

and 10). Other statistical data are more helpfully presented and discussed.

Finally, the publishers have done Denoon a double dis-service, by producing a book which is poorly proof-read, and setting on it a price so astronomical in relation to its size that most potential readers will have recourse only to library copies.

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*John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth-Century Man of Letters.* By John Lawrence Abbott. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1983. 241 pp. U.S.A. price: \$22.50.

LITERARY SCHOLARS are familiar with John Hawkesworth (1720–1773) as a disciple of Samuel Johnson; historians know him as the first chronicler of Cook. It was a misfortune that Johnson failed to carry through his projected edition of Hawkesworth's writings and correspondence. Memories of his protégé might have prompted further reflections on the Vanity of Human Wishes; or, at a more practical level, his efforts might have preserved particulars well known to Hawkesworth's contemporaries but since lost beyond recall. Johnson might even have produced the kind of memoir he himself advocated: one that passed over 'vulgar greatness' to 'lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life'.

The opportunity was lost, probably through Johnson's notorious indolence, and Hawkesworth has had to wait more than two centuries for a biographer in the person of John Lawrence Abbott. Working in the exacting tradition of American humane scholarship, funded by the inexhaustible resources of American research foundations, Professor Abbott has probably gathered every fact about Hawkesworth now recoverable and has certainly made a thorough study of his publications. But minute details of his life are lacking, especially in the early years, and there are grey areas at all periods. The picture that emerges is of a young man with no advantages of birth or education rising through the still fluid society of eighteenth-century England to enjoy a brief and delayed fame.

His ascent was largely the result of his own efforts, but benign Providence took a hand at certain critical junctures. After being apprenticed to an attorney, at the age of twenty he found employment with Edward Cave who a decade before had established the *Gentleman's Magazine*. This unique periodical, a combination of literary review, news digest, political commentary, and court chronicle, was ideally suited to Hawkesworth's talents and gave him experience he could not have acquired elsewhere. Moreover, it introduced him to Cave's chief editorial assistant, Johnson, who became his mentor and model. They worked together until Johnson, needing more time for his dictionary and other enterprises, gave up his post. Hawkesworth succeeded him, to become the magazine's literary editor and a power in the world of letters.

Not long after settling into his new profession Providence again favoured him.

He had the good fortune to meet and marry a young woman, Mary Brown, who came from Bromley in Kent. Her origins were as undistinguished as her name, but she may have inherited property from her father, a butcher, and she herself was energetic and enterprising. In the mansion the Hawkesworths occupied in her birthplace she ran a boarding school or boarding house (perhaps both) and, as Abbott observes, gave her husband a secure base for his literary career. Not only that, she provided him with a home in semi-rural surroundings not too remote from the metropolis. There he could work in peace and occasionally entertain less fortunate writers, among them Johnson and his wife 'Tetty'. The two couples became close friends, all the more intimate, it may have been, because both were childless. Following the aged Tetty's death in 1752 Hawkesworth took over from the inconsolable husband and arranged her burial in Bromley churchyard.

The association continued, marred only by the differences that inevitably arise when friends are also writers. A breach occurred in 1756 when Hawkesworth was awarded a Lambeth doctorate. As a result he suffered 'illusions of self-importance' — 'a common disease perhaps,' speculates Professor Abbott, 'of recipients of honorary degrees.' At any rate about this time, on the authority of Miss Reynolds, Johnson exclaimed: "'Hawkesworth is grown a coxcomb, and I have done with him.'" Johnson had to eat his words and in the end was consoled by the more prestigious degrees he himself received from Dublin and Oxford. Nor could he have been indifferent to the unflinching support he received from Hawkesworth in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Each of his publications was reviewed respectfully in detail and even his acceptance of a royal pension was defended.

With access to periodical files and special collections, American and English, Abbott has been able to give a full account of Hawkesworth's literary career, supporting his own judgements by liberal quotations from the vast but inaccessible *oeuvre*. Clearly he was far from being the Grub Street hack he was once labelled; he fully merits the 'Man of Letters' of Abbott's title. Nor was he *merely* Johnson's disciple. While following the mentor's lead, he ultimately asserted his independence and sometimes surpassed the master. His *Adventurer*, for example, is not a slavish copy of Johnson's *Rambler* but a more catholic periodical to which other writers contributed. Then again his work on Swift is probably superior to Johnson's, showing a modern respect for original texts and a most enlightened attitude towards Swift's scatology. His style, as Abbott demonstrates, was sometimes undistinguishable from Johnson's: that is, they both observed the Augustan conventions governing serious discourse. Hawkesworth's variation bears no resemblance to such caricatures of Johnsonese as Madame d'Arblay's.

His range was wide, embracing not only theatrical pieces undertaken for his friend Garrick but novels and tales. Some were 'oriental' exercises emulating Johnson's *Rasselas*; others, with local and contemporary settings, were sentimental and 'improving' in the manner of Richardson. Abbott quotes from Hawkesworth's *Adventurer* essays where he urged writers of fiction to inculcate lessons of virtue; and among works commissioned by Garrick were, it appears, versions of Restoration plays purged of their improprieties. His reputation as a moralist rather than his talents as littérateur may have won him the Lambeth doctorate. He gained further esteem in 1768 with his translation of Fénelon's epic and didactic *Adventures de Télémaque*, originally composed for the edification of the youthful Duke of Burgundy.

In the same year, 1768, James Cook set out for Tahiti and on his return late in

1771 Lord Sandwich commissioned Hawkesworth to prepare for the press the journals of this and previous British expeditions to the Pacific. The three volumes, written and published in the incredible space of eighteen months, won the author a fortune, enhanced his name, and gave him the entrée into London's most exclusive circles. His felicity, alas, was brief: within a few months he was a disappointed and discredited man; by the end of November 1773 he was dead. Posthumously, it was his fate to be eclipsed by the two men whose fame he himself had done so much to establish.

Abbott has a lengthy chapter on the *Voyages* and their sequel, acknowledging his debt to J. C. Beaglehole, and to W. H. Pearson, for his textual study of that work. The strength of his own account is that the whole episode is seen in relation to Hawkesworth's previous career and earlier writings. Thus the fluency of his narrative and its readability were manifestly the outcome of long practice as a novelist and dramatist, while its epic-travelogue qualities doubtless owed something to the recent *Adventures of Telemachus*. Similarly it can be recognized how Hawkesworth the moralist and observer of man asserted himself throughout — in presenting the varieties of human behaviour, in his treatment of the clashes between Europeans and Pacific islanders, in his own speculations on the workings of Providence. His most vehement critics attacked him in this role — with mortal effect according to some of his contemporaries. Professor Abbott gives the evidence but wisely passes no verdict. Gratitude is due to him for his work of erudition and rehabilitation. The book is well if rather austere produced: the single illustration reprints an engraving of the portrait by Reynolds. I noted only one typographical error: *typography* on p.132, 1.24 should be *topography*.

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