the larger landscape that is the world of the picture. One of the youths, dressed quite fashionably, is clearly an urban visitor; his tousled rustic companion, just as evidently, is native to this bucolic region. Beyond their shaded retreat, in the middleground, a shepherd leads his flock of sheep and a goat in sunlight past another grove. In the distance, buildings interrupt the horizon, architectural signs of civilization, a man-made world on the fringes of -- and yet somehow finally containing -- the natural landscape in which this gathering takes place. (34)

Rosand explains that the effect of the painting was longstanding, influencing both viewers and other artists:

Concert Champetre, once it entered public awareness in the eighteenth century, challenged the poetic sensibilities of Watteau and, a century later, the technical curiosity and ambitions of Delacroix; most infamously, it would provide a basis for Manet's shocking communion of modern dressed male and unclothed female in the Park. (45)

The distinction between the attire of the male and female point to one of the major desires, especially for men, to return to nature. Many men see women and nature as equal and inferior to patriarchal institutions, and although

Johnson usually makes the division between humanity -- men and women -- and nature, his pastoral impulse in London, like verse of those before him, implies the return not only to nature but to the female as well.

For the artists following the tradition of the pastoral retreat, the land and the woman are synonymous. Carolyn Merchant explains that

Pastoral poetry and art . . . in the Renaissance presented another image of nature as female -- an escape backward into the motherly benevolence of the past. Here nature was a refuge from the ills and anxieties of urban life through a return to an unblemished Golden Age. Depicted as a garden, a rural landscape, or a peaceful fertile scene, nature was a calm, kindly female, giving of her bounty. . . . The Arcadia theme, eulogized in the pastoral poetry of Philip Sidney . . . and Edmund Spenser . . . appeared in many poetic and artistic settings in which nature was idealized as a benevolent nurturer, mother, and provider. (7-8)

What is implied within this removal from the city is clear. If men are to society what women are to nature in European terms as expressed throughout the range of this paper, then when men fail in royal courts, as Sidney did when Elizabeth I found him "entirely antithetic to . . . her mode of operation" (Kimbrough xviii) or in professions, as Johnson did when his play was so delayed in reaching the stage, they look to what appears to be the opposite --the simple country life, the life of contemplation, not action,

resolving "the contrast between public and private life" (Humphryes 1) which had existed from the time of the earliest pastorals in early Greece.

Although the hopeful Johnson shows disdain for the secluded life, symbolized by the garden, that Turkish bower so beautifully described in Irene, the disappointed Johnson decides that society can be even more hazardous than he had imagined, and thus, it is to what he knows best that he turns -- the kind female, the gentle landscape of the English midlands.

Indeed the pastoral genre shows the truth of such a statement in London. The ravenous beasts of the wilderness, removed from their natural habitat, have become humanized in the city's vices as the citizens of London turn into thoughtless animals, devouring all that they see: Some men, like lawyers, "prowl[] for prey" (l. 16) while others "pluck a titled poet's borrow'd wing" (l. 70). Many thirst for "pow'r and gold" (l. 62). Even the "beau" (l. 104) who may deserve to be removed from public view is "hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court" (l. 109) by people no better than snakes or owls.

Such examples emphasize the need for the either-or choices so popular in rational argument. If the city is evil, then Johnson shows it at its worst. Therefore, his

narrator must "commend" (l. 3) Thales's decision to leave London to enjoy "Some pleasing bank where verdant osiers play, / Some peaceful vale with nature's paintings gay" (ll. 44-5).

At the heart of the retreat is both a reference to paintings -- the link between the visual world of art and the actual existence of nature -- and willows and water, a description not unlike Johnson's remembrance of swimming in the pond in Lichfield, that small spot so hidden by vegetation.

Rosand explains that "the pastoral landscape tends to be more intimate than panoramic" (48). The setting includes what has become tradition to pastoral writing -- water, land, flowers (48) -- but these elements of nature are important for the mental and physical health for the individual as well. Again, the qualities of the genre match the memories of Johnson; Lichfield, although a town, had its secluded spot for natural enjoyment that Johnson so loved as a small boy. Within the urge to the pastoral landscape comes, I believe, a subconscious alienation of the unfortunate elimination of the healthy physical, material universe. The part of London that the well-know Johnson so often praises is that of the mind, not even the spirit. The emphasis solely on the intellect does not produce healthy

individuals or societies. Perhaps a metaphorical analogy would be helpful. Elaine Pagels writes concerning one view of Eden, an early pastoral ideal:

The Valentinian author of the Gospel of Philip, speaking in mythic language, said, for example, that death began when 'the woman separated . . . from the man' -- that is, when Eve (the spirit) became separated from Adam (the psyche). Only when one's psyche or ordinary consciousness, becomes integrated with one's spiritual nature -- when Adam, reunited with Eve, "becomes complete again" -- can one achieve eternal harmony and wholeness. (68)

Whether we call Eve the body as did the early traditional Christian fathers or the spirit as does this gnostic Christian, the separation of the elements of the personalities of people and of their alienation from the land results in pain, depression, and despair.

The horror of the situation is that learned people of the eighteenth century so often saw the soul and mind as superior to the body and the earth. This divisive effect is nowhere as apparent as in Johnson. Varney writes that "neither Juvenal nor any of the major translators and adaptors preceding Johnson (Boileau, Oldham, Dryden) began by stressing any division in the mind" (205):

Johnson's satire presents us with a society containing in itself the elements of its own destruction, an enemy within which will subvert and betray it. Human minds in this society are fractured, hypocritical, deluded, deceived, or otherwise divorced from their own better interests. (204)

Because Johnson valued the either-or dialectical approach to life, he was forced by troubles, in part created by a high-minded civilization, to seek the opposite of the city, the country, and of the man, the woman. He becomes just one of the many educated and lettered men who looked to an earthly paradise of water, air trees, and flowers in which to rediscover themselves once their sophisticated life styles had transformed country lanes into filthy city streets. There is, in such a retreat, a sense of home-coming, of being in touch with the earth and what they viewed the feminine as well.

The pastoral retreat itself might appear self-explanatory. Thales is going to the country we might say, and like the narrator, we might, in the face of the difficulties of living in a modern metropolis, speak with the narrator of the poem and in our "calmer thought his choice commend" (l. 3). The city has not "been subverted" as Varney suggests (211). Rather the city itself, as it has been created by alienated men, is the root of the corruption and danger that Johnson so honestly attacks.

However, Johnson's London is not a pastoral even though it contains a pastoral impulse. The poem is a satire, and many of the retreats are drawn in terms that are less than ideal. Other than the willows and waters that harken back to Johnson's childhood or England's Renaissance, the pleasures available to the exile are limited both in

Johnson's poem just as they are in Juvenal's. For Juvenal, the country is superior only by comparison to the corrupt city:

If you can tear yourself away from the games of the Circus, you can buy an excellent house at Sora, at Fabrateria or Frusino, for what you now pay in Rome to rent a dark garret for one year. And you will there have a little garden, with a shallow well from which you can easily draw water, without need of a rope, to bedew your weakly plants. There make your abode, mattock in hand, tending a trim garden fit to feast a hundred Pythagoreans. It is something, in whatever spot, however remote, to have become the possessor of a single lizard! (Juvenal 49)

Although there are a few positive images in the plentitude of food to satisfy the first vegetarian, the plants are "weakly" and the livestock reptilian.

Similarly Johnson produces a garden containing mixed images:

Could'st thou resign the park and play content,
For the fair banks of Severn or of Trent;
There might'st thou find some elegant retreat,
Some hireling senator's deserted seat;
And stretch thy prospects o'er the smiling land,
For less than rent the dungeons of the Strand;
There prune thy walks, support thy drooping flow'rs,
Direct thy rivulets, and twine thy bow'rs;
And, while thy grounds a cheap repast afford,
Despise the dainties of a venal lord. (ll. 210-19)

Certainly the word hireling is negative, referring again to the easily bought allegiance of people in the government. What good can come from a land owned by such a man? In this garden the occupations are similar to the

very pursuits in nature that Johnson derides in other work. In his reflections on his pond in Lichfield, he is unhappy at the extensive curtailment of the trees and rejoices that the waters flow naturally without being redirected by gardens intent on continuing the latest fads in landscape. Similarly, the words "drooping flow'rs" (216) remind us of Milton's Garden of Eden after the fall when the roses in Adam's hands shatter when he learns of Eve's disobedience. What people do to nature, Johnson implies, may gain them a living, but the prospect doesn't bring Johnson joy as he contemplates the result.

Such a response seems in keeping with the rest of the poem which is often centered in the evils of commerce. In the eighteenth century, even the land was a source of money. Many of the wealthy people "continued to draw incomes from rents or tolls or from the sale of grain or wool or cattle" (Rudé, Hanoverian London 38), and the "London aristocrats took time off from their London duties or social round to seek the relative peace and quiet and the more salubrious air of the surrounding country-side" (Rudé 47).

And again there is a close connection of Johnson to his source, for Hight writes that

Juvenal speaks from the point of view of the old-fashioned gentleman who believes the only honourable income is that derived from land. . . . The Romans were more devoted to tradition than even the British,

and Juvenal speaks here as the last descendant of the elder Cato, who said there was only one truly safe and honourable way of making money, which was farming.

(70)

And yet, neither Juvenal's images nor Johnson's approach the ideal. Highet says that one kind of "resistance to unnatural city life . . . is idealization of the village and the country" (67), but neither Juvenal nor Johnson has painted a very impressive picture with pictures of lizards and "drooping flow'rs" (l. 216).

In Johnson, the true appreciation of nature comes when the hands of human gardeners have been stilled. After he has detailed what the exile can do with the land, Johnson adds these lines:

There ev'ry bush with nature's musick rings,
There ev'ry breeze bears health upon its wings;
On all thy hours security shall smile,
And bless thine evening walk and morning toil.

(ll. 220-23)

And we have come full circle in our discussion of Johnson's nature. Here he finds the positive sensuous pleasure in nature's songs and feels the corrupt atmosphere of London transformed, not by men, but by nature into "a purer air" (l. 6), where "ev'ry breeze bears health upon its wings" (l. 221). If Johnson has doubts about gardening as his images have expressed, he has no uncertainty concerning the

health of country life. He encourages all young men overcome by the evils of metropolitan life to "fly[] for refuge to the wilds of Kent" (l. 257).

If the poem London stood alone as a message about escape and retreat in the midst of trouble, then the critics that cannot accept Johnson's honesty concerning his appreciation of the country, might, at least, have a point. However, Johnson's personal life echoed his sentiments in this satire. Bate writes that "During this year and a half of diverse, often desperate hack work (December 1737 to May 1739), something happened between him and Tetty. They had plainly begun to live apart" (177). The city had disastrous effects upon the relationship.

These were the nights that Johnson "sometimes even roamed the streets without settled lodging" (178) and "walk[ed] the streets all night when" (179) money was not available for a bed, for he could no "live no longer on her money" (Bate 178). At last Johnson went back to Lichfield on "the suggestion of friends" (183) to try for a teaching position. However, once again returned to the site of his childhood, "he delayed returning to London" (183). Just as Thales escapes the city, so did Johnson, and while he was in his childhood retreat, he again turned to a woman, this time Molly Aston, "thirty-three," (183), a companion who encompassed all the virtues of womanhood that Johnson admired.

There is little difference in the flight of Thales and that of Johnson. What Johnson learned early in his life from his father was that if problems increased at home, journeys away were always possible. Johnson's retreat is to the country and to the woman that he had rediscovered there, and his pastoral impulse has been satisfied in the physical reality of his childhood home.

CONCLUSION

RESOLUTION AND CONFLICT?

Johnson's early poetry, read in light of other literary texts and his own Annals, has provided us with valuable insight into the conflicts that Johnson had deciding the position of humankind within creation, especially himself and women. Instinctively, he reacted throughout his verse and what we know of his life in a gentle and nurturing manner -- writing lines that provide more partnership than domination, giving to the poor, helping specific women gain improved status. Carol Merchant's conclusion, that men treat women and nature in much the same way, is applicable to Johnson. He refrained from any kind of research in science that would cause pain, and he exhibited no desire to restrain women in unnatural ways by patriarchal methods. When he wrote verse to women, he either equated men and women, or he gave power to the feminine, perhaps because of the influences of his mother during his childhood. When he wrote his Annals, he featured his mother in a heroic, albeit comic, position. When he wrote one play, he made the protagonist and the supporting foil female. When he spoke, according to those who listened and took notes, he supported the very institutions that oppressed the women about him, the natural world, and Johnson himself.

However, Johnson's connection with all the creatures within his environment is even more complex than these associations imply. As the youthful Johnson was able to enjoy the immediate rewards of fruit, so was the mature Johnson willing to employ the physical world for humankind's benefit. In 1739, just one year after London, Johnson's "The Life of Dr Herman Boerhaave" was published. In this biography Johnson praises the doctor's knowledge of botany:

He was not only a careful examiner of all the plants in the garden of the university, but made excursions, for his further improvement, into the woods and fields, and left no place unvisited where any increase of botanical knowledge could be reasonably hoped for. (58)

In this text, Johnson approves of gardens for medical advancements, just as he accepts the central role of nature as provider in A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland some years later. Here he records the farming practices that he witnesses and the agricultural improvements that he hears. In the Highlands, he learns that "attempts . . . to raise roebucks in Raasay" (61) have failed and that in Ulinish, the cuddly fish "affords the lower people both food, and oil for their lamps" (75). Johnson's curiosity concerning the flora and fauna of Scotland is genuine, but only the proper use of such knowledge justifies the time spent on these activities, and that use implies human consumption. For all his concern for women, he seems not the least affronted when he learns that the women of Sky are

reckoned in terms of cattle -- "The question is, How many cows a young lady will bring her husband. A rich maiden has from ten to forty; but two cows are a decent fortune for one who pretends to no distinction" (104).

And yet, the sensitivity of Johnson to his environment is nowhere clearer than in his horror at the deforestation of the entire country. In "Johnson's Intent in The Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, Arthur Sherbo, who sees "no tragic vision" in the lack of forests and even cites such references as "Johnson's too often repeated joke" (395), has clearly not looked very deeply into the importance of woods and trees to Johnson. Johnson's comments, which, like his conversation, can be humorous, are not quick, one-line jokes, stuck here and there for comic relief; they are carefully considered opinions concerning the state of the Scottish environment:

The Lowlands of Scotland had once undoubtedly an equal portion of woods with other countries. Forests are every where gradually diminished, as architecture and cultivation prevail by the increase of people and the introduction of arts. But I believe few regions have been denuded like this, where many centuries must have passed in waste without the least thought of future supply. (10)

At first, he blames the Scots for their contribution to this devastation, but by the end of his journey, as John B. Radner shows, Johnson develops an "evolving compassion for the islanders" and the difficulties they face in living in

this demanding environment (138). Johnson's love of trees, as evinced by his early experiences in Lichfield, continued unabated in his mature years.

In "Johnson and the Trees of Scotland," Robert G. Walker asserts that the concern with the forests is "not an ecological but a philosophical crisis, and perhaps a sociological crisis as well" (99). However, Johnson's response is much like the ecologist today. He describes the difficulties in protecting the plants against animals and concludes with a statement that contains the need for a balance in nature:

It is therefore reasonable to believe, what I do not remember any naturalist to have remarked, that there was a time when the world was very thinly inhabited by beasts, as well as men, and that the woods had leisure to rise high before animals had bred numbers sufficient to intercept them. (140)

According to Boswell, Johnson's plaintive cry against the disappearance of the Scottish trees had an immediate and a positive ecological effect. John Knox explains that Johnson's "remarks on the want of trees and hedges for shade, as well as for shelter to the cattle are well founded" (Boswell, Life 583).

Similarly, Alexander Dick writes to Johnson: The truths you have told . . . already appear to have a very good effect. For a man of my acquaintance, who has the largest nursery for trees and hedges in this country, tells me, that of late the demand upon him for these articles is doubled, and sometimes tripled. (Life 795)

Dick concludes that "Sir Archibald Grant, has planted above fifty millions of trees on a piece of very wild ground at Monimusk" (795), and thus Johnson the ecologist is as apt a name for his studies in the Highlands as Johnson the sociologist. Although Johnson notes the need for forests for commerce, he encourages humans to replace that which they take. He writes,

Plantation is naturally the employment of a mind unburdened with care, and vacant to futurity, saturated with present good, and at leisure to derive gratification from the prospect of posterity.
(A Journey 139)

Samuel Johnson looks toward the future, and his ideas of conversation seem more like a pattern of partnership than of domination. For Eisler, qualities of such a relationship imply progress, equality, freedom -- all of which "represented a fundamental break with androcratic ideology" (160). Johnson has shown that commerce or economic profit should not exist to the detriment of the environment.

Similarly, in his prose, his images, unlike the harsh, cutting diction of Bacon, reveal a conciliatory approach to the external natural world as he uses plants to explain his ideas. He attempts

a dictionary . . . which, while it was employed in the cultivation of every species of literature, has itself been hitherto neglected; suffered to spread, under the direction of chance, into wild exuberance.
(Preface to the Dictionary" 307)

Such natural images in his essays are too numerous to include, but a sampling reveals his figurative use of the natural world. He explains the objective of many projects both personal and private:

Fame cannot spread wide or endure long that is not rooted in nature, and manured by art. That which hopes to resist the blast of malignity, and stand firm against the attacks of time, must contain in itself some original principle of growth.
(Rambler No. 154; 59)

"Envy," he admits, "is, indeed, a stubborn weed of the mind, and seldom yields to the culture of philosophy" (Rambler No. 183 199). Of "the systems of learning," he writes,

It is not always possible, without a close inspection, to separate the genuine shoots of consequential reasoning, which grow out of some radical postulate, from the branches which art has engrafted on it.
(Rambler No. 156; 66)

Thus, Johnson becomes, not the conqueror, but the gardener and guardian of nature. He does not penetrate or control. He cultivates; he sows; he reaps.

And what of the women of his later work? According to Boswell, Johnson said, in September 1777, "If . . . I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman" (Life 845). The statement is faintly reminiscent of his sentence concerning selecting words for the Dictionary. To omit the plant world, he writes, would be to banish "the

most pleasing part of nature" ("Plan to the Dictionary" 6). Are women, then, just pleasant decorations? Plants, he has shown, also have their usefulness. What is his maturing view of women? In his Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland," he writes, on "the road beyond Aberdeen," the land "continued equally naked of all vegetable decoration" (18), but he happily remarks on the beauty of the Scottish women. Flowers, trees, and women -- these improve the appearance of the landscape, but just so have men traditionally asserted.

However, Johnson does not limit the value of any aspect of nature to its positive visual stimulus. Pleasure he defines as "delight; gratification of the mind and senses" (Dictionary). Just as plants offer beauty and pragmatic uses, so do women provide the same. Just as the Scottish land should be functional, so should the beauty of a woman increase the man's joy in her company, but she must have more than superficial amenities. Johnson adds another requirement to his fantasy of life in the post-chaise: "'I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman; but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation'" (845).

Of the women in Skye, he writes,

The ladies have as much beauty here as in other places, but bloom and softness are not to be expected among the lower classes, whose faces are exposed to the rudeness

of the climate, and whose features are sometimes contracted by want, and sometimes hardened by the blasts. (83)

Thus a female companion offers pleasure in both body and mind, and if the environment in which she lives contributes to a type of beauty with which he has not been accustomed, he is still able to value and enjoy such friendships.

Indeed, in "Dancing Dogs, Women Preachers And The Myth of Johnson's Misogyny," James G. Basker notes that "thoughtful women from Mary Wollstonecraft to Virginia Woolf have read Johnson as sympathetic to the female condition" (64); Basker provides an extensive list of the positive references that Johnson makes concerning the various kinds of women in his essays,

From giddy teenage society belles to struggling servant girls, shrewd tradesmen's wives to bored ladies of the manor, peevish old maids to dying prostitutes, Johnson's fertility of imagination in recreating and exploring women's lives is remarkable. (66)

In an appendix Basker lists "Johnson's 'Female Fictions,'" beginning with Rambler 10, in which Johnson "discusses Flirtilla's suggestions and responds to letters [all by Hester Mulso] from four correspondents" (80) and ends with Adventurer 74, in which "Perdita tells of feeling trapped by conflicting advice about suitors, and [being] doomed to spinsterhood" (82).

In so many of these examples, Johnson reveals again and again his sympathy and compassion for all living creatures, and yet when we turn to those later works that include women and nature, a somewhat darker picture arises. "To Miss ---- On Her Playing Upon the Harpsicord" (77) "appeared in Dodsley's Museum, 22 November 1746" (McAdam 77); in May of the same year six poems "were printed in the Gentleman's Magazine (80), two of which deal directly with women and nature. In "To Miss ----- On Her Giving the Author a Gold and Silk Net-Work Purse of Her Own Weaving," the woman addressed becomes a spider who has used "gold and silk their charms unite, / To make thy curious web delight" (ll. 1-2). However, in this light and charming short poem of thanks, it's not the gift but the giver who is the true attraction of the lines. The narrator is "the roving coin" (l. 6) that makes his end caught in the purse, and he asks if "The heart, once caught, should ne'er be freed?" (l. 12). The poem is light in tone, and the idea of Johnson captured in the woman's purse has sexual suggestions that again stress the power of the feminine in Johnson's imagination.

A darker poem, however, is "The Winter's Walk" in which Johnson again unites, as he does in the first poem, nature, a woman, and the poet. Like "Festina Lente," however, the countryside is bereft of beauty. In "The Winter's Walk," the action within the poem is specifically detailed by a participating narrator who "wanders the "naked hills, the

leafless grove, / The hoary ground [beneath] the frowning skies" (ll. 2-3). Here the natural setting becomes a dark symbol for the tribulations of life experienced by a sensitive personality. Gross explains that

Johnson ranged the landscapes of the mind, delving to the inner recesses, however dark or painful or incongruous, to construct a dynamic picture of mental functioning. His writings map the course of basic human wants, needs, and expressions and show how, when deprived and frustrated, they erupt into dangerous morbid symptoms. (4)

In this poem nature again reflects the emptiness of the narrator's life. Personified Winter "spreads . . . horrid reign" (l. 7) throughout the speaker's thoughts and the land, and he finds no joy from day to day: "Tir'd with vain joys, and false alarms, / With mental and corporeal strife" (ll. 17-8).

In "Johnson's Poetry" B. S. Lee asserts that the "relation between the dreary prospects and the poet's causeless gloom is adventitious" (85), that "Johnson seeks a temporary protection from suffering, not an escape from reality" (86), but these lines reflect deep pain and suffering. The winter that has covered the land with ice and cold has blighted the narrator's "hope" and "desire," overturning the possibilities of happiness with "spleen and care" (ll. 9-10). It is with "despair" (l. 12) that he faces his mutable future.

And his succor again is a woman. Johnson concludes the poem with these lines:

Tir'd with vain joys, and false alarms,
With mental and corporeal strife,
Snatch me, my Stella, to thy arms,
And screen me from the ills of life. (ll. 17-20)

The only constant in his life, beset with "vain joys, and false alarms," is the woman. The "screen" separates him from whatever problems he faces. And if we consider the conclusion of "To Miss ----- Playing On Her Harpsicord," we find, even in this poem of partnership, an inclination to feminine nurturing. He explains that the relationship between men and women creates one complete picture:

Mark, when from thousand mingled dyes
Thou see'st one pleasing form arise,
How active light, and thoughtful shade,
In greater scenes each other aid. (ll. 25-8)

Although unity results, in the Dictionary Johnson gives definition six of shade as "protection" or "shelter." Thus, the woman, in most of his work, acts as the protector, the shelter, the screen from the disagreeable elements of life. Consistent with this view of women is Johnson's "Vision of Theodore, the Hermit of Teneriffe" (1748), "Johnson's first piece of allegorical fiction" (Kolb 107). In "The Vision of Theodore: Genre, Context, Early Reception," Gwin J. Kolb explains that, according to Thomas Tyers, Johnson wrote the narrative "'in one night,'" in a rapid production

much like that of "the Life of Savage, Rasselas, and the fairy tale The Fountains" (107). Kolb briefly mentions these various female guides, these literary women characters whose prototypes originated in the distant emergence of humankind. However, their appearance in Johnson's tale has a greater significance for his work and life than a cursory reading suggests, for this allegory brings together Johnson's attitude toward women, nature, and himself. Theodore the Hermit recounts his reasons for leaving the world behind for this pastoral retreat:

I was once . . . a groveller on the earth, and a gazer at the sky; I trafficked and heaped wealth together, I loved and was favoured, I wore the robe of honour and heard the music of adulation; I was ambitious, and rose to greatness; I was unhappy, and retired here, a place where all real wants might be easily supplied Here I saw fruits and herbs and water, and here determined to wait the hand of death, which I hope, when at last it comes, will fall lightly upon me. (165)

Thus does Theodore acknowledge the first use of nature, that of sustenance. Similarly, his hermitage for "forty-eight years" (165) has provided both a retreat from the disappointments of the world and a haven for contemplation.

However, suddenly he discovers within himself first "a desire to climb" "the rock" above his "cell" and then "a wish to view the summit of the mountain, at the foot of

which . . . [he] had so long resided" (165). His reaction to these urges is in keeping with the conflicts that we have seen throughout Johnson's work:

This motion of my thoughts I endeavoured to suppress, not because it appeared criminal, but because it was new; and all change not evidently for the better alarms a mind taught by experience to distrust itself. I was often afraid that my heart was deceiving me, that my impatience of confinement arose from some earthly passion, and that my ardour to survey the works of nature was only a hidden longing to mingle once again in the scenes of life. (165).

Thus does this allegory document Johnson's fears of direct involvement in nature as distractions from the thoughtful and for him, the necessarily Christian life. Theodore, however, resolves his difficulty by rationalizing that perhaps laziness, and not the desire for spiritual retreat, has kept him within his cell for so many years; therefore, any action is better than no action, and he sets out on a journey during which he rests within an intimate, womb-like shelter,

a small plain almost inclosed by rocks, and open only to the east. . . [where he] tasted ease, . . . [where] branches spread a shade over . . . head, and the gales of spring wafted odours to . . . [his] bosom. (165)

At this point, just as he prepares to sleep, he evidently meets with an angel, a masculine being whose appearance is marked by a "sound as the flight of eagles" (166), a creature that presents the vision that the hermit has

earned, a dream-like picture of women and nature and the human's place therein. The spirit encourages Theodore "to observe, contemplate, and be instructed" (166) by all that he sees, and the hermit carefully details the various parts of the images set before him.

At the center of this reverie is a high mountain whose base is "of gentle rise, and overspread with flower" (166). Here Innocence, a female guide, watches as people "amuse[d] themselves with gathering flower" (167). When they sometimes mistake "a thistle for a flower" (167), no real damage occurs, for the young and inexperienced are beginning life. Making use of the flora is a suitable occupation for the young because they can observe and contemplate all the new sensations and ideas that come by experiencing nature much as Johnson did in his early years in Lichfield as he wandered from field to garden, swimming in Stowe pond, and looking at daffodils.

Similarly, Johnson connects nature and youth in Rambler No. 36. Here he discusses pastoral poetry, a type of reclusive verse that can deal with religious hermits as readily as shepherds (Rosand 64). This poetry, Johnson asserts, is usually associated with "peace and leisure and innocence" (195). Johnson explains that since people farmed

before they created cities, pastoral poetry was probably "the first employment of the human imagination" (195).

Thus,

It is generally the first literary amusement of our minds. We have seen fields and meadows and groves from the time that our eyes opened upon life; and are pleased with birds, and brooks, and breezes much earlier than we engage among the actions and passions of mankind. We are therefore delighted with rural pictures, because we know that original at an age when our curiosity can be very little awakened, by descriptions of courts which we never beheld, or representations of passion which we never felt. (196)

And now the relationship among all these "innocent" pastimes of youth unite -- the gentle female guide, much like the virginal Cleora, the fruits and flowers of field and orchard, the gentle lines of pastoral beauty.

However, life, Johnson implies through "Vision of Theodore," is a series of stages, and hence his mountain grows from its "flowery bottom" (167) to "paths . . . too narrow and too rough" (167) for those individuals who wish to continue enjoying the "Appetite," a negative and regressive quality of maturing adults. Similarly, the female guides grow stern, and Johnson creates "Education, a nymph more severe in her aspect and imperious in her commands" (167), who attempts to aid all those willing to go "up the mountain" (167) by providing warnings of danger. At the top of the mountain, "the declivity beg[ins] to grow craggy" (167), and as in most of Johnson's verse, the

beauties of nature have disappeared. Education is replaced by yet other female guides, Reason and Religion, each with her attributes which can withstand Appetite and Habit. Of all those who persevere to the top of the mountain, "Reason . . . discern[s] that they [are] safe, but Religion [sees] that they [are] happy" (173). Gross explains that "Religion, not Reason . . . helps liberate the imprisoned spirit" (61). This idea she finds similarly in The Vanity of Human Wishes (1749),

[which treats the subject of impetuous worldliness [and] . . . illustrates that material goals breed disappointment and suffering, while religious faith holds the potential for human happiness (61).

In the allegory of Theodore, those who fall away from the difficulty but rewarding path of reason and religion find themselves tempted by "fruits" (173) and "flowers" (174), neither of which satisfies Appetite or Habit until finally these people find themselves "at the depth of the recess, varied only with poppies and nightshade, where the dominion of Indolence terminates, and the hopeless wanderer is delivered up to Melancholy" (174).

Thus does Johnson delineate his world. The spiritual introduction to the vision is masculine, as are the men who control the institutions of the eighteenth century -- the universities, the churches, the governments, the homes. Johnson's appreciation of these social centers is always

distant and formal. His prayers, for example, all seem elaborately formed pieces addressed to an exacting judge.

In July of 1755, for example, he writes,

O Lord, who has ordained labour to be the lot of man, and seest the necessities of all thy creatures, bless my studies and endeavours; feed me with food convenient for me; and if it shall be thy good pleasure to intrust me with plenty, give me a compassionate heart, that I may be ready to relieve the wants of others; let neither poverty nor riches estrange my heart from Thee, but assist me with thy grace so to live as that I may die in thy favour, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.
(57-58)

He cannot separate the goodness of God from the possible impending punishment of hell. Thus, all his attention to God, as to the institutions of his time, is colored by his fear of possible destruction.

If the spiritual being who gives Theodore his vision, like the patriarchal society in which Johnson lived, is masculine, those beings who help all humankind through the maze of life that these masculine creatures, including God, have created are almost always female. Even near the end of his life, Johnson features female salvation in yet another allegorical narrative, "The Fountains: A Fairy Tale," his "longest . . . single contribution to . . . Miscellanies in Prose and Verse" (Kolb 215). Kolb explains that the central focus of the tale is the same as Rasselas and "The Vision of Theodore" -- "the assorted paths taken by travellers moving upward on the 'Mountain of Existence'" (226).

Through experience, Floretta learns to value a life with spiritual rewards directed, not by her own wishes, but by "'the course of Nature'" (Kolb 225).

However, according to Hester Thrale Piozzi, Johnson wrote the piece with her specifically in mind: "'Come Mistress, now I'll write a tale and your character shall be in it'" (Kolb 215). In the Introduction to the tale, Kolb explain that Piozzi is Floretta,

not a flawless paragon of superlative virtues, [but she] convinces from beginning to end fundamental goodness and intelligence, which serve to temper notably the succession of her conventional, normally human wishes ---for beauty, a lover, wealth, wit, and longevity. (223)

However, Gross believes that "if Mrs. Thrale is the model for Floretta, it is obvious that Johnson himself is much entangled in the character of the creature she restores" (125), for at this time of his life, he was beset with fears and problems. Gross explains that although he was working hard, he was attempting

to forestall [an] acute mental crisis by massive undertaking. . . . for all the outward show of success, he appears at the same time to have been wrecked by it. . . . he . . . suffered from unallayed pangs of remorse and dejection, rotted deep in the psyche. (122)

Again, Johnson, as we have seen him many times before, appeals to the feminine in times of "acute . . . crisis"

(Gross 122). In what must have been satisfying terms, in "The Fountains," he describes Floretta's rescue of the bird from the hawk:

Floretta longed to rescue the little bird, but was afraid to encounter the hawk, who looked fiercely upon her without any apparent dread of her approach, and as she advanced seemed to increase in bulk, and clapped his wings in token of defiance. Floretta stood deliberating a few moments, but seeing her mother at no great distance, took courage, and snatched the twig with the little bird upon it. When she had disengaged him she put him in her bosom, and the hawk flew away. (231)

Again that which is in control or threatening is masculine and that which rescues is female. However, an important change has occurred within this tale. Johnson, the bird, is also female, and his repose within the breast of another woman makes him as close to this savior as he can be. In all the other texts that we have read, Johnson has kept his sex distinctly masculine, and the terms of his rescue have been influenced by the traditional courtly lover's petition for the love and/or body of the lovely lady which Johnson transforms into the poet's and/or narrator's need for protection, shelter, and sanctuary in a dismal and harsh environment symbolized by dangerous natural images -- water, cliffs, and now hawks.

From his mother's care, to the sheltered pond at Stowe, from the security of the Age of Elizabeth I to the enclosed pastoral retreat, from the friendship of Hester Thrale

Piozzi to the protective breast of Floretta, Johnson turns to the woman for help. However, in the fairy tale, he himself is female, a transformation that a younger man would have had a great deal of trouble making with psychological ease.

What is intriguing is the way that such a change reflects one of the greatest despairs of Johnson's life -- his inability to produce consistently and regularly. A writer, like a woman, creates life of a sort, and the one element of nature that Johnson specifically disliked was sterility in any form, and thus part of his concern about the Scottish countryside was the barren, rocky ground. Ulva is "rough and barren" (128). On Sandiland, "a subordinate Island" of Inch Kenneth, he sees "a rock, with a surface of perhaps four acres, of which one is naked stone, another spread with sand and shells . . . [of] glossy beauty" (131). On Talisker in Sky the rocks are an improvement, for they "abound with kelp, a sea-plant, of which the ashes are melted into glass" (73). And we remember his early poem, "Festina Lente," which ends with the "cautious Fabious" who sent "bold invaders" back "to their own barren sands" (ll. 17-20). Thus Johnson seems to approve of all which produces -- women, land, and some men who find more to create and repair than to destroy in war and violence.

For Johnson, creation is divided into the masculine and the feminine. All that is dangerous, hazardous, and punishing is masculine; almost everything that is loving, nurturing, and productive is female. The difficulty lies, finally, in the way that Johnson envisions himself. He may be physically masculine, and he is heterosexual; however, his intuition, of which Boswell remarks in the Life (35), his concern for others, his need for equality in a time and place which was rife with prejudice and bigotry, his gentleness in his approach to all life from trees to his cat Hodge, all seemed to place him within what the eighteenth century too often saw only the feminine sphere. Barker-Benfield explains that in this century "the reformation of male manners" (35) was an attack on the harshness with which men viewed and treated all those within their power (66).

The problem becomes for many men not so much what is a woman, but what can a man be if a woman has everything but physical prowess. For Johnson personally, this question was not troublesome. However, the image of himself in society was. Thus, throughout his life, he could never quite bring to a conclusion the conflict between his role as a functioning male and his desires as a compassionate human being.

What is more important, however, is the way in which he tried to come to terms with himself and his environment. For the most part, he reciprocated his gifts from women and

nature by attempting a direct and nurturing relationship that dealt, not with heroic abstractions, but with personal involvement. Unfortunately, like Theodore the Hermit, he could not trust his own heart and realize the depths of his own goodness. Samuel Johnson was his own antithesis; he could not find resolution, and even his last composition, his prayer upon dying, is to a masculine God, one who demands "commemorative" ceremonies (Boswell 1391), one who admits or rejects petitioners at the gates of "everlasting happiness" (Boswell 1391).

NOTES

¹In "Johnson and the Concordia Discors of Human Relationships," Jean H. Hagstrum discusses the "fusion of opposites" (51), which Johnson effects in "human relationships . . . concordia discors . . . [and] "in wit . . . discordia concors" (51).

²In Her Bread to Earn: Women, Money, and Society from Defoe to Austen, Mona Scheuermann discusses female protagonists as created by men. She omits Tristram Shandy from her study because Sterne does not "focus[] significantly on depictions of women" (2).

³Pearsall believes that this tale has its roots in what may have been "actual 'cults' of the flower and the leaf. . . [is] chaste, faithful love, the flower . . . light love" (qtd. in McMillan n.5).

⁴The word flowers could also mean the menstrual cycle for a woman. In a 1672 letter to his nephew Theophilus, Earl of Huntingdon, Arthur Stanhope attempts to help the young husband discover a way "to penetrate his bride of two months" (Pollock 41). He recommends that the young bridegroom

finger my lady espetially att this time now she has her flowers for I assure you those parts are most apt to

delate and widen when she is in thatt condition, and the most probably time to gett yr p: in to her. (42)

⁵In his introduction to Nature and Industrialization, Alasdair Clayre comments on Samuel Johnson's "ambivalence about economic developments in . . . [the] Adventurer" (xxxiii). Clayre asserts, however, that Johnson "resolved it, after many arguments . . . in favour of civilization" (xxxiii).

⁶Deborah Marie Laycock has an intriguing dissertation discussing the development of the pastoral within London. In "An Eighteenth-Century Sense of Place: The Urban Pastoral," she finds the "urban pastoral" in Gay's and Pope's work.

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Appendix A

Indeed, Samuel Johnson himself, by writers over three centuries, has often been described in heroic terms.

"Carlyle long ago presented him as a moral hero: 'Nature, in return for his nobleness, had said to him, Live in an element of diseased sorrow'" (qtd. in Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense, Damrosch 61). At the beginning of the biography of Johnson's life, Bate notes the courageous and determined actions of the famous doctor:

To begin with, there is the moving parable of his own life. "Example," says the proverb, "is the greatest of teachers." As in the archetypal stories in folklore, we have a hero who starts out with everything against him, including painful liabilities of personal temperament -- a turbulent imagination, acute anxiety, aggressive pride, extreme impatience, radical self-division and self-conflict. He is compelled to wage long and desperate struggles, at two crucial times of his life, against what he feared was the onset of insanity. Yet step by step, often in the hardest possible way, he wins through to the triumph of honesty to experience that all of us prize in our hearts. That is why, as we get to know him better, we begin to think of him as almost an allegorical figure, like 'Valiant-for-truth' in the Pilgrim's Progress. (3-4)

Similarly, Boswell likens Samuel Johnson to a classical hero: "Yet there is a traditional story of the infant Hercules of toryism, so curiously characteristick, that I shall not withhold it . . . " (29), and then Boswell recounts the desire, according to the father, of the young

son to hear "the much celebrated preacher" (29) Dr. Sacheverel (29).

If we take these critical responses and anecdotal records of scholars into account and go no farther, we can state that Johnson's position toward life as he matured, was of the domination, mode, that of the conquering hero and the accompanying firmly structured societies that enjoyed such tales as of the heroic past. But was he as a young man attempting the heroic? Where are his poems of seduction? Where is his attention to masculine value? What are the lines in which he attempts to dominate anything at all?

Appendix B

The power of the woman occurs in another poem, "On a Lady's Presenting a Sprig of Myrtle to a Gentleman" (1731), and here Johnson again employs plant imagery which tilts the hierarchal rule firmly toward domination by the woman. — According to McAdam,

these verses were written at Birmingham in 1731 for Morgan Graves, brother of Richard Graves, the author of The Spiritual Quixote. According to Hector, Graves "waited upon a lady in this neighbourhood, who at prating, presented him with the branch. He shewed it me, and wished much to return the compliment in verse. I applied to Johnson, who was with me, and in about half an hour dictated the verses which I sent to my friend." (79)

In this poem we have the actual recounting of a physical plant given by one human being to another. What might such a gift from a woman suggest? Johnson decides to use the myrtle as a symbol that shows the power that this young woman holds in her hand. In her intention toward Morgan Graves, she could nurture or destroy his hopes for a fruitful relationship.

Again the woman appears in relation to plants and flowers, but here the opposing conflict between men and women is most obvious. Johnson provides the two possible meanings of the plant given to the young lover:

In myrtle groves oft sings the happy swain,
In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain;
The myrtle crowns the happy lovers' heads,
Th' unhappy lovers' graves the myrtle spreads.

(ll. 7-10)

Again Aphrodite's image is conjured up. How will she reward the young lover? We will never learn the response because the poem ends in a supplication to the woman who will either "cure the throbbings of an anxious heart" (l. 12) or "fix his doom, / Adorn Philander's head, or grace his tomb" (ll. 13-4).

Appendix C

In this sense, Johnson's use of the powerful woman-sun is traditional. Love, from the Middle Ages through the seventeenth century could cause great changes within those involved, and the result was often disorder of one kind or another. How can we explain this deliberate empowering of women in clearly defined patriarchal societies?

In Shakespeare's Festive Comedies, Barber says that allowable disorder occurs within the ordered structure of many cultures. Time was put aside, he says, for the upsetting of roles and functions (25). One aspect of the upset, as Freud has shown us, can be love.

In much verse of the Renaissance, the courtly lover, between battles, wars, and tournaments, pines for his mistress and makes her the temporary focus of his life, a power that stimulates his thoughts and fantasies much as the sun which hangs high in the sky fertilizes the earth. Therefore, love or affection, that emotion that over-rides sense and reason, can produce allowable disorder that will last for a limited time only, and what was female becomes male and what was male becomes female.