

Criticism of Dr. Samuel Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds

Dr. Yassin salhani MA'AT*

□ ABSTRACT □

Dr. Smauel Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds are two important personalities of 18th century England. The first is a writer and a critic and the other is a painter. This essay attempts to study and compare the writings and criticism of both men in the light of the general taste of the arts in their times. It also establishes the position and influence of both men in their fields of interest.

* Associate Professor at English Department, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Tishreen University, Lattakia, Syria.

"نقد الدكتور صامويل جونسون والسير جوشوا رينولدز"

الدكتور ياسين صالحاني المعط*

□ ملخص □

يعتبر الدكتور صامويل جونسون، والسير جوشوا رينولدز، من الشخصيات الهامة في إنكلترا في القرن الثامن عشر. نقد كان الأول أدبياً وناقداً، والآخر رساماً. تهدف هذه المقالة لأن تدرس، وتقارن النظريات النقدية عند كلا الرجلين، في ضوء المنحنى العام للذوق في الفنون في زمنهما وكذلك يتبين بدقة موقع، وتأثير كل من الرجلين في مجال اهتمامه ونشاطه.

* أستاذ مساعد في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية - كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية - جامعة تشرين - اللاذقية - سورية.

Critics and criticism have been, throughout the ages, the subject of dispute and argument. Some reviewed them as a necessity to refine and improve the quality of the creative arts and others considered them as a useless censure that hindered the progress of the arts and tied it down with strict limitations. Pope had a high opinion of the critic and exalted him to a very high level, almost to that of the poet;

Both must from Heaven derive their light,
Those born to judge, as well as those to write.(1)

On the other hand, Swift was of another opinion. He expressed his hate and contempt of the critic when he described him as 'a discoverer and collector of writers' faults' and 'a judge who takes up a resolution to hang all men that came before him upon a trial'(2) and as an ass with horns whose flesh was full of gall and bitterness and who had descended in a direct line from Momus and Hybris.

But whatever the case may be, one must not forget that critics are ordinary human beings liable to commit mistakes and to misjudge. At the sametime, criticism is an occupation where the judgement is based, to a great degree, on personal beliefs and conceptions and where as a result prejudice is very hard to avoid. For this reason, of multitudes of men who take up criticism as an occupation only very few are distinguished as great critics. The greatness of the critic is parallel to his ability to free himself from individualistic and personal interest, prejudice and narrow judgement. Johnson, the leading critic of the 18th century, achieved greatness by inquiring into the beauties and faults of literary works and pronouncing with great accuracy on the merits of literary productions. His judgement was based on rules and principles, so it was always constant with very little variation. Another aspect of his greatness is that he truly believed in these principles, cherished them and applied them in his own writing. Sir Joshua Reynolds, another prominent name in the 18th century had a distinguished role in establishing art as a matter fit to occupy cultivated minds'(3) He laboured hard for the establishment and development of art in general and art study and criticism in particular. Like Johnson he based his

arguments on universality and nature and he set down rules upon which the merits of a painting can be judged.

While Johnson championed the classical ideals in literature, Reynolds established and insisted on them in art. Johnson the leading critic and Reynolds the first artist of their time, have a great deal in common. They shared practically the same views in criticism and adopted similar attitudes towards nature and man. In this essay I intend to discuss these views and attitudes and to point out what they insisted upon and what they rejected in a work of art, and the principles on which they based their judgements and arguments. Johnson's Lives of The English Poets, intended as prefaces to the collection of their poetry, contain a great deal of his criticism on poets and poetry. In the same way Rasselas is not just a romance but a philosophical discussion of nature, man, human manners and poetry. Reynolds' Discourses on Art is similar to the above mentioned works by Johnson in the respect that they were written as a teaching guide for young artists and turned out to be 'One of the most instructive and eloquent literary documents in the history of European art'(4) My choice of the above mentioned works is based on their outstanding value as some of the most important documents of 18th century criticism.

Criticism, whether didactic or defensive, furnishes most of Johnson's work with touches of beauty and singular characteristic of solidity and sound reasoning. But although his work reveals constantly rounded and considered judgment, much of it was written with great rapidity. He wrote to live. His genius seemed to flourish under restraint. 'His practice, even his habit we know, was to write under compulsion of a dead line (the Rambler) or extreme financial need (Rasselas)'.(5) Johnson and his work are inseparable; to enjoy reading Johnson and to understand him fully one must be acquainted with Johnson the man. From his early youth he had a great interest in reading. His father's shop provided him with an endless variety of books to satisfy his interest. He quickly began to master various languages, especially Latin; and in addition to classical literature he also dipped in modern philosophy and literature. His reading was impulsive rather than systematic. He was vigorous

and impatient by nature. Although he rarely finished a book, he always read with a critical and appreciative eye as he once said to Mrs. Thrale 'Alas! how few books are there of which one ever can possibly arrive at the last page.'(6) He was, in a sense, a bookworm and whenever he went books were his first concern. On entering a strange house, Boswell relates, he went straight to the book case and read the backs of the books. He was very sensitive. His sensitivity was sharpened into pride by his poverty. His excessive sensitivity and pride forced him to leave the university because he was poor and his clothes were shabby. He was frank, sincere and bold. He did not hesitate to condemn what was popular and accepted if he believed it was wrong. His personality is reflected in his conversation and his works. When Boswell, rather disappointed by Johnson's acceptance to write prefaces to all the poets the booksellers suggested, asked Johnson if he would do this to any dunce's works, if they should ask him, Johnson replied. 'Yes, Sir and say he was a dunce'.(7) Milton's life furnishes a good example of his readiness to declare his frank opinion even if it was going to win him the contempt of the people and expose him to their attacks. His frankness boldness and sincerity are the natural consequences of his piety. He was very religious and prayers were the constant relief to his soul. He always found consolation in praying to God for forgiveness and asking him for assistance and support.

Almighty God ... look down with mercy upon me
depraved with vain imaginations ... enable me to
shake off sloth, and to redeem the time misspent in
idleness and sin by a diligent application of the days
remaining.(8)

Johnson was conscious of the flight of time and always felt with sorrow at the loss of 'that which can never be restored'(9). Every Easter almost the same prayer is repeated again and again. His religious beliefs and piety made him appreciate the same in others. He praised Boerhaave because 'he worshipped God as he is in himself, without attempting to inquire into his nature'(10) and condemned Milton because in the distribution of his hours, there was no hour

of prayer, either solitary or with his household, omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.'(11) He strongly believed that man is a "fallible being" who is placed in his present condition without any choice or control and whose limited mental capacity does not provide him with adequate insight to penetrate into the nature of God and the secrets of his power. Nekayah's comment in Rasselas, 'But the being whom I fear to name, the being which made the soul, can destroy it,'(12) conveys Johnson's most typical religious emotions.

Although Johnson, in his dictionary, defines a critic as 'A man skilled in the art of judging literature; a man able to distinguish the faults and beauties of writing'(13) criticism meant to him much more than pointing out defects and praising beauty. In 'Rambler' No. 22, he says;

It is ... the task of criticism to establish principles to improve opinion into knowledge, and to distinguish those means of pleasing which depend upon known causes and rational deductions from the nameless and inexplicable elegancies which appeal wholly to fancy... (14)

Johnson the last and most vigorous exponent of humanism stands out as one of the greatest critics of poetry. Eliot believed that he is 'One of the three greatest critics of poetry in English literature; the other two being Dryden and Coleridge'.(15) He believed poetry to be the highest and noblest of all writing as Imlac said:

Wherever I went, I found that poetry was considered as the highest learning, and regarded with veneration somewhat approaching to that which men would pay to the Angelick Nature,(16)

What's more 'the most ancient poets are considered the best'.(17) When Imlac said "wherever" Johnson was expressing that human nature is the same everywhere and at any time. In the Lives of the Poets as well as in Rasselas Johnson expressed, what Eliot resounded almost two hundred years later, that

the poet should not restrict himself to time or place; he should not limit his writing to personal subjects and narrow themes but he must write as the "interpreter of nature" and the "legislator of mankind" making the universal good his objective and nature his ideal. And he stressed that he who does not write with these intentions 'easily finds readers and easily loses them'. He praised Shakespeare because he is a poet of 'general nature who holds up to his reader a faithful mirror of manners and life'.(18) And he censured Cowley because he did not represent a faithful and natural picture of nature and life in his writing but fell for metaphysical traps as he unhappily adopted that which was predominant.(19) The poet must be free from all ties whether political, social or personal that may form an obstacle in his way to greatness. Johnson believed that the poet must labour hard to achieve greatness. Nothing in life or in nature is unworthy of the poet's attention, 'whatever is beautiful and whatever is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination'.(20) The poet's empirical search must be arduous and unrelenting the poet ranges, observes, wanders, converses, learns, estimates and traces. The verbs all come from the portrait of the ideal poet in chapter ten in Rasselas. The process is an empirical one, as the poet perseveres, he enters into nature. This experience will help him to rise to general and transcendental truth which will always be the same. In relating his history, Imlac said that his desire of excellence impelled him to transfer his attention to nature and to life for 'the knowledge of nature is only half the task of the poet; he must be likewise acquainted, with all the modes of life'.(21) Imlac's speech makes a clear separation between nature and life. Under nature Johnson discusses qualities regularly associated with the beautiful and those regularly associated with the sublime (mountains, deserts, "whatever is dreadful" "the awfully vast"). Under life he discusses the qualities regularly associated with the pathetic "the passions in all their combinations", the human mind, right and wrong and laws and opinions. The poet must look around him for images and ideas, fixing his attention on "the species; to remark general properties and large appearances." Although Johnson respected the originality and learning of the metaphysical poets he was against their excessive use of

minute details of the particular. He believed that in doing so, they lost the strength of their metaphors. He considered them as versifiers only. They have lost their right to the name of poets because their writings did not offer anything that could contribute to the improvement of mankind and because in their writings 'they neither imitated nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operation of intellect'(22) Therefore their poetry is unnatural and what is unnatural can not be of any real use in life and cannot expect true praise and appreciation. Their writing, Johnson believed, will not survive the ages because it is novel and like anything new it will die down the minute it ceases to be strange. He objected to Congreve's characters because 'they are commonly fictitious and artificial, with very little nature and not much life.'(23) He condemned all the metaphysics for their total reliance on imagination and free use of images. He attacked Cowley, Waller, Denham and Milton for this. But although he censured these poets severely he also pointed out their merits. He praised Cowley for the simplicity, purity and elegance of his writing. In Waller's life he discussed the possibility of using religion as a theme for poetry. He concluded his argument by asserting that 'the ideas of Christian theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for ornament.'(24) In mentioning his shorter poems he said that 'neither the beauties nor the faults deserve much attention.' Although he attacked the theme and heavy images of Milton's "Paradise Lost", he did not hesitate to declare that when the poem is 'considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second among the production of human mind.'(25) He considered Denham one of the fathers of English poetry for his efforts with Waller to improve the English versification. He also admired his originality, musicality of his numbers and justness of his thoughts. Despite the fact that Johnson's sketch of the poet made Rasselas cry out 'Enough! Thou hast convinced me, that no human being can ever be a poet' and although his standards of judgment are very high, he had high respect for any poet worthy of the name.

Johnson's classical ideals are reflected in his emphasis that poetry should be didactic. A poem should convey a moral or a lesson or at least it should help people to live happily by helping them to lead a better life. He censured the vogue of pastoral writing because he strongly felt that pastoral characters had very little to offer mentally. He believed that they contradicted with reality and that all they offer is illusion and beautifully set scenes that lull the reader into a dream after which he finds life more intolerable than before. In Thomson, he praised his way of thinking and expressing his thoughts, his proper use of blank verse and his ability to penetrate deep in life and nature with his poetic eye. The beauty of the Seasons is in its general effect. It makes the reader 'wonder that he never saw before what Thomson shows him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson expresses.'(26) Thomson's defect is that he was idle and never had any concern for the welfare of others. His attitude to Gray's poetry is obvious when he says;

Gray's poetry is now to be considered, and I hope not to be looked on as an enemy to his name, if I confess that I contemplate it with less pleasure than his life.(27)

He detested his artificiality and strain. He said that 'his mind seemstowork with unnatural violence ... and in his art there is too little appearance of ease and nature'(28)

Johnson always expressed that poetry is the imitation of life and nature. As the laws of nature are static and never changing 'it is commonly observed that the early writers are in possession of nature.'(29) The ancients observed nature and expressed its laws, that there is no hope for the modern poets of discovering or inventing anything new. But if the ancients are in possession of nature their followers are in possession of art. 'The first excel in strength and invention, and the second in elegance and refinement.'(30) so the poet can arrive at the truth from two different sources. First from the works of the ancients where all the static and general laws of nature are expressed and

secondly from the life around him, which does not differ from the life of the ancients except in its colour. He should imitate the ancients, with moderation and variety, by transcribing the images they use for the same theme or event by selecting from these images a combination which he believed would add to the final excellence of his writing. The 'imitator therefore' is expected 'to have adopted what he found, and to have added what was wanting.'(31) Exact imitation and minute copying will, inevitably, lead to uniformity which generates boredom and tediousness. Rasselas in the Happy Valley where everything he wished for was attainable, was very weary of 'looking on barren uniformity, where I could only see again what I had already seen.'(32) Pekuah when relating her adventures after being captured by the Arab says that her first few days were spent in observing her new surrounding and soon was very weary of looking in the morning on things from which she had turned away weary in the evening. Even the old man whom they thought was happy and visited to find out the secret of his happiness, was bored because 'the world has lost its novelty'(33) and it could offer him nothing new. Therefore, since 'the end of poetry is to instruct through pleasing', it is essential that the poet should avoid tediousness which 'is the most fatal of all faults.'(34) But Johnson was very careful in his encouragement to novelty. He made it clear that novelty was not in deviating from general nature which embodies the truth that the poet should always be seeking in his writing, nor by the practice of wild and excessive imagination. He praised Butler's poem of Hudibras because it is scarcely possible to pursue a page without finding some association of images that was never found before.'(35) so novelty is not in invention but in variation which is 'the greatest source of pleasure.' Invention is unnatural and what is unnatural cannot stand the test of time. Johnson warned that 'those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation.'(36) Novelty is admired when new because it is strange but when it becomes familiar its deformity is perceived and it is no longer a source of pleasure. Variation can be attained by observing nature and by learning. In his insistence on nature and what is natural and

general as the basis of good writing he always emphasised the importance of reason and the shallowness of imagination and fancy.

He compared reason to the sun, of which the light is constant, uniform, and lasting; and fancy to a meteor, of bright but transitory lustre, irregular in its motion, and delusive in its direction.(37)

In his treatment of imagination Johnson has always been very cautious. Although it may be observed that later in his life his attitude towards imagination was moderated a little he always believed it to be 'licentious and vagrant', wild, unrestrained, rapid and vehement. Excessive imagination could easily prevail over reason and lead to insanity and madness. Johnson gives the example of the obsessed and paranoiac astronomer, in Rasselas, who sat 'days and nights, in imaginary dominion, pouring upon this country and that the showers of fertility, and seconding every fall of rain with a due proportion of sunshine.'(38) He associated imagination with youth and inexperience, with lyric and pastoral verse, to which he was either indifferent or hostile. His experience with imagination was not a happy one. Beside Percy, later the famous editor of the Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765), stated that Johnson,

When a boy ... was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry ... I have heard him attribute to these extravagant fictions that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession.(39)

He censured imagination for its dangerous effect on both the young reader and writer. It misleads the former, like it did to him, and hinders the latter from pursuing true experience. The young reader is disturbed and corrupted by imagination because his lack of experience prevents him from distinguishing fancy from reality. When young, Johnson was terrified 'by the speech of the Ghost in Hamlet when he was alone.'(40) Like Reynolds, he denies the young

author the use of imagination and permits it to the mature one. While the former can easily fall a victim to it, the latter by experience, can use it to add beauty and strength to his writing. Youth is a period of shallow existence because one does not judge with reason or act with rationality always. Like the Druses Johnson believes that 'the true period of human existence may be easily estimated at forty years.'⁽⁴¹⁾ The Druses who are very strict and very secretive about their religion do not allow their youth to inquire or enter the religion before they reach the age of maturity, which is forty, the same as Johnson's. With maturity there is no danger of imagination. In The Lives we see Johnson praising the inventive genius of Milton and the fiery energy of Dryden.

One of his main objections to extreme particularity, in style as in subject, and to the use of complicated images or foreign terms, is the risk of obscurity. Johnson, very firmly, held the classical principle that perspicuity is the first obligation of the artist. For this reason he detested Milton's use of Latin idioms and Dryden's use of French ones. He censured Pope's imitation of Horace as necessitating a specialized information in the reader. He preferred Cowley's 'Latin performances' to Milton's because they are simpler. He praised Pomfret because his poetry was smooth easy and pleased many and added that 'he who pleases many must have merits.'⁽⁴²⁾ Dryden's odes and especially the ode for 'St. Cecilia's Day' were praised for the same reason and because they exhibit the highest flight of fancy and the exactest nicety of art.'⁽⁴³⁾

One cannot, however he tries, sum up Johnson's criticism in an essay of any length. The Lives of the Poets taken as a complete unit conveys Johnson's ideals and conceptions of poets and poetry. But poetry is not the only subject they deal with. Almost in every life a new topic or a new idea is discussed. In The life of Roscommon he discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a literary academy and gave an example in the Italian and French academies. In Butler's life he dealt with the Puritans. In Milton's he discoursed on Cromwell, the monarchy and church. Cromwell and parliament were also discussed in the lives of Butler and Waller. Waller's panegyric to Cromwell is not praised or censured. Nothing of its merits as a poem is mentioned because Johnson's

attention was fixed on his personal interest in pointing out Cromwell's rebellious character. He discussed the language in few of the lines but this discussion was more direct in The Lives of Dryden and Roscommon. The Lives of the Poets, Johnson's most memorable literary work is not his first attempt at biography writing. Between 1738 and 1744 he wrote the lives of a few important personalities, statesmen, generals, admirals and men of religion. The Lives of the poets; is then, the first of a long experience. Johnson was aware of the hard labour his task demanded of him. He was well qualified to write these lives. Some of the men he wrote their lives, he knew personally. His background reading and strong memory helped him achieve his task admirably. He knew enough of the scholar's life to say 'statesmen and generals may grow great by unexpected accidents and a fortune concurrence of circumstances, neither procured nor foreseen by themselves: but reputation in the learned world must be the effect of industry and capacity.'(44) Johnson's Lives of the Poets surpasses all previous writings of literary biography by its originality, its high standard of excellence and freshness and in its accuracy. Particularly all the biography writing before Johnson was 'a work put together with scissors and paste.'(45) Many of the facts in Cibber's Lives of the poets are wrong and misleading. As a critic and as a writer, Johnson, was honest and frank. If his information was not first hand he said so and if he wasn't sure of the validity of the information he had he told his reader not to depend on them completely. He knew that his tragedy Irene was a failure. And when told that a certain Mr. Pot thought it unrivalled among modern tragedies his reply was 'If Pot says so, Pot lies.'(46)

When reading the Lives of the Poets my curiosity and interest were raised by three of them more than the rest; those of Savage, Addison and Milton. The first is a symbol of friendship and tender emotions, the second of respect and admiration and the third of hate and contempt. A close comparison of the three lives reveals Johnson's prejudice and proves, more than anything else, that he is a human being who cannot separate his judgement from his emotions and personal beliefs. His love for Savage is apparent in his excuse,

his respect for Addison in his praise and his hate of Milton in his attack. Numerous examples can be given from each life. There is hardly a page in the three lives where one cannot feel Johnson's emotions towards his man. What he attributed to a weakness in Savage was a fault or a sin in Milton. Savage's lack of religion, drunkenness, his instability in friendship, his dishonesty and murder are only 'faults' that were very often the effect of his misfortunes.'(47) These "misfortunes" deserve our compassion and forgiveness while Milton's loss of sight does not, and his complaints of falling on evil days and evil tongues should not be met with mercy because they are the result of his "wickedness" and "insolence". Milton is wicked because he was a puritan and a republican, both, which Johnson hated and loathed. Johnson was a teacher himself early in his life and when he stated that Addison was a teacher he touched upon it lightly. But for Milton it was a dishonour to become a teacher. He criticised and ridiculed Milton's school with malice when he said:

From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe, is a small History of Poetry, written in Latin by his nephew, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.(48)

In discussing Milton's poetry he was hardly satisfied with any of it. Addison's poetry 'it must be confessed that it has not often those felicities of diction which give luster to sentiments, or that vigour of sentiment that animates diction.'(49) Then he goes on "confessing" Addison's faults very mildly. It is very unsuitable for a critic to "confess" when he is judging a work of art. His respect for Addison forced him into this state. But with Milton the story is different. Although he praised some aspects of "Paradise Regained" he showered it with censure. The theme is very generalized and too much for the human mind. The basis of "Paradise Lost" is narrow. He went even further to say that 'had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.'(50) Johnson attacked Milton as he did Gray,

because they sinned against taste.(51) Johnson was ready to forgive Dryden's faults in the parts for the merit of the whole but not Milton.(52) His respect to Sprat made him pass over his poetry lightly and fast because it was not the type he respected while he attacked Milton's poetry in details.(53) Many more examples can be given of Johnson's prejudice against Milton.

In Rasselas the discussion of poetry and poets is only a small part of a general and conclusive pattern of criticism concerning man and society and life in general. The novel itself is based on a philosophical theme; Rasselas' search for happiness. After much search they arrived at the conclusion that happiness, in the way they looked at it, 'is never to be found, and each believes it possessed by others, to keep alive the hope of obtaining it for himself.'(54) Between the start of the search and the arrival at that conclusion, Rasselas and his party met many people whom they mixed and conversed with. Every conversation reveals a philosophical idea and every sage, hermit or astronomer has his own philosophical theory of life and man. Johnson's belief in the brutality of man is evident in Rasselas in such expressions as man preyed upon man.'(55) 'There may be community, said Imlac of material possession, but there can never be community of love or esteem.'(56) When Imlac was relating his history to Rasselas, he said of his companions that 'they were my enemies because they grieved to think me rich, and my oppressors because they delighted to find me weak.'(57) Like Jubran Khaleel Jubran, Johnson believed that Man is wicked and vicious by nature. Jubran believed that;

والشر في الناس لا يفنى وإن قبروا (58) الخير في الناس مصنوع إذا جبروا

On the philosophy of life Johnson says 'Human life is every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed.'(59) Every life has its obstacles to happiness, like the mountains which stood in Rasselas's way in search for happiness. There is in Rasselas a discussion of marriage, conduct, religion, ranks of society, virtue, piety, Pashas and governments. Johnson believed that no government is really working for the sake of its subjects. Those who are in

power are only interested in their own and wealth. The prince expressed his idea of the perfect government as that 'by which all wrong should be restrained, all vice reformed and all the subjects preserved in tranquility and innocence.'(60) The prince's government is as impossible to exist in reality as Imlac's poet. The work as a whole is packed with wisdom. This drive after philosophy rendered the work lacking in decorum. Every character in this romance is a philosopher. Imlac, Rasselas, Neckayah and Pekuah, not to mention the Hermit, the Sages and Astronomer, are all philosophers in the mode of life, the character of man and the philosophy of the universe. Pekuah, Neckayah's maid, who is supposed to be a servant and could have been a slave possesses the mentality of a philosopher or a sage. Neckayah, the young princess with practically no true experience in life gave the most sensible definition of happiness. Such' said Neckayah, is the state of life, that none are happy but by anticipation of change: the change itself is nothing; when we have made it, the next wish is to change again.'(61) Jubran, probably influenced by Johnson, again expresses the same attitude towards happiness when he says.

يرجى فإن صار جسماً مله البشر	وما السعادة في الدنيا سوى شبح
حتى إذا جاءه يبطيء ويعتكر	كالنهر يركض نحو السهل مكتحاً
إلى المنيع فإن صاروا به فتروا	لم يسعد الناس إلا في تشوقهم
عن المنيع فقل في خلقه العبر (62)	فإن أقيت سعيداً وهو منصرف

There is no decorum of speech in this novel and one can easily mistake one's speech for another's.

In Rasselas and throughout the Lives of the Poets we find Johnson stressing the same points again and again, on which he based his praise and his censure; i.e. imitating nature and life and writing for all mankind and not for a certain type or rank. He emphasised that the great work is the work that pleases more people and pleases them longer. He respected piety and virtue and praised them wherever he found them.

Like Johnson, Reynolds' art cannot be separated from his life or from his literary writing. 'His paintings illustrate his lessons, and his lessons seem to be derived from his painting.'(63) His life was a long diligent strife for success and fame. Throughout his life his aspirations were high and constant. He was only sixteen when he told his father that 'he would rather be an Apothecary than an ordinary painter.'(64) His life was a continuous process of empirical search and observation. The great portrait of commander Kepple in 1753-1754 was his introduction to fame. After this portrait he began to climb the ladder of success and soon was recognized in London as a great artist. He seized every opportunity to visit other countries and to have a close look at the great works of the masters. He was very sociable and had a large number of friends. He liked his friends to be a mixture from all branches of life. His circle included artists, statesmen, men of letters and noblemen. His persistence and the consistency of his ideas won him a great number of admirers. His success and sound argument convinced his audience, as well as his readers, that painting was worthy of systematic discussion. He believed that hard labour is the making of an artist, of which his life was a good example. Reynolds, noticed that art was beginning to win admiration of the people and gain their interest. In his First Discourse at the opening of the academy he declared that;

There are, at this time, a great number of excellent artists than were ever known before at one period in this nation; there is a general desire among our nobility to be distinguished as lovers and judges of art.(65)

Reynolds realized that many of these young artists possessed talents and elements of genius in them. But they were struggling in their career for the lack of knowledge and experienced guidance. They had limited opportunities of seeing the works of the great masters and little hope of going abroad to see them. He felt the strong need for an art academy to smooth the way for these artists to elevate and polish their talents. At the opening of the academy he announced that the academy was found to help these artists on their long way

to success by showing them 'a shorter and easier way.'(66) He also said that the academy, in addition to providing the students with good guidance and teaching, will be a repository for the great examples of the Art,

On which genius is to work, and without which the strongest intellect may be fruitlessly or deviously employed.(67)

He always stressed that any artist who desired success should acquaint himself with the works of the masters. He assured that all the great artists of all times have studied the works of their predecessors.

Raffaello, it is true had not the advantage of studying in an academy; but all Rome, and the works of Michael Angelo in particular, were to him an academy.(68)

As the first president of the Academy, Reynolds wrote his Discourses and addressed them to his students, over twenty years, on the occasion of distribution of prizes. First they were intended as a guiding advice to the young artists from a man of a vast experience. But with the years they developed into a complete chain of theories on art criticism. Unlike Johnson, Reynolds had a long time to prepare his speech. And unlike Johnson's work the Discourses were not totally his own personal production.

Many hands living and dead join in the composition of the Discourses. Reading through the manuscripts, one almost comes to believe in something impossible: that a masterpiece can be written by a committee.(69)

Even so, the authority of the Discourses was the triumph of Reynolds' careers, his career as the most successful painter whom England had produced, and his equally gratifying literary career, because they embodied his own ideas and theories on art. Reynolds' strive over twenty years as the president of the

academy was to establish art into an organized fields of systematic study. By the time of the last Discourse he was convinced that he had succeeded in putting the whole art into order when he said:

I have succeeded in establishing the rules and principles of our art on a firm and lasting foundation than that on which they had formerly been based. (70)

His Discourses were not addressed to artists only. His aim was to win the admiration of writers more than of painters. He often compared the painter with the writer. He talked of painting and literature and thought painting the highest of all arts as poetry of all writing. More than once he declared that the painter and the poet have a lot in common. The task of the painter is the same as that of the poet in contributing to the humanity. Their objective is the same in imitating nature and the immutable ideas of man. And on top of all that both have the same route to success that is by keeping very close to the masters' footsteps and by leading an empirical search for truth, and material. His argument was based on classical tenets. His concern was with the ideal and like Johnson he regarded sublimity as the accompaniment of the 'gardener of generality.'(71) His theory of imitation won him the praise and admiration of Burke and his mode of thinking made him a friend of Johnson. One of his greatest achievements was the establishment of history painting as an independent genre. His works are filled with a wealth of historical examples.

Practically in every Discourse Reynolds emphasised the importance of imitating the masters and learning from them. He divided the artist's life into three stages. In the first 'which is confined to the rudiments'(72) the artist learns the art of drawing any object and how to manage his colours. In the second his business is 'to learn all that has been known and done before his own time.'(73) The third period 'emancipates the student from subjection to any authority.'(74) Reynolds placed the stress on the second stage in which the student observes and records in his sketch book and in his memory the great aspects of the masters' works, because success is achieved by the industry of the

"mind" not the "hands".

The first school from which the masters learnt is open for every one, but nature is not to be copied too closely because

The whole beauty and grandeur of art consists in being able to get above singular form, local customs, particularities and details of every kind.(75)

The painter must disregard all local and temporary ornaments and 'look only on those general habits which are everywhere and always the same.'(76) Even when imitating the masters, the artist must not make an exact copy of the work he is imitating, but should take of every work what attracts his attention and record it in his collection of images to which he then applies his mastery and forms into a new original work. This was Reynolds' own practice.

After receiving his commission for a portrait group of the three sisters Montgomery, Reynolds ransacked his note books for appropriate expressive attitudes.(76)

The attitudes were taken from the paintings of various masters. Reynolds builds as a magpie builds a nest. This artistic technique was called by Reynold "imitation" by Walpole: "Wit" or "quotation" by Hone "conjuring" and by Blake "thievery".(77) But whatever it is, it added strength and beauty to his painting and made him world class master in his art. The artist can free himself from rules and imitation only when his 'genius has received its utmost, improvement.'(78) Reynolds had no faith in natural genius because it could not 'subsist on its own.'(79) 'True genius' he conceives 'consists in the power of expressing that which employs your pencil, whatever it may be as a whole.'(80) Although he complained a great deal about Gainsborough's want of precision and finishing, he praised

his manner of forming all the parts of his picture together; the whole going on at the same time, in the same manner as nature creates her work.(81)

As a critic Reynolds displayed accurate judgement and great honesty. 'Like Richardson on Van Dyke, or Johnson on Shakespeare, Reynolds tabulates art according to a balance sheet of pluses and minuses'(82) He believed that in every great painting there is something worth admiring and imitating. He inspects the painting with a sensitive eye and examines it from every angle; light, figure, drapery, colour, shadow and background. He balances his praise with a list of faults as he did in the sixth Discourse when he talked of the Dutch school. Although Reynolds detested Ruben's landscapes declaring that 'they are in want of simplicity in composition, colouring and drapery,'(83) he admired them for their airiness and facility. Of Breughel's 'Slaughter of the Innocents', Reynolds balanced judgment was that;

This painter was totally ignorant of all the mechanical art of making a picture; but there is here a great quantity of thinking, a representation of variety of distress, enough for twenty modern pictures.(84)

A close inspection of Johnson's and Reynolds' lives and works reveals an interesting parallel between these two great men. Both did not really have a solid public education. Reynolds' was what he received at his father's school and Johnson's is not much better off although he spent a year at Oxford. Their real knowledge came from their own private reading. Johnson was addicted to books and reading and long study was Reynolds' program for success. Their lives were a hard long struggle for the establishment of their principles and achieving greatness. One of the most interesting things about their writings is that they embody the 18th century attitude towards literature and art and at the same time contain a great deal of useful information about great personalities of their time and some of the past. Johnson's Lives of The Poets is of a great documentary value; partly because some of them provide the only information available about some poets and partly because some constitute the best written biography of great poets such as Pope. Reynolds' Discourses is a wealthy source of art history and an accurate reflection of 18th century painting in theory

and practice. In their criticism both men displayed practically the same attitudes towards man, nature and creative production whether literary or artistic. Reynolds maintained that the end of art is ethical enlargement and that virtue is to be acquired only by a firm grasp of the immutable ideal of man. Johnson, similarly, stressed that the end of poetry is to instruct by following the static laws of nature and imitating the common manners and attitudes of man. Both declared that nature is the first school for the young artist and young writer and the best way to possess nature is to imitate the ancients who have a full command of its laws. Even in imitation, both did not encourage an exact minute copying of the ancients or nature. Both insisted on selecting "the best" of everything because nature to them was 'a synthesis of scattered excellencies.'⁽⁸⁵⁾ so the writer's job is to gather these excellencies and combine them into a complete genuine "whole". Both believed very strongly that greatness is achieved by devoting one's life to a diligent empirical search for the truth, whether in nature or in man. The poet and the artist must rise above personal, local or temporal interest and stick to the general and stable forms and laws of man and nature. As classicists they believed that a work of art whether a poem or a painting should address the mind first and then the emotion to which they showed a total disregard. At the beginning of the Fourth Discourse Reynolds declared that the rank and value of every art is in proportion to the "mental" labour employed in it, or the "mental" pleasure produced by it. Johnson was against all forms of Romantic love and excessive emotional strain. He censured Cowley's poem "The Mistress" because every stage 'is crowded with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls, and with broken hearts.'⁽⁸⁶⁾ In judging a work of art, both critics displayed great honesty and accurate judgement. They balanced their lists of praise with others of censure. They pointed out the aspects of humanity and revealed the defects. Although Johnson always emphasized the importance of the classical in writing and Reynolds strived to establish them in painting both admired genius and natural talents. This is evident in Johnson discussion of Shakespeare and Reynolds' of Gainsborough. Again both were agents the

mixing of genres. Johnson detested Shakespear's tragicomedy and Reynolds attacked Ruben's landscape because they believed that their mixed nature disturbs the concentration. Like Johnson, Reynolds believed that time is the true test of greatness. Shakespeare was Johnson's example of a great writer who passed the test of time Raffaele and Michaele Anggelo were Reynolds' examples. Although both men championed the calssical ideals all the way through their lived, their judgement and argument in their later years reveal a slight inclination towards romanticism. In the first Disourse Reynods claimed Raffaele the greatest artist of all times but by the time of the last Discourse Michaele Angelo was declared "The Homer" of painting. In the same way we see Johnson censuring imagination, severly, in Rasselas and his earlier writings but praising it later in Milton, Dryden, Shakeaspeare, Thomson and others. But this change did not, in any way, have any cucial effect on the principles to which they devoted their lives. Their consistency and empirical lives were exemplary of that of the scholar. Reynolds and Johnson will always be respected, their views valued, their works admired and their criticism will always remain a miniature history of literary taste and critical theory in the 18th century and will always be the key to a better understanding of that age.

Notes

- 1- John Butt, ed., The poems of Alexander Pope. (1965) p.144
- 2- Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub. (1968) p. 64-65
- 3- Lawrence Lipking, The Ordering of The Arts, (1970) p. 191
- 4- Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art (1961) p.v
- 5- Lawrences Lipking, op. cit. p. 412
- 6- W. J. Bate, Achievement of Samuel Johnson (1961) p. 185
- 7- Lawrence Lipking, op. cit. p. 414
- 8- W. J. Bate, Achievement of Samuel Johnson (1961) p. 9
- 9- S. Johnson, "Rasselas", in Johnson Poetry & Prose, ed. Mona Wilson (1970) p.398
- 10- J. H. Hagstrum, Samuel Johnson Literary Criticism (1967) p. 189
- 11- S. Johnson, "Lives of the Poets",in Johnson Poetry & Prose ed. Mona Wilson (1970) p. 828
- 12- Ibid, "Rasselas", p. 481
- 13- Samuel Johnson, English Dictionary.
- 14- Samuel Johnson, Rambeler No. 92', quoted from Watson's Literary Critics (1973)p. 13
- 15- J. H. Hagstrum, Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism (1967) p. XI
- 16- Samuel Johnson, "Rasselas", Johnson Poetry & Prose,ed.MonaWilson (1970) p. 409
- 17- Ibid., p. 409
- 18- Ibid., "Preface to Shakespeare".
- 19- Ibid., "Lives of The Poets" p. 817
- 20- Ibid., "Rasselas", p. 410
- 21-Ibid.,p. 410
- 22- Ibid., "Lives of the Poets" p. 798
- 23- Ibid., p. 883
- 24- Ibid., p. 849
- 25- Ibid., p. 834

- 26- Ibid., p. 229
- 27- Ibid., p. 940
- 28- Ibid., p. 944
- 29- Ibid., "Rasselas" p. 409
- 30- Ibid., p. 409
- 31- Ibid., "Lives of the Poets" p. 815
- 32- Ibid., "Rasselas" p. 407
- 33- Ibid., p. 471
- 34- Ibid., "Lives of the Poets" p. 882
- 35- Ibid., p. 843
- 36- Ibid., p. 799
- 37- Ibid., "Rasselas" p. 425
- 38- Ibid., p. 466
- 39- W. J. Bate, Achievement of Samuel Johnson (1961) p. 5
- 40- George Watson, The Literary Critics (1973) p. 74
- 41- S. Johnson, "Rasselas" Johnson Poetry & Prose ed. Mona Wilson (1970) p.398
- 42- Ibid., "Lives of Poets" p. 850
- 43- Ibid., p. 864
- 44- S. C. Roberts, Dr. Johnson and others (1958) p. 84
- 45- Lawrence Lipking, op. cit. p. 423
- 46- W. J. Bate, Achievement of Samuel Johnson (1961) p.186
- 47- S. Johnson, "Life of Savage", Johnson Poetry & Prose ed, MonaWilson (1970) p. 67
- 48- Ibid., "Lives of the Poets" p. 822
- 49- Ibid., p. 876
- 50- Ibid., p. 839
- 51- James L. Clifford, ed, Eighteenth Century English Literature (1959) p. 300
- 52- S. Johnson, "Lives of Poets", Johnson Poetry & Prose ed. M. Wilson (1970) p. 864
- 53- Ibid., p. 869

54- S. Johnson, "Rasselas" Johnson Poetry & Prose ed. Mona Wilson (1970) p. 422

55- Ibid., p. 393

56- Ibid., p. 415

57- Ibid., p. 408

58- Jubran Khaleel Jubran (Lebanese born American Poet), Almawakeb, p. 3
People are made virtuous by force but vice in them does not die even if they are buned.

59- S. Johnson, "Rasselas" Johnson Poetry & Prose ed. Mona Wilson (1970) p. 413

60- Ibid., p. 470

61- Ibid., p. 477

62- J. K. Jubran, Almawakeb p. 22

Happiness in life is a sought phantom that people desert once it becomes reality.

Like the river running energetically down to the valley but once there goes slow and dull.

People are happy in their strive for the difficult but when achieved their enthusiasm dies.

If you meet a happy man who does not aspire for the difficult then you have found an exemplary man.

63- Lawrence Lipking; op. cit. p. 170

64- Ibid., p. 169

65- Sir Joshua Reynolds; op. cit., p. 19

66- Ibid., p. 20

67- Ibid., p. 20

- 68- Ibid., p. 20
- 69- Lawrence Lipking; op. cit. p. 180
- 70- Sir Joshua Reynolds; op. cit., p. 237
- 71- W. J. Bate, From Classic to Romantic (1961) p. 82
- 72- Sir Joshua Reynolds; op. cit., p. 29
- 73- Ibid., p. 30
- 74- Ibid., p. 30
- 75- Ibid., p. 45
- 76- Lawrence Lipking; op. cit. p. 176
- 77- Ibid., p. 176
- 78- Sir Joshua Reynolds; op. cit., p. 22
- 79- Ibid., p. 90
- 80- Ibid., p. 170
- 81- Ibid., p. 221
- 82- Lawrence Lipking, op. cit. p. 199
- 83- Sir Joshua Reynolds; op. cit.; p. 79
- 84- Lawrence Lipking, op. cit. p. 196
- 85- J. H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts (1965), p. 143
- 86- S. Johnson "Lives of the Poets", Johnson Poetry & Prose ed. Mona Wilson (1970) p. 812