

INTRODUCTION

Samuel Johnson, the greatest English man of letters, was born in Lichfield (about 120 miles N.W. of London) on 18 September, 1709. As many accounts of his life are available, it will be enough to provide the following sign-posts:

1717-25	Attends Lichfield Grammar School
1726-28	Works in his father's bookshop in Lichfield
1728	Enters Pembroke College, Oxford
1729	Leaves Oxford without a degree
1730-33	In Lichfield, Market Bosworth, and Birmingham
1735	Marries Elizabeth Porter ('Tetty'), a widow of 46 Opens a school in Lichfield
1737	Makes his way to London with David Garrick
1738	13 May publishes <i>London: A Poem</i> .

As *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are based on two of Juvenal's satires, something should be said about the Roman poet. *Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis* (born about A.D. 60; died some time after 130) came from Aquinum, a town about 80 miles S.E. of Rome. Very little is known of his life. He published his first book of satires (nos. 1-5) under Trajan about A.D. 110 and his fourth book (nos. 10-12) under Hadrian about 125. To judge from his work he experienced a good deal of frustration and disappointment, but the tradition that he spent some years in exile is not well supported.

After enjoying little success in his lifetime, Juvenal came into fashion in the fourth century, survived the vicissitudes of the dark ages, and began to attract interest again after the eleventh century.¹ The first printed edition appeared at Rome before the end of 1469.² Translations began in England with the version by Sir Robert Stapylton (1647), but this was easily surpassed by Dryden's brilliant rendering of five satires, including nos. 3 and 10, in 1693. Though Johnson was familiar with Dryden's work, he chose to write in a rather different tradition, namely that of imitation. This he called 'a kind of middle composition between translation and original design, which pleases when the thoughts are unexpectedly applicable and the parallels lucky'.³ Speaking from memory, Johnson thought the

¹ See Highet, chapters 28-32.

² See C.F. Bühler, 'The Earliest Editions of Juvenal', *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955) 84-95.

³ 'Life of Pope' in *The Lives of the Poets*, ed. G.B. Hill, Oxford 1905, iii, 176. In Pope's early editions Horace's Latin was printed *en face* for purposes of reference, and where *London* came closest to Juvenal Johnson saw to it that the reader had the Latin lines before him. So reproducing the original in the present edition is not merely a pedantic exercise.

tradition had begun with Rochester and Oldham, but it can be seen in embryonic form as early as Wyatt (1503-42). The theory was enunciated by Denham and Cowley in the 1650's and applied in Cowley's 'The Country Mouse' (1663). Similar ideas were gaining ground in France, where Boileau published a collection of satires, based loosely on Horace and Juvenal, in 1666. The example of Cowley and Boileau was followed by Rochester and Oldham in the 1670's, and the latter's 'up-dated' version of Juvenal 3 supplied several hints for Johnson's *London*. Dryden expressed misgivings about imitation in the preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles* (1680), but at least four imitations of Juvenal appeared between 1683 and 1694, and Horace was even more popular. The greatest achievements in the genre, however, belonged to the next century. Between 1712 and 1714 Swift adapted two Horatian epistles and one satire; and Pope's wonderful *Imitations of Horace*, eleven in all, appeared in the five years preceding *London*.⁴

Johnson wisely decided to avoid Horace, but he took up the challenge by turning to Juvenal, a writer whom he knew in three different ways: through a direct study of the Latin text, through the translations and imitations mentioned above, and through the scholarly comments which had appeared in the major editions since the renaissance. In this mass of material he found two main conceptions of Juvenal. The first saw him as primarily a moralist, whose castigation of a decadent, pagan society made him acceptable to Christian readers. The second saw him chiefly as a wit, whose devastating and often indecent attacks could be savoured with malicious pleasure. Johnson was acknowledging both points of view when he described the peculiarity of Juvenal as 'a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences [i.e. sharp and perceptive epigrams] and declamatory grandeur'.⁵ The actual proportions of the mixture, whether because of theme, mood, or age, varied somewhat as between Satire 3 and Satire 10; and the reader will find an even wider variation in Johnson's response. But in any case it is clear from what has been said of Juvenal's place in the English tradition that Johnson had strong literary reasons for attempting his imitations.

He also had historical reasons. Like Pope, he was living in a period when the parallel between England and Rome (in social structure, institutions, and cultural outlook) could be exploited in a very striking way, so as to produce works which were both literary allusions and at the same time independent, eighteenth-century poems. More particularly, since, in the years 1737-38, Johnson was vehemently opposed to Walpole's government, he was all the more receptive to Juvenal's angry condemnation of vice and corruption in Roman public life. Admittedly Juvenal was not, properly speaking, a *political* satirist; he never advocated a return to the republican constitution; nor did he attack contemporary figures of any political

importance. (What he did was to use the notorious dead as *exempla* of folly and wickedness.) Nevertheless, from the early seventeenth century, he was widely admired as the 'opposition satirist' *par excellence*, and Dryden was following a long tradition when he praised him as 'a zealous vindicator of Roman liberty'.⁶

We do not know exactly why Johnson was so hostile to Walpole. The satirist's 'Toryism' is hardly the answer; such labels are vague and unreliable, and in any case Walpole's most powerful critics were Whigs. More probably we should think of the influence exerted by Savage, Guthrie, Harry Hervey, and the writers of *The Craftsman*. From listening to these men, the young Johnson, 'embittered at his failures in the Midlands and still unsure of himself in Grub Street', was disposed to blame his misfortunes on 'the system'; and Walpole *was* the system.⁷ Such personal factors also animated Johnson's reading of Juvenal. After all the privations he had known, he felt a profound affinity with the Roman poet who, more vividly than any other, had conveyed the sting of failure and poverty. As an illustration of this affinity one thinks first of the central section of *London*, with its massive line SLOW RISES WORTH BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D. But the same deep feelings lie behind his reflections on the scholar's life in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Mrs Piozzi tells how, when he read these lines to his friends at Streatham, 'he burst into a passion of tears'.⁸

For such reasons as these, which all shade into one another, Johnson went to work. Thanks to the investigations of two modern scholars,⁹ we can now suggest with some confidence that he used the Delphin edition (Prateus, 1684) along with the notes of the variorum commentary (Schrevelius, 1684). He seems to have worked to a large extent from memory – an astonishing feat, even in that age. And he was so familiar with the two commentaries that he sometimes embodied their notes in his imitations.

Having finished the work by about the end of March, Johnson wrote to Edward Cave, publisher of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, ostensibly acting on behalf of a needy friend. He was confident, he said, that Cave would reward it 'in a different manner from a mercenary bookseller, who counts the lines he is to purchase and considers nothing but the bulk'. He went on to add the following offer: 'As I am sensible I have transcribed it very coarsely, which, after having altered it, I was obliged to do, I will, if you please to transmit the sheets from the press, correct it

⁴ For an informative account of imitation in English poetry see Brooks.

⁵ 'Life of Dryden' in *Lives*, ed. Hill (see n.3 above) i, 447.

⁶ 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' in Dryden's *Essays*, ed. W. P. Ker, Oxford 1926, ii, 87. This view of Juvenal is well documented by H. D. Weinbrot, *Augustus Caesar in 'Augustan' England*, Princeton 1978, chap. 5. I attempted to show how unhistorical it was in *The Satires of Horace*, Cambridge 1966, 258-73.

⁷ For these ideas I am indebted to Greene, chap. 4, especially pp. 91 and 106.

⁸ Mrs Piozzi, *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson*, LL.D., 1786, 50.

⁹ See Bloom and Bloom (1).

for you, and take the trouble of altering any stroke of satire which you may dislike.' Cave accepted the poem, but suggested that the name of Robert Dodsley, a better-known publisher, should appear on the title page. Dodsley agreed and paid Johnson ten guineas for the copyright. As it happened, *London* was published on the same morning as Pope's 1738, so that, as Boswell remarked, 'England had at once its Juvenal and Horace as poetical monitors'. Pope's reaction to *London* was, we are told, 'candid and liberal'. 'He requested Mr Richardson . . . to endeavour to find out who this new author was. Mr Richardson, after some inquiry, having informed him that he had discovered only that his name was Johnson, and that he was some obscure man, Pope said, "He will soon be *déterré*".'¹⁰

A comparison of *London* with Juvenal *Sat.* 3 shows that Johnson has expanded the opening scene, the first part of the speaker's diatribe, and the later picture of the countryside, whereas he has shortened the woes of poverty and the dangers of city life. The passages on foreign residents, and the two epilogues, are more or less equal.

1. Juvenal begins by relating Umbricius' decision to leave Rome for Cumae, an old Greek colony on the coast, now rather deserted. He approves of the decision, listing some of the hazards of Roman life. Finally he describes the scene just outside the Porta Capena (1-20). Johnson gives a longer list of hazards and significantly alters the poet's reflections at the point of departure (Greenwich); for while Juvenal contrasts the squalid area outside the Porta Capena with what it was like in the days of King Numa (and makes a characteristic joke about the pious gentleman's love-life), Johnson is more respectful in his nostalgia, recalling the great days of Elizabeth when England was powerful abroad and internally sound. In this way he adds a *political* dimension (1-30).

2. Umbricius claims that Rome is a place where social nonentities grow rich by following sordid occupations. What room is there for him? He cannot lie or cheat (21-57). Thales omits the element of class resentment but imports political comment, satirising treasonable speeches in parliament, the stage licensing act, Walpole's *Gazetteer*, and the dispensing of patronage (31-90).

3. Umbricius' picture of country life, though favourable, is far from idyllic. Phrases like 'learn to love your hoe', 'to regale a hundred Pythagoreans' (i.e. vegetarians), and 'to become the owner of one lizard' (a somewhat minute piece of livestock) keep enchantment at a safe distance. Thales' vision (210-23) is longer and altogether more idealized, e.g. 'There ev'ry bush with nature's music rings, / There ev'ry breeze bears health upon its wings'.

4. In Juvenal the poor man's indignities are described at greater length (126-89). Some of the complaints, however, would have struck Johnson as morally dubious, e.g. what use is there in paying one's morning respects to rich old ladies

when a great magistrate has got there first? And how scandalous it is that an upstart can afford to seduce a Roman matron when a decent citizen can barely pay for a whore! Again, Juvenal's amusing and rather patronising description of a country festival (171-9) is omitted by Johnson, who expands instead the idea of migration found in Juvenal vv. 162-3. Even these lines of escapist yearning contain a thrust at the activities of Spain (173).

5. Rather surprisingly, Johnson declines to render Juvenal's marvellously vivid description of Rome's traffic (232-67) and the objects hurled from open windows (268-77). (Did he consider the subject-matter too low?) Also, in talking of nocturnal violence, he leaves out Juvenal's quotation of the young blade's abuse with its class contempt and race hatred (292-6). The more even tenor of Johnson's style is apparent in his rather limited variation of question, exclamation, and reported speech. The contrast can be seen by simply looking at the punctuation of Juvenal's text.

6. In Juvenal's section on foreigners (58-125) prejudice is evoked by the sarcastic use of Greek terms, Greek names, and Greek mythology, by the implication that the immigrants are so much refuse washed down by the river or blown in by the wind, and by the employment of sexual or excretory images to point a rhetorical climax. In this last respect Johnson is much less coarse (in spite of 'sewer', 'clap', and 'whore'). He also gives the passage a patriotic tone by complaining in sonorous and elevated style that the Englishman has abandoned his native virtues (99-106 and 117-22).

London as a whole is less cynical than its model. It conveys a strong desire for integrity in politics and social life, and calls for a foreign policy which will uphold ancient traditions of national greatness. The country's ills at home and abroad are naively ascribed to Walpole's corrupt and supine administration – an error which Johnson later confessed.¹¹ And the vision of rural life is decidedly rosy. One must remember, however, not just that *London* is a young man's poem, but that even in 1738 it reflected only the dominant mood of the writer, not his total view. In spite of its vileness, the city had many attractions. Johnson was happy to stay there, and he once remarked in a famous pronouncement that 'when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life'.¹²

The main stages in the next period of Johnson's life are as follows:

1739	Stays with Dr John Taylor at Ashbourne in Derbyshire
1740	Mortgages the family house in Lichfield Returns to London; works for the <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i>
1742	Assists in the preparation of James's <i>Medicinal Dictionary</i> Begins to catalogue the Harleian Library

¹¹ See Hawkins, *Life of Johnson*, 514; Boswell i, 131.

¹² Boswell iii, 178.

10 The material in this paragraph comes from Boswell i, 121 and 128-9.

- 1743 Writes his *Account of the Life of Richard Savage*
 1746 Undertakes to compile a *Dictionary of the English Language*
 1748 November, completes *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.

The rest of Johnson's life, during which he became a national celebrity, does not come within the scope of this commentary. He died on 13 December 1784 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Boswell tells us that most, if not all, of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* was written at Hampstead, where Mrs Johnson had lodgings. 'The fervid rapidity with which it was produced is scarcely credible. I have heard him say that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them upon paper till they were finished. I remember when I once regretted to him that he had not given us more of Juvenal's satires, he said he probably should give more, for he had them all in his head; by which I understood that he had the originals and correspondent allusions floating in his mind, which he could, when he pleased, embody and render permanent without much labour. Some of them, however, he observed, were too gross for imitation.'¹³

Johnson sold the copyright to Dodsley for fifteen guineas, and it was published in January 1749.

Readers may find it instructive to make a detailed comparison with Juvenal's tenth satire. The main points are as follows:

Juvenal

- 1-53 (53) Introduction: most prayers are misguided and, if answered, harmful; various 'blessings', including eloquence, strength, wealth, and political status; the contrasting attitudes of Heraclitus and Democritus.
- 54-113 (60) Political power: the downfall of Tiberius' powerful minister, Sejanus.
- 114-32 (19) Eloquence: the fate of Cicero and Demosthenes.
- 133-87 (55) Military glory: how Hannibal, Alexander, and Xerxes ended their careers.
- 188-288 (101) Long life: physical decay, mental decay, the deaths of friends and relatives; Nestor, Priam, and others.
- 289-345 (57) Beauty: the moral and physical dangers threatening handsome young men; Silius and Messalina.
- 346-66 (21) Conclusion: prayers for Stoic virtues do no harm, but are unnecessary.

Johnson

- 1-72 (72) Introduction: mankind's follies are observed from a vantage-point above the earth; the known world now stretches from China to

Peru; abstract nouns take the place of people, giving more stately and inclusive generalisations; the idea of a deity who derives malicious amusement from human foolishness is evaded by substituting Vengeance for God; Democritus becomes a much more dignified figure.

- 73-134 (62) Political power: the fall of Wolsey; Juvenal's vulgarity and jeering insults are replaced by melancholy reflection on the vanity and transience of power.
- 135-74 (40) Learning: this section is expanded in a way which reflects the poet's own interest and experience; the *exempla* are briefly and respectfully mentioned; no attempt is made to reproduce Juvenal's liveliness and malice.
- 175-254 (80) Military glory: Charles XII of Sweden, Xerxes, Charles Albert of Bavaria. Instead of sneering at these great leaders, Johnson ponders sadly on their futility.
- 255-318 (64) Long life: Johnson is fully aware of the dreary absurdity of old age, but he shortens Juvenal's catalogue of afflictions; he omits his obscenity; and he does not harp with such merciless insistence on physical indignities.
- 319-42 (24) Beauty: the dangers which threaten beautiful girls. Johnson again avoids Juvenal's obscenity; he develops no *exempla*; and he confines himself entirely to heterosexual follies and their cost.
- 343-68 (26) Conclusion: a positive Christian affirmation, including the values of faith (363), hope (343) and love (361), none of which appears in Juvenal.

Boswell observed 'His *Vanity of Human Wishes* has less of common life, but more of a philosophical dignity than his *London*. More readers, therefore, will be delighted with the pointed spirit of *London*, than with the profound reflection of the *Vanity of Human Wishes*. Garrick, for instance, observed in his sprightly manner, with more vivacity than regard to just discrimination, as is usual with wits, "When Johnson lived much with the Herveys, and saw a good deal of what was passing in life, he wrote his *London*, which is lively and easy. When he became more retired, he gave us his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, which is as hard as Greek. Had he gone on to imitate another satire, it would have been as hard as Hebrew." But the *Vanity of Human Wishes* is, in the opinion of the best judges, as high an effort of ethic poetry as any language can show.'¹⁴

¹³ Boswell i, 192-3.

¹⁴ Boswell i, 193-4.

Text

For *London*, apart from a few very minor corrections, I have followed the text printed in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748) vol. 1. This was the basis of all texts, except that of 1750, for over thirty-five years. The 1750 edition was a quarto reprint of the uncorrected first edition of 1738 and has no independent value. According to James Boswell the younger, Johnson made a few notes and alterations on a copy (now lost) of this inferior edition, and Boswell transcribed these marginalia onto his own copy of the 1789 edition of the *Poetical Works*. Since five of Boswell's six explanatory notes and all four of his new variants (at 5, 131, 218, and 241) had already been incorporated in Hawkins' edition of the *Works* in 1787, it is usually assumed that Hawkins too had access to Johnson's notes. There are, in addition, three emendations in Hawkins (at 74, 122, and 251) which were not recorded by Boswell. Should these also be ascribed to Johnson? Some scholars are doubtful; some go further and question whether Boswell's variants really come from Johnson. Could they, perhaps, have originated with Hawkins? Those who wish to pursue these problems should consult Moody (2) 23 and 31-5. In the present edition I have mentioned these later readings in the notes but have not admitted them to the text. Even if they do come from Johnson himself, ten years are enough, one may think, for a poem to assume its final form. After that it should be immune to further tinkering on the part of its author. This somewhat arbitrary position is easier to sustain when, as here, the later variants are either trivial or inferior.

As for *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, I have adhered to Dodsley's text of 1755, except in a few matters of spelling and punctuation. Again James Boswell the younger recorded some variants. Ten were taken from the first edition of 1749; of the remaining six (at 41, 138, 167, 268, 293, and 298), five had already appeared in Hawkins. Four other, rather feeble, emendations in Hawkins (at 199, 250, 340, and 348) were not recorded by Boswell. This time Boswell does not state explicitly that he is transcribing Johnson's handwriting, but in three instances (268, 293, and 298) he does add the words 'corr MSS' after the variant. For details the reader is referred to Moody (2) 24-30. Once again I have mentioned all these cases in the notes but have not printed them in the text.

Except in proper names, capitals are used only in clear instances of personification. There are, admittedly, doubtful cases, but it seemed better to attempt some distinction than to print every noun with a capital – a practice which tends to distract the modern reader without conveying any appreciable nuance.

The figures in square brackets in the left hand margin are intended to serve as a guide to the corresponding sections in Juvenal.

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LONDON

Quis ineptae

Tam patiens urbis, tam ferreus ut teneat se?

[1]

Tho' grief and fondness in my breast rebel,
When injur'd Thales bids the town farewell,
Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend,
I praise the hermit, but regret the friend,
Who now resolves, from vice and London far,
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,
And fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
Give to St. David one true Briton more.

For who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?
There none are swept by sudden fate away,
But all whom hunger spares, with age decay:
Here malice, rapine, accident, conspire,
And now a rabble rages, now a fire;
Their ambush here relentless ruffians lay,
And here the fell attorney prowls for prey;
Here falling houses thunder on your head,
And here a female atheist talks you dead.
While Thales waits the wherry that contains
Of dissipated wealth the small remains,
On Thames's banks, in silent thought we stood,
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood:
Struck with the seat that gave Eliza birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth;
In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew,
And call Britannia's glories back to view;
Behold her cross triumphant on the main,
The guard of commerce, and the dread of Spain,
Ere masquerades debauch'd, excise oppress'd,
Or English honour grew a standing jest.

A transient calm the happy scenes bestow,
And for a moment lull the sense of woe.
At length awaking, with contemptuous frown,
Indignant Thales eyes the neighb'ring town.

[21]

Since worth, he cries, in these degen'rate days,
Wants ev'n the cheap reward of empty praise;

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In those curs'd walls, devote to vice and gain,
 Since unrewarded science toils in vain;
 Since hope but soothes to double my distress,
 And ev'ry moment leaves my little less;
 While yet my steady steps no staff sustains,
 And life still vig'rous revels in my veins;
 Grant me, kind heaven, to find some happier place,
 Where honesty and sense are no disgrace;
 Some pleasing bank where verdant osiers play,
 Some peaceful vale with nature's paintings gay;
 Where once the harrass'd Briton found repose,
 And safe in poverty defy'd his foes;
 Some secret cell, ye pow'rs, indulgent give.
 Let —— live here, for —— has learn'd to live.
 Here let those reign, whom pensions can incite
 To vote a patriot black, a courtier white;
 Explain their country's dear-bought rights away,
 And plead for pirates in the face of day;
 With slavish tenets taint our poison'd youth,
 And lend a lye the confidence of truth.
 Let such raise palaces, and manors buy,
 Collect a tax, or farm a lottery,
 With warbling eunuchs fill a licens'd stage,
 And lull to servitude a thoughtless age.
 Heroes, proceed! What bounds your pride shall hold?
 What check restrain your thirst of pow'r and gold?
 Behold rebellious virtue quite o'erthrown,
 Behold our fame, our wealth, our lives your own.
 To such, a groaning nation's spoils are giv'n,
 When publick crimes inflame the wrath of heav'n:
 But what, my friend, what hope remains for me,
 Who start at theft, and blush at perjury?
 Who scarce forbear, tho' Britain's Court he sing,
 To pluck a titled poet's borrow'd wing;
 A statesman's logick unconvinc'd can hear,
 And dare to slumber o'er the Gazetteer;
 Despise a fool in half his pension dress'd,
 And strive in vain to laugh at H——y's jest.
 Others with softer smiles, and subtler art,
 Can sap the principles, or taint the heart;
 With more address a lover's note convey,

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Or bribe a virgin's innocence away.
 Well may they rise, while I, whose rustick tongue
 Ne'er knew to puzzle right, or varnish wrong,
 Spurn'd as a beggar, dreaded as a spy,
 Live unregarded, unlamented die.
 For what but social guilt the friend endears?
 Who shares Orgilio's crimes, his fortune shares.
 But thou, should tempting villainy present
 All Marlb'rough hoarded, or all Villiers spent,
 Turn from the glitt'ring bribe thy scornful eye,
 Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy,
 The peaceful slumber, self-approving day,
 Unsullied fame, and conscience ever gay.

[58] The cheated nation's happy fav'rites, see!
 Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me!
 London! the needy villain's gen'ral home,
 The common shore of Paris and of Rome,
 With eager thirst, by folly or by fate,
 Sucks in the dregs of each corrupted state.
 Forgive my transports on a theme like this,
 I cannot bear a French metropolis.
 Illustrious Edward! from the realms of day,
 The land of heroes and of saints survey;
 Nor hope the British lineaments to trace,
 The rustick grandeur, or the surly grace,
 But lost in thoughtless ease, and empty show,
 Behold the warrior dwindled to a beau;
 Sense, freedom, piety, refin'd away,
 Of France the mimick, and of Spain the prey.
 All that at home no more can beg or steal,
 Or like a gibbet better than a wheel;
 Hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court,
 Their air, their dress, their politicks import;
 Obsequious, artful, voluble and gay,
 On Britain's fond credulity they prey.
 No gainful trade their industry can 'scape,
 They sing, they dance, clean shoes, or cure a clap;
 All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,
 And bid him go to hell, to hell he goes.

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The laureat tribe in servile verse relate,
 How Virtue wars with persecuting Fate;
 With well-feign'd gratitude the pension'd band
 200 Refund the plunder of the beggar'd land.
 See! while he builds, the gaudy vassals come,
 And crowd with sudden wealth the rising dome;
 The price of boroughs and of souls restore,
 And raise his treasures higher than before.
 Now bless'd with all the baubles of the great,
 The polish'd marble, and the shining plate,
 Orgilio sees the golden pile aspire,
 And hopes from angry heav'n another fire.
 Could'st thou resign the park and play content,
 210 For the fair banks of Severn or of Trent;
 There might'st thou find some elegant retreat,
 Some hireling senator's deserted seat;
 And stretch thy prospects o'er the smiling land,
 For less than rent the dungeons of the Strand;
 There prune thy walks, support thy drooping flow'rs,
 Direct thy rivulets, and twine thy bow'rs;
 And, while thy beds a cheap repast afford,
 Despise the dainties of a venal lord:
 There ev'ry bush with nature's musick rings,
 220 There ev'ry breeze bears health upon its wings;
 On all thy hours security shall smile,
 And bless thine evening walk and morning toil.

[268] Prepare for death, if here at night you roam,
 And sign your will before you sup from home.
 Some fiery fop, with new commission vain,
 Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man;
 Some frolick drunkard, reeling from a feast,
 Provokes a broil, and stabs you for a jest.
 Yet ev'n these heroes, mischievously gay,
 230 Lords of the street, and terrors of the way;
 Flush'd as they are with folly, youth and wine,
 Their prudent insults to the poor confine;
 Afar they mark the flambeau's bright approach,
 And shun the shining train, and golden coach.
 In vain, these dangers past, your doors you close,
 And hope the balmy blessings of repose:

Cruel with guilt, and daring with despair,
 The midnight murd'rer bursts the faithless bar;
 Invades the sacred hour of silent rest,
 240 And plants, unseen, a dagger in your breast.

Scarce can our fields, such crowds at Tyburn die,
 With hemp the gallows and the fleet supply.
 Propose your schemes, ye senatorian band,
 Whose Ways and Means support the sinking land;
 Lest ropes be wanting in the tempting spring,
 To rig another convoy for the k—g.

A single jail, in Alfred's golden reign,
 Could half the nation's criminals contain;
 Fair Justice then, without constraint ador'd,
 250 Held high the steady scale, but deep'd the sword;
 No spies were paid, no special juries known,
 Blest age! but ah! how diff'rent from our own!

[315] Much could I add, — but see the boat at hand,
 The tide retiring, calls me from the land:
 Farewell! — When youth, and health, and fortune spent,
 Thou fly'st for refuge to the wilds of Kent;
 And tir'd like me with follies and with crimes,
 In angry numbers warn'st succeeding times;
 Then shall thy friend, nor thou refuse his aid,
 260 Still foe to vice, forsake his Cambrian shade;
 In virtue's cause once more exert his rage,
 Thy satire point, and animate thy page.

NOTES ON *LONDON*

Epigraph: 'Who is so willing to put up with the foolish city, who so iron of soul as to contain himself?' – a quotation from Juv. l.30-31; but Juvenal wrote, not *ineptae* (foolish), but *iniquae* (unjust or wicked) – a much stronger word. Probably just a slip on J's part.

2 **Thales**: traditionally understood as Thales of Miletus (early 6th cent. B.C.), a pioneer of Greek natural philosophy. If this is right, the name typifies 'the wise man'; and that is all J's reader was expected to know. The further suggestion, in Bloom (1), that J took the name specifically from Juv. l.3.184-5, where Thales is spoken of as 'a gentle soul' (*mite ingenium*), is only a remote possibility; for there Thales exemplifies the philosopher who calmly accepts crime and injustice. A more recent proposal, in Bate (2) 172, is that Thales recalls the Greek lyric poet of the 7th cent. B.C. whom Lycurgus is said to have brought from Crete to Sparta (Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 4). His odes induced such harmony and obedience that he was thought of as a kind of law-giver. On this view J's Thales has been rejected by the community which he sought to civilize. This is more plausible, for (unlike Juv.'s Umbricius) J's Thales is a poet (260ff.), though not a lyric poet, and Plutarch's *Lives* were familiar to J's readers. But certainty is impossible.

Another question is whether J's picture of Thales was influenced by the case of his friend, the poet Richard Savage, who left London to live in Swansea in July 1739. This was after the publication of *London*, but Savage's departure may have been proposed long enough before to have entered J's mind. Retrospectively, at least, he seems to have associated the two figures; for in the Dict. under sense 2 of 'dissipate' he quoted a sentence from his *Life of Savage* and then under sense 3 quoted v.20 of *London*. All this, however, does not justify the crude equation of Thales with Savage – an equation which J. himself denied and which, even after 1739, would have been quite unnecessary for an understanding of the poem. See on 69-70 and 81 below.

3-4 Oldham had

Though much concern'd to leave my dear old Friend,
I must however his Design commend

(*Poems and Translations*. By the Author of *The Satyrs upon the Jesuits*, London 1683, 180.)

4 The compressed antithesis combines two ideas: 'I praise his decision to become a hermit' and 'I regret the loss of my friend'.

Hermit: here not literally an anchorite, but one who leads a solitary life; cf. 'cell' (49).

5 **Who now resolves**: strictly speaking Thales had already made his decision. The reading 'Resolved at length' (1787) removes this negligible blemish but involves a less

straightforward syntax, for 'Resolved' must be in the accusative (or objective) case agreeing with 'friend' rather than in the nominative with 'I'.

7-8 Fix'd: not 'determined', but 'settled'; cf. Juv.'s *sedem figere* (2). In his *Polyolbion* 5.333-43 (a poem which J admired) Drayton had referred to 'holy David's seat' in 'Cambria'.

True Briton: Thales' withdrawal is a sign of his patriotism. Juv.'s Umbricius leaves 'the Greek metropolis' for Cumae, a Greek colony. If irony was intended by Juv. the point is not obvious.

9-10 Hibernia's land: Ireland. The periphrasis carries the idea of 'wintry' (Lat. *hibernus*), which balances 'the rocks of Scotland'.

Strand: there is a play on 'strand' (as opposed to 'rocks') and 'Strand' (the London street). J. has expanded the geography of Oldham:

The Peake, the Fens, the Hundreds, or Lands-end,

I would prefer to Fleetstreet, or the Strand. (181)

When J. first arrived in London, he had lodgings off the Strand 'in an upper room of a house in Exeter St., behind Exeter 'change, inhabited by one Norris a stay-maker', Hawkins, *Life of Johnson*, 57. Boswell was wrong to regard J.'s lines as an example of anti-Scottish prejudice; for the sense is 'Ireland and Scotland are grim, but London is a lot worse'.

13-17 T. S. Eliot criticized these lines as lacking in authenticity. See 'Johnson as Critic and Poet' in *On Poetry and Poets*, London 1957. No doubt there is some overstatement (though less than in Juv.), but the features mentioned can all be abundantly documented. In 1738 many areas of London, especially the older districts, were still highly dangerous. See George 81-4, Plumb 13-22, Weinbrot 166-9.

16 Fell: cruel and inhuman.

Attorney: an officer of the Common Law Court. As attorneys were often overzealous in applying the harsh Settlement and Vagrancy laws, they were hated by the poor. Fielding called them 'pests of society'. See Turberville i, 309-11. J.'s 'attorney' may have been prompted by Boileau's *le Sergent*:

Allons du moins chercher quelque antre ou quelque roche,

D'ou jamais ni l'Huissier, ni le Sergent n'approche.

(*Sat.* 1.25-6)

17 Falling houses: 'Two things are conspicuous in the London of the eighteenth century.

One, the number of old ruinous houses which frequently collapsed', George 73; see also 74-5.

18 In its bathos this is designed as a parallel to Juv.'s 'poets reciting in the month of August'. The idea of killing may owe something to *paene enecabant* in Schrevelius' note, but it is better to recall Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (624):

Nay, fly to Altars; there they'll talk you dead.

19 Wherry: a light river-boat which will take Thales out to his ship. See 255.

20 Dissipated: Thales has been unable to bear the exorbitant cost of living in London. There can hardly be any hint of condemnation here, for Thales is a virtuous man. For the sense cf. 'spent' in 256.

21-4 J. had lodgings in Greenwich for a short period in the summer of 1737. *London*, however, was written at no. 6, Castle St., near Cavendish Square, not at Greenwich.

22 One might have expected a contrast, as in Juv., between squalid present and more attractive past, but the contrast in J. is a *political* contrast. The scene at Greenwich is *not* squalid, and it is a mistake to find overtones of commercial greed in 'the silver flood'.

23 Struck: strongly impressed.

Eliza: Queen Elizabeth was born at Greenwich. Nostalgia for the Elizabethan age was widespread among Walpole's critics, especially in the circle of Bolingbroke; see Kramnick's index under *Elizabeth*.

27 Cross: the cross of St. George.

Main: the high seas. For the sentiments compare Arne's 'Rule Britannia', which was heard for the first time in the musical drama *The Masque of Alfred* (1740).

29 Masquerades: masked balls.

Excise: by the bonded warehouse system imported goods were kept in a warehouse until sold to retailers, when a duty was paid. This was applied to tea, coffee, and a few other commodities in 1723; ten years later Walpole proposed to extend the scheme to cover wine and tobacco, hoping to use the revenue to abolish the land tax. But the opposition played on people's fear of government interference, and the idea was eventually dropped.

30 See on 53-4 below.

33-4 Dryden had:

Then thus Umbricius, with angry frown

And looking back on this degen'rate town. (37-8)

This does not correspond to anything in Juv., but the speaker's anger had already been made explicit by Boileau (*Sat.* 1.19-20) and Oldham (181).

36 In Juv. 1.74 worth is praised – and shivers (*probitas laudatur et alget*); in J. it lacks even this amount of tribute.

37 Devote: devoted.

38 Science: men engaged in intellectual work.

Unrewarded...in vain: an intentional pleonasm used for emphasis.

39 But sooths: soothes but.

40-42 Note the alliteration, which is not merely a decorative device but enforces the sense.

40 Moment: the subject of 'leaves'.

42 Revels: not 'delights', but 'runs riotously'.

45 Osiers: willows.

47 Harrass'd Briton: a reference to the Anglo-Saxon invasions of the 5th and 6th centuries. The new invasion turns out to be French.

49 Cell: the word, which can mean any small dwelling, does not imply that Thales is actually going to become a solitary monk; but like 'hermit' (4) it has religious overtones.

- 50 The monosyllabic name was never supplied. X has adapted to London as a worm adapts to dirt. J. may have had in mind
Que George vive ici, puisque George y sait vivre
(Boileau, *Sat.* 1.34)
in which case the shaft is aimed at George II.
- 51 **Pensions**: J. was indignant at the allowances dispensed by Walpole, but many years later (1762) he accepted a pension himself.
- 52 **Patriot**: at this time the name belonged to a heterogeneous group of Whigs and Tories, led by Pulteney and Bolingbroke. (For a fuller list see Grant Robertson, 53.) These men, who included some very able writers, attacked Walpole in plays, pamphlets, ballads, and especially in *The Craftsman*. They found an ally in the Prince of Wales, who was on bad terms with the king and had set up a separate court at Leicester House in 1736.
- 53-4 **Dear-bought rights**: Probably J. means commercial rights. Since 1713 England was entitled to supply Spanish colonies with negro slaves and to send one ship a year to trade at Cartagena or Vera Cruz. When these rights were illegally extended by British merchants the Spaniards retaliated by conducting searches in mid ocean, often with considerable violence. This and other causes led to a crisis. Walpole, who was anxious to settle the differences by negotiation, was vilified as an appeaser. J. himself notes sarcastically 'The invasions of the Spaniards were defended in the houses of Parliament'. Newcastle, Pitt, and the rest of the opposition were bent on war, which finally came in 1739 (the War of Jenkins' Ear). See Williams 207-10, Grant Robertson 77-80 and Appendix 3.
In the face of day: in broad daylight.
- 55 'It is impossible to taint a body already poisoned.' This objection was made by William Mudford in 1802 and by William Shaw before him. In fact J. has used a Latin construction whereby the adjective 'poison'd' is proleptic – i.e. taken before its time. The sense is 'taint our youth so that it becomes poisoned'.
- 58 **Farm a lottery**: 'Even the Government exploited the universal craze for gambling by raising state lotteries, which were patronized by all classes in society' (Turberville i, 355).
- 59 **Warbling eunuchs**: the *castrati* of Italian opera, which was then in fashion.
A licens'd stage: Walpole's Licensing Act (1737) was a response to repeated attacks on the government over the previous decade by Gay, Fielding, and others. It limited the number of theatres, and required that all plays and operas should be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain at least a fortnight before they were due to open. See P. J. Crean, 'The Stage Licensing Act of 1737', *Modern Philology* 35 (1937-8) 239-55. The original reading was 'our silenc'd stage', which involved a contradiction after 'warbling'. In any case, by 1748, with Walpole dead and Garrick manager at Drury Lane, the idea of 'silenc'd' was inappropriate. Yet the reading was restored in 1787.
- 60 **Thoughtless**: too stupid to care.
- 61 **Pride**: objective case.
- 65 **A groaning nation's spoils**: spoils taken from a groaning nation. The 1st ed., and that of 1787, had 'the plunder of a land is given' – a lighter and less tightly packed expression.

- 66 **Public crimes**: crimes against the people.
- 69-70 'I can hardly refrain from showing up a poet as second-rate and derivative, even though he has a title and writes in praise of the court.' In Horace, *Epist.* 1.3.18-20 Celsus is advised to rely more on his own resources – otherwise the birds may come to reclaim their plumage and the poor crow will become an object of ridicule. This is an adaptation of the Aesopic fable found in Babrius 72 and Phaedrus 1.3. J. may well be referring to Cibber, who became poet laureate in 1730; cf. the ironical passage in J.'s *Compleat Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage* (1739), where the writer imagines 'those Halcyon-days in which no politicks shall be read but those of the Gazetteer [cf. v.72] nor any poetry but that of the Laureat'. This, however, does not prove the equation Thales = Savage, even though the latter resented Cibber's appointment and set himself up as 'Volunteer Laureate'. All it means is that Thales shares Savage's (and others') dislike of Cibber and is sorely tempted to expose his inadequacies.
- 72 **Gazetteer**: *The Daily Gazetteer*, founded in 1735, was the official newspaper of Walpole's government.
- 73 One who spends half his allowance on clothes.
- 74 **H——y's**: traditionally identified as John, Lord Hervey (1696-1743), Walpole's supporter and confidant of the queen, known to Pope's readers as 'Sporus' and 'Lord Fanny'. But Greene (307-8) argues strongly for John, 'Orator' Henley (1692-1756). Preacher, exhibitionist and wit, Henley was employed by Walpole in 1730 to ridicule *The Craftsman* in a periodical called *The Hyp Doctor*. For a full study see G. Midgeley, *The Life of Orator Henley*, Oxford 1973.
'Clodio's' was substituted in the 1787 edition, by which time Hervey and Henley were both long dead. As 'Clodio' was derived from the Lat. *claudus* (lame) it suited a feeble wit, and it was in line with other 'significant' names like 'Orgilio' and 'Balbo'. It is not clear, however, that Hawkins had J.'s authority for the change.
- 79 **Rustick**: used here, not without irony, to suggest the simple, wholesome country as opposed to the false, over-sophisticated city. Cf. Boileau: *Je suis rustique et fier, et j'ai l'ame grossiere* (*Sat.* 1.50).
- 80 **Puzzle**: to complicate and so obscure.
- 81 **Spy**: Savage was accused of spying for Pope (*Lives of the Poets* ii, 362, ed. Hill); but where there are factions there are always informers (cf. 252 below), and so here, too, it is best to see Thales as a figure who shares certain views and experiences with Savage.
- 83 Here, for variety, the antithesis is presented in chiasitic order – ABBA.
- 83-4 Friendship of this kind is based on complicity and the mutual fear of exposure. 'Social', from Lat. *socialis*, means 'pertaining to companionship', hence 'shared'; but the phrase 'social guilt' looks like an original stroke of wit.
Orgilio: a name implying arrogance (Italian *orgoglio*, French *orgueil*). The obsolete 'orgillous' is given in the Dict. See on 208.
- 86 See Marlborough and Villiers (2) in list.
- 89 **Self-approving**: having a good conscience. Smugness is not implied; cf. *se probare* in, e.g., Horace, *Sat.* 1.1.109.

91 The favourites who prosper, thanks to the nation which they cheat. Partly Italians, but mainly French.

92 The antecedent of 'who' is 'the great'.

94 **Shore**: Oldham had

the Common-shore

Where France does all her Filth and Ordure pour (185).

It seems that J. came to regard 'sewer' as the more correct form (see Dict. under 'shore'); in any case 'sewer' was substituted in editions after 1758. The later reading also avoided the ambiguity of 'shore'. Cf. Dryden (110-11):

Obscene Orontes, diving under ground,

Conveys his wealth to Tyber's hungry shores.

98 As in more recent times, French elegance was regarded with a mixture of admiration and suspicion. In this respect the French provided a suitable counterpart to Juv.'s Greeks. Greece, however, did not present any military threat to Rome, whereas French power under Cardinal Fleury had been allowed to develop as a result of Walpole's foreign policy. Anti-French feeling was widespread. 'The London populace still continued its traditional hostility to foreigners, who were generally classed indiscriminately as French' (George, 133). Yet the fascination remained. For an illustration of the popularity of French fashions see the passage quoted by J. H. Plumb in *Sir Robert Walpole: the Making of a Statesman*, London 1956, 28-9.

99 **Edward**: see list.

Realms of day: heaven, earth being a dark vale of sin and woe.

102 **Surly grace**: here, as in 'surly virtue' (145), 'surly' is best understood as 'rough'.

103 'Lost' agrees with 'warrior' (104). For 'thoughtless' see on 60.

104 The warrior has dwindled to a beau, who (sense, freedom, and piety having been refined away) is the mimic of France etc. 'Refined away' is ironical, since the expression is normally used of impurities. Dryden had

Your herdsman primitive, your homely clown

Is turn'd a beau in a loose tawdry gown. (119-20)

108 **Gibbet**: gallows.

Wheel: a method of execution used in France before the revolution, when it was replaced by the guillotine. The victim was spreadeagled, and then as the wheel revolved his bones were broken with an iron bar. Sometimes the executioner was ordered to finish the prisoner off; the blows were then called *coups de grâce*.

112 **Fond**: foolishly well disposed.

114: **Clean shoes**: cf. Oldham (186):

Foot-boys at first, till they, from wiping Shoes,

Grow by degrees the Masters of the House.

Clap: gonorrhoea, 'the French disease'. Note the descending order of accomplishments.

115 **Fasting Monsieur**: Oldham (186) had 'A needy Monsieur'.

116 **Go to hell**: by putting *in caelum . . . ibit* (78), 'he will mount to the skies', Juv. had in mind simply a physical absurdity. Dryden (141) wrote 'And bid him go to heav'n, to heav'n he goes', which implied instead a religious injunction. J. saw that this could be improved, for no Englishman ever told anyone to 'go to heaven'.

117-8 Cf. Oldham (187)

Then, pray, what mighty Privilege is there

For me, that at my Birth drew English Air?

119 **Right**: object of 'to prize'. Britons have forfeited their birthright (i.e. liberty) by surrendering to the flattery of the French.

120 **Henry's victories**: Agincourt (1415) and other victories over the French, leading to the Treaty of Troyes (1420). For Henry see list. J. may have in mind the patriotic recollection of St. Crispin's day as foreseen by the king in Shakespeare's *Henry V* 4.3.51ff., especially v. 56: 'This story shall the good man teach his son.'

121 A satirical version of Horace's famous words

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit (*Epist.* 2.1.156)

Greece, on being captured, took her rough conqueror captive.

122 Early editions read

And what their armies lost, their cringes gain?

This was a little untidy in that one had to apply 'their' to the French after understanding 'conqueror' of the English. Hence, presumably, the alteration. Later, in 1787, Hawkins (on whose authority?) read 'prevails' instead of 'subdues', perhaps because it gave a more exact balance to 'are vain'.

124 **Supple**: easily assuming any posture, especially one of deference.

Parasite: 'one that frequents rich tables, and earns his welcome by flattery', Dict.

125-6 'True' agrees with 'tongue'. Some editions, on the false but excusable assumption that it agreed with 'Gaul', put a full stop after 'goes'.

126-8 J. exploits the ambiguity of 'bestow', which can mean 'attribute' or, literally, 'confer'. In 127f. he assumes the second sense, as if people's looks and speech had *actually* been transformed.

129-31 The only triplet in J.'s mature verse (Nichol Smith). Unlike Juv.'s Umbricius (92), Thales does not include himself among the hypocrites.

130 **With diffidence**: without confidence.

131 **Gain**: Hawkins (on whose authority?) changed this to 'get', perhaps on account of the sequence 'vain', 'strain', 'gain'. Yet the internal rhymes are defensible in a triplet.

140 J. concentrates Oldham's couplet (188)

Do you but smile, immediately the Beast

Laughs out aloud, tho he ne'er heard the jest.

142-3 The indispensable rhyme 'heat'/'sweat' was used by Oldham (188) and Dryden (177-8).

Hints: mentions.

- 143 Dog-days**: the period when the Dogstar Sirius rises and sets with the sun (3 July to 11 August); a time of oppressive heat, at least in Mediterranean countries.
- 145 Surly**: see on 102.
Fix a friend: make a firm friend.
- 146 Slaves**: in apposition to 'competitors' (144).
Serious impudence: shamelessness with a serious expression.
- 149** The line should be enclosed, at least mentally, in parentheses, for 'taste' exemplifies 'trifle', and 'judgment' exemplifies 'vice'.
- 150** In his original draft J. had written
Who dwell on Balbo's courtly mien [i.e. looks].
But since Balbo comes from the Lat. *balbus* (stammering), the change to 'eloquence' was clearly an improvement. No individual can be identified.
- 151** Writing of James I, Sir Anthony Weldon said 'His walk was ever circular, his fingers ever in that walke fidling about his cod-piece', quoted in *James I by his Contemporaries*, ed. Robert Ashton, London 1969, 12.
- 153** 'Invade' has a literal (though extended) sense with 'table', a figurative sense with 'breast'; an instance of zeugma.
- 155** Reading the absurd *aulam* in Juv. 112, and accepting the probably spurious 113, Barten Holyday translated:
They'll ransack House and Heart and thence be fear'd.
His note explains: 'He will turn his friend's house and all in it, as it were, upside down, so to discover his secrets and keep him in awe.' This was taken over and condensed by J. in 154-5.
- 157 Commence**: 'to take a new character', Dict. Hence 'to turn into' or 'become'.
- 158 By numbers**: on account of their large numbers.
- 160 Rigid**: severe, cf. 16 above.
- 161 Snarling muse**: satire. In classical times the satirist was sometimes referred to as a vicious cur by his opponents and as a trusty watch-dog by his supporters. See, e.g., Horace, *Epodes* 6, *Sat.* 2.1.85; Diogenes Laertius 6.60.
- 162 Sober**: solemn, with overtones of 'humourless'.
- 163 Dream**: i.e. of riches, cf. 184.
Labours for a joke: struggles to make a joke.
- 164 Brisker**: more lively and alert.
- 168 Gen'rous**: noble.
- 169 Blockhead's insult**: i.e. an insulting blockhead.
Points: 'directs' rather than 'sharpens', for sharpening would imply wit.
- 170-75** These lines are based on Horace's sixteenth epode, where the poet calls on those who are disgusted with civil war to set forth on 'the encircling ocean' and to seek 'the happy land' and 'the rich islands' which Jupiter has 'reserved' (*secrevit*) for the righteous. The association was prompted by Juv.'s *debuerant migrasse* . . . *Quirites*

- (163). Cf. Bolingbroke's letter to Swift, *Correspondence*, ed. F. E. Ball, London 1910-14, iii, 259.
- 173** During these years Georgia was claimed by the Spaniards, who had settled in Florida. For details see Kenneth Coleman (ed.) *A History of Georgia*, Athens, Georgia 1977, chap. 3 and Phinizy Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America*, Chicago 1977, chap. 7.
- 174 Seats**: a place to settle; Lat. *sedes*.
Explore: search out.
- 176-8**: Line 177 is justly admired for its massive weight. It must be granted, however, that the logic of the verses is untidy. The sense should be 'worth rises slowly everywhere, but more slowly here'; but in J.'s syntax 'ev'ry where' goes with 'confess'd', not with 'rises'.
- 179-81** If you want a great man to notice you, you must bribe his servant; cf. Juv. 184-9.
Retails: retail: 'to sell at second hand', Dict.
- 182ff.** Juv.'s mention of Ucalegon (199), a figure taken from *Aeneid* 2.312, led J. to Virgil's description of burning Troy. As the cries of the crowd woke Aeneas in his palace, so J.'s sleeper is roused from his dream of a palace. Dryden's translation of the passage begins thus:
Now peals of shouts came thundering from afar,
Cries, threats, and loud laments, and mingled war:
The noise approaches, though our palace stood
Aloof from streets, encompassed with a wood.
Louder, and yet more loud, I hear the alarms
Of human cries, distinct, and clashing arms.
Fear broke my slumbers. (397-403)
- 187 Tremendous**: terrifying.
- 189 Little ALL**: an abridgement of Juv. 208-9.
- 190** Another epic expansion of Juv., recalling the fate of Aeneas after the fall of Troy.
- 192-3** These lines show how J. could use scholars' lumber to construct a fine couplet. 'In vain' comes from *frustra*, which was wrongly admitted into the text of Juv. 210 by certain editors and was mentioned as a variant by others. J. rightly read *frusta* (scraps); *frustra*, being a spondee, is metrically impossible.
- 194 Orgilio**: see on 208 below.
- 197 Pacify**: appease.
- 198 Servile**: 'venal', the reading of the 1st ed., appeared again in 1787.
- 199** The line parodies the false rhetoric of the laureate tribe.
- 201** They give him the equivalent of the wealth he has lost – wealth which he had acquired by exploiting the country's poor.
- 203 Dome**: building.
- 204** Certain small boroughs ('pocket boroughs') were virtually the property, for electoral purposes of wealthy aristocrats who could sell or give the representation to men of

their choice. In addition, the ownership of a manor often carried with it the right (called 'advowson') to appoint a clergyman to the local church. 'Restoring the price' means giving back to the landowner enough money to purchase new estates. So the line as a whole refers to the corrupt use of land ownership to influence parliament and church.

206 Bauble: 'a thing of more show than use', Dict.

208 Orgilio: the draft had 'Sejano'. In the mind of the reading public there was a chain of association connecting Verres (the evil governor of Sicily), Sejanus (the powerful favourite of Tiberius whose fall is described in Juv. 10), Wolsey (see list), and Walpole. The evidence from *The Craftsman* and elsewhere is presented by C.B. Ricks, *Modern Language Notes* 73 (1958) 563-8. So it is fair to think of Orgilio, who in v.84 is the counterpart of Juv.'s Verres, as 'a man like Walpole' and of his palace as 'a mansion like Houghton'. For the meaning of Orgilio see note on 84.
Aspire: 'to rise, to tower', Dict. sense 3.

209 Juv., as often, is more sharp and cynical. The rich man, he says, is now suspected with good reason of having set fire to his own house (221-2). According to Fleeman, fire insurance became possible in 1739 – the year after the publication of *London*.

210 Park: e.g. St James's Park and Hyde Park, and fashionable pleasure-gardens like Vauxhall and Ranelagh.

211 Thales is travelling to Wales, beyond the Severn; J. was born in Lichfield near the Trent. Oldham (199) had
An handsom Dwelling might be had in Kent.

212 Elegant retreat: this does not contradict 'secret cell' (49), for Thales does not say that he intends to acquire such an 'elegant retreat' for himself.

213 The M.P. is living in London, where he votes as his patron tells him.

214 Prospects: views.

Smiling: *OED* gives 'cheerful', 'agreeable to the sight'; but here it seems to have the added connotation of 'fertile'; in fact the draft had 'fruitful'. Cf. the Lat. *laetus* in the first line of Virgil's *Georgics*: *quid faciat laetas segetes*.

215 Dungeons: basements; see George 89-90.

216-23 This elevated, and yet tender, way of writing about rural life owes something to Milton; see, e.g., his description of Eve in *Paradise Lost* 9.427-30:

... oft stooping to support
Each flower of slender stalk, whose head, though gay
Carnation, purple, azure, or speck'd with gold,
Hung drooping unsustain'd.

One must also bear in mind the Georgic tradition, which, though it started earlier, received its main impetus from Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Georgics*. (See J. Chalker, *The English Georgic*, London, 1969.)

Here Thales *wants* us to see the country in these idealized terms. Rural delights are needed as a contrast to urban horrors. And this may well have been a contrast which J. wished to draw at this point in his career. His *general* view of country life was much more complex. His appreciation of it was based on a thorough knowledge of practical details, and he was by no means blind to its harshness. (See R. W.

Ketton-Cremer, 'Johnson and the Countryside' in *Johnson, Boswell and their Circle*: Essays Presented to L. F. Powell, Oxford 1965, 65-75.)

217 Bower: 'an arbour; a sheltered place covered with green trees, twined and bent', Dict.

218 Beds: Hawkins (on J.'s authority?) changed this to 'grounds' in 1787, perhaps because 'beds' was thought to be too low. Yet 'beds' is more precise.

222 Security: freedom from both danger and worry.

226-9 Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.500-502:

And when the night
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.

Fop: 'a man of small understanding and much ostentation', Dict.

New commission: he has just been made an officer.

228 Frolick: 'gay, full of levity, full of pranks', Dict.

230 Mischievously: in a way involving harm, wickedly. The Dict. does not give the lighter, more playful, meaning, which seems to be a later development.

233 They prudently confine their insults to the poor. The adverbial idea of 'prudently' is rendered by an adjective, which is then transferred from 'they' to 'insults'. Both processes are common in Latin poetry.

234 Flambeau: a lighted torch.

235 Train: retinue.

232-5 Cf. Oldham (202):

Yet heated, as they are, with Youth, and Wine,
If they discern a train of Flamboes shine,
If a Great Man with his gilt Coach appear,
And a strong Guard of Foot boys in the rere,
The Rascals sneak, and shrink their Heads for fear.

237 Balmy: mild, soothing.

239 Midnight murd'rer: cf. Oldham (204) 'midnight Padders'.
Faithless: the opposite of 'trusty'.

241 Plants: it may be argued that the variant 'leaves', adopted in 1787, rounds off the scene with the murderer's departure; but the reader has to adjust his construction on finding that 'leaves' is a transitive verb. 'Plants', moreover, is a stronger word.

242 Tyburn: the place of public execution until 1783, near the present site of the Marble Arch. Hanging-days, which occurred eight times a year, were observed as public holidays. Oldham (205) had
Then fatal Carts thro Holborn seldom went,
And Tyburn with few Pilgrims was content.

243-7 J. could have said 'so many are hanged that the executioner is running out of rope', or 'so many are hanged that the fleet is running out of rope', or 'so many are hanged that there won't be enough rope for the king's convoy'. The draft, which did

not originally include 244-5, suggests that J. may have intended to choose the third, and strongest, possibility, or at least to combine the first and third. In the end he tried to include all three and so blurred the effect. Juv. (310-11) did not make the same mistake.

Schemes: 'The words "project" and "scheme" were anathema to Walpole's Tory critics', Kramnick 194.

245 Ways and Means: a parliamentary term for methods of raising money.

246-7 Another political shaft. 'Tempting' makes it clear that J. is referring to the eight months which George II spent in Hanover with his mistress Mme de Wallmoden from May 1736 to January 1737. This and other visits to Hanover were greatly resented; see Williams, 40-42. (It is perhaps over-ingenious, however, to see a verbal play in 'rig' which would connect it with 'riggish' = wanton.)

248 Alfred: see list.

250 Without constraint: the absence of greed and violence made penal laws unnecessary. J.'s contemporaries read about the golden age of Alfred in Sir John Spelman's *Life of Alfred the Great*, translated and edited by Thomas Hearne, Oxford 1709.

251 Deep'd the sword: the meaning should be 'lowered the sword', which provides a suitable contrast to 'held high the . . . scale'. If this is right, J. must have not only revived an obsolete verb but also given it a new sense. (The previous sense was 'to plunge or immerse deeply', *OED* 4.) Of other suggestions 'dipp'd' is at first sight attractive, but those who have studied J.'s handwriting maintain that his 'dipp'd' would hardly have been corrupted into 'deep'd' by the printer. 'Drop'd' could have been misread and would have provided the right sense. ('Drop' = 'lower' was used in fencing; cf. 'to drop one's guard' in boxing.) In that case, however, we have to exclude the more common sense, viz. 'to let fall'. If 'deep'd' was wrong, it was allowed to stand uncorrected for a very long time. 'Sheath'd', the alteration printed by Hawkins in 1787, gives an inferior antithesis and is iconographically inept.

252 Spies: Walpole had an extensive network of spies to counteract Jacobitism. See J. H. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole; the King's Minister*, London 1960, index under 'Spies'. Harley also had his sources of information.

Special juries: under Walpole such juries, chosen from a panel of rich landowners, were used to secure convictions in cases of seditious libel. See Greene, 307, n.17.

257 Wilds of Kent: J. must surely have considered 'banks of Trent' as a parallel to Juv.'s reference to his native Aquinum (319). But that would have meant altering v.211, where he had substituted 'Trent' for Oldham's 'Kent'. So he followed the other course and put 'Kent' here. Since we are dealing with such a strongly explicit poet, it seems improbable that 'the wilds of Kent' was meant to suggest either Canterbury cathedral or the family home of J.'s friend Elizabeth Carter. Nor, I think, does it refer to the fact that Kent was 'deconverted' by the Danes and thus became the last bastion of paganism. The more superficial explanation, based on rhyme and on the hint from Oldham, is more likely to be true.

260 Aid: J.'s text of Juv. (322) had *adjutor* (helper). Modern editors rightly prefer *auditor* (listener). Juv. is not thought of as *composing* his satires at Aquinum; if

he goes there he will be on holiday. Also, it is amusing to suggest that Juv.'s lady-satires (*saturae*) might be embarrassed if a man in heavy boots showed up at their recital. But once the satires have been personified, it makes no sense to talk of them being helped. (What are they being helped to do?) Umbricius, therefore, imagines himself as a listener, not as a co-author of satiric poems.

261 Foe to vice: Prateus' note on Juv.'s *caligatus* (322) reads: 'equipped like an energetic soldier, certainly a keen foe of vice (*acer vitiourum hostis*)'. For the satirist as a foe to vice and a friend of virtue cf. Horace, *Sat.* 2.1.70 and Pope's Imitation 119-22:

Yes, while I live, no rich or noble knave
Shall walk the World, in credit, to his grave.
To VIRTUE ONLY and HER FRIENDS A FRIEND,
The World beside may murmur, or commend.

Shade: a place of seclusion. Juv.'s 'Umbricius' might possibly suggest 'the man in search of seclusion (*umbra*)'. Certainly he has nothing to do with the haruspex mentioned by Pliny the Elder (10.6) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.27) and referred to by some of the older commentaries.

262 Rage: in view of 'virtue's cause' and 'exert' it probably means 'zeal' or 'ardour' rather than 'anger'. Fleeman understands it in the more specialized sense of *furor poeticus* or inspiration.