Transnational Exchange: Rethinking Johnson's French Resistance in the *English Dictionary*

Johnson's French resistance has acquired quasi-canonical status in contemporary as well as later accounts of his life and works. His 'dislike of the French was well known to both nations', Hester Piozzi declares in her *Anecdotes*.[1] Boswell took consolation in Johnson's stated assertion that 'France is worse than Scotland in every thing but climate' while Frances Reynolds reported Johnson's conviction that the French (a 'silly people') lack 'common manners', 'common learning', and 'common sense'.[2] 'Forgive my Transports on a Theme like this,/ I cannot bear a *French* metropolis', Johnson declared in 'London' in 1738.[3] Lucy Porter, in Lichfield, was the recipient of similarly negative impressions after Johnson's first (and only) visit to France in 1775. 'Paris was not as fine a city as you would expect', Johnson stated; the French 'way of life' was judged neither 'commodious or pleasant'.[4]

In terms of language, too, a similar narrative routinely appears. Johnson's commitment to the 'wells of English undefiled' is a set piece in popular comment. 'It is difficult to separate Johnson from the English identity he prized so much. The importance of English community and the continuity of Englishness is crucial in the *Dictionary*', Kersey comments.[5] Johnson's resolution (made in the 'Preface') that English speakers will not 'babble a dialect of *France*' can both suggest and reject a state of political as well as linguistic subordination.[6] Anxieties that English might 'be overwhelmed and crushed by unnecessary foreign ornaments', earlier expressed by Lord Chesterfield, were, by implication, categorically resolved.[7] 'In English I would have *Gallicisms* avoided, that we may keep to our own language, and not follow the French mode in our speech', an illustrative citation from Henry Felton's *Dissertation on Reading the Classics* records under *Gallicism*.

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[1] Hester Piozzi, *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (London: Thomas Cadell, 1786), 102.

[2] James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Comprehending an Account of his Studies and Numerous Works* (London: Charles Dilly, 1791) I, 512; Frances Reynolds, cited in Christopher Hibbert, *The Personal History of Samuel Johnson* (London: Penguin, 1971), 246-7.

[3] Samuel Johnson, 'London: A Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal', *The Poems of Samuel Johnson* eds. David Nichol Smith and Edward L. McAdam, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), II, 98-9.

[4] Samuel Johnson to Lucy Porter, 16 November 1775, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson* ed. Bruce Redford (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), IV, 276.

[5] Mel Kersey, ''The Wells of English Undefiled': Samuel Johnson's Romantic Resistance to Britishness', *Age of Johnson* 17 (2006). https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/wells-english-undefiled-samuel-johnsons-romantic/docview/1711533692/se-2 (accessed March 14, 2023).

[6] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language; in which the Words are deduced from their originals and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers* (London: J. and P. Knapton, T. and T. Longman, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, A. Millar, and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755), C2^{v}.

[7] [Chesterfield, Lord], Letter to *The World* No.100, November 28 1754, 603.

Johnson's definitions of words such as *canaille* ('A French term of reproach') or, say, *disinteressment* ('merely gallick') can meanwhile suggest his own participation in agendas of this kind. 'A Gallick signification, not adopted among us', he notes, for instance, under *comport* (v.) in the sense 'to bear, to endure'. 'A French word which with many more is now happily disused', the entry for *souvenance* (glossed as 'Remembrance; memory') declares.

A sense of transnational competition, with France as familiar enemy, were other conspicuous features. Johnson's *lexicographer* is, famously, a 'harmless drudge' but, in the *Dictionary,* lexicography was also rendered 'a contest with united academies and long successions of learned compilers' with the prize as 'the palm of philology'.[8] William Adams' encounter with Johnson in 17 Gough Square (the literal home of Johnson's dictionary-making), and Johnson's scathing assessment of 'the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman', has, in this light, become another staple element in the *Dictionary*'s historiography. As Adams was assured, while the forty 'Immortels' of the Académie Française had required forty years to complete their *Dictionnaire*, a mere three years would suffice for Johnson, single-handedly, to bring his own work to a close.[9] Viewed in factual terms, Johnson's patriotic bravado was counteracted by a publication date of 1755, some eight years after his project began. Boswell's description of Johnson's habit of 'talking for victory' is apt. Even so, the tropes of war, and a specifically Anglo-French war of words, were prominent in the *Dictionary*'s public reception. 'JOHNSON, well-arm'd like a hero of yore/ Has beat forty *French*, and will beat forty more', as David Garrick declared in his celebratory poem 'Upon JOHNSON's *Dictionary*': 'Would we alter our boast from the sword to the pen/ Our odds are still greater, still greater our men', he added.[10] Johnson, as DeMaria observes, is often seen as typifying a form of 'triumphant Anglicity'.[11]

In this article, however, I want to explore the ways in which Johnson's praxis in relation to French and French authority during the dictionary years can assume both different and surprising directions. The Académie might, as we have seen, take precedence in popular comment (along with the ‘cold eye’ that, as Reddick contends, Johnson cast on France)[12] but French lexicography was, on a range of levels, also to be directly embedded in the *Dictionary* in ways that affect meaning, evidence, and definition. By extension, Johnson, rather than being a type of Gallophobic ‘John Bull’, can be seen in interesting ways (and on English soil) as engaging with the ‘*querelle des dictionnaires*’, enacted across the Channel between the restrictive model of the Académie Française and the more liberal legacies of Antoine Furetière (whose work for his *Dictionnaire Universelle, contenant generalement tous les Mots François* led to his own expulsion from the Académie in 1685).[13] As Roy-Garibal has stressed, fundamental questions of liberty and authority, usage and the collective, were embodied in these divergent approaches to recording a native tongue.[14] In Johnson’s modelling of practical lexicography, and the transnational patterns it reveals, his ‘French resistance’ is, as we will see, specific rather than general while the ‘cold eye’ laid on France is, at a number of points, clearly not so cold at all.

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[8] Samuel Johnson, *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language; Addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield* (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1747), 33.

[9] 'Johnsoniana Related by the Rev. Dr. William Adams, Oxford, June 1784', in James Boswell, *The Correspondence and Other Papers of James Boswell relating to the making of the Life of Johnson* (2nd ed.) ed. M. Waingrow, *The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell: Research Edition* (New Haven and London: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 19.

[10] David Garrick, 'Upon JOHNSON's *Dictionary*', *Gentleman's Magazine* xxv (1755), 190.

[11] Robert DeMaria, *The Life of Samuel Johnson: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), xii.

The reality of Johnson’s enduring interest in French is part of this. ‘I would have you learn French’, Johnson advised George Strahan in 1765, then beginning his Oxford career at University College.[15] Johnson might, as in his later tour to France in 1775, prefer Latin in terms of spoken address but French, and especially written French, remained part of his self-confessed ‘zeal for languages’, here as both critic and practitioner.[16] ‘The importance of translation in Johnson’s scheme to establish himself as a man of letters can hardly be stressed too much’, writes Kaminski.[17] A close familiarity with works in French underpinned a range of early projects, including *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (1735), based on Joachim Le Grand’s *Relation Historique d’Abissinie*, as well as Johnson’s translation of Jean Pierre de Crousaz’s *Commentaire sur la traduction en vers de M. Abbé Du Resnel, de l’Essai de M. Pope sur l’homme*, published as *A Commentary on Mr. Pope’s Principles of Morality, or Essay on Man* in 1742. Equally important were the many adaptations which formed part of Johnson’s work on the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (and in which French texts were routinely read, paraphrased, and condensed into English for English readers). Even as the *Dictionary* began, Johnson was, as William Adams records, contemplating still other processes of transnational (and Anglo-French) exchange. A further visit to Gough Square had, for example, revealed the parlour floor ‘covered with Bundles of foreign Bibliotheques, the *Journals des Savans*, and the like’.[18] Johnson was assiduously at work, in French and English, exploring possibilities for a literary journal and a work that, on Continental models, was universal rather than narrowly restrictive in its range.

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[12] Allen Reddick, *The Making of Johnson’s Dictionary 1746-1773* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 195 n.2.

[13] On the history of the ‘*querelle*’, and the fundamental conflicts between the Académie and Furetière that this revealed, see Michael Fitzsimons, *The Place of Words: The Académie Française and its Dictionary During an Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[14] Marine Roy-Garibal, *Le Parnasse et le palais: l’oeuvre de Furetière et la genèse du premier dictionnaire encyclopédique en langue française (1649–1690)* (Paris: Champion, 2006), 19.

[15] Samuel Johnson to George Strahan, 25 May 1765, *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, I, 248.

[16] See Moses Tyson and Henry Guppy (ed.), *The French Journals of Mrs. Thrale and Doctor Johnson: Edited from the Original Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library and In the British Museum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1932), 7

[17] Thomas Kaminski, *The Early Career of Samuel Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 81.

French and French precedent in Johnson’s hands

It was, of course, European achievements in lexicography that provided the immediate context for Johnson’s *Dictionary*, as well as the methods he was expected to adopt. The *Vocabulario* of the Accdemia della Crusca had been in existence since 1612, and the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Françoise* since 1694 (a second edition had followed in 1718). If, by 1746, some five hundred English dictionaries had been published, none, as the bookseller Robert Dodsley made plain, compared to those of national academies abroad, nor the discourse of regulative linguistic control (and ‘règles certains’) that these espoused. It was, Dodsley argued, ‘a Work’ of this kind that ‘of all others we most want’.[19] His superlative heightened this sense of absence; his use of ‘want’ neatly mediated between national ‘need’ and ‘deficiency’. *Want* is ‘the state of not having’, as Johnson later explained in the *Dictionary* that had, in turn been commissioned by Dodsley and his consortium of booksellers.

The precedents of academy discourse (and particularly the Académie Française) were plain in other respects, too. Lord Chesterfield, secured by Dodsley as patron for Johnson’s work, was, as by Mallet in 1749, deftly positioned as a quasi-Richelieu whose ‘academy for the *French* tongue…flourishes to the advantage of his country’, as well as ‘the peculiar honour of his own name’.[20] Meanwhile, in a ‘puff’ produced for Dodsley’s journal *The World* in 1754, Chesterfield proffered his own desiderata on the regulative processes he desired. ‘Toleration, adoption and naturalization have run their lengths’, he stressed. Just as for the Académie, the borders of discourse were to be strengthened and migrant words controlled while purism and proscriptive control took centre stage. French, as Chesterfield added, had hitherto 'spread…over most parts of Europe' – a process 'always reckoned among the glories of the reign of Lewis the fourteenth'.[21] English, he suggested, was, courtesy of Johnson's work, poised to secure similar advance.

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[18] The Rev. Dr. William Adams to James Boswell, 17 February 1785. In Boswell, *Correspondence and other Papers*, 49.

[19] [Robert Dodsley], ‘Review of *The Plan* of a DICTIONARY of the English Language,’ *The Museum: Or, the Literary and Historical Register* 3 (1747), 389.

[20] David Mallet, *Amyntor and Theodora: or, the Hermit* (London: Paul Vaillant, 1747), iii.

Johnson signed the contract with Dodsley's consortium of booksellers in 1746. Subsequent advertising affirmed the regulative remit he was to adopt. Nevertheless, the extent to which Johnson's *Dictionary* really resembled the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Françoise* remains an interesting question. Both are reference works, interested in codification and a quality of linguistic precision applied to meaning and the use of words. The *Dictionnaire* was distinguished by its determined selectivity, and informed both by its commitment to 'pur' usage and its stated desire to 'nettoyer' French. In similar ways, Johnson's title-page formally drew attention to the usage of the 'best writers' while the 'chief intent' of his *Dictionary,* as Johnson likewise indicated, was 'to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of the English idiom'. 'If this part of the work can be well performed, it will', Johnson explained, 'be equivalent to the proposal made by Boileau to the academicians, that they should review all their polite writers, and correct such impurities as might be found in them, that their authority might not contribute, at any distant time, to the depravation of the language'.[22]

For Johnson, as an extant manuscript draft of his 1747 *Plan* attests, considerations of selection nevertheless remained troubling while a number of academy desiderata were both addressed and placed in doubt. 'When I first conceived the design of compiling a new Dictionary of the English Language, ~~the first question~~ Words ~~to be considered~~ is it did not appear by what rule or by what marks of Distinction the words are to be chosen', as Johnson stated, phrasing and rephrasing his words with care. A further dilemma, he indicated, was 'whether the work is to comprise only those words which are used in the general intercourse of Life, and…found in the writings of Orators, Historians and those ~~such~~ authours which ~~as~~ are usually…termed polite' or whether, in contrast, 'it should take in the Language of particular professions, which generally derive their terms as with their arts from other nations?'[23] Within the *Dictionnaire,* agreed areas of omission centred on words or meanings judged regional, archaic, or obsolete (since the true *honnête homme* was supposed to be *au*

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[21] [Chesterfield] Letter to *The World*, 601.

[22] Johnson, *Plan*, 4, 22.

[23] Samuel Johnson, 'A Short Scheme for Compiling a New Dictionary of the English Language', in Samuel Johnson, *Johnson on the English Language*, ed. Gwin J. Kolb and Robert DeMaria (Yale: Yale University Press, 2005), 379.

courant rather than using words that had fallen out of fashion). Words connected with ‘low’ registers such as trade and commerce (judged unbecoming for the gentleman) were likewise dismissed, as were those betraying undue foreign influence. The diction of science and technology was another targeted absence. ‘Bon usage’ had a cultural as well as normative base. The Académie, Johnson notes, exemplified an ‘exact and pure idea of a grammatical dictionary’ which privileged ‘the works of those whom we commonly stile polite writers, without including the terms of particular professions’.[24] Telling, too, was its anti-empirical stance. As Considine observes, the *Dictionnaire* registered ‘good usage known to the academicians …even if no evidence for it was to be found in approved authors’.[25] Even in 1746, however, Johnson was clearly reading for evidence (and usage) in both early and later texts. In contrast to the *Dictionnaire*, an extensive citation file informed ‘the rigour of interpretative lexicography’ at which he aimed.[26]

For Johnson, questions of utility (and of what readers might require) would, in similar ways, repeatedly intervene. ‘The value of a work must be estimated by its use’, he stressed: ‘It is not enough that a dictionary delights the critic, unless at the same time it instructs the learner’.[27] His critical stance is unambiguous. Models of inclusion (and exclusion) were reconfigured in response. ‘It seems necessary to the completion of a dictionary design’d not merely for critics but for popular use, that it should comprise, in some degree, the peculiar words of every profession’, Johnson instead affirmed.[28] In the 1755 ‘Preface’, mines, shops, and manufacture are all presented as spaces that claim linguistic attention while, in the *Dictionary* proper, an extensive system of field labels explores the diverse registers of use, alongside the polysemies of meaning that they produce. If a fully systematic representation of the terms of ‘art and manufacture’ had not proved possible, Johnson reassured his readers that ‘what favourable accident, or easy enquiry brought within my reach, has not been neglected’.[29]

Other forms of critical distancing appeared in relation to loanwords and the diction of science and technology. For Johnson, the fact that the ‘academicians of France’ had ‘rejected terms of science…in their first assay' was adduced only to confirm his own diametrically opposed course. 'It would', he affirms, 'surely be no proof of judgment to imitate them in an error which they have now retracted, and deprive the book of its chief use by scrupulous distinctions'.[30] *Scrupulous*, signalling that which is 'nicely doubtful' and 'given to objections' (as the relevant entry in the *Dictionary* confirms), does not suggest praise. Loanwords brought similar pragmatic concerns. As Johnson warned, 'if foreign words' are excluded, the resulting dictionary 'could be little regarded, except by critics, or those who aspire to criticism'.[31] The rigid limits on adoption and naturalization anticipated by Chesterfield do not appear. Instead, closer examination of Johnson's practice can reveal a nuanced engagement with assimilation as an on-going process in which comments on French often function as diatopic markers of derivation and use.[32] Words such as *sublime* and *verdant*, if Gallicisms in origin, hence claim full naturalization. 'A Gallicism, but now naturalized', Johnson noted of the former. Others are explored as transitional forms. 'Neither this word, nor *adroit*, seem yet completely naturalized', Johnson states under *adroitness,* another French loan. *Enceinte* ('A military term not yet naturalised') is similar, as is *access* (sense 4) which, as Johnson explains, is 'sometimes used, after the French, to signify the returns or fits of a distemper' even if as 'yet [it] seems … scarcely received into our language'. If French remains the prime reference point in such uses, 'yet', as temporal marker, is eloquent of the potential for further change. Evident, too, is Johnson's conviction that that usage rather than lexicographical edict must get the final say. As he states, if academies 'have been instituted to guard the avenues' of the native tongue, such 'vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain'. As the Académie had itself proved, French had 'visibly changed under [its] inspection'. The new edition of the *Dictionnaire*, published in 1718, was, Johnson indicates, a witness to its lack of power in these and other respects.[33]

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[24] Johnson, *Plan*, 4.
[25] John Considine, *Academy Dictionaries 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 32. On the early history of the *Dictionnaire*, see Michael Fitzsimmons, *The Place of Words: The Académie Française and Its Dictionary during an Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Ch.1.
[26] Johnson, *Dictionary*, B2^{r}.
[27] Johnson, *Plan*, 5.
[28] Johnson, *Plan*, 7.
[29] Johnson, *Dictionary*, C1^{v}.

Seen in this light, Garrick's rhetorical excursus on Johnson's *Dictionary* and the Académie Française can therefore seem strikingly misplaced. Johnson had, in effect, triumphed only in that he had produced a dictionary that, in fundamental ways, was distinct from that of the 'Immortels' in both practice and design. Science, trade, technology, alongside words on the borders of discourse in place and time were all included, along with citational evidence by which such usage was supported. The fact that the *Dictionnaire* was itself embedded in Johnson's own work, if in visible support of the continued border crossings that words reveal is, in this light, freighted with incidental irony. Under *virelay*, for example, French derivation (< *virelai*) co-existed with English evidence from Spenser and Dryden. 'A sort of little ancient French poem, that consisted only of two rhymes and short verses, with stops', Johnson's accompanying definition had affirmed. Yet, as this made plain, the *Dictionnaire* had itself migrated across the Channel, courtesy of an embedded translation of the underlying text. '*L'Acad.*', the truncated attribution records. 'Sorte d' ancienne petite poësie Françoise qui est toute sur deux rimes, & de vers courts avec des refreins', the corresponding entry in the *Dictionnaire* attests.[34] Johnson, as we have seen, was a translator before he was a lexicographer. In the *Dictionary*, however, these two identities can repeatedly collide, in ways that visibly re-negotiate Anglo-French relations on the page.

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[30] Johnson, *Plan*, 5-6.
[31] Johnson, *Plan*, 5.
[32] See Lynda Mugglestone, 'The End of Toleration? Language on the margins in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*'. In *Standardising English: Norms and Margins in the History of the English Language***,** edited by Linda Pillière, Wilfred Andrieu, Valérie Kerfelec and Diana Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 89-105.
[33] Johnson, *Dictionary*, C2^{r}.

The patrimony of a lexicographer

The entry for *virelay* is of interest on a number of levels. We can, for instance, thereby place the *Dictionnaire* in Gough Square, and perhaps even in the Dictionary garret itself. Johnson's knowledge of the *Dictionnaire* (and its principles) was, it confirms, clearly direct rather than indirect, and specific rather than general. Nevertheless, Johnson had, in reality, similarly direct knowledge of a wide range of French lexica, courtesy in part of his extensive work in crafting a critical (five-volume) catalogue of the Harleian Library in the years immediately before he began his own dictionary project. The bookseller Thomas Osborne, with whom Johnson also worked on Robert James's *Medicinal Dictionary*, had purchased the vast library of Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford, for £13,000, duly appointing Johnson (together with William Oldys) to construct what was, as Korshin notes, 'probably the most important library catalogue of the eighteenth century'.[35] This was a work of immense scholarship, critical as well as bibliographical, ambitious in its range and detail. It would, wrote Johnson, 'inform Posterity, of the Excellence and Value of this great Collection, and promote the Knowledge of scarce Books, and elegant Editions'.[36]

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[34] The fact that *refrain* in the sense 'An utterance, phrase, or theme that is often repeated' was, as the *OED* explains, '*rare* before 19th century' presumably explains the translation of *refrein* as 'stop' (< Scots *refrane*, 'constraint'). See *refrain* (*sb* 1 and *sb* 2), *OED Online*. Johnson does not include an entry for *refrain*.

[35] Paul Korshin, 'Johnson and the Renaissance Dictionary', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974): 301.

[36] [Samuel Johnson], *Proposals for Printing, by Subscription, the two first volumes of Bibliotheca Harleiana: or, A catalogue of the library of the late Earl of Oxford. Purchased by Thomas Osborne, bookseller, in Gray's-Inn* (London, 1742), 8.

The comparative approach Johnson adopted (the books, as he confirmed, would not only be ‘accurately described’ but ‘distributed into their distinct Classes, and every Class ranged with some regard to the Age of the Writers’) has its own significance, as does the fact that the Harleian Library included some 345 dictionaries, spanning the early Renaissance to the early eighteenth century.[37] Johnson’s reading and construction of the list of ‘Dictionaria, Lexica, Vocabularia, et Onomastica … Gallica’, a ‘Class’ which appeared in volume II of the *Catalogue*, is, in this context, particularly interesting. A copy of the *Dictionnaire*, in its second edition of 1718, was carefully itemized on p.991. Johnson’s familiarity with Henri Estienne’s *Dictionnaire François-Latin* (Paris, 1549), as Considine argues, likewise began at this point.[38] Other entries confirm Johnson’s scrutiny of Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (an English edition -- *Bayle’s Historical and Critical Dictionary, Translated into English*, dated 1710, was listed elsewhere) alongside the lexicographical works of Jean Nicot, César-Pierre Richelet, and Abel Boyer (whose *Dictionnaire Royale Français et Anglais* was used by Johnson in translating Jean de Crousaz's *Commentaire*).[39]

The ‘Dictionaria Gallica’ document, too, the celebrated *Dictionnaire Universel, contenant généralement tous les Mots François tant Vieux qui Modernes, & les Termes des Sciences & des Arts* (henceforth *DU*) which, compiled by Furetière (and published in 1690) was revised and ‘augmentée’ by Henri Basnage de Beauval in the second edition of 1701. The *Dictionnaire Universel Françoise & Latine, autrement appelle de Trévoux* (originally published in 1704, but listed in a five-volume edition dated 1721) was included, too. Claiming to include everything ‘qui a quelque rapport à la langue’, the ‘Trévoux’ was, in effect, a further expanded iteration of the *DU* (and closely based on Basnage and Furetière). Jacques and Louis-Philemon Savary’s *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce, d'Histoire Naturelle & des Arts & Métiers* (in the two-volume first edition published in Paris in 1723) was another critical presence.[40] ‘*Nous vivons dans un siecle que l'on peut appeller le siecle des Dictionnaires. Jamais on ne vit tant de ces sortes d'Ouvrages*’, wrote Augustin Calmet in 1722 in the opening ‘Epitre’ to his *Dictionnaire Historique, Critique, Chronologique,*

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[37] [Johnson], *Proposals*, 8.

[38] John Considine, “The Lexicographer as Hero: Samuel Johnson and Henri Estienne” *Philological Quarterly* 79 (2000): 205–24.

[39] On Johnson’s use of Boyer, see James Gray, ‘*Arras/Hélas*! A Fresh Look at Samuel Johnson's French’, *Johnson After Two Hundred Years* ed. Paul J. Korshin (1986), pp. 87–90, and also Samuel Johnson, *A Commentary on Mr. Pope’s Principles of Morality, or Essay on Man* ed. O. M. Brack (Yale: Yale University Press, 2004), xliii.

[40] Samuel Johnson and William Oldys, *Catalogus Bibliothecæ Harleianæ, in locos communes distributus cum indice auctorum.* Vol.II. (London: Thomas Osborne, 1743), 990-92.

Géographique et Littéral de la Bible (another work that Johnson read and recorded). Constantine's *Lexicon Graecolatinum* (1592) in which, as Korshin notes, quotations (and the salience of evidence) illustrated methodologies that Johnson later adopted, was listed elsewhere, as was the 1741 edition of Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia: or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*[41] (a work that underpinned some two hundred entries in the first volume of Johnson's *Dictionary*). As DeMaria affirms, the Harley collection was a trove of 'almost all the books [Johnson] would use in compiling his *Dictionary*, not only the other lexicons and reference works but most of the sources of quotations'.[42] Johnson might have been crafting a catalogue but its legacies – direct and indirect – shaped his later work.

Dictionary-making was moreover particularly responsive to legacies of this kind. No lexicographer worked in isolation. Instead, as Chambers stressed in his own 'Preface', each dictionary was part of a collective 'patrimony', international rather than insular, wide-ranging rather than parochial. 'I come, like an heir, to a large patrimony, gradually raised by the industry and endeavours of a long race of ancestors', Chambers confirmed of his own work. Resituated within an English dictionary, 'The French and Italian academists the abbe Furetière, the editors of Trevoux, Savary, Chauvin, Harris, Wolfius, and others' had, he made plain, all 'contributed their share'.[43] Such shares might not, in reality, be equal; the echo of Furetière's work in Chambers's title is, for instance, a succinct marker of which side of the *querelle des dictionnaires* he preferred (as, indeed, is the caustic account of the Académie in Chambers's earlier *Considerations*: 'How many Years were the *French* Academists, to the Number of Forty the choicest Wits in *France*, in composing their Dictionary? How often did they alter the Plan of it; and yet, when finish'd how many Faults did Furetière find in a single sheet publish'd as a Specimen?').[44]

Johnson's lexicographic 'patrimony' can be re-examined in the same light. Chambers, directly and indirectly, is part of this. Johnson's reading of Furetière and Basnage, alongside the 'Trévoux', as well as of Calmet, Savary, and Etienne, made other contributions. We have, for example, already examined Johnson's resistance to the models of selection that the Académie adopted. Furetière (and Basnage's expanded edition of the *DU* of 1701, as well as the universalism of the 'Trévoux') provided, however, other unambiguous counterexamples where a commitment to 'abondance', and to 'la richesse de la langue' was realized in the liberal representation of words 'tant Vieux qui Modernes' together with the 'Termes des Sciences & des Arts'. 'Bon François' across the *DU* (in its various iterations) comprised not merely elite writers but ordinary usage, including the terms of law, architecture, travel or the diction of the 'homme de guerre', here in ways that evoke their own parallels in Johnson's work. 'The conviction that "shops" and "mines" are sources of legitimate vocabulary was essential to the lexicographical work of Furètiere', Kolb and DeMaria affirm.[45] 'The terms of war and navigation should be inserted so far as they can be required by readers of travels, and of history; and those of law, merchandise and mechanical trades, so far as they can be supposed useful in the occurrences of common life', Johnson likewise made plain.[46] Illustrative citation, particularly within Basnage's expanded edition of the *DU*, was a further critical correspondence. 'Je les cite tous également', Basnage confirmed.[47] Constantine, as Korshin argued, clearly presented one model for methods of this kind. In the *DU*, however, Johnson also encountered other precedents far closer to home.

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[41] Korshin, 'Johnson and the Renaissance Dictionary', 304.
[42] DeMaria, *Life of Johnson*, 104.
[43] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*. 5th edn. (London: James and John Knapton, 1741), ii.
[44] Ephraim Chambers, *Some Considerations Offered to the Publick, Preparatory to a Second Edition of Cyclopaedia: or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London: 1733), 3.

In relation to the forms of patrimony that Johnson thereby both claimed and rejected, how to define an *alcove* can therefore acquire surprising salience. 'Un architecte parle aussi bon français, en parlant de plinthes, de modules, de stylobates... qu'un courtesan en parlant d'alcôves, d'estrades et de lustres', Furetière had, for example, robustly contended, addressing other aspects of popular evaluative hierarchy in relation to the usage the dictionary should record.[48] The *Dictionnaire*'s own definition of *alcove* had been plain and to the point ('Endroit dans une chambre separé du reste où l'on place d'ordinaire le lit'). Furetière was, predictably, far more expansive, referring to 'ornements d'Architecture' such as an 'estrade' that might feature, as well as to the presence of different types of furniture such as seats for receiving company in private, or, indeed a bed. 'A recess, or part of a chamber, separated by an estrade, or partition of a column, and other correspondent ornaments; in which is placed a bed of state, and sometimes seats to entertain company', might therefore appear as a convincing translation of this entry in the *DU*. This is, however, the relevant entry in Johnson's *Dictionary,* having been translated from Furetière's original text in what was, in effect, another act of symbiosis between dictionary-maker and translator, and English and French.

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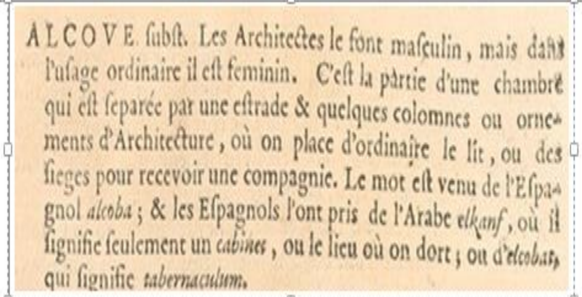
[45] Samuel Johnson, *Johnson on the English Language*, eds. Gwin J. Kolb and Robert DeMaria, Jr. (Yale: Yale University Press, 2005), xxxiii.

[46] Johnson, *Plan*, 7. On Johnson's interest in the language and metalanguage of war, see Lynda Mugglestone, ''Conflicted Representations': Language, Lexicography, and Johnson's 'Langscape' of War', *Eighteenth Century Life* 44 (2020): 75-95.

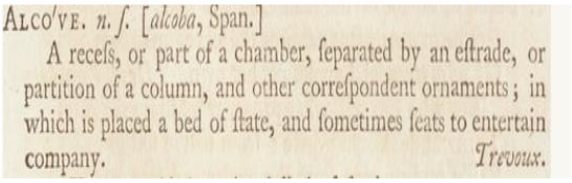
[47] Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel, contenant generalement tous les Mots Francois tant Vieux qui Modernes, & les Termes des Sciences & des Arts*. Seconde édition revüe, corrigée & augmentée par Monsieur Basnage de Bauval, 2 vols. (Rotterdam: la Haye, 1701), 'Preaface', n.p.

[48] Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel, contenant generalement tous les Mots Francois tant Vieux qui Modernes, & les Termes des Sciences & des Arts*. 2 vols. (Rotterdam: La Haye, 1690), n.p.



ALCOVE. ſubſt. Les Architectes le ſont maſculin, mais dans l'uſage ordinaire il eſt feminin. C'eſt la partie d'une chambre qui eſt ſeparée par une eſtrade & quelques colomnes ou ornements d'Architecture, où on place d'ordinaire le lit, ou des ſieges pour recevoir une compagnie. Le mot eſt venu de l'Eſpagnol *alcoba*; & les Eſpagnols l'ont pris de l'Arabe *elkanf*, où il ſignifie ſeulement un *cabinet*, ou le lieu où on dort; ou d'*elcobat*, qui ſignifie *tabernaculum*.

Figure 1. Definitions of *alcove* in Furetière's *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690) and Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755).



ALCO'VE. *n. ſ.* [*alcoba*, Span.]
A receſs, or part of a chamber, ſeparated by an eſtrade, or partition of a column, and other correſpondent ornaments; in which is placed a bed of ſtate, and ſometimes ſeats to entertain company. *Trevoux.*

In this instance, we can therefore trace a direct link between Johnson and his reading of Furetière. Reference to alcoves as a social space was removed by Basnage in his revised entry in *DU* 1701; an alcove was 'comme dans un lieu retiré', he instead stated (a pattern replicated in subsequent editions). However, a range of other entries across Johnson's *Dictionary,* labelled with the generic 'Trevoux' (or variants thereof), reveal similar processes of French exchange, encompassing material that variously derives from Furetière (as above) or Basnage's expanded edition of the *DU*, or the bilingual and derivative text 'appelle de Trévoux' (1704, and subsequent editions). These French attributions are explicit, if variable in form. *Circle* (sense 10), *ermine*, *massicot,* and *rondeaux* are all, for example, credited to '*Trevoux*', *harlequin* and *rotundo* ('A building formed round both in the inside and outside; such as the pantheon at Rome') to '*Trev*', while *furbelow* (in a reference added in 1773 to Johnson's fourth edition) is attributed to '*Trev.Dict.*'. Relevant entries appear across the alphabetic range, spanning *acacia* to *vaudevil*. 'A song common among the vulgar, and sung about the streets, *Trev*.', the entry for the latter stated, replicating, if in English, the revised definition ('Chanson que le peuple chante & qui court dans les rues') introduced by Basnage and followed in subsequent *DU* editions in the eighteenth century.

Typically, as these examples also confirm, the imported text served as a definition such that translated authority displaces or supplants a definition that Johnson might otherwise have supplied in his own right. *Plastron* (defined as 'A piece of leather stuffed, which fencers use, when they teach their scholars, in order to receive the pushes made at them') is, for example, a French-inflected paraphrase of a *DU* definition common to Furetière, Basnage, and later eighteenth-century iterations.[49] *Bistre*, defined by Johnson as ‘A colour made of chimney soot boiled, and then diluted with water; used by painters in washing their designs’, and attributed to ‘Trevoux’, confirms similar legacies (‘C’est ainsi que les Peintres & Dessinateurs appellant de la suye cuitte, & ensuitte detrempée, qui leur sert à laver leurs Desseins’, Furetière had stated in *DU* 1690). A brief gloss, subordinated to the translated text, can, however, sometimes appear. ‘A ballad; a trivial strain’, Johnson added, for example, under *vaudevil*, following, and subordinate to, a definition deriving from (and credited to) *Trevoux*.

Elsewhere, as under *cordwainer* (‘A shoemaker’) and *lampoon*, the *DU*’s authority was used to support etymology and matters of derivation. ‘It imports, *let us drink*, from the old French *lamper*, and was repeated at the end of each couplet at carousals. *Trev.*’, Johnson’s *Dictionary* attests under the latter. As under *morel* or, say, *tangent*, more extensive citation was made the source of encyclopaedic details which carefully amplified both meaning and sense. As Lynch notes, ‘Johnson’s *Dictionary* was among the most encyclopedic of English dictionaries because many of his definitions are themselves encyclopedic’.[50] Even so, these transplanted encyclopedic entries, in reproducing the *DU*’s commitment to forms of discourse that the Académie preferred to exclude, can, in effect, also replicate aspects of the ‘*querelle des dictionnaires*’ within Johnson’s work. Register-specific words from e.g. art and architecture (*alcove*, *rotundo*, *bistre*), mathematics (*algebra*, *tangent*, *rhomb*, *gnomonicks*, *sursolid*), biology and botany (*aloes*, *brunion*, *scammony*), minerology/ geology (*amethyst*, *massicot*), astronomy (*comet*, *libration*) unambiguously endorse the liberally-instituted agenda of Furetière and his successors. If, in the *Plan*, Johnson had already pondered the salience of providing information which might relieve the reader of ‘difficulties produced by allusions to the crocodile, the ichneumon, and the hyaena’, here, too, his reading of the *DU* in its various iterations was an important resource, underpinning not only *crocodile* but detailed descriptive accounts of e.g. the *camelopard*, *ermine*, and *agouty*.

The entries in which Johnson’s translated French texts are used in providing illustrative citational evidence nevertheless present some particularly intriguing hybridities.

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[49] See e.g. *DU* (1701): ‘On le dit aussi des cuirs rembourrez, dont les Maîtres d’escrime se servent, quand its donnent leçon pour recevoir les bottes qu’on leur porte’.

[50] Jack Lynch, ‘Johnson’s encyclopedia’, in *Anniversary Essays on Johnson’s Dictionary* ed. Jack Lynch and Anne McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 135.

Lunette, a loanword defined by Johnson as ‘a small half moon’ is, for example, accompanied by a transposed quotation that, formally attributed to ‘Trevoux’, functions to provide authority for English use (‘*Lunette* is a covered place made before the courtine, which consists of two faces that form an angle inwards, and is commonly raised in fosses full of water, to serve instead of a fausse braye, and to dispute the enemy’s passage: it is six toises in extent, of which the parapet is four’). In this instance, derivation can be traced to Basnage (and later iterations of the *DU*); ‘disput[ing] the enemy’s passage’ (‘en disputer le passage’) was not part of Furetière’s original text (the somewhat literal translation in Johnson’s entry is, we might argue, a further marker of non-native antecedents of this kind).[51] Nevertheless, text conventions, and Johnson’s use of italics (hence *lunette* not ‘lunette’), mark, as elsewhere in the *Dictionary,* illustrative and in-citation uses of the headword. *Lunette* might therefore occur within a piece of translated text but, as Johnson indicates, its functional role remains the same. Johnson’s entries for *libration, amomum* (defined as ‘a sort of fruit’), and *massicot* provide, among others, similar examples. Set against other evidence in the *Dictionary,* however, the paradoxical status of illustrative citations of this kind is plain. They exist only via contemporary translation into English, taken from an underlying French text, and written by an intermediary – whether Johnson or one of his assistants.

Border-Crossings: Tracing French praxis in Johnson’s English lexicography

To place French translation in the dictionary garret as part of Johnson’s crafting of his English text is, in a number of ways, an arresting proposition. No commercial translations of the *DU* were, we should note, in existence. ‘Perhaps I may at last have reason to say, after one of the augmenters of Furetier, that my book is more learned than its author’, as Johnson had stated in his *Plan* of 1747.[52] This, too, was a direct translation (‘Enfin mon livre (si j’ai quelque droit de l’appeller ainsi) est beaucoup plus sçavant que moi’, as Basnage had stated with marked humility in the ‘Preface’ to his edition of Furetière). If Johnson, as DeMaria stresses, always has ‘one foot in Europe’, French, and a Continental ‘patrimony’ located outside the Académie were, in this respect, made matters of close attention.[53]

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[51] The translation can in other respects, too, reveal some fundamental problems. Compare e.g. *DU* 1701/1704 (and subsequent eighteenth-century editions): ‘elles ont **cinq** toises de large, dont le parapet en a **trois**’ with the statement in Johnson’s *Dictionary* that a *lunette* is ‘**six** toises in extent, of which the parapet is **four**’ [my emphases]

[52] Johnson, *Plan*, 21.

[53] DeMaria, *Life of Johnson*, xiii.

Material of this kind sheds new light on Johnson's working practices, and on the *Dictionary* as a collaborative text where not all participants had similar levels of transnational fluency. Entries such as *alcove* and *bistre*, as we have seen, provide effective (and largely accurate) forms of transposition. Those for e.g. *armadillo*, and *camelopard* (and, indeed, aspects of *lunette*) are less successful. As in the former, the conflicts of natural and grammatical gender, alongside over-literal forms of translation, can be conspicuous. 'An Abyssinian animal, taller than an elephant, but not so thick', the entry for *camelopard* states: 'He is so named, because he has a neck and head like a camel; he is spotted like a pard, but his spots are white upon a red ground. The Italians call him *giaraffa*'. Similar is *armadillo* ('He is armed all over with hard scales like armour, whence he takes his name, and retires under them like the tortoise. He lives in holes, or in the water, being of the amphibious kind…This animal hides himself a third part of the year under ground. He feeds upon roots, sugar-canes, fruits, and poultry. When he is caught, he draws up his feet and head to his belly, and rolls himself up in a ball, which the strongest hand cannot open…'). V. J. Peyton, as one of Johnson's dictionary assistants, was fluent in French (he later published a range of Anglo-French reference works).[54] Other assistants clearly descended into a form of translationese or, as under *assapanick*, outright error ('A little animal of Virginia, which is said to fly by stretching out its shoulders and its skin, and is called in English the flying squirrel', where 'shoulders' is a mistranslation of French *jambes*).[55]

Equally apparent, however, is the fact that Johnson's French translations were not restricted to the *DU*. Instead, a range of other encyclopedic texts make their own appearance in the *Dictionary* in which French authority and English lexicography recombine. Material from Calmet's *Dictionnaire Historique* as well as Savary's *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce* is, for example, transposed in similar ways. Calmet 'has, for some years, made so considerable a Figure in the Common-Wealth of Learning', Colson and D'Oyly had declared in the English version they published in 1732: 'we cannot pay a greater Compliment to him, than by introducing him into our Country'.[56] Johnson, as entries such as *balsam-tree* and *bear* attest, clearly had access to this translated text. Elsewhere, however, work for the *Dictionary* engaged directly with Calmet's original French, as in Johnson's decision to retain headwords such as *aspick* (Colson and D'Oyly *asp*) or *euroclydon* (Colson and D'Oyley *wind*) or *swan* (translating Calmet's *cynge* but mistranslated in Colson and D'Oyley as *cygnet*, which arreonously appears as the headword in the 1732 text). Similar are e.g. *bat* and *cherub* where Johnson's text again suggests a return to the original in key points.[57]

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[54] Peyton's *Les vrais principes de la langue angloise: où se trouve developé tout ce qui est necessaire aux etran gers pour apprendre facilement a parler, Lire, et Ecrire l'anglois* (London, 1758) was still in print almost thirty years later. His *Compendious Dictionary* of French was published by Dodsley in 1764.

[55] See e.g. *DU* 1701 and later: 'Petit animal de la Virginie. On dit qu'il vole en étendant ses jambes & sa peau. Les Anglois l'appellent un *Ecureuil volant*'. Furetière did not include an entry for *assapanick*.

[56] John Colson and Samuel D'Oyly, *An Historical, Critical, Geographical, Chronological, and Etymological Dictionary of the Holy Bible*. 3 vols. (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1732), 'Dedication'.

Johnson's use of Savary is similar. If by 1751, an English translation of Savary's work on the diction of trade and commerce by Malachy Postlethwayt was in existence, Johnson had already returned to the original French. As for *bilander*, for example, the *Dictionary* definition ('A small vessel of about eighty tons burden, used for the carriage of goods. It is a kind of hoy, manageable by four or five men, and has masts and sails after the manner of a hoy. They are used chiefly in Holland, as being particularly fit for the canals') draws closely on Savary's phrasing ('Petit bâtiment de mer, du port d'environs 80 tonneaux, qui sert au transport des marchandises. C'est un espèce de heu, qui se conduit par quatre ou cinq hommes seulement ….'), here in an entry that Postlethwaite had decided to omit.[58] Yet even where cognate entries can be located, a similar process of selection was self-evidently at work. Postlethwayt' s style is verbose and expansive, often elaborating on Savary's text to provide entries of conspicuous length. It was, as Grimes concludes, 'as easy for SJ to extract from the French'.[59] The fact that Johnson's Savary attributions occur in the early sections of the alphabet (supporting nouns such as *aloes*, *anchovy*, and *bitumen*) also, of course, suggest that the text was likely to have been settled before Postlethwayt's translation appeared. But, by the same token, Johnson clearly had no appetite for later revision once the later text appeared. His processes of French exchange remain, in this respect, precisely as they were before.

Other images of trans-nationalism, we might note, also attend a range of intricately blended entries in Johnson's *Dictionary*. In unwitting collaborations of this kind, the evidence of the *DU* could, as under *rhomb* or *bivouac*, be fused with information taken from the corresponding entry in Harris's *Lexicon Technicum* (with both texts credited accordingly) just as, under *comet* or *amonum*, Chambers was blended with the *DU* (and with Savary under *amethyst* and *bezoar*) text. The intermingling of different French texts such that Savary and the *DU* combine in Johnson's entries (and evidence) for e.g. *ammoniac* and *acacia* is equally worthy of note, as is the fusion of both text and translation that results. The adversative model of Anglo-French relations that dominates popular Johnsonian comment can visibly collapse in collective evidence of this kind.

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[57] See Augustin Calmet, *Dictionnaire historique, critique, chronologique, géographique et littéral de la Bible* (Paris: Emery, 1722). Johnson departs from the implications of wealth and monetary value implied by Colson's and D'Oyley's translation of e.g. *ouvrage de cherubin* as 'costly work, rephrasing it as 'cunning' [i.e. skilful'] work instead in line with his definition of *cunning*, sense 1: 'Skilful; knowing; well instructed; learned'.

[58] Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce Translated from the French of the Celebrated Monsieur Savary* (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751).

[59] See Brian Grimes, 'Samuel Johnson Dictionary Sources'. https://www.sjdictionarysources.org/savary-jacques-savary-du-bruslon-and-louis-philemon-savary.html. Accessed March 17 2023.

French translation within Johnson's English *Dictionary* might therefore hitherto have been neglected -- but we can, for example, now place a library of French texts within the garret in Gough Square which were routinely read, referenced, translated, condensed, and (re)combined across the dictionary years, with varying degrees of aptitude. If Chambers, as his own titlepage confirms, had made use of texts 'in several languages', duly transposing such material into English in the interests of increasing knowledge within the native tongue, Johnson was, in effect, to follow the same procedure. That Alexander Macbean, as one of Johnson's amanuenses, had previously worked for Chambers has, in this light, additional significance. Johnson was, in reading for the *Dictionary,* engaged in a work that, as he declared, based on 'English literature' and 'English words'. But, he was, for the same purposes, also reading in French, and collecting French evidence accordingly – even if this was subsequently repositioned within the native tongue.

On one level, this can of course serve to provide additional testimony for Johnson's wider receptiveness to the enterprise of knowledge and its transmission. As Reddick has argued, to think of lexicography in terms of an 'exclusive focus upon single authorship denies the true nature of the creation of works' of this kind. They are, he adds, 'more accurately described as social, communal, dynamic, the result of a process of exchange'.[60] Evidence of Johnson's habits of transnational 'exchange' firmly restructures not only readings of his Gallic 'dislike' but affirms his committed attentiveness to (and awareness of) Continental practice. Nevertheless, as in Johnson's dispatch of his completed *Dictionary* to the Académie, more is, by extension, at stake than might initially seem to be the case. Johnson's English *Dictionary* can, of course, make its way to the French 'Immortels' as an indubitable testimony of English achievement. Woven within it, however, was an intellectual credo in which the '*querelle des dictionnaires*' was, in microcosm, reprised, alongside an embedded alliance with Furetière, Basnage, and other French encyclopedists for whom a shared (and French) resistance to the academy enterprise remained overt.

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[60] Allen Reddick, 'Revision and the limits of collaboration: hands and texts in Johnson's *Dictionary*', in *Anniversary Essays on Johnson's Dictionary* ed. Jack Lynch and Anne McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 212.