

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Samuel Johnson has become known to posterity in two capacities: through his own works as the great literary essayist of the eighteenth century, and, through Boswell's *Life*, as a man – notoriously a medical patient with a string of physical and psychological ailments. John Wiltshire brings the two together in this original study of Johnson the writer as 'Doctor' and patient. The subject of modern medical historians' case studies, Johnson also cultivated the acquaintance of doctors in his own day, and was himself a 'dabbler in physic'. Dr Wiltshire illuminates Johnson's life and work by setting them in their medical context and also examines the importance of medical themes in Johnson's own writings. He discusses the many parts of Johnson's work, touching on doctors, medicine, hospitals and medical experimentation, and analyses the central theme, running throughout, of human suffering – in body and mind – and its alleviation.

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

SAMUEL JOHNSON IN THE
MEDICAL WORLD

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Plaster cast of a bust of Samuel Johnson, incorporating his death-mask (1784). William Cumberland and James Hoskins. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

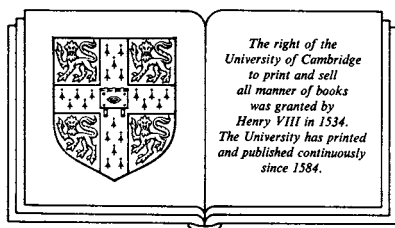
SAMUEL JOHNSON
IN THE
MEDICAL WORLD

THE DOCTOR AND THE PATIENT



JOHN WILTSHIRE

English Department, La Trobe University, Melbourne



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK PORT CHESTER

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

IN MEMORY OF
LEONTINE DINGA
AND
NORAH WILTSHIRE

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521383264

© Cambridge University Press 1991

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1991
This digitally printed first paperback version 2005

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN-13 978-0-521-38326-4 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-38326-9 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-02228-6 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-02228-2 paperback

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS



<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>A note on references</i>	x
Introduction	I
1 Johnson's medical history: facts and mysteries	II
2 The practice of physic	64
3 Transactions of the medical world	90
Fortune of physicians	90
Charity and cruelty	115
Johnson and vivisection	128
4 Medicine as metaphor	141
5 The history of a man of learning	165
6 Dr Robert Levet	195
7 Therapeutic friendship	223
<i>Notes</i>	244
<i>Bibliography</i>	271
<i>Index</i>	285

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE



MEDICINE HAS been written as the story of doctors, their practices and achievements. Recently, there has been a shift to the patient. Writers from widely different fields – neurology (Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings*, 1973, revised edition 1982), literary criticism (Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 1985), medical history (Roy Porter, *Patients and Practitioners*, 1985; *Mind Forg'd Manacles*, 1987) and anthropology, (Arthur Kleinman, *Social Origins of Distress and Disease*, 1986; *The Illness Narratives*, 1988) – have converged to focus upon the history and experience of the individual sufferer. This book seeks to build upon and augment their work by examining the words and experience of a major writer and spectacular patient.

I wish to acknowledge the help of the following scholars and medical historians in preparation of this book: Miss E. Allen, Curator of the Hunterian Museum; Professor Harold Attwood; Dr C. H. Brock; the late Professor Kenneth Dewhurst; Dr J. D. Fleeman; Dr Graham Nicholls of the Birthplace Museum. I am especially indebted to Dr Dennis Gibbs of the London Hospital.

The editors of the Australian journals *The Critical Review* and *Meridian* published earlier versions of parts of chapters 6 and 7 respectively, and I thank them. The Research Grants Committee of the School of Humanities, La Trobe University, gave me a travel grant which allowed me to research part of chapter 3.

My colleagues and friends in the English Department, La Trobe University, have helped me in dozens of ways, with suggestions and comments, criticisms and translations, and not least in enduring the papers in which I tried out parts of this book. I am very grateful to them. To Susan Louise Burns, Judi Benney and Dorothy Johnstone I am especially indebted for typing the various drafts: and to Richard McGregor for his help with the proofs and index.

David Ellis and Howard Mills gave me encouragement when I needed it most.

Cambridge University Press

0521022282 - Samuel Johnson in the Medical World: The Doctor and the Patient

John Wiltshire

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

A NOTE ON REFERENCES



REFERENCES TO Boswell's *Life of Johnson* are normally to the edition edited by G. B. Hill, revised by L. F. Powell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (6 vols., second edition, Oxford, 1964, reprinted 1975) which will be cited in the notes as *Life*. Occasional reference will also be made to the edition published in 1938 by the Limited Editions Club and edited by Edward G. Fletcher, *The Life of Samuel Johnson by James Boswell, with Marginal Comments by Mrs Piozzi*, and to Hill's original edition (6 vols., Oxford, 1889).

G. B. Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies* (2 vols., Oxford, 1897) (which includes Mrs Thrale's *Anecdotes*) is cited as *Miscellanies*.

Sir John Hawkins, *The Life of Samuel Johnson L.L.D.* (second edition 1787) is cited as Hawkins.

Johnson's letters are usually cited by number only in the edition edited by R. W. Chapman, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson with Mrs Thrale's Genuine Letters to him* (3 vols., Oxford, 1952). References to essays by Johnson are also normally by number only: the text is taken from the Yale edition of the *Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 2, *Idler and Adventurer*, edited by W. J. Bate, J. M. Bullitt and L. F. Powell, (1963) vol. 3, vol. 4 and vol. 5, *The Rambler*, edited by W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (1969).

Johnson's *Diaries, Prayers and Annals*, edited by E. L. McAdam Jr, with Donald and Mary Hyde, vol. 1 in the Yale edition (1958), is cited as *Diaries*.

Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale (later Mrs Piozzi) 1776–1809, edited by Katharine C. Balderston (2nd edn, 2 vols., Oxford, 1951), is cited as *Thraliana*.