Lord Kames, whose acute comments on Shakespeare's drama are discussed here, is one of the most distinguished and individual of 18th century critics. He shows his 18th century bearings in the manner of his involvement with Shakespeare, in his approach, and not the least in his critical terminology.

Kames's chief concern is with Shakespeare's unique delineation of passion — a delineation that renders his characters so vital and lifelike. His treatment of Shakespeare in this respect reveals his Aristotelian heritage. And Aristotle, let it be remembered, happened to be the guiding star (along with later critics such as Horace) of the tribe of neo-classical poets and critics. Besides, Kames as an eighteenth century critic of Shakespeare can be easily placed by his references to 'Nature' ('Nature shows itself might in him'), to Shakespeare's 'knowledge of human nature', to his (Shakespeare's) defects, or rather 'blemishes' ('his plays are defective in the mechanical part, which is less the work of genius than of experience.....'), 'his many irregularities', and his occasional deviation into 'intricate thought and obscure expression'. It should be noted however
that Karnes touches on Shakespeare's 'blemishes' only in passing, and does not dwell on them at any length. What strikes him the most is the captivating naturalness of Shakespeare's characters — a naturalness which he traces to the author's inimitably imaginative rendering of passion from within the character. Here he finds in Shakespeare what we may call a faultless adherence to an Aristotelian precept which we shall quote and discuss below. The quality of Shakespeare's dramatic representation of passion is exactly what is envisaged by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. The accent on 'passion' is noteworthy in this connection: Karnes must have had some such meaning of 'passion' as Dennis, among others following Longinus, had of it. Besides, Karnes's interest in passion is the direct result of his interest in character. The Augustans were keenly interested in the life and nature around them. They insisted, among other things, on naturalness as a prime virtue, and the extreme naturalness of Shakespeare's characters held them. They came to regard them as living men and women. The whole Augustan attitude in this regard can possibly be put down to the prevailing empirical outlook of the time.
If Joseph Warton sought to establish Shakespeare's greatness by a detailed analysis of plays and characters, it was left to Lord Kames to find Shakespeare's unapproachable stature as a dramatist in his exquisite and exact dramatic representation of passion. Kames's finding is the result of his recognition of Shakespeare's dramatic method as not descriptive, as was Corneille's and the later dramatists', but directly imitative or representative, the sentiment being the legitimate offspring of passion, and therefore in themselves expressive of personality. Kames makes his point by drawing pointed attention to the inadequacy of later drama:

"In our later English tragedies, we sometimes find sentiments tolerably adapted to a plain passion; but we must not, in any of them, expect a sentiment expressive of character; and, upon that very account, our late performances of the dramatic kind are for the most part intolerably insipid."¹

Among the 18th century critics, Kames has a high place in so far as he discusses Shakespeare purely from the viewpoint of drama. And shying away from the ritual of general adulation, as did Warton, though in a different way, Kames gets down to brass tacks.

Kames's Elements of Criticism came out in 1762. It is obvious that this Scottish Judge made a

¹ Elements of Criticism, Chapter XVI.
comparative study of Shakespeare and other dramatists, particularly those of the 17th and 18th centuries — a study which brought home to him the incomparable superiority of Shakespeare. It is also obvious that this study actuated him to achieve a clear understanding of certain fundamental problems about drama. He seems to have addressed certain questions to himself, and sought, and actually obtained answers to them. What is of the essence of drama? What are the factors or elements that make for the credibility of dramatic situations and characters? How is it that Shakespeare's characters have a greater appeal and convincing air than those of his contemporaries or successors?

Not that we find these questions clearly formulated in the text of his criticism, but their presence, however vague, in the critic's mind can well be assumed. And in his involvement with these vital questions he helps, however incidentally, to call our attention to what Aristotle said about drama. Drama is mimetic. It is a representation of action, of situation and character. And the success of a play will be in direct proportion to the accuracy and liveliness of representation. Now this representation, properly understood, is imitation. A dramatist seeks to conjure up a situation through imitation. More than any other branch of literature,
drama aims at producing an illusion of men and women engaged in the all-important business of life. In drama we see before us men and women talking and acting, and naturally the slightest falsity of accent or situation will be easy of detection. What is particularly called for is a satisfactory illusion of life, a verisimilitude. There must needs be a good agreement between situation and character, and between character and utterance. Drama, in particular, demands directness of touch and sureness of handling. Characters should seem to grow out of situations, and the language should be so chosen as to seem the most natural vehicle of the passion involved. The correspondence between characters and passion is important. Equally important is the correspondence between passion and its expression in language. And the dramatist can never be too sure about it.

It is here that Karnes’s insistence on the element of imitation assumes such pre-eminent importance. No doubt, the entire situation is the result of imitation (representation of a segment of life bred by imagination, and approved by the laws of art). But the power of imitation is put to the severest test when it comes to giving tongue to the passions of the heart. It is not a question of indirect reporting. It is a question of uttering forth under the stress of the instant, of speaking out the passion of the moment. The dramatist is, so to speak, the
speaker. He must feel involved. It is as though he who is going to live with an accession of life, or die an all-extinguishing death. And yet the paradox is that he does not act or speak; he makes his characters act and speak. And it is a task that makes a most exacting call on his imaginative faculty in the capacity of a dramatist.

The foregoing discussion will, we hope, help to bring out the full nature of Kames's perception of Shakespeare's imitative power in regard to the dramatic representation of passion. It is exactly here that Shakespeare succeeds and so well, while most others fail, or at least do not succeed as well as he. And the reason is that while they describe, he imitates. To quote Kames:

"The descriptive manner of representing passion, is a very cold entertainment; our sympathy is not raised by description; we must first be lulled into a dream of reality, and everything must appear as passing in our sight. Unhappy is the player of genius who acts a capital part in what may be termed as descriptive tragedy: after assuming the very passion that is to be represented, how is he cramped in action, when he must utter, not the sentiments of the passion he feels, but a cold description in the language of a bystander? It is this imperfection, I am persuaded, in the bulk of our plays, that confines our stage almost entirely to Shakespeare's, notwithstanding his many irregularities."

In other words, Kames means to say that mere description does not measure up to imitation, the term being understood in its true dramatic context. One who describes does so from the outside. It is

only an actual participant that imitates in the sense in which Aristotle uses the term. A literary 'imitator' lives or relieves the situation or passion that he represents. He is in the inside of things; he has an inalienable sense of involvement so that the words that he puts in the mouths of the characters seem the most natural. In other words, they seem to spring hot from the passions of the heart. To quote Aristotle:

"Granted the same natural endowments, the dramatist who experiences the emotions described will be the most convincing; distress and anger, for instance, are portrayed not truthfully by one who feels them at the time of writing. This is why poetry requires a man with special gifts of nature and temperament, or else a touch of madness; the former is highly impressionable, while the latter is beside himself with emotions."1

The key expressions — "the dramatist who experiences the emotions described" and "one who feels them at the time of writing" are worth pondering; these, one can see very clearly, serve to lend the most authoritative confirmation to Karnes's view-point from which that dramatic artist is pronounced a failure who conveys "not the sentiments of the passion he feels, but a cold description in the language of a bystander." Aristotle's words pinpoint the dramatists' obligation to see and develop character from within and his complete identification

with the passion in question. Karnes stands for the same approach.

In his plays Shakespeare is always in the inside of things; he has an inalienable sense of involvement. Unlike the Augustan playwrights, Shakespeare works from within as Nature does. This is the reason why his creations have such an irresistible appeal, why his characters have such an authentic ring. They overwhelm one with a plenary sense of life. As Karnes remarks:

"Shakespeare is superior to all other writers in delineating passion. It is difficult to say in what part he most excels, whether in moulding every passion to peculiarity of character, in discovering the sentiments that proceed from various tones of passion, or in expressing properly every different sentiment; he disgusts not his reader with general declamation and unmeaning words too common in other writers; his sentiments are adjusted to the peculiar character and circumstances of the speaker, and the propriety is not less perfect between his sentiments and his diction. That this is no exaggeration, will be evident to every one of taste, upon comparing Shakespeare with other writers in similar passages. If upon any occasion he fall below himself, it is in those scenes where passion enters not."

Again: "One thing must be evident to the meanest capacity, that wherever passion is to be displayed, Nature shows itself mighty in him, and is conspicuous by the most delicate propriety of sentiments and expression."  

2. Ibid, PP 71-72.
We may note incidentally that this twin agreement between characters and sentiment and between sentiment and expression did not go unnoticed in previous Shakespeare criticism. We have already seen how Rowe, Addison, Pope and Warton referred eulogistically to this aspect of Shakespeare's character-portrayal. Rowe and Addison noticed this feature particularly in the creatures of magic, whereas Pope noted it and recorded his appreciation in respect of Shakespeare's characters in general.

Placed beside Shakespeare, most other playwrights often sound hollow, ring false, and so appear unsatisfactory on the whole. Because of their method of presentation their works leave gaps between either situation and characters, or character and speech. And because of this lack of coincidence or correspondence, speeches and actions in their plays very often strike one as out of character. The words—
"He disgusts not his reader with general declamation and meaningless words, too common in other writers," seem specially significant in the context of a similar opinion (already quoted in the previous chapter)

1. Thus Pope says: "To this life and variety of character we must add the wonderful preservation of it, which is such throughout his plays, that had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the Persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker." Warton praises Shakespeare's speech which is perfectly and delicately expressive of the manners and sentiments of different characters.
expressed by Warton.\(^1\) The only thing we would like to say here is that the 18th century critics of Shakespeare did not, on the whole, allow the current vogue of any kind, either in poetry or drama or criticism, to dim their openness of vision or to blunt the edge of their native sensibilities. Very often they criticised their own age and extolled Shakespeare. Kames is an instance in point.

Thus satisfactory presentment of character is due to satisfactory imitation of passion. But the question that remains to be asked is: what is that virtue in a writer which enables him to imitate passions successfully? Kames gives us his answer. A writer can only imitate or represent well when he knows life well. One's writings are invariably coloured by the extent and quality of his knowledge of men and things. To put it differently, the capacity to delineate depends on the capacity to understand life. Shakespeare had this capacity to understand life in abundant measure. He was an unequalled student of life, and more particularly of human nature. His astonishing accuracy of observation

\(^1\) According to Warton: "Shakespeare has more truly painted the passions than any other writer; affection is more powerfully expressed by this simple wish and offer of assistance (Ferdinand's offer to Miranda in The Tempest), than by the unnatural eloquence and witticisms of Dryden, or the amorous declamations of Rowe."
and appropriateness of diction his almost unerring sense of situation and character proceed from his most intimate knowledge of human nature. And here it is that he rises superior to other writers. As long as one remembers this almost preternatural gift of his which finds such ubiquitous and striking expression in his works, his faults appear as of no consequence. As Kames observes:

"May it not in some measure excuse Shakespeare, I shall not say his works, that he had no pattern, in his own or in any living language, of dialogue fitted for the theatre? At the same time, it ought not to escape observation, that the stream clears in its progress, and that in his later plays he has attained the purity and perfection of dialogue: ... This ought to be considered, by those who rigidly exaggerate every blemish of the finest genius for the drama ever the world enjoyed; they ought also for their own sake to consider, that it is easier to discover his blemishes, which lie generally at the surface, than his beauties, which cannot be truly relished but by those who dive deep into human nature."¹

Again:

"Shakespeare excels all the ancients and moderns, in knowledge of human nature, and in unfolding even the most obscure and refined emotions. This is a rare faculty, and of the greatest importance in a dramatic author; and it is that faculty which makes him surpass all other writers in the comic as well as the tragic vein."²

Similar remarks by the previous critics of Shakespeare will come readily to mind in this connection.³

¹ Ibid, P. 71.
² Ibid, P. 72.
³ Warton says: ".....But to portray characters naturally, and to preserve them uniformly, requires such an intimate knowledge of the heart of man, and is so rare a portion of felicity, as to have been enjoyed, perhaps, only by two writers, Homer and Shakespeare."
Before we take up a fresh aspect of Kames's criticism, we would like to dwell for a while on his favourite term — passion. Indeed, he seems greatly enamoured of it. Now this recurrent use of the word 'passion' reminds us of Dennis and Pope both of whom had used it with gusto, and incidentally points to a near-Romantic temper that Kames must have possessed very much like Dennis and Pope, among others.

We have already drawn attention to and emphasised the existence of a strain of faint romanticism in English letters during the 18th century. And we have at the same time pointed out the seminal influence of Longinus in maintaining, if not also creating, that temper. In a word, much like some other Augustans, Kames recognises the moving power (which is the result of the play of imagination in literary creation) of great literature, here represented by Shakespeare. In other words, he belongs very much to the complex intellectual climate of his epoch.

Besides all this, Lord Kames is one of those 18th century critics who draw attention to Shakespeare's language and style. Indeed, Kames speaks of them in his own individual manner, showing some originality in his perception. Unlike the great bulk of Augustan writers, Johnson included, who loved to contemplate and discover general images of humanity
In Shakespeare's writings, Karnes is struck by the pronounced individuality of Shakespeare's images, by the unusual concreteness of his particular terms and expressions. As a rule, says Karnes, Shakespearean images and symbols possess too hard an outline to be mistaken, which accounts for the astonishing vividness of the diverse facets of Shakespeare's world. One may recall in this connection that Pope had noted the sharp and hard individuality of Shakespeare's characters. If Pope has no praise for abstractions with regard to characters, Karnes has no particular fascination for the same with regard to terms and images. Thus he says:

"Abstract or general terms have no good effect in any composition for amusement; because it is only for particular objects that images can be formed. Shakespeare's style in that respect is excellent; every article in his description is particular, as in nature; and if accidentally a vague expression slips in, the blemish is discernible by the bluntness of its impression..... It was one of Homer's advantages, that he wrote before general terms were multiplied; the superior genius of Shakespeare displays itself in avoiding them after they were multiplied."

Thus in conclusion we can say that in spite of his being essentially a neo-classicist, he shows some perceptions and insights we had not come across before. His distinctive critical intelligence is there never to be mistaken. While in his investigations

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into the unique dramatic character of Shakespeare's creations Karnes stands almost in a class apart by reason of his rare critical instinct (bearing the neo-classical stamp though) for dramatic literature, in his felicitous observations on Shakespeare's language, he is among the select few of the century who were struck by the vivid particularity of the poet's diction.
CHAPTER VIII

SAMUEL JOHNSON: "a moralist ceaselessly curious in conduct and the best of Shakespeare's comprehensive critics."

(J.I.M. Stewart)

"Repeatedly in his own criticism, he comes back to the healthful reminder that performance in literature comes after precept. If the neo-classic rules of the drama conflict with the achievement of Shakespeare, it is they that are inadequate, not Shakespeare."

(Walter Jackson Bate)

To come to Johnson is to reach a field which displays the most impressive harvest of 18th century explorations of Shakespeare. He combines practically all that has gone before in Shakespeare criticism with a bold promise of what is yet to come.

For all his fads and they were a good many, Johnson brings to bear upon Shakespeare a searching intelligence, a robust commonsense, and large sympathies, all of which combine to shed rare brilliance on his observations on the master dramatist. He was at once a child of his time and ahead of it. He was at once a captive and a free man, a conformist and a rebel. And in all that he wrote he had his feet firmly planted in the soil while not altogether disdaining the high sky.

Johnson writes sustained criticism, and writes, more than once, exclusively on Shakespeare. He not only helps, as did Dryden and others in their
own ways, to put Shakespeare in perspective; by liberally devoting time and attention and energy, by writing general criticism and detailed notes to put rare beauties in focus, and to illumine obscure passages, he brings Shakespeare close to our understanding in a way none else had hitherto done. Perhaps for the first time in the history of English literary criticism does Shakespeare appear as a master mind and master playwright who, more than any other English writer, demands serious and patient efforts at exploration. Johnson is not merely a summation of his predecessors as has been maintained in certain quarters. Indeed, it is hard to agree wholly with F.E. Halliday when he observes:

"Johnson's Preface is remarkable not so much for what it says as for what it is, the judicial summing up of the opinion of a century."  

We shall have occasion to show the inadequacies of this statement as we proceed. We shall only repeat at this point that Johnson's work is clearly more than a summing up. The truth of the matter is that besides giving memorable expression to the most sensible of the current views, the Doctor made significant explorations on his own; he dived deeper than had been hitherto attempted, found more sense and substance than had been conceded before, and gave powerful expression to his profound judgments in what has come to be known as his granite phrasings.

The passage we have quoted at the outset gives much of the truth about Johnson's findings of Shakespeare, and, in the process, holds the key to our proposition that he is a freeman as well as a captive, a rebel as well as a conformist. Indeed, he throws overboard a pretty bunch of accepted dogmas, and this he succeeds in doing on the strength of his 'searching intelligence' and 'robust commonsense'.

It is on this open-eyed character of his critical intelligence that W.J. Bate makes the following significant observation:

"As Johnson moves rapidly towards the subject of Shakespeare's distinctive greatness, Shakespeare's fertile and direct 'power of nature', the refreshing surprise is to find three principal shibboleths of extreme new-classic formalism — the 'unities' of time and place, the fear of mingling comic and tragic elements, the stylised 'types of character' — all fall into place, and rub shoulders with the routine conventions of the average romance as just one more species of abstraction from reality, though of a more demanding sort. This is not a protest against selectivity in art. That Johnson still remains the greatest critical exponent of English neo-classicism, despite all his reservations about it, is ready enough proof..... The protest is against taking one particular mode of selectivity or 'form' — and then following it literally — against following anything in art, criticism or scholarship, so closely that it can shut us off from the suggestive variety and healthful amplitude of experience."1

We are trying at the moment to get at the heart of Johnson's critical thoughts on Shakespeare, and to that end, we quote below another

significant passage from Bate, which occurs a little earlier in his book:

"The statement in which Johnson begins to lift the criticism of Shakespeare above the rule-mongering of lesser neo-classic critics could be taken as the starting-point of all his critical writings: 'There is always an appeal open from criticism to nature.' In criticism as in everything else, the first duty of a thinking being is to 'distinguish nature from custom; or that which is established because it is right, from that which is right only because it is established.' Criticism, in one of its main functions, is therefore the evaluator of conventions."

And "hence, Johnson's procedure, as he defends Shakespeare's neglect of the particular 'rules' of the drama..., is to swing back to the premise of distinguishing 'that which is established because it is right, from that which is right because it is established.'

Before however we proceed further it is perhaps well to take note of the fact that like the fellow Augustans Johnson did suffer from certain telling limitations. In fact, many a subsequent critic has called attention to them. For example, F.R. Leavis takes pains to underscore Johnson's incapacity to appreciate Shakespeare's poetry, and hence his tragedy. In other words, Mr. Leavis charges Johnson with a lack of understanding of the full-blooded endowments of Shakespeare as a creative artist.

1. Ibid, P. 181.
2. Ibid, P. 195.
He levels this charge in different ways:

"His (Johnson's) limitation in the face of Shakespeare's tragedy goes with a limitation in the face of Shakespeare's poetry. He cannot appreciate the Shakespearean handling of language."¹

"The thoughts that the Augustan poet like any other writer, sets himself to express are amply provided for by the ready-minted concepts of common currency. What he has to do is to put them together with elegance and point according to the rules of grammar, syntax and versification. The exploratory-creative use of words upon experience, involving the creation of concepts in a free play for which the lines and configurations of the conventionally charted have no finality, is something he has no use for; it is completely alien to his habit. So that even when he is Johnson, whose perception so transcends his training, he cannot securely appreciate the Shakespearean creativeness."²

Again: "He cannot appreciate the life-principle of drama as we have it in the poetic-creative use of language — the use by which the stuff of experience is presented to speak and act for itself."³

Now this limitation or incapacity or whatever else one may call it on the part of Johnson is largely a fact. He certainly failed to sympathise with most of the Shakespearean use of the English language. He failed to discover any quality about Shakespeare's predominantly metaphorical expression. To him the Elizabethan's language was very often avoidably sprawled-out and burdened with uncalled-for embellishments.⁴

3. Ibid, P. 110.
4. John Wain in his essay 'The Mind of Shakespeare' makes on this point a comment that is worth-recalling. He writes: "'The style of Shakespeare, in itself perplexed, ungrammatical and obscure.' And Johnson was right, it is all those things. But it is clear too.

Contd.....
But then to stress this point looks like stressing the obvious. Here we may quote a passage from T.S. Eliot:

"........ When Johnson writes of Shakespeare, we are puzzled by Johnson's silence about the mastery of verification. Here there was no prejudice against a particular fashion of writing, as when he discusses the Metaphysicals; no personal dislike of the man, as when he treats of Milton; but only the acutest observation, the highest esteem, the most just and generous praise: but he assigns to Shakespeare the very highest rank among poets, on every other ground than that of the beauty of rhythm and diction." 1

Eliot goes further to point out:

"My point is that we should not consider this obtuseness, which to us is very strange, as a personal defect of Johnson which diminishes his stature as a critic. What is lacking is an historical sense which was not yet due to appear." 2

Indeed, Eliot shows an exquisite accuracy of judgment in his pronouncement. Johnson's limitation was rooted in the training and in the temper of his age. Let one take a good look at the poetry of the age and its critical standards, and one should not take

(Contd. from P.209) Even the most flagrantly ungrammatical and illogical sentence-constructions, such as:

Like one, Who having, into truth, by telling of it, Made such a sinner of his memory, To credit his own lie — he did believe He was himself the Duke

even a sentence like that is not, in fact, difficult to understand; it is put together in a way that would be obscure in a prose-writer, but then one of the things Shakespeare so magnificently exemplifies is that the verse-writer can get away with a much looser syntax, provided he is able to use his verse to hold up the sagging edges of what he has to say. The verse-rhythms will present the words in their most effective order, and they will enter the hearer's mind clearly........." (More Talking of Shakespeare, ed. John Garrett, 1959, P. 162.)

2. Ibid, P. 168.
long to be convinced that the very discipline of the epoch must have stood in the way of anything near a proper appreciation of the soul-stirring suggestivity of Shakespeare's language. Brought up at a time when writers were called upon to be precise and direct, lucid and unambiguous in style, Johnson rather naturally found Shakespeare's expression to a large extent baffling. This is why he makes such observations as the following:

"It is incident to him (Shakespeare) to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it."1

"He is not long soft and pathetic without some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation."2

Or, "A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it."3

Or, again: "In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution; and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few."4

Used to the method of prose-statement in poetry, Johnson could not but see superfluity in Shakespeare's expression. Poetry had clearly become pedestrian, its wings had been clipped, and it walked close to earth, having been incapacitated from soaring in heaven; it was now far more amenable to the

2. Ibid, P. 91.
3. Ibid, P. 92.
4. Ibid, P. 90.
rational than to the imaginative understanding.

Now it is precisely because of that altered attitude towards poetry and language consequent upon the altered intellectual temper, that Johnson went off the track in pronouncing on "Come, thick night" speech in Macbeth, where he found serious fault with "avengers of guilt peeping through a blanket."¹

Besides, Johnson cannot quite see the justness of the moral scheme of Shakespeare's universe. He believes that the man who is virtuous should be happy, and the one who is vicious ought to be miserable. But such facile distribution of happiness and misery is not generally to be met with in Shakespeare's plays or in life either. And obviously this is a fault to Johnson. Thus Johnson observes:

"He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good and evil, nor is always careful to show a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of the age cannot extenuate; for it is always the writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent of time or place."²

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¹ Rambler no 168, Oct 26, 1751.
This argument is reinforced when speaking of the close of King Lear. Johnson comments:

"A play in which the wicked prosper and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of life; but since all reasonable beings love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded, that the observation of justice makes a play worse; or, that if other excellences are equal, the audience will not rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue."

These words of Johnson's could be passed as almost unexceptionable as formulating a principle. The audience will rise "better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue." The trouble, however, is that Johnson cannot see when his own principle allows a thing to be sound. A critic of adequate perception will certainly recognise the final undoing of the forces of evil and the corresponding "final triumph of persecuted virtue" in King Lear. There is in this tragedy, as in every other great Shakespearean tragedy, an unmistakable suggestion of the re-establishment of the moral order that was nearly overthrown by the evil. Since literature deals with life and life does not exclude ethics, it is bound to involve a moral view of things. But while this is so, good literature will always resist the incorporation of overt moral statements or explicit moral solutions within its frame.

As Mr. Leavis says: "Johnson cannot understand that works of art enact their moral valuations." 1

On this moral stance of Johnson, J. I. M. Stewart makes some valuable comments which we quote below:

"Johnson backs up this stricture (Shakespeare 'is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose') by declaring that 'he makes no just distribution of good and evil', thereby ranging himself with those who require of the dramatist the administration of poetical justice. And the conception of poetical justice, indeed, was for a very long time the focal point round which most debate on Shakespeare's morality turned...... Johnson, although working the mirror-of-life idea hard ........ hankered after poetical justice. He could not bear poetry not to vindicate moral governance of the world; he believed that at the end of plays the evidence should (as it were) be fudged in order to chasten vice and encourage virtue.........

On this ground Johnson preferred Tate's 'happy-ending' Lear to Shakespeare's ...... Yet when Dr. Johnson puts the thing at its most general, and declares 'it is always a writer's duty to make the world better', we are conscious of a proposition which, at least, must be treated more warily. Has Shakespeare any aim to instruct ? ...........

"Shakespeare's characters are at an opposite remove from, say, Corneille's. They never give the impression of being moral athletes — a sort of Ethical Brains trust knowing all the answers and existing in order to give an exhibition of them. They are not in fact, the creations of a moralist ...... Rather, they are the element in an entertainment of which the stuff and substance is, indeed, the moral nature of man, but the end of which is not moralistic. Shakespeare, in short, sees it as the business of the poet to exhibit, not to pronounce upon, moral behaviour.... He deals with morals always; but as a moralist, never. He renders us more aware of ourselves as creatures of good and evil; but he seems to do this rather because such awareness is pleasurable than because it conduces to salvation. He does not work out moral problems for us; yet he leaves us, as moral beings, more alert than he found us. This may itself be a moral act, and laudable.

But certainly if (as, I would have the artist do) Shakespeare 'makes the world better' it is by exercising our moral interests and perception than by any deliberate proposal to alter them, to expound patterns of behaviour, or to bend fiction to the support of principle and precept.\textsuperscript{1}

Walter Jackson Bate, while recognising in Johnson this "rather pathetic tug toward wish-fulfilment," justly points out:

"But it is never permitted to serve as a primary critical principle, by which to accept or reject...... It can be said, of course, that Johnson felt the situations of Lear with powerful empathy, whereas he cared nothing about Cato and failed to be caught up in the character of Adam. But empathy is a tribute to a critic, especially in an era when the fear of direct emotion in art or criticism becomes itself emotionally overpowering ...... The fact remains that any number of plays that observe 'poetic justice' are rightly seen by him as little more than 'chill declamation', whereas the praise of Shakespeare is that he presents 'the real state of sublunary nature; and that at the same time the reader ...... finds his mind more strongly seized by the tragedies of Shakespeare than of any other writer."\textsuperscript{2}

And yet while Johnson's limitation or disability in this regard is almost beyond question, let us attempt to understand why it should have been so. The age was consciously attempting to reestablish moral standards which had been set at naught during the Restoration. The English social life of the Restoration was by and large tainted with a sort of promiscuity and lewdness. And the foremost of 18th century writers set to tightening the moral hold on the national life, to raising the ethical tone of


\textsuperscript{2} The Achievement of Samuel Johnson, Galaxy Book, 1961, PP 201-2.
society. It may be of interest in this connection to quote Dr. Johnson on the kind of life depicted by the comic playwrights of the Restoration:

"Themselves they studied, as they felt they writ intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit; vice always found a sympathetic friend, they pleased their age, and did not aim to mend."

Addison and Steele, Pope and Johnson, among others, took upon themselves the great responsibility of training and educating their generations, of teaching them how to live a life designed to promote social health. They undertook the task of correcting public manners by holding up before the public gaze, examples of virtue, decency, decorum and goodness.

In addition to this great eagerness to improve public morals, the 18th century writers had in mind the much-proclaimed literary precepts of the ancient Latin writers and critics. Horace had said that the two-fold aim of literature was to delight and instruct. And there was perfect unanimity on this point. Literature, they were all agreed, should be delight-giving and instructive. If a play gave only pleasure at the expense of instruction, it forfeited the right to be called good literature. There was universal agreement that good literature must have a pronounced ethical overtone so that the public might gain a kind of moral education while enjoying it. Johnson, deeply imbued with the spirit of the age, found Shakespeare wanting from what may be called the moral angle. Thus the desire to raise the moral standard of the nation coupled
with the classical doctrine as to the instructional quality of literature rendered. Johnson incapable of seeing the fine ethical valuation that is implicit in the texture of Shakespeare's writings.

Besides, Johnson picks holes in Shakespeare's coat on many another count. It may however be noted parenthetically that some of the remarks we shall quote do credit to Johnson in so far as they reveal his acute power of observation and his singular aesthetic sense.

Thus Johnson sees in certain plays of Shakespeare imperfect plot construction and lack of design:

"The plots are often so loosely formed, that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued, that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design."1

Again, "It may be observed, that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labour to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented."2

Furthermore, Shakespeare shows a lack of discrimination in representing customs, opinions, manners, etc.:

"He had no regard to the distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expense not only of likelihood, but possibility."3

2. Ibid, P. 89.
3. Ibid, P. 89.
Let us submit that Johnson had the rare quality to discover these oddities in Shakespeare—oddities which do exist, and which have indeed been recognised by modern critics, such as Walter Raleigh, who have sought to explain or justify them. Johnson however was the first to draw our attention to them. For a lesser writer these would indeed have been great blemishes, while in Shakespeare they have almost become virtues; he is like his Cleopatra whom everything becomes, in whom everything is in place.

But Johnson's indictment does not stop here; the Doctor shoots his shafts of disapproving criticism on the great Elizabethan's tragedies, and on certain aspects of his comedies. Thus:

"In his comic scenes he is seldom very successful when he engages his characters in reciprocations of smartness and contests of sarcasm; their jests are commonly gross and their pleasantry licentious; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners."¹

And: "In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse, as his labour is more. The effusions of passion which exigence forces out are for the most part striking and energetic; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity."²

Apparently, these are serious charges no doubt, but they can hardly be said to have any real foundation. If anything, they betray an incomprehension of the full-blooded nature of Elizabethan life and of the.

¹. Ibid, P. 90.
². Ibid, P. 90.
unexampled and amazingly bold individuality of Shakespeare's dramatic genius. We may hope to achieve some understanding of this patent disability by recalling the nature of the age in which the critic did his work.

As variously indicated before, imitation and conformity on the one hand and commonsense and reason on the other, were the go of the day. It was an age in which the neo-classical spirit reigned supreme. It was an age of reverence for the ancients. There were rules and dicta demanding adherence. There was good sense and decorum to be upheld. There were the unities to be observed. There were the graces of expression to be achieved, and the distinctions of literary 'types' to be respected. There were the unimpeachable models to be studied and emulated.

Besides the rules of Aristotle as commented upon by the French exponents of neo-classicism, the Horatian precepts were considered laws for artistic creation. The terseness and elegance of Horace's diction, his unrivalled clearness of statement, and his didactic tendency appealed strongly to the Augustan writers, who made correctness and lucidity their aims.

Into such an age was Johnson born, and in such a society did he live, move and have his being. It was only natural that he should have imbibed some of the fixed ideas of his age. In fact, he had in him
a good deal of the temper of his age, which found rather abundant illustration in his poetry, in his Lives, in Rasselas, in the Rambler, in his celebrated extempore discourses, and also, rather naturally, in his Shakespeare criticism in particular. The Doctor is in agreement with the prevalent notions of his age—the notions of correctness and fixed types of compositions—when he assails Shakespeare on the afore-mentioned scores. Due allowance must also be made for temperament, reactions which are not always fully explainable and which do not show much consistency.

It has been suggested already that when Johnson speaks of Shakespeare's limitations, he, rather paradoxically, betrays largely his own. His conclusions are the result of a critical intelligence, severely limited in certain directions, seeking to measure Shakespeare's works. All this is true. We doubt Johnson was a man of strong likes and dislikes, which was why he was a critic of imperfect sympathies. At the same time, however, may it not be asked if there ever was a critic who was completely free from all disabilities, who was hundred percent perfect? Critics like T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis, for all their eminence, have manifested imperfect powers of appreciation while dealing with the works of poets like Shelley. The Romantic critics of Shakespeare have, notwithstanding
their achievements, either deified Shakespeare or hoisted themselves through self-projection on and self-discovery in the pages of the great Elizabethan. And besides, it is extremely unlikely that Johnson would have himself laid claim to unerring judgment. We have his own words (said about Shakespeare) to lend support to our view. "Every man's performances, to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived, and with his own particular opportunities."¹

More important, the words he used about his own preface show how conscious he was about his own limitations: "Every work of this kind is by its nature deficient."²

The reason why Johnson pinpointed Shakespeare's faults, as he conceived them, is clearly stated by him in his letter to Charles Burney, dated Oct. 16, 1765:

"...... We must confess the faults of our favourite to gain credit to our praise of his excellences. He that claims either for himself or for another the honours of perfection, will surely injure the reputation which he designs to assist......"³

One thing stands out clear, though. Johnson is no Narcissus or hero-worshipper. Here is a forthright man, with conspicuous critical powers,

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1. Ibid. P. 98.
making forthright pronouncements on the artistic productions of a man who is recognised to be as puissant as Nature herself. Here is no pretension, no soft-pedalling, no attempt at explaining away what is considered to be a fault. Here is indeed a man dealing with another man. This, indeed, is what J.W. Crutch mean to convey when he says:

"Johnson may not have seen all of his hero (Shakespeare was to him a hero, not a god) whom he was attempting to contemplate. But what he saw he saw clearly, and in describing that much, he at the same time also revealed to us very clearly his own mind."1

Pecul)iarly imperfect, therefore, as man is, the critic, for all his sympathies, goes wrong on occasions. But the utterances are masculine and virile; the arguments adduced in support of opinions robust and clear as daylight. In fact, there would seem to be justice in some of Johnson's criticism; Shakespeare's plotting and climaxes are sometimes loose and careless, some of his bawdry and word-play is tedious and otiose. As Walter Raleigh so aptly observes:

"The head and front of Johnson's offending was that he wrote and spoke of Shakespeare as one man may fitly speak of another. He claimed for himself the citizenship of that republic in which Shakespeare is admittedly pre-eminent, and dared to enumerate Shakespeare's faults. The whole tale of these, as they are catalogued by Johnson, might be ranged under two heads - carelessness and excess of conceit. It would be foolish to deny these charges."2

It may be profitable to attempt to find out more exactly the kind of critic Johnson is. And what kind of a critic he is, depends on what views he holds about poetry or literature. Now Johnson's views on literature are not very easy to piece together. He certainly insists on truth to nature and what may be called lifelikeness. He demands of art that it be a faithful representation of life. It may be stressed at this stage that while Johnson's predecessors also spoke of art as mirroring nature and praised naturalness of scenes and characters, they never went as far as Johnson goes. For Johnson, art is very much a natural process, as natural as human behaviour with all its attendant uncertainties and unpredictabilities; it defies restrictive rules and evolves according to the genius of time and place. Thus:

"One of the chief distinctions of Johnson from his predecessors in criticism is in this careful reduction of the realm of art, and this habit of regarding literature as a natural process, set in the context of other natural processes such as social behaviour, and thus amenable to treatment in relation to its psychological causes and effects, its natural materials, and its circumstantial determinants. Literary works, for Johnson, must be thought of not as specifically identifiable objects, instances of fixed classes of works, and embodying more or less perfectly an ideal form but as human acts to be judged in relation to the agency of their production and appreciation. They are, consequently, 'things modified by human understandings, subject to varieties of complication, and changeable as experience advances knowledge, or accident influences caprice.' Literature, like morals having life as its object, is not 'prescribed and limited':"
'Since life itself is uncertain, nothing which has life for its basis can boast much stability.' The performances of art, in consequence of their implication with human action and natural models, are 'too inconstant and uncertain, to be reduced to any determinate idea'.............. 'There is therefore scarcely any species of writing, of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents; every new genius produces some innovation, which, when invented and approved, subverts the rule which the practice of fore-going authors had established.'

And thus in accordance with his notion of the inviolable freedom of art, Johnson applauds Shakespeare for his accurate imitation of life in all its variety and mysteriousness. Shakespeare, he never tires of affirming, was an unrivalled student of the life that was around him, and studied it with such curiosity and understood it so intimately and fully as to outshine any other writer before or since. Shakespeare's almost unapproachable excellence is in direct proportion to his matchless familiarity with human scenes and the human language which are so natural. As Johnson says:

"This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language......"  

Again: "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithfull mirror of manners and of life."  

3. Ibid. PP. 79-80.
Indeed so pronounced at times becomes Johnson's insistence on conformity to nature and life that he would seem not to recognize any distinction between art and life; he would appear to put aside even the thinnest conceivable partition between the two. At such moments he would look and sound as an unabashed advocate of stark realism. To quote Johnson:

"It will not easily be imagined how much Shakespeare excels in accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with other authors...... the theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topics which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation, and common occurrences."1

Again, Shakespeare's dramas are "the dramas of a poet who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him."2

Johnson's attitude, as spelt out in these passages, is one of a complete repudiation of the autonomy, or for that matter, of any distinct sphere, of art. This is what makes Rene Wellek remark so acutely:

"Dr. Johnson is of course no Romanticist or even unconscious forerunner of Romanticism; he is rather one of the first critics who has almost ceased to

1. Ibid, PP 80-81.
2. Ibid. P. 81.
understand the nature of art, and who, in the central passages, treats art as life ....... He paves the way for a view which makes art really superfluous, a mere vehicle for the communication of moral or psychological truth. Art is no longer judged as art but as a piece or slice of life. 1

Again: "There runs through Johnson a deep suspicion of all fiction and all art." 2

Nevertheless, in spite of all this emphatic equation of life and letters, Johnson just does not go the whole hog. His realism would look askance at, would even be scandalised by, the realism of a Chaucer or an Emile Zola. For if he is a realist, he is much more significantly and truly a moralist. Had he been a realist out and out, he just could not have objected to any particular aspect or aspects of life being represented in literature, he just could not have thought of artistic treatment. For example, we could have depended upon his not making an issue of the close of King Lear. What one finds is that the critic who goes into raptures over Shakespeare's superb sense of life and actuality blames the latter for exhibiting what, according to him, he should not have exhibited. An artist is to reveal, but he is to reveal within certain strict limitations. He must know how to exercise his judgment. He must take care to see that what he chooses is morally edifying and not such as might in any way encourage tendencies which are inimical to social health. The age demanded

2. Ibid. P. 80.
that the artist's choice of material and his treatment should be of such character as to be able to provide sound instruction as well as pure pleasure. In the Rambler 4, Johnson discusses modern fiction and begins by saying:

"It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation; greater care is still required in presenting life, which is so often discoloured by passion." He goes further to assert that "many characters ought never to be drawn." There should be no opportunities lost to portray absolute goodness to which no exception can be taken, and vice, which it is necessary to exhibit, should be so exhibited as to cause disgust. Johnson, as we have seen, like some other outstanding fellow Augustans, was deeply troubled by the low moral tone of the age and strove to raise it. One can therefore easily understand why Johnson preferred Richardson to Fielding, and why he denounced Tom Jones as a "vicious book."

We have already seen how Johnson charges Shakespeare with a lack of "moral purpose" because of his sacrificing "virtue of convenience", and being "so much more careful to please than to instruct." Johnson is emphatic that this fault of Shakespeare "the barbarity of the age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent of time or place."

It is therefore clear that Johnson's moralism renders his realist stance ineffectual. His moralism and realism run into or almost against each other.

and consequently the picture that we are presented with is somewhat clumsy and blurred. While his realist self advocates inclusion or absorption of life, his moralist self prescribes certain rigid rejections. The realist in Johnson entertains profound admiration for Shakespeare, the moralist in him assails the poet.

At this stage it may not be entirely irrelevant to examine more carefully the nature of his realism. It is indeed a fact that like his contemporaries and predecessors, Johnson makes repeated mention of 'truth' and 'nature' and 'life', and reminds the writer of his inescapable obligation to them. Now, these terms have formalised significance attached to them in the dictionary of 18th century writers. And when Johnson uses these terms they naturally carry their contemporary association and significance.

Johnson, true to the spirit of the age, does not seem to believe in anything particular or individual, for his emphasis is on the general and abstract, patterned and uniform. Thus when praising Shakespeare Johnson emphasises the generic properties of his characters while it would be deemed a great tribute to the poet to commend the unique individuality of his characters. "In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species."¹ Johnson's limitation becomes

all the more conspicuous when we recall what Pope had observed many years before: "Every single character in Shakespeare is as much an individual, as those in life itself."

But as M.H. Abrams points out:

"Johnson's total view is as often misinterpreted because he usually argues to the single point or document at issue, by an appeal to only so much of the general principle as the case requires. Although he praises Shakespeare's characters, for example, because they are species, he later goes on to say that 'characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other.' .........

Read completely rather than in selected passages, then, Johnson may be said to locate the highest and rarest excellence in the representation of the individualised type, the circumstantially general, and the novel-familiar."1

The following is a particularly illuminative passage on the same question from the same book:

"In the Age of Johnson, then, we find standards of art running the gamut from a primary emphasis on typicality, generality and 'large appearances', to the unqualified recommendation of particularity, uniqueness, and a microscopic depiction of detail. For our purposes, however, it is important to note that these discussions and disagreements took place mainly within a single aesthetic orientation. Whether art is to represent a composite of scattered beauties, generic humanity, average forms, and familiar appearances, or whether unique characteristics undiscovered particularities, and ultra-violet discriminations — all these forms and qualities are conceived to be inherent in the constitution of the external world, and the work of art continues to be regarded as a kind of reflection, though a selective one. The artist himself is often envisioned as the agent holding the mirror up to nature, and even the originality of a genius is explained in large part by his possessing the zeal and acuity to invent (in the root sense of 'discover') aspects of the universe and

of human nature hitherto overlooked, and the imaginative ingenuity to combine and express familiar elements in new and surprising ways."

Now Johnson's brand of this 18th century English realism is significantly modified by his plea for moral selection. The breach between the two selves is never fully healed. The basic incompatibility remains for all that the Doctor says now and then in the matter. The possible cause of this odd posture is perhaps due to the fact that Johnson was above all what may be called a 'responsible' writer. We have noticed that a sense of social responsibility was peculiar to the 18th century writers in general. As we have observed more than once, they felt that the social tone left much to be desired, and they bent their energies to secure the ideal social health which meant the ideal moral health. Johnson accordingly was what may be called a committed writer — a writer committed to a task or ideal. The moral question occupied him and he became rather an obsessed man, which explains why the problem of life and art became for him the problem of morals. An excessive preoccupation with social life and the social side of man nearly blinded him to the great extra-social dimensions of life and man. His vision of man and society became curiously limited.

1. Ibid, PP 41-42.

2. J.I.M. Stewart calls Johnson "a moralist ceaselessly curious in conduct" (Character and Motive in Shakespeare, 1950, P. 1)
And therefore it is not altogether surprising why he should have failed to see the deeper morality of Shakespeare's plays. To put it in a word, it was an encounter between a committed writer on the one hand and an uncommitted one on the other. For one life was essentially social, for the other it was elemental and mysterious. Johnson with his somewhat limited world-view and consequently somewhat narrow range of interest was necessarily unequal to the exceedingly large task of fathoming Shakespeare who viewed life in its deepest and most comprehensive sense.

Yet this is far from being the final word on Johnson as Shakespeare critic. All this is, if anything, but one side of the picture, and we would grievously err in not taking an understanding look at the other, perhaps more important, side. To this side T.S. Eliot has called our attention in away in which few others have ever done. Eliot observes:

"To pass from Dryden to Johnson is to make the journey from one oasis to another. After the critical essays of Dryden, the Preface to Shakespeare by Samuel Johnson is the next of the great pieces of criticism to read. One would willingly resign the honour of an Abbey burial for the greater honour of words like the following, from a man of the greatness of their author:

'The poet, of whose works I have undertaken the revision, may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration. He has outlined his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit. Whatever advantages he might once derive from personal allusions, local customs, temporary opinions, have for many years been lost; and every topic of
merriment, or motive of sorrow, which the modes of artificial life afforded him, now only obscure the scenes which they once illuminated. The effects of favour and competition are at an end; the tradition of his friendships and his enmities has perished; his works support no opinion with arguments, nor supply any faction with invectives, they can neither indulge vanity nor gratify malignity; but are read without any other reason than the desire of pleasure, and are therefore praised only as pleasure is obtained; yet, thus unassisted by interest or passion, they have passed through variations of taste and changes of manners and as they devolved from one generation to another, have received new honours at every transmission.'

"What a valedictory and obituary for any man to receive! My point is that if you assume that the classical criticism of England was grudging in its praise of Shakespeare, I say that no poet can ask more of posterity than to be greatly honoured by the great; and Johnson's words about Shakespeare are great honour."1

Here Eliot with his great authority beautifully upholds the authoritative pronouncements of one of his somewhat distant predecessors. When we pause to call to mind the many other like observations of Johnson, we cannot fail to realise the extent and depth of his interest in Shakespeare; we are led on to see that Johnson's recognition of the universality and enduring quality of Shakespeare's genius was complete and absolute, whatever questions he might have raised occasionally and whatever reservations he might have had on certain aspects of the poet's works. Thus speaking on the deathless appeal of Shakespeare's works,

Johnson says:

"The stream of time which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare." 1

This again is no qualified praise. There is something about the two passages quoted above which makes one feel that the critic in question is no sour-faced man, but one who genuinely enjoys the company of Shakespeare, and who almost moves about in the broad, open expanse of the poet's creation with irrepressible gusto. It is worthy of mention that Johnson's spirit in commending Shakespeare is not only in tune with, but a further reinforcement of, the spirit of Dryden and Pope, among others. And this is an important thing: For it is a question of approach, and a critic's approach is even more important than what might be regarded as his concrete achievements. And let it be remembered that Johnson had his concrete achievements too. At this point where we are dwelling on the quality of Johnson's approach to Shakespeare, we may quote Walter Raleigh:

"Those who approach the study of Shakespeare under the sober and vigorous guidance of Johnson will meet with fewer exciting adventures, but they will not see less of the subject. They will hear the greatness of Shakespeare discussed in language so quiet and modest as to sound tame in ears accustomed to hyperbole, but they will not, unless they are very dull or careless, fall into the error of supposing that Johnson's admiration for Shakespeare was cold and partial......

The great moments of Shakespeare's drama had thrilled and excited Johnson from his boyhood up. When he was nine years old, and was reading Hamlet alone in his father's kitchen, the ghost scene made him hurry upstairs to the street door, that he might see people about him and be saved from the horrors of imagination. In his mature age he could not bear to read the closing scenes of Lear and Othello. His notes on some of Shakespeare's minor characters show with what keenness of zest he followed the incidents of the drama and with what sympathy he estimated the persons.\(^1\)

This brings us to an important point. The Augustan critics of Shakespeare, although formally rule-bound, do give occasional evidence of emotional and imaginative response to literature, particularly to Shakespeare. Indeed, we have noted how the claims of imagination were gaining fresh grounds as the century advanced. Our point here is that Raleigh's discovery of the emotional and imaginative strains in Johnson's artistic nature bears testimony to that aspect of 18th century critical temper to which we have called repeated attention. M.H. Abrams observes almost in the same vein:

"The assertion that Eighteenth century critics read by reason's gross calumny. Readers of no age have demanded more, or more violent, emotions from poetry, and not only the sentimentalists, but the most judicial readers as well. Johnson's praise of Shakespeare—

His powerful strokes presiding Truth impressed
And unresisted passion stormed the breast—

is not empty declamation, as the intensity of Johnson's response to Hamlet, and to the closing scenes of Lear and Othello demonstrates."\(^2\)

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Indeed, a close look at Johnson's Preface confirms the impression of high animation that Raleigh received from it. Among other things, the energy and vivacity with which Johnson joins issue with the poet's detractors, and clears him of what were thought serious charges, point to the 'thrill' and 'excitement' which Raleigh discovers in Johnson's reactions to the pulsating life of Shakespeare's world. It does not seem that he takes up the gauntlet on behalf of Shakespeare with any touch of perfunctoriness. More than once while defending Shakespeare he does not stop short of ridiculing the opposite party, of showing how hide-bound and silly they are. Dealing with the criticism that Shakespeare's Romans were not 'sufficiently Romans' and Voltaire's dig that his kings were not 'completely royal', Johnson remarks with an obvious shrug of his shoulder:

"His (Shakespeare's) story requires Romans and kings, but he thinks only of men. He knew that Rome like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and wanting a buffoon he went into the senate-house for that which the senate-house would have afforded him. He was inclined to show an usurper and a murderer not only odious but despicable, he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings. These are the petty cavils of petty minds; a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery."

The sturdy commonsense which informs these remarks does not need pointing out and the rapier-thrust that one can see in them goes home.

One of the greatest things that Johnson said about Shakespeare was on the nature of his plays, although as Eliot has pointed out, it has escaped adequate notice. Few subsequent critics have cared to commend Johnson for his unusually shrewd observations in this regard, or at least drawn our attention to them. The profound insight that he brings to bear upon his study of the character of Shakespeare's plays remains unmatched, and here again his neo-classical bearings are all too manifest.

Johnson's view is, closely seen, grounded in the 18th century's intense interest in nature or life, in what may perhaps be called the empirical world of nature, more particularly human nature. Thus Johnson saw deep enough to realise that Shakespeare's plays centred round and were deeply involved in one and the same world — a world of both joy and sorrow, of both good and evil. The stuff in each play is nearly ever the same richly complex stuff only tinted in an individual manner. Which means that the customary divisions of these plays into tragic, comic, and historical is often arbitrary and misleading. Johnson says:

"Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proposition and innumerable modes of combinations."

1. Ibid. P. 83.
Again: "The players, who in their edition divided our author's works into comedies, histories, and tragedies, seem not to have distinguished the three kinds by any very exact or definite ideas."[1]

Further: "Through all these denominations of the drama, Shakespeare's mode of composition is the same: an interchange of seriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time, and exhilarated at another. But whatever be his purpose........ he never fails to attain his purpose."[2]

What Johnson drives at and so rightly is that Shakespeare's plays are essentially some significant tales of man's journey through the profound mystery that is life with all its unpredictabilities and attendant joys and sorrows. The time-honoured categorisation is out of place. What is even more important is that the great success with which Shakespeare has handled his comic and tragic scenes in the same work should effectively silence those critics who attack his mode of mixing the two elements, which incidentally is unexampled in previous English dramatic history.

This brings us to Johnson's defence of Shakespeare's tragi-comedy and also of his rejection of the unities of time and place. In each of these cases his arguments give conspicuous evidence of his forthright and powerful intellect. And it must be noted that in each case his views are substantially anticipated by Dryden's. Johnson's argument on tragi-comedy is but a continuation of his observations on

1. Ibid. P. 85.
2. Ibid. P. 86.
the mingling of tragic and comic elements in every Shakespearean play. Now his defence of tragi-comedy proper which he calls 'mingled drama' and which he knows to be against the theory of literary types is peculiarly defiant and convincing:

"That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied."1

It is necessary to record here that in Rambler 156, Sept. 14, 1751, Johnson had put forward an equally vigorous defence for tragi-comedy. Thus:

"For what is there in the mingled drama which impartial reason can condemn? The connection of important with trivial incidents, since it is not only common but perpetual in the world, may surely be allowed upon the stage, which pretends to be the mirror of life."

This discussion on tragi-comedy and Johnson's defence of it reminds one of two other outstanding men living in two different times and diametrically opposed to each other on the same issue. They are Sir Philip Sidney and John Dryden, the former condemning with Vigorous banter "the mongrel tragi-comedy" as he called it and the latter being all praise for it. It is only fair to add that Sidney did not have Shakespeare's example before him. Dryden, as we have already seen, comes out saying that he "cannot but conclude, to the

1. Ibid. P. 84.
honour of our nation, that we have invented,
increased, and perfected a more pleasant way of
writing for the stage than was ever known to the
anceints or moderns of any nation, which is tragi-
comedy.***

The same clear-sightedness and intellectual
integrity enable Johnson to justify Shakespeare's
disregard of the unities of time and place. Here
again, as we have seen, Dryden anticipated Johnson.
Much like Dryden, Johnson goes straight to the
heart of the matter, and his pronouncements are
characteristic of the man and eminently memorable.
On the pointlessness of the unity of time Johnson
observes:

"The drama exhibits successive imitations of
successive action; and why may not the second
imitation represent an action that happened years
after the first; if it be so connected with it
that nothing but time can be supposed to intervene.
Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious
to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily
conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we
easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore
willingly permit it to be contracted when we only
see their imitation."**

And what he says with absolute abandon
(bordering on scorn) on the indefensibility of the
unity of place would seem to make a mockery of the
opposite point of view. "The truth is, that the

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1. An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, 1668, in English
Critical Essays XVI-XVIII Centuries, W.C. 1956,
P. 141.

2. Johnson's Preface, in Shakespeare Criticism,
spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first, to the last, that the stage is only a stage, that the players are only players. They came to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place, but different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?"1

All these observations, grounded in sound commonsense, have an air of finality about them. There would seem to be no higher court of appeal. Henri Fluchere who finds in Johnson "the first signs of modern modern critical thought"2 makes the following comment in this connection:

"The scene of the action is as imaginary as it can be since the stage is neutral and, thanks to its arrangement in depth and height, as well as to its decor and its symbolical stage properties, it can represent everything.... There is indeed nothing simpler than to accept a fiction which presents itself as such. This theatre contains the whole universe, a stage more magical than the devil's cloak offered to Dr. Faustus, which can combine ubiquity with immobility. Everything is possible to the 'willing suspension of disbelief.'"3

1. Ibid. PP 94-5.
True, Johnson was not the first to see no particular virtue in the slavish observance of the 'unities'. Since the days of Dryden and Rymer the critics had not ceased to debate whether or not the action of a play ought to be confined to one place or completed within 24 hours, and whether under-plots were permissible. In fact, Johnson's arguments had been anticipated a century earlier by Farquhar in his Discourse upon Comedy, yet the issue was not dead. And it remained for Samuel Johnson to say for his age the last word on it. And through Johnson spoke the essential sanity of the 18th century English critical thought. As Nichol Smith puts it:

"After all, it was Johnson who, as far as English criticism is concerned, settled the problem of the dramatic unities once and for all."¹

And W.K. Wimsatt, Jr. Sums it up in an even more colourful manner:

"Johnson deserves credit for meeting this issue in a characteristic display of two of his most valuable powers. For one thing, he goes immediately to the heart of the matter, putting his finger on the false premise by which the exaggerated doctrine of the unities had so long been sustained — namely, the assumption that the aim of drama is literal verisimilitude, 'the supposed necessity of making the drama credible.' For another thing, even if he is only kicking an open door, he does this with such ample energy and gusto, such resonance, reverberation

¹. Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century, 1928, P. 75.
of splintering material, that it is doubtful if carpenters will be able soon to mend the door."  

Shakespeare had been appraised and extolled by others such as Addison, Pope and Warton, but by none with such vigour and such sureness of critical judgment as by Johnson. Johnson absorbs them all and yet stands out. From his pages emerges the picture of a universal poet — a poet who, as Coleridge says, "is of no age" and who, to recall an almost identical judgment by Ben Jonson, "was not of an age, but for all time."

Indeed, it is remarkable how assiduously Johnson sought to get at the essential greatness of Shakespeare. In more than one way his criticism was particularly original and suggestive so that it could be held to have foreshadowed certain critical trends in the later ages. Thus Johnson's view that "his (Shakespeare's) real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of the fable" represents a remarkable insight — an insight not evidenced before, and one that fairly anticipates from a distance of well over a hundred years the trend of criticism represented, among others, by Wilson Knight who is chiefly concerned with the total impression derived from a studious exploration of the entire poetic pattern of a play.

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That Johnson was deeply persuaded that Shakespeare's greatness lies chiefly in his almost unique conception of the whole rather than in the curiosities of isolated expressions, becomes all the clearer from his saying it once again:

"Parts are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed; there is a kind of intellectual remoteness necessary for the comprehension of any great work in its full design and its true proportions."  

Johnson's criticism has been characterised as judicial criticism. We saw how Halliday regards Johnson's Preface as "the judicial summing up of the opinion of a century." We think it proper to call Johnson's criticism humanistic criticism. By judicial criticism is meant that attitude of mind which distributes praise and blame. It may be asked if most literary criticism is not essentially so. True, the neo-classical writers consciously played the judge. They did assume some of the authoritarian attitude. But appreciation without some judgment is neither here nor there. The critic is obliged, by an inner compulsion, to show his likes and dislikes. What about T.S. Eliot then? Does he not exhibit the judicial temper when he declares Hamlet 'an artistic failure'? Do not good critics spotlight both excellence and faults in a work of art as they conceive these to be? We said that we would rather have the expression —

1. Ibid. PP 114-115.
2. Shakespeare and His Critics, 1958, P. 11.
'humanistic criticism'. Johnson never tired of forcing it on to our attention that with Shakespeare man is the centre, the focal point of whatever happens, whatever else there might be. His characters are never either monsters or gods. Set against the 19th century attempts at divinisation of the poet and his works, Johnson's statement that 'Shakespeare has no heroes: his scenes are occupied only by men who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion. Even when the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life' would seem truly remarkable — remarkable because of the just accent it lays on the naturalness of the plays' setting and content and the sheer humanism of their appeal. The point that should not escape notice is that Johnson, instead of mouthing rules like the average writer of his time, speaks of man and of what looks natural or otherwise. It is life rather than the rule that interests him. As W.R. Keast observes:

"The substance of Johnson's attacks on the rules for pastoral poetry and comedy, on the prohibitions of tragi-comedy, and on the dramatic unities are familiar enough to need no restatement here. It is important to note that in each case Johnson seeks to subvert accepted critical dogmas and to deliver literature from the fetters of prescriptive criticism ..... The precepts he opposes are in general, he says,

'the arbitrary edicts of legislators, authorised only by themselves, who, out of various means by which the same end may be attained, selected such
as happened to occur to their own reflection, and then by a law which idleness and timidity were too willing to obey, prohibited new experiments of art, restrained fancy from the indulgence of her innate inclination to hazard and adventure, and condemned all future flights of genius to pursue the path of the Meconian eagle.'

......"The real state of sublunary nature — 'this chaos of mingled purposes and casualties' — is the poet's object. That some poets, like the ancient writers of tragedy and comedy, have elected to restrict themselves to a part of the diversified whole cannot warrant the critic in imposing a similar restriction on others. Critical rules, Johnson says, have too often been derived from precedents rather than from reason, and hence 'practice has introduced rules, rather than rules have directed practice.'"1

It is his soul-ful distaste for obtuse rules that prompts him to defend Shakespeare against those who would denounce him for his having nothing to do with theunities of time and place and for his tragi-comedies. Johnson's vigorous defence of Shakespeare's non-conformity can well be seen as the expression of the larger 18th century English spirit of non-conformity (which, as we have seen, was very much a fact) to pointless conventions.

The greatest passage in which Johnson deals with Voltaire's Criticism of Shakespeare and gives his riposte is another xp proof of the importance he attaches to naturalness (to man and nature) and genuine passion or emotion. Voltaire had opted for

Cato in preference to Othello. Let us see how Johnson reacts. He dismisses Addison for his artificiality and goes for Shakespeare because of his naturalness. ("Let him be answered that Addison speaks the language of poets, and Shakespeare, of men"). Thus he places Othello ("the vigorous and vivacious offspring of observation impregnated by genius") above Cato ("a splendid exhibition of artificial and fictitious manners").

Johnson's sense of historical relativity deserves notice especially in the context of the school of historical criticism in this century. We have already seen how Pope's opinion had foreshadowed Johnson's in this regard. Johnson's observation is capable of application to his own performance as Shakespeare critic as well. And if we kept it at the back of our minds, we might perhaps understand a little better and sympathise with, rather than assail him, for some of his failure and short-comings.

When at last we put aside for a while his preface, and look further afield, we recognise that his Notes on the Plays are an invaluable part of his distinctive achievement as Shakespeare critic. This work is in the tradition of the century's

1. "Everyman's performances to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived."
Shakespeare scholarship. Johnson's achievement in this respect is three-fold: first, his judicious and determined endeavour to find out the real Shakespeare by restoring the authentic and purging him of all that is sham; second, his shedding some light on obscurities, and last, his acute reading of characters. In his effort to get at the real Shakespeare, he called attention to the supreme importance of the First Folio, restored many of its readings, and was the first to realise and proclaim its sole authority. In the matter of the explication of difficulties, he was singularly fortunate in his sturdy commonsense, his awareness of human nature, and his historical knowledge. But perhaps "the largest philological virtue" which Johnson displayed was the virtue of restraint and humility in the face of Shakespeare's text and also that of respect for what was given. And in the matter of character analysis, started in the 18th century by Rowe and carried forward by Joseph Warton, Johnson stands far ahead of them and others in point of penetrative treatment and the faculty of happy comment. It may be recalled that this trend in which Johnson had thus a great hand, was destined to prove momentous later on, since the greatest critics of the next century, namely, the 19th, had for their principal occupation
the study of character — its motives and workings. Moreover, the tendency of looking at Shakespeare through his characters survived the 19th century and saw its culmination in the writings of A.C. Bradley whose Shakespearean Tragedy appeared in 1904. On the confluence of the old and new trends of criticism in Johnson, Nichol Smith remarks:

"Just as his edition of Shakespeare is the pivot of the old and new scholarship of the 18th century, similarly we may take it as a rough mark for the beginning of the new criticism. We need not look for this new criticism in the Preface. But it speaks out loud and bold in the Notes. In these Notes Johnson did not confine himself to textual difficulties. Like Warburton before him, and Theobald and Pope, he would draw attention to the beauty of a line or passage; and he would sometimes add his estimate of the play. He is at his happiest when he is moved to write about a character."

We quote two passages from his Notes, one on Polonius, the other on Falstaff, to illustrate Johnson's felicitous character analysis. Thus on Polonius:

"Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining into dotage...... Such a man is positive and confident, because he knows that his mind was once strong, and known not that it is become weak. Such a man excels in general principles and fails in the particular application. He is knowing in retrospect, and ignorant in foresight......"

And on Falstaff:

"But Falstaff unimitated, unimitable Falstaff, how shall I describe thee? Though compound of sense and vice: of sense which may be admired but not esteemed, of vice which may be despised, but hardly detested. At once obsequious and malignant, he satirises in their absence those whom he lives by flattering. He is familiar with the prince only as an agent of vice, but of this familiarity he is so proud as not only to be supercilious and haughty with common men, but to think his interest of importance to the Duke of Lancaster. Yet the man thus corrupt makes himself necessary to the prince that despises him, by the most pleasing of all qualities, perpetual gaiety, by an unfailling power of exciting laughter."

These observations bear witness to the critic's perceptive faculty, his fascination for details, and his delight in characters. There is an inviting freshness about them — a freshness that appears true for all times.

In the Introduction we spoke of the essential sanity and soundness of 18th century Shakespeare criticism taken as a whole. Incidentally, we also referred to Raleigh's praise for the "cool and manly utterances" of Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, among others. Here we shall only quote two passages seeking to emphasise those very virtues in Johnson. Thus George Steiner writes:

"The eighteenth century had admired Shakespeare in spite of his archaic language. A critic such as Johnson held that English had gained in clarity and sobriety since the Elizabethans and Jacobins. He had too much good sense to suppose that the language of a past literary period could be revived, a language being the living mirror of historical change. The romantics, on the
contrary, immersed themselves in Shakespearean speech, in the hope that they could thereby restore the lost glory of the English style. They hung on their melodramatic plots and egotistical imaginings great streamers of words borrowed from Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, or Ford. The result is a dismal farrago.\footnote{1}

The following is from Helen Gardner:

"Johnson also took the historical in his stride: He had far more historical knowledge than Dryden, and, with his work as Lexicographer and editor behind him, is the patron of all scholar-critics, as Dryden is the patron of all men of letters and of the poet turned critic. But their fundamental position is the same.

'In order to make a true estimate of the abilities and merits of a writer, it is always necessary to examine the genius of his age, and the opinions of his contemporaries. A poet who should now make the whole action of his tragedy depend upon enchantment, and produce the chief events by the assistance of supernatural agents, would be censured as transgressing the bounds of probability, be banished from the Theatre to the nursery, and condemned to write fairy tales instead of tragedies.'

"So Johnson opens his long and very learned note on the first stage-direction of \textit{Macbeth}:

'Enter three Witches'. And he concludes:

"Upon this general infatuation Shakespeare might be easily allowed to found a play, \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots nor can it be doubted that the scenes of enchantment, however they may now be ridiculed, were both by himself and his audience thought awful and affecting.'

"Johnson suggests here, \textit{en passant}, that we ought to take into account how a work appeared to its first audiences, a theory much in vogue today. He does not appeal to the audience to help him to interpret the work, a dangerous enterprise which often involves the critic who attempts it in a perfectly circular argument. He appeals to the audience to\footnote{1. The Death of Tragedy, paper covered ed. 1961, PP 146-47.}
acquit Shakespeare from the charge of having chosen a childish plot.... He is facing the problem of changing beliefs. How are we to respond to a work of art which embodies assumptions which were once accepted as true but are now unacceptable and appear to us as aberration of the human intellect? He handles the problem with characteristic robustness, because, like Dryden, he is able to make a clear division. The historical is something to be got out of the way. The notion that we should ourselves find the scenes of enchantment "awful and affecting" he does not consider for a moment. Changing beliefs, like changing customs and manners, are accidents. The whole basis of Johnson's criticism is the belief that human nature is always essentially the same and that the poet's concern is with general truth. .......... To Johnson history means information about the past which makes it possible for the critic to find universal moral truths in ancient works of art..........

"Criticism, after Coleridge, which accepts as axiomatic the integrity of a work of art as the product of a creative imagination, cannot make this distinction between the kernel of eternal moral truth and the shell of outmoded belief. Coleridge himself, although eager enough to use an historical argument in defence of romantic drama against neo-classical, when he approaches the work itself salves its imaginative integrity by ignoring the historical ............... Coleridge no more questions than Johnson that human nature is always the same. But while Johnson makes allowance for the accidents of history, Coleridge ignores them. He thereby preserves the integrity of the work, but he does so at the cost of remaking it in his own image. He ignores the fact that Hamlet was written for the stage, and for a stage whose conventions were very different from the conventions of the stage of antiquity and the stage in his own day. He ignores also the fact that Shakespeare did not invent the story of Hamlet. Nobody would guess from reading Coleridge on Hamlet that the play had any other source than Shakespeare's imagination creating an image of human life as he knew it."

Both the extracts above seek to pinpoint the inherent soundness and merit of Johnson's Shakespeare criticism, and suggest his superior acceptability on account of his being possessed of a better historical perspective as compared with the Romantics.

To sum up: the first thing that one should like to say is that almost all of Johnson's pronouncements on Shakespeare are largely free from any crude bias or inhibition. His utterances are, by and large, the products of a sensitive and virile mind, deeply rooted in the age and yet surpassing it. In this connection, it may be of interest to recall what Johnson had said about the function of criticism or of a critic. A critic, said Johnson, is neither to point out beauties rather than faults nor to emphasise faults rather than beauties; it is his function to "hold out the light of reason, whatever it may discover."  

What Johnson has in mind is that a critic should have for his job to attempt at a fair, dispassionate and rational understanding of a work.

1. The Paper entitled Caprices of Criticism, 93 dated Tuesday, 5th February, 1751, says: "...... The duty of criticism is neither to depreciate nor dignify by partial representations, but to hold out the light of reason, whatever it may discover, and to promulgate the determinations of truth, whatever she shall dictate." (The Rambler, E.M.L., P. 165).
of art. Since it is only natural that while bringing his reason to bear upon a work of art, the critic will discover both merits and blemishes, it becomes his obligation to make them known without fear or a blush. The expression — "the light of reason" — no doubt is typical of the man and his age. It is really interesting to note that Johnson does not speak here of imagination or anything allied to it. That he sought to steer clear of what may be called an emotional involvement or imaginative participation in the works he was studying is beyond a doubt, although we have seen how in spite of himself and the official Augustan rational creed, he occasionally found himself emotionally involved and achieved imaginative participation. Johnson's responses to *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *King Lear* are cases in point. At any rate, fairness is Johnson's motto, and he succeeds in being singularly fair even when he dwells on what he considers Shakespeare's faults. He holds the scale of criticism remarkably even.

Yet, as we have already noted, and, paradoxical though it may sound, when Johnson responds to Shakespeare, he does so with all his being; it is a total intellectual-cum-emotional-cum imaginative response, not just an intellectual one.
Incidentally, this is a fresh proof that the age was not entirely intellect-ridden, but had kept alive many of the richer sensibilities that go with art. Johnson's total response finds its reflection in his very language.

"One difference between Johnson and most other literary critics, and especially between him and many other critics of his time, is the fullness and depth with which he responds to a work of literature and to the author of that work. Johnson responds with a massive movement of his personality. Sometimes this works to inform and illuminate a critical judgment, as in the intuition...... that Shakespeare's 'mingled drama' is an artistically right exhibition of the 'real state of sublunary nature.'"

And Lionel Trilling finds in him a critic "who requires no formulated first principles for his judgment but only the sensibility that is the whole response of his whole being."

Johnson is one of those rare people in whose hands things take on a new look. It is ultimately the question of the force of personality making all the difference. The energy, the thoroughness, and the perspicacity with which Johnson set about the task of reading Shakespeare got the complexion of the entire century's Shakespeare study significantly altered. The wind of change had

already begun to blow. Johnson came to give it the promise of long and vigorous life in the direction of textual scholarship besides character and play analysis. After him the study of Shakespeare could no longer remain in the old ruts of neo-classical injunctions.