

THE USE OF METAPHOR IN
SAMUEL JOHNSON'S RAMBLER (1750-52)

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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THE USE OF METAPHOR IN
SAMUEL JOHNSON'S RAMBLER (1750-52)

by

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ABSTRACT

Samuel Johnson's Rambler (1750-52) has often been regarded as abstract preaching on moral issues, but of late scholars have begun to realize that these essays possess a concrete, richly allusive style. This thesis focuses on one particular aspect of the Rambler's style, i.e., its metaphorical dimension, a topic which has received only limited attention from scholars. This study endeavours to provide a more comprehensive and analytical treatment of Rambler metaphor than has yet been attempted by scholars.

Chapter 1 familiarizes the reader with the scholarly work already done on Rambler metaphor. It outlines the ensuing chapters, and provides a working definition of "metaphor" as the term is used in this study.

Chapter 2 identifies six categories of metaphor that recur regularly in the essays. Investigation of their use leads to an interpretation of these individual categories as part of an interrelated system of metaphor derived from Johnson's view of life as a struggle. An attempt is also made to establish connections between these iterative metaphors and Johnson's life, interests, and personality.

Johnson's use of metaphor extends far beyond these iterative categories; hence Chapter 3 offers a general

survey of the extensive variety of metaphor found in the Rambler. The main intent here is to reveal the wide variety of sources from which the metaphors are drawn. Some attention is also given to traditional sources of metaphor which are little used by Johnson.

Chapter 4 examines the way metaphor functions within the structure of individual essays. In the Rambler Johnson appears to use metaphors most frequently in six ways: as allegory, decoration, stock analogy, concluding device, recurring "undersong," and multiple expanders of theme. Examination of each of these functions leads finally to a consideration of the thought process behind these particular uses of metaphor.

PREFACE

While Rambler metaphor has received some attention from scholars, it has remained largely an unexplored topic. This thesis represents the first attempt to write a full-length study of Johnson's use of metaphor in the Rambler.

I have endeavoured to provide a general study both of the types of metaphor present in the Rambler and of the relationship the choice and use of metaphor may bear to Johnson's personal experiences and mental outlook. My whole approach to the topic is guided by the specific definition of metaphor given in Chapter 1. Therefore I make no attempt at an analysis of the images or allusions, which are other aspects of the rich fabric of the Rambler's style. My study is also limited strictly to the Rambler, with no effort to establish links between its metaphors and those found in the Idler (1758-60), the Adventurer (1753-54), or other Johnsonian prose.

General comments are made about the frequency (or infrequency) with which certain metaphors appear, but I am not primarily concerned with such statistics. Indeed I find that Johnson's tendency to use metaphors within metaphors — makes specific counts somewhat difficult.

In general, I have made an attempt to grapple with an aspect of Rambler prose style not previously given close study. While many of my conclusions are admittedly tentative, they perhaps open the way for more intensive research into the intriguing subject of Rambler metaphor.

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Patrick O'Flaherty, for his valuable guidance in my research. His suggestions, critical comments, and above all his constant encouragement made the completion of this thesis possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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The reputation it has earned for difficult reading and its substantial size (208 essays) make the Rambler (1750-52) by Samuel Johnson somewhat intimidating. Perhaps this helps explain why the amount of critical study done on the Rambler is much less than one would expect to see on such a major work of literature. As recently as 1970 Donald Greene stated: "The work does, in fact, require careful and sensitive reading; indeed, analytical study in depth of its contents has not yet been attempted."¹ In the years since Greene wrote this, interest in Johnson has remained strong among literary historians and critics, with the Rambler receiving a reasonable share of attention. Still, most of the commentary on the work has taken the form of short articles, or single chapters, in books that treat all of Johnson's writing, or at least all of his prose. This rather piecemeal approach, although helpful and important, is hardly the type of "analytical study" that Greene seems to call for.

As for the subject of this study, the use of metaphor in the Rambler, scholars from Johnson's day to our own have often settled for stating that metaphor is present in the

work in abundance, and have then abandoned the topic as too massive for their consideration. Most of the in-depth exploration of metaphor in Johnson's prose has been very recent, with the notable exception of the work done by W.K. Wimsatt, Jr. In The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson (1941), Wimsatt conducts a detailed examination of Johnson's prose style, including his use of parallelism, antithesis, and the famous vocabulary of "hard" words. He draws some impressive conclusions with respect to the first two devices mentioned, but it is his consideration of Johnson's diction that is of concern here, since metaphor is indivisible from an author's choice of words.

In an effort to categorize the type of vocabulary preferred by Johnson, Wimsatt studies lists of words extracted from the essays of Johnson and Hazlitt. He argues convincingly for Johnson's "dryly non-sensory, intellectual use" of words in contrast to Hazlitt's tendency towards the "sensory and specific."² He eventually classifies Johnson's diction as "philosophic" or "scientific." Because of this "philosophic" vocabulary, Wimsatt feels that the imagery found in Johnson's prose (and he includes metaphor within his definition of imagery) does not conform to the usual interpretation of images as being "pictorial."³ He decides that Johnson's imagery is "simply non-literal" with "little sensory value,"⁴ though he does concede that such imagery may still be effective.

In Philosophic Words (1948), which had its origins in the chapter on diction in the earlier book, Wimsatt delves more deeply into the scientific imagery inherent in Johnson's use of "philosophic" words. Two useful appendices, one listing 380 "philosophic" words from the Rambler, and the other giving the sources for the definitions of these words in Johnson's Dictionary, provide substantial evidence for the argument that Johnson's imagery (again, the term embraces metaphor), has a strongly scientific flavour. Throughout the book Wimsatt quotes numerous examples of metaphors stemming from natural history, chemistry, physics, optics, astronomy, and medicine, finally concluding that in his creative prose Johnson "was engaged in a persistent process of metaphoric transfer from the realm of the philosophic to that of the psychological."⁵ A case in point cited by Wimsatt is the following metaphor from Rambler 131, which does not appeal to the physical senses, yet certainly takes the reader far beyond a literal interpretation of words:

Wealth is the general center of inclination,
the point to which all minds preserve an
invariable tendency, and from which they
afterwards diverge in numberless directions.⁶

The reader is catapulted into the realm of science as Johnson compares man's desire for wealth to the resistless attraction of a magnetic force. He does not use the term "magnet," but its properties are metaphorically implied by the terms "center of inclination," "tendency," and "diverge." Wimsatt

believes that Johnson possessed a "realization of the imagery latent in even the most abstract philosophic word."⁷ and it is this type of intellectual imagery that he considers the hallmark of Johnson's style in the Rambler.

Clearly Wimsatt's two books provide valuable discussions of the scientific metaphors of the Rambler, but it is important to note that he gives no consideration to the varying uses of these metaphors within essays. The general statement is made that Johnson uses them for "psychological" purposes, and while this is often true, there are also numerous occasions when he appears to insert them quite casually, with no deep intent whatsoever. The nature of Wimsatt's work also limits him to one single class of metaphor -- the scientific -- thereby leaving a broad area for the attention of other critics.

An attempt to treat a more varied sampling of Johnson's imagery (which term again includes metaphor) was made by Cecil S. Emden in "Dr. Johnson and Imagery" (1950). Using the term "simile" to cover all types of comparisons, Emden / asserts that Johnson utilizes simile for purposes of "elucidation" and "persuasion,"⁸ and that he favours a remoteness of relation between the factors of the simile. That is to say, "the proposition and the illustration come from incongruous spheres and yet are shown to be significantly alike."⁹ Emden feels that imagery in Johnson's conversation - is far more vivid than that in his prose. Perhaps that point may be granted, but it is difficult to concur with his

assertion that the best imagery of the essays occurs in those selections "which took the form of stories and which described the doings of characters and social vagaries in general."¹⁰ More careful research shows conclusively that in the Rambler these essays are the very ones that generally lack a creative use of metaphor. They mainly resort to stock expressions, and only occasionally produce a well-developed, intriguing comparison. This question of the use of metaphor in the narrative essays will receive further attention later in this thesis.

Without providing any detailed explanation, Emden identifies a number of metaphoric patterns favoured by Johnson. Included here are metaphors based on science, medicine, treasures, war and a group referred to as "standard pictures of life, used as backgrounds for the illustration and enforcement of moral principles." These are the stream, the voyage, and the path of life, as well as the idea of life as something to be "cultivated."¹¹ These four metaphors are viewed negatively by Emden, because he believes that their repeated presence in the moral essays "tends a little to monotony;" and this, he states, "may be taken to indicate some restriction in the fertility of Johnson's imagination, in so far as his moral essays are concerned."¹² This is a doubtful approach to take to the works of a writer praised by numerous commentators for the fertility of his imagination.

Emden's error may be attributed to two sources. First, he fails to recognize that the repetition of metaphors by Johnson is probably done deliberately; secondly, he bases his judgement on what can only be called a superficial glance at these supposedly monotonous metaphors. The many voyages, paths and streams that to the casual eye seem the same, take on differing characteristics from one essay to another. If Emden had looked more closely at specific examples, he would have found that Johnson uses internal variety to create distinctions within his metaphoric patterns. Despite his discontent with these four metaphors of life, Emden still acknowledges that they are "revealing of [Johnson's] mind and its way of confronting questions of morality and conscience."¹³

Another modern critic who endeavours to provide a comprehensive handling of Johnson's imagery (again the term includes metaphor) is John Cabell Riely. His article, "The Pattern of Imagery in Johnson's Periodical Essays" (1970), illustrates that the imagery used by Johnson "reinforces our understanding of Johnson's sensibility" and "helps to define the range of his obsessive habits of mind."¹⁴ Like Wimsatt, Riely accepts Spurgeon's view of simile and metaphor as part of the general term "image." He admits the difficulty of making any strict categorization of Johnson's imagery. This problem arises from Johnson's habit of intricately blending a number of different similes or metaphors within one principal

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figure. He may, for example, in the middle of a metaphor based on warfare, insert others based on vegetative growth, the sea, or perhaps disease. Because of this, Riely decides that exact counts of each kind of image are neither possible nor meaningful. Instead he concentrates on "the relative proportion among kinds of images"¹⁵ and arrives at the conclusion that two categories far outnumber all others. These are "Nature" (weather, elements, growing things, farming, etc.) and "Daily Life" (war, trades, commerce, government, etc.).¹⁶

This analysis is sound, though somewhat unsubtle. There is a need for finer distinctions than those permitted by such general categories as "Nature" and "Daily Life." Closer study reveals that certain metaphors like those of vegetative growth and war receive short shrift by being included under these headings. They play such an important role in the Rambler that their value can be properly assessed only when they are studied as separate major categories.

A final important point established by Riely is Johnson's preoccupation with metaphors that reflect a gloomy outlook on life. These naturally include war, but also prevalent are metaphors of sinking, imprisonment, and disease. Since these occur so frequently in the essays, Riely is convinced that they are "spontaneous" rather than "contrived," and that they therefore indicate "a deeply-rooted pessimism, not about what is possible in life, but about the probable fate of most men."¹⁷ This is a very valid point, for it seems

reasonable to assume that any man who portrays life as fraught with so many attacks, storms, uncontrollable currents, precipices and blasts must be a worrier, constantly watchful for obstacles and snares that stand in man's way as he struggles to lead a moral life.

Patrick O'Flaherty is also aware of Johnson's proclivity to brood about the difficulties of this mortal existence. In a recent essay not principally concerned with a study of metaphor, O'Flaherty nonetheless makes observations that bear directly on this topic. His examination of the effect that Johnson's moral purpose has on the structure of the essays leads O'Flaherty to comment on recurring images that inculcate Johnson's "sense of the precariousness of virtue."¹⁸ The wanderer vainly trying to stay on the right path, and the ship harassed by tempests and driven off course, are two images that continually disclose Johnson's anxiety. Metaphors of warfare, as already noted, are an integral part of Johnson's writing, but O'Flaherty seems to have been the first to identify "the heart (or mind) as a fortress"¹⁹ constantly being bombarded by the power of vice. This interpretation is noteworthy for it directs our attention to the frail structure of man as Johnson sees him, undermined from within by his own desires, and thereby becoming ever more susceptible to pressures from without. The warfare imagery of the Rambler now takes on a more personal tone, for surely one of those hearts being assailed is none other than Johnson's own.

One important type of metaphor not treated by any of the scholars already mentioned is that of allegory. Bernard Einbond's Samuel Johnson's Allegory (1971) traces the development of Johnson's allegorical method from his earliest effort, "The Vision of Theodore" (1748), all the way to the Happy Valley of Rasselas (1759). Along the way he devotes a short, but illuminating, chapter to precise explication of the allegories found in the Rambler. Einbond sees allegory as ideally suited to Johnson's overall purpose in writing, which is "to instruct by pleasing."²⁰ This, in his view, is accomplished by conveying abstract truth "through the concreteness of fiction,"²¹ so that Johnson "is able to teach and entertain the reader simultaneously. Since the purpose of the Rambler is a moral one, Johnson wishes to find a way to appeal to readers who, like most of us, have no great fondness for an overtly preachy tone. According to Einbond, Johnson uses the allegorical combination of truth and fiction to make the moral themes more palatable. Unlike many critics and general readers who find Johnson's allegories boring, Einbond delights in them, and argues convincingly that they are "skillfully wrought and rewarding to read."²²

The resurgence of interest in the Rambler has also been indicated of late by the number of postgraduate students choosing some aspect of this work as a thesis topic. Dissertations on the rhetorical stance, themes, syntax, and personal and classical allusions in the Rambler have made

their appearance. However, only Myron Yeager makes metaphor his main topic of discussion. In his dissertation "The Mind in the Marketplace" (1980), Yeager presents a comprehensive study of Johnson's use of commercial imagery in his prose works. Substantial proof is furnished to convince the reader of Johnson's deep interest in the world of business, manufacture, and trade.

For Yeager, the theme of commerce, besides referring to manufacture and trade, also encompasses the related topics of wealth and its antithesis, poverty. Within the periodical essays, especially those of the Rambler, Yeager says that Johnson refers to commerce as a way of providing "moral instruction to an industrially emerging society."²³ The commercial images are often brief references interspersed throughout various essays. Some of them, however, are more fully developed, as in Rambler 38, where the commercial metaphor takes the form of an allegory. Here Johnson tells the story of Hamet and Raschid to convey the importance of moderation in life, since an abundance of wealth is accompanied by "the freaks of caprice, and more privilege for ignorance and vice." Raschid, craving too much wealth, here represented by the waters of the Ganges, is destroyed by his own immoderate desires.

Despite the fact that the commercial imagery often illustrates man's errors and subsequent punishment or loss, Yeager is insistent on one major point -- that Johnson does

not condemn industrialization or the wealth derived from it. Rather, he deplores "the improper use of wealth,"²⁴ and uses diverse methods, including suitable metaphor, in an effort to educate his readers in its proper use.

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Each of the critical commentaries outlined above makes a worthy contribution to the development of an overall appreciation of Johnson's metaphoric method in the Rambler. Yet even a combination of all the major motifs handled by these writers still leaves a great portion of this topic unexplored and unexplained. I hope to expand on some points raised but not fully developed by these scholars, and to treat particular aspects of metaphor in this important work by Johnson that have hitherto been neglected. I am aiming at a more comprehensive study of the use of metaphor in the Rambler than any scholar has so far attempted.

In order to eliminate any confusion that may result from the widely differing views of metaphor held by readers, it is necessary to establish a clear definition of metaphor as used in this study. I shall consider a metaphor as any comparison, explicit or implicit, between two basically dissimilar ideas or objects. Simile, analogy, and allegory are included within this definition. Not included is what I understand to be designated by the term "image," which may be applied to any word or group of words which has sensory

appeal. Thus "rose" is an image but not a metaphor; "My love is like a red, red rose" is, of course, an image and is also metaphoric. I treat the second "rose" but not the first. "Images" receive attention in this study only when they are component parts of a metaphoric expression.

A brief summary of the next three chapters may serve to indicate the logical progression of this examination of the metaphoric qualities of the Rambler. Chapter Two classifies the major patterns of metaphor recurring in the Rambler and offers suggestions as to why Johnson repeats these particular figures. Chapter Three looks beyond these major patterns and acquaints the reader with the great variety of metaphor present in the essays. An attempt is made in both these chapters to point out connections between these figures of speech and Johnson's personal background and interests, as well as his precise knowledge of eighteenth century life. Certain valuable sources of metaphor rarely used by Johnson will be identified in Chapter Three and possible reasons proposed to explain his failure to use them. Chapter Four identifies and analyzes specific ways that metaphor functions within individual essays. While it is true that Johnson is most adept in using figurative language, we must not assume that every metaphor is an estimable one. This fourth chapter explains that Johnson too has his stock of metaphor, and he is not averse to applying one merely to embellish or extend an essay, rather than to augment or reinforce an argument.

Also in this chapter an attempt is made to shed some light on the mental processes revealed by Johnson's selection and application of metaphor.

CHAPTER 2

THE ITERATIVE METAPHORS OF THE RAMBLER

Within the broad spectrum of Rambler metaphors there exists a group of figures that recur frequently and acquire great importance. These are identified in Chart I. At first these six categories may seem totally diverse in nature, but it is hoped that this chapter will reveal them as interlocking sections of an intricate metaphoric pattern. Each category is, however, deserving of independent study because of the light each sheds on Johnson's personal interests and the extent of his general knowledge. Even more important is the fact that viewed as a whole the iterative metaphors disclose Johnson's inmost beliefs and fears, and provide him with a method of assessing the human condition and giving advice on how to cope with it.

ii

In the metaphors based on agriculture an opportunity is given to see certain facets of Johnson's personality that do not usually receive much attention. It has been customary

CHART I
ITERATIVE METAPHORS OF THE RAMBLER

Main Category (listed alphabetically)	Sub-groups
Agriculture	plants, seeds, growth process, dangers to growth, i.e., blasts, cankers, frosts, pests
Entrapment	imprisonment, slavery, shackles, snares, traps, chains, fetters, nets, labyrinths, mazes
Journey	path, road, abyss, precipice, river, stream, ocean, general landscape and seascape
Medicine	disease, pain, drugs, poisons, cures
Military	battles, invasion, fortress, weaponry
Science	chemistry, physics, instruments of science including the balance, magnet, microscope, and telescope

to regard Johnson as the ultimate city dweller, of whom Boswell said, "his love of a London life was so strong, that he would have thought himself an exile in any other place, particularly if residing in the country."¹ Nor do we have to rely on Boswell's opinion, for to his last days Johnson himself was still proclaiming, "The town is my element."² Yet despite his obvious preference for the urban lifestyle, it is true, as noted by R.W. Ketton-Cremer in "Johnson and the Countryside" (1965), that "He had a much firmer grasp of country realities, a far clearer understanding of what really went on there -- the agriculture, the economy, the general way of life -- than so confirmed a town-dweller would be likely to possess today."³

This knowledge originated in Johnson's childhood, for the small city of Lichfield was but a short ramble from the countryside, where young Sam could indulge his curiosity in the observation of rural life. After he had taken up residence in London, he still spent many summers in the country, and "learnt to have his own views on orchards, and corn-growing, and stock-raising, and the planting of trees."⁴ The themes of many Rambler essays disclosed Johnson's great knowledge of rural life, but more important for this study is the wealth of metaphor derived from cultivation which occurs in numerous essays regardless of theme.

In the process of cultivating land, Johnson found many similarities to life in general. On numerous occasions the

efforts of an individual to grow and reach his full potential were metaphorically represented by the farmer's struggle to get the best yield out of his land. In one early essay Johnson instructed his younger readers to realize that a fruitful harvest depended on proper preparation. Therefore he exhorted them not to waste their youth, but instead

... to make use at once of the spring of the year, and the spring of life;... and to remember, that a blighted spring makes a barren year, and that the vernal flowers, however beautiful and gay, are only intended by nature as preparatives to autumnal fruits. (5)

Farming is hard, often tedious, labour; so too is the task of virtuous self-development. One never-ending chore for the farmer is getting rid of the weeds which choke out the good plants. In a moral sense, this is equated by Johnson with "the extirpation of lusts and appetites deeply rooted and widely spread" (110); and envy, one of the hardest vices to overcome, is identified as "a stubborn weed of the mind" (183). The attacks on plants by all manner of blights are paralleled by vices or weaknesses which prey on the developing mind and soul: Ill humour is "the canker of life" which "taints and vitiates what it cannot consume" (74), and man must stamp out the plague of scepticism which "will, if not speedily remedied, infect the reason, and, from blasting the blossoms of knowledge, proceed in time to canker the root" (95).

Perhaps, the Rambler sometimes imagined, environmental factors rather than disease were responsible for hindering growth. Poor location could have disastrous effects on plants, or "indeed on the writer who came to public attention hard on the heels of a celebrated author. Unfortunately, the new writer stood "under the shade of exalted merit," and was prevented "from rising to his natural height, by the interception of those beams which should invigorate and quicken him" (86). In life, as in agriculture, certain regulatory measures are often required; even essential elements in uncontrolled amounts will prove destructive. For this reason, Rambler 2 cautions against an overabundance of hope:

The understanding of a man, naturally sanguine, may, indeed, be easily vitiated by the luxurious indulgence of hope, however necessary to the production of every thing great or excellent, as some plants are destroyed by too open exposure to that sun which gives life and beauty to the vegetable world.

Should we manage to survive all the difficulties outlined by Johnson, to come safely through the "blast of infamy," "frost of neglect," and "sudden blast of disease,"⁵ we still cannot assume that ultimate success will be granted. The days before harvest, or the days at the end of human life, may still bring danger, and "various shapes of misery" can easily "trample down our hopes at the hour of harvest" (52). All these are proof that Johnson saw a close correspondence

between the nurturing of a crop from seedling to fruit and the process of developing a virtuous soul.

One outstanding feature of the Rambler cultivation metaphors is their highly practical tone.⁶ Johnson had little interest in the merely decorative, whether it be in architecture, writing, or, in this case, agriculture. The lack of metaphoric emphasis on fragrant flowers and idyllic pastures is in keeping with his well-known dislike of pastoral writing. Instead of these, Johnson generally used metaphors based on the science of farming, and applied them directly to life. Humanity itself is the soil in which the seeds of virtue are sown. Vice, presented as weeds, canker, and other blights, makes healthy growth difficult, but with care and perservance success is still possible. If the growing season, a human life span, is wisely managed, or as Johnson says, "if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun with noxious plants, or laid out for shew rather than for use" (108), it will culminate in the harvest of a virtuous soul.

Johnson did not limit his use of agricultural metaphors to general comments on life. As might be expected, he found them useful when discussing writers and moralists. The following excerpts illustrate the influence of the time factor on both the quality of an author's work and the duration of his fame:

Hasty compositions, however they please at first by flowery luxuriance, and spread in the sun-shine of temporary favour, can seldom endure the change of seasons, but perish at the first blast of criticism, or frost of neglect. (169)

Various kinds of literary fame seem destined to various measures of duration. Some spread into exuberance with a very speedy growth, but soon wither and decay; some rise more slowly, but last long. Parnassus has its flowers of transient fragrance, as well as its oaks of towering height, and its laurels of eternal verdure. (106)

To moralists he extended a word of caution. In their well-meaning way they occasionally went too far, and "have not contented themselves with checking the overflows of passion, and lopping the exuberance of desire, but have attempted to destroy the root as well as the branches" (66). They should also refrain from hasty judgements, and take care to recognize that "in the loose, and thoughtless, and dissipated, there is a secret radical worth, which may shoot out by proper cultivation" (70).

Nor did Johnson omit an agricultural metaphor applicable to the Rambler itself, as is seen in this excellent metaphor on essay writing from Rambler 184:

A careless glance upon a favorite author, or transient survey of the varieties of life, is sufficient to supply the first hint or seminal idea, which enlarged by the gradual accretion of matter stored in the mind, is by the warmth of fancy easily expanded into flowers, and sometimes ripened into fruit.

In the area of literary criticism Johnson referred to "the everlasting verdure of Milton's laurels," which never succumbs to the attacks of critics. Even his own criticism of Milton's works could not "produce any other effect, than to strengthen their shoots by lopping their luxuriance" (140). From these examples associated with writing, and from all the agricultural metaphors singled out for comment, it can be easily seen that Johnson "well understood both the theory and practice of agriculture"⁷ and found it a fertile source for analogy with all aspects of human experience.

iii

The next metaphors to be considered are those of entrapment. Snares, nets, shackles, and other symbols of captivity abound in the Rambler, and at times lend an ominous tone to the essays. Within these metaphors, the individual appears as a creature set upon by people or forces bent on depriving him of his freedom. The snares and other devices may be either the means of capture or the instruments used to ensure continuing bondage; in either case they conjure up what Walter Jackson Bate in The Achievement of Samuel Johnson (1955) called "the pressing sense of the caged and bewildered struggle of the human heart for freedom."⁸

In Johnson's essays there seems to be no limit to the number of traps into which mankind may fall. Our reason may stumble into "the labyrinths of fallacy;" we may surrender

our self-respect to the shackles of "patronage" or "dependence;" or we may lose sight of our true selves in the snares of "artifice and adulation" set by those who wish to ingratiate themselves with us.⁹ Nor is it only the idle mind that is susceptible to traps. In Rambler 103 we are informed that "busy and excursive minds" may also be ensnared by "the cobwebs of petty inquisitiveness, which entangle them in trivial employments and minute studies." The finest reasoning powers are not immune to "the tyranny of fancy" which can, at least temporarily, "enchain the mind in voluntary shackles" (137).

Once caught, we usually try to escape from our fetters. There are, however, times when we are held captive in such a way as to remain blissfully unaware of our lost freedom. A case in point involves the deceptive nature of wealth, which conveys a false sense of security while simultaneously sapping the willpower and judgement. Too many people spend a lifetime amassing great fortunes which, according to Johnson, are nothing more than "golden shackles, by which the wearer is at once disabled and adorned" (202). Whether the traps are set by our own passions, or by some external forces, the proliferation of such metaphors demonstrates Johnson's obsession with these "ensnarers of the mind" (155).

Unlike most creatures caught in traps, man is not totally helpless. He is endowed with mental capacities which make escape possible. Just as a vanquished nation can

rise again and overthrow its conqueror, man too can rebel against and subdue the vices that control him. Such rebellion is encouraged by Johnson in Rambler 89: "This captivity, however, it is necessary for every man to break." He can accomplish this by allowing his reason to assume its rightful control. Thus the captive will be able to "rid his mind of passions ... which enchain his intellects, and obstruct his improvement" (112). Even the use of reason, since it has human flaws, will not be able to put a permanent end to man's errors. He will stumble again, and, in fact, he is just as likely to fall into the same old trap as into a different one. It takes a supreme effort to break free from this cycle, which is why Johnson had high praise for the sinner who finally shakes off a long established bad habit:

The influence of custom is indeed such that to conquer it will require the utmost efforts of fortitude and virtue, nor can I think any man more worthy of veneration and renown, than those who have burst the shackles of habitual vice. (155)

The anxiety emanating from these metaphors is so pervasive that it necessitates a consideration of Johnson's personality. As Riely observed, the metaphors convey "a sense of his own miseries" and through them we view the "dark side of his temperament."¹⁰ There are many indications that Johnson went through his life feeling trapped. Firstly, this man of vigorous spirit was imprisoned in a body which caused him

suffering so great that he once remarked, "My health has been, from my twentieth year, such as has seldom afforded me a single day of ease" (Life, IV, 147-8). He fully understood the predicament of those who were "chained down by pain" (118). Surely it is the voice of experience we hear in Rambler 85 when he referred to "those pains which wear us away slowly with periodical tortures, and which, though they sometimes suffer life to be long, condemn it to be useless, chain us down to the couch of misery, and mock us with the hopes of death."

Far worse than the physical ailments he endured was Johnson's mental anguish, the "morbid melancholy" (Life, I, 63) that he believed he had inherited from his father, and the one thing that kept him fearing for his sanity. As Bate pointed out, "The insane, in the eighteenth century, were, of course, commonly chained."¹¹ The report of Johnson's entrusting a padlock to Mrs. Thrale seems to indicate his fear that at some time he might need to be forcibly restrained.¹² His constant anxiety about his mental health may help explain his predilection for references to shackles. Finally, Johnson fretted about his tendency towards indolence, which, try as he might, he could never subdue. The same type of entrapment metaphor found in the Rambler was used in a prayer for release from indolence:

I am a sinner, good Lord, but let not my
sins burthen me for ever. Give me thy
Grace to break the chain of evil custom.

Enable me to shake off idleness and
sloth ...¹³

It seems very likely that he was thinking of himself when he said, in Rambler 155, "Indolence is therefore one of the vices from which those whom it once infects are seldom reformed." One thing is certain; Johnson spent a large part of his life either trying to avoid "the snares of idleness" (191), or trying to escape from them.

Although the entrapment metaphors probably reflected Johnson's personal fears and anxieties, it must be understood that they played far more than a confessional role. There are many examples that have no real relationship to Johnson himself.¹⁴ His main concern was to emphasize the fact that life subjects all men, including himself, to a multitude of traps or snares. As with all the iterative metaphors, those of entrapment serve primarily to help the reader better understand the shared human condition. If along the way he also becomes better acquainted with Samuel Johnson, that must be regarded as a by-product rather than a planned outcome of Johnson's application of the metaphor.

iv
q

Anyone who reads the Rambler in its entirety cannot fail to notice the recurring metaphor of the journey of life. The critics agree that this is one of the most important Johnsonian metaphors, and one commentator, Thomas Curley in

Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel (1976), produced an intensive study of the travel motif in Johnson's works. Curley called attention to the fact that in eighteenth century England, "Travel was a national enthusiasm and a prime manifestation of that exuberant Georgian curiosity to survey and to study the expanding geographical frontiers of human knowledge."¹⁵ Johnson possessed more than his fair share of this "Georgian curiosity," which he exercised to the fullest, especially when he was away from his everyday milieu. Although he had the desire to travel, financial conditions in his youth and his health in later life were severe hindrances. Yet he did tour parts of the English countryside, and managed to visit Wales, Scotland and France. Mrs. Piozzi, in Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson (1786), remarked that

He loved indeed the very act of travelling, and I cannot tell how far one might have taken him in a carriage before he would have wished for refreshment. He was therefore in some respects an admirable companion on the road, as he piqued himself upon feeling no inconvenience, and on despising no accommodations. On the other hand however, he expected no one else to feel any, and felt exceedingly inflamed with anger if any one complained of the rain, the sun, or the dust.¹⁶

This excerpt seems to indicate that for Johnson the pleasure and the experience gained from the journey more than compensated for any discomforts or problems. Further reference will be

made to this attitude, as it will have an important implication for the interpretation of the journey metaphors.

The journey metaphors of the Rambler encompass travel by land and sea, but those relating to land are in the majority by far. Such a noticeably unequal distribution may be a natural outcome of Johnson's aversion to sea travel.¹⁷ For present purposes, however, all the journey metaphors may be dealt with together because Johnson employed both the land and water figures to represent the inherent struggle in man's progress through life. The same disquietude, the same fear that at any moment life will lurch out of control, is as evident here as in the two iterative categories already discussed. By now it can be seen that this tone of anxiety is common in the recurring metaphors.

In Johnson's view, the journey of life was no pleasure cruise. He "employed the metaphor of travel to depict the human pilgrimage," and as moralist it was his task to direct "his fellow pilgrims in the proper course of virtuous conduct to obtain that final spiritual goal."¹⁸ This he did by frequently reminding us of our heavenly destination, and by pointing out the obstacles on the path leading there. On the journey we will encounter others who, having been waylaid by temptation, are caught up in temporary pleasures. We must not follow their lead. Whenever the journey becomes more pleasurable than troublesome, we might do well to examine the situation. Perhaps we have unwittingly "forsaken

the paths of virtue" for "the road of perdition," or have followed "the stream of folly" and will eventually come to grief in "the Gulph of Intemperance" or on "the Rocks of Pleasure."¹⁹ That the journey must be taken seriously is proven in this blend of the land/water motif from Rambler 175:

To youth, therefore, it should be carefully inculcated, that to enter the road of life without caution or reserve, in expectation of general fidelity and justice, is to launch on the wide ocean without the instruments of steerage, and to hope, that every wind will be prosperous, and that every coast will afford a harbour.

Forearmed with knowledge of the possible dangers, the traveller has a better chance of getting through safely to his destination. In his role as guide, Johnson tried to prepare us for every eventuality. Therefore he presented a threatening landscape, containing "pitfalls of treachery," "coverts of cowardice," and "the precipice of falshood," as well as a seascape made terrifying by its "fluctuations of uncertainty," "sleeping stagnation without wind or tide," and "gulphs of insatiability."²⁰ Only those with the moral resolve to stick to "the narrow paths of truth" (121), to "toil up the steeps of virtue" (14), or to endure the tempests and whirlpools of a treacherous sea without despairing, would eventually reach a safe haven. In Rambler 89 Johnson explained why the rate of success is low:

In the journey of life some are left behind, because they are naturally

feeble and slow; some because they miss the way, and many because they leave it by choice, and instead of pressing onward with a steady pace, delight themselves with momentary deviations, turn aside to pluck every flower, and repose in every shade.

Clearly Johnson was an honest guide who would never deceive his companions by minimizing the dangers or offering false hopes for their chances of success.

As shown earlier in the quotation from Mrs. Piozzi, Johnson refused to tolerate any complaints about travelling conditions. He transferred this same attitude to the metaphoric journey. It was not that he was insensitive; on the contrary, he was more aware than most of the dangers involved in man's search for "safe passage through ways beset on all sides by fraud and malice" (79). He also had a deeper appreciation of the value of each small victory over the "obstacles", with which we find our "passage embarrassed and obstructed" (127). As Johnson saw it, all these difficulties should be regarded as opportunities for strengthening our moral resolve and proving our virtue, not as grounds for whining complaints. Each moral triumph, small or large, advances us towards our eternal goal; surely this heavenly destination, once attained, will more than recompense us for the worst travelling conditions imaginable.

Since it is common in earthly excursions to seek attractive routes, or ways that will bypass obstacles, many try to follow the same procedure in the progress through life.

Like some authors, we may be "more inclined to pursue a track so smooth and so flowery, than attentively to consider whether it leads to truth" (2), or instead of pondering ethical choices we may just follow the crowd and "roll down any torrent of custom" (70). But Johnson knew that there was no easy way to salvation, so he warned us to stop wasting precious time seeking the nonexistent. Never was advice given in more straightforward fashion than in the conclusion of Rambler '63:

The traveller that resolutely follows a rough and winding path, will sooner reach the end of his journey, than he that is always changing his direction, and wastes the hours of daylight in looking for smoother ground, and shorter passages.

This passage and so many others relating to life's journey re-echo the famous lines from Scripture which tell of the broad and narrow paths, one which "leadeth unto destruction" while the other "leadeth unto life."²¹ Johnson knew that eternal life would be gained only by those who stayed on the hard path and contended with each moral challenge cast in their direction.

v

We have just seen Johnson acting as a guide, but the next group of metaphors will show him in the role of a physician, diagnosing and treating the moral ills of mankind.

Because of the precarious condition of his own health, illnesses and their treatments were matters of constant concern to Johnson. He was "a great dabbler in physick" (Life, III, 152), and was knowledgeable enough to assist in writing the proposals for Dr. Robert James's Medical Dictionary (1743). Throughout his life Johnson "had in general a peculiar pleasure in the company of physicians" (Life, IV, 293), and from such contacts he learned enough to feel confident in prescribing remedies for himself and his friends.²² Since the science of medicine was of more than casual interest and importance to Johnson, we should not be surprised to find him using it as a source for metaphor.

The use of recurrent metaphors from the common practices of life was a method of making readers conscious of shared human experiences. Perhaps nowhere was there a greater opportunity for achieving such unified audience response than in the use of medical metaphor. Since all people have felt the pangs of physical suffering, they can respond to a representation of life's moral ills in terms of disease. All can likewise appreciate the concept of alleviating the suffering by following the prescriptions suggested by Johnson. It is important to realize, however, that Johnson never claimed to have permanent cures. Nothing can totally rid life of vice:

That life has many miseries, and that those miseries are, sometimes at least, equal to all the powers of fortitude, is now universally confessed; and therefore it is useful to consider not only how we

may escape them, but by what means those which either the accidents of affairs, or the infirmities of nature must bring upon us, may be mitigated and lightened; and how we may make those hours less wretched, which the condition of our present existence will not allow to be very happy. (32)

It is a matter, then, of making the best of a bad situation. We are no more capable of eradicating evil and suffering than doctors are of conquering disease, but the mortal state is improved by the enduring fight to keep these perils at bay.

To identify the evils that assail human virtue, Johnson often used terms associated with bodily diseases. Cancerous growths that take full control of the body were paralleled by "the tumour of insolence," "swellings of vain hope," and the "malignity" of falsehood, all of which warp the mind and control behaviour.²³ Sometimes evil was equated with virulent diseases of 'plague proportion within the general population. "The contagion of vanity" (95) and "the frigid and narcotick infection" of vain imagination (89) were two of the most prevalent disorders of the human mind. It is natural for moralists to practise mental analysis, since the frailties of the mind make it a breeding ground for moral disease. Johnson's fears for his own sanity made him even more intrigued than most moralists with the workings of the mind. Mrs. Piozzi emphasized Johnson's concerns in her comment that "He had studied medicine diligently in all its branches; but had given particular attention to the diseases of the imagination,

which he watched in himself with a solicitude destructive of his own peace."²⁴ This private anxiety about mental health was extended to embrace mankind in the Rambler essays. The development of "a healthful Mind,"²⁵ which reasoned as well as is humanly possible, should be the aim of every man, for it guaranteed him at least a fighting chance against each "formidable and obstinate disease of the intellect" (89).

One thing that worked against the achievement of a healthy mind was the universal preoccupation with selfish concerns, a theme dealt with in many of the essays. For example, Cupidus of Rambler 73 was so consumed by greed that even when he received his long awaited inheritance he continued to suffer from his "inveterate disease of wishing." Another self-centred type criticized by Johnson was the pedant who regarded his area of study as superior to any other. By refusing to widen his intellectual horizons, he was condemned to a disability pictured in Rambler 173:

As any action or posture long continued,
will distort and disfigure the limbs; so
the mind likewise is crippled and contracted
by perpetual application to the same set
of ideas.

There were also the know-it-all youths whose high regard for their own ideas caused them to denigrate or totally ignore the theories of earlier thinkers. Johnson labelled their attitude "the mental disease of the present generation" (154).

These and similar egocentric tendencies portrayed in the Rambler led Ariele Sachs in Passionate Intelligence (1967) to comment on Johnson's "insistence on the need to avoid self and subjectivity." According to Sachs, Johnson believed that the individual had to "extricate himself from sterile introspection" and become actively concerned with his function within the brotherhood of man.²⁶ By reaching out to others with friendship and support, man could avoid the unhappiness and isolation that must inevitably result from the unbridled pursuit of self-interest. The disease of selfishness is best resisted by commitment to others, and for that reason Johnson offered the following recommendation:

Let us therefore make haste to do what we shall certainly at last wish to have done; let us return the caresses of our friends, and endeavour by mutual endearments to heighten that tenderness which is the balm of life. (54)

Although the Rambler provided a comprehensive survey of moral diseases, balance was maintained by the inclusion of viable remedies. In suggesting methods whereby man could improve his moral state, Johnson continued his reliance on medical metaphors. Terms like "prescription," "medicine," "remedy," "cure," "antidote," and "balm" appeared frequently in his advice for the correction of corrupt behaviour. Indeed, both the abundance of such terms and the precision with which they were applied lead one to concur with John Wiltshire, who concluded in the essay "Pains and Remedies:

An Aspect of the Work of Samuel Johnson" (1979) that the Rambler was "formally conceived as therapy," and that the "analogy between the moralist and the doctor seems the governing and shaping metaphor of Johnson's enterprise."²⁷ Diagnosing human ills is the duty of the physician and the moralist, but the diagnosis in Johnson is accompanied by the responsibility of providing a treatment which offers some measure of hope to the patient. As a practitioner of moral medicine, Johnson relied on simple but effective treatment. For the mind burdened with sorrow, Johnson prescribed "employment" as "the safe and general antidote" (47). Elsewhere he stated that "Austerity is the proper antidote to indulgence" (110), and for general therapeutic effect in many distressing situations he suggested the use of patience, "the great remedy which heaven has put in our hands" (32). Nor was Johnson inclined to sugarcoat his remedies, as proven by Rambler 17 in which he prescribed the frequent contemplation of death as a "universal medicine of the mind." While that may be a bitter pill to swallow, it is, as Johnson said, "of the utmost efficacy to the just and rational regulation of our lives."

Like any conscientious physician, Johnson realized the need for care in prescribing medication. He would never condone the use of any medicine for the purpose of escaping from reality. He did not approve of opiates, although their use was quite acceptable in the eighteenth century. Bate

stated in the biography Samuel Johnson (1975) that in the eighteenth century "the moderate use of opium -- as a powder -- taken with water or as laudanum (mixed with some alcohol) -- was the most common single medical treatment for calming the nervous system."²⁸ Johnson's fear of opiates, despite the fact that he used them to ease his own pain, is indicative of the depth of his medical knowledge and insight. He once told Boswell that opium was "a remedy that should be given with the utmost reluctance, and only in extreme necessity", (Life, IV, 171). His worry was no doubt partly based on his observation of the drug's influence on his beloved wife Tetty, who according to Dr. Levet succumbed to the effects of "perpetual illness and perpetual opium."²⁹

Johnson's negative feelings about this medication were reflected in the Rambler metaphors, where the term "opiates" was often used in conjunction with qualities or behaviours that deprive man of his reasoning powers. The wealthy man, for instance, should be on guard against deception, since flattery was "always at hand to pour in her opiates" (172). Misella, the prostitute of Rambler 171, revealed how her seducer used to lull her guilty conscience "with the opiates of irreligion." Sometimes the individual was responsible for benumbing his own reason. In Rambler 89, for example, Johnson advised man to curb his unrestrained imagination which "like the poison of opiates, weakens his powers, without any external symptom of malignity." Clearly Johnson

was opposed to drugs which clouded the mind, thus preventing it from facing moral dilemmas. However painful or fearsome the problem, Johnson believed it could be better handled if the reasoning powers had not been lulled into insensibility. The most powerful proof of this was given when Johnson faced his greatest terror, death. Though in extreme pain in his last days, he was determined to remain rational and would not "meet God in a state of idiocy, or with opium in his head."³⁰

In his application of medical metaphor, Johnson was able to make moral ills and their treatment more realistic to the average layman. There was further realism in his honest admission that neither he nor anyone else could offer a permanent cure for problems rooted in man's imperfect nature. As he stated in Rambler 186, "Positive pleasure we cannot always obtain, and positive pain we often cannot remove." Nevertheless, the moralist, like the good physician, must never stop trying to alleviate mankind's ills. In Johnson's estimation the best medicine available to man was his own carefully regulated reason. In the biographical work Samuel Johnson (1974), John Wain stated that "The Rambler essays proclaim Johnson's trust in reason, in seeing things as they are, in thinking clearly and distinguishing justly."³¹ If every individual were to use his reasoning powers wisely, moral diseases like pride, envy or greed would find it harder to "make silent and invisible inroads on mankind" (68).

Another large group of powerful metaphors in the Rambler is that taken from the realm of military affairs. During Johnson's lifetime England was embroiled in one hostility after another, both in Europe and the colonies. The eight-year War of the Austrian Succession ended in 1748, just a few months before Johnson began writing the Rambler. Johnson detested war, but he did have a certain amount of admiration for the courage of military men. In his article "Dr. Johnson and War" (1945), H.R. Kilbourne said that this respect stemmed from Johnson's own "manly and bulldog spirit" which "was naturally attracted by fighting men."³² Johnson himself commented that "the profession of soldiers and sailors has the dignity of danger. Mankind reverence those who have got over fear, which is so general a weakness" (Life, III, 266). Since war was a general topic of conversation, and since Johnson thought highly of military courage, his use of military metaphor in the Rambler was almost predetermined.

There was a further factor at work here, one that had an overriding influence on everything Johnson did -- his Christian beliefs. His use of military metaphors in a moral context was authorized by the Bible and other Christian writings, where such metaphors commonly portray the battle for the soul. In Rambler 7 Johnson stated, "It is not without reason that the apostle represents our passage through this stage of our existence by images drawn from the

alarms and solicitude of a military life; for we are placed in such a state, that almost every thing about us conspires against our chief interest." In the Rambler, Pictures of warfare were applied to every aspect of life, from the struggle to build a successful career to the war between the sexes, but the greatest number was used to represent the battle against temptation. It was highly unlikely that a man of Johnson's religious nature could think of that particular battle without recalling the many Christian references that exhorted mankind to "fight the good fight of faith."³³ Hence a Christian motive, rather than a political or private one, was probably chiefly responsible for Johnson's inclination to use military metaphors.

"Battle," "fortress," "sentinel," "ambush," "fortify," "conquest," and "vanquish" are just a few of the military terms found in Johnson's descriptions of the soul's struggle against the forces trying to corrupt it. Two types of warfare were presented: external, in which people and situations outside the self played a major role; and internal, in which the focus was on the fight to overcome personal imperfections. Let us consider first the external warfare, which Johnson related to three major pursuits of man: the quest for knowledge, the desire for social acceptance (this included the winning of a spouse), and the fight for success in a chosen profession.

The scholar's or student's work is termed an "attack on knowledge" which, if successful, becomes a "conquest" (108). Any talented student who, like Polyphilus of Rambler 19, vacillates from one course of study to another, is a poor strategist because "he makes sudden irruptions into the regions of knowledge, and sees all obstacles give way before him; but he never stays long enough to complete his conquest, to establish laws, or bring away the spoils." Then there is the fierce strife between experts in the different branches of learning, as detailed by Johnson in Rambler 83:

Learning confers so much superiority on those who possess it, that they might probably have escaped all censure, had they been able to agree among themselves: but as envy and competition have divided the republick of letters into factions, they have neglected the common interest; each has called in foreign aid, and endeavoured to strengthen his own cause by the frown of power, the hiss of ignorance, and the clamour of popularity. They have all engaged in feuds, till by mutual hostilities they demolished those outworks which veneration had raised for their security, and exposed themselves to barbarians, by whom every region of science is equally laid waste.

Johnson regarded such jealous bickering as a foolish waste of time and talent which could be better applied "to the benefit of life." Besides encouraging the student to respect studies different from his own, Johnson also advised him to develop an interest in life outside the scholarly realm. Total dedication to study might leave him ill-equipped for

the other battles of life, for "while science is pursued, other accomplishments are neglected; as a small garrison must leave one part of an extensive fortress naked, when an alarm calls them to another" (180). The student, and for that matter everyone else, should welcome diversity of experience as preparation for the many situations that "lay us open to new assaults and particular dangers" (43).

The battles that occurred in the social milieu were just as intense as those in the area of learning. Therefore it was quite appropriate to compare the nervousness of the wit facing his public to "the palpitations of a champion on the day of combat." This metaphor based on medieval military tactics was enlarged by the wit's lamentation that he had little hope of victory since he "could find no pass opened for a single sally" whereby he might break through his listeners' taciturnity (101). The public life of young ladies was also pictured in violent terms of "conquest and destruction" (62), and in Rambler 130 Victoria said of her debut into society, "I was dressed and sent out to conquer, with a heart beating like that of an old knight-errant at his first sally." Having referred to the famous advice of the Spartan mother to her son, Victoria compared that to her own situation by adding, "My venerable parent dismissed me to a field, in her opinion of equal glory, with a command to shew that I was her daughter, and not to return without a lover."³⁴

The search for a marriage partner was, usually the main focus of a person's early social life, as is evidenced in many Rambler essays. The fortune hunter of Rambler 182 typified the many warriors in this field, as he advanced "furnished with irresistible artillery" and "turned his batteries upon the female world." His female counterparts were also well armed and equally vigorous in their aggression. Mothers drilled their daughters in the strategy of sexual warfare and urged them on to victory. Victoria said of her mother (who was no more zealous than most), "She advised me to prosecute my victories, and time would certainly bring me a captive who might deserve the honour of being enchained for ever" (130). Spinsters too were described in military terms as "barren countries ... free, only because they were never thought to deserve the trouble of a conquest" (39). These pictures of the courtship process as warfare reflect Johnson's disapproval of certain of the marriage customs of his day; a similar tone is set by the commercial metaphors on the same topic. These will be discussed in the following chapter.

The individual trying to advance his career was sure to become embroiled in a conflict. Evidence of aptitude on his part frequently met with jealous, spiteful treatment from others. The ferocity of the opposition was shown in Rambler 144, where the "Roarers, Whisperers, and Moderators" launched

their attack. Every step up the ladder of success required an almost superhuman effort because

The first appearance of excellence unites multitudes against it; unexpected opposition rises up on every side; the celebrated and the obscure join in the confederacy; subtilty furnishes arms to impudence, and invention leads on credulity.

The case of the writer received a great deal of Johnson's attention. In one early essay he spoke of the bane of all writers, the critics "who stand as centinels in the avenues of fame" (3). His own determination not to be intimidated by them was expressed thus: "Though the nature of my undertaking gives me sufficient reason to dread the united attacks of this virulent generation, yet I have not hitherto persuaded myself to take any measures for flight or treaty." Rambler 176 provided a more detailed account of the manner in which the powerful critic harassed his victim, pursuing him "from line to line without cessation or remorse." Meanwhile the beleaguered author "tries every art of subterfuge and defence; maintains modestly what he resolves never to yield, and yields unwillingly what cannot be maintained." This vivid metaphor, which is extended at great length, perhaps betrayed the emotions of Johnson the battle-scarred, literary veteran.

Strong personal sentiment may also be evident in Johnson's treatment of the patron, another potential foe of writers and others trying to forge a career. Not long before starting the Rambler, Johnson had the humiliating experience of being

rebuffed by Lord Chesterfield while seeking support for his proposed Dictionary. Since work on the Rambler and the Dictionary progressed simultaneously, any reference to patronage in the essays may reflect his injured pride.

Johnson's disgust for the practice of patronage was revealed in his sketch of Liberalis, whose patron considered him "fully in his power" and proceeded to treat him contemptuously. Again Johnson resorted to military language to show how Liberalis was reduced to slavery by his patron:

When the pale of ceremony is broken, rudeness and insult soon enter at the breach. He now found that he might safely harrass me with vexation, that he had fixed the shackles of patronage upon me, and that I could neither resist him nor escape. (163)

To those writers who achieved success, Johnson issued a warning that their war was far from over. Another enemy, perhaps the fiercest of all, was lurking in the shadows. That enemy was Time, and countless writers "who thought themselves secure by a short forbearance, have sunk under his scythe, as they were posting down with their volumes in triumph to futurity" (3). From this and all other military metaphors connected with the career of writing, we know that Johnson fully comprehended the dangers of his profession. His attitude must not be interpreted as a sign of complaint; he knew the risks inherent in the life of writing, accepted them, and advised all prospective writers to do the same,

"for he that writes may be considered as a kind of general challenger, whom every one has a right to attack; since he quits the common rank of life, steps forward beyond the lists, and offers his merit to the publick judgment" (93).

While combatting the external problems just discussed, man was at the same time caught up in internal conflict. At stake here was something more important than social acceptance, romantic, educational or financial success -- namely, the salvation of the soul. The preservation of a virtuous soul is an extremely difficult task. If we falter in the least, the enemy has opportunity for access and for eventual conquest. Johnson made this point clear in Rambler 201:

... he that suffers the slightest breach in his morality, can seldom tell what shall enter it, or how wide it shall be made; when a passage is opened, the influx of corruption is every moment wearing down opposition, and by slow degrees deluges the heart.

Factors over which we have little control, because they attack from the outside, press heavily on the heart (or soul, since these two are often used synonymously by Johnson). There are the "arrows" of "reproach" and of "calumny," and the fierce "armies of pain."³⁵ But worse still is the fact that the very entity we are trying to defend often turns traitor. We are betrayed by selfish motives, greed, pride and vain imagination, or in a word, by our own egocentricity.

Bate explained the process by which the heart/soul jeopardized its own chance for salvation:

The heart then concentrates solely on what relieves or confirms its own personal ambitions or fears; it begins instinctively to regard others as rivals to be feared or means to be used, and to wall itself still more firmly behind barriers through which only a warped perception of reality filters.³⁶

Weakened from within by this "chronic, crippling preoccupation"³⁷ with self-interest, the heart leaves itself wide open to attacks of "vanity" and "impatience," and to "the ambushes of envy."³⁸ And what of those "airy gratifications" of uncontrolled imagination which "invade the soul without warning, and have often charmed down resistance before their approach is perceived or suspected" (89)? If they can infiltrate so insidiously, what chance does an already corrupt heart have against them? We can take comfort in knowing that the smallest spark of moral worth within that heart is sufficient to stave off total capitulation to sin. Regardless of setbacks, or temporary surrenders to vice, the war must not be abandoned, since to retire from the field is to doom the soul to everlasting damnation. Accordingly, Johnson urged his readers to fight on and never lose hope. He summed up the situation in Rambler 119 by saying "That the world is over-run with vice, cannot be denied; but vice, however predominant, has not yet gained an unlimited dominion." Nor would it ever gain total power as

long as each man continued to fight for control of his soul. Richard B. Schwartz said in his work Samuel Johnson and the Problem of Evil (1975) that "Johnson's heroes are those who can sustain their faith and persevere through long and trying pain."³⁹ Willingness to fight on against tough odds is indeed admirable, and certainly the mark of "the true warfaring Christian."⁴⁰ Johnson was adamant "that no part of life be spent in a state of neutrality or indifference" (89), because only constant opposition to evil could ultimately ensure eternal peace for the soul.

vii

Metaphors derived from science make up the final iterative class in this study. Because of their quantity and importance, figures based on medical science were discussed earlier as a separate group. Certain other scientific metaphors will be treated later within categories that demand their inclusion. Most relating to biology will therefore be included in the Animal or Agricultural groups, while others relating to astronomy and certain aspects of physics will fit best in the section on Light. These decisions are examples of the degree of arbitrariness that sometimes comes into play when one takes on the complex task of classification of Johnson's metaphors. Our science category, still sizeable despite the exclusions given above, consists of metaphors relating to

chemistry and physics (except the area of light), and to instruments employed⁷ in scientific study.

Like most of his contemporaries, Johnson was very interested in science. In "Samuel Johnson and Eighteenth-Century Science" (1943), John Brown demonstrated that Johnson's scientific bent was given short shrift by Boswell who had no liking for this area of study.⁴¹ Boswell did not mention Johnson's fascination with chemistry, but Mrs. Piozzi's account of Arthur Murphy's first meeting with Johnson clearly reveals him as an amateur scientist:

... he [Murphy] went next day, and found our friend all covered with soot like a chimney-sweeper, in a little room, with an intolerable heat and strange smell, as if he had been acting Lungs in the Alchymist, making aether.⁴²

Although Johnson conducted scientific experiments, he did not hesitate to criticize those fanatical amateurs who "signalized themselves by melting their estates in crucibles" (199). Wasting time and fortune on scientific trivialities was for the moralist just one more example of deviation from reasoned behaviour. It was the loss of self-control that Johnson condemned, not a sensible interest in science. He himself has "an underlying affection" for things scientific, a fact proven by "the wide assortment of scientific ideas that are assimilated in various metaphoric ways to moral and psychological themes throughout the Rambler."⁴³

Chemistry provided Johnson with many effective metaphors to illustrate aspects of the human condition. The effect of vices on the soul was compared to the effect of air on metals. Hence there are many "corrosions" -- of envy, inveterate hatred, ill-humour, and idle discontent -- and, in the same vein, sorrow is called the "rust of the soul."⁴⁴ The pure essence of the soul is vitiated by these corrosive forces, much as an iron bar is weakened through oxidation. Other metaphors were linked to the effect heat has in causing substances to boil and evaporate. Johnson pictured the heated or excited emotions as bringing similar results. Thus, "The madness of joy will fume imperceptibly away;" and the wit's bubbling imagination "fumed away in bursts of wit, and evaporations of gaiety." Because of the fiery nature of human passions, Johnson declared that "all our gratifications are volatile, vagrant, and easily dissipated."⁴⁵ Some materials possess innate tendencies to react in a particular way; in a metaphoric sense a secret too has "some subtle volatility, by which it escapes imperceptibly at the smallest vent, or some power of fermentation, by which it expands itself so as to burst the heart that will not give it way" (13).

The branch of chemistry now called metallurgy also found its way into Rambler metaphors. Rambler 41 referred to the future as "pliant and ductile," whereas the past was "stubborn and untractable." In a commentary on Milton's

Samson Agonistes Johnson created a strong link between the work of a literary critic and that of a metallurgist:

To expunge faults where there are no excellencies, is a task equally useless with that of the chemist, who employs the arts of separation and refinement upon ore in which no precious metal is contained to reward his operations. (139)

In a far different type of essay Johnson censured the human screech-owl for debasing "the golden hours of gaiety with the hateful dross of grief and suspicion" (59). Metallurgy in the eighteenth century was still associated with the dubious science of alchemy. The secrecy identified with this study was noted in Rambler 51. When speaking of the way in which a country housewife guarded her recipe for capers, Johnson said that she seemed "resolved that the secret shall perish with her, as some alchymists have obstinately suppressed the art of transmuting metals." The goal of metallurgy and all chemistry is to come to a better understanding of the physical universe by separating materials into their basic components or elements. In a psychological and moral sense, that was also Johnson's objective. His effort to analyze the substance of life was best summed up in Rambler 68:

...as the chemists tell us, that all bodies are resolvable into the same elements, and that the boundless variety of things arises from the different proportions of very few ingredients; so a few pains, and a few pleasures are all

the materials of human life, and of these the proportions are partly allotted by providence, and partly left to the arrangement of reason and of choice.

Physics is as prominent as chemistry in Rambler metaphor.

Of particular interest is the manner in which Johnson used metaphors based on the mechanics of motion. To emphasize the fact that life is in a state of flux, Johnson stated that "nothing terrestrial can be kept at a stand. Ease, if it is not rising into pleasure, will be falling towards pain" (85). The principles of motion again come into play in Johnson's explanation of the way man's initial drive towards a goal may be decelerated and halted through friction:

The advance of the human mind towards any object of laudable pursuit, may be compared to the progress of a body driven by a blow. It moves for a time with great velocity and vigour, but the force of the first impulse is perpetually decreasing, and though it should encounter no obstacle capable of quelling it by a sudden stop, the resistance of the medium through which it passes, and the latent inequalities of the smoothest surface will in a short time by continued retardation wholly overpower it. (127)

Metaphors allied to gravity and magnetism illustrate the way we are inclined to make choices; or are drawn towards or repelled by certain people. In Rambler 160 Johnson explained instant likes and dislikes as follows:

There are many natures which can never approach within a certain distance, and which when any irregular motive impels

them towards contact, seem to start back from each other by some invincible repulsion. There are others which immediately cohere whenever they come into the reach of mutual attraction, and with very little formality of preparation mingle intimately as soon as they meet.

The desire for wealth was shown to have a magnetic control over human actions, for, as Johnson said, "Wealth is the general center of inclination, the point to which all minds preserve an invariable tendency, and from which they afterwards diverge in numberless directions" (131).

Of all the physics metaphors in the Rambler, the most prevalent are those involving the balance, which seems somehow fitting in the work of a man so determined to weigh every factor in his appraisal of humanity. Sometimes the metaphor conveys the importance of learning what has true value, as in the case of the dying man who realizes too late that his life, devoted to the pursuit of success and popularity, actually counts for naught. We need not repeat his mistake if we take heed of the lesson taught by that deathbed scene:

Whoever would know how much piety and virtue surpass all external goods, might here have seen them weighed against each other, where all that gives motion to the active, and elevation to the eminent, all that sparkles in the eye of hope, and pants in the bosom of suspicion, at once became dust in the balance, without weight and without regard. (54)

Returning once again to the theme of egocentricity, Johnson exclaimed against man's habit of valuing himself

above his fellows so that "whatever apparent disadvantages he may suffer in the comparison with others, he has some invisible distinctions, some latent reserve of excellence, which he throws into the balance, and by which he generally fancies that it is turned in his favour" (21). Elsewhere, the balance became a symbol for the choice between good and evil, a difficult task because "The good and ill of different modes of life are sometimes so equally opposed that ... The mind no sooner imagines itself determined by some prevalent advantage, than some convenience of equal weight is discovered on the other side." (63). Johnson made metaphoric use of the balance so often that almost every appearance of words like "equipoise," "equipoinderant," or "preponderate" signals another such metaphor.⁴⁶ Careful study of this group of figures corroborates Wimsatt's view that the balance is "one of the Rambler's more concrete symbols of a human mind conceived as a recipient and recorder of conflicting external impulses, pushes and retardations, motives, temptations, fears and desires."⁴⁷

The microscope and telescope are two other instruments of science important in Rambler metaphor. Their contrasting functions were perfect for illustrating the extremes that could exist in the process of critical observation:

Some seem always to read with the microscope of criticism, and employ their whole attention upon minute elegance, or faults scarcely visible to common observation ... Others are furnished by criticism

with a telescope. They see with great clearness whatever is too remote to be discovered by the rest of mankind, but are totally blind to all that lies immediately before them. (1762)

In another essay Johnson showed how too intense an examination of life might make contentment an impossibility. There is "a wide interval between practical and ideal excellence" which we must learn to accept. Otherwise, every little imperfection will loom large, just as "exposed to a microscope, the smoothest polish of the most solid bodies discovers cavities and prominences; and that the softest bloom of roseate virginity repels the eye with excrescences and discolorations" (112). In Rambler 28 the properties of the lens were used to explain our manner of evaluating human behaviour:

As a glass which magnifies objects by the approach of one end to the eye, lessens them by the application of the other, so vices are extenuated by the inversion of that fallacy, by which virtues are augmented.

Besides showing Johnson's awareness of the function and importance of these instruments, the lens metaphors seem inextricably linked with his desire to obtain the most accurate view possible of man and his world.

Excellent metaphors are present in all the iterative categories, but those of science seem to possess the highest degree of originality. Since these comparisons used ideas

that were not commonplace, the reader of the Rambler was led to look at ~~life~~ from new angles. The metaphors were not so complicated that a background in science was required to decipher them, but they were sufficiently intricate to give most readers a good mental workout. Perhaps Brown best summed up Johnson's use of these metaphors in the Rambler (and other works) when he said, "His writings exhibit the use, not only of technical terms .. which any writer can affect, but a clear understanding and happy application to a different field, of the principles involved."⁴⁸

viii

The prose style of the Rambler is greatly enhanced by the presence of these six iterative groups of metaphor. They each provide evidence of Johnson's interests, his abilities, and his unique way of interpreting life. For all their individual importance, however, their full value can only be measured when they are considered as a unified whole. Whether it was a deliberate plan or merely a natural emanation from his subconscious (more likely the latter), Johnson used six interlocking metaphoric parts in a system that encompassed his views on man's moral state. Five of the groups supplement each other to produce a picture of life as a constant and formidable struggle which tests man physically, mentally, and spiritually. The "struggle" concept as portrayed by the iterative metaphors is summarized below in Chart II.

CHART II

ITERATIVE METAPHORS AND THE STRUGGLES THEY REPRESENT

Category of Metaphor (listed alphabetically)	Struggle Being Represented
Agriculture	the struggle for personal growth, the labour of bringing one's life to a fruitful harvest
Entrapment	the fight for freedom from the bonds of temptation and vice
Journey	the struggle to progress through life's dangers and detours and to reach the heavenly goal
Medicine	the war against the endless afflictions that beset man's body, mind, and soul
Military	the daily battle to build a successful life, and the moral fight to conquer evil which threatens to destroy the soul

It is easily seen that these five categories, by re-echoing one premise, drive home the harsh realities of "the burthen of life" (6). Over and over again in the essays these metaphors remind the reader that "the world is over-run with vice" (119), and that man must spend his entire life trying to resist it.

Thus far, the picture of life emerging from this series of metaphoric struggles can be said to be pessimistic. Still, Johnson can usually be counted on to provide the reader with a ray of hope, that invaluable commodity regarded by him as "the chief blessing of man" (203). Nor does he fail us this time, for through the final iterative category of metaphor, that of science, Johnson shows that man possesses within himself the ability to cope with and survive all the struggles of life. It is man's faculty of reason which, properly applied, becomes his guide not only through "the thorny mazes of science" (19) but through the even thornier mazes of everyday living. An essential factor for progress in any branch of science is the application of the reasoning powers to observed data. Compilation of data and experimentation become fruitless endeavours without the power of reason to sift and weigh evidence and draw logical conclusions. Similarly, unless we make reason our guide in day to day experience, we will drift through life learning nothing of moral value and doomed to repeat our mistakes. That Johnson saw reason as our moral guide is supported by his statement

in Rambler 8: "He therefore, that would govern his actions by the laws of virtue, must regulate his thoughts by those of reason."

It has already been noted that Johnson recommended the use of reason within the "struggle" metaphors, especially as a way to escape entrapment or as a treatment for moral ills. But it was mainly through the science metaphors that Johnson extolled the reasoning mind as man's best aid for a worthwhile existence. Like a scientist peering through a microscope or telescope, man must make careful observations of all situations and behaviours. Furthermore, he must weigh the pros and cons in order to make ethical decisions and maintain balance in his life. Reason again comes into play as man makes the distinction between the good and evil components of life, much as a chemist separates the particles of gold from the impure dross. Through the exercise of reason, so much a part of the scientific method, man can learn to cope with all the problems portrayed by the metaphors of struggle.

In a recent work entitled The Religious Life of Samuel Johnson (1983), Charles E. Pierce, Jr. stressed Johnson's firm belief that "Man cannot eliminate or escape from the frustration and suffering that is inherent in human life, but he can learn -- and must learn for his own well-being -- how to live with it." Pierce went on to say that Johnson saw the reasoning faculty as one way to "detect the insidious ways in which our passions misled us and to redirect them in

such a way that a virtuous life was possible."⁴⁹ There is much to be said in defence of Pierce's view. He saw reason as a vital factor in the moral teaching of the Rambler; it is just as essential within the sphere of iterative metaphor, where it serves as man's guide through the adversities symbolized by the metaphors of struggle.

CHAPTER 3

THE VARIETY OF METAPHOR IN THE RAMBLER

i

The variety and depth of the subject matter treated by Johnson in his lifetime are proof of his ability to speak or write proficiently on almost any topic. If this skill had its origin in Johnson's voracious reading of the books available to him in childhood because of his father's trade as bookseller, its continuing development throughout life was assured by his insatiable curiosity. Johnson, like any "uncommonly inquisitive" person (Life, I, 48), might have acquired his collection of facts haphazardly, but his orderly mind then imposed a system on them. As Boswell pointed out, "he had accumulated a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which was so arranged in his mind, as to be ever in readiness to be brought forth" (Life, IV, 427). This capacity for quick retrieval of information was of value during Johnson's days as a diurnal writer, for it enabled him to maintain variety in his essays despite the pressures of deadlines. A great deal of variety of the Rambler emanated from the extensive range of metaphoric references employed by Johnson to elucidate his themes. The metaphor, stemming

from widely diversified sources, was an excellent indication of Johnson's great reservoir of general knowledge.

One subject to be discussed in a later chapter is the mental processes connected with Johnson's use of metaphor. At this point, however, it is important to realize, as Owen Thomas says in Metaphor and Related Subjects (1969), that "the proper choice of a metaphorical base is clearly a major consideration for any writer."¹ Certain metaphors slipped automatically into Johnson's work, as they do for any writer, but many others were conscious, even very deliberate, choices. Johnson wished to appeal to as many readers as possible, not just to the erudite minority. While the Rambler may not be in vogue with average readers today, it was originally written, as John Wain stated in his biography of Johnson, "for the ordinary man who stood in need of instruction." Wain went on to say that "for a hundred years it was read by ordinary English people who did not think of themselves as engaged in historical and literary study, but as learning directly about life."² Since the work was intended for the general public, its components, including metaphor, must necessarily be meaningful to all.

Johnson endeavoured to make his figurative language universally significant by using metaphors that appealed to readers of varying ages, occupations, interests, educational backgrounds and financial conditions. This helped him achieve his major goal, which was "to inculcate wisdom or

piety" (208), for the diverse metaphors directed the individual reader to a consideration of the similarity of problems and hopes common to all men regardless of their different lifestyles. Whether the metaphor was agricultural (e.g., "the pain of seeing some fall in the blossom, and others blasted in their growth"), military (e.g., "the innumerable casualties which lie in a ambush on every side to intercept the happiness of man"), or medical (e.g., "The contagion of misery"),³ the picture of life as a continuous struggle was clearly drawn by Johnson. Farmer, soldier, physician, patient, and others were reminded that life always contrived "to lay us open to new assaults and particular dangers" (43). Each metaphor had special relevance for a particular group of readers; the collected metaphors served as a unifying force, bringing all readers to the realization that those who co-exist in the human state are subject to the same emotions, hopes, and suffering.

Classification of the metaphors in an extensive work like the Rambler is an intriguing, but difficult task. There is the problem of sheer numbers, aggravated by Johnson's tendency to use metaphors within metaphors.⁴ Sometimes arbitrary decisions regarding category must be made by the classifier where such multiple metaphors occur. However, no difficulty arises as long as it is understood that this survey does not purport to provide either a compendium of every metaphor in the Rambler or specific counts of individual

metaphoric types. This chapter offers an overview of the wide variety of Rambler metaphors; these are grouped according to the frequency of their use, and suppositions are made as to how and why Johnson used them. An attempt is also made to explain why Johnson made only limited use of certain familiar classes of metaphor.

ii

A practical method of showing the wide range of Rambler metaphors is to list them in tabular form. Three separate charts help distinguish the importance of certain metaphors in comparison to others. Each chart identifies major classifications and their sub-groups. Chart I, already provided, lists those metaphors which recur most frequently in the Rambler, and probably reveal the most about Johnson's interests, thought processes and personality. The next table of metaphors, given here in Chart III, consists of those that appear on a fairly regular basis throughout the essays. Many of them are quite effective; however, their overall impact is less striking than that achieved by the iterative metaphors of Chart I.

Johnson's choice of metaphor in the first category of Chart III provides grounds for some reflection on his attitude towards animals. His fondness for his cat Hodge is well known, yet Mrs. Plozzi indicates that his liking for animals was limited to his pet, and that otherwise "He had indeed

CHART III

METAPHORS OF GENERAL IMPORTANCE IN THE RAMBLER

Main Category (listed alphabetically)	Sub-groups
Animal	individual creatures, animal behaviour, flight
Classical	real and fictional characters of ancient times, oracles, elysian regions
Commerce/Wealth	manufacturing, trade, stores of goods, gems, treasures
Established Authority	law, crime, government, politics, tyranny, imperialism
Fire/Light	flame, heat, cold, dark, rays, lustre, sun, stars
Human Body	five physical senses, colours, sounds, body parts, movements and functions, including sleep

that strong aversion felt by all the lower ranks of people towards four-footed companions.⁵ This may help explain the concentration of attention upon the more vicious qualities of animals, for the "animal" metaphor of the Rambler is based overwhelmingly on distasteful characteristics shared by man and beast.

Johnson fully realized how difficult it was for any man to conquer his baser instincts, thereby elevating himself above "the common herd of mortals" (164). One appalling human trait that he consistently associated with animal behaviour was that of greed. In Rambler 153 we see a family so bent on grabbing an inheritance that they "flew like vulturs on their prey," and Rambler 175 equates those who "regulate all their conduct by their love of money" with predatory beasts lured by "the scent of prey." According to Johnson excessive wealth brings with it the likelihood of attack from human scavengers determined to share the bounty. Inevitably the wealthy man "will be at last torn to pieces by the vulturs that always hover over fortunes in decay" (38).

Others besides the greedy man are compared in derogatory fashion to animals. Matchmakers are "vulturs" (115), chronic complainers are "the screech-owls of mankind" (59), and those who seduce innocent girls are "reptiles" (170). Insects help Johnson strengthen the link between human and animal behaviour. We have all felt the "stings" of inferiority

and neglect (149, 189) and have been befuddled by "swarms" of expositors and reasoners (106, 121). Daily life is fraught with pesky irritations described by Johnson as "insect vexations which sting us and fly away, impertinencies which buzz a while about us, and are heard no more" (68).

Occasionally a Rambler metaphor reveals admiration of certain animal abilities, as in the case of those relating to flight. Ramblers 103 and 162 both use the word "soar" in reference to the attainment of knowledge and virtue. In Rambler 5 Johnson praised the cleverness of chameleons who "borrow their colour from the neighbouring body, and, consequently, vary their hue as they happen to change their place." He suggested it would be to man's advantage to follow the chameleon's example, in order "to derive his reflections from the objects about him; for it is to no purpose that he alters his position, if his attention continues fixed to the same point." This particular comparison also serves to remind us that travel and exploration had brought many new and unusual creatures to the attention of the eighteenth century public.⁶ Johnson could be reasonably sure that his readers would be familiar enough with the chameleon's habits to appreciate his metaphor. Despite the few examples showing animals in a good light, Johnson preferred to employ them metaphorically to identify those baser qualities that man must be determined to rise above.

Metaphors based on classical references are to be expected in any literature written in Johnson's day. As Donald Greene observed in The Age of Exuberance (1970), authors like Johnson "were writing for an audience who they assumed had the basic grounding in Latin literature that was the hallmark of every educated Englishman from the Renaissance down to the beginning of the twentieth century."⁷ Johnson was a far more proficient classical scholar than most of his contemporaries; Boswell reported that he was "undoubtedly one of the first Latin scholars in modern times" and that he "could give a Greek word for almost every English one" (Life, IV, 385). The noticeable presence of classical metaphors in the Rambler should come as no surprise. What is surprising, however, is that they are far less prevalent than many other classes of metaphor (including all those listed in Chart I and several categories in Chart III, pp. 15 and 64), and in many instances they are less skillfully wrought.

The classical metaphors of the Rambler may truly be considered as stock phrases because most leave no lasting impression on the reader's mind. Familiar classical figures like Ulysses, Aeneas, the Cyclops, even Nero (and his fiddle) all appear in Rambler metaphors. Enticements that lure men from the straight and narrow path to virtue are regularly designated as "sirens," and man's good deeds transport him to the fabled "Elysian regions."⁸ The only striking use of this latter metaphor occurs in the satiric reference to "the

elysium of poverty" in Rambler 202. Other stock metaphors are used to compare women to "Amazons" (113) or "harpies" (192). Elsewhere, overly watchful critics are identified with "Cerberus" and "Argus" (3), while the patronage-seeking poet suffers the torments of "Tantalus" (163). These familiar comparisons would have come quite automatically to Johnson's mind, given both his own classical background and contemporary literary style. Since Johnson's knowledge of the classics was profound, it stands to reason that he intentionally limited his metaphors to those that his entire audience would recognize. He did not write the Rambler to illustrate his ability as a classical scholar, but rather to instruct the average citizen. For this very reason his classical metaphors are mainly familiar ones.

The related topics of commerce and wealth provided Johnson with interesting material for metaphor. Eighteenth century England witnessed a great deal of industrial and commercial expansion. According to J.H. Plumb in England in the Eighteenth Century (1950), "trade was a national preoccupation and the constant concern of Parliament and the government."⁹ Apart from his desire to use metaphors to enhance the universal appeal of his essays, Johnson's own fascination with business prompted his use of commercial references in the Rambler. In Johnsonian Miscellanies (1897), George Birbeck Hill reported that Johnson "thought the happiest life was that of a man of business, with some

literary pursuits for his amusement."¹⁰ In Johnson's later years, his enthusiastic involvement with the Thrale brewery sale attested to the importance he attached to the world of manufacturing. Boswell quoted a comment made by Johnson on the day of the sale: "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich, beyond the dreams of avarice" (Life, IV, 87). It would appear from this that Johnson viewed the ability to manage a business profitably as a highly admirable talent. He applied a similar rule of thumb to life itself; we are all given the "machinery," the wherewithal to make our lives profitable, but only those who wisely manage the business of life will be able to gain moral and spiritual riches.

That Johnson viewed life as a sort of business is evident from the recurrent metaphors presenting human behaviour in terms of profit and loss. In Rambler 95, Pertinax the sceptic gained renown, but at no bargain, since he said it "was not purchased but at the price of all my time and all my studies." His costly purchase brought him no happiness. Like Pertinax, many pay too high a price for what they think they want out of life. As Yeager has suggested, Johnson thought that the final evaluation of every action should take into account the fact that "the measure of worth relies on the relationship between what is spent and what is accomplished by that expense."¹¹ Johnson endorsed the old adage "caveat emptor," for again in Rambler 104 he warned that "To solicit patronage,

is, at least, in the event, to set virtue to sale," with the buyer obviously losing more than he gains.

Perhaps more than any other area of life, the state of matrimony provided Johnson with the opportunity to use effective "commercial" metaphors. In Johnson's lifetime, prospective brides were "set out to show" or "condemned to be set to auction, and made cheap by injudicious commendations" (35). The period of courtship, often spent by both parties trying "to disguise their natural temper, and real desires," reminded Johnson of shady business transactions (45). Therefore, in the guise of a Rambler correspondent, Johnson remonstrated with married couples who complained of their lot. In his opinion, they should neither "wonder nor repine, when a contract begun with fraud has ended in disappointment." His total disgust for the marriage market was perhaps best epitomized by his description in Rambler 115 of matchmakers who "offer a partner of life with the same readiness, and the same indifference, as a salesman, when he has taken measure by his eye, fits his customer with a coat."

Closely connected with commercial metaphors are those derived from the area of wealth, including money, gold, gems and other treasures. Johnson advised the reader to husband his resources wisely so that his life would not be bankrupted. These resources or treasures alluded to by Johnson may be physical and mental as well as financial. For example, Rambler 41 tells us that old age will be less melancholy and

bleak in if our youth we prudently "lay up such a treasure of pleasing ideas, as shall support the expences of that time, which is to depend wholly upon the fund already acquired." Surely this is comparable to the sound business practice of investing profits as security against the lean years the future may bring. A similar metaphor occurs in Rambler 50, as Johnson again pointed out that to have "honour and decency" in old age, a man "must lay up knowledge for his support, when his powers of acting shall forsake him."

Many "wealth" metaphors of the Rambler refer to an individual's admirable qualities which are either underdeveloped or at least unperceived by others. The wit in Rambler 101, his talent stifled by university life, is "a gem hidden in the mine;" the pauper of Rambler 166 has qualities of "truth, fortitude, and probity" which go unnoticed because they are not "brightened by elegance of manners" and are therefore "cast aside like unpolished gems." Untried fortitude is described as "gold not yet brought to the test" (150); praise, "like gold and diamonds, owes its value only to its scarcity" (136); and finally, in an essay questioning capital punishment, life itself is a "treasure" which should be paid out only as recompense for the taking of another life (114).

The number of "wealth" metaphors used by Johnson suggests that he believed that they had particular significance for the majority of his readers. Wain reckoned that Johnson "could take no satisfaction in a piece of work unless he

could feel that it ministered to wisdom and helped his readers to see things clearly and put their values in order."¹² A study of the many Rambler essays on the theme of riches reveals Johnson's anxiety about man's preoccupation with striking it rich. Through his metaphors, he encouraged his audience to transfer its attention from financial to moral riches. In an early essay Johnson identified the close of life as a time for man "to recollect distinctly his past moments, and distribute them, in a regular account, according to the manner in which they have been spent" (8). Presenting life thus as a system of debits and credits was Johnson's way of asserting that moral or spiritual wealth was the only kind worth seeking. All other acquisitions were, in the long run, meaningless. Johnson might well have supported his views with the familiar Biblical words, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."¹³

Another category of metaphors used frequently by Johnson is related to established authority, i.e., law and government. The legal and political bent of Johnson's mind makes these metaphors a natural occurrence. In the Rambler metaphors of law are more plentiful than those based on government. One modern critic, Paul Fussell, comments on the influence of the law on Johnson's writing. In Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing (1971), he asserts that Johnson became a writer "by default and by accident, prevented by poverty and ugliness

from aspiring to any other life," and that "there is no doubt that he would have preferred the law."¹⁴ Whether or not we completely concur with Fussell's opinion, it is undeniable that many of the finest Ramblers were written in the persuasive, argumentative style of a lawyer pleading a cause.

The very first essay established a legal tone, later repeated throughout the work, when Johnson presented the case of the author venturing into the literary world to face his judges, the readers. The metaphor was extended by reference to certain writers who endeavoured "to gain favour by bribing the judge with an appearance of respect which they do not feel," and developed even further by the use of such terms as "public challenge," "vindication," "plead," and "defraud." Towards the end of the essay Johnson outlined his own plan for the bi-weekly papers by stating, "my impatience to try the event of my first performance will not suffer me to attend any longer the trepidations of the balance." Surely the balance intended here was the scale of justice. The final Rambler essay brought full circle the legal metaphor involving Johnson's own writing. Here he averred that regardless of "the final sentence of mankind," he was content with his efforts and would "never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause" (208). Seeing Johnson begin and end his Rambler with this type of legal metaphor lends substantial support to Fussell's claim that Johnson conceived of literature "as quasi-legal argument."¹⁵

Other areas of life were also deemed suitable for "legal" treatment. In Rambler 148, Johnson commented on "the supreme judicature" of a harsh, abusive parent who was "less to be vindicated than any other criminal." Parental authority came in for more criticism in Johnson's declaration that the arrangement of marriages was a "crime" perpetrated upon innocent girls by parental "robbers and assassins" (39). Bad-tempered people were described as "receiving hourly pardons from their companions" (11), while those who habitually reconciled themselves to their faults merely postponed "the sentence most dreaded" which their own "reason and conscience" would eventually pass on them (76). The varying use of legal metaphor extended to the wit, who rarely received sympathy from Johnson. In Rambler 128, however, Johnson showed compassion for the apprehensive wit who entered "every assembly with a beating bosom, like a litigant on the day of decision."

From the application of legal metaphors as seen in the Rambler, it would appear that Johnson viewed our mortal existence as a sort of trial. Although we judge others, and are in turn judged by them, we must all be finally evaluated by the highest justice -- the Lord Himself. That last judgement was foremost in Johnson's mind when he concluded Rambler 208 with words borrowed from Dionysius Periegetes: "Celestial powers! that piety regard, / From you my labours wait their last reward."

In dealing with the metaphors that relate to government, it must first be admitted that the Rambler is not a politically oriented work. Still, sprinkled throughout the essays are metaphors that call to mind aspects of government. Just as the race of man is subjected to ruling powers, so each man within himself comes under the influence of certain "authorities." Some of these are "the dominion of the passions" (155), "the dominion of chance" (184), and the power of love "that extends his dominion wherever humanity can be found" (186). As O'Flaherty has suggested, "Johnson in the Rambler was a Christian writer trying to help men know and lead the moral life."¹⁶ Because of this, Johnson was extremely concerned about the influence exerted on human behaviour by the power of the passions. No one is exempt, from their hold; they are equally strong "in the Greenlander's hut as in the palaces of eastern monarchs" (186). Man's only hope, if he is "to do good and avoid evil,"¹⁷ is to learn to live within the sphere of their power without being corrupted by them.

Yet just as earthly rulers sometimes become despotic, the prevailing mental passions often maintain a tyrannical hold on man. Johnson constantly worried about our inability to resist temptations offered by our own misguided thoughts. For him it was "no vain speculation to consider how we may govern our thoughts, restrain them from irregular motions, or confine them from boundless dissipation" (8). For if we

fail to govern them, they will surely gain absolute control of us. To illustrate this concern, Johnson portrayed certain emotions as conducting a reign of terror. He warned us in Rambler 8 that it is essential to keep "reason a constant guard over imagination," for under the rule of imagination we would be corrupted with "pernicious and tyrannical appetites and wishes." Or should we be foolish enough to trust in chance, "a subtle and insidious power" (184), we might face utter ruination, as did the adventurer in lotteries of Rambler 181. Beauty, fear, amorous passion and envy were all presented metaphorically as potential tyrants whom we must resist with all our strength. Our efforts to curb our passions and maintain proper self-government will secure the favour of the highest "authority" -- "the Lord and Father of the universe" (110).

The next group of metaphors is more easily handled if it is first subdivided into two groups: Group A (metaphors of fire, flame, heat and cold), and Group B (metaphors of light and dark.) Two general observations about Group B may prove useful for later reference: first, the metaphors in this group outnumber those of Group A approximately three to one; and second, they are on the whole more scientific in terms of both concept and diction than those of Group A.

In the Rambler Johnson often employed metaphors of fire (or lack of fire) to represent human emotions or characteristics. Hence we repeatedly encounter the figurative picture of a

flame burning within man. There are flames of "gratitude," "unlawful love," "ambition," and "friendship," as well as the blaze of "hope" and "merriment."¹⁸ Youth and old age are contrasted by heat and cold; in one essay the Rambler mentions his own "cool maturity," which grants him objectivity and control over his passions so that he can hear "the vociferations of either sex without catching any of the fire from those that utter them" (18). Again, in Rambler 111 "the tardiness and frigidity of age" are juxtaposed with "the fire and impetuosity of youth," this time with a suggestion that a balanced blend of these qualities would create a better person.

Although Johnson occasionally referred to the elevated concept of the divine spark,¹⁹ he was more inclined to develop metaphors based on the mundane chore of kindling a fire. This is noteworthy since domestic metaphors, as we shall see, are rare in the Rambler. One such comparison is present in the opening essay, where Johnson advised writers against making overconfident opening remarks, lest the body of the work fail to measure up to them. In his estimation, "they ought not to raise expectation which it is not in their power to satisfy, adding "that it is more pleasing to see smoke brightening into flame, than flame sinking into smoke." Anyone familiar with lighting a wood stove, or even building a campfire, understands the disappointment of watching a hurriedly kindled blaze die away in smoke. How much better

to watch a small spark, fed gradually with good fuel, burn with increasing brilliance and warmth.

A domestic "fire" metaphor recurred when Johnson likened the desire for fame to "a flame kindled by pride, and fanned by folly", (49), and when he told married couples to "fan every spark of kindred curiosity" (99) in order to keep their flame of love burning. Even one's natural ability or genius is "like fire in the flint, only to be produced by collision with a proper subject" (25). The language and ideas of all these metaphors, intrinsically simple, are intelligible to the average reader. So much attention has always been devoted to the complexities of the Rambler that there is good reason to note the occurrence of these less intricate metaphors. Because they reveal an appreciation of an ordinary routine in life, they help us see beyond the literary giant to Johnson the man.

Farther removed from everyday situations are those metaphors of light and dark, which, as mentioned earlier, tend to have a scientific flavour. There are a few simple comparisons involving light, but there are many references of a more complex nature, such as "scintillations of conceit" (141), "irradiations of knowledge" (108), and enough "lustres" to bedazzle any reader. It was the prevalence of such Johnsonian terms as these that prompted censure from early critics, although more recently they have drawn a sort of qualified admiration from Wimsatt, who classified them as

"philosophic words."²⁰ Even when the wording of the metaphor is not strictly scientific, the content often is. For example, Rambler 106 disclosed Johnson's understanding of the qualities of light rays:

An object, however small in itself, if placed near to the eye, will engross all the rays of light; and a transaction, however trivial, swells into importance, when it presses immediately on our attention.

Two other essays, 78 and 156, revealed skilful metaphoric use of the concept of diffusion of light:

That merit which gives greatness and renown, diffuses its influence to a wide compass, but acts weakly on every single breast; it is placed at a distance from common spectators, and shines like one of the remote stars, of which the light reaches us, but not the heat.

and

Of the great principles of truth which the first speculatists discovered, the simplicity is embarrassed by ambitious additions, or the evidence obscured by inaccurate argumentation; and as they descend from one succession of writers to another, like light transmitted from room to room, they lose their strength and splendour, and fade at last in total evanescence.

Metaphors of this kind are truly indicative of Johnson's enthusiasm for science, but it should be admitted that he was also following a general trend in the literature of his day, that of referring directly or indirectly to Newton's discoveries regarding the nature and behaviour of light.

Newton's Opticks, published in 1704, had a tremendous impact on the eighteenth century world, and as Marjorie Hope Nicolson stated in Newton Demands the Muse (1946), his influence on literature "began at the time of his death in 1727 in the period of 'deification;' [and] continued almost unabated until the mid-century."²¹ While most writers might be less intensely scientific in their figurative language, in all fairness Johnson's style should be regarded as well within the bounds of contemporary literary custom.

The scientific principles of light discovered and explained by Newton were given an added dimension in the Rambler. For Johnson, the beam of light became an instrument for penetrating the very soul of man. By using metaphors of light he endeavoured to elucidate man's true nature, and to provide a clear view of the moral path that will lead his readers through the dark labyrinth of life. It was this "light of moral or religious instruction" (58) that Johnson hoped would dispel "the gloom of anxiety" (134) and hold out some hope for man's redemption.

The final metaphors from Chart III are those based on physical attributes and functions of the human body. We do not see Johnson at his creative best here; the metaphors may justifiably be labelled as some of his weakest. Their inefficacy is mainly due to deficiencies in Johnson's sight and hearing which caused him to give a "non-sensory" connotation to words we expect to be "sensory."²² Throughout the Rambler

there is a lack of specificity of colours and sounds which lessens the effectiveness of the physical metaphors. When a writer employs terms like "colours," "paint," "voice," or "music" as bases for figurative speech, the reader generally anticipates an appeal to his senses. This sensory assault rarely materializes from Johnson's application of the terms. Instead, we receive vague references to "the colours of life," "the colours of false representation," "the paint of the meadows," "the voice of fame," and "the musick of flattery."²³ The reader is placed in visual and aural limbo, unable to conjure up a physical response to what appears to be some attempt at physical metaphor. Johnson is slightly more successful with the few metaphors that relate to the senses of smell and taste. He compares the transitoriness of human greatness to "the odour of incense in the fire" (190); remorse is said to have a "pungency" about it (110); and, in a possible allusion to beer, "the draught of life" is made "sweet or bitter by imperceptible instillations" (72). These do have some effect on our senses, though they could hardly be deemed highly sensory.

The same vagueness reappears in the metaphors drawn from the structure of the body. We encounter "the eye of vanity," "the arms of fortune," and "hands" of "favour," "death," "avarice," and "time."²⁴ Johnson declined to tell us whether the hands are gnarled or smooth, whether the arms comfort or the eye glistens. The almost complete lack of

sensory description relegates these examples to the category of stock metaphors that perhaps warrant no more than a passing glance.

Within the whole classification of "body" metaphors, only the sub-group of sleep deserves special consideration. It manages to rise above stock expression and to provide some insight into the psyche of the author. That sleep did not come easily to him, and that he stayed awake for many "miserable nights,"²⁵ are facts recorded by both Johnson and his biographers. His insomnia was sometimes the result of physical problems like asthma, but the mental anguish that at times severely depressed him seems also to have been a factor. His sheer dread of bedtime is made clear in the following excerpt from Mrs. Piozzi's Anecdotes:

Nothing was more terrifying to him than the idea of retiring to bed, which he would never call going to rest, or suffer another to call so. "I lie down (said he) that my acquaintance may sleep; but I lie down to endure oppressive misery, and soon rise again to pass the night in anxiety and pain."²⁶

Johnson's attitude as described here by Mrs. Piozzi is reflected in the "sleep" metaphors of the Rambler, where sleep is regarded as something to be avoided rather than welcomed.

These metaphors are generally derogatory in tone, sleep being pictured either as an unproductive state in which some "slumber away their days in voluntary visions" (89) or a deceitful one in which man "suffers himself to slumber in

false security, and becomes a prey to those who applaud their own subtilty, because they know how to steal upon his sleep" (79). His sense of the sleeper's useless inactivity is conveyed by figures such as "the slumber of sloth" (71), the "literary slumber" of a young scholar postponing his career choice (132), and idlers "who slumber in universal negligence" (118). Taken separately, the significance of these metaphors might go unnoticed, but a review of the entire group seems to indicate that Johnson felt distrust and fear of the somnolent state. For him it was a dangerous condition in which man, unable to regulate his mental faculties, was susceptible to fancies or terrors which in a more alert state he could successfully ward off. Since Johnson was ever conscious of the need for "perpetual vigilance"²⁷ against possible assaults on the soul, these metaphors are a natural result of his fear of the debilitating opiate of sleep.

iii

Certain classes of metaphor usually given much attention by other writers are employed only minimally by Johnson. These all stem from very basic concerns in life, as shown in Chart IV. Several of these categories, such as Arts and Domestic Life, are such proven treasuries of figurative language that when they play a comparatively insignificant role in a metaphoric work like the Rambler, one is prompted to question their neglect. In the light of what is known

CHART IV
THE OCCASIONAL METAPHORS OF THE RAMBLER

Main Category (listed alphabetically)	Sub-groups
Arts	architecture, drama (masks, costumes, etc.), music, painting, sculpture
Domestic Life	furniture, household items, spinning, weaving, clothing, food, servants
Education	teaching, learning, school
Human Sexuality	love, courtship, marriage, prostitution
Sports	competition, games, contests
Weather	seasons, precipitation, wind, sun, clouds

about Johnson's opinions, there are two possible explanations, one personal, the other stylistic, that may account for his limited use of these sources of metaphor.

Johnson, of course, had his likes and dislikes. He had strong aversions to certain topics, perhaps because they reminded him of his inadequacies, recalled unpleasant memories, or simply bored him. Personal reactions like these steered him away from the Arts, Education and Weather as sources of metaphor. A true appreciation of the arts can be achieved only by the keen exercise of one's physical senses, particularly sight and hearing. The delicate harmonies of a melody, the muted tones of a painting, the minute changes in an actor's facial expression, all failed to impress Johnson. Mrs. Piozzi told of his "utter scorn of painting," and added that "he delighted no more in music than painting; he was almost as deaf as he was blind."²⁸ In the case of drama, his dislike may be only partially blamed on his handicap; it also arose from painful experience. Johnson's play Irene (1749), performed just a year before the appearance of the Rambler, had been a failure. This humiliation rankled all the more as Johnson jealously eyed the success of his young friend David Garrick. When one considers these extenuating circumstances, the paucity and triteness of the "art" metaphors become understandable. Life is on numerous occasions a "stage" or "theatre,"²⁹ and writers of fiction become painters

"engaged in portraits of which every one knows the original" (4). Yet these allusions fail to evoke any strong response, so that Emden's comment that Johnson's "painting" metaphors are "dull and below his better quality"³⁰ is equally applicable to all the "art" metaphors of the Rambler.

In a work of literature written for the purpose of instructing mankind, it seems almost incomprehensible to find practically no metaphors derived from the field of education (though we sense the atmosphere of the classroom in certain essays). We must, however, remember that thoughts of learning and teaching brought unpleasant memories to Johnson's mind. His formal education at Oxford was disrupted by poverty, and his attempts to establish a career in teaching were dismal failures. Later in life he admitted to Boswell that he could find no pleasure in teaching children (Life, II, 101). We can only surmise how frustrating it must have been for Johnson to confine his wide-ranging intellect to the mundane, repetitive exercises doled out to inattentive, mischievous schoolboys. The job required a type of patience Johnson just did not possess. He might respect others who found teaching an exciting endeavour, but for him it was unproductive and probably boring. Hence metaphors involving the whole learning process would not readily occur to him.

Any discussion of the weather as an influential factor in human existence also seemed to bore Johnson. Boswell recorded that until quite near his death Johnson had "a

contempt for the notion that the weather affects the human frame" (Life, II, 358). This was borne out in the "Life of Milton," where Johnson summarily dismissed the weather's importance, saying that "the author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted."³¹ Understandably, then, Johnson devoted very little effort to metaphors in which the weather figured prominently. Conventional comparisons between youth and spring, old age and winter do occur (5, 50, 69); we are also told of "breezes of felicity" (128), and the freezing "blast of slander" (64). There are, however, few impressive metaphors within this group. One exception, found in Rambler 188, extols the virtues of a good conversationalist, "whose departure is lamented, like the recess of the sun from northern climates, as a privation of all that enlivens fancy, or inspirits gaiety."

Although Johnson used few metaphors based on "weather," he did, in fact, refer to weather and seasonal changes quite frequently. In a thought-provoking article entitled "Johnson's Rambler and Its Contemporary Context" (1982), James Woodruff argued convincingly that references to the seasons and to "events in Johnson's own life or in his circle of acquaintances" gave the essays a higher degree of contemporaneity than was previously realized.³² There are in the Rambler a number of "seasonal" essays like the one recounting "the annual flight of human rovers" to the countryside (135) and their return

to London in the fall so that "a new flight of beauties" (175) may enter the social whirl. Such essays brought Johnson into closer contact with his readers because, as Woodruff observed, their themes developed "out of a sense of real life."³³ Johnson chose not to emphasize seasonal changes in weather and human behaviour metaphorically. Yet his inclusion of them among his themes was one way of conceding their relevance in the lives of others, though he himself professed immunity from their effects.

The remaining classes of metaphor in Chart IV, Domestic Life, Sports and Human Sexuality, were probably avoided by Johnson because he felt they were ill-suited to the high moral purpose of the Rambler. In considering the first two, we should bear in mind that Johnson was more of a social than a domestic man, and that from childhood he had shown little inclination towards sports. This does not suggest that he had developed any hatred for things domestic or athletic; he merely regarded them as trifling matters, harmless enough but unworthy of his serious attention.

The Rambler contains a few household metaphors involving "cups," food," and "threads," as well as athletic ones of "races" and "contests."³⁴ Of these "homely pictures," Emden said that Johnson "may have thought them insufficiently dignified for moral essays or literary criticism."³⁵ It is likely that Johnson would have felt the same about sports metaphors, and as for any based on human sexuality, these

would indeed be considered as incompatible with the Rambler's purpose. Hence this last area was, almost totally disregarded by Johnson, except for a few metaphors in which the passions are identified with "seducers," "enchantedresses," and "prostitutes" (79, 92, 104). To come closer to God through virtuous living, Johnson exhorted his readers to break "the chains of sensuality" (110). It was only logical for him to shy away from tropes that might remind his readers more of the carnal than the moral aspects of life.

Finally, attention should be directed to the unexpected absence of Biblical and religious metaphor. The Biblical accounts of the Garden of Eden, the fall of man, the carrying of the cross, and the Resurrection are just a few of the many possible Old and New Testament sources of metaphor that could have been effectively applied to man's endeavour to lead a moral life. It is not easy to explain why, in a work so manifestly Christian, Johnson failed to utilize many of the most common Christian metaphors (though, of course, he uses some from the New Testament parables, such as laying up resources, using one's talents, sowing seed, rendering accounts, etc.). It might be argued that this is just one more inconsistency in the fabric of the Rambler; there is no denying that the work contains plenty of them.³⁶ Yet this is too flippant a response, especially since we have stated that authors tend to choose or neglect major metaphoric categories with some degree of deliberateness. Could it be

that Johnson felt such religious metaphors were overworked? A possibility perhaps, but how then can his frequent use of stock figures drawn from other areas be explained? A more reasonable explanation may be found through a reconsideration of Johnson's aims. Although much emphasis has been placed on the famous statement in Rambler 208 to the effect that his principal design was "to inculcate wisdom or piety," we must also remember that in Rambler 1 he said that he would "endeavour the entertainment of [his] countrymen" in these essays. Since he obviously wished to combine entertainment and instruction, perhaps he felt that the presence of religious metaphor might make an already moralistic work too ponderous or preachy. That he was cognizant of his audience's preference for lighter fare was made clear in Rambler 23 -- his defence of himself against critics who condemned him as "a solemn, serious, dictatorial writer, without sprightliness or gaiety." He concluded this essay by vowing that despite the criticism he would continue to follow "the direction of [his] own reason," but perhaps it is not too far-fetched to suggest that his own reason, upon careful reflection, led him to avoid most religious metaphor.

The Rambler metaphors, as we have now seen, stem from a multitude of sources, and make a valuable contribution to the richness and variety of the whole work. Within the many categories of metaphor can be found proof of Johnson's wide-ranging interests and abilities, as well as his determination

to make the essays personally significant to readers of diverse backgrounds. In reflecting on the metaphors, we are also brought close to Johnson the human figure -- walking on rural paths, being scratched by thorns, avoiding bees, watching crops being planted, lighting fires, eying the shady practices of business and marriage. We are left with a renewed sense of his curiosity, energy, and breadth of vision.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF JOHNSON'S MIND AS REVEALED THROUGH HIS USE OF METAPHOR

i

The main concern of this study thus far has been the identification of the kinds of metaphor present in the Rambler. As interesting and informative as such classification is, it offers only a partial view of the role this literary device plays in any work. For a better appreciation of Johnson's use of metaphor, it is necessary to examine the way it functions within the structure of the individual essay. Therefore a closer look at the composition of selected essays will now be undertaken. It is hoped that by studying when and why Johnson turned to metaphor we may gain some understanding of both his mental processes generally, and his way of proceeding as a writer of essays.

In the Rambler Johnson was primarily concerned with discussing the moral life of man; so despite its admitted importance metaphor must be regarded as ancillary to that principle. In certain essays, especially the narratives and studies of characters, metaphor often played a very minor role. The topics and situations dealt with in these essays were usually less abstract than those of the moral essays; hence they required less illumination through analogy.

Take, for example, Euphelia's letter describing her boredom in the country (42), or the account of Squire Bluster (142). Though practically devoid of metaphor, both were entertaining selections that conveyed their themes effectively. There was also apparently very little need of metaphor in the essays devoted to literary criticism. This is not to say that the essay types just mentioned are always non-metaphoric or contain only tropes of poor quality. Such a conclusion is easily refuted by the wealth of effective metaphor in a narrative like Rambler 54,¹ or by the excellence of the following figure, explaining Johnson's dissatisfaction with Pope's imitation of Italian versification:

From the Italian gardens Pope seems to have transplanted this flower, the growth of happier climates, into a soil less adapted to its nature, and less favourable to its increase. (92)

We cannot reduce Johnson's use of metaphor to fixed rules. On occasion, he would use one unexpectedly, in critical or narrative contexts, perhaps for the simple reason that it struck his fancy.

Such examples are, however, the exception rather than the rule, and metaphor is most prevalent in the essays generally regarded as the best, i.e., the ones Johnson called "the essays professedly serious" (208). As he meditated on complex moral issues, Johnson frequently resorted to metaphors to clarify or strengthen his arguments. Abstract

topics like vanity, patience or greed became more meaningful to the average reader when made concrete through metaphors of illness, warfare, agriculture, or commerce.

There is disparity in the quality as well as the frequency of metaphoric use in the Rambler. That is to be expected in a work encompassing two hundred and eight essays written over a two-year period. That some readers would feel that Rambler metaphor "was used to excess and was sometimes ill judged"² would have neither shocked nor troubled Johnson. He regarded the Rambler as one of his best literary efforts, but he recognized and conceded its flaws. The final essay presented his frank appraisal of the difficulties of the diurnal writer's task:

That all are happily imagined, or accurately polished, that the same sentiments have not sometimes recurred, or the same expressions been too frequently repeated, I have not confidence in my abilities sufficient to warrant. He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an imagination overwhelmed, a mind distracted with anxieties, a body languishing with disease. He will labour on a barren topic, till it is too late to change it; or in the ardour of invention, diffuse his thoughts into wild exuberance, which the pressing hour of publication cannot suffer judgment to examine or reduce.

On consideration of all these points, we should marvel at the overall excellence of the metaphors rather than single out for criticism the few weak examples.

Whatever the distribution of quality of the metaphors, they seem to fall into specific categories of usage. We have tentatively identified six ways in which metaphors were commonly used in the Rambler. They functioned as allegory, decoration, stock analogy, concluding device, haunting "undersong" recurring throughout the essay,³ and as multiple expanders of theme. Within an essay one particular usage may be prominent, or two or three types may have equal importance. For example, stock metaphors often occur within an allegory, and elsewhere some that are merely decorative are juxtaposed with persuasive metaphors that expand an argument. By examining each of these functions separately, some of the thought patterns that gave rise to their use will be revealed.

ii

The type of sustained metaphor known as allegory was popular in the eighteenth century, and it received more than fair representation in the Rambler. There is no need to analyze these allegories at length here, since Einbond has already effectively done that. Nevertheless, we must briefly discuss this type of essay because it illustrates one particular way that Johnson handled metaphor. Allegorical writing requires a conscious, purposeful development of a metaphoric concept, which means that the author must exercise fairly strict mental control over his material. Characters, setting, and actions must be compatible with the dominant metaphor.

There is some room for variety, but for an allegory to be successful all its metaphors should be interrelated parts of a total picture.

In the other essays Johnson was free to draw his metaphors from any source, or to switch abruptly from one type to another, whereas in the allegories he had to work within fixed limits. A look at Rambler 102' reveals that every metaphor developed some aspect of the illustration of life as a voyage. The human body was a "vessel," man's early years were "the straits of infancy," Reason helped "to steer" the way, and Pleasure was a siren who "warbled the song of invitation" which led to shipwreck. The same type of connecting pattern is present in all the other Rambler allegories. When it was necessary, Johnson was clearly able to rein in his normally wide-ranging thoughts, and to concentrate all his mental powers on the development of a tightly-knit system of metaphor. Nevertheless, Johnson rarely carried a single metaphor the full length of an essay, except in the allegories. This seems to indicate a preference for a wider range of metaphor than is possible within the requirements of allegorical writing.

It should also be noted that the allegories gave rise to less subjective metaphors; Johnson's choice in such essays was influenced more by convention than by personal feelings. Characters like Rest and Labour (33) or Wit and Learning (22), and the landscape in which they dwelled, were

simply not the stimuli Johnson needed to evoke his best metaphors. Concerning the allegories, O.F. Christie said in Johnson the Essayist (1924) that "Tedious indeed are the personifications, and tedious their pedigrees, connections and employments."⁴ While Einbond was probably right in saying that Christie's evaluation was overly harsh,⁵ it must be admitted that the most intriguing metaphors are found outside the allegories, where Johnson's imagination was less constrained.

iii

Metaphors were also used by Johnson in a decorative capacity. These figures did not clarify important points or make any contribution to the development of the essay's theme. They may be divided into two groups, those that added to the colour and vivacity of an essay, and those that merely increased its length. The first group may be referred to as embellishment and the second as filler.

Embellishment metaphors regularly occurred when Johnson engaged in description, especially description of characters. In Rambler 51 the personage of Lady Bustle was made more vivid through two charming metaphors. Her domestic accomplishments were playfully elevated to major importance when Johnson said, "the art of making English capers she has not yet persuaded herself to discover, but seems resolved that the secret shall perish with her, as some alchymists

have obstinately suppressed the art of transmuting metals." Later he conferred on her the mysterious powers of a Delphic sybil, for when her relative Cornelia peeked into her recipe book she was "totally unable to understand it, and lost the opportunity of consulting the oracle, for want of knowing the language in which its answers were returned." Lady Bustle's personality was already clearly established by the facts Johnson had provided. Still, our mental image of this woman is greatly enlivened by these metaphors.

Similar vividness is added to our vision of Gulosulus, the glutton, when Johnson remarked that "His calendar is a bill of fare; he measures the year by successive dainties" (206). The embellishment metaphor became for Johnson a neat way of fixing a particular impression of a character in the reader's mind. For example, from the catalogue of Hymenaeus's courtship adventures, the erudite Misothea stood out above all the other girls.⁶ The descriptions of the others were not adorned with metaphor, whereas Misothea was made memorable in this manner:

The queen of the Amazons was only to be gained by the hero who could conquer her in single combat; and Misothea's heart was only to bless the scholar who could overpower her by disputation. (113)

Embellishment metaphors were not limited to portrayal of characters; some served as a more attractive way to present

commonplace observations. The standard contrast between spring and winter was enlivened thus:

Spring is the season of gaiety, and winter of terror; in spring the heart of tranquillity dances to the melody of the groves, and the eye of benevolence sparkles at the sight of happiness and plenty: In the winter, compassion melts at universal calamity, and the tear of softness starts at the wailings of hunger, and the cries of the creation in distress. (80)

Elsewhere, when Johnson wished to point out that philosophers spout maxims without really comprehending them, he did so with this colorful metaphor: "their souls are mere pipes or organs, which transmit sounds, but do not understand them" (71).

Such use of embellishment revealed Johnson's awareness of what is today known as the packaging of the product. If the themes or the actions of characters were self-explanatory, illuminating metaphors were, strictly speaking, unnecessary. Yet Johnson knew that his readers relished the ornamentation of plain style with figurative language; indeed he shared their taste. When a certain Mr. Gwyn asked why Johnson accepted ornamentation in literature when he disapproved of it in architecture, he received this reply:

Why, Sir, all these ornaments are useful, because they obtain an easier reception for truth; but a building is not at all more convenient for being decorated with superfluous carved work. (Life, II, 439)

Because it was an effective means of gaining the attention of his audience, Johnson gladly made use of embellishment.

Diurnal productions like the Rambler make extraordinary demands on the creative talents of any writer. Johnson handled these "anxiety-ridden compositional circumstances" admirably,⁷ but the effect of the strain can occasionally be seen. When his metaphor deteriorated to the level of filler he was probably mentally drained of momentarily bored with his topic. While it is true, as Greene said, that "no English prose writer is less given than Johnson to 'padding out' sentences,"⁸ he sometimes extended his essay length by the addition of metaphoric filler.

In Rambler 147, where a young man enumerated the faults of his courtier uncle, metaphor served no purpose other than to lengthen the narrative. The correspondent first described himself as "banqueting upon [his] own perfections," though he later experienced "the shafts of ridicule." Of the courtier we were told that he "diffused . . . a gloss of softness and delicacy by which every one was dazzled," but, in truth, his "tinsel of politeness" marked a "poverty of ideas." Taken individually these tropes were rather perfunctory and added precious little to the themes of the essay; nor did they combine to create any special effect. They did not even add perceptibly to the attractiveness of the essay, as good embellishment would have done.

Filler was also employed in Rambler 56 when the Rambler apologized for not publishing letters from the public. The message was quite simple; the author was sorry to give offence, but all writers should be prepared for rejection. Stating this in brash terms would have further alienated some readers; therefore Johnson used metaphor to fill out and soften the harsh message. Each rejected letter, "the offspring of a fond parent," enkindled such pride that its writer was "fired with the beauties of his new composition." Johnson went on to say that every correspondent equated himself with literary giants by dreaming "of laurels and Parnassus," and awaited the day when his brain-child would give "lustre" to the world. These metaphors were not needed for clarification of any of Johnson's remarks, nor were they noteworthy in any aesthetic sense. They did, however, extend a commentary that would have otherwise been short to the point of abruptness.

iv

The Rambler also contains many examples of metaphors that came readily to Johnson's mind and were rather automatically inserted into his prose. No effort was made to develop them or grace them with an air of originality. Metaphor thus applied is best referred to as "stock," in accordance with the definition of that term in the Oxford English Dictionary:

stock: in reference to intellectual or literary topics; kept in stock for use; commonly used or brought forward, constantly appearing or recurring; in conversation, discussion, or composition; belonging to a staple or stock-in-trade of subjects, arguments, phrases, quotations, etc.; hence, commonplace, trite, conventional.

There are two types of stock metaphors in the Rambler, those commonly used by most writers, and those that were mainly a Johnsonian convention.

Since ancient times, easily understood metaphors have been used to explain important aspects of life. Johnson identified these as part of "a common stock of images ... which all authors suppose themselves at liberty to use, and which produce the resemblance generally observable among contemporaries" (143). This category included comparisons of life to a road or river, different ages to the seasons, wealth or dearth of emotions to fire and cold, and other metaphoric expressions based on the physical senses or domestic situations.⁹ Metaphors drawn from these sources could, of course, exhibit originality and wit, depending on the context in which they were used and the skill of the user. But being part of everyday expression, they were often employed in a mechanical fashion by writers. And indeed they are used mechanically by Johnson in many essays.

Although travel metaphors were some of Johnson's finest, he also used the road or path in stock phrases. People

encountered each other "in the walks of life," certain studies were remote from "the beaten track of life," and the main advantage of fame was its ability to "smooth the paths of life." Johnson followed the tradition of conveying the transitoriness of beauty through the blossoming and fading of flowers in expressions like "the bloom of youth" and "the bloom of beauty." In one essay a young man chose his wife because she possessed "qualities which might make her amiable when her bloom was past."¹⁰

It was earlier observed that metaphors associated with the senses were some of the weakest in the Rambler. Expressions like "the voice of fame," "the songs of flattery," or "the sweets of kindness" were not valuable additions to any essay.¹¹ Equally unimpressive are "the first smiles of vernal beauty," "the arms of fortune," and "the cold hand of the angel of death."¹² Johnson also followed the tradition of linking blithe spirits to the motion of dancing. He wrote of a wayward pupil that "his heart dances at the mention of a ball" (132), and of all mankind that "the heart dances to the song of hope" (207).

Other stock figures in the Rambler arose from Johnson's familiarity with the lore of the Greeks and the Romans. The material of classical literature and philosophy formed the foundation of the education of Johnson and his contemporaries. Even a mind like Johnson's could not help sometimes automatically following patterns impressed on it from childhood onward.

Johnson spoke in Rambler 41 of the power of ideas implanted in our memories:

... the images which memory presents are of a stubborn and untractable nature, the objects of remembrance have already existed, and left their signature behind them impressed upon the mind, so as to defy all attempts of rasurè, or of change.

Johnson's memory was filled with stock classical materials always ready for use. Therefore we are told that boredom had almost driven Euphelia to call on "the destinies to cut [her] thread" (42), and that the young trader hoped to be regarded by the ladies "as an oracle of the mode". (116). If Johnson could not altogether banish such stale metaphors from his work, he at least seemed less susceptible to their influence than many other writers. That he generally bypassed the classical area when elucidating his major arguments was proof that he preferred to draw his metaphors from a less hackneyed source:

Also found in the Rambler are stock figures that are more the result of Johnson's idiosyncrasies than of any literary tradition. Johnson's melancholia caused him to take a gloomy view of life, a fact borne out by his frequent use of entrapment and disease metaphors. While it is true that such figures often play an important role in a given essay, at other times they seem merely the unpremeditated, indeed habitual, metaphoric expressions of a mind with a tendency towards pessimism. It was second nature for Johnson

to describe life as complex and dangerous. Therefore he advised readers to walk carefully through "the labyrinth of life," avoiding "the snares of sophistry," and "the thorny mazes of science." As they progressed, they would fall victim to "the tumour of insolence," and "the malignity of envy." Even if they felt "chained down by pain," they must fight on bravely and never submit to the "shackles of cowardice."¹³ These and many similar examples, involuntary verbal expressions of his deepest fears, made up Johnson's personal stock of metaphor. Johnson once described how his slumber was invaded by thoughts he had had while awake; he said that "the same images, though less distinct, still continued to float upon my fancy." (105). The reverse process was operating in the case of his stock metaphors. A part of his subconscious mind, they regularly invaded his consciousness, and inevitably became a feature of his writing.

Occasionally Johnson used metaphor as a concluding device which crystallized the argument of an entire essay.¹⁴ Whether or not the metaphor belonged to a category already at work in the essay, it brought the essay to a powerful climax. Such culminating metaphors were constructed to catch the reader's attention, and to leave the theme firmly planted in his mind.

Rambler 47 showed how a brief but forceful metaphor could encapsulate the main drift of an essay. This essay was concerned with the proper means of dealing with sorrow, which "gains such a firm possession of the mind that it is not afterwards to be ejected." Metaphors of various types, including classical, medical and military, helped reveal how sorrow affected the individual and what remedies might be tried against it. Having decided that man could best combat sorrow through "employment," Johnson then knit together his whole discussion in this scientific metaphor:

Sorrow is a kind of rust of the soul, which every new idea contributes in its passage to scour away. It is the putrefaction of stagnant life, and is remedied by exercise and motion.

With this well-chosen metaphor Johnson summed up every aspect of the essay -- what sorrow is, how disastrous are its effects, and how it may be remedied.

In Rambler 154 Johnson maintained that he who scorned the knowledge of the ages in favour of his native intelligence would never be truly wise. On the other hand, he then stated that merely spouting the ideas of others without thinking for oneself was equally foolish. These two concepts were supported by metaphors ranging from stock ones to more imaginative examples like this explanation of the value of study:

... whatever be our abilities or application, we must submit to learn from others what perhaps would have lain hid for ever

from human penetration, had not some remote enquiry brought it to view; as treasures are thrown up by the ploughman and the digger in the rude exercise of their common occupations.

The essay contained so many metaphors for elucidation that perhaps Johnson was in the right frame of mind to use a concluding metaphor.¹⁵ The final and best metaphor of the essay encapsulated the theory that natural genius and intensive study are of the greatest value when they work as a team. From the category of agriculture, used to good effect earlier in the essay, Johnson derived his concluding trope:

Fame cannot spread wide or endure long that is not rooted in nature, and manured by art. That which hopes to resist the blast of malignity, and stand firm against the attacks of time, must contain in itself some original principle of growth. The reputation which arises from the detail or transposition of borrowed sentiments, may spread for a while, like ivy on the rind of antiquity, but will be torn away by accident or contempt, and suffered to rot unheeded on the ground.

Proficiency in any area, like successful farming, required that natural resources be supported with wise use of proven techniques.

Of those essays that have a metaphoric conclusion, perhaps the most intriguing is Rambler 184, whose theme is the role of chance in human affairs. Johnson here argued strenuously that everything from the choice of essay topics to the selection of marriage partners fell under "the dominion

of chance." The proofs culminated in what must be one of Johnson's finest metanphors:

We set out on a tempestuous sea, in quest of some port, where we expect to find rest, but where we are not sure of admission; we are not only in danger of sinking in the way, but of being misled by meteors mistaken for stars, of being driven from our course by the changes of the wind, and of losing it by unskilful steerage; yet it sometimes happens, that cross winds blow us to a safer coast, that meteors draw us aside from whirlpools, and that negligence or error contributes to our escape from mischiefs to which a direct course would have exposed us.

The fragile vessel tossed on the capricious waves was a perfect representation of the unpredictability of the human condition and of man's inability to control his destiny. If the reader had not been convinced by earlier proofs, he would be hard put to remain unmoved by the eloquence and reason contained here.

Having brought the essay to such an effective climax, Johnson proceeded to add a paragraph that contradicted everything said previously. Crediting chance with such overwhelming power apparently struck him as not strictly orthodox. Therefore he felt obligated to steer his essay "in the direction of Christian teaching," leading O'Flaherty to say of this paragraph that "there is no more violent reversal than this in the whole of the Rambler."¹⁶ The reader was now informed that "nothing in reality is governed by chance," but rather that "our being is in the hands of omnipotent

goodness, by whom what appears casual to us is directed for ends ultimately kind and merciful." That was what Johnson's Christianity had taught him to believe, though his reason may have occasionally seen things differently. This anticlimactic ending is simply no match for the paragraph immediately preceding it; the reader remains firmly gripped by the voyage figure. Although Johnson tried to back away from his own initial conclusion, the impact of the metaphor ensured that his audience would not be swayed. For many of them the true ending of Rambler 184 was surely in the penultimate paragraph.

In Johnson's use of metaphor as a concluding device there is proof of Boswell's statement that "In him were united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination" (Life, IV, 429). Only a precise mind could reduce lengthy arguments to a compact nucleus; only an inventive one could then build a memorable metaphor around that thematic core. Considering the speed with which most of the essays were written, it stands to reason that they displayed the natural or habitual operations of Johnson's mind. We know from his biographers that this same combination of logic and creativity was a feature of his conversation.¹⁷ One thing is certain: Johnson's listeners and readers could readily grasp and long remember messages enunciated in this fashion.

vi

From time to time in the Rambler a single metaphor became dominant owing to its repeated use throughout an entire essay or a large portion of it. It seems that a particularly apt metaphor could cast a spell on Johnson, forcing him to return to it again and again within an essay. At each new appearance the metaphor was subtly altered or even greatly extended, but the same basic idea was always present. In "Shakespeare's Iterative Imagery" (1931), Caroline Spurgeon used the term "undersong" to identify those persistent figures which recurred in an individual play.¹⁸ This is a fitting description of the haunting metaphors that kept surfacing in certain Rambler essays.

More than one third of Rambler 35 was controlled by an "undersong" from the area of commerce. The essay opened with a casual account of a young man taking care of his estate. The piece took on a different tone when he decided to seek a mate. Early in the description of the courtship Johnson used a business metaphor, stating that marriageable daughters, like so much produce, were "set out to show." Disapproving as he did of arranged marriages, the suitability of the phrase stuck in Johnson's mind. He continued with the narration, but, at regular intervals, variations on the metaphor appeared. The suitor said that he pitied those young people "condemned to be set to auction," only to be "offered and rejected a hundred times." He resented "the

stratagems" and "allurements" practised on him as a prospective buyer. Yet when the arrangements were settled, he was proud to have the girl's father praise him "for being so good at a bargain." Only when the deal culminated in marriage did the metaphor release its hold on Johnson. Since the narrative essays were not usually metaphoric, this exception confirmed the power of an expedient metaphor to dominate Johnson's thought.

The whole of Rambler 134 was affected by the presence of a recurring metaphor. The essay dealt with idleness -- a topic of great personal importance to Johnson. In the third paragraph he denounced idleness as "if not the most violent, the most pertinacious of ... passions, always renewing its attacks, and though often vanquished, never destroyed." Since Johnson waged a private struggle against indolence, the military metaphor easily took hold. For the remainder of the essay the battle scene is kept before us, as in this excerpt showing reason fighting against the enemy:

Idleness never can secure tranquillity;
the call of reason and of conscience
will pierce the closest pavilion of the
sluggard, and, though it may not have
force to drive him from his down, will
be loud enough to hinder him from sleep.

The final plea for the productive use of one's life was expressed in military terms:

It is true that no diligence can ascertain
success; death may intercept the swiftest
career; but he who is cut off in the
execution of an honest undertaking, has

at least the honour of falling in his rank, and has fought the battle, though he missed the victory.

Because the military "undersong" was so tightly intertwined with the theme of resisting inactivity, it contributed to the overall unity of the essay. Indeed, one general function of metaphor in this work is to add an element of unity to what are (of course) "rambling" series of thoughts.

Rambler 136 focused on indiscriminate dedication by authors. A recurring legal metaphor was employed, and the reader feels he is part of a dramatic courtroom scene. The legal metaphor began in the second paragraph when the writer was referred to as "the ultimate judge of disputable characters."

He was told to bestow dedications judiciously or be found guilty of "atrocious treason against the great republic of humanity." In the course of the essay the writer's role descended from judge to criminal. His praise of undeserving men was a "species of prostitution" or a fraud in which he placed "the stamp of literary sanction upon the dross and refuse of the world." In keeping with the theme of justice, Johnson showed how extenuating circumstances might have caused the writer's criminal behaviour. A share of the blame was ascribed to the patron who "bribes a flatterer" and pays "the price of prostitution."

Johnson introduced metaphors from other sources as he wrote the essay, but the emphasis on crime continues throughout.

At the end of the essay Johnson still had his dominant metaphor in mind when he stated:

To encourage merit with praise is the great business of literature; but praise must lose its influence, by unjust or negligent distribution; and he that impairs its value may be charged with misapplication of the power that genius puts into his hands, and with squandering on quilt the recompence of virtue.

So essential were these legal/criminal metaphors to the explication of the theme that they provided a kind of structural underpinning for the entire essay. In truth, to remove them would be equivalent to destroying the argument; hence, they once again help to give the essay unity.

The recurring metaphors seemed to emerge only when a topic touched off a strong emotional response within Johnson. There is no doubt that the marriage market was offensive to him, or that deep personal feelings coloured his response to idleness or dedications to unworthy patrons. Perhaps because he felt so strongly about these topics, his mind was more than normally receptive to the charm of a vigorous metaphor. While Johnson was in this frame of mind, his manner of handling a theme was somewhat controlled by metaphor. Possible slants that the development of the theme might take could have been overlooked in favour of the one dictated by the recurrent metaphor. It is almost as if working through the variations of this metaphor enabled Johnson to achieve a

catharsis of the emotions stirred up within him when he chose the theme.

vii

Johnson seemed to have confidence in the persuasive power of multiples,¹⁹ and in a number of essays he relied on multiple metaphors for illustration. Sometimes there is an observable connection between different metaphors; at other times they are completely unrelated.

In Rambler 127 there is a strong bond among the various metaphors that extol the quality of perseverance. Johnson first turned to the science of physics to show that "The advance of the human mind towards any object of laudable pursuit, may be compared to the progress of a body driven by a blow." In any situation the initial momentum is gradually decreased by obstacles, and the chances of reaching the goal are likewise diminished. This concept was re-echoed in a number of different metaphors. Within the same paragraph Johnson left the scientific metaphor for one based on the journey motif. The switch from an object hurtling through space to a person travelling is an orderly one. Like the object, the traveller is hindered in his progression by "a thousand obstacles," and he is "easily discouraged by the first hindrance of his advances." Later Johnson added metaphors from agriculture, the sea, and warfare for illustrative purposes. Each one of the major analogies harked back to

the original concept taken from physics. Perseverance is essential, for though an individual may begin an activity with "alacrity" and "ardour," he may find himself so overwhelmed by obstacles that he "abandons himself to chance and to the wind, and glides careless and idle down the current of life, without resolution to make another effort, till he is swallowed up by the gulph of mortality." What is happening in this essay is that an engaging theme is "throwing up" a variety of illustrative interconnected metaphors, which Johnson pursues to deepen and reinforce his argument.

In a large section of Rambler 52 Johnson moved back and forth between metaphors of medicine and imprisonment. The grief-stricken individual was advised to contemplate the calamities of others as a way to bring "some alleviation of that pain" caused by his grief. Whenever a complete cure is not possible, we must settle for any available consolation, for, as Johnson said, "A prisoner is relieved by him that sets him at liberty, but receives comfort from such as suggest considerations by which he is made patient under the inconvenience of confinement." This first digression from medical metaphor to that of incarceration might be regarded as accidental, if not for examples of similar transition in the ensuing paragraphs. The grieving man was told to "appease the throbbings of anguish" by realizing that "others are sunk yet deeper in the dungeon of misery, shackled with heavier chains." Words like "solace," "efficacy," and

"ills" extended the medical metaphor. The overtones of lost freedom also continued, with the victim's circumstances being identified as "the oppression of ... melancholy."

Since the alliance of the two categories of metaphor persisted throughout six long paragraphs, it seems reasonable to conclude that it was not merely the result of chance. Johnson often felt that his physical and mental suffering encroached on his freedom, and that alleviation of the pain restored his liberty.²⁰ The pattern of multiple metaphors in this essay was probably a reflection of feelings deeply rooted in Johnson's mind.

On other occasions, the multiple metaphors appeared to have nothing in common except their ability to illustrate the points Johnson was trying to make. This is evident in Rambler 108 where he wanted to prove that the short span of a human life, if wisely employed, was sufficient for all our endeavours. In order to convince us of this, Johnson drew on metaphors from many sources. Of the hours we have on earth we complain that there are few "which we can spend wholly at our own choice." Yet careful management of even a little time can bring good results. We should learn from business that "the fatal waste of fortune is by small expences." As the essay continued, Johnson included metaphors of flight, warfare, and a river's current, and concluded with the agricultural metaphor that time is an estate "which will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly

repay the labours of industry." The fact that there was no direct link among the diverse metaphors, did not lessen their effectiveness.

How can Johnson's fondness for multiple metaphors be explained? Thomas said that "A good writer ... will frequently test his ideas by submitting them to the influence of several alternative metaphors."²¹ Perhaps Johnson felt that in certain situations his argument gained strength through varying metaphoric interpretations. Perhaps he believed that each new dimension added by metaphor helped to make the theme meaningful to a wider audience. If we accept these premises, we must conclude that the use of multiples was an intentional strategy. This is only a possibility, of course; it is equally possible that they simply occurred to him as he developed his argument. His mental stores of metaphor were plentiful, and it is quite likely, as Emden said, that they "kept effervescing uncontrollably in his mind."²²

viii

Spurgeon said that the imagery (including metaphor) used by a writer is "a revelation, largely unconscious ... of the furniture of his mind, the channels of his thought."²³ This discussion has focused on six functions of metaphor in the Rambler, with a view to the thought processes behind each one. Perhaps some general observations about the mind of Samuel Johnson would now be in order.

Johnson plainly did possess a mind inclined to think metaphorically. The frequent occurrence and wide variety of metaphor in the Rambler are enough to suggest a poetic mentality. Reinforcing this impression is the ease with which Johnson was able to shift among diverse categories of metaphor, often developing several simultaneously. Such a style would not be possible for a writer who had to mull over every metaphor. Laborious efforts might result in a stilted, artificial tone, something not seen in Johnson's work. Instead there was a natural flow and grace to Johnson's most complex metaphors, proof positive that this type of expression was instinctive to him.

Saying that metaphors came easily to Johnson does not mean that his use of them was always automatic. His powers of logic often directed either his choice of metaphor or the way he used it. We have seen evidence of this with allegory, concluding metaphors, and many figures used for purposes of clarification. Johnson's keen judgement told him when to relegate a metaphor to casual usage, and when to elevate it to importance. In Rambler 139, when speaking of the proper structure of poetry, he perhaps automatically thought of a stock comparison to the construction of a building. His reason, however, sensed the kernel of an effective analogy and prompted him to develop it. Therefore he encouraged every poet to follow the "law of poetical architecture, and take care that his edifice be solid as well as beautiful;

that nothing stand single or independent, so as that it may be taken away without injuring the rest; but that from the foundation to the pinnacles one part rest firm upon another."

Although his reasoning ability was unquestionably great, it could not always counteract the strength of his emotions. The themes of many essays emphasized the need for reason, but Johnson was susceptible to the power of his passions.²⁴ Certain topics or situations stirred up his feelings, and he responded with impassioned metaphors. Many of the medical, military and entrapment metaphors emanated from the emotional rather than the analytical portion of Johnson's mind.

In reference to the way Johnson worked out his formal arguments in the Rambler essays, O'Flaherty said that we see "the process of Johnson's thinking rather than the results of his thought."²⁵ The manner in which he handled metaphor also gives some insight into the actual operations of his mind. A reflective or meditative thought process was at work as Johnson carefully developed metaphor to support moral themes. When he was fatigued, or possibly bored, his thoughts sometimes ran along familiar channels and produced familiar stock figures. The stirrings of the deep recesses of his mind -- or perhaps we should say soul -- were reflected by intense metaphors that touched the heart of every reader.

It is not possible to make a neat package out of Johnson's mind; no amount of research will ever accomplish that. But

it can be said with certainty that the expanse of its knowledge, its astuteness, and the intensity of its emotions are reflected in the metaphors used in the Rambler. Oliver Goldsmith once told Johnson that he desired to have some new members added to the Literary Club because the current members had already "travelled over one another's minds" (Life, IV, 183). If we should ever think that scholarly research has fully explained the psyche of Johnson, we would do well to recall the response Goldsmith received: "Sir, you have not travelled over my mind, I promise you." Nor have we, but our brief excursion within it has been a rewarding adventure.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Donald Greene, Samuel Johnson (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), p. 141.

²W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941; rpt. 1963), p. 55.

³Ibid., p. 65. In his use of the word "pictorial" Wimsatt adheres to the definition of imagery put forward by Caroline Spurgeon, i.e., that images refer to "every kind of picture, drawn in every kind of way, in the form of simile or metaphor -- in their widest sense." See also: Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Iterative Imagery, Council of the British Academy Annual Shakespeare Lecture (London, 6 May 1931), p. 2.

⁴Wimsatt, Prose Style, pp. 65-66.

⁵W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., Philosophic Words: A Study of Style and Meaning in the "Rambler" and "Dictionary" of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948; rpt. Archon Books, 1968), p. 93.

⁶Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, ed. W.J. Bate and A.B. Strauss, in The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, vols. III, IV, and V (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), IV, 331. Hereafter most references to individual Rambler essays are noted by essay number within the text.

⁷Wimsatt, Philosophic Words, p. 66.

⁸Cecil S. Emden, "Dr. Johnson and Imagery," The Review of English Studies, NS I (1950), p. 28.

⁹Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹²Ibid., p. 32.

¹³Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁴John Cabell Riely, "The Pattern of Imagery in Johnson's Periodical Essays," Eighteenth Century Studies, 3, No. 3 (1970), p. 384.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 387.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 388.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 394-95.

¹⁸Patrick O'Flaherty, "Towards an Understanding of Johnson's Rambler," Studies in English Literature, 18 (1978), p. 529.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 529.

²⁰Samuel Johnson, Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, in The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), VII, 67.

²¹Bernard L. Einbond, Samuel Johnson's Allegory (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1971), p. 26.

²²Ibid., p. 97.

²³Myron D. Yeager, "The Mind in the Marketplace: Commercial Imagery in Samuel Johnson's Prose Works," Diss. Purdue 1980, p. vii.

²⁴Ibid., p. 72.

CHAPTER 2

¹James Boswell, Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. George Birbeck Hill, rev. L.F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), I, 320. Most future references to this work are noted in abbreviated form within the text.

²Samuel Johnson, The Letters of Samuel Johnson, coll. and ed. R.W. Chapman, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), Letter to Dr. Richard Brocklesby, October 25, 1784, III, 241.

³R.W. Ketton-Cremer, "Johnson and the Countryside," in Johnson, Boswell, and Their Circle: Essays Presented to Lawrence Fitzroy Powell, ed. M.M. Lascelles et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 65.

⁴Ibid.; p. 66.

⁵Ramblers 111, 169, 133.

⁶Ketton-Cremer, p. 71. He comments that Johnson's attitude towards country life is one of "stern practicality." Johnson was more interested in the productiveness than the attractiveness of a piece of land. This same practicality is evident in the agricultural metaphors.

⁷Sir John Hawkins, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., ed. Bertram H. Davis (London: Jonathan Cape, 1961; rpt. 1962), p. 211.

⁸Walter Jackson Bate, The Achievement of Samuel Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 93.

⁹Ramblers 151, 163, 104, and 172.

¹⁰Riely, "The Pattern of Imagery in Johnson's Periodical Essays," p. 390.

¹¹Bate, Achievement, p. 38.

¹²For further comment on the padlock and Johnson's insanity, see: Plozzi, Hester Lynch (Thrale), Thraliana: The Diary of Hester Lynch Thrale, ed. Katharine C. Balderston,

2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), I, 384, n. 4, and I, 415, n. 4.

¹³Samuel Johnson, Diaries, Prayers and Annals, ed. E.L. McAdam, Jr., with Donald and Mary Hyde, in The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958; rpt. 1960), I, 69.

¹⁴Johnson, for example, was not "shackled by timidity" (Rambler 159); nor was his soul "chained down to coffers and tenements" (Rambler 203).

¹⁵Thomas M. Curley, Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1976), p. 1. Emden and Riely also refer briefly to metaphors of travel used in the Rambler. See Emden, pp. 31-32 and Riely, p. 393.

¹⁶Hester Lynch Piozzi, Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson, ed. S.C. Roberts (London: Cambridge University Press, 1932), pp. 110-111.

¹⁷Johnson regarded travel by ship as a kind of torture. Boswell quoted him as saying, in reference to the life of a sailor, that "being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned" (Life, I, 348).

¹⁸Curley, p. 125.

¹⁹Ramblers 77, 188 and 102.

²⁰Ramblers 175, 183, 104, 95, 124 and 38.

²¹Matthew 7: 13-14.

²²Johnson was once mistaken for a physician when he went into an apothecary's shop and wrote out a prescription for himself in correct technical terms (Life, V, 74). See also Johnson's Letters, I, 80-81. In a letter to Hill Boothby, Johnson recommended to her his own remedy for indigestion.

²³Ramblers 98, 29, 96.

²⁴Piozzi, Anecdotes, p. 52.

²⁵Samuel Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes," in Poems, ed. E.L. McAdam, Jr., with George Milne, in The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), VI, 108, l. 359.

²⁶Arieh Sachs, Passionate Intelligence: Imagination and Reason in the Work of Samuel Johnson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 14-15.

²⁷John Wiltshire, "Pains and Remedies: An Aspect of the Work of Samuel Johnson," Critical Review, 21 (1979), p. 9.

²⁸Walter Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975; rpt. 1977), p. 585.

²⁹Piozzi, Anecdotes, p. 97.

³⁰Hawkins, p. 271.

³¹John Wain, Samuel Johnson, (New York: Viking Press, 1974), p. 157.

³²H.R. Kilbourne, "Dr. Johnson and War," ELH, 12 (1945), p. 131.

³³I Timothy 6: 12.

³⁴For interesting commentary on military metaphors that relate to the medieval period, see Eithne Henson, "Johnson's Romance Imagery," Prose Studies 8, No. 1 (1985), pp. 5-24. Henson saw this type of military metaphor as part of a Johnsonian bent for romance imagery. Other types of metaphor treated by Henson in conjunction with the chivalry and romance motif are those of dungeons, shackles, the journey or quest, and certain landscapes.

³⁵Ramblers 76, 144 and 32.

³⁶Bate, Achievement, pp. 95-96. For more discussion of the heart being endangered by its own longings, see O'Flaherty, "Towards an Understanding of Johnson's Rambler," p. 529.

³⁷Ibid., p. 96.

³⁸Ramblers 160, 32 and 183.

³⁹Richard B. Schwartz, Samuel Johnson and the Problem of Evil (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 59.

⁴⁰John Milton, Areopagitica (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 16. While Johnson found most of this work unpalatable, he would have agreed with Milton that the true Christian must always be ready to do battle for his faith.

⁴¹John Brown, "Samuel Johnson and Eighteenth-Century Science," Diss. Yale 1943, p. xxv.

⁴²Piozzi, Anecdotes, p. 152.

⁴³Wimsatt, Philosophic Words, p. 56.

⁴⁴Ramblers 17, 185, 74, 133 and 47.

⁴⁵Ramblers 172, 101 and 78.

⁴⁶For other metaphors based on the balance, see Ramblers 5, 7, 70, 76, 95 and 132.

⁴⁷Wimsatt, Philosophic Words, p. 64.

⁴⁸Brown, p. 163.

⁴⁹Charles E. Pierce, Jr., The Religious Life of Samuel Johnson (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1983), p. 119.

CHAPTER 3

¹Owen Thomas, Metaphor and Related Subjects (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 26.

²Wain, Samuel Johnson, pp. 153, 162.

³Ramblers 69, 205 and 59.

⁴A case in point is the expression "shackles of patronage" (163), an entrapment metaphor embedded in a longer metaphor that is distinctly military.

⁵Piozzi, Anecdotes, p. 165.

⁶Issues of The Gentleman's Magazine at this time generally contained articles on the anatomy and behaviour of animals only then becoming familiar to Europeans. For example, in the first few months of 1750 articles appear on the leopard (January), the crocodile, pipa, and salamander (February), the hummingbird (March), the tiger (April), and so on.

⁷Donald Greene, The Age of Exuberance (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 161.

⁸For "sirens," see Ramblers 31, 53, 124, and 150. For "elysian regions," see Ramblers 6, 36, 46, 128, 196, and 207.

⁹J.H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century, The Pelican History of England (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1950; rpt. 1968), vol. 7, p. 21.

¹⁰George Birbeck Hill, ed., Johnsonian Miscellanies, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), vol. 2, p. 13.

¹¹Yeager, "The Mind in the Marketplace," p. 72.

¹²Wain, Samuel Johnson, p. 152.

¹³Mark 8: 36.

¹⁴Paul Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the Life of

Writing (New York: "Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), pp. 7, 44.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁶O'Flaherty, "Towards an Understanding of Johnson's Rambler," p. 525.

¹⁷Samuel Johnson, "Life of Milton," in Lives of the English Poets, Oxford Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. (Oxford: Talboys and Wheeler, 1825; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1970), vol. 7, p. 77.

¹⁸For "flames," see Ramblers 27, 111, 54 and 64. For "blaze," see Ramblers 43 and 101.

¹⁹For metaphors of "divine spark," see Ramblers 49, 70.

²⁰Wimsatt, Philosophic Words, p. 5.

²¹Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Newton Demands the Muse: Newton's "Opticks" and the Eighteenth Century Poets (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. vii.

²²Wimsatt, Prose Style, p. 55.

²³Ramblers 69, 95, 135, 87 and 136.

²⁴Rambler 124 ("eye"), 184 ("arms"), 104, 200, 124 and 75 ("hands").

²⁵Johnson, Letters, Letter to Mrs. Thrale, March 19, 1777, II, 166.

²⁶Piozzi, Anecdotes, p. 81.

²⁷O'Flaherty, "Towards an Understanding of Johnson's Rambler," pp. 528-9.

²⁸Piozzi, Anecdotes, p. 66.

²⁹For "stage" and "theatre" metaphors, see Ramblers 4, 54, 101, 123, 156 and 207.

³⁰Emden, p. 33.

³¹Johnson, "Life of Milton," p. 102.

³²James F. Woodruff, "Johnson's Rambler and Its Contemporary Context," Bulletin of Research in the Humanities, 85, No. 1 (1982), p. 29.

³³Ibid., p. 34.

³⁴See Ramblers 153, 167 ("cup"), 151, 193 ("food"), 13, 68 ("thread"), 19, 58, 172 ("race"); and 93, 111, 127 ("contest").

³⁵Emden, p. 33.

³⁶The inconsistencies of the Rambler are discussed by Fussell, and also by Leopold Damrosch, Jr. in his article "Johnson's Manner of Proceeding in the Rambler," ELH, 40 (1973), pp. 70-89.

CHAPTER 4

¹This particular essay deals with the theme of death, a topic which often prompted Johnson to express his thoughts metaphorically.

²Emden, p. 38.

³The term "undersong" as used in this chapter was borrowed from Spurgeon. For clarification of this term, see p. 110 of this chapter.

⁴O.F. Christie, Johnson the Essayist (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1924; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1966), p. 123.

⁵Einbond, pp. 66-67.

⁶Ferocula, Sophronia, Phyllida and several unnamed beauties make little impression on the reader.

⁷Fussell, p. 157.

⁸Donald J. Greene, "'Pictures to the Mind': Johnson and Imagery," in Johnson, Boswell and Their Circle: Essays Presented to Lawrence Fitzroy Powell, ed. M.M. Lascelles et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 143.

⁹For thorough coverage of traditional or "stock" metaphor, see Ad de Vries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery (Amsterdam and London: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1974) or J.C. Cooper, An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1978).

¹⁰Ramblers 56, 162, 49 ("road" or "path"), Ramblers 66, 189, 130 ("bloom").

¹¹See Ramblers 87, 151, 93 for "voice of fame," Rambler 128 for "songs of flattery," and Rambler 56 for "sweets of kindness."

¹²Ramblers 111, 184, 190.

¹³Ramblers 39, 95, 19 ("traps" of various kinds), Ramblers 98, 111 ("disease"), Ramblers 118 and 157 ("fetters").

¹⁴Greene referred to Johnson's tendency to use concluding metaphors within his prose. However, he gave no specific examples of these from the Rambler. See Greene, "Pictures to the Mind," p. 148.

¹⁵Rambler 154 is one of the most metaphoric of all Rambler essays. Of its 15 paragraphs, 11 use metaphor extensively.

¹⁶O'Flaherty, "Towards an Understanding of Johnson's Rambler," p. 535.

¹⁷The Rambler "breathes indeed the genuine emanations of its great Author's mind, expressed too in a style so natural to him, and so much like his common mode of conversing" (Piozzi, Anecdotes, p. 194). For similar comments linking the styles of Johnson's prose and conversation, see also Boswell, Life, IV, 236-237, and Hawkins, p. 71.

¹⁸Spurgeon, "Shakespeare's Iterative Imagery," p. 5.

¹⁹Wimsatt, Prose Style, pp. 15-32. Here Wimsatt discusses Johnson's use of "parallelism" or "multiplied similar meaning" (p. 15) as an important aspect of Johnson's prose style.

²⁰See the discussion of "entrapment" in Chapter 2, especially pp. 23-25.

²¹Thomas, Metaphor, p. 74.

²²Emden, p. 35.

²³Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935; rpt. 1968), p. 4.

²⁴Boswell quoted Reynolds as saying that "Johnson's passions were like those of other men, the difference only lay in his keeping a stricter watch over himself" (Life, IV, 396, n. 3).

²⁵O'Flaherty, "Towards an Understanding of Johnson's Rambler," p. 528.

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