CHAPTER - II
Both Dr. Johnson and Scott are pioneers in their respective fields. They have served as models for subsequent writers remarkably. They laid down literary principles of lasting worth. It is a must for every researcher to have a proper view of their canonical work. Born the son of a bookseller in Lichfield, Johnson was throughout his life prone to ill health. At the age of three he was taken to London to be ‘touched’ for scrofula. He entered Pembroke College, Oxford, in October 1728, and during his time there he translated into Latin Messiah, a collection of prayers and hymns by Alexander Pope, published in 1731. Johnson was an impoverished commoner and is said to have been hounded for his threadbare appearance; the customary title ‘Dr’ by which he is often known is the result of an honorary doctorate awarded him by the University in 1775. His father died in 1731, and left the family in penury; Johnson was a teacher at the grammar school in Market Bosworth during 1732, and then moved for three years to Birmingham, his first

In 1735 he married Mrs. Elizabeth Porter (‘Tetty’), a widow 20 years his senior, and the couple harboured enduring affection for each other. They started a school at Edial, near Lichfield, but the project was unsuccessful, so they moved down to London in 1737, accompanied by one of their former pupils, David Garrick. Johnson began earning a steady living in the employ of Edward Cave, the founder of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. To this he contributed essays, Latin verses, biographies and political commentaries on parliamentary proceedings. In 1738 he published his poem *London*, a Juvenalian imitation approved by Pope.

The death in 1743 of his erstwhile friend, the poet Richard Savage, prompted the first of Johnson’s biographical pieces, published in 1744. The publisher Robert Dodsley then persuaded him to address to Lord Chesterfield his *Plan of a*
Dictionary of the English Language in 1747, but little help was forthcoming, and for the next eight years Johnson laboured intermittently with this project, a lexicographical milestone. In 1749 he published The Vanity of Human Wishes, his longest and most enduring poem, and in that same year his loyal field Garrick fulfilled a promise by staging a production of Johnson’s moralistic tragedy Irene it appeared at Drury Lane and altogether earned its author £300. In 1750, Johnson undertook another enterprise for Cave, a twice-weekly periodical called The Rambler, which ran until 1752, all but four of its 208 numbers being written, anonymously, by Johnson himself. The project was applauded by Samuel Richardson.

In 1752 he contributed to John Hawkesworth’s periodical The Adventurer, and at Cave’s death in 1754 Johnson wrote a life of the bookseller for The Gentleman’s Magazine. The next year saw the publication of A Dictionary of the English Language, and the rebuff with which he greeted delayed endorsement of this project by Chesterfield. His entry for ‘patron’ in the Dictionary reflects the compiler’s feelings. An
abridged form of the *Dictionary* appeared in 1756, but Johnson was hardly earning a living, having to pen numerous political articles, reviews and essays for various periodicals including the *Universal Visitor* and the *Literary Magazine*. He wrote his lives of Sir Thomas Browne and Roger Ascham which were published in 1756 and 1761 respectively, and from 1758 to 1760 contributed *The Idler* series of papers to the *Universal Chronicle*. In 1759 his philosophical romance *The Prince of Abyssinia, A Tale* (later known as *Rasselas*) was published shortly after the death of the author's mother.

At the behest of Lord Bute, the new monarch George III awarded Johnson in 1762 an annual pension of £300, which somewhat relaxed his straitened circumstances. On 16th May the following year he first met James Boswell, who was later to become his biographer. In 1764 – along with his friend Joshua Reynolds, the painter – Johnson founded 'the Club', an artistic 'coterie' whose meetings at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street were attended by Burke, Goldsmith, Garrick, Boswell and Charles James Fox. In this year he made the acquaintance of
Henry Thrale, a prosperous and cultured brewer, and his diminutive wife Hester, who offered generous hospitality to Johnson during crucial years when depression hovered over his life. In 1765, after considerable delays, his eight-volume edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* appeared, followed by Johnson's own *Preface*. Subsequent scholarship may have superseded most of the editorial work, but the prefatory essay remains one of the most sensible introductions to its subject.

By now a deservedly celebrated literary figure whose opinions on a variety of subjects were eagerly noted in metropolitan circles, Johnson finally agreed to Boswell's request that they embark together on a tour of Scotland. His observations were published as *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775). At the suggestion of a number of London booksellers, he began work in the spring of 1777 on a series of 'little prefaces' for a planned edition of the works of certain English poets, and these penetrating biographical essays were published separately in 1781 as *The Lives of the Poets*, fifty two compelling studies which show him both informed and
opinionated as a literary critic. In 1781 Henry Thrale died, and Hester sold off the brewery, and began to see less of Johnson; in June 1783 she announced her intention to marry Gabriele Piozzi, a music teacher, and Johnson’s outraged response caused their sad estrangement. He spent the summer of 1784 touring England, visiting Lichfield, Birmingham and Oxford, and returning to London in mid-November, dropsical and depressed. Samuel Johnson died during the night of 13th December and is buried in Westminster Abbey. With all his achievements Johnson regarded himself a failure. He wanted to serve humanity with his literary activity. As he was not satisfied with himself, he never took up autobiography formally. He was seriously interested in literature, specially in biography as he wished his readers to find out personal meanings in themselves. About this sublime quality of his literature Philip Davis observes:

Those private inner autobiographical echoes in Johnson are his private version of what he wanted his readers to be reminded of in themselves. The
memory of their own private autobiographies was to be triggered, just as his had been, on the other side of the big, public words of powerful commonalty. Johnson’s language creates on the page a general human meeting-point which exists at once to repress and to recall personal meanings in writer and reader alike. (*Extraordinarily* 12)

Scott was born in Edinburgh, on August, 1771. on both his mother’s and father’s side he descended from old Border families, distinguished more for their feuds and fighting than for their intellectual attainments. His father was a barrister, a just man, who often lost clients by advising them to be, first of all, honest in their lawsuits. His mother was a woman of character and education, strongly imaginative, a teller of tales which stirred young Walter’s enthusiasm by revealing the past as a world of living heroes. As a child, Scott was lame and delicate, and was therefore sent away from the city to be with his grandmother in the open country at Sandy Knowe, in Roxburghshire, near the Tweed. This grandmother was a perfect
treasure-house of legends concerning the old Border feuds. From her wonderful tales Scott developed that intense love of Scottish history and tradition which characterizes all his work. By the time he was eight years old, when he returned to Edinburgh, Scott’s tastes were fixed for life. At the high school he was a fair scholar, but without enthusiasm, being more interested in Border stories than in the text-books. He remained at school only six or seven years, and then entered his father’s office to study law, at the same time attending lectures at the university. He kept this up for some six years without developing any interest in his profession, not even when he passed his examinations and was admitted to the Bar, in 1792. after nineteen years of desultory work, in which he showed for more zeal in gathering Highland legends than in gaining clients, he had won two small legal offices which gave him enough income to support him comfortably.

His home, Abbotsford House provided a fitting background for his comfortable and literary life. The following
words collected from the Internet depict the beauty of the house:

The farmhouse developed into a wonderful home that has been likened to a fairy palace. Through windows enriched with the insignia of heraldry the sun shone on suits of armour, trophies of the chase, a library of over 9,000 volumes, fine furniture, and still finer pictures. Panelling of oak and cedar and carved ceilings relieved by coats of arms in their correct colour added to the beauty of the house.

*(Wikipedia 4/8)*

Scott was a hardworker throughout his life. He wrote nearly two novels every year. Towards the end of his life, he was caught in serious financial troubles incurring a debt of almost half a million. Before death he had paid some two hundred thousand dollars of his debt, nearly half of this sum coming from his *Life of Napoleon*. He died in 1832 at the age of 61 leaving behind a body of literature of lasting value.
Scott became a legend in his lifetime. In the 18th century Wordsworth and Coleridge tried to popularize the romantic element in literature but their success was incomplete. The English novel in the 18th century focused only on the present. It was left for Scott to change history. In the following words W. J. Long correctly observes that Scott was the greatest exponent of the romantic movement:

The poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge was read by a select few, but Scott's *Marmion* and his *Lady of the Lake* aroused a whole nation to enthusiasm, and for the first time romantic poetry became really popular. So also the novel had been content to paint men and women of the present, until the wonderful series of Waverley novels appeared, when suddenly, by the magic of his "Wizard of the North," all history seemed changed. (*English* 395)

As a lexicographer, essayist, poet, novelist and critic of literature Johnson created a corpus which holds ample scope for research. In every field he was a trendsetter. Johnson's
Dictionary is not merely a collection of words but a work of literature. The following words from the Internet express a similar opinion:

Johnson’s Dictionary offers insights into the 18th century and a faithful record of the language people used. It is more than a reference book; it is a work of literature. (*Wikipedia* 6/17)

His views expressed in his poems and essays are not only original but also based on his own experiences. He had the same interest in others as he had in himself. When it came to biography, Johnson disagreed with Plutarch’s use of biography to praise and to teach morality. Instead, Johnson believed in portraying the biographical subjects accurately and including any negative aspect of their lives. Because his insistence on accuracy in biography was little short of revolutionary, Johnson had to struggle against a society that was unwilling to accept biographical details that could be viewed as tarnishing a reputation. His *Lives* contains statements which, taken together,
constitute his critical theory. His views on poetry are of great critical significance:

He believed that the best poetry relied on contemporary language, and he disliked the use of decorative or purposefully archaic language ... he preferred poetry that could be easily read and understood. In addition to his views on language, Johnson believed that a good poem incorporated new and unique imagery. *(Wikipedia 12/17)*

In his personal life Johnson was a kind hearted man with an exceptionally accommodating attitude. He had staunch faith in Christian morality. He opposed slavery on moral grounds. Scholarship was writ large on his face. Due to this he was considered giant by many although the formal title Dr. was given to him by his biographer Boswell. Johnson, however, was not in favour of using this title. The following lines depict him as an unassuming man:

In his *Life of Samuel Johnson* Boswell referred to Johnson as Dr. Johnson so often that he would
always be known as Dr. Johnson, even though he hated being called such. (*Wikipedia* 14/17)

Scott, on the other hand, made an equally great contribution by creating the historical novel. He not only created this new form of novel but also gave a new meaning to history. His subsequent writers regard him as an unquestionable master in this field. W. J. Long observes:

He created the historical novel; and all novelists of the last century who draw upon history for their characters and events are followers of Scott and acknowledge his mastery. (*English* 402)

Scott’s interest in history, specially in public figures, compelled him to study and analyse the lives of dramatists and novelists. In his novels he gives an added importance to the scene while describing action. In his *Lives* he lays emphasis on the minute details which throw light on the character and genius of writers. Besides being a great historian he possesses the incisive vision of a critic and this combination lends his *Lives* a rare worth.
Scott never saw an old tower or a stream without instantly conjuring up its old world associations. For him every common relic burned with the fire of romance. Endowed with this creative energy of imagination, he also made the reader feel the glamour of places and the actuality of the past. He was a writer with an active imagination and an equally active pen. He has no literary trick. He compels our interests by making us feel that men and women of a past age were real life human beings. He knew his country very intimately and made us feel that his characters were not the creations of other times but might be found in modern dress in the Scotland of his own day. He welded together the past and present in a homogeneous whole and showed us the spiritual continuity of history. David Daiches observes:

We find in the work of Walter Scott a deep sense of Scottish history and nationhood as well as an attitude to the past and the present which derives from a peculiarly Scottish experience and colors his best novels. (Critical 831)
Scott's poetry is also full of historical contexts. His interest in history enables to write vigorous verse narratives. He symbolizes the history and culture of Scotland. David Daiches goes on to say:

His life and work are both a symptom and a symbol.

As a figure in English literature he is known as the author of vigorous verse narratives which reflect a romantic interest in the past and as the founder of the historical novel. (831)

Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe were concerned in their historical romances with periods sufficiently remote to be invested with romantic charm and to offer scope for the imaginative treatment of history. All of them lacked historical realism. Scott defined the novel as a fictitious narrative in prose or verse because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events. What Richardson, Fielding and Smollett had done in holding a mirror up to the eighteenth century way of life Scott did for the remote centuries of which his contemporaries knew nothing. His very
first novel *Waverley* is a slight attempt at a sketch of ancient Scottish manners. *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary* truthfully picture the manners and a state of society that could breed such characters as Meg Merrilies, Dandie Dinmont, and Counsellor Pleydell. *The Antiquary* presents a true picture of the manners of Scotland. *Old Mortality* is about the troubled times of Charles II and the rising of Covenanters in 1685. In *Ivanhoe* Scott takes up England as his scene, and reconstructs not the eighteenth century he knew, but the Middle Ages.

Through Johnson's major achievements were in prose and even more in his personality, his verse is not as mediocre as is commonly supposed. It is small in bulk, but is as characteristic of the man as his other and better-known works. He wrote two considerable satires in imitation of Juvenal: *London* (1738) and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). These two poems are the utterances of his heart and as such are personal documents. Melancholy in tone these poems represent Johnson's poetic sensibilities. R. D. Trivedi observes about these poems in his famous book *A Compendious History of English Literature*: 
Johnson the moralist surveys the human scene and depicts it in his characteristic pompous diction. The style is declamatory but eloquent. (243)

In *London*, Johnson criticises the contemporary society of the metropolis. Johnson found London the heartless city crowded with rich fools. Johnson's early struggle had made him familiar with poverty. It created in him a sense of bitterness and, at the same time, sympathy for the upcoming writers who were struggling like him. This interest in the lives of writers is at the back of the creation of his *Lives*. Trivedi quotes the poem as a whole. Here are some lines:

> Has Heaven reserv'd, in Pity to the Poor,
> No pathless Waste, or undiscover'd Shore,
> No secret Island in the boundless Main?
> No peaceful Desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?
> Quick let us rise the happy Seats explore,
> And bear Oppression's Insolence no More. (243)

_The Vanity of Human Wishes_ is even more characteristic of the author in his role of the moralist. He considers the
various objects of human ambition – wealth and power, science and leaning, military glory, beauty, longevity – and finds them all vain and empty.

No discussion on Johnson’s literary oeuvre is complete without a reference to his novel *Rasselas*. It represents Johnson’s moral and philosophical principles. Rasselas, a son of the emperor of Abyssinia, is confined along with other members of the royal family in a private paradise – the “happy valley” surrounded by mountains. Fed up with the joys and pleasures of “this soft existence” and curious to know how other people live, the prince escapes to Egypt, accompanied by his sister and the old philosopher Imlac. He surveys human life widely and comes to the conclusion that happiness is nowhere to be found. He realizes that every condition of life has its drawbacks. Human life is everywhere a state, in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed. The moral of the novel is that man should practise virtue which secures a quiet conscience in this life and a brighter prospect in the next. The following words from *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* are notable:
The Conclusion, in which nothing is concluded illustrates the book's deliberate structure, and affirms Johnson's conviction that action is superior to introspection. (Ousby, 821)

Fred Parker regards Rasselas as Johnson's best known work. According to him one must begin the study of Johnson's with Rasselas as it is of great help in understanding Johnson's genius:

It is still the best known of any of Johnson's works, and is probably the best place to start for anyone coming to Johnson for the first time. It is short, for one thing, saying much in relatively few pages. (Skepticism 162)

Critics hold the opinion that Johnson the man has eclipsed Johnson the writer. He was a man of robust commonsense, vast and varied learning, fearless honesty and independence, piety, kindliness, rough manners, and strong prejudices. He dominated the literary stage of his time as no one else has done before or since. His formidable personality has drawn more critical
attention than his work. Though not a great poet, Johnson is certainly among the greatest of prose-writers. One common feature of all his works is the underlying moral teaching.

Johnson is also remembered for *The Rambler* and *The Idler*. *The Rambler* which was started to revive *The Spectator* vein was not quite successful. It was too serious to please the general public. R. D. Trivedi writes:

Johnson who wrote almost all the papers did not deal with the fashions and frivolities of the times but concentrated on piety and morals – and in this respect it would be hard to find a more earnest or a more eloquent preacher. (*Compendious* 277)

In *The Idler* the papers are similar in character to *The Rambler* but are shorter in length and generally lighter in tone. His edition of Shakespeare contains some very illuminating notes and some of his emendations are still the best. His originality as annotator is refreshing. The most remarkable thing about Johnson’s *Shakespeare* is its preface. In this he rises above the prejudices of the neo-classical school by defending
his mingling of tragedy and comedy, and his flouting of the
unities. At the same time he admitted the inadequacy of the so­
called rules and cleared the path for the future romantics. The
Preface to Shakespeare is one of the most valuable
contributions to literature.

The Lives of the Poets is Johnson’s magnum opus. It is on
this immortal work that his reputation rests. Johnson was
requested by a deputation of prominent London booksellers to
write these biographies for an edition of the English poets
which they had planned. Lives were published separately from
the texts in 1781. Fifty two poets beginning with Cowley were
included, but Johnson had nothing to do with the selection. It is
the reason why several of the major poets were excluded while
many minor poets got place in the work. The Lives maintain a
fine balance between biography and criticism. Johnson analyses
the facts of the lives first and then examines the merits and
demerits of their works. Johnson was interested in the poets not
merely as writers but as men. With all his greatness Johnson has
his own prejudices. These are seen specially in the biographical
sketches of Milton and Gray. Milton was a Puritan and a regicide republican whom Johnson a staunch Anglican and Tory could not forgive. Johnson has little sympathy with Gray. Johnson wanted a poem to be poetical and rational. He did not find these qualities in the poetry of Milton and Gray. He had ignored the rules of neo-classical criticism in his estimate of Shakespeare but he did not extend the same concession to Milton and Gray. His judgements even at their worst have the freshness and strength of a great and original mind. R. D. Trivedi observes:

There are times when we tire of the inanities and sentimentalities of adulatory criticism, and relish the shock of contradiction and denial, and then Johnson comes to us as a tonic, like a breeze of fresh air after confinement in a crowded and stuffy room. *The Lives of the Poets* are a classic in their own kind, constituting as they do the largest single work of practical criticism in English.

*(Compendious 278)*
Scott is renowned both as a great poet and a pioneer novelist. In both fields he shows a rare interest in history. The fact that Scott’s poems were overshadowed by the greater success of his novels has led to a general belief that he is an inferior poet. This view is not correct in any way. It is forgotten that Scott is a narrative poet, a teller of tales in whom felicity of expression is an excellence rather than a fault. He had noble emotions as well as wholesome philosophy, but he was too much of a Tory to parade the one or preach the other. His romanticism is free from extravagance. A wholesome sobriety is the hallmark of all his works.

Scott’s historical novels fall into three groups; those set in the background of Scottish history, from Waverly to A Legend of Montrose; a group which takes up themes from the Middle ages and Reformation times, from Ivanhoe to Talisman, and his remaining books, from Woodstock onwards. Scott’s dramatic works include Halidon Hill (1922), Macduff’s Cross (1823), The Doom of Devorgoil, A Melodrama (1830), and
Auchindrane (1830), which was founded on the case of Mure of Auchindrane in Pitcairn’s *Ancient Criminal Trials*.

Scott gave up verse romance when he saw he could not compete with Byron in that field. He was aware of his varied gifts and saw much greater scope for them in prose romance. His first novel, *Waverley*, was published anonymously in 1814, but he had begun it in 1805 and laid it aside. When it was published the public as well as the critics at once realized that a new star had risen in the literary firmament. The combination of historical events and descriptions of Scottish scenery, character, speech and manners, Scott kept up throughout the series of Scotch novels that followed. In writing his Scotch novels, Scott was careful to deal first with the historical periods nearer to his own day before venturing into the romoter past. Scott wrote many kinds of novel including the conventional domestic or social novel of manners – but he owes his eminence in English literary history to his position as the creator of the historical novel. His mind was an encyclopedic storehouse of various historical dates, specially those relating to his own country. He
had a natural attachment for the Middle Ages and chivalry. Poetry provided only a limited scope for his narrative genius. In fiction he found ample space for his narrative art. It provided a larger canvas for the expression of his varied gifts and endowments. He put the best of himself in his novels, specially in those relating to Scotland. He wrote more than two dozen novels and at least half of them are devoted to Scotland. The historical novel had been attempted before him by Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe and ‘Monk’ Lewis as also by Godwin in *St. Leon*, but these were crude full of inaccuracies and anachronisms. Charles Edward, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth, James I, Charles II, Claverhouse, Louis XI, Charles the old, Cromwell, and others – these are presented as history records them. He placed the great figures of history in a picturesque setting. Scott’s novels are history made picturesque. To the discerning reader they have a deeper significance of character, motive and meaning than mere entertainment. In novels like *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward* where the scene is laid in the Middle Ages. Scott’s dialogue is apt to be conventional – archaic, stylized or
stilled; for he was trying to reproduce the speech of these far-off times. Scott's merit is not merely that he wrote exciting romances, or made history picturesque, or created classic characters, but that he also enshrined in his novels universal values: truth, honour, courage, courtesy, decency. Scott embodied in his novels the high ideals of chivalry which are their greatest recommendation to young and old alike. His novels are on an epic scale; they expand our mental horizon, enlarge our experience, and broaden our sympathies.

If Scott has numerous admirers and followers, he has several critics as well. Mark Twain criticised him for romanticizing battle. In several of his works he ridicules various favourite concepts of Scott. E. M. Forster regarded him as a clumsy writer. The following words from the Internet throw light on his merit and demerit:

Where F. R. Leavis had rubbished Scott, seeing him as a thoroughly bad novelist and a thoroughly bad influence, Marilyn Butler offered a political reading of the fiction of the period that found a great deal of
genuine interest in his work. Despite all the flaws, Scott is now seen as an important innovator and a key figure in the development of Scottish and world literature. (Wikipedia 5/8)

Scott was created a baronet in 1820 acknowledging his achievements. He founded the Bannatyne Club, which published old Scottish documents. He published *Life of Napoleon* in 9 volumes in 1827. He started to keep his *Journal*, recording in undiscourageable spirit his deteriorating health and other misfortunes. Scott’s interest in history and the human character enabled him to create immortal biographical sketches. In these sketches he never claims to be a critic or an ultimate judge of human character. He simply creates tales which read like great stories and throw ample light on the character and genius of the writer concerned. He brings out the essential goodness of each of them and focuses on it in a very clear manner. He is all praise for those who help, in some way, the growth of literature. In fact, he himself strived for this goal
throughout his life. For example the following lines about Swift can be taken:

If Swift was himself interrupted in the career of general literature, no part of his character is more admirable than his zeal in assisting and bringing forward all who seemed to cultivate its art with success. (Scott, Lives 52)

In recording biographical details Scott never forgets the historical context. In fact, it is his aim to see the writer in the historical context and to present not only his life and work but also his influence on his age and vice-versa. In “The Life of John Dryden” he states this aim clearly in these words:

It is the object of this memoir to connect, with the account of Dryden’s life and publications, such a general view of the literature of the time, as may enable the reader to estimate how far the age was indebted to the poet, and how far the poet was influenced by the taste and manners of the age. (193)
While writing about well-known writers Scott acknowledges the work of earlier biographers. He frankly tells that there is nothing new for him to write. Still he takes up the work, if only to retell the story of the writer’s life in his own way. The result is an interesting tale free from the burden of unnecessary criticism and analysis:

The circumstances also of Dr. Goldsmith’s life, his early struggles with poverty and distress, the success of his brief and brilliant career after he had become distinguished as an author, are so well known, and have been so well and so often told, that a short outline is all that ought here to be attempted. (488)

Johnson’s greatness is evident from the fact that he represents not only the literature of his age but also sensitively reflects the minute changes which ere taking place in the literary scene of his day. David Daiches writes:

Samuel Johnson illustrates in his life and works both the changing position of the man of letters in
eighteenth – century England and the operation of one of the most vigorous literary minds in English history. *(Critical 774)*

Johnson’s literary work is marked by the vigor of his personality and the boldness of his concepts. His utterance was always unmistakably his own. Poet, critic, essayist, journalist, editor, and great literary personality, Johnson was one of the first full-dress professional men of letters in England. Johnson, in moving out of Grub Street and simultaneously rejecting patronage, demonstrated how a writer could achieve economic and social status as a result of his own literary efforts. His early poverty and drudgery gave him knowledge of the seamy side of London life. Johnson’s sufferings left him completely disillusioned with the romantic view of life. However, he never claimed to be a reformer. David Daiches writes:

> His pessimism about man in general, his contempt for reformers and innovators, his almost desperate conservatism in politics and religion as a bulwark
against despair, went side by side with great personal charity and generosity. (775)

Johnson was a pioneer in many ways. He was one in the field of criticism also. His age was marked by two conflicting trends in criticism, the one representing the old, emphasizing reason to be the main test of literary values, and the other representing the new, emphasizing emotion and imagination to be its chief test. Dr. Johnson was neo-classical in as much as he believed that there should be certain rules to check the free and uncontrolled imagination of the poet. Yet he asserted that the artist was not supposed to follow all the rules. According to Johnson there are certain rules which are essential and others which are to be followed according to the writer's convenience. The writer should follow the fundamental rules, but as regards the rules of the second type he is free to use them according to his own conditions and convenience, or to reject them altogether. He himself followed the rules where he found them good and useful, and immediately rejected them when he did not agree with them. The bulk of his criticism is to be found in
his essays in the *Rambler*, and the *Idler*, his dissertation of poetry in *Rasselas*, his preface to the *Plays of Shakespeare* and the *Lives for the Poets*. Johnson's effort as a critic is to inculcate a sounder appreciation of literature by improving the standards and methods of criticism. In the first place, he shows his distrust in 'taste' and 'beauty' as test of literary values. Beauty, to him, like evil, is a mystery. Johnson never ignored the value of reason in criticism. Another test that Johnson suggests is the test of time. He says that the works which have stood the test of time have a claim to our regard. The writer should observe nature and represent it in his works, only then he can achieve lasting fame. He is of the firm opinion that one who carefully studies nature and can well describe it is the kind of writer who can hope for a long continuance of fame. Johnson also believes that in judging the merits of a work of art we should also take into account historical consideration. He says that to judge rightly on an author we must transport ourselves to his time. Finally Johnson says that we should judge a work as a whole and not by its different parts. A work of imagination
should provide delight of a permanent kind, it should either help us to enjoy life or to endure it.

Johnson’s views on poetry are of great significance although they focus chiefly on its form and technique rather on its subtler features. In his “Life of Milton” he describes poetry as the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason. In Johnson’s view a poet is guided by reason in the imitation of truth, and he takes the help of imagination in affording pleasure to the readers. Johnson lays emphasis on the moral aspect of poetry, that it must instruct. Howard D. Weinbrot observes:

Johnson’s poems frequently exhort us to examine, look, mark, observe, remark, see survey, and then apply the fruits of discovery to our actual lives. He thus often includes varied known tribulations, as in his satire London, that includes images of danger familiar to the modern urban dweller. (Poetry 36)

Poetry deals not with particular subjects but with general and transcendental truths. It must consider right and wrong in
their abstracted and invariable state. It is for this reason, the portraiture of universal nature, that he praises the plays of Shakespeare.

As regards poetic expression Johnson stands for clarity and simplicity. He criticizes many of the ornamental devices of his age like colourless epithets, needless inversions, harsh and daring figures. In his "Life of Dryden" in expresses his views on poetic diction more elaborately. Poets should make a selection of proper words. As regards versification, Johnson wants regularity and fitness. He regards rhyme as necessary for English verse and the heroic couplet as the best form which achieved perfection in the hands of Alexander Pope. He, however, gives a grudging approval to Milton's blank-verse in *Paradise Lost* and says that he would not wish that Milton had written in rhyme. His remarks on various kinds of poetry are also valuable because they also throw light on his literary doctrine and judgements. Johnson is with the neo-classicists in regarding epic superior to all the other kinds of poetry. Pastoral elegy seems to have made the least impression on Dr. Johnson.
He thinks that no poet can express his real grief through this form. Johnson thinks that the Pindaric ode is unsuitable for modern age.

He establishes Shakespeare’s sound claims to supremacy in literature, not by applying classical or neo-classical rules, but by the Longinian test of all great literature. He praises Shakespeare for his universality. He admires him for his faithful depiction of human nature also. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. Philip Smallwood observes:

At the time when he was spending long hours editing Shakespeare, and deep in the midst of these labors, a reorientation of Johnson’s creative energies seems to have occurred. This was the time when Johnson virtually gave up trying to be a serious poet. And after the limited success of the poetic tragedy *Irene* he completely gave up writing drama. The consequence or corollary of this
creative evolution seems to be that Johnson’s experience of Shakespeare comes together with a new view of human experience. (Shakespeare 146)

Johnson differs from the neo-classical creed in defending Shakespeare’s practice to mingling tragic and comic elements in the same play. Johnson defends Shakespeare’s non-observance of the unities of time and place. He regards the unity of action as essential for the drama.

Johnson, emphasized the historical estimate of a writer and says that a writer’s work should be judged with reference to the conditions of the age in which he lived. In his Lives he aspires to create the historical ambience in which a particular poet wrote his poetry. According to him, if a biographer is unable to create the historical moment, he is guilty as one who observes a gap between his will and action. Greg Clingham observes:

The interaction between the individual and his or her historical moment, constantly slipping from the biographer’s understanding because of the gap
between the present and the past, is analogous to the discrepancy between human will and action with which Johnson’s moral essays are concerned. (Life 166)

Johnson’s views on the metaphysical poetry deserve mention. He regarded his “Life of Cowley” as his best, on account of its dissertation on metaphysical poetry. The term ‘metaphysical’, applies to the school of poetry which flourished between Donne and Cowley. He borrowed it from Dryden, it being interpreted, not in its modern, but in its ancient and more literal sense, as that which ‘came after’ the physical or natural in the field of studies.

As a biographer Johnson occupies a rare position among the English biographers. It is commonly believed that Johnson was more happy in the biographical section than in the critical and, consequently, did it better. His biographies are enriched with short and interesting anecdotes, and personal reminiscences.
Johnson is at his best in the *Lives* of Dryden and the Augustans, Pope and Addison, to whom he stood closer in time and sympathy, and whose literary ideals he, in a large measure, shared. The best illustration of his use of comparative method of criticism is when he compares Pope with Dryden.

*The Lives of the Poets* shows Johnson's vigour of judgement, as a critic of life and of letters, at its zenith. Johnson tried his hand at every genre with canonical excellance but it is as a critic that he draws our attention most. Every great personality has its own other side. Johnson also has his weak points. He was preoccupied with his peculiar stock-responses to literature. His myopic vision made him insensible to the beauties to nature. His judgement was sometimes affected by his preoccupation with morality. He failed to distinguish between morality in the widest sense and mere didacticism. He was against all emotionalism and the higher flights of imagination. He dictated that poets should confine themselves to the universal truths and not to indulge in descriptions of petty objects of nature. He was against sacred poetry. Judged by the
Johnsonian standards, much of the English poetry will fall short of the definition. Some critics have found fault with his ear and taste while others have denounced him for his rigid moral and religious attitudes. Some critics blame him for partiality. His method is always dictatorial. He treats poets as schoolboys to be corrected. His judgement remains essentially dogmatic and traditional and we find him distributing praise or blame to poets with the confident assurance of a schoolmaster looking over a boy's homework. He was singularly deficient in aesthetic sensibility. He could appreciate only the regular mechanical and monotonous beat of the heroic couplet, and closed his eye and ear to the beauties of the blank verse. It seems as if he found no divinity in poetry and regarded it as only a cunning craft. His political views unduly affected his literary criticism. His narrow-mindedness made him incapable of perceiving the arrival of Romanticism.

But the fact remains that Johnson was a trend setter in the field of literary criticism. As a practical critic, he made use of the biographical, historical and comparative methods of
criticism. In the field of biographical criticism his achievement is to turn the literary life into a vehicle of criticism. He has rightly been called by Watson the true father of historical criticism in English. His work on metaphysical poets and Shakespeare too, is of very much permanent value. Steven Lynn observes that Johnson's work has drawn continuous critical attention:

The early critics looked at Johnson's substance, style, and effect in order to find the inner man in his works, to celebrate his genius or denigrate his deformity. Modern critics in looking closely and carefully at his works have also resisted giving up the historical Johnson, as they have tried to suppress the fictional Johnson, even as recent theories have questioned whether there is any difference. (*Critical 252*)

Walter Scott is an equally great critic but his criticism could not draw due attention due to his reputation as a novelist. The greatness of his criticism originates from his incisive
wisdom and a rare interest in history and the study of human nature. As a student of human nature he enjoys an edge over Johnson as he is free from the weaknesses of a professed critic. In writing biographical sketches he not only records the merits of a writer's work but also brings to light to goodness of his character and the greatness of his genius. Writing about Swift, he observes that Swift was original in many ways. His qualities were marked by a rare originality:

Jonathan Swift was blessed in a higher degree than any of his contemporaries, with the powers of a creative genius. The more we dwell upon the character and writings of this great man, the more they improve upon us: in whatever light we view him, he still appears to be an original. His wit, his humour, his patriotism, his charity, and even his piety, were of a different cast from those of other men. (Scott, *Lives* 185)

Scott has a rare genius for creating characters and in this respect he is almost equal to Shakespeare. In his novels he
creates a gallery of characters which are historical or imaginary but which catch our attention like living men and women of our own day. In his *Lives* he revives the personalities of old writers and makes the living more lively. What Saintsbury says about his novels is also relevant about his *Lives*:

He added to the gallery of imaginary personages more and greater figures than had been added by any one except Shakespeare. He did what even Shakespeare had been prevented by his medium of communication from doing with equal fullness – he provided a companion gallery of landscape and interior such as had never been known before. 

*(History 681)*

Scott is always full of the milk of human kindness. He peeps into the private lives of writers not to find faults but to bring out the noble aspects of their character. Describing the private life of Richardson, he states that it is full of notable qualities and there is almost nothing to censure. In recording
biographical details Scott is more of a historian than a critic. He enlists the following merits in Richardson’s character:

A love of the human species; a desire to create happiness and to witness it; a life undisturbed by passion, and spent in doing good; pleasures which centred in elegant conversation, in bountiful hospitality, in the exchange of all the kindly intercourse of life, - marked the worth and unsophisticated simplicity of the good man’s character. (Scott, Lives 388)

Writing about Cumberland, Scott observes that he was a man of strong and weak points. His conversation revealed that he was a man of ‘humorous sadness’. There was no ill-will in his heart for his critics or enemies. Scott’s picture of Cumberland’s personality is marked by life like reality. One meets persons of mixed virtues in one’s life everyday. As one reads Scott’s narrative, one is surprised by his extra-ordinary sense of reality:
His conversation often showed the author in his strong and in his weak points. The foibles are well known which Sheridan embodied on the stage, in the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary. But it is not from a caricature that a just picture can be drawn, and in the little pettish sub-acidity of temper which Cumberland sometimes exhibited, there was more of humorous sadness than of ill-will, either to his critics or his contemporaries. (485)

Scott's assessment of Dr. Johnson is accurate and realistic. It is generally believed that there was a touch of rudeness in Johnson's behaviour and it was due to his over estimation of his own talents, but the fact is that it was due, in part, to the fact that Johnson remained, for a large part of his life, a stranger to the higher society:

But during the greater part of his life, he had been in a great measure a stranger to the higher society, in which such restraint is necessary; and it may be fairly presumed that the indulgence of a variety of
little selfish peculiarities, which it is the object of good breeding to suppress, became thus familiar to him. (503)

With his rare insight into the human character Scott filled his narratives with living characters. In his novels he is the first realistic portrayer of character after Fielding. In the following lines Saintsbury applauds him for this rare ability:

It was that here, almost for the first time since Fielding was the true and universal sort of life displayed in this form of literature. The places were real, not the cardboard scenery of a toy theatre; the persons were real, too, not more or less gaudily coloured “character” thrust on the stage on wooden slides. (History 679)

There are marked differences between the approaches of Johnson and Scott at various places. Writing about Sterne, Scott mentions that his conversation was lively and full of wit. But Johnson found it full of licence. Clearly Scott does not agree with Johnson’s view. He says that whatever inequality there
was in his temper was due to his ill-health and physical deficiencies. The reader clearly perceives that Scott’s approach is more human than that of Johnson:

His conversation was animated, and witty; but Johnson complained that it was marked by licence, better suiting the company of the Lord of Crazy Castle, than of the great moralist. It has been said, and probably with truth, that his temper was variable and unequal, the natural consequence of an irritable bodily frame, and continued bad health. (Scott, Lives 517)

As a critic of literature Scott gives top priority to originality. In the character of a man he looks for original qualities and in the works of a writer he values originality the most. In fact he is an original critic who does not adhere to any tradition strictly. He regards Mackenzie great due to his originality. Scott did not tread the beaten path. His path was entirely his own:
His works possess the rare and invaluable property of originality, to which all other qualities are as dust in the balance; and the sources to which he resorts to excite our interest, are rendered accessible by a path peculiarly his own. (526)

Although Ann Radcliffe did not originate the form, she became the best-known exponent of the Gothic novel. Her persecuted heroines, wild and lonely settings, cliff-hanging chapter endings and apparently supernatural events epitomize its conventions. Assessing her, Scott says that the form and technique of her novels is controlled by her forceful imagination. In her case imagination supersedes accuracy:

Mrs. Radcliffe’s powers, both of language and description, have been justly estimated very highly. They bear, at the same time, considerable marks of that warm, and somewhat exuberant imagination, which dictated her works. Some artists are distinguished by precision and correctness of outline, others by the force and vividness of their
colouring; and it is to the latter class that this author belongs. (571)

Johnstone practiced as a lawyer before going to Calcutta in 1782, where he became a journalist and newspaper proprietor. He was the author of *Chrysal*, or, *The Adventures of a Guinea*, satirical episodes from the life of the times, told by a guinea as it is passed from hand to hand. Most notable are the scenes at the Hellfire Club and the successful manoeuvres of an ambitious wife on behalf of her clergymen husband. His Indian association brings him close to the Indian readers. He is remembered as the author of the 'Scandalous Chronicle' of the time:

It is only as the author of what has been termed the Scandalous Chronicle of the time, that Johnstone's literary character attracts our notice. We have already observed, that there is a close resemblance betwixt the plan of "Chrysal" and that of the "Diable Boiteux." (599)
Like Johnson, Scott also had to face difficulties in collecting biographical details. There are writers who, with all their greatness, have left only a little information about their lives. Clara Reeve is one such writer. Loved and respected by her readers, she preferred to lead a retired life. Scott has to depend on the scanty information and the small clues in her work to form an idea of her life and character. It is a difficulty which every biographer faces at some time. However the paucity of information does not affect the flow of Scott's narrative:

Such are the particulars which we have been able to collect concerning this accomplished and estimable woman, and, in their simplicity, the reader may remark that of her life and of her character. (546)

Robert Bage was a man of precocious talents. At a very early stage in his life he learnt Latin and the art of making paper. He got his efficiency in French only through books. He was interested in mathematics as he possessed a ‘correct
imagination', Scott's admiration for him is evident in these words:

He acquired the French language from books alone, without any instructor ... Nine years after his marriage he studied mathematics; and, as he makes one of his characters say, and as he probably thought respecting himself, "He was obliged to this science for a correct imagination, and a taste for uniformity in the common actions of life." (606)

Johnson and Scott were not professed biographers. They wrote only Prefaces to the works of writers although Scott's *Life of Napoleon* is a full fledged biography. These two giants created two great biographers Boswell and Lockhart. The most famous and brilliant biographer of the 18th century is James Boswell who wrote *Life of Samuel Johnson*. It is the most interesting and perfect biography in the English language. Boswell possessed many literary qualities, the most important among them were his courage and originality. He also possessed great psychological insight into the character of men
and acute power of observation. Boswell's aim was not to write a panegyric of Dr. Johnson but his life as it was actually lived, with all his greatness and imperfections. The Boswell tradition continued in England in the early part of the 19th century. Lockhart, the author of *Life of Scott*, is the second best biographer in English literature after Boswell.

Scott continued to work throughout his life and his literary output is no less than wonderful. At Abbotsford he carved a niche for himself. His work is canonical in many ways. He gave us new insight into history. He changed our way of thinking in a radical way. He combined history and biography with criticism and created immortal stories:

The output beggars belief. Furthermore, Scott was entertaining on a baronial scale at Abbotsford, enjoying the role of local Laird, and functioning as a man of law as well as of letters, so it is not surprising that his health was considerably undermined. (Ousby, *Cambridge* 882)
There can be no better tribute to Johnson than to say that he was a man of strong and virtuous thinking. What Scott says about Johnson is true about Scott himself as well:

He was fortunate, however, in a strong and virtuous power of thinking, which prevented his plunging into those excesses, in which neglected genius, in catching at momentary gratification, is so apt to lose character and respectability. (Scott, *Lives 501*)