SAMUEL JOHNSON AND LEIGH HUNT:
TWO VIEWS OF THE THEATRE

by

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ABSTRACT

Samuel Johnson and Leigh Hunt, as generally representative spokesmen of the Eighteenth Century and the Romantic Age, provide some interesting comments on the theatre of their times. Their individual idiosyncrasies colour their views to some extent. Such inconsistencies, as they pertain to the theatre, are the subject of Chapter I of this essay.

Physical conditions in the theatre of Johnson's and Hunt's times, which could not but influence the reception of acted drama, are noted in Chapter II.

Johnson, whose views towards the drama are generally those of the literary critic, evaluated the plays of Shakespeare and others mainly in terms of their literary worth. But he was not unaware of the peculiar demands of the theatrical métier, and his well-known prejudice against the players did not prevent him from making a just appraisal of the theatrical fare of his time, according to Johnsonian canons of taste.

Hunt shared in the generally idolatrous regard of the Romantics towards Shakespeare. He wrote when the offerings of current playwrights reflected, to him, the age's dearth of dramatic character. He thought some of the earlier offerings, notably those of the Restoration playwrights, were unsuitable to the present mores of taste. But in his
voluminous theatre criticism he is principally concerned with the stage presentation of plays, rather than their value as closet drama.

As playwrights, Johnson and Hunt made manifest some of their critical principles; and a study of Irene and A Legend of Florence provides a concluding commentary on the worth of their criticism, translated into practice.
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It is intended in this essay to study a period of change in the history of the theatre, as it is reflected in the writings of Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) and Leigh Hunt (1784-1859). Accordingly, it will be necessary at the outset to compare and contrast in general terms the personalities and attitudes of the two men, so that their dramatic criticism may be seen in its proper context.

Dr. Johnson is not unequivocally a classicist. He has been claimed for the romantics by Henri Stendhal, and recently disclaimed for the neoclassicists by the British critic, J.H.W. Atkins. Johnson's criticism, distinguished for its common sense and dislike of cant, more characteristic of the man than of the Age, is more properly called Johnsonian than neoclassical. In his delight in the free play of mind and his impatience with cant, he anticipated the romantics. "Clear your mind of cant," was his advice to Boswell. "You may talk as other people do;... it is a mode of talking in society; but do not think foolishly." He had the romantics' great respect for the human mind; and they shared his view that human experience is a leading criterion of truth: "Human experience, which is always contradicting theory, is the great test of truth."

But there was a great area of sensibility in Johnson which he deliberately suppressed, and his critical writings
have a reserve about them which alienated the romantics. His strait-jacketing of his sensuous being crippled him for the task of criticism, according to them, as much as the 'imperfection of his organs' and his lack of taste in music and painting. The autocratic and prescriptive ring of his pronouncements further alienated them, and nowhere more than in his judgements upon Shakespeare. Although the romantics made Shakespeare a god, the supreme authority figure, they made him, as it is said, in their own image, for Shakespeare is big enough to be many things to many people. To Johnson, Shakespeare was not a god, but a compeer in the republic of letters. And the romantics resented the implication of equality with Shakespeare, from a person with Johnson's constrictions and deficiencies.

Mention must be made of some physiological factors which could not but affect Johnson's view of the theatre. An obvious influence upon his reception of anything visual or auditory was the "imperfection of his organs," which Boswell makes the primary cause of "Johnson's prejudice against players." There was "the irreparable damage...done to the auricular organs" by the king's Evil, "and I suppose," says Mrs. Thrale, "'tis owing to that horrible disorder too that he could never make use of but one eye." There is evidence that Johnson, so handicapped, was no very refined judge of theatrical merit. As time went on, he avoided the theatre as he avoided sermons in church, because he could not hear well. The theatre became
to Johnson "the young man's whore," cast off as "we drop some of the things that have pleased us; whether it be that we are fatigued and don't choose to carry so many things any further, or that we find other things which we like better."7 One thing that he liked better was talk: his chief regret at not attending the theatre was that he was unable to discuss the merits of the new productions with his friends. His preference in the drama, early and late, was for the written, rather than the spoken kind; for in this, his strong imagination could well supply the want of acuity of his other senses. "Let him that is unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last"8 - not attend its representation on the stage. Occasionally a passage might not come through to the "solitary reader, though it may be somewhat invigorated by the exhibition of the stage,"9 but to Johnson it was not one of Shakespeare's excellencies that "this poet is always more careful about the present than the future, about his audience than his readers."10

Leigh Hunt, with the advantage of excellent hearing and eyesight, always had a preference for plays done in the theatre. In his Autobiography, he says, "Neither then [at school] nor at any time, have I been as fond of dramatic reading as any other."11 But he always enjoyed attending the theatre, where his first-class faculties made him an acute theatrical critic, and practice and a wide acquaintance with literature made him
a discerning and informed one. The theatre was a lasting love of his life, providing shelter sometimes from melancholy, perhaps from domesticity. He was not blind to the theatre's faults, as he seems to have been to his wife's. He was a liberal, and a reformer, in the theatre; and here there is no echoing concern in Johnson, who, although he grew less tolerant of the theatre, did not attempt to reform it. Hunt strove to bring about "fourth-wall realism" in the theatre a half-century before the public seems to have been ready for it. "John Kemble flourished long after my attack on his majestic dryness and deliberate nothings." although he seemed to Hunt to fade before Kean "like a tragedy ghost." Hunt did not cast off the theatre, as Johnson did, although the theatre, in Hunt's time, became somewhat roué. With romantic ardour, he clung to an ideal that was permanent and far more beautiful than Johnson's concept of the theatre as a 'young man's whore.'

Certain domestic circumstances favoured the growth of Hunt's criticism along the 'benevolist' lines of his philosophy of life, and Johnson's along his rigorously austere ones. Domestic committedness probably helped to cause the labefactation that is apparent in Hunt's later writings, and an absence of it enabled Johnson to maintain consistent standards.

One may trace what happened to their respective gregarious propensities. Johnson always remembered what the old man once
told him at Oxford: "Ply your books diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." Johnson's great period of study was between the ages of twelve and eighteen. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* contains many instances of his impatience with books later in life, when he became a desultory, although always perspicacious, reader: "He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end." The same sort of facility enabled him to seize what was important in discourse. "I learnt what I know of law, chiefly from Mr. Ballow, a very able man," he told Boswell. "I learnt some, too, from Chambers.... My knowledge of physick I learnt from Dr. James, whom I helped in writing the proposals for his dictionary.... I also learnt some from Dr. Lawrence." Sometimes good conversation came from surprising sources - although nothing that happened in London really surprised Johnson: "It is wonderful, Sir, what is to be found in London. The most literary conversation that I ever enjoyed, was at the table of Jack Ellis, a money scrivener behind the Royal Exchange, with whom at one period I used to dine generally once a week." Although Johnson retained his conviction that "general principles must be had from books," he valued most highly that knowledge of the world that was "fresh from
life, not strained through books."¹⁹ and took pleasure in being able to say to Boswell, on their journey to the Hebrides, "You and I do not talk from books."²⁰

Johnson's own practice, and it was partly as a defense from his "constitutional melancholy", was to "fly from study and meditation, to the dissipating variety of life."²¹ As soon as time and means permitted - soon after his pension had been conferred upon him in 1763 - he interested himself in "The Club", later "The Literary Club", the germinal idea of which seems to have come from Sir Joshua Reynolds. A distinctive feature of The Club's membership was its youthfulness. Of the charter members, all were younger than Johnson, some considerably so. The youthfulness of Johnson's circle of acquaintance was always conspicuous: Burke and Goldsmith were about twenty years younger than he; Boswell, Mrs. Thrale, Gibbon, Langton, and Beauclerk about thirty years. "Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people," he once told Boswell, "because, in the first place, I don't like to think of myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longer, if they do last; and then, Sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age. They have more wit and humour and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars."²² These are generous sentiments for a man of fifty-four, who 'read very hard' in his own youth. Johnson's associations with young people were reciprocal - he was sought out by such
as Boswell, Langton, and Beauclerk; and his association with them helped to maintain the suppleness of his mind.

Quite conscious of his own mental powers, Johnson did not suffer fools gladly and towered over his weaker adversaries in conversation, with his impressive, sometimes terrible, demeanour contributing to the general effect of his mastery. Collections of "Johnsoniana" provide a substantial memorial to his discourse. There is as much 'bark and steel' for the mind in his recorded talk as there is in a *Rambler* essay. Johnson himself had a sense of the value of his discourse, for its inculcation of morality and piety. In 1766, when he seemed to have retired from writing, he defended his inaction to Goldsmith: "A physician, who has practised long in a great city, may be excused if he retires to a small town and takes less practise. Now, Sir, the good I can do by my conversation bears the same proportion to the good I can do by my writings as the practise of a physician, retired to a small town, does to his practise in a great city."\(^2^3\)

Discourse suited Johnson's inclinations better than domesticity. He was very little domesticated, very much of a club man. Even his "pretty dear" Tetty could not keep him long from the pleasures of discoursing with his friends, when he could find an opportunity of doing so. His social propensities enabled Johnson to remain "a man of the world," who continued to take "in some degree the colour
of the world as it moves along. With "general principles" well established by prodigious early book-learning, he continued to put them to the "test of real life."

Johnson's intellect, compounded of early and late theory and practice, of real enjoyment of the world in the company of youthful acquaintance, was practical and acute, vigorous and lasting. Cultivated and husbanded by conversational contest, his mental faculties were never permitted to lie fallow or to grow sour. Their latest product, The Lives of the Poets (1779-1781), has as much vitality as the Life of Savage (1744).

Leigh Hunt had the same sort of start in life as Johnson - a good grammar-school education at Christ Hospital, the school of Coleridge and Lamb. Unlike Coleridge, however, he did not become a 'Grecian' and go on to College. Like Johnson, he was troubled sometimes by the "English Malady," which he sought to control, as Johnson did at first, by extreme exertions and abstinences. But while Johnson took the 'extrovert' course of flying from study and meditation 'to the dissipating variety of life,' Hunt was the typical 'introvert' who avoided contact with the world. True, he attended the theatre - but in a spirit of isolation. While Johnson was inclined to be a participating spectator at the theatre, often to the embarrassment of the actors, Hunt favoured by nature a less active role; and when he was melancholy, he could enjoy his passive identification with a large audience in a theatre:
The sight of the pleasant actors and pleased audience in a theatre is never discordant to us; even though we should sit isolated in the little darkness of our own grief as in a closet, and be unable to feel the warmth and light that we behold. The tears on its windows are from within, not from without.²⁶

Both Johnson and Hunt found relief from melancholia in the rigours of Journalism. The writing of his Adventurer essays had a therapeutic effect upon Johnson, at a particularly trying period of his life; the writing of the Tatler had a similar effect upon Hunt. The effort of this single-handed undertaking nearly wore him out physically; yet, he says,

Such is a habit of the mind, if it but be cultivated, that my spirits never seemed better, nor did I ever write theatricals so well, as in the pages of this most unremunerating speculation.²⁷

Johnson's marriage was a peripheral affair, and had little effect upon the "tenour of his ways." Hunt's marriage was at the center of his life; it confirmed him in sedentary habits and added domestic servitude. While Johnson's marriage was a somewhat incongruous ornament, it is impossible to imagine Hunt's life without some "tender-hearted damsel" to share it; it is impossible not to see the influence of domesticity upon his life and writings. Domesticity put a damper on his social life and his opportunities for uninhibited discourse and exchange of ideas with his friends. The untrammelled ease of Johnson's Club could never be attained in the Hunt household, where as many
as eight children were allowed to grow up in a most permissive manner. Hunt was too busy providing for the children to be able to look after them, and Marianne Hunt, a chronic invalid, was too ill. In Italy, Byron found the children 'worse than Yahoos! Six little blackguards!' By 1834, when the Carlyles called, the situation had not improved:

Hunt's household in Cheyne Road, Chelsea. Non-descript! Unutterable! Mrs. H. asleep on cushions; four or five beautiful strange gypsy-looking children running about in undress, whom the lady ordered to get us tea. The eldest boy, Percy, a sallow black-haired youth of sixteen, with a kind of dark cotton night-gown on, went whirling about like a familiar, providing everything. An indescribable, dream-like household.28

Keats objected to Hunt's domesticity, and to Marianne. "What a very pleasant fellow he is, if he would only give up the sovereignty of a room pro bono; what evenings we might have with him, could we have him from Mrs. Hunt!"29 Hunt was so tied to the household that he could not accept Carlyle's invitation, in 1833, to go to Scotland (Johnson could accept Boswell's!). "There are a hundred reasons connected with a family of eight children, great and small, and all at home."30

Hunt tended to retreat from the domestic rigours, into the spirit world - taking his books with him. His sphere of friends contracted. Thornton Hunt says of him:

As life advanced, as his family increased faster than his means, his range of visiting became more contracted, his devotion to labour more continuous, and his friends reduced to those who came only to steal for conversation the time he otherwise would have given to his books. Such friends he welcomed heartily, and seldom allowed them to feel the tax which they made him feel for time thus consumed.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
His whole existence, and his habit of mind, were literary. If it were possible to form any computation of the number of hours which he expended severally in literary labour and recreation, after the manner of statistical comparisons, it would be found that the largest portion of his hours was devoted to hard work in the seclusion of his study, and that by far the larger portion of the allotted 'recreation' was devoted to reading, either in the study or in the society of his family.

The effect of Hunt's prodigious program of reading was to supply his writing, and presumably his conversation, with an ever ready fund of literary allusions. There are no records of Hunt's discourse, no volumes of Huntiana to commemorate its charm. But there are accounts of it. Its froth and bubble delighted the ladies; but it sometimes irked Keats, when he was too sick to enjoy it, as it provoked Haydon, who was too religious, or Carlyle, who was too serious. "His talk only fatigued me mostly," said Carlyle. "There was much, much of it; full of airiness indeed, yet with little but skeptical quibbles, crotchets, fancies, and even cockney wit, which I am all too earnest to relish." This is "talking from books." Hunt lost touch with the world, became other-worldly, and buried himself in his books at a time of life when Johnson was turning from books to people and was able, and disposed, to devote a large part of his waking hours to discourse with a circle of acquaintance whose intellect and variety were a match for the salons in Paris and the Edinburgh Poker Club.
Books could never take the place of London, and the talk it provided, for Johnson. Talk could be had in the country - it always was, with Johnson, even in remote Hebridean isles; but he would willingly exchange Scotland for the Strand, any day. Hunt, on the other hand, with his predilection for the peace and quiet that generally eluded him, enjoyed the country. Had he been less assiduously engaged in "the toilsome trade of letters," he might have lived in the country the kind of life that Hazlitt envisioned for him in 1825:

He is the only literary man we ever knew, who puts us in mind of Sir John Suckling, or Killigrew, or Carew; or who united rare intellectual acquirements with outward grace and natural gentility. Mr. Hunt ought to have been a gentleman born, and to have patronized men of letters. He might then have played and sung and laughed and talked his life away; have written manly prose, elegant verse.

Yet Hunt wrote with vigour and flair at a time of life when he was struggling with poverty, sickness, indolence, and melancholy. Had he been "a gentleman born, and patronized men of letters," it is more likely that he would have been more of a Shenstone, puttering on his country estate, than a Suckling. Doubtless he would have played, and sung, and laughed, and talked - and probably read - his life away; but it is unlikely that there would be any substantial record of its passing. There might have been even more young Hunts. The daily round forced him to overcome that West Indian languor in his blood, which had debilitated his father. It is perhaps hardly fair to judge by his performance after his
pension had been awarded him in 1847 - he was then worn out by a long life at the toilsome trade of letters - but his best writing seems to have been done under duress.

Fortunately, Hunt's writings with which we are mostly concerned are those up to and including the *Tatler* (1830-1832) which contain the bulk of his criticism, and of that bulk there is very little, according to Saintsbury, "without taste, acuteness, and felicity of expression." "Nine-tenths of his criticism is admirable, and most admirably suited to instruct and encourage the average man."34

Hunt's concern for "the average man" is notable, and contrasts with Johnson's more lofty attitude towards that abstraction. The difference may well be attributed to certain basic disparities between their outlooks: Johnson's that of a pragmatist and man of the world; Hunt's, of a "Universalist", an idealist, Religion played a part in forming their views, and an examination of the genesis of religious thinking in Johnson and Hunt is instructive.

Johnson's mother had told him about heaven and hell at an early age, and by the time he was ten years old, he informed Mrs. Thrale, his mind was disturbed by scruples of infidelity, which preyed upon his spirits and made him very uneasy. The pains of guilt first convinced him of the soul's immortality, and he became a Christian - "one of the most pious and zealous ones ever known," as Mrs. Thrale said. He had a strong sense of sin, and his schooling further imbued
him with the tradition of Christian Humanism, which insisted that all thought and action should be subjected to a moral test.

Johnson was far from being a Universalist. He was as skeptical as was Hunt about Methodists and their "inner lights" and observances - but he favoured a religion which provided regularity and order, in which people knew their place in relation to God. In fact, that people should know their place in relation to one another and to God was a primary tenet of the Johnsonian canon. Johnson, although he was always a vigorous advocate of free will, did not hold with the hopeful doctrine that man is a creature of infinite potentiality: "We know our will is free, and there's an end on it," he stated unequivocally enough. But experience, the great test of truth, had shown him "the absurdity of the levelling doctrine". He favoured a stratified society, in which people knew their place and stayed in it.

Empirical observation, too, prevented Johnson from embracing the romantic ideal that virtue is inherent in man. Hunt, convinced of the ever-loving kindness of God, sincerely believed that man was inherently virtuous, and that a state of society was coming in which virtue would be more commonly rewarded with prosperity. He longed, he says in the Autobiography, for the state of society that might have encouraged his tranquil, kindly, gentlemanly - and impractical - father to have been more successful, in which the spirit, rather than
the letter, of Christianity, might be enthroned; and there were signs in "the universal talk and minds of men" that showed him such a state was near at hand.\textsuperscript{37} Johnson was not interested in future possible conditions of society, and had they been predictable by historical precedents, he would have taken an opposite view to Hunt's. He censured Lord Kames for stating (in \textit{Sketches of the History of Man}) that virtue is natural to man, "and that if we should but consult our own hearts, we should be virtuous." His own view was that "after consulting our own hearts all we can, and with all the helps we have, we find how few of us are virtuous. This is saying a thing which all mankind know not to be true."\textsuperscript{38} Lady MacLeod was shocked at Johnson's reply to her query as to whether man's feelings were not of themselves generally directed towards the good - "No, Madame, no more than a wolf."\textsuperscript{39} He told Boswell that "there can be no more confidence in a man [who trusts to impressions] than in a tyger."\textsuperscript{40}

Hunt looked into the human heart and saw a lamb; Johnson looked in and saw a wolf or tyger. The heart, the seat of the emotions, was no fit director of activity, to Johnson. Reason, and religion, were fit directors, and not a religion like Leigh Hunt's "religion of the heart," but of the rod and the letter of the law. Man had not outgrown, in Johnson's opinion, the need for chastisement. Hunt, seventy-five years later, thought that "mankind have become too intelligent, too
impatient of being cheated, and threatened, and 'put off';
too hungry and thirsty for a better state of things in the
beautiful planet in which they live,"41 to be chastised by
the authoritarian dictates of a Johnson. "What mankind
chiefly wants is a good and hopeful opinion of one another,"42
was his advice to playwrights. The universalism which domina­
ted Hunt's outlook depended upon a perfectly benevolent God -
"No Hell. No unfatherliness. No monstrous exactions of
assent to the incredible. No impious Athanasian creed. No
creed of any kind but such as proves its divineness by the
wish of all good hearts to believe it if they might, and by
the encouragement which would be given them to believe it
by the acclamations of the earth."43 Such was Leigh Hunt's
"Religion of the Heart." He was the son and grandson of
Church of England ministers, but by the time Hunt could re­
member his father, Isaac Hunt was very much preoccupied
with forms of worship beyond the pale of the Church of Eng­
land. "He had greatly relaxed in the orthodoxy of his re­
ligious opinions. Both he and my mother had become Unitarians.
They were also Universalists.... My father, however, was will­
ing to hear all sides of the question, and used to visit
the chapels of the most popular preachers of all denomina­
tions."44 He was a shopper, then, for the pleasantest sorts
of religion; and Leigh Hunt's "religion of the heart" must
surely be the most permissive and indulgent of all.

"The Universalists... are so named from holding the
benevolent opinion, that all mankind, nay even the demons
themselves, will be finally restored to happiness, through the mercy of Almighty God," Leigh Hunt quotes in the Auto-
biography, and adds, "What an impiety towards 'Almighty God' that anybody could ever have thought the reverse!" 45

Hunt's religion of the heart is the religion of Abou Ben Adhem, who, although he did not "love the Lord," persuaded the Angel to write him in the book of gold "as one that loves his fellow-men."

The Angel wrote, and vanish'd. The next night it came again with a great wakening light,
And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

Hunt had, as he often asserted, "faith and hope infinite in the progress of the times, God knows." 46 He foresaw a millennium not far off, and by God's grace, mankind were ready for it any time. "And that such a consumma-
tion may come slowly but surely, without intermission in its advance, and with not an injury to a living soul, will be the last prayer, as it must needs be among the latest words, of the author of this book," Hunt wrote in his Autobiography. 47

Some of Hunt's convictions, as he himself states, were a consequence of his father's disappointments in the Church of England. "And if it may be some vanity in us, at least it is no discredit to our turn of mind, that we [Hunt and his brothers] have been the means of circulating more knowledge and entertainment in society, than if he had attained the bishopric he looked for, and left us ticketed and labeled among the acquiescent." 48 The millennium that Leigh Hunt
foresaw would care for the irregular and unbusinesslike but kindly people, like his father: "How often," says Hunt, "have I longed for the state of society that might have encouraged him to be more successful."49

Hunt was at his most benevolent in his Tatler theatre pieces, when mellow retrospect had tempered some of his older, waspish views. In the earlier pieces, there is more constructive theatre criticism; the Tatler had settled down to be thankful for small mercies in hard times. In 1808 Hunt was grateful to Munden for his caricatures of Reynolds' and Dibdin's characters, which were already "out of nature" - for Munden's "brightening the miserable daubs of our playwrights."50 By 1831 a play by Peake satisfied him: "It is in fact like one of our old friend Reynolds' pieces come back again, a five-act farce; but loth should we be to give it the reception we should have done in the days of our 'classical ignorance,' when we were not aware of 'the goods the gods provide us.' Mr. Peake has the art, if not of writing a good comedy, of spinning out a pleasant yarn of some sort... and he gives you the impression of being one who relishes the jokes he makes his hearers relish. For these things we are grateful in hard times."51

Hunt's disparagement of his earlier critical position as "classical ignorance" provides some evidence of the shift in his criticism from the former strict, somewhat neoclassical or Johnsonian, position, to a much looser one that was adaptable to the current theatre fare rather than desirous of changing it.
Hunt became more easily pleased - and he noticed that theatre audiences were becoming more easily pleased, too, and interpreted this as a sign of the approaching millennium. "The best thing we have observed about them lately," he says of the audiences, "is a greater willingness to be pleased with what they see on the stage; nay, a remarkable indulgence in that respect; which we cannot help attributing to the general progress of knowledge. This is a great step towards being pleased with the best things."\(^{52}\) "It seems the fashion nowadays for audiences to find as little fault as possible; and we have no quarrel with the fashion. There is more knowledge in it, than in the readiness to find fault."\(^{53}\) It is possible to find fault with the logic of these assumptions, but they are consistent with Hunt's Universalist persuasions.

Hunt's latest theatre criticisms were largely directed to "the advancement of human good" - through any salutary effect that the drama might have upon the audience. That end, he thought, was best likely to be accomplished by a greater cheerfulness on the part of the playwrights: "We confess that we think that the world have had melancholy books more than enough; that what mankind chiefly want is a good and hopeful opinion of one another; and finally, that the most unceasing and effective reformers have been those who have not taken the least cheerful means of effecting their object."\(^{54}\) The following statement is a definitive one, of Hunt's latest position:
In the 'mingled yarn' of which the web of our life is composed, we can be content that the lighter colours should predominate, at least in places designed for recreation; and if it be thought that there are not enough of the darker in the actual story of our existences, let the stage supply the deficiency, but let the artists be men of a higher order of poetry and genius, who alone know how to temper and soften them.55

There is not to be found in Hunt that Olympian detachment that he found in Johnson, and noted in his prospectus for a series of "Literary and Philosophical Examiners":

Johnson paid his devoirs like one that claimes, rather than entreated notice, for he knew his dessert; it becomes me to be more humble, and I hope it will be my good fortune to see wisdom in her cheerful moments a little oftener than the melancholy Rambler; at the same time I must earnestly confess that I have not the slightest hope of viewing her so clearly or of venturing half so far within the sphere of her approach.56

This deference to Johnson is characteristic of the early Hunt, giving way later to a less favourable view. But Johnson's clear, if melancholy, view of wisdom assumed rather more from his public than Hunt's more cheerful one; as Walter Raleigh says of Johnson: "He assumed in his public a fair measure of knowledge and judgement; he ventured to take many things for granted, and to discuss knotty points as a man might discuss them in the society of his friends and equals. He was not always successful in his assumptions, and more than once had to complain of the stupidity which imagined him to deny the truths that he honoured with silence."57

Concern with the morality of the stage was characteristic of both Johnson and Hunt. Although it was for Johnson
"the first defect" of Shakespeare that "he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose," yet so great was the playwright that even this fault might almost be dismissed, as Shakespeare dismisses his persons at the close, "without further care." Greatness also excused Addison; "Cato was unquestionably the noblest product of Addison's genius," and "the best model of tragedy we had." Whatever pleasure there may be in seeing crimes punished and virtue rewarded, yet, since wickedness often prospers in real life, the poet is certainly at liberty to give it prosperity on the stage. For if poetry is an imitation of reality, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form? The stage may sometimes gratify our wishes; but if it be truly the "mirror of life," it ought to show us sometimes what we are to expect. In fact, Johnson was dubious of the stage's practical application to real life, as the following account of the Beggar's Opera, from the "Life of Gay," shows:

The play, like many others, was written only to divert, without any moral purpose, and is therefore not likely to do good; nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil. Highwaymen and housebreakers seldom frequent the playhouse, or mingle in any elegant diversion; nor is it possible for anyone to imagine that he may rob with safety, because he sees Macheath reprieved upon the stage.

Hunt shared with the romantics, generally more relaxed moral views than those of Johnson. With the Shakespeare idolaters,
he could not find Shakespeare guilty of any great moral
dereliction; but he could find him guilty of minor moral
infractions and improprieties, as a Greek god might have
been. Hunt's concern for the effect upon an audience of
such improprieties exceeded Johnson's, or that of the other
romantic critics. "Mr. Hazlitt occasionally startles us,"
Hunt wrote in a review of Lectures on the Literature of the
Age of Elizabeth, "with a criticism, which seems as if it
would run counter to his own zeal for the improvement of
the social condition; as when he values Shakespeare for not
interfering with any of the received notions of his time."63
He agreed with Johnson, that "it is always a writer's duty
to make the world better, and justice is a virtue indepen­
dent of time."64

The theatre was a greater power in Hunt's life than in
Johnson's; and Hunt liked to think that the stage was not
without its practical applications which could be a positive
influence upon the advancement of human good. "The early
"Theatrical Examiners" were prefaced with a passage from
Addison's Spectator no. 370:

It is with me a matter of the highest consideration
what parts are well or ill performed, what passions
or sentiments are indulged or cultivated, and con­
sequently what manners or customs are transfused
from the stage to the world, which reciprocally
imitate each other.

Hunt continued to value the concept of the reciprocity of
manners between the stage and the world. But in theatrical
"hard times" the reciprocity of Elizabethan and Restoration manners with those of the nineteenth century caused a dilemma. His early view of the revival of Restoration plays was that no good could come of it, either to writers or audiences: "Will the managers of an English theatre render the vices of the great eternal? Will they assist in scattering a pestilence from the graves of departed genius?"

Like Johnson, Hunt did not undervalue the greatness of the "departed genius" of any age, and his greater concern for the theatre audience of his own age gradually became reconciled to a greater laxity, as shown in the following account of Sheridan:

Of the moral character of his plays, as effecting society, less need be said, we think, that might be supposed. The effect of the drama upon real life appears to us to be of a very general cast, not a particular; and to keep alive a certain softness and sociality of spirit, without which, among other helps, a nation might relapse into brutality. We believe we have before expressed our particular admiration of that phrase in Ovid, where he speaks of a taste for the liberal arts: "haec sinit esse feras" - it will not suffer men to be barbarous. The extreme of the stage, when there is one, is only an antidote, we conceive, to the extreme of reserve and bigotry. A man should not be the author of lax dramas, if his conscience is doubtful about it; he cuts up a deeper principle by doing so, than any into which he might sophisticate himself; but the general result of this part of the stage's character we conceive to have done no more harm in the long run than the authors intended. We know how profligate men can be, during periods of relaxed morals; we know how profligate they can be also during periods of tightened ones, and in the worst and most inhuman species of profligacy; and we prefer the excess on the kind side, if we
must have one. But there is no need to have either, and no age need be afraid if superstition will let us alone.66

This late Examiner essay is an augury of the moral character of Hunt's later writings.

This has been an account of the divergencies and con­currencies in the thoughts of the two writers under dis­cussion. Johnson's critical practices, for all that his per­sonality was divided between skepticism and superstition, remained remarkably consistent; although his work as lexi­cogapher and editor made him seek to be definitive and certain in his judgements, his good sense never led him far astray from a position where the world can respect him and learn from him. Compared with Johnson, Leigh Hunt was a more tricksy spirit, an Ariel-figure, as Saintsbury called him. From an early position considerably beholden to Johnson, he assumed in his criticism a flexibility more appropriate, perhaps, to the flowing currents of his time. There is in Hunt, rather than a consistent viewpoint, a consistent move­ment, which alters when it alteration finds, rather than the everfixed mark that was characteristic of Johnson's criticism.

The student of two such critics as Johnson and Hunt, who are often not in sympathy with the received notions of their times, inconsistent with one another, and sometimes with themselves, will often be reminded of the shaping influence of those personal forces which have been the subject of the present chapter. In particular, the systems of morality
central to the writings of both men were the product of both strong and strongly contrasted religious beliefs. Johnson's disciplined religious orthodoxy attempted, not always successfully, to conceal from himself pessimistic convictions of whose truth his feelings and the extensive view of his observations frequently apprized him. Hunt's benevolist inclinations predisposed him to see cheerful signs about him, when events seen in retrospect seem not to have vindicated his views. A consideration of these factors renders possible a separation of what is characteristic of the writers, from what is characteristic of the theatre, in the following chapters.
II. THE THEATRES AND THE CONCEPT

OF THEATRICAL ILLUSION

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They came to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation."

Johnson's lines, evoking a picture of a very austere, formal, and classical stage, are more wishful and prescriptive than realistic. The performance of an eighteenth-century tragedy might have been austere and formal. But the spectators who came to sit on the hard benches in Drury Lane came to see one another and be seen, to watch Garrick's latest tour de force or the new afterpiece. They sat in a brightly lit auditorium, with sometimes drops of candle-wax falling on them from the chandeliers. There was no curtain fall between acts, but a band to entertain and distract them. The actors waited about impatiently to deliver their "points," generally, unless they happened to be Garrick or Macklin or another member of the new school of "natural" acting; and they delivered them in a fine rant, and an elegant stance. The supporting actors made no attempt to follow or react to the business on stage, but stood about scuffling, perhaps spitting, surveying the auditorium. Some of the audience might have been sitting on the stage. Very likely the stage-boxes, above the proscenium doors, were filled with the town's finest, in their most eye-catching array. The lights over the stage glared. It is hard to
imagine anyone while sitting in the pit and contending with these various nuisances and distractions, being very much disposed to be deceived. But the spectators came with livelier expectations than that of hearing "a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation."

The theatre that Johnson defined so formally in the "Preface" to Shakespeare bears little relation to the "young man's whore" which he was willing enough to cast off when he found other things he liked better. The first is perhaps the "beau ideal"; the other is the reality which his attendance at the theatre, and his acquaintance with Garrick's green room, had shown him. Johnson wrote his own play, Irene, for the former abstraction; but as it was played in the latter reality, it was not a very successful stage play. Although it ran for nine nights, it had to be bolstered up with afterpieces for the last three. Subsequently its resurrection has been confined to the closet.

Johnson was unwilling to make the alterations that Garrick thought would make Irene more stageworthy; and when he was asked how he felt about its indifferent success, he said, "Like the Monument."² He did not dwell on his martyrdom: he was satisfied that the people had expressed their will, and never attempted another play.

Yet Johnson, despite his unbending convictions of what an audience should want in the theatre, was not unaware of the practical problems of playwrights and managers of his
day. His "Prologue" written for Garrick's opening of Drury Lane in 1747 reveals that he was aware of the fact that the theatre was a commercial enterprise, and somewhat subject to the whims of the audience. The prologue is an admonition to the audience. Johnson had some hopes that Garrick's management might produce a theatre more in keeping with his ideal - but the onus was not upon Garrick alone:

Hard is his lot, that here by Fortune plac'd,
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;
With every meteor of caprice must play,
And chase the new-born bubbles of the day.
Ah! Let not censure term our fate our choice,
The stage but echoes back the public voice;
The drama's laws, the drama's patrons give,
For we that live to please, must please to live.

Then prompt no more the follies you decry,
As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die;
'Tis yours, this night, to bid the reign commence
Of rescued nature and reviving sense;
To chase the charms of sound, the pomp of show,
For useful mirth, and salutary woe;
Bid scenick virtue form the rising age,
And truth diffuse her radiance from the stage.

The "charms of sound," "the pomp of show," were attributes of a prosperous harlot; Johnson proposed for the theatre the role of a temple of virtue, rather than house of ill-repute. "Useful mirth," "salutary woe," and "scenick virtue" were Johnson's reminder to the audience that the theatre should be instructive as well as pleasing. Yet, despite his clarion-call to virtue, and the practical demonstration provided by Irene, folly, if it did not reign, played an important supporting role at Drury Lane, during Garrick's
management; and Johnson grew disenchanted with the theatre as a place for the inculcation of wisdom and piety. As a place for innocent merriment, he had no time for it.

Appeals to the senses, with their resultant impairment or obliteration of the reasoning faculty, were snares and delusions, in Johnson's view. Exaltation of the feelings led to the formation of those "impressions" which were not to be trusted: the man who trusted in them was no more worthy of confidence than "a tyger." Johnson would have rejected Boswell's definition of the principal end of drama as a "delicate power of touching the human feelings"³ - insofar as human feelings are capable of alienating people from rational thought, or drugging them with sensualities. But there are two kinds of feelings - and had Boswell been referring to those pious and universalized ones associated with salutary human ideals and insights, Johnson would have espoused the playwright's aim to make credible a change of scene from Alexandria to Rome, and that act of the audience's imagination which effected that aim - to the end that morality and piety were inculcated. Johnson did not deny to others the exercise of those powerful emotions of whose existence he was so acutely aware in himself, but he felt that the disciplines he imposed upon them were salutary for the generality of mankind. He felt that it was the business of the artist, the writer of fictions, and the playwright, to select "objects, and to cull from the mass of mankind those individuals upon which the attention ought most to be employed." Much in life
that is "discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness,"\(^4\) was better left unrepresented. The selection of objects and individuals and the generalized portrayal of them circumscribed the poet. Within that pale, the drama could exercise its best function. "The business of a poet... is to examine not the individual, but the species;... He does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest."\(^5\) It was one of Shakespeare's excellencies that, although "in the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species."\(^6\)

Johnson chose not to be deceived in the theatre, and advocated that the spectators should be "always in their senses," - in the signification of having their intellects uppermost. Imagination, although it played its role, might not have dominion over reason; and the theatre was to be a place where an audience might come "to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation." In the generalized, classical theatre that Johnson envisioned, delusion was not a strong likelihood. Yet even in the theatre of Johnson's day, a possibility of delusion had to be admitted, and Johnson was at some pains to make clear his views on that issue.

It was Johnson's anti-delusory propensities, in fact, which informed his rejection of the unities of time and place. The French theatrical ideal of delusion, coupled
with a strong emphasis upon the unities, produced, Johnson felt, an absurd paradox. "Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation." Therefore, he went on to reason, the mind that is in a state of delusion, out of the reach of reason, might as well "despise the circumscription of terrestrial nature. There is no reason why a mind thus wandering in extasy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field." Johnson chose to reject the unities on the opposite premise, that the spectators know, "from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players." Much better, to Johnson, than a willing suspension of disbelief, was a deliberate suspension of belief.

A good deal of the responsibility for not deluding the audience, for being more careful to instruct than to please, for creating "just representations of general nature" and distinguishing "those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation," lay with the playwright, and Johnson's opinion of Shakespeare and the other playwrights will be discussed in the following chapters, along with Hunt's, in the light of the playwright's responsibilities. In the meantime it is proposed to study conditions in the theatre which had bearing upon audience reception of drama, and no doubt had a large part in informing the opinions and preferences of Johnson and Hunt.
Many conventional, non-realistic features of eighteenth-century theatre helped to dispel any sense of realism, and Johnson could not have felt that "illusion" was any great threat in the theatre of his time. Various devices helped to keep the spectators in their senses - besides the hard benches, lights, and candle-drippings. The scenery, which was pushed on and off in full view of everybody, was not such that a spectator would be inclined to lose himself in it. Antiquarian research into costumery had not then been thought of. The conventional periwigs and plumes, contributing to a "theatrical" atmosphere, reminded spectators that they were witnessing a tragedy. Cast-off gowns from court sometimes provided elegant, anachronistic wearing apparel. Johnson might have attended a 1747 performance of The Orphan and seen nothing strange about the mixture of costumes, which Tate Wilkinson remembered in his 1806 Memoirs:

What would our young beaux think of young Chamont, as I have seen Quin act it at the age of sixty? He was equipped in a long, grisly, half-powered periwig, hanging low down on each side of the breast, and down the back, a heavy scarlet coat and waistcoat trimmed with broad gold lace, black velvet breeches, a black silk neckcloth, a pair of square-toed shoes, with an old-fashioned pair of stone buckles; - and the youthful, the fiery Chamont adorned himself with a pair of stiff, high-topped white gloves, with a broad old scalloped lace hat, which when taken off the head, and having pressed the old wig, and viewing his fair round belly with capon lined, he looked like Sir John Brute in the drunken scene.

Old Ryan was the strong and lusty Polydore, with a red face, and a voice truly horrible.... Ryan also added bad deportment, and was not near so well dressed as Quin's Chamont, though in much the same extraordinary manner; and by them stood Mr. Barry
in Castalio, in a neat bag-wig, then of newest fashion, in his bloom and prime of life; and was certainly one of the handsomest men ever seen on or off the stage, with Mrs. Cibber all elegance and neatness at his side as Monimia. The sight of the two ancient heroes of antiquity made such a contrast in the Quartetto, that it struck even my features at the age of eleven with risibility.9

Another convention of the stage was the "green carpet of tragedy." Goldsmith, who was an early agitator for realistic effects, objected to the stage-hands "spreading a carpet punctually at the beginning of the death-scene, to prevent our actors from spoiling their clothes; this immediately apprizes us of the stragedy to follow: for laying the cloth is not a more sure indication of dinner than laying the carpet of bloody work at Drury Lane."10

Goldsmith complained, too, of another formality: "Our little pages, that bear up the train of a weeping princess, and our awkward lords-in-waiting, take off much from her distress."11

Johnson was familiar with such features of eighteenth-century theatre as these; and did not think them ill-fitting. They suited the classical concept of theatre, and for Johnson, who said "the delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction,"12 they increased the delight, by increasing the consciousness.

Yet, during all this period, there was some evidence of a movement away from formalism, towards realism in the theatre. Garrick, as manager of Drury Lane, was an innovator of some of the new developments. He brought indirect side-lighting to Drury Lane from the continent, in 1765, to
eliminate the overhead "candle-hoops"; he brought de Loutherbourg, in 1771, to inaugurate a whole new era of "illusionary" scenic and lighting effects in the theatre - of whose implications for the drama of the future he was hardly aware. Garrick considered the new effects to be a commercial novelty, and they were used at first mostly to dress up spectacles and afterpieces. Shakespeare was played on the same sort of sparsely furnished stage [such as] he might have had at the Globe theatre. Coleridge would have approved: he found the more elaborate nineteenth-century productions of Shakespeare inimical to the true thought and spirit of Shakespeare: for, in Shakespeare's theatre,

the theatre itself had no artificial inducements - few scenes, little music - and all that was to excite the senses in a high degree was lacking. Shakespeare himself said, "We appeal to your imaginations; by your imaginations you can conceive this round 'O' to be a mighty field of monarchs, and if you do not, all must seem absurd."

Johnson, of course, approved of the formal, conventional sets, with "nothing to excite the senses in a high degree."
In his imagination he was able to conceive a mighty field of monarchs; but he delighted in his consciousness of the fiction, rather than in the suspension of his disbelief.

But it was as an actor that Garrick made his greatest contribution to theatrical realism.

On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting; T'was only that when he was off, he was acting. So runs Goldsmith's account of him, in the Retaliation. Another account is Mr. Partridge's, in Fielding's Tom Jones:
"He the best player!" cries Partridge, with a contemptuous sneer; "Why, I could act as well as he myself. I am very sure, if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner, and done just as he did. And then, to be sure, in that scene, as you called it, between him and his mother, where you told me he acted so fine, why, Lord help me, any man, that is, any good man, that had such a mother would have done exactly the same."

After his unconscious tribute to Garrick's "natural" acting, Partridge goes on to say,

"Indeed, Madam, though I was never at a play in London, yet I have seen acting before in the country: and the King for my money; he speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as any other.- Anybody may see he is an actor."

Johnson, like Partridge, liked to see "just gesture" and "elegant modulation" in an actor that anybody might see was an actor. Such an actor was Quin, who, "with very little variation of cadence, and in a deep, full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action,... rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference, that seemed to disdain the plaudits that were bestowed upon him."

Despite his friendship with Garrick, Johnson preferred the classical, formal stage deportment of Quin and his followers. He thought Garrick less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a table - where, in Goldsmith's estimate, he would have been acting. "Garrick, Madame," he once told Mrs. Siddons in a remarkably Partridgean aside, "was no declaimer. There was not one of his scene-shifters who could not have spoken 'To be, or not to be' better than he did."
In keeping with his preference for a "rant" style of acting, Johnson found improper the verisimilitude which some actors attained through "histrionic identification." Talking to John Kemble, the successor to Quin's school of acting, he said, "Are you, Sir, one of those enthusiasts who believe yourself transformed into the very character you represent?" Upon Kemble's answering that he had never felt so strong a persuasion in himself, Johnson said, "To be sure not, Sir, the thing is impossible. And if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster, Richard III, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it."16 Garrick's identification enabled him to play a role such as Lear with the effects noted in the following newspaper account:

The curse at the close of the first act, his phrenetic appeal to heaven at the end of the second on Regan's ingratitude, were two such enthusiastic scenes of human exertion, that they caused a kind of momentary petrifaction through the house, which he soon dissolved as universally into tears. Even the unfeeling Regan and Goneril, forgetful of their characteristic cruelty, played through the whole of their parts with aching bosoms and streaming eyes. In a word, we never saw before so exquisite a theatrical performance, or one so loudly and universally applauded.17

Johnson would have found such a performance indecorous; it is unlikely that he would have participated in the momentary petrifaction, or the ensuing tears. At any rate he would not willingly have suffered himself to be made such a fool of.

But Garrick made the theatre prosperous and respectable; and after his death it continued to flourish with
Sheridan and the "royal family of the theatre," the Kembles. The two "patent houses," vying with one another for popularity, were rebuilt and enlarged in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In Drury Lane, which Sheridan rebuilt in 1793 to hold 3611 people, making it the largest ever, some of Leigh Hunt's earliest impressions of the drama must have been formed. Drury Lane remained prosperous, by means of Sheridan's showmanship and spectacular productions, until it burned down in 1809. It was rebuilt, slightly smaller, and opened again in 1812. But the old, palmy days had gone with Sheridan; even Kean could not restore Drury Lane's prosperity. Covent Garden, with the Kembles, fared better for a little longer.

Hunt had theories to account for the waning popularity of the theatres. He wrote in his Autobiography:

Forty or fifty years ago, people of all times of life were much greater playgoers than they are now. They dined earlier, they had not so many newspapers, clubs, and pianofortes; the French Revolution only tended at first to endear the nation to its own habits; it had not yet opened a thousand new channels to thought and interest; nor had railroads conspired to carry people, bodily as well as mentally, into as many analogous directions. Everything was more concentrated, and the various classes of society felt a greater concern in the same amusements. Nobility, gentry, citizens, princes, - all were frequenters of theatres, and even more or less acquainted personally with the performers.18

The Kembles, socially presentable, brought to the theatre a certain aura of respectability: "Nobody who recollects them will dispute that they were a remarkable race, dignified and elegant in manners, with intellectual tendencies, and in point of aspect what might be called 'God Almighty's
In a less retrospective account of the "supposed decline of a taste for the drama," Hunt wrote in an 1831 Tatler:

We lay little stress upon the causes usually assigned for the decline of playgoing, where it has declined - such as high prices, bad plays, bad acting, &c.; and least of all, the immoral state of the lobbies. High prices are not considered by people of fashion; the plays and the acting are both good enough, considering what was tolerated, and even liked, twenty years back, and as to the sights in the lobbies, fashionable eyes are not so squeamish as people fancy them. They would have to differ too often with their own looking-glasses.

The whole secret of the matter we take to be this: first, that the richer classes, besides the drawback of late hours and the diminution of tavern habits on the part of the gentry, have so abounded of late years in the luxuries of new books, music, and visiting, that they have outgrown a disposition to go to the theatre; and second, that the diffusion of knowledge has been bringing up the uneducated classes to the point where the others left off, and giving them an increase in all sorts of intellectual pleasures, previous to their having anything like a critical knowledge of them, or care for criticism. Ten years hence, perhaps, the trade of a theatrical critic will be better than it is now, and over the water, in preference to the once witty neighbourhood of Covent Garden.

The issue, then, as Hunt saw it, was not so much a decline in the theatre-going habit, as a transference of it to the "Surrey-side of the river," where the illegitimate theatre already had a healthy foothold. It was a matter of some regret, to Hunt, that the theatre, which Dr. Johnson once admitted to have outgrown, had been outgrown now by a whole class of society.

In his excuse-making for the state of the theatre, Hunt is conspicuously unconcerned with factors within the theatre. It is perhaps characteristic of a person of the
theatre to be conservative in this respect: the play-house is riddled with tradition, and highly resistant to change, and its devotees are often as conservative as it is.

Certain changes had come about in the play-house, however, since Johnson's attendance at Drury Lane; some of which, perhaps, Hunt helped to bring about; all of which to some extent must have informed the philosophy of his theatre criticism.

At the commencement of his career as critic Hunt had to complain of the devastating effect upon an effect of illusion in the theatre - an effect, which, unlike Johnson, Hunt loved and strove to promote - of the "alterations of scene, so badly managed at the theatre, where you see two men running violently towards each other with half a castle or a garden in their grasp." There was still no act-drop to hide this operation; nor would there be until the 1870's, in Henry Irving's Lyceum. The scenic effects, though, were better: de Loutherbourg's influence had spread to other scene-designers and painters, and the new, realistic scenery was used for more than spectacles and afterpieces. Leigh Hunt enjoyed, too, the music in the intervals - both of which Coleridge would have found distractions to the appreciation of the play. Hunt wrote,

The scenery of this piece is very beautiful. When we did not like any actor who was speaking, we took a walk in it, and found ourselves in the midst of
glades and woods, "and alleys leading inwards far." In one of the intervals between the acts the orchestra gratified us by playing, in a masterly manner, the sweet and apposite air of "Thou soft-flowing Avon." Upon the whole, we have not had such a treat as this play, since we renewed our visits to the theatre.\textsuperscript{22}

The fact that Hunt could take into account an air played between the acts of a play of Shakespeare's, as contributing partly to the "treat," would have illustrated to Johnson the dangers of allowing the "solicitations of sense" into the representation of a play, be they in the form of music, dress, or stage-setting.

Hunt found admissible, even desirable, the incursion of scenic trappings into Shakespearean drama. In a review of \textit{Henry IV} in 1830, he found the trappings growing essential:

The historical plays of Shakespeare certainly do not tell as they used to - no disparagement to his mighty genius. We know history better now, and respect the performers in it less. Greater matters engage us; but love is always interesting, and wit, and domestic pity, and the strugglers of the will with the understanding. In Shakespeare's time, audiences were contented with a curtain for a few dresses no better than a booth.... Now we must dress up the Historical play with plumes and decorations and real costumes, in order to amuse the eye, because the other interest languishes. And we dress it very well, yet it languishes still.\textsuperscript{23}

In his earlier criticisms, Hunt frequently complained about improprieties in costume. The tragic plumes were not seen so frequently now, and some attempt at realistic costume was being made, with varying ambition and success. But in 1808, Hunt wrote of Kemble's production of \textit{Much Ado About Nothing}:
There is an astonishing disregard of chronological propriety at the theatres, and yet they tell us that the acting manager of Covent Garden is a man of reading.... The last Sicilian king of this house reigned at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the dresses of every polite nation in Europe were totally different from their present mode: the manager of Covent Garden therefore has dressed his Spanish prince of the fourteenth or fifteenth century like a modern English gentleman in a blue coat, white breeches and stockings, and an opera hat; one of his Spanish officers appears in the exact regimentals of our present infantry, and the Italian officers exhibit the same identical coats and breeches which their descendants wear at this day. I do not know how Mr. Kemble reconciles this to his studious soul, to his old affectation of thoughtful propriety.24

In 1817, Hunt was still able to find fault with chronological inconsistencies of dress:

Our... stage wants great amendment in that matter, for its unusual dresses are not only untrue to the times, but so miscellaneous and inconsistent as to defy all times.25

But by 1830, when dress improprieties were much less prevalent, Hunt practiced a greater liberality than he earlier showed. He is even found defending an "impropriety" -

Mr. Farren surely does right to play Sir Peter Teazle in the costume of the last century. It is not so easy to defend Lady Teazle for appearing in a dress fifty years in advance. There is something, however, to be said for the violation of the strict matter of fact on these points; for the stage, it may be said, is not a literal picture of life, but one which must be given us with many allowances and heightenings; and if we can have a livelier sense than otherwise of old age, and youth and fashion, by seeing them in dresses with which we have identified them in our imaginations, the actor may say that he does best both for himself and us, in presenting them to us accordingly.26

The lighting of the theatres became done by gas, but there was little change in the technique of stage illumination,
and the auditorium remained lit during performance. The hard, backless benches in the pit still kept the audience critically mettlesome. But there were certain changes which had their effect upon illusion in the theatre, and the audience's reception of the drama.

One hard-dying old theatre tradition had finally gone, in 1822. The proscenium doors were finally eliminated from Drury Lane, after frustrated attempts by the architects in 1793 and 1812. Both times the actors had insisted upon their retention, as a time-honoured tradition. Finally, their departure was celebrated in a prologue written by Colman for the 1822 opening:

Nor blame him Elliston for transporting from his floors,  
Those old offenders here, the two stage doors,  
Doors which have oft, with burnish's panels stood,  
And golden knockers glittering in a wood,  
Which on their posts through every change remained,  
Fast as Bray's Vicar, whosoever reign'd;  
That served for palace, cottage, street, or hall,  
Used for each place, and out of place in all."

The proscenium doors were an obstacle to realism, as were the stage-boxes which used to surmount them. With their removal, the theatres were ready for the picture-frame stage and the kind of illusion that Hunt envisioned in his concept of "fourth-wall" realism. In the theatre of Dr. Johnson's time, the declamation and most of the action had taken place on the fore-stage, which jutted into the auditorium, and the scenery behind the proscenium arch did little more than provide "atmosphere." With successive reductions in the size of the forestage, more of the action took place within the picture-frame of the proscenium arch, and the scenery was
more integral with the action. Long before the box-set had appeared, in 1805, when realistic properties were hardly heard of, Hunt was able to commend a performance by Bannister, in which "the stage appears to be his own room, of which the audience compose the fourth wall."28

The removal of the players to the region behind the proscenium arch destroyed some of the old intimate rapport between actors and audience and made the audience less a participant in the action; but more important, to Hunt, was a heightening of illusory effect as the picture-frame stage became, as it were, a projection of the mind's eye. Hunt's concept of the audience as a fourth wall perhaps assigns them a more passive role than does Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief". The responsibility for the creation of an illusion in the audience was to a greater extent that of the actors and the producers, and to a lesser extent, that of the writer. The audience were there to be pleased and exalted.

Hunt's theatre criticism is mostly concerned with the actor's interpretations and projection of roles, and to the extent that the large patent theatres interfered with natural and realistic portrayals, Hunt objected to them. Had there been a race of super-actors, the vastness of the theatres would not have interfered with the illusory effect of the picture-frame proscenium; but with the present race, the large places taxed the powers of the actors to project; voices and expressions had to be strained and exaggerated,
to the detriment of the illusion of reality. The small Hay-
market, where Kean played in the summer of 1831, was "a house
of the proper dimensions for the exhibiting of a fine tra-
gedian." It would be better for the town, Hunt wrote, "if
there were a dozen theatres open at once, instead of two or
three; and if the great houses were devoted to music and
spectacle. People would then go to the smaller theatres to
see the countenance and persons of the actors; voices would
not be so strained; plays would not be so marred and torn to
pieces."30

The presentation at Drury Lane in 1831 of a Grand Spec­
tacle called Hyder Ali, with a cast including elephants,
lions, and snakes, found Hunt in his element:

It is a charge against those interesting debutantes,
the boa constrictors, elephants, &c., that they are
unfit to make their appearance in the great theatres,
and that they displace their betters; but in our
opinion, the greater the theatre, the more fitting the
elephant, and their betters are better elsewhere....
The great houses are so great that they are fit for
nothing but spectacle. In a theatre like the Hay-
market we can discern the fine movements of Mr. Kean's
countenance, and catch, at all parts of the house,
the delicate tones of Mr. Macready; but what is the
case when we are seated at a distance before a stage
like that of Drury Lane or Covent Garden? Mr. Kean
is obliged to rave himself hoarse that we may hear him;
and with all the sonorousness of Mr. Macready's voice,
we lose its most touching inflections and are as much
deprived of the light of his countenance as of that
of Mr. Kean....
The gods in particular, as they never use opera-
glasses, must remain in a state of blissful ignorance.
Macready's face and Liston's must be pretty nearly the
same to them. Keeley may be shown to them in the streets
as Mr. Kean.

They see with equal eye, as gods of all,
The hero threaten, and the knave look small.
How different with the elephant, a fine portly actor, fit for a great stage.... Her proboscis touches the feelings of the remotest spectator: and in case of a speech from her or the lion, the remoteness just alluded to must be held still more desirable.... The roar of a lion is among those musical notes that are mentioned by the poet as being "by distance made more sweet." By a lucky perfection of fitness, the dialogue of the animal piece at Drury Lane is, by universal consent, acknowledged to be the more approved of, the less it is heard.

In short, the theatres of Messieurs Arnold, Morris, Mathews, and Yates, are the houses for seeing human beings in; the great theatres are properly devoted to the larger animals, and to spectacles becoming the deserts of Africa.

Hunt's wish to foster in the theatre an illusion of reality was behind his humanitarian concern for the actors and audience. Only by means of realism in every department of the theatre could the former lift the latter out of their theatre seats, out of their "senses", and transport them to the other real world of the playwright. Hunt differed from the French "delusionists" in that the world they would create in the theatre was an illusory world; Hunt was more concerned with believable representations of actuality.

Hunt's concept of tragic acting, although antagonistic to the classical, declamatory style, did allow the actor some elevation of manner, in keeping with the heightened realism of tragedy:

The loftier persons of tragedy require an elevation of language and manner, which they never use in real life. Heroes and sages speak like other men, they use their actions as carelessly and their looks as indifferently, and are not distinguished from their fellow mortals by their personal, but by their mental character; but the popular conception of a great man delights in dignifying his external habits, not only because great men are rarely seen and therefore acquire dignity from concealment, but because we conclude that those who excel us so highly in important points can have
nothing unimportant about them. We can hardly per­
suade ourselves, for instance, that Shakespeare ever 
disputed in a club, or that Milton was fond of smoking: 
the ideas of greatness and insignificance associate 
with difficulty.32

Hunt, in his criticism, was concerned with a wider pub­
lic than, for instance, Coleridge, who "sowed a few valuable 
thoughts in minds worthy to receive them." Hunt always tried 
to inform the whole theatre-going public, in the hope that 
he could create a better informed public for the theatre. 
His critical essays were popular in tone, and concerned with 
popular conceptions. Since it was the popular conception of 
a great man that he should be great in all things, Hunt allowed 
that his external habits on stage might be dignified. Certain 
conventional devices and ploys of the tragic actor, however, 
he did not countenance inasmuch as they were too elevated, 
too far removed from reality. He complained of Elliston for 
this very reason:

He cannot retire into himself with that complacent 
studiousness, which feels easy in the absence of 
bustle and in the solitary enjoyment of its own 
powers: in soliloquy, therefore, which is nothing 
but thinking loudly, he is too apt to "declaim"; 
and in this respect he is like those common actors 
who think of nothing but their profession, and for­
get that declamation is of all styles of speaking, 
the most unfit for soliloquys, because they ought 
ever to have the air of being made for effect.33

In the interests of realism, with the declamatory rant 
should go any sense of the actor addressing his audience; 
and an offender against this principle was Pope, whose 
brazen playing to the galleries Hunt distinguished by the 
name of "clap-trapping":

There is, however, an infallible method of obtaining praise from the galleries, and there is an art known at the theatre by the name of clap-trapping, which Mr. Pope has shown great wisdom at studying. It consists in nothing more, than in gradually raising the voice as the speech draws to a conclusion, making an alarming outcry on the last four or five lines, or suddenly dropping them into a tremulous but energetic undertone, and with a vigorous jerk of the right arm rushing off the stage. All this astonishes the galleries; they are persuaded it must be something very fine, because it is so important and unintelligible, and they clap for the sake of their own reputation.

In a more serious vein is the following general exhortation to tragic actors:

One of the first studies of an actor should be to divest himself of his audience, to be occupied not with the persons he is amusing, but with the persons he is assisting in the representation. But of all simple requisites to the mimetic art, this public abstraction seems to be the least attained....[Inferior actors] never speak to one another, but to the pit and to the boxes; they are thinking, not what the person spoken to will reply, but what the audience think of their own speeches: they never speak a soliloquy, because soliloquys are addressed to one's self, and they always address their solitary meditations to the house: they adjust their neckcloths; they display their pocket-handkerchiefs and their attitudes.... But let us imagine the scene, in which this extravagence is performed, to be a real room enclosed in four walls, for such a room the actor himself ought to imagine it. What then is he looking at all this time? He is casting side-glances at a wainscot, or ogling a corner cupboard.

This advice, according with Hunt's "fourth-wall" realism, reveals, too, that the theatre in 1805 was still to some extent peopled with actors who made as much as they could of their "points" - and spent the rest of their time on stage out of character, strolling about or gazing out into the auditorium. In this way actors managed to "upstage" one another, and made the play a series of "spots" rather than a unified whole. In
Johnson's time, it had been thought one of Garrick's ex-
cellencies, early in his career, "that he stayed in charac-
ter when not speaking, listening to others attentively, not
looking with contempt at an inferior, not spitting unnecessarily
or gazing round 'the whole circle of the spectators."36

The various refinements of scenery and dress which Hunt's
ideal of realism demanded, required the support of refinements
of the actor's art - including the actor's divesting himself
of his audience, and consistently identifying himself with his
role. In the matter of histrionic identification, Hunt's views
are quite at odds with Johnson's, as the following account
shows:

On occasions of great feeling, it is the passions
should influence the actions: feel the passion, and
the action will follow. I know it has been denied,
that actors sympathize with the feelings they re-
present, and among other critics, Dr. Johnson is
supposed to have denied it. The Doctor was accustomed
to talk very loudly at the play upon divers subjects,
even when his friend Garrick was electrifying the
house with his most wonderful scenes, and the worst
of it was that he usually sat in one of the stage
boxes: the actor remonstrated with him once after
the performance, and complained that the talking "dis-
turbed his feelings." "Pshaw, David," replied the
critic, "Punch has no feelings." But the doctor was
fond of saying his good things, as well as lesser
genious, and to say a good thing is not always to
say a true one, or one that is intended to be true.
To call his friend a puppet, to give so contemptuous
an appellation to a man whose powers he was at other
times happy to respect, and whose death he lamented
as having "eclipsed the gaiety of nations," must be
considered as a familiar pleasantry rather than a
betrayed opinion. The best way to solve the dif-
ficulty is to apply to an actor himself, but as I am
not in the way of such an application, I think the
complaint made by Garrick will do as well, since he
talks of the feelings, as the means necessary to the
performance. It appears to me, that the countenance
cannot express a single passion perfectly, unless the passion is first felt: it is easy to grin representations of joy, and to pull down the muscles of the countenance as an imitation of sorrow, but a keen observer of human nature and its effects will easily detect the cheat; there are nerves and muscles requisite to expression, that will not answer the will on common occasions; but to represent a passion with truth, every nerve and muscle should be in its proper action, or the representation becomes weak and confused, melancholy is mistaken for grief, and pleasure for delight: it is from this feebleness of emotion so many dull actors endeavour to supply passion with vehemence of action and voice, as jugglers are talkative and bustling to beguile scrutiny. I have heard somewhere, that Mrs. Siddons has talked of the real agitation which the performance of some of the characters has made her feel. Mrs. Siddons has the air of never being the actress; she seems unconscious that there is a motley crowd called a pit waiting to applaud her, or that there are a dozen fiddlers waiting for her exit.

Identification such as Garrick's, with a role such as Lear's, could not have resulted in a portrayal too rigorous for Hunt:

An actor who performs Lear truly, should so terrify and shake the town, as to be requested never to perform the part again. If he does not, he does not do it at all. There is no medium, in a scene which we are to witness with our eyes, between an unbearable Lear and no Lear. In Shakespeare's time, the scenery, dresses, &c., were so unlike anything real, and the public came so much more to hear the writing of the thing than to see the acting of it, that it was comparatively another matter; but now that the real man is before us, with his white beard and the storm howling about him, we ought not to be able to endure the sight, any more than that of a mad old father in the public street.

The theatre criticism of Leigh Hunt differs from that of Dr. Johnson in that they have somewhat different ends. "The end of writing," Dr. Johnson said, "is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." Hunt arrived at the view, in *Imagination and Fancy*, that poetry's ends
should be pleasure and exaltation - with a stronger emphasis on the feelings, and emotional involvement. His earliest position was closer to Johnson's:

The end of dramatic exhibitions has generally been, and should always be, to instruct the spectators, either by laughing at the vicious, or weeping for the unfortunate; either by awakening us to mirth or to terror, to pity or indignation, in proportion as we see virtue or vice triumphant.

The moral emphasis here, like the balanced structure of the sentences, is beholden to Johnson; and Hunt always remained a moral critic. But the morality which was engendered by his Universalist persuasions and generally liberal thought, was a very different product from that of Johnson, the conservative and High Churchman. The instruction that Hunt zealously espoused at every stage of his criticism was inclined to be pleasurable: he looked to the theatres to extend the joyous spirit of Christianity which materialistic expediency or "false religion" often obscured in the real world:

Of tragedies there are quite sufficient in the real world; and plenty of gravity is to be found or acquired, wherever there is care, or bad health, or resentment, or sulkiness, or affectation, or money-scraping, or any other sorrow, selfishness, or stupidity.... Without the humane wisdom of Shakespeare, the humbler pleasantries and philosophies of the farce writers, and the fiddles and pianofortes about town, we cannot tell what poor humanity would do, now that some classes are so eaten up with the methodistical, and others with the mercenary and money-getting; for the taste which the world has got of late years for the prudential, or what it conceives to be such, is founded in saving-knowledges of such meanness, and has turned cities into such mere overgrown heaps of selfishness, that if the inhabitants were not reminded now and then, and reminded pleasantly too, of the existence and the virtues of people differing with
themselves, they would either stand a chance of forgetting everyone out of the pale of their own houses and interests, or grow, as is usual with folly, more dull and obstinate at having their vanity mortified. We look upon the playhouses, in short, as the finest antidotes to sullen and selfish opinions to all sorts. They help virtue and vice both from degenerating into mere want of feeling. They scatter egotism and collect sociality. They assemble people together smilingly and in contact not cut off from each other by hard pews and harder abstractions.... They win, not frighten; are universal, not exclusive; in a word, one good-tempered little farce at the Haymarket is worth all the Methodist sermons preached the rest of the week - aye, and all the other grave mistakes of selfishness, not methodistical.

Further differences between the morality of Dr. Johnson and that of Leigh Hunt will appear in later chapters. The difference which is the present concern of this essay is the important one between Johnson's "instruction" and the "exaltation" that has replaced it in Hunt's formula of criticism. This difference largely accounts for the contrary views of Johnson and Hunt on some aspects of the playhouse which have been the concern of the present chapter. The ends of "instruction" and "exaltation" were served by quite different means.

The means which best served Johnson's didactic aims for the theatre were largely those that he found at Drury Lane. There the audience might be "always in their senses," knowing from first to last that "the stage is only a stage, and the players are only players." The instruction, "useful mirth, and salutary woe," came through unencumbered by very many illusionary trappings - "the charms of sound, the pomp of show."

Johnson was against illusion, in the theatre and out of it; against the solicitations of sense, as he was against cant
and any forms of self-deception, and any other obstacles to clear vision and the apprehension of truth.

Johnson thought that truth was best served by the spectators' remaining in their senses. Hunt favoured illusion in the playhouse, by means of which the spectators, deprived of self-consciousness, might better absorb the spirit and principle of the playwright. With all the resources of the theatre directed towards the accomplishment of this aim, the drama could lift the spectators out of their "senses" and their immediate surroundings, lift them into the playwright's domain. Hunt's vision of the theatre was somewhat prophetic and the theatre of his time only saw the rudimentary beginnings of some of his objectives, with the exception of some very outstanding acting which accorded with his principles. But Henry Irving's productions in the Lyceum, in the 1880's, were a veritable apogee of illusionary stagecraft, with their darkened auditorium, limelight, and the heightened realism of Irving's acting. Johnson would not have cared for them. "Sir," he might have said, had he been put down like a Chinese visitor into Irving's theatre, "your theatre attempts to convey me, upon the insecure wings of fancy, from the Scylla of my own folly, to the Charybdis of someone else's."

In the meantime, Hunt could make the following statement of his views, and the state of illusion in the theatre which prevailed in 1805:
The majority of an audience were certainly never deluded into a belief, that events represented on the stage were realities. The best actors, who are the most likely to produce such a delusion, are always the most applauded; but it is evident they would gain no applause, were their assumed character forgotten; for in common life, we do not clap any incident that pleases us in the street, nor cry out "bravo!" at a pathetic circumstance in a room. A rustic, perhaps, who knew nothing of the machinery and trick of the stage, might be momentarily deceived; but the dream would soon be removed by the frequent cessations of the entertainment, and particularly the alterations of scene, so badly managed at the theatre, where you see two men running violently towards each other, with half a castle or a garden in their grasp. Though it is impossible, however, and indeed generally considered it would be undesirable, to maintain this impression of reality, the imitation of life and manners should be as exact as possible, for the same cause that we are pleased with our just resemblance in a glass, though we are convinced that it is a mere resemblance. But the most consummate actor gains but half his effect, if his eloquent imitation is not assisted by the mute imitations of dress and of scenery.

An upshot of the new concern with realism was historical research into the settings, and psychological research into the characters, of Shakespeare's plays. Elaborate productions by Charles Macready and Charles Kean implemented the former, and the latter became the special concern of the romantic critics, with their affinity for the subjective, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, and Hunt. But Johnson made important contributions to both, presaging the romantics' concern with his own acute and characteristic comments.

"The stream of time," Johnson said, "which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare." Shakespeare was commonly the criterion, the measure of excellence against
which other playwrights were measured and found variously wanting. In the next chapter Johnson and Hunt measure Shakespeare by the standards of their age and of themselves, in terms of what the reader or the playgoer should get from a Shakespeare play.
"The end of writing is to instruct, and the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing," wrote Dr. Johnson, in the Preface to Shakespeare. Hunt's definition gave poetry a larger domain: "Its means are whatever the universe contains; and its ends, pleasure and exaltation." This much Johnson would have understood, though perhaps not approved. The universe contained a great deal that poetry should not contain, in Johnson's view, if his strictures to the writers of romances might be extended to poets:

It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account: or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind, as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination. 1

Leigh Hunt's definition of poetry was to a great extent founded on the practice and theory of the romantic poets, who had enlarged the compass of poetry; who in diction that Johnson would not always have found poetic, had described parts of nature that Johnson would have thought not proper for imitation: Byron, Shelley, and Hunt himself had described human nature "discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness."
"Instruction" had quite gone from Hunt's definition, being replaced by "exaltation," a phantasm ambiguous and untrustworthy enough, in Johnson's estimation. In this concept of the function of poetry, the romantics are far beyond the Johnsonian pale. It is true that Wordsworth had stated in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, a significant romantic document, that poetry must enlarge the understanding and purify the emotions. The romantics' aims for literature were not very different from Johnson's; but in the degree of those aims, and in the subject matter and techniques of literature, they differed greatly. In subject matter, they dealt with all aspects of life - with "whatever the universe contains" - including those areas which Johnson felt were neither safe nor useful. In technique, they avoided "sermonizing" and contriving the material in an obvious way, feeling that the human mind was capable of finding a moral lesson in a simple, powerfully told tale.

In his view of the means of poetry, Hunt is not at variance with the commonly held romantic one. His view of the ends of poetry is his own. He held that poetry's chief end is that of service to the reader, rather than the writer, of poetry. Here he differs, for instance, from John Stuart Mill:

"All poetry is in the nature of soliloquy. When the poet's act of utterance is not itself the end, but a means to an end, - viz., by the feelings he expresses, to work upon the feelings, or upon the belief, or the will, of another - when the expression of his emotions... is tinged by that purpose, by that purpose of making an impression on another mind, then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence."
Coleridge could say, in the preface to the second edition of his poems (1797): "I expect neither profit nor general fame by my writings, and I consider myself as having been amply repaid without either. Poetry has been to me 'its own exceeding great reward'; it has soothed my afflictions; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me."

Hunt's little treatise, "What is Poetry?", makes clear that he recognized the dissimilarity between the aims of instruction and exaltation, but at the same time found them not irreconcilable. After quoting from Coleridge's "Preface" and Shelley's Defense of Poetry, he says:

I would not willingly say anything after perorations like these; but as treatises on poetry may chance to have auditors who think themselves called upon to vindicate the superiority of what is termed useful knowledge, it may be as well to add, that if the poet may be allowed to pique himself on any one thing more than another, compared with those who undervalue him, it is on that power of undervaluing nobody, and no attainments different from his own, which is given him by the very faculty of imagination they despise.... No man recognizes the worth of utility more than the poet: he only desires that the meaning of the term may not come short of its greatness, and exclude the noblest necessities of his fellow-creatures."

It is clear that Dr. Johnson could not have been one of those auditors "who think themselves called upon to vindicate the superiority of what is termed useful knowledge"; at least not in the flesh; but in spirit, he is the man Hunt meant. Johnson's intellectual poetry, and the poetry
of others which he favoured, was to the romantics like an abridgement of the kind of poetry that Wordsworth called "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" informed with deep thought - with most of the powerful feelings removed. The spontaneous overflow of Johnson's feelings, impressions, imagination, was subjected to a searching scrutiny, restrained and reduced to a manageable stream, before it was allowed out into the public channels of print. In Hunt's view, the release of the pressure of that powerful imagination which Johnson despised was not only a definite utility to the poet, but the denial of it excluded "the noblest necessities of his fellow-creatures."

Like his poetry, Johnson's criticism was constricted, the romantics felt, by the subordination of a very real area of experience, that of the imagination, to that of rational thought. Johnson believed that "when fancy [imagination], the parent of passion, usurps the dominion of the mind, nothing ensues but the natural effect of unlawful government, perturbation, and confusion." Consequently, poets who were under the sway of fancy, for instance Cowley, were lowered in his estimation.

Now Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare, in the "Preface" to *Shakespeare*, is more inclined to panegyric than most of his critical writings. Nevertheless, the romantics found Johnson wanting as Shakespearean critic, because he was unable to appreciate properly those uninhibited qualities of imagination which were to them the essence of the poetry.
With his critical blind-spots he could not criticize, they felt, the poet who, in Dryden's words, "of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive mind." The revenge of Dr. Johnson, who could not retaliate against the romantics, was amply taken, they felt, in his criticism of their patron saint, Shakespeare.

The "Preface" which Adam Smith styled "the most manly piece of criticism that was ever published in any country" was not pleasing to idolaters of Shakespeare in the next age. The approach, to begin with, was not enthusiastic enough. Hazlitt said, "An overstrained enthusiasm is more pardonable with respect to Shakespeare than the want of it; for our imagination cannot easily surpass his genius." Overstrained enthusiasm was not native to Dr. Johnson. With a clear head and a not sufficiently humble voice, he proceeded to find faults with Shakespeare, for, as he said, "We must confess the faults of our favorites, in order to claim credit to our praise of his excellencies. He that claims either in himself or others, the honours of perfection, will surely injure the reputation which he designs to assist."

The particular source of the romantics' rancor towards Johnson was that, in enumerating Shakespeare's faults, he spoke of Shakespeare as one man may speak of a fellow-citizen in the republic of letters. Johnson was a republican, rather than a royalist, in letters. He did not recognize the divine rights of Shakespeare, and so the Shakespeare
idolaters could not admit him to their services of worship.

Yet Johnson's "Preface" pays court to "the transcendent and unbounded genius of Shakespeare" in handsome terms. The opening acknowledges the fact of his lasting fame, after "the effects of favour and competition are at an end; the tradition of his friendships and enmities has perished; his works support no opinion with arguments, nor supply any faction with invectives; they can neither indulge vanity nor gratify malignity;... yet, thus unassisted by interest or passion, they have past through variations of taste and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to another, have received new honours at every transmission."^8

Aware of the general and continued approbation of Shakespeare, Johnson reasoned in the Preface to the source of Shakespeare's excellence - in order to assure himself and his readers that the approbation was not the product of prejudice or fashion. The criterion of that excellence is a characteristically Johnsonian one. "Nothing can please many and please long but just representations of general nature." Shakespeare is above all modern writers "the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life."^9 "His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets, a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it
is commonly a species."10 His characters are "the general progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find."11

The justness and generality of Shakespeare's characterizations, not only for an age but for all time, was the source of the lasting greatness of Shakespeare, who excelled "in accommodating his sentiments to real life." "The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topics which will never arise in the commerce of mankind."12

"Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded." But Shakespeare knew that "love is only one of many passions;... He knew, that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity."13 Shakespeare, who caught his ideas from the living world which he saw before him, was exonerated from the artificial rules of classical drama. If his senators were buffoons, and his kings not completely royal, they were only demonstrating their real selves in the "real state of sublunary nature." And his mingling of "tragick and comick scenes" was exonerated by the occurrence of events in that same state of nature where good and evil, joy and sorrow, are "mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination", in a world "in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his
wine, and the mourner burying his friend." The mingled drama managed to convey "all the instruction of tragedy or comedy... because it includes both in its alternations of exhibition, and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life."

The fact that Shakespeare wrote about real men, in real situations, justified his occasional roughness of language:

Shakespeare's familiar dialogue is affirmed to be smooth and clear, yet not wholly without ruggedness or difficulty; as a country may be eminently fruitful, though it has spots unfit for cultivation: His characters are praised as natural, though their sentiments are sometimes forced, and their actions improbable; as the earth upon the whole is spherical, though its surface is varied with protruberances and cavities.

If it was Johnson's praise of Shakespeare that his drama was "the mirror of life," Johnson's reproof of the poet was equally characteristic of the critic. The faults that he found, like the excellencies, reveal much about his critical processes. The greatest fault was that Shakespeare did not always select characters and events worthy to be mirrored:

He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose.... This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place.

Fault number two arises from the looseness of the plots. Fault number three concerns the anachronisms, which perhaps a want of learning supplied. Fault number four is the common licentiousness and lack of refinement in some of the comic scenes; which fault, like number one, the barbarity of
the times cannot extenuate. "There must... have been always some modes of gayety preferable to others and a writer ought to chuse the best."18 The next fault is the "tumour, mean-ness, tediousness, and obscurity"19 of those passages of tragic passion, narration, or declamation, when he "solicits his invention, or strains his faculties",20 for his power was the power of nature. Fault number six is Shakespeare's failure to extricate himself from an occasional "unwieldy sentiment", leaving it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it."21 Fault number seven is the neglect of equality of words to things: "Trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures."22 The last is that fault of style which compels Shakespeare to pursue a conceit like a will-o' the-wisp across the marsh: "He is not long soft and pathetick without some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation."23 "A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was for him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it."24

While Johnson's criticisms of Shakespeare's language are not "petty cavils," the faults of language are subordinate to that "first defect... that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books and men"25 - the want of moral decorum, and the faults of language were breaches of
a less important decorum.

In the romantics' view, it was one of Shakespeare's excellencies that he revealed those areas of human experience that are generally repressed; that, while they are sometimes irrational and unwholesome, yet are universal and very real, and therefore important to be recognized in the totality of man's character. Such areas were to be suppressed, in Johnson's theory, as they were suppressed in his practice; in the theory, often in the practice, of the romantics, they were exposed and taken into account. It was, they felt, the poet's role to expose every facet of the human drama that does not show itself on the surface of life, that is not played out in the visible world, but in the hearts of men.

In their estimate of the nature of the knowledge that is scattered over Shakespeare's works, the romantics and Johnson are agreed that "it is often such knowledge as books will not supply."\(^{26}\) "He that will understand Shakespeare," said Johnson, "must not be content to study him in the closet, he must look for his meaning sometimes among the sports of the field, and sometimes among the manufactures of the shop."\(^{27}\)

The printed tales, with which the infancy of learning was satisfied, "exhibited only the superficial appearances of action, related the events but omitted the causes.... He that would know the world, was under the necessity of gleaning his own remarks, by mingling as he could in its business and amusements."\(^{28}\) The "transcendent and unbounded genius of Shakespeare" provided him with that stock of life-like allusions
whose universality was the wonder alike of Johnson and the romantics. "Shakespeare," said Hunt, "had animal spirits, wit, fancy, judgment, prudence in money matters, understanding like Bacon, feeling like Chaucer, mirth like Rabelais, dignity like Milton. What a man!" Those who wish to study and understand Shakespeare "must study where Shakespeare studied - in the fields, in the heavens - in the heart and fortunes of man."

Johnson, in the opinion of Hunt and the romantics generally, was not equal to the task of criticizing Shakespeare, because his world "was not the universal and still eager world of the poet, but was made up exclusively of the Strand, hypochondria, charity, bigotry, wit, argument, and a good dinner; a pretty region, but not the green as well as smoky world of nature and Shakespeare." Hunt was generally inclined to find less fault with Johnson than the others. He once applauded in an actor the sort of research into the character of a Shakespearean role "which thinks it more advisable to read a note of Dr. Johnson than one of George Steevens in arriving at a general estimate of the character of all time."

And in his criticism of Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, Hunt ventured the opinion that Johnson had been the first to do justice in an essay to a Shakespearean character - that of Falstaff, "who won Dr. Johnson's heart with his taste in jokes and good dishes, as Wilkes did at the bookseller's table in the Poultry... Mr. Hazlitt's praise might have been relished by Falstaff himself; but with all
due regard to the Doctor (whom we like and respect very sincerely, nevertheless, all sorts of differences of opinion not excepted), Sir Hugh Evans, we suspect, would have been most taken with his."

At another time Hunt takes a stand more like that of Hazlitt, in evaluating Johnson's critical abilities. In referring to Johnson's estimate of *Julius Caesar*, he says:

> With all due respect to the powers of Dr. Johnson, this is a sorry piece of criticism: it is, at best, like most of his criticisms, only so much gratuitous opinion without analysis, without argument; but at bottom, I am afraid, it is an additional betrayal of his absolute unfitness for poetical criticism, at least with regard to works of a higher order. A writer, who by his own confession was insensible to painting and music, has at least very suspicious claims to become a critic; but when we see his taste so ready on all occasions to pollute itself with political prejudices, when we find him really insensible to the infinite and glorious variety of Milton's numbers, and when he acknowledges, in the instance before us, that he feels no strength of emotion in witnessing the working of great minds in awful situations, in beholding the sudden downfall of guilty greatness, and in sitting with the patriot in his tent, in the wakefulness of a noble affliction, and on the eve of the last struggle for liberty, then he signs his own condemnation, and leaves us still in want, as we certainly are to this day, of a true critical authority with respect to our great poets.

Hunt, in *Imagination and Fancy*, rises to great heights of eulogy in the discussion of Shakespeare. Yet he agrees with Johnson, that Shakespeare "(to judge from *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Rape of Lucrece*) does not appear to have had a call to write narrative poetry." Johnson said, "Instead of lightening it by brevity, [he] endeavoured to recommend it by dignity and splendour." Hunt says, "He over-informed it with reflection."
"In fact, if Shakespeare's poetry has any fault," Hunt goes on, "it is that of being too learned; too overinformed with thought and illusion. His wood-notes wild surpass Haydn and Bach. His wild roses are all twenty times double. He thinks twenty times to another man's once, and makes all his serious characters talk as well as he could himself - with a superabundance of wit and intelligence."\(^{38}\)

Hunt speaks here as theatre critic. In this capacity he found that Shakespeare's superabundance of wit and intelligence was not well suited to theatrical ends; here his criticism differs from Dr. Johnson's literary criticism. Johnson was more concerned with a closet reading of Shakespeare, than with theatre renderings. It was regrettable to Johnson that Shakespeare, careless of future fame, had sold his works, not to be printed, but to be played, for this practice had occasioned the many errors in the texts. And, to Johnson,

\[\text{a dramatrick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect.}\]
\[\text{Familiar comedy is often more powerful in the theatre, than on the page; imperial tragedy is always less.}\]
\[\text{The humour of Petruchio may be heightened by grimace; but what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of Cato.}\^{39}\]

Theatrical concomitants only detracted from Johnson's enjoyment of the drama. He was frightened by Hamlet's ghost, shocked by the death of Cordelia, not at the play, but in the closet. The reader of the "Preface" to Shakespeare "that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who
desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give" was not told to attend the theatre; rather, he was advised to "read every play from the first scene to the last." Hunt, in his concern with the impact of productions of Shakespeare upon audiences in the theatre, differed not only from Dr. Johnson, but from most of the Shakespeare idolaters of the nineteenth century, who thought that the plays were unsuitable for theatre performance. Coleridge never saw any of them acted "but with a degree of disgust, pain, and indignation." He had seen the Macbeths of the Kembles, but they were not the Macbeths of Shakespeare; and he was therefore not grieved "at the enormous size of the theatres, which naturally produced many bad but few good actors; and which drove Shakespeare from the stage, to find his proper place in the heart and in the closet, where he sits with Milton, enthroned on a double-headed Parnassus; and with whom everything that was praiseworthy, was to be found." Lamb could not help "being of the opinion that the plays of Shakespeare are less calculated for performance than those of almost any other dramatist whatever. Their distinguished excellence is a reason that they should be so. There is so much in them, that comes not under the province of acting, with which eye, and tone, and gesture, have nothing to do." Hazlitt was of the same opinion: "We are not in the number of those who are anxious in recommending the getting-up of Shakespeare's plays in general as a duty which our stage managers owe equally to the
author and the reader of these wonderful compositions. The representing of the very finest of them on the stage, even by the best actors, is, we apprehend, an abuse of the genius of the poet; and even in those of a second-rate class, the quantity of sentiment and imagery greatly outweighs the immediate impression of the situation and story.\textsuperscript{43}

Coleridge never forgot that Shakespeare wrote for the players, with the theatre at heart; but decided that the concomitants of the nineteenth-century theatre did disservice to the plays. Lamb attempted to prove that Shakespeare did not really write for a theatrical audience and that the theatre was a \emph{faut de mieux} disowned as soon as possible like the profession of player. They doubted that a satisfactory performance of a Shakespeare play was possible of attainment, or desirable. They were all good disciples of Shakespeare, regularly professing their faith in literary essays; Coleridge further managed to "sow a few valuable thoughts in minds worthy to receive them"\textsuperscript{44} by the medium of his lectures on Shakespeare.

Hunt differed from the others in his love of the theatre, in his concern for the theatre as critic, and perhaps in his humanitarian concern for a larger public than that reached by the essayists. He was vitally interested in the dissemination of Shakespeare's "good things" to as large an audience as possible. He seems to have been the only one who wished to keep Shakespeare before the public on the stage:
If Mr. Kemble has not succeeded Garrick in all tragic excellence, as some of his admirers pretend, he has worthily succeeded him in one important respect, that of loving Shakespeare and keeping him before the public. The other managers of the present day have so little taste... that were it not for Mr. Kemble's exertions the tragedies of our glorious bard would almost be in danger of dismissal from the stage; and it does him infinite credit to have persevered in spite of comparatively thin houses; to have added to the seasonable as well-deserved; and to have evinced so noble an attachment, and helped to keep up so noble a taste, in an age of mawkishness and buffoonery.

Hunt was at some pains to defend the "histrionic genius", as a worthy conveyance of Shakespeare, in a well-known passage in the Preface to Critical Essays:

As to the contempt that has been cast upon histrionic genius, it is not worthy an argument. If the knowledge of ourselves be the height of wisdom, is that art contemptible which conveys this knowledge to us in the most pleasing manner? If the actor is greatly inferior to the true dramatist, if he merely tells others what he has been told himself, does the officer deserve no praise who issues the instructions of his general with accuracy, with spirit, with an ardour that shews he feels them?

In one of the Critical Essays he makes what is probably his definitive statement of "histrionic genius", implying that it is a compound of Conception and Imagination, although the proportions and method of blending the ingredients are lamentably lacking in the description:

Conception is a dependent and passive capacity, that receives ideas suggested by others, and therefore belongs principally to the actor, who displays the ideas of the poet. Imagination is an original and active power, that forms its own images and impresses them upon the minds of others; it belongs therefore mostly to the poet. But actors sometimes have to imagine as well as conceive, for if the suggestions of the poet are few and feeble, they must be invigorated by the additional ideas of the actor, who in this instance imagines as well as conceives...
Imagination is the great test of genius; that which is done by imagination is more difficult than that which is performed by discernment or experience. It is for this reason that the actor is to be estimated like the painter and the poet, not for his representation of the common occurrences of the world, not for his discernment of the familiarities of life, but for his idea of images never submitted to the observation of the senses... imagination surprises, wins, and elevates too; it carries us off from our earthly level with ordinary cares, it bears the mind to its highest pitch of ascent, transports us through every region of thought and feeling, and teaches us that we have something within us more than mortal. A tragic actor, as he displays more imagination, displays a more poetical genius than a comedian.

It is difficult to tell where conception stops, and imagination takes over, or whether they are concurrent. And what of actors of Shakespeare, whose suggestions are surely not "few and feeble"? Shall they be called lesser geniuses than those who invigorate the suggestions of the feeble poets?

The following passage from the same essay does little to clarify these issues:

It is more difficult to conceive passions than habits, principally because the former are less subject to common observation: in common characters we generally recognize the manners or peculiarities of some person with whom we are acquainted, or who is at least known in the world; but of the deeper tragic passions we have only read, or heard; we never see in society an impassioned character like Macbeth, or King Lear, or Hamlet; such characters exhibit themselves only on great occasions, their very nature prevents their appearance in common life; but habits appear no where else: the idea of passion requires more imagination than that of habit.

Johnson, had he been able to follow Hunt's reasoning through its various ramifications, would not have cared for the idea of "histrionic genius"; nor would he have cared for Hunt's species of imagination, "which carries us off from
our earthly level... bears the mind to its highest pitch of ascent, transports us through every region of thought and feeling, and teaches us that we have something within us more than mortal." It was too akin to that other species of imagination, "that power of the mind which contemplates ideas (that is, thoughts or notions) without referring them to real existence, or to past experience," which Johnson thought too terrible to go under the name of imagination in his Dictionary, and included instead under "fantastickal", with other attributes: "irrational: subsisting only in the fancy; capricious, humourous, unsteady; irregular; apparent only; having the nature of phantoms." That "something within us" which is "more than mortal" Johnson found highly suspect. When he went to the theatre, he did not go to attend a séance.

Hunt set up an ideal for the acting profession, which was practically impossible of achievement, particularly as he allowed ad hominem considerations to influence his judgment of an actor: "We can never help being skeptical about Garrick's excellence in characters of deep and serious interest; since, off the stage, he was little better than a quick-eyed trifler, full of phrases and gabbling jargon, and coarse-minded withal." He continued to believe, however, that a fulfillment of his ideal was possible in an actor, although he wrote in 1805, of Elliston's acting of Hamlet: "The character... of Hamlet seems beyond the genius of the present stage, and I do not see that a personification will be easily attained by future
stages; for its actor must unite the most contrary as well as the most assimilating powers of comedy and tragedy, and to unite these powers in their highest degree belongs to the highest genius only."50 Years later, the perfect actor had still not materialized:

We are exceedingly skeptical as to the power of any actor to represent such a mind as Lear's, just as we are in the case of Hamlet. The acting faculty is a thing not intellectual enough or sensitive enough; and if it were, it would defeat itself; it would sink under such a wear and tear of the union of thought and passion with the physical representation of it.51

Hunt could only speculate that a composite of Kean and Macready might be able to perform some of the heavier Shakespearean roles adequately:

When did the world ever see a perfect performance of a character of Shakespeare's? When did it ever see the same Macbeth's good and evil nature worn truly together, the same King John looking mean with his airs of royalty, the same Hamlet the model of a court and the victim of melancholy? Mr. Kean's Othello is perhaps the most perfect performance on the modern stage, but it is not a perfect Othello nevertheless. The union of such a variety of tones of feeling as prevails in the great humanities of Shakespeare seems as impossible to be found in any actor, as the finest musical instrument is insufficient to supply all the effects of a great writer for a band.52

Dr. Johnson, who preferred to think of the actors as puppets, disliked Garrick's acting when it seemed more careful to please than to instruct. The exigencies of a large and impressionable theatre audience called for new assessments of the plays, tempered by moral considerations; in the closet an unsequestered audience had the notes and commentaries of the various eighteenth-century commentators
to calm their sensibilities. Johnson condoned in the public sanction of Tate's altered version of Lear, which was both more instructive and pleasant than Shakespeare's.

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

In the present case the publick has decided. Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations might add anything to the general suffrage, I might relate, that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play, till I undertook to revise them as an editor.

Hunt, and the romantics generally, could not sanction any mutilation of Shakespeare for any purpose; Hunt's account of the "acting version" of Lear in 1808 provides an interesting contrast of outlook to Johnson's:

The tragedy of King Lear was performed on Wednesday last as it was altered by Tate, who was altered by Coleman, who was altered by Garrick. Our great bard, whom everybody calls "the divine and the matchless," is indeed so inimitable that everybody thinks himself capable of mending him; the different editions are sure to succeed, because the greater part is still original; the critic grows vain, and thinks he has done for Shakespeare what Shakespeare evidently does for him. If Tate had been content to expunge a few anachronisms, to omit the fool which is now out of date, and to send Gloster behind the scenes whilst he is blinded, he might have been well excused; but that a mere rhymer, whose dulness has become proverbial, should create whole scenes of his own and adorn them with a few extracts from Shakespeare, that he should turn the current of our poet's feeling into scanty sprinklings over his own barren fancy and then cry out "How fertile I am!" is really a violation of a man's literary property....
The original King Lear is a deep tragedy; it is entirely occupied with the distress arising from violent passions, and with awful lessons on parental partiality; but Tate (amorous soul) must divide this interest, and accordingly he has introduced a love-scene in which the admirable Cordelia, the pattern of filial piety, is made to forget her old, houseless, distracted father, whom she is wildly seeking, and not only to find time for listening to a lover, but to retire with him into a cave in order to dry her clothes before she goes any further. Cordelia, in this instance, therefore, becomes a lover who sacrifices her filial to her amatory tenderness, and is a different character from the original Cordelia, whose whole imagination is filled with one great, pathetic, and disinterested idea. Shakespeare made his play end unhappily, because he knew that real nature required such a catastrophe; but Tate (impassioned soul) must have a marriage between the lovers at the end, and the old father must give them his blessing.

Hunt refused to excuse the emender of King Lear on grounds of "poetic justice" to Cordelia; that consideration was transcended by justice to Shakespeare. Fidelity to Shakespeare was of first importance to Hunt; fidelity to life naturally followed, in that Shakespeare was true to life, and dramatic decorum demanded Shakespeare's catastrophe:

As to the Doctor's [Johnson's] old argument that poetic justice did not allow the innocent to suffer with the guilty, I think it is completely refuted, not so much by the common ill-fortune of virtue, which he seems to consider as the only argument against him, but by the evident maxim that error is never so exemplary in its effects as when they involve the innocent with the guilty; nay, the very death of a virtuous person seems to be a sort of triumph over persecution; the calm repose which we see in a dead body, and the lively enjoyment which we fancy the soul has just fled to partake, form a strong contrast with the anticipated end of the guilty, and with their turbulent pleasures on earth. It appears to me, also, that the old age of Lear has been too much shattered by his repeated madness to survive a second change of fortune, and that the exhaustion of which he dies in Shakespeare is in every respect natural and unavoidable.
The romantics found some impropriety in the stage representation of Othello, the "coal-black Moor" - except for Hunt, who, whether because of his moral liberality or his Barbados blood, found nothing indecorous. Coleridge said "Othello must be conceived not as a negro, but as a high and chivalrous Moorish chief." Lamb thought that a black Othello was all right - provided he was perceived in the mind's eye. But upon the stage - "I appeal to everyone who has seen Othello played, whether he did not... sink Othello's mind in his colour; whether he did not find something exgremely revolting in the courtship and wedded caresses of Othello and Desdemona." But Hunt found nothing repugnant in the stage version of Othello:

This character of Desdemona is one of the loveliest ever conceived. She has the heart of a child, with all the feelings of a woman. She is generous, painstaking, patient, pleasurable, unweeting of ill. Her ruin comes by her goodness. Some gross commentators have delighted, by the help of Iago, to discover that she was more sensitive than she need be, or at least not less so than the liveliest of her sex. Why should she be, if she was good and warm-hearted? She fell in love with Othello for his mind and soul first, and for all which he had gone through. True sympathy was the ground of her passion. If upon this, all the rest of her being followed, and we are to suppose that her love was a world of pleasure as well as pride to her, it only shews that in every respect she was the woman that she ought to have been - as perfect in body as in heart. Grossness is when there is no heart at all, and no just passion.

It is characteristic of Dr. Johnson that he found no fault with the racial tincture of Othello; but with his generalizing propensities managed to make a general moral issue out of Othello's marriage to Desdemona:
Act III. Scene V.
She did deceive her father, marrying you.

This and the following argument of Iago ought to be deeply impressed on every reader. Deceit and falsehood, whatever conveniences they may for a time promise or produce, are, in the sum of life, obstacles to happiness. Those who profit by the cheat, distrust the deceiver, and the act by which kindness was sought, puts an end to confidence.

Johnson did not agree with Maurice Morgann, that the character of Falstaff suffered a pejorative change in the theatre. "The less we see, the better we conceive," said Morgann, stating the case for closet study of Shakespeare. Johnson's sketch, however, depicts the common stage version of Falstaff:

But Falstaff, unimitated, unimitable Falstaff, how shall I describe thee? Thou compound of sense and vice which may be admired but not esteemed, of vice which may be despised but hardly detested. Falstaff is a character loaded with faults, and with those faults which naturally produce contempt. He is a thief and a glutton, a coward, and a boaster, always ready to cheat the weak, and prey upon the poor; to terrify the timorous and insult the defenseless. At once obsequious and malignant, he satirises in their absence those whom he lives by flattering. He is familiar with the prince only as an agent of vice, but of this familiarity he is as proud as not only to be supercilious and haughty with common men, but to think his interest of importance to the Duke of Lancaster. Yet the man thus corrupt, thus despicable, makes himself necessary to the prince that despises him by the most pleasing of all qualities, perpetual gaiety, by an unfailing power of exciting laughter, which is the more freely indulged, as his wit is not the splendid or ambitious kind, but consists in easy escapes and sallies of levity, which make sport but arouse no envy. It must be observed that he is stained with no enormous or sanguinary crimes, so that his licentiousness is not so offensive that it may be borne for his mirth.

The moral to be drawn from this representation is, that no man is more dangerous than he that with a will to corrupt, hath the power to please; and that neither wit nor honesty ought to think themselves safe with such a companion, when they see Henry seduced by Falstaff.
While Morgann contended that the common stage representation of Falstaff did not do justice to his character, which was not dominated by cowardice but something finer, Johnson felt that any elevation of the character would have reinforced a moral weakness of the play. "Why, Sir," he remarked to Boswell when he had read Morgann's essay, "we shall have the man come forth again, and as he has proved Falstaff to be no coward, he may prove Iago to be a very good character." On another occasion he expressed himself even more strongly: "If Falstaff was not a coward, Shakespeare knew nothing of his art."

Hunt agreed with the common stage representation of Falstaff, although with less moral implication than Johnson:

Falstaff's size, which is thought to be the greatest part of him, is the least. It is only a gross help towards the comprehension of him by the vulgar. It belongs to him, we allow. He cannot do without it, seeing the quantity of sack he drinks; but his real superabundance is in his animal spirits: the festivity of his soul is his most unctuous plenitude: he has an enormous capacity for making the most of life, and swallowing every satisfaction that comes in his way: and this is the reason why we like him: we cannot be melancholy in his company. Of any grave or ordinary contradiction to his mirth he is incapable: his anger his cups of calamity, like his other cups, have sugar at the bottom.... The ordinary stage conception is the right one, if actors could but act up to it. It is probably handed down from Shakespeare's own time. It purports to represent a puffing and a blowing, swaggering, chuckling, luxurious, fat-voiced "tun of a man", gathering corpulence from every dish and goblet as he rolls, for ever mirthful and shameless, making a jest of danger in the apprehension, and anxiously getting out of it when it comes, but above all things witty and festive, unable to admit care or give it, making his moral enormities appear as natural and jovial as his fat; in short, a perpetual feast to himself and his beholders.
A striking thing in a comparison of Hunt's account with Johnson's is the amorality of Hunt's. He simply is not concerned about the moral purport of a heroic Falstaff; he only applauds Shakespeare's portrayal of what he feels to be natural, jovial, moral enormities. While Johnson sighs over the faults of the character, and draws a moral from them, Hunt exults over them, and applauds the portrayal of them \textit{per se}.

The difference between Johnson and the Shakespeare idolaters, with regard to the general dissemination of Shakespeare's works, is that they sometimes thought the people were not fit for them; Johnson sometimes found the works not fit for the people. And the difference between Hunt and both is that Hunt found them perfectly fit for one another, and wished them to be together as much as possible. And with perhaps more hope than realism, Hunt looked to a state of the theatre in which this desirable union might be strengthened, and the wonders of Shakespeare brought into greater notice.
IV. THE OTHER PLAYWRIGHTS

The romantic writers who were antagonized by Johnson's unworshipful approach to Shakespeare were in sympathy with his defense of Shakespeare against the cant of neoclassic criticism. They bridled at the tone of his remarks and disagreed with his fault-finding. They felt a sort of filial kinship with Shakespeare-the-romantic, which was offended by Johnson's pragmatism.

Hunt differed from Johnson in this basic viewpoint; and as practicing theatre critic, he differed from both his contemporaries and Johnson. Their concerns were not primarily his. The romantics were concerned with the best of all possible representations of Shakespeare - those most true to Shakespeare; Johnson was concerned with those most salutary to the audience. Hunt was primarily concerned with the best possible representation of Shakespeare in the theatre, with Shakespeare and the audience equally in view.

Johnson's criticism of the other dramatists' works was similarly not much oriented to the theatre, and Hunt's was coloured somewhat by impressions that came to him across the footlights. Proceeding from Shakespeare to the other dramatists, the present chapter will attempt to discover what Johnson and Hunt sought, and what they found, in the works of the other playwrights.
Johnson preferred Shakespeare's practice to the rules and the unities; preferred his "just representations of general nature," which filled the plays with "practical axioms" and "domestick wisdom," to those representations of other authors, "peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language that was never heard, upon topicks which will never arise in the commerce of mankind."

Johnson has much to say of "other authours" in the "Preface" to Shakespeare. "Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world."

Shakespeare, for all his excellencies, has faults, and Johnson mentions them "without envious malignity or superstitious veneration." These are the faults transcended by a Shakespeare, but which doomed lesser authors to early obscurity. Johnson's anathema included:

writing without moral purpose;
loose formation of plots;
violations of chronology;
licentiousness;
tumid effusions, prolix narrative, cold declamation;
failure to develop "unwieldy sentiments" fully;
neglect of equality of words to things; and
contemplate equivocations, quibbles.

Johnson could make allowances for historical factors, beyond the control of the playwright: for the barbarous condition of the nation in Shakespeare's time, for the fashionable licentiousness in Dryden's; but they did not justify immorality, "for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place."

The morality that was Johnson's primary concern was a general one, with religious overtones, informed by his reading of the stoic writers and Anglican divines, and of Bacon, Locke, and Butler. It assumed the "just distribution of good and evil" and "disapprobation of the wicked" of the social contract.

Providing there was a sufficient compensatory greatness in the playwright, Johnson could excuse some inattention to this important factor of morality. He even managed to tolerate Dryden's portrayal of Almanzor in the Conquest of Granada:

All the rays of romantick heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without enquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestickal madness, such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often reverenced, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.
Johnson, for whom "the delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction," was able to find this tragedy delightful, because it was such a palpable fiction.

When Johnson was confronted with a play which looked in a good way to outlive its century, "the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit," he could refer to the "publick," the authors, after all, of the play's survival. Of Venice Preserved he said, "The publick seems to judge rightly of this play, that it is the work of a man not attentive to decency, nor zealous for virtue; but of one who conceived forcibly, and drew originally, by consulting nature in his own breast." There was always an appeal open from criticism to nature, and on the strength of this appeal, Johnson could excuse Addison's tragedy Cato, whose author, in addition, had the recommendation of having "purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness" in his essays, and redeemed humanity from the licentiousness of the Restoration wits. Surely such a writer could be excused the moral impropriety of the plot of Cato, the play which Johnson called "unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius." His defense of Addison is unique in Johnson's works:

Whatever pleasure there may be in seeing crimes punished and virtue rewarded, yet, since wickedness often prospers in real life, the poet is certainly at liberty to give it prosperity on the stage. For if poetry is an imitation of life, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form?
The stage may sometimes gratify our wishes; but if it be truly the "mirror of life" it ought to shew us sometimes what we are to expect.

Thus Johnson managed to justify the endurance of the durable works, often in the face of one or more of the "faults" previously mentioned. The romantics, in their dealings with Shakespeare, had no such comprehensive list of faults as Johnson, to apply to their favorite, although they had enumerations enough of his virtues, against which the merits of other writers might be measured. If Shakespeare and the other great ones had faults, they were to be excused by making the same sort of allowances Dr. Johnson made. Shakespeare's licentiousness, or indelicacy, as Hunt called it, was inconsequential: "Grossnesses may be attributed in part to the age which allows them.... Our great bard, as he was the greatest, so he was one of the most delicate of all the dramatic writers of his time. The instinctive sweetness and gracefulness of his nature threw off impurities which Ben Jonson, and Massinger, and even Beaumont and Fletcher allowed themselves absolutely to wallow in; and it is observable, that what license he allowed himself, is almost invariably on the side of pleasurable associations, and not of degrading ones."

The degrading licentiousness of a Massinger, or a Farquhar, was inappropriate to the standards of decorum that prevailed in the nineteenth century. Farquhar's Recruiting Officer, for instance, was "altogether too broad for the present state
of manners and taste, the vices of which lean towards the sordid and hypocritical, rather than the debauched." If it should appear from the above that Hunt thought of the vices of humanity as a shifting, noneradicable phenomenon, it must be stated that he was always hopeful of improvement, and even thought he could detect improvement from time to time in the theatre audiences. His own practice was certainly to foster a better state of things. "If he had not taken at its word a world which he despised," he said of Farquhar, "and grown hopeless as well as his inferiors, his love of sympathy, which he degraded in his dramas into mere dissipation, might have opened his eyes to discover the 'soul of goodness' in things which he found evil, and left so."10

Hunt was inclined to look for the "soul of goodness" in many things where Johnson, in the name of morality, would have found it wanting. Even his colleagues were sometimes hard put to defend some of Hunt's notions concerning the equality of the sexes.* The morality which Hunt saw fit to promote upon the stage differed from that of Johnson. It was informed by the revolutionary spirit in the air, by considerations of Godwin's _Political Justice_. It anticipated the end

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* Lamb wrote in the _London Magazine_, Oct. 1823: "L.H. is unfortunate in holding some loose and not very definite speculations (for at times I think he hardly knows whither his premises would carry him) on marriage - the tenets, I believe, of the _Political Justice_, carried a little further. For anything I could discover in his practice, they have reference, like those, to some future possible condition of society, and not to the present times."
of superstition, a greater equality between man and man, and between man and woman, and a society when the rewards of Universalism would be more commensurate with its aims. It was in some ways a visionary morality, for a whole age of "Victorian morality" was to put the clock back for another fifty years. The theatre, too, was a conservative institution, shot through with tradition, and always behind literary fashion. The age of experimental drama was a long way off and Hunt himself realized that the theatre was far from being the ideal place for avant-garde ideas, as he shows in his review of Barry Cornwall's *Mirandola*:

We know not what to say always of his morality; but this perhaps is owing to some lawless notions of our own; and does him no injury with the common opinions on such points. The stage is no easy place for promulgating other opinions; even if he agreed with us, which he does not; so his women are the same ill-used as well as gentle creatures as formerly, only he makes their tenderness and patience so lovely that we fall in for the moment with what we think the mistaken sentiments of society, and blink the question of improvement for the sake of indulging ourselves in lordly pity...

We would make as many things innocent in the world as we could; but in the meantime, we abhor the deceit and misery-making of seduction. We abhor it by the same principles, old or new, that we abhor injustice and foul play of all sorts, and the sacrifice of any one person's rights, man or woman, to another.  

Hunt believed in, and was rather jealous for, the improvement of the human lot. "We have faith and hope infinite in the progress of the times, God knows," he once wrote; "but meanwhile the horrible want of charity in those who ought to overflow with it out of the excess of their luck,
shows a want of imagination and common foresight truly frightful to think of.\textsuperscript{12} He could excuse the Restoration poets their lack of sympathy with a world they despised; but in the nineteenth century a writer's callousness was not so excusable. Theodore Hook was one writer whom Hunt thought unsuitable for the age:

There is a vein of something in this play [The Diamond Ring] from which we instinctively recoil. We laughed heartily at some of the things in it, and admired the performers; but to say nothing of an occasional coarseness of the lowest kind, we could not see two such things brought together as a vagabond without one particle of filial feeling, and an old man continually groaning for disappointment in the bitterness of his heart, without disliking the taste that could strike its drolleries out of such a contrast. The situation, too, of the moral (which it affects to be) of the old husband, the wife, and the gallant, is managed in the most bungling and offensive manner... We should suspect some irony, were not the rest of the sentiment in a very commonplace style. The effect seems intended for serious, and therefore we are bound to think the author serious in intending it, or he is still less excusable than we supposed him.\textsuperscript{13}

Hook, whose plays smacked of Restoration rakishness, seems to have been an anachronism in an age in which perfectionability appeared to many to be a realizable prospect. In another account of him, Hunt says:

Sentiment, in a certain point of view, is not to be looked for in a writer of farces; but the total absence of it is apt to betray itself in a way that deprives his humorous vein of its pleasantest powers, by showing it destitute of cordiality. He is quick; he is fertile; he has a real notion of pleasantry, as far as mere pleasantry goes, and often makes us laugh heartily, but there is something we miss after all. Nothing seems done to enlist merriment on the side of real good humour or the
aabotions. Piece after piece comes out, and laughter is to be raised at the expense of fathers, lovers, and women. At last he enters upon the subject of Cockneys, and in this "Refuge for the Destitute of Wit" he seems fairly to be getting desperate and poverty-stricken.14

With his emphasis on cordiality, and his professed preference for comic rather than tragic drama, Hunt occasionally had to answer charges that he discouraged the representation of realistic, painful issues on the stages, and avoided the exhibition of "the world in its true form." To such a charge he replied in the following statement:

As for the inclination, with which the writer charges us, for making literature and drama a series of fairy-tales, and for shrinking from powerful and wholesome delineations of oppressed virtue and triumphant vice, we must disclaim it. We have often expressly said that we had no quarrel with any writings, however painful, which really tend to a salutary effect, and to the advancement of human good; though we have often said also, perhaps oftener (for we do confess some tendency to be pleasurable), that we like to see fair play between men's cheerfulness and their spleen; otherwise, from an excess of the latter, they are apt to neutralize the wholesomeness of it, and give up their efforts in despair.... We confess, that we think the world have had melancholy books, more than enough; and that what mankind chiefly want is a good and hopeful opinion of one another; and finally, that the most unceasing and effective reformers have not been among those who have taken the least cheerful means of effecting their object.15

Hunt confirms this view in another article:

In the mingled yarn of which "the web of our life" is composed, we can be content that the lighter colours should predominate, at least in places designed for recreation; and if it be thought that there are not enough of the darker in the actual
stories of our existences, let the stage supply the deficiency, but let the artists be men of a higher order of poetry and genius, who alone know how to temper and soften them. 

There is a note in the above reminiscent of Johnson, who could excuse a play in which "the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry" when it was the product of a very great writer, such as he considered Addison or Shakespeare to be, because "it is a just representation of the common events of human life."

The run of the playwrights, in Hunt's time and in Johnson's, were not men of a higher order of poetry and genius, who were fitted to temper and soften the darker side of actuality. Particularly in Hunt's time, when many great literary figures found their call to write for the closet, rather than the theatre, a lack of "good taste" was apparent in the theatrical offerings. This deficiency finally drove Hunt to condone the immoralities of the comic plays of the Restoration, whose writers had the saving grace of genius, and the justification of their licentious age.

Hunt's latest practice was to emphasize the historical influences upon dramatists such as those of the Restoration, and to justify the shortcomings of his contemporaries by reference to their milieu. Combined with his increasingly "other-worldly" determination to look for the "soul of goodness" in things, this produced such things as his
denunciation of Jeremy Collier, who had denounced the comic poets of the Restoration:

Collier assumed that the writers were so many knaves and fiends, who had positively malignant intentions; and in so doing he was not aware that he displayed a vice in his own spirit, which if they had thought as ill of as he did of their license, would have warranted them in denouncing him as the far greater devil of the two. For to believe in such unmitigated wickedness at all, is itself the worst part of the result of vice; namely a moral melancholy, and an attribution to the Creator of having made what he never did.

Hunt excused the current batch of playwrights from attempting to promote upon the stage any of his advanced ideas of morality. The stage was no easy place for promulgating uncommon opinions; Hunt would have commended Ibsen's attempts, which much later still found difficulty in England and elsewhere in being accepted. In the meantime, he was averse to "injustice and foul play of all sorts"; and he felt that "pleasant plays" and good humour would do the most "in places of recreation" to rectify some of the ills of actual life. When he encountered a playwright who had the art, "if not of writing a good comedy, of spinning out a pleasant yarn of some sort" he was satisfied. "For these things we are grateful in hard times." The idea of the stage compensating for any deficiency of dark or light colours "in the actual stories of our existences" is a new one with Hunt, founded, seemingly, upon ideal rather than real practice. The "dearth of dramatic character" of Hunt's own age only brought a dearth of new drama; and the tendency
of an age had generally been to reveal itself, rather than compensate for itself, in its drama. With the coming of Ibsen and the realistic playwrights in the age of Victorian morality, dramatists began to portray the alter-ego of an age's personality: but that is the subject of another thesis.

Four of the faults which Johnson found in Shakespeare were those of language; the other three were exonerated by the barbarity of the times, and the exigencies of writing for the playhouse. But Shakespeare provided at the same time a criterion of dramatic dialogue for Johnson, whose account in the "Preface" to Shakespeare provides general advice for the playwrights of any age:

If there be, what I believe there is, in every nation, a stile which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so consonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language as to remain settled and unaltered; this stile is probably to be sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition or elegance. The polite are always catching modish innovations, and the learned depart from established forms of speech, in the hope of finding or making better; those who wish for distinction forsake the vulgar, when the vulgar is right; but there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gathered his comick dialogue. He... among his other excellencies deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of the language. 19

In Johnson's view, then, the most desirable practice for "comick" writing was a mean between grossness and refinement,
the common conversation of life, which is least likely of any to be altered by time. The occasional aberrations of Shakespeare from this practice did not detract from the "natural" qualities of his comic characters, or from his excellencies as a portrayer of them; as "the earth upon the whole is spherical, though its surface is varied with protruberances and cavities."²⁰

It is more difficult to establish Johnson's ideal criteria for tragic writing. "The effusions of passion" in Shakespeare "which exigence forces out are for the most part striking and energetick"; yet "whenever he solicits his invention or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity." The implication is that Shakespeare's best dialogue, whether comic or tragic, was that which was colloquial, extemporaneous, or written under the pressure of exigencies. In the narrative parts, which are "naturally tedious," which he "endeavoured to recommend... by dignity and splendour," and in the declamatory speeches, in which he tried to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, he commonly was the inferior of "other tragick writers."

Of the other tragic writers, Addison provided, in Cato, "the best model of tragedy we had," according to Johnson.²¹ Yet, he used to say, "of all things, the most ridiculous would be, to see a girl cry at the representation of it."²²
It was one of the excellencies of the play that "Cato is a being above our solicitude, a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless indifference." Such a man was a fit subject for classical tragedy, and the language of Cato was similarly apposite: considerably elevated, but "striking and energetick." Such a criterion of language seems to have prevailed in Johnson's selection of excellent:"imperial tragedy."

Johnson's objections to Dryden's All For Love were more moral than linguistic. For an exorbitancy of love in a play, "probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved." But Dryden's refinement of the language compensated for his inclination to follow prevailing modes of thought. "Words too familiar or too remote defeat the purpose of the poet," and Dryden's was one of a few minds - "the favorites of nature" - which could discriminate "those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose."

Johnson's own practice in his writing of Irene was to combine a high tragic theme with an elevated diction - the practice of Addison in Cato. Verse was the proper vehicle for such a tragedy, but blank verse, for rhyming verse was, in Johnson's opinion, an unnecessary concession to public pleasure. Dryden's rhyming plays, Johnson stated, "were written in compliance with the opinion of Charles II, who
formed his taste by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote only to please, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his master's preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies until, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.\textsuperscript{26} Blank verse, that of Milton's \textit{Paradise Lost}, was appropriate to Johnson's concept of high tragedy, in which the intellect played a greater part than the sensual passions.

The more natural tones, approaching those of comedy, could be admitted to domestic tragedy, such as Otway's \textit{Orphan}, whose "whole power is upon the affections"; while it was not written with much "elegance of expression," yet "if the heart be interested, many other beauties may be missing, yet not be missed."\textsuperscript{27} And the diction of Rowe's \textit{Fair Penitent}, another "sentimental tragedy," "is exquisitely harmonious, and soft or sprightly as the occasion demands." "It is one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage, where it still keeps its turns of appearing, and probably will long continue to keep them, for there is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting by the fable, and so delightful by the language."\textsuperscript{28}
The writers of these informal tragedies might be not afraid to please, and yet not offend propriety. But few could attain to the stature of a Dryden, although they could keep Johnson's counsel in mind:

That book is good in vain which the reader throws away. He only is the master, who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predomination I will consent that Dryden should be tried; of this, which in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which in defiance of criticism, continues Shakespeare the sovereign of the drama.  

The "charms of sound" had their place in domestic tragedy, where the writer could not be aloof to popular reception of his play. The writer of classical tragedy could be above such solicitudes; Johnson's model for classical tragedy was the Greek one; to the one, as to the other, the public should repair, as a public duty, as it were to a service of worship, for the good of their souls.

In dramatic "hard times," Hunt regarded Shakespeare's language as one of the number of his excellencies, to which other writers could hardly more than aspire. Its excellence owed to the fact that it was natural, possessing a sort of intuitive authenticity that no amount of artifice could hope to capture. Jane Shore, for instance, which Rowe stated had been written in imitation of Shakespeare's style, fell as far short of its model in Hunt's estimation
as it did in that of Johnson, who said "in what he thought himself an imitator of Shakespeare it is not easy to con-
ceive."\textsuperscript{30} Hunt took Rowe to task in the following account:

I have heard of a play in imitation of our great poet, in which the whole similarity consisted of one line:

And so good morrow to you, good Master Lieutenant.

Upon this principle Rowe seems to have imagined that, with an English story for his plot, and with one or two familiar expressions borrowed from Shakespeare, he has caught this masterly genius which relies upon no artifice whatever.... Shakespeare in general seems to have written exactly as he felt; but only half of Rowe seems to have been written from feeling; the other was occupied in giving his feelings their dramatic dignity.\textsuperscript{31}

The romantics well and truly guarded Shakespeare's magic circle; interlopers were not tolerated:

Within that circle none durst tread but he.

\textit{Jane Shore} was a domestic tragedy, whose language, however, was elevated out of keeping with its subject. Hunt was partial to natural diction, as to every aid to the illusion of reality in the theatre - even in tragedies of a more exalted order. He had strong praise for Barry Cornwall's "natural style" in the tragedies \textit{Virginius} and \textit{Mirandola}:

The author of \textit{Mirandola} has faith in nature; and it is a saving one; he has helped the public taste, and it is grateful. \textit{Virginius} and \textit{Mirandola} are the only tragedies written in a natural style, that have appeared on the stage in our time: and they are eminent encouragements to all who may follow in the same path, with the same trusting and unaffected step.\textsuperscript{32}
Hunt's views on natural diction have their definitive statement in the following Examiner review:

The critic in the Times proceeds to observe that the "design of the author seems to have been to try the effect of natural dialogue on the stage, and to bring down the serious drama from its usual elevation, without endangering its dignity. In this he has been successful; nor has he essentially lowered the dialogue, by the colloquial ease he has introduced into it."

The spirit of this remark is just; but readers must be cautioned how they mistake the word "elevation" used on these occasions. It is impossible to lower the dialogue erroneously, when lofty or natural emotions, proper to the scene, are speaking. There is nothing higher than nature. The loftiest artificial language is but an inferior substitute for it, and is too apt to become a vulgar commodity which any ingenious person can build up. It is the school in which grown tragedians learn to tread measures. Some of the very gravest and highest things in Shakespeare, at which we feel our hearts thrill and our humanity grow godlike, utter the very commonest words. Some of them utter also very uncommon and lofty words; but then the nature of the moment demands them, or they would become as essentially ludicrous as misplaced familiarity. At one time it was a notion that language elevated everything. Writers marked a cheap and vulgar sentiment with huge words, as drapers do gromg gowns in their windows with huge numerals, and the critics were taken in like the maid-servants. Even foreign authors, whose praise they undertook to echo for their naivete, must be elevated, they thought, or it was all over with their charmingness. They elevated them accordingly; that is, let them down to the most received standard of fine writing; and the charm, being of nature, was gone.

But few came to Hunt's call, to "follow in the same path, with the same trusting and unaffected step." Most writers of Hunt's period were, like Prior, signally unfitted for the role of dramatic poet:
Now and again you recognize something like an original image, — something which shows that his mind has been at least endeavouring to create; but what is natural power to a true poet is vain and brief toil to him; he subsides immediately into commonplace; and exhibits page after page that infallible criterion of an uninspired taste — the being contented to pursue a train of observation in worn-out epithets and phrases which show that he cannot draw upon his own exchequer. Such writers do not speak because they are full of something to be spoken; still less do they borrow in order to repay with interest, as the English poets have done from the Italian. They have no abundance in detail, — and therefore want solid magnitude in the gross. They unconsciously regard poetry as a kind of classical language; and speak it as they would speak latin — in centos from authority.

Hunt sanctioned "foreign borrowings" providing they repaid with interest their originals, and that the borrower had something of originality to impart to them. But in an impoverished time, Hunt grew increasingly appreciative of the little "unremembered acts" of modest playwrights of no pretensions to genius. Of a tragedy whose greatest virtue seems to have been its lack of ostentation, he said:

The tragedy is not remarkable for genius in the writing. There is occasionally a metaphor, or a simile, above ordinary dramatists; but from the general cast of the language, we should not suppose that he [Horace Twiss, in Carib Chief] was ambitious of doing more than putting together a striking set of incidents. And they do honour not only to his skill, but his feelings. Nothing is either timidly avoided, or callously dwelt upon. They follow each other naturally, exciting our interest, never disappointing us, and always involving something of the agitating without uselessness, and the humane without affectation.
Modesty, and discrimination, and "unsuperfluousness," and naturalness, were the interim suppliers of a greater want, that of genius: and Hunt cheerfully put up with the substitution.

Another approach to the drama, apart from those of morality and language, and yet linked to them, is that of biographical research, which takes the man and his times into the consideration of his works. Johnson's scholarly research into the lives of the poets anticipated the romantics' concern with biographical criticism. The approach, too, was anticipated to some extent in Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare:

That much knowledge is scattered over his works is very justly observed by Pope, but it is often such knowledge as books will not supply. He that will understand Shakespeare must not be content to study him in the closet, he must look for his meaning sometimes among the sports of the field, and among the manufactures of the shop.

There is however proof enough that he was a very diligent reader...36

Substantial amounts of the information provided by real experience and book-learning Johnson considered to be the indispensable stock-in-trade of the playwright; if they were lacking, nothing else could supply the want. Johnson seems to set a higher valuation upon real experience, than that of books. In his account of Savage, he says:

an interval of prosperity furnished him with opportunities of enlarging his knowledge of human nature, by contemplating life from its highest gradations to the lowest; and had he afterwards
applied to dramatrick poetry, he would perhaps not have had many superiors.37

And of Milton, whose tragedy, Samson Agonistes, was good in vain, Johnson says:

Milton would not have excelled in dramatrick writing; he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, nor the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.38

Johnson, then, demanded an informed playwright - informed principally by commerce and converse with the world of men; and in this consideration he did not find Shakespeare wanting.

The romantics, with their greater propensity for "psychologizing," were even more particular about the playwright's qualifications - and the critic's. Shakespeare, again, was their "mould of form." "We must study," Hunt said, "where Shakespeare studied - in the fields, in the heavens - in the heart and fortunes of man; and he and the other great poets should be our reading out of school hours."39 "School" was the school of life, to Hunt; and reading, though important, was secondary to it. He preferred Milton's smaller poems to Paradise Lost, with its "oppressiveness of ambition and conscious power"40 - because the smaller poems were illuminated by that lyrical impulse which is the product of real experience in the world of men, rather than vicarious experience in the world of letters:
In the Allegro and Penseroso, &c., he is in better spirits with all about him; his eyes had not grown dim, nor his soul been forced inward by disappointment into a proud self-esteem, which he narrowly escaped erecting into self-worship. He loves nature, not for the power he can get out of it, but for the pleasure it affords him; he is at peace with town as with country, with courts and cathedral-windows; goes to the play and laughs; to the village-green and dances; and his study is placed, not in the old Jewry, but in an airy tower, from which he good-naturedly hopes that his candle - I beg pardon, his "lamp" (for he was a scholar from the first, though not a Puritan) may be seen by others.

It is perhaps an idealized portrait of Milton's youth; but it indicates Hunt's view that the proper study of the poet - and presumably of the playwright, for it was Shakespeare's - was "Nature herself, the great and perfecting mistress without whom we become either eccentric pretenders or danglers after inferior beauty, or repeaters, at best, of her language, at second hand."

Psychological considerations of an author could help to damn his play. Hunt found Dr. Young wanting as a playwright. Johnson tolerated The Revenge, because the "reflections, the incidents, and the diction, are original. The moral observations are so introduced as to have all the novelty that can be desired." Hunt's criticism of the play is nothing but an acrimonious denunciation of Young and the spirit that produced "Night Thoughts":

He was a man of the world, of the very worldliest description, and under the most disagreeable disguise he took orders, when advanced in life, for the purpose of getting preferment, and because he
did not get as much as he wished, he left posterity the charming legacy of a long, gloomy book in blank verse, full of false poetry, false ethics, and false religion, and tending to dishonour, under the mask of piety, the providence which had not thought fit to make him a Bishop. We do not wish to cant even against canters, not to allow them fair play, considering the circumstances that mould them as well as others; but if we hate anything, it is that vain and splenetic spirit of self-reference, which measures everything in the world by its own crabbed meanness, and would fain pollute the good and beauty of it in the apprehension of all the rest of mankind, because accident has put its own gross mouth out of taste. But enough of the famous poem of the "Night Thoughts," which so many good, unthinking people take for the effusion of a kind of saint, but which really emanated from a disappointed courtier, who could not sleep for thinking he had lost a mitre! It is said, that he wrote with a lamp and skull before him, given him by the profligate Duke of Wharton: a worthy accompaniment, and likely enough. But be that as it may, it is certain that he dedicated his Revenge to the Duke, though he knew what sort of a man he was, and knew that his profligacy was not of any common and pardonable sort. But he expected places from him!... As for the tragedy, it has clever things in it, but is disfigured with misplaced wit and artificial feelings. We could endure but little of it, and came away.44

This classic example of Hunt's personal attacks puts to some question his detachment and objectivity in the office of critic. But to Hunt the office of critic was a moral one, whose ends were the dissemination of goodness and light, and the cultivation of an audience worthy to receive them. There is more than personal asperity in this account of Young; Hunt is railing at the whole system of thinking that underlay Young's poetry; a dangerous and malignant system of thinking in the state of universal benevolence which Hunt was trying to bring into being.
Besides the learning that comes from books and from life, then, a certain kind of mental set was essential to the playwright, according to Hunt - a product of the disposition and the circumstances of that learning: the kind of reading, and the kind of living. For Hunt was never forgetful of the millennium that had to come, that mankind were hungry, and thirsty, and impatient for. He was tired of superstition and chastisement, and believed that reform would be most quickly brought about by those who did not choose the least cheerful ways of effecting their object. All Hunt's moral criteria have in view this future possible condition of society, this fulfilment of the tenets of the *Political Justice.*

Hunt's ideal was tinged with the thought of Rousseau, with its vision of freeing man from the chains of church and state - superstition and the veneration of authority. Johnson, never an advocate of Rousseau, believed in the retention of most of the shackles which the present state of society

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imposed, as being in the interest of the individual.
Johnson's morality was founded upon reason; Hunt's was
founded upon benevolent intuition. Johnson could find
a system of social duty in Shakespeare, because "he that
thinks reasonably must think morally; but Shakespeare's
precepts and axioms drop casually from him." But this
very unthinking quality exalted him in Hunt's eyes: Shake­
spere, writing "in general... entirely as he felt", was so
unerringly right.

It was one of Shakespeare's excellencies, to both John­
son and Hunt, that when he wrote "entirely as he felt" his
language was perfectly in keeping with the demands of the
situation, whatever the level and import of the situation.
Hunt looked to the new playwrights to find a similar level
of propriety. Elevated diction, in the old sense, was out,
according to Hunt: for "there is nothing higher than nature."
Johnson still thought there was a place for formal exhortation
and declamation in classical tragedy. The linguistic views of
both men were allied to their views of dramatic function:
Johnson's pleasure and instruction, Hunt's pleasure and exal­
tation. And those views were linked with their social ideals.

Hunt, as theatre critic, was in sympathy with the audience
whose taste he strove to elevate. And he was not out of
sympathy with the managers, whose problems he acknowledged. At
least they were willing to produce any new thing that had a
chance with the public. On the occasion of one new production,
Hunt wrote:

The eagerness with which the managers of the theatres pounce upon a new work of any popularity, in order to turn it to account, is a striking instance of the dearth of dramatic talent. However, it is at least a proof that they are aware of the deficiency, and willing to mend it. But will none of all the literary men of the day help to get society and manners out of their monotony and revive the drama? To write a play nowadays - to set the comic or tragic muse fairly up again - is a task so tempting, we should think, to anyone's ambition, that one is almost provoked to exclaim, like old Absolute in the play, "I'll marry the girl myself!" 46

But the theatre lagged behind the important literary developments in the nineteenth century, and the literary men of the day were generally content to exercise their talents elsewhere. Hunt, though, many years later, did "marry up with the muse" in his own play, _A Legend of Florence_. His love-affair of the theatre was of life-long duration. The offspring of it will be the subject of the next chapter, along with Irene, the product of Johnson's flirtation.
"A gentleman known as Pot, or some such name" has been discredited for two centuries - as he was discredited by Johnson - for his estimate of Irene as "the finest tragedy in modern times."¹ "If Pot says so, Pot lies!" Johnson is supposed to have commented; and Pot and Irene have remained discredited to this day.

Scholars have remained content with Johnson's estimate, and that of some of his contemporaries. But reports of that estimate are scarce, and not unequivocal. Johnson had little to say about Irene, and was content that he should not be reminded of that part of his life when his attachment for the theatre had been formed. There is the Pot incident, and another, much later, account of a reading of the play "to a company at a house in the country." After a time Johnson left the room, and when someone asked him why he had done so, he replied, "Sir, I thought it had been better."² But the readers, or the occasion, might have been unsuitable. Once Mrs. Thrale managed to get Johnson to read some passages from the play - in September, 1778: "He read several speeches, and told us he had never read so much of it before since it was first printed."³

Boswell says, in the Life of Johnson: "Irene, considered as a poem, is intitled to the praise of superiour excellence. Analysed into parts, it will furnish a rich store of noble"
sentiments, fine imagery, and beautiful language; but it is deficient in pathos, in that delicate power of touching the human feelings, which is the principal end of the drama."^4 Garrick, who acted in the play, said, "When Johnson writes tragedy, declamation roars, and passion sleeps."^5 Aaron Hill, having attended the play, found **Irene Johnson's** "proper representative: strong sense ungraced by sweetness or decorum."^6 But Tom Davies said: "Since the days of Cato, no tragedy has been acted which was so justly admired for beauty of diction, energy of sentiment, harmony of versification, and purity of moral. ...Notwithstanding the approbation of **Irene** was not so general as might have been expected, it was greatly admired by a number of judicious spectators, who supported it in a run of nine nights."^7

The opinion of twentieth-century theatre historian Allardyce Nicoll is allied to that of Garrick and Hill: **"Irene is strictly regular; the scene is unchanged from first scene to last, the time is only a few hours, the action is one and entire. Everything is according to the true pseudo-classical pattern; all that is lacking is tragic spirit and fire. Declamation dominates Irene, sometimes declamation which rises to the height of a grand rhetoric, but declamation will not make a play, so that we remain cold alike at the patriotism of Demetrius, the villainy of Cali, the agony of Irene. A frigid chill enwraps the whole work."**^8
The issues treated in the play, and the method of treatment of them, are sufficiently Johnsonian. Love is only one of the passions, which, as they are regular or exorbitant, cause happiness or calamity. The other "general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated," are those of patriotism, ambition, greed, envy, and jealousy; and the characters of Johnson's play are agitated by them, perhaps, in a way sufficiently general and formal that they remain beings "above our solicitude... of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless indifference."  

Yet, despite the elements of chill grandeur, elevated declamation, and classic regularity noted in the various critical appraisals of Johnson's play, there is a considerable amount of tension generated by the play's fable. Deceptions and intrigues provide ample dramatic irony: Cali, the Turkish Emperor's chief vizier, plots against the emperor, and the Emperor plots against him; Abdalla and Demetrius are comrades in arms, and rivals in love for Aspasia; and Irene totters on the brink of decision, as the forces of passion and intellect contend within her.  

The war between emotion and reason was a lifelong preoccupation of Johnson's, and his avowals of the passions as governors of action are not frequent. Although he liked to
think that most issues could be settled by intellectualization, Johnson did not deny the strong role of the passions in the actual conduct of human life. There is the strong instance in Chapter XVIII of *Rasselas*, of the philosopher who could not live up to the dictates of his "truth and reason" when his daughter had died of a fever; his polished periods and studied sentences became so much empty rhetorical sound.

*Rasselas* is supposed to have been written by Johnson to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral, at a time when his emotions might reasonably have been omnipresent. *Irene* was written at a time of Johnson's life when the dictates of the passion of love were not to be denied. When he came up to London to complete his tragedy, he had to leave behind his wife of less than two years, for whom his love, if not realistic, was very real by all accounts. At twenty-eight, Johnson may have had the same immoderacy in his marital demands as he is known to have had in eating and drinking. At any rate, in *Irene* is contained the strongest statement of the supremacy of passion in the ordering of men's affairs, that is to be found in Johnson. If there is any quotation in the play, worthy of inclusion in compendiums of quotations, it is: "To cant... of reason to a lover." Abdalla's speech to Cali contains a sturdy Johnsonian rejection of cant - cant in the name of reason, opposed to the hot, precipitate zeal of a lover:
Hast thou grown old amidst the crowd of courts,  
And turn'd th'instructive page of human life,  
To cant, at last, of reason to a lover?  
Such ill-tim'd gravity, such serious folly,  
Might well befit the solitary student,  
Th'unpractis'd dervise, or sequester'd faquir.  
Know'st thou not yet, when Love invades the soul,  
That all her faculties receive her chains?  
That Reason gives her sceptre to his hand,  
Or only struggles to be more enslav'd?  
Aspasia, who can look upon thy beauties,  
Who hear thee speak, and not abandon reason?  
Reason! the hoary dotard's dull directress,  
That loses all because she hazards nothing!  
Reason, the tim'rous pilot, that to shun  
The rocks of life, for ever flies the port!  

Cali is similarly set upon by Demetrius:  

Tomorrow's action! Can that hoary wisdom,  
Borne down with years, still dote upon tomorrow?  
That fatal mistress of the young, the lazy,  
The coward, and the fool, condemn'd to lose  
An useless life in waiting for tomorrow,  
To gaze with longing eyes upon tomorrow?  
Till interposing death destroys the prospect!  
Strange! that this general fraud from day to day  
Should fill the world with wretches undetected,  
The soldier, lab'ring through a winter's march,  
Still sees tomorrow dress'd in robes of triumph;  
Still to the lover's long expecting arms  
Tomorrow brings the visionary bride.  
But thou, too old to bear another cheat,  
Learn, that the present hour alone is man's.  

The precipitate rashness of the action is vindicated at the catastrophe, when further delay would have caused further disaster. Moreover, Irene is destroyed by following the dictates of her reason; in giving herself to Mahomet, she defies her emotions, and in so doing she makes her reason her tragic flaw, for Mahomet cannot believe that she has really given herself to him, that her conversion is really complete.
The truth to life of the love passages, the vigour of expression, and the various complications of the plot, reward the scholarly and antiquarian perusal of the play that was Johnson's first fling at fame, and last attempt to distinguish himself in the theatre. One would expect this product of Johnson's youth to be vinous, sensuous, and violent; and it is these things to a greater extent than his later writings. That it is not so to a greater degree than it is, is due to various compensatory factors.

Johnson, understandably for an apprentice writer, was beholden to certain models, and mostly to one model, Cato, which he thought "the best model of tragedy we had." His practical familiarity with the theatre was not very great; Lichfield had little in the way of acted drama, and in London Johnson had to live too frugally to be able to attend the theatre. His somewhat idealized conception of the theatre was formed through an extensive scholarly knowledge of the classical and modern dramatists, and exalted by prospects of wealth and fame, such as recent successes had won for Gay, Steele, and Addison. With Irene, Johnson "first thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement." His talent, he felt, was of such a kind that it suited better the needs of classical tragedy, such as that of Addison, than
those of comedy or domestic tragedy.

Similarities between *Irene* and *Cato* are apparent, both in structure and characterization. The expository parts of the two plays are alike dialogues which describe recent events. Both plays have a female case of two - one another's confidantes and counsellors, but with one dominant: Marcia, in *Cato*, and Aspasia, the real, although impossibly virtuous, heroine of *Irene*. Had Aspasia and Cato been amalgamated in one play, one imagines that the fusion of so much purity and light would have ignited them spontaneously with an intense white flame.

*Irene* and *Cato* are alike representative of that characteristically eighteenth-century genre, pseudo-classical tragedy, in the large amount of action that is reported, rather than seen on the stage. There is brief promise, in Johnson's play, of a duel between Demetrius and Abdalla, but Abdalla reasons himself out of participating - and his reasoning propensities destroy him in the end:

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Well mayst thou call thy master to the combat,
And try the hazard, that has naught to stake;
Alike my death or thine is gain to thee.14
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The "act-tags", by means of which the audience knew that the act was finished, there being no curtain drop to announce the fact, would establish Johnson's play as of eighteenth-century or earlier origin. The rhymed parts at the ends of the acts of *Irene* are suggestive of those of *Cato*; the following is Mahomet's exhortation of *Irene*, at the end of Act
II, to renounce her race and religion and enjoy the glittering worldly treasures that he can offer her:

If greatness please thee, mount th' imperial seat;  
If pleasure charm thee, view this soft retreat.  
Here ev'ry warbler of the sky shall sing;  
Here ev'ry fragrance breathe of ev'ry spring;  
To deck these bow'rs, each region shall combine,  
And e'en our prophets gardens envy thine:  
Empire and love shall share the blissful day,  
And varied life steal unperceiv'd away.  

But Irene's conversion to Mohammedanism would incur her acceptance of a soul of inferior caste to that of a man; and in her very able arguments for "equal rights for women" some of Johnson's early and late espousal of feminist causes is reflected. And elsewhere the play provides setting for some generally Johnsonian homilies, such as that on the vanity of human wishes:

How heav'n, in scorn of human arrogance,  
Commits to trivial chance the fate of nations!  
While with incessant thought laborious man  
Extends his mighty schemes of wealth and pow'r,  
And tow'rs and triumphs in ideal greatness;  
Some accidental gust of opposition  
Blasts all the beauties of his new creation,  
O'erturns the fabric of presumptuous reason,  
And whelms the swelling architect beneath it.  

The conclusion is surely Johnson's "proper representative":

So sure the fall of greatness rais'd on crimes!  
So fix'd the justice of all-conscious heav'n!  
Where haughty guilt exults with impious joy,  
Mistake shall blast, or accident destroy;  
Weak man with erring rage may throw the dart,  
But heav'n shall guide it to the guilty heart.  

But although the conclusion reveals Johnson's palpable intent "to reward virtue and punish vice," it is a criticism
of the play that the conclusion is greater than the premises
warrant. The brunt of misfortune has fallen upon Irene, who
has been established as too weak and vacillating a character
to sustain the role of tragic heroine satisfactorily. Irene,
in capitulating to Mahomet, has herself half-persuaded, and
the reader is half-persuaded, that her motives are altruistic.
She then attempts to demonstrate her loyalty to her
new lord, and is put to death for her pains. Good and ill
are so mingled in her character that her fate is of ques-
tionable value to supply a moral which Johnson felt had some
pretensions to universality.

Johnson's play, perhaps, never did reward him for his
perplexities in the writing of it. He wrote it at a time
when he had high ideals for, and little familiarity with,
the theatre. As a relic of the early state of his mind -
in a time of marital preplexities, poverty, and his first
experience of London - Irene shows through its determination
to be classical a special vitality, and its very short-
comings give it a special niche in the shrine of Johnsoniana.
Rather than endeavour to improve his performance in a medium
with which by the time of the production of his play Johnson
was already disenchanted, he parted company with the theatre
and found fame and greatness in other things which he liked
better.
Johnson's play allowed its audience to will, if they would, the suspension of their disbelief, but at the expense of considerable effort. Concessions to any illusionary effect were minimal. Johnson tolerated "the charm of sound, the pomp of show" insofar as they were concomitants to dramatic effect. But in "imperial tragedy" the effect was always mitigated by the presence of such concomitants; and Johnson wrote a play of an austere kind, which placed foremost emphasis on the moral lesson to be learned and the rhetoric that would best convey it.

The case was quite different in Hunt's time. The public, for one thing, had no longer any taste for tragedies such as Cato; they preferred something less exalted and pretentious - and more realistic. The theme of Hunt's play was not an elevated one, and the language, in general, suited the needs of domestic tragedy. Progress was being made in the theatre towards a greater scenic realism, and perhaps a greater histrionic realism.

The progress of the theatre towards realism was hardly matched, in the first half of the century, by a commensurate attention to realism on the part of writers for the stage. These were dramatic "hard times" - when the monopoly had made the illegitimate drama worse, and the legitimate drama had to follow suit in order to compete with it.
It would be pleasant to report that Leigh Hunt's play was an oasis in a grey waste. The writing of it was an outcome of his lifetime of experience with the theatre as critic, and Hunt was never unaware of those theatrical shortcomings that were "hallowed by custom, and rooted in tradition." At the same time his experience had shown him that the theatre was not the ideal place for the promulgation of uncommon ideas. A Legend of Florence disappoints the critic who expects to find in the play an expression of Leigh Hunt's earlier liberal outlook. Allardyce Nicoll, however, has kind words for it:

Hunt's play is... free of reminiscences of earlier drama, and shows a power of construction and an ease of dialogue which makes us wish that its author had devoted more time to the stage.... Such a play as this shows how the other poets failed. The story is only a "legend of Florence," yet Hunt has been able to give it true life. We may condemn the work because of the unreality of its theme - for here he followed the others - but his product has a strength which is wanting elsewhere. Had the legitimate poets been as Lovell and Hunt, the story of our nineteenth-century drama might have been vastly different. The Milmans the Maturins, the Talfourds - even the Byrons and the Brownings - merely led it astray.18

The play's chief strength is its "ease of dialogue," and even that strength is mitigated sometimes by "tumour and tediousness" out of keeping with what Hunt's earlier concept of tragic dialogue prescribed. Hunt's treatment of an unrealistic theme is insipid; it is only a faint echo of that liberality of spirit which characterised his earlier writings. One may perhaps wish that Hunt could have been
spared from his daily journalistic concerns, in his prime. The theme is as follows: Ginevra has married Agolanti, a wealthy and noble Florentine; she is loved by Antonio Rondinelli. Not loving her husband, she is pining away, but the passion of the two lovers remains pure. She seems to die, but revives in the tomb and is rescued by Antonio. When Agolanti comes to claim her from Antonio, she finally rebels and refuses to go with him, and in the resultant melée Agolanti is killed.

Of the play's success at Covent Garden in 1840, Hunt wrote:

Most kind have been my old readers to me; for surely the audience on the first night must have been half made up of them, to be so willing to be pleased. Most kind, also, has been the press, of all parties,—doubtless moved by a like readiness to think the best of a not ill-natured writer; and especially am I bound to value this general spirit of good will, and, above all, the loud and instantaneous sympathy of the audience with the poetical justice of the catastrophe, when I consider how the treatment of domestic tyranny appears to have puzzled the ethics of some of my literary brethren; and how questions, which had been accustomed to beg all the delicacies on one side, suddenly and provokingly beheld the possibility of at least an equality of claim shifted to the other.

The play, and its reception, provide an interesting commentary on Victorian morality. We feel that here, in Hunt's treatment of "domestic tyranny," we should have the explanation of those "loose and not very definite speculations" on marriage that Lamb was at pains to exonerate Hunt's practice from in 1823. But the situation is not much
improved by *A Legend of Florence*. Although the state of marriage is not exalted in the play, it is justified; and there is no liberal solution, as one might have expected from Hunt, for its injustices; nothing, at least, approaching pantisocracy. The solution to Agolanti and Ginevra's problem has no universal applications. What does emerge, is Hunt's New Deal for Women - but it has no very militant statement.

The view of marriage in the following passages in the play is not a favourable one. Rondinelli's friend, in the first act, is attempting to persuade him that Ginevra will not really languish away - that her love for him will preserve her: "Bethink thee what a life within a life/ She has to retire into, sweet and secret." Another friend further seeks to reassure Rondinelli:

Colonna. Why then, sir, look; there are a hundred marriages
In Florence, and a hundred more to those,
And hundreds to those hundreds, bad as this;
As ill-assorted, and as lover-hated;
(Always allowing for the nobler difference,
And therefore greater power to bear); and yet
They do not kill; partly, because of lovers;
Partly, of pride; partly, indifference;
Partly, of hate (a good, stanch, long-lived passion);
Partly, because all know the common case,
And custom's custom. There'll be a hundred couples
Tonight, 'twixt Porta Pinti and San Gallo,
Cutting each others' hearts out with mild looks,
Upon the question, whether the Pope's mule
Will be in purple or scarlet; - yet not one
Will die of it; no, faith; nor were a death
To happen, would the survivor's eyes refuse
A tear to their old disputant and partner,
That kept life moving somehow.
By which logic
You would infer, to comfort me, that all
Marriages are unhappy.

Not unhappy,
Though not very happy.

Half facetiously, Da Riva hypothesizes "some future possible condition of society" when a better state of things will be realized:

A time will come -

Poet and prophet - Redunt Saturnia regna.
Now hear him on his favorite golden theme,
"A time will come"; a time, eh? when all marriages shall be like some few dozen; exceptions, rules;
Every day, Sunday; and each man's pain in the head
A crowning satisfaction!

No, but still
A time when sense and reason shall have grown
As much more rife than now, and foolish thorns
As much less in request, as we, now living,
Surpass rude times and savage ancestors.
Improvement stopped not at the muddy cave,
Why at the rush-strewn chamber? The wild man's dream,
Or what he might have dreamt, when at his wildest,
Is, to the civilized man, his commonplace.
And what should time so reverence in ourselves,
As in his due good course, not still to alter?

The time of that future happy condition is then suggested:

Till chariots run some twenty miles an hour?
Ay, thirty or forty.
Oh! oh! Without horses? Say, without horses?
Well, to oblige you, yes.
And sailing boats without a sail! Ah, ha!
Well, glory be to poetry and to poets!
If this prophesy had been fulfilled, Leigh Hunt in the nineteenth-century might have known of a happy solution to the problem of "not very happy" marriages. But *A Legend of Florence* throws no light on any such solution, although a very Victorian one is found. Ginevra's "life within a life" - her love for Rondinelli - keeps her in a state of languishing existence in her "lover-hated" marriage, and keeps her somewhat rancorous towards Agolanti; but her impossible virtuousness allows her to give no comfort to her lover. The situation is not much eased by the efforts on Rondinelli's behalf of Da Riva, poet, and Colonna, member of the Pope's guard. They speak of "foolish thorns" but seem unable to relieve the discomfort of them. The twentieth-century reader recoils from the tactics of a pair of such palpable "do-gooders" and tends to side with Agolanti, who, at any rate, does love his wife, and who defends his marriage on the grounds that it is no worse than a hundred others in Florence:

Agolanti. My house is not quite happy. You see it. Whose is? But look, sir, - why should Florence fall on me? Why select me, as the scape-goat of a common And self-resented misery? 'Tis a lie, A boy's lie, a turn'd off servant's lie, That mine is a worse misery than their own, Of more deserved. You know the Strozzi family, You know the Baldi, Rossi, Brunelleschi,- You do, Signor da Riva, - the Guidi also, And Arregucci: - well, - are they all smiles? All comfort? Is there, on the husbands' sides, No roughness? no plain-speaking? or, on the wives',
No answering, tart or otherwise? no black looks?
No softest spite; nor meekness, pale with malice?
No smile with the teeth set, shivering forth a sneer?
Take any dozen couples, the first you think of,
Those you know best; and see, if matrimony
Has been a success with them, or a dull failure;
Dull at the best; probably, damn'd with discord;
A hell, the worse for being carried about
With quiet looks; or, horriblest of all,
Between habitual hate and fulsome holiday.

**Da Riva.** Oh, Sir, you wrong poor mix'd humanity,
And think not how much nobleness relieves it,
Nor what a heap of good old love there lies
Sometimes in seeming quarrel. I thought you, sir,
I must confess, a more enduring Christian.

**Colonna.** And churchman, sir. I own I have been
astonish'd -
Pardon one somewhat nearer than yourself
Unto the church's prince - to hear you speak
Thus strangely of a holy ordinance.

Colonna's sanctimonious cant in the play appears to have been meant to be taken seriously. The arrant hypocrisy of Colonna and da Riva is painted in a magic paint that was invisible to the nineteenth-century audience. Yet the characterization of Agolanti, even in the nineteenth century, seems to have been a flaw in the play. Hunt's humanitarian bent seems to have rendered him incapable of painting a thorough-going villain. Even da Riva says of Agolanti:

*Nay, I won't swear he does not love his wife,
As well as a man of no sort of affection
Nor any tenderness can do so.*

The man who has "no sort of affection, nor any domestic tenderness" seems more to be pitied than chastened, for his lot; and one is inclined to attach some of the blame to some defect in the wife - as did the critic on the *Examiner,* who
It does not appear if she ever had, at any time, shown him even that semblance of fondness which a man's self-indulgence would naturally claim; or how much the utter want of this has had its influence on the misery of their home. The uncertainty in which this is left, is perhaps an evidence of the writer's genius; a means scarcely recognized by himself, of seeing fair play done on both sides, even between oppressor and oppressed. She has a lover whom it is evident she most strongly loves, while she most strongly discourages. We shrink from this, and are half inclined to take part with the husband. She is patient under all the tortures of a villainous temper, but it is a patience without a touch of affection in it, the cold and shrinking suffering of the grave. We shrink from this, too, and are loath to condemn the husband utterly.

The sudden disintegration of Agolanti's character at the end of the play is a flaw noticed by the Examiner critic: "Francesco Agolanti... is the major portraiture of the play, and in all respects, except towards the close, exquisitely finished." There is an inconsistency, too, in Ginevra's character at the close. Hitherto she has remained in character, acting in a consistently perverse manner, but at the final scene, when Hunt decides to have her not renounce the world and get to a nunnery, but to return to her penitent husband, her decision not to

...go back to that unsacred house,
Where heav'nly ties restrain not hellish discord

suddenly makes her the mouthpiece for Hunt's liberal, feminist, and "not very definite speculations." What of the "holy ordinance" now? At this last straw, at Agolanti's
last word, where he conveniently betrays his villainy, like a deus ex machina,

Who triumphs now? who laughs? who mocks at Pandars, Cowards, and shameless women?27

Ginevra claims "the judgment of most holy church," but in the next moment, Agolanti has been killed. There is little left unsaid at the close; the action is all but "one and entire"; and the inference meant to be drawn is that, after a decent interval of grief, Ginevra will fly to the patient, loving arms of Rondinelli.

The principles inculcated by A Legend of Florence are so cloudy that the necessity for Hunt's professed temerity in stating them is hard to account for. Perhaps the mere representation of a home in which discord reigned was offensive on the Victorian stage. The Examiner critic says: "It is indeed the interior of a home, whose doors, in theatres, have hitherto been carefully closed. Perhaps few men would have encountered the risk of flinging them so widely open."28

It is a pity that, having flung them open, Hunt did not allow a little more air and light in. Death was found to be the only solution to a liaison such as that of Ginevra and Agolanti, although da Riva and Colonna did try to make the hate of it a little more loving, at least on Agolanti's side. But after fifteen years in which to contemplate the matter, Hunt, regrettably, does not seem to have thought it
worthwhile to promulgate on the stage those "lawless notions of his own," whatever they were, that he once held high in his Examiner criticism of Barry Cornwall's Mirandola, when he said:

His women are the same ill-used creatures as formerly, only he makes their tenderness and patience so lovely, that we fall in for the moment with what we think the mistaken sentiments of society, and blink the question of improvement for the sake of indulging ourselves in lordly pity.29

Ginevra is still a subject for lordly pity - combined perhaps, with a justifiable lordly impatience. The overall effect of the play is not an ennobling one, as the critic on the Examiner remarked:

The effect left on the mind is that of a perplexed moral sense, in which much that is the most ennobling and grand in our nature is dashed and alloyed with much that is the most unworthy. There is too large an admixture of this in life itself, to suffer us to charge it on the author as a crime against the actual, however great may be its sin against the ideal. The question will rather be, perhaps, how far the stage is the theatre for such lessons.30

A Legend of Florence seems to demonstrate a shift from Hunt's earlier viewpoint - "that the most unceasing and effective reformers have not been among those who have taken the least cheerful means of effecting their object,"31 and that "the lighter colours should predominate, at least in places designed for recreation."32 In seeking to reform opinion upon an issue "which had been accustomed to beg all the delicacies on one side," he certainly indulged in the
spleenetic side of the representation. And Ginevra's sudden reformation carries no great weight of conviction. Perhaps Hunt was not one of those artists "of a higher order of poetry and genius, who alone know how to temper and soften" the darker colours in the mingled yarn "of which 'the web of life' is composed." His treatment tends to obscure the pattern. The liberal admixture of good in Agolanti, "the master-portraiture of the play," makes him too sympathetic a figure, and the one who invites identification more than any other; the admixture of bad, or at least negative, in Ginevra, makes the audience lose patience with her as the action proceeds. To portray one positive act after a succession of weak and negative ones is not to strike any great blow for the emancipation of womanhood — it is rather to call the issue to question. The diffuseness of the play's "moral" is largely accountable to this weakness in characterization, which was not missed by the nineteenth-century critic.

In his theatre criticism, Hunt presaged and ably fostered that concept of "fourth-wall realism" which was substantially fulfilled later in the century; in his play he was a remote precursor of Ibsen, who showed with more realism the interior of homes, "whose doors, in theatres, have been hitherto carefully closed." But in A Legend of Florence Hunt commits a technical regression, in his
characterization of Ginevra, from his early strong espousal of stage realism: "An actor... who indulges himself... in looking at the audience, and acknowledging their approbation, is just as ridiculous as I should be myself, if I were to look every moment at the reflection of my own smile in my looking-glass, or make a bow to the houses on the other side of the way."34

But in the stage directions of *A Legend of Florence*, Ginevra is instructed to look at the audience; [She clasps her hands, and speaks with constant vehemence, looking towards the audience.] The speech which she delivers in this stance is perhaps edifying, for the light that it throws upon Hunt's humanitarian view of womankind. It is instructive, too, in revealing a regression from Hunt's earlier avowal of "natural" diction:

Alas! alas! why was that one word utter'd
To bear down the last patience of my soul,
And make me cry aloud to heaven and misery?
I am most miserable. I am a creature
That now, for fifteen years, from childhood upwards,
Till this hard moment, when the heavens forbid it,
Have not known what it was to shed a tear,
Which others met with theirs. Therefore mine eyes
Did learn to hush themselves, and young, grow dry.
For my poor father knew not how I loved him,
Nor mother neither; and my severe husband
Demanded love, not knowing lovingness.
And now I cry out, wishing to be right,
And being wrong; and by the side of me
Weeps the best heart, which ought not so to weep,
And duty's self seems to turn round upon me,
And mock me; by whose law nevertheless
Do I abide, and will; so pray heaven
To keep me in my wits, and teach me better.
Turn me aside, sweet saints, and let me go.35
Perhaps Hunt wrote better than he knew, for his play is in advance of its times in its presentation of a complex character. The situation would have been better served by a simple one; the characterization of the other parts is straightforward and conventional, and the plot and construction of the play are such that the commonplace is expected, or even demanded, and yet there is Agolanti. One is reminded of Hunt's comment upon an actor who "lost half his proper effect by the very strength of his powers:"

Strange! by the means defeated of the ends!36

It is easy, and perhaps unfair and unprofitable, to find fault with Victorian drama. Some of the stage's conventions then seem ludicrous today - Ginevra's posturings, for instance. Another pre-Ibsenian convention, far from realism, but which Hunt fully exploited in his play, is that of the "asides," which were the dramatist's expository deus ex machina; and which have suffered a pejorative change until they are now regarded as the trappings of melodrama. The following excerpt illustrates the kind of use they were put to in Hunt's play - and incidentally tends to reinforce one's sympathy for Agolanti. The scene is Agolanti's house, where the "do-gooders" have come to ask if they may watch the Pope's procession from Ginevra's windows, which front the route:
Lady Olimpia. I fear we have tired her
With our loud talk, Signor Francesco.

Ginevra. No; 'tis like bright health come to talk
with us:
Is it not? (To her husband).

Agolanti. (Aside). She knows I hate it. - Lady Olimpia
Brings ever a sprightly stirring to the spirit,
And her fair friend a balm. (Aside, to Ginevra). What
want they now, this flaunter and insipidity?

Ginevra. (Aloud). Our neighbour and her friends
bring a petition,
That it would please you to convenience them
With your fair windows for the coming spectacle;
Yourself, if well enough, doubling the grace,
With your good company.

Agolanti. (Aside). I thought as much.
At every turn my will is to be torn from me,
And at her soft suggestion. (Aloud). My windows
Cannot be better filled, than with such beauty,
And wit and modest eloquence.

In his preface to the second edition of A Legend of
Florence, Hunt comments upon the actors, in the mellow,
charitable spirit of his Tatler criticisms:

I wish I could shower upon Miss Ellen Tree pearls
and gems, equal to the syllables that she so readily
utters, with those bright eyes, and those lips which
seem made delightedly to say "yes."

To Mr. Bartley, who played da Riva,

I am indebted for that hearty and emphatic delivery
of every word which happened to be of more importance
than it might seem to a right understanding of the
spirit of the play. What there is at present of
heaviness in Mr. Anderson's [Rondinelli's] style is
an ore containing gold; and will wear off as the
passion in him, of which he has a great deal, learns
to run into a state of fusion, and to overcome intel-
lectual-looking temptations to isolated bits of des-
cription and illustration.
Mr. Moore (Agolanti),

too, like Mr. Anderson, occasionally wants an absorption of the less into the greater, or to express what I mean more distinctly, the power of painting incidental images and feelings as he goes, without seeming to stop and paint them. But like him also, he has no cant, no self-absorption, and on the other hand, a faith in passion, which is capable of every acquirable excellence by study. 39

With these acute and characteristic comments on the actors, Hunt's profession of playwright has turned him full circle, and he is again - and still - the theatre critic, who, in commencing to review drama for the News, "discovered what excellent actors we possessed." 40 Hunt began his critical career by criticizing actors; and ever after, his theatre criticism emphasized the role of actors, more than that of authors, producers, or managers, in the theatre. The play was not so much the thing as the player. He became less concerned with the quality of the plays as time went on, and he had more insight into the age's "dearth of dramatic character"; and he ended his theatre criticisms in the Tatler in a mellow spirit of reconciliation with his old enemies, Reynolds and Dibdin, the writers of "five-act farces." The performance of the actors in his own play was of tremendous importance to him; more, he avowed, than the play's ultimate worth. He ventured to prophesy in the preface that Ellen Tree's Ginevra "will be recorded in annals of the stage, though the written
part, as a whole, should not survive its author."

It is hardly reasonable to conjecture that Hunt's play had a better cast than Johnson's did, with Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Pritchard, four leading ornaments of the eighteenth-century stage. Yet there is a rumour that Johnson found fault with the way the lines of *Irene* were delivered. But Johnson, although he should have been the supreme authority for his own play, was by all accounts not a refined critic of acting. At any rate, he could not have been as well-equipped to comment on the actors as was Hunt. What might have happened is that Garrick, who was "no declaimer," and who thought Johnson's play was out of date for the mid-eighteenth-century, might have attempted to infuse into it some of his naturalism.

A comparison of such plays as *Irene* and *A Legend of Florence* is apt to be invidious, especially when different centuries of very different thought are involved. But both plays have been found to be their writer's "proper representative" and to have shown not only personal but cultural traits, and to have illustrated, to some extent, developments in the theatre. Johnson's was the product of an early infatuation, and Hunt's was the postlude to a life-long love affair with the theatre. Johnson's exemplified an ideal which the theatre failed fully to live up to, and Johnson subsequent to the production of his play became estranged from the theatre. *Irene* is a doggedly Johnsonian
play - in its lofty, generalized treatment of theme, general virtues and general vices are dealt with in a manner not calculated to sweep the listener along; its events are remembered "without joy or sorrow," and to see a girl cry at the representation of it would certainly have been the most ridiculous of all things.

Hunt's play is the antithesis of Johnson's in that it errs - at least to our ears - in being excessively particular, rather than general, in its treatment of theme. The theme, perhaps, has general significance, in that "there are a hundred marriages/ In Florence, and a hundred more to those,/ And hundreds to those hundreds" as bad as Agolanti's. But the working out of a particular marriage seems to be such a particular one, with sword-play, and the poetic-justice death of Agolanti, that universality is greatly sacrificed.

If it is easier to find fault with Hunt's play than with Johnson's, it is because Johnson's seems "above solicitude," and shares in the generally deferential regard of the twentieth century towards the eighteenth. Hunt's play is representative of a discredited period of literature, which, temporally closer to our own, is at an opposite pole spiritually. But as an item of "theatralia," Irene is less significant than A Legend of Florence, because Johnson was less practically involved with the theatre, and wrote a
pseudo-classical play when the genre was already out of favour with most eighteenth-century playgoers. Hunt's ideals for acting, production, and the substance of drama were advanced beyond possibility of achievement in the theatre of his time. Although his play seems to show a withdrawal from the position which he held as critic, when he laid the foundations for productions of Ibsen and Shaw in the theatre, Hunt foreshadowed, in *A Legend of Florence*, another important development in the theatre. Without really abandoning his earlier ideals, Hunt recognized in a practical way the two directions which Victorian drama pursued, and wrote a play that augured the heightened realism of Sir Henry Irving's Lyceum productions. Hunt's criticism led the way along one path; his playwriting followed along the other. But his play, a commercial success, is truly representative of one course of the development of the Victorian theatre.
FOOTNOTES

to chapter I


3 *Life*, IV, 221.

4 *Life*, I, 167.


6 *Life*, II, 465; V, 559.


8 *J. on S.*, p. 61.


10 Loc. cit.


13 *Life*, I, 446.

14 Loc. cit.

15 *Life*, I, 71.

16 *Life*, III, 22.

17 *Life*, III, 21.

18 *Life*, II, 361.

19 *Life*, I, 105.
20 Life, V, 378.
21 Life, I, 446.
22 Life, I, 445.
23 Life, II, 15.
24 Life, I, 427.
25 Life, II, 361.
26 Tatler #86.
27 Autobiography, p. 421.
29 Letter, Sept. 1817.
30 Leigh Hunt, I, 203.
32 Leigh Hunt, I.
35 Life, II, 82.
36 Life, I, 448.
37 Autobiography, pp. 19, 452.
38 Life, III, 352.
40 Life, IV, 123.
41 Tatler #279.
42 Autobiography, 453.
43 Loc. cit.
48 Autobiography, p. 17.


51 Tatler #76.

52 Tatler #200.

53 Tatler #268.

54 Tatler #279.

55 Tatler #289.


57 Introduction to J. on S., p. xx1.

58 J. on S., pp. 20-21.


60 Life, I, 199.

61 Works, X, 123.

62 Works, X, 246.

63 Examiner, March 19, 1820.

64 J. on S., p. 21.

65 "Theatrical Examiner", Feb. 21, 1808.

66 "Theatrical Examiner", July 14, 1819.
FOOTNOTES

to Chapter II

1 J. on S., p. 27
2 Life, I, 199.
3 Life, I, 198.
4 Rambler #4, Works, IV, 23.
5 Rasselas, Works, III, 329.
6 J. on S., p. 12.
7 J. on S., pp. 26-27.
8 Rambler #4, Works, IV, 23.
9 Quoted in Odell, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (New York, 1920), p.
10 The Bee (Oct. 6, 1759) #1.
11 Loc. cit.
12 J. on S., p. 28.
15 Life, IV, 243.
16 Life, IV, 243-244.
17 London Chronicle, May 23, 1776.
19 Autobiography, p. 137.
20 Tatler, July 7, 1831.
22 Tatler, Nov. 19, 1830.
23 Tatler, Nov. 20, 1830.
24 "Theatrical Examiner" #1, Jan. 3, 1808.
26 Tatler, Dec. 3, 1830.
27 Theatrical Observer, Oct. 16, 1822.
28 Critical Essays, p. 60.
29 Tatler, August 30, 1831.
30 Tatler #145.
31 Tatler, Nov. 10, 1831.
32 Critical Essays, p. 2.
33 Critical Essays, p. 182.
34 Critical Essays, p. 23.
38 "Theatrical Examiner," April 3, 1820.
39 J. on S., p. 16.
40 Dramatic Essays by Leigh Hunt, p. 127.
41 "Theatrical Examiner", July 20, 1817.
43 J. on S., p. 19.
FOOTNOTES

to Chapter III

1 Rambler #4, Works, IV, 23.


3 In Imagination and Fancy (London, 1844).


7 "Introduction", J. on S., p. xx.

8 J. on S., p. 11.

9 Loc. cit.

10 J. on S., p. 12.

11 Loc. cit.


13 Loc. cit.

14 J. on S., p. 15.

15 J. on S., p. 16.

16 J. on S., p. 20.

17 J. on S., pp. 20-21.

18 J. on S., p. 22.

19 Loc. cit.

20 Loc. cit.

21 J. on S., p. 23.

22 Loc. cit.

23 Loc. cit.
25 J. on S., p. 20.
26 J. on S., p. 36.
27 Loc. cit.
28 J. on S., p. 38.
29 Imagination and Fancy, p. 158.
32 "Theatrical Examiner" #24.
33 "Theatrical Examiner", Nov. 2, 1817.
34 "Theatrical Examiner", March 29, 1812.
35 Imagination and Fancy, p. 132.
36 J. on S., pp. 22-23.
37 Imagination and Fancy, p. 132.
38 Imagination and Fancy, p. 133.
39 J. on S., p. 28.
40 J. on S., p. 61.
42 "Theatrical Examiner", March 12, 1815.
43 "Theatrical Examiner", March 12, 1815.
44 Imagination and Fancy, pp. 249-250.
45 "Theatrical Examiner", June 3, 1810.
47 Critical Essays, pp. 50 ff.
48 Critical Essays, p. 51.
50 Critical Essays, p. 183.
51 "Theatrical Examiner", April 30, 1820.
53 J. on S., pp. 161-162.
54 "Theatrical Examiner", May 28, 1808.
55 Loc. cit.
56 "Table Talk", 1822.
57 Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, I, 108.
58 Tatler #146.
59 J. on S., p. 198.
60 J. on S., p. 125.
61 Life, IV, 192.
62 Life, IV, 515.
63 Tatler #26.
FOOTNOTES

to Chapter IV


2 "Life of Dryden", Works, IX, 332.

3 J. on S., p. 28.

4 "Life of Otway", Works, IX, 226.

5 "Life of Addison", Works, X, 113.

6 Ibid., p. 120.

7 Ibid., p. 123.

8 Tatler #22.


10 Loc. cit.

11 "Theatrical Examiner", January 14, 1821.

12 Tatler #73.


15 Tatler #279.

16 Tatler #289.


18 Tatler #76.

19 J. on S., p. 20.

20 Loc. cit.
21 Life, I, 199, n. 2.
22 Loc. cit.
23 Life, X, 199.
26 Ibid., p. 320.
28 "Life of Rowe", Works, X, 62.
29 "Life of Dryden", Works, IX, 431.
30 "Life of Rowe", Works, X, 64.
31 "Theatrical Examiner", March 13, 1808.
32 "Theatrical Examiner", January 14, 1821.
33 Loc. cit.
34 "Theatrical Examiner", March 16, 1817.
35 "Theatrical Examiner", May 16, 1819.
36 J. on S., p. 36.
37 "Life of Savage", Works, X, 321.
38 "Life of Milton", Works, IX, 178.
39 Feast of the Poets, pp. 58-59.
40 Imagination and Fancy, p. 212.
41 Imagination and Fancy, pp. 212-213.
42 Feast of the Poets, p. 59.
43 "Life of Young", Works, XI, 345.
45 J. on S., p. 21.
46 "Theatrical Examiner", March 15, 1818.
FOOTNOTES to Chapter V

1 Life, IV, 5, n. 1.

2 Life, IV, 5.

3 Life, IV, 5, n. 1.

4 Life, I, 198.

5 Loc. cit., n. 4.

6 Life, 1, 198.

7 Life, 1, 538.


9 J. on S., p. 12.

10 "Life of Addison", Works, X, 120.

11 Irene, Works, I, 69.

12 Ibid., p. 72.

13 Life, I, 201.

14 Irene, Works, I, 111.

15 Ibid., p. 67.

16 Ibid., p. 56.

17 Ibid., p. 128.


20 Legend, p. 25.

21 Legend, pp. 25-27.

22 Legend, pp. 40-41.

23 Legend, p. 4.

24 "Theatrical Examiner", Feb. 9, 1840.

25 Loc. cit.

26 Legend, p. 80.

27 Loc. cit.

28 "Theatrical Examiner", Feb. 9, 1840.


30 "Theatrical Examiner", Feb. 9, 1840.

31 Tatler #279.

32 Tatler #289.

33 Loc. cit.

34 Dramatic Essays by Leigh Hunt, p. 30.

35 Legend, p. 77.

36 Dramatic Essays by Leigh Hunt, p. 48.

37 Legend, p. 21.

38 Legend, p. xiv.
39 Legend, p. xv.

40 Dramatic Essays by Leigh Hunt, p. xxxviii.

41 Legend, p. xiv.

42 Legend, p. 25.
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