Articles and Talks

Reading Shakespeare Together: Sociable Reading, Samuel Johnson, and Collaborative Lexicography

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In 2022, Philip Smallwood noted, provocatively, that "anyone raising the topic of Johnson and Shakespeare, alongside the well-worked subject of Johnson on Shakespeare, is going to encounter scepticism from a number of quarters." Both subjects, as Smallwood states, have elicited a vast amount of excellent and well-informed criticism in ways which might render further comment redundant. Likewise, as Robert DeMaria illustrates in his *Johnson and the Life of Reading* (2009), Johnson as reader has been subject to equal, and perceptive, scrutiny. Nevertheless, as I will explore, a focus on Johnson's reading as a shared activity — and a process in which a range of works, including Shakespeare's plays, are, in various ways, read together — can, in fact, take us in some interesting and, at times, unexpected directions.

"We turn'd o'er many books *together,*" states the first quotation in Johnson's *Dictionary* entry for *together* (see Figure 1, below). On one hand, this usefully harnesses reading, togetherness, and Shakespeare's work (in this instance, *The Merchant of Venice*). On the other, as we will see, it also draws attention to the critical

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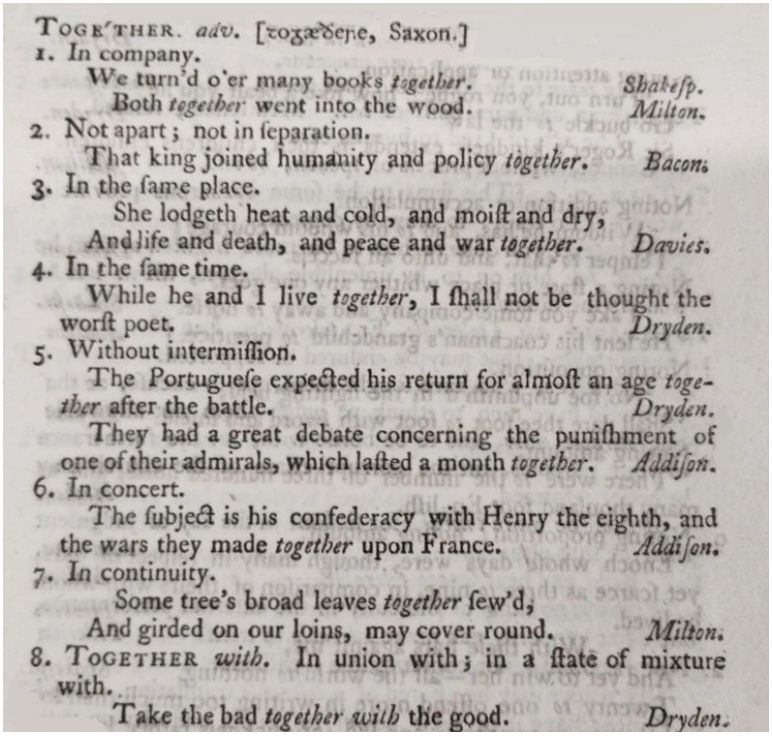
matter of Shakespeare in the *Dictionary*, and the reading by which such evidence was derived.



TOGE'THER. *adv.* [ꝥogæðere, Saxon.]
1. In company.
We turn'd o'er many books *together*. *Shakesp.*
Both *together* went into the wood. *Milton.*
2. Not apart; not in ſeparation.
That king joined humanity and policy *together*. *Bacon.*
3. In the ſame place.
She lodgeth heat and cold, and moiſt and dry,
And life and death, and peace and war *together*. *Davies.*
4. In the ſame time.
While he and I live *together*, I ſhall not be thought the worſt poet. *Dryden.*
5. Without intermiſſion.
The Portugueſe expected his return for almoſt an age *together* after the battle. *Dryden.*
They had a great debate concerning the puniſhment of one of their admirals, which laſted a month *together*. *Addiſon.*
6. In concert.
The ſubject is his confederacy with Henry the eighth, and the wars they made *together* upon France. *Addiſon.*
7. In continuity.
Some tree's broad leaves *together* ſew'd,
And girded on our loins, may cover round. *Milton.*
8. TOGETHER *with*. In union with; in a ſtate of mixture with.
Take the bad *together with* the good. *Dryden.*

Figure 1: Johnson's entry for *together*, from the first edition of the *Dictionary* (1755). Reproduced by permission of Pembroke College, Oxford.

Across the eighteenth century, the value placed on sociable reading, and on reading together as a source of pleasure, is indisputable. Richardson invited select friends to his country house in North End in 1751 to hear him read from his manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison*. Anna Seward thought she had permanently damaged her voice by reading *Macbeth* aloud at too many social gatherings in 1794. Johnson's "extreme impatience" when being read to, as Boswell recounts, undeniably, however, rendered him an outlier in this respect. Boswell's description of Bennet Langton reading aloud to Johnson, from Dodsley's *Cleone*, has Johnson visibly writhing in discomfort, "turning his face to the back of the chair" and "putting himself into various attitudes" in which bodily

expression unambiguously marked his lack of pleasure. It was clearly seen as noteworthy when, in April 1778, Boswell was able to record in his journal that “Mr. Johnson permitted me to read some passages aloud” — even if this momentous event turned out to involve William Marshall’s *Minutes of Agriculture*. Marshall’s work had just been printed by Johnson’s neighbor, Edmund Allen, and apparently reduced Johnson to outright laughter — mainly, however, at the infelicities of the prose.

We can find another fleeting glimpse of reading together, possibly in Gough Square, here in relation to Johnson's wife, Elizabeth, more familiarly known as "Tetty." In principle, this provides an instance of the kind of domestic sociability that was joyfully anticipated by the eighteenth-century bookseller James Lackington in contemplating his own marriage. “I was in raptures,” Lackington said, “with the bare thoughts of having a woman to read with, and also to read to me.” It seems doubtful, however, that the experiences of Tetty and Johnson quite matched the “raptures” that Lackington envisaged, not least given Johnson’s trenchant verdict that Tetty “mouthed the tragedies” too much. Johnson’s use of “tragedies,” in the plural, seems to confirm the existence of more than one occasion of shared reading of this kind. Yet we can also see Johnson assuming the role of critical listener in which the sociable intimacy which Lackington desired is abandoned. A similar critical distancing is evident in popular anecdotes of Garrick reciting Shakespeare in Johnson’s presence, and Johnson’s caustic response that Garrick’s sceneshifters could surely have done better. It was, in this light, perhaps unsurprising that Tetty retreated to solitary reading in bed and a consolatory pile of romances, and Johnson’s silent reading remained the norm.

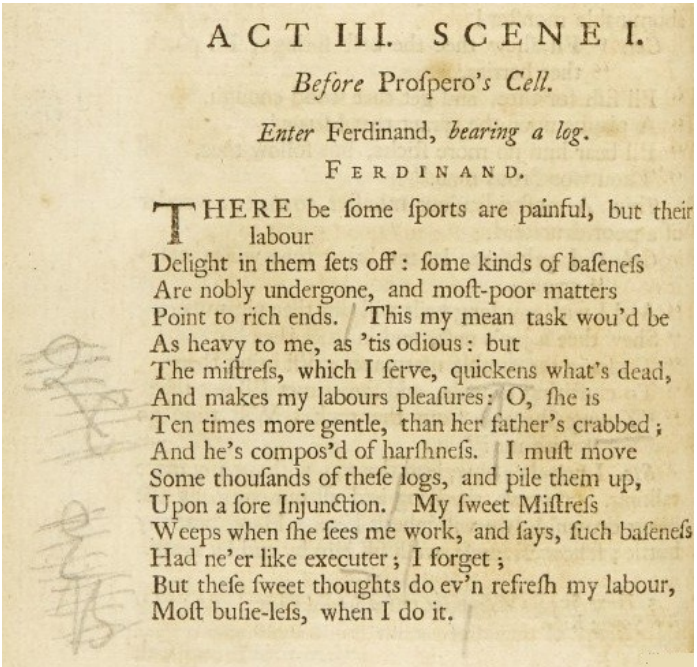
Even Johnson’s silent reading can, however, at times confirm a process of togetherness. “He always read amazingly quick, glancing his eye, from the top, to the bottom of the page in an instant,” as Frances Reynolds recalls in a manuscript account preserved in the Hyde Collection at Harvard. If we know from multiple accounts about Johnson’s readerly habits, such knowledge clearly depends on the presence of others, like Reynolds, who are together with Johnson reading in ways that clearly satisfy Johnson’s sense 3 of

together, that of being "in the same place" and, indeed, sense 4, that of being *together* "in the same time."

Charles Burney provides a further vivid illustration of Johnson's readerly habits in this respect, in describing an early visit Johnson made to Burney's home. On arrival, as Burney notes, Johnson promptly turned to inspect the bookshelves, "almost brushing them with his eye-lashes from near examination," before choosing a volume of the French *Encyclopédie* for immediate consumption. In terms of the *Dictionary*, Johnson and Burney were thereby together "in company" in ways that, at least formally, allow us to bring Johnson's sociably orientated sense 1 of *together* into play. But, as Burney indicates, the whole process paradoxically, becomes an instance of what we might term "*un*sociable reading together" such that, once equipped with his chosen book, Johnson "began … to read to himself … as intently as if he had been alone in his own study," while he stood "aloof from the company, which he seemed clean and clear to forget." The arresting account by Mrs. Knowles (recorded in Boswell's *Life* for May of 1776), in which Johnson wrapped Charles Sheridan's *Account of the Late Revolution in Sweden* in a tablecloth during a pause in reading enforced by the appearance of the meal, is a further example of this kind of unsociable reading in action. In all these instances, Johnson might read as if he is alone. But, as we know, he is, in reality, together in company, at the same place, and at the same time. Crucially, of course, our knowledge of his readerly practice depends on this collective fact.

Reading, as Robert DeMaria stresses in his *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading*, always has a context, and if we turn our attention now to Gough Square and the garret where the *Dictionary* was largely compiled, the contexts and consequences of readerly togetherness are equally distinctive. Beginning in 1746, when Johnson signed the contract, the *Dictionary* was, by definition, established as a vast readerly project. Almost 120,000 citations would be assembled in the published text (while many thousands more existed in the underlying and hand-written "database"). Shakespeare, however, claimed undisputed pre-eminence, yielding more quotations in the completed *Dictionary* than any other writer.

Importantly, seven of the surviving volumes of the 1747 edition by William Warburton which were used (and annotated) for the *Dictionary,* are now located in the University of Aberystwyth in Wales. As Figure 2 illustrates, they clearly enable us to see Johnson writing *on* Shakespeare, if here in the most literal sense. More significantly, however, they also provide an extraordinary witness history for the kinds of collective reading on which the *Dictionary* relied. As we can see, Shakespeare was literally read for words, and the plays segmented into usable quotations for the purposes of documenting English use. The words *quickens*, *crabbed*, *executer*, and *busie* all drew Johnson's attention. His pencil tracks his progress across the page. He underlines words of interest and indicates the relevant initial letter (in capitals) in the margin.



ACT III. SCENE I.

Before Proſpero's *Cell.*

Enter Ferdinand, *bearing a log.*

FERDINAND.

THERE be ſome ſports are painful, but their labour
Delight in them ſets off: ſome kinds of baſeneſs
Are nobly undergone, and moſt-poor matters
Point to rich ends. This my mean task wou'd be
As heavy to me, as 'tis odious: but
The miſtreſs, which I ſerve, quickens what's dead,
And makes my labours pleaſures: O, ſhe is
Ten times more gentle, than her father's crabbed;
And he's compos'd of harſhneſs. I muſt move
Some thouſands of theſe logs, and pile them up,
Upon a ſore Injunction. My ſweet Miſtreſs
Weeps when ſhe ſees me work, and ſays, ſuch baſeneſs
Had ne'er like executer; I forget;
But theſe ſweet thoughts do ev'n refreſh my labour,
Moſt buſie-leſs, when I do it.

Figure 2. Section of *The Tempest*, annotated by Johnson, in William Warburton's edition of Shakespeare (1747). (This image and the four that follow are used with permission of the University of Aberystwyth, Wales.)

In bibliographical terms, the presence of Johnson's hand clearly makes the annotated Warburton Shakespeare an association

copy *par excellence*. Its provenance is incontrovertible, while its subsequent history is usefully supported by a range of other in-text annotations. Only in February 1785, for example, at the sale of Johnson's library, did the assembled volumes pass from Johnson's ownership into that of the Shakespearian scholar George Steevens. "These volumes with the M.S. notes of the late D^{r}. Samuel Johnson were purchased by me at the sale of his library," as Steevens's hand-written inscription still records. Fifteen years later, at the sale of Steevens's own library, the volumes were repurchased, for a pound, by Machell Stace, a publisher, bookseller, and stationer who is listed at various addresses in London, including Leicester Square and the Haymarket. It was, in turn, in Stace's shop that Charles Thoyts, a major in the North Yorkshire Militia, succumbed to temptation, adding his own ownership marks to the provenance history of the text. And in July 1814, after Thoyt's own death and library sale, we can follow the annotated volumes into the vast collections of the bibliophile Richard Heber — the dedicatee of Thomas Dibdin's famous *Bibliomania*. If, after Heber's death, the volumes disappeared temporarily into the possession of an unknown purchaser, the fact of their reappearance in 1862 is both verified, and verifiable. Importantly, it is at this point when they were bought, for fifteen guineas, by George Powell of Nanteos (1842–82) — whose donation would in time secure their preservation, and conservation, at the University of Aberystwyth.

In 1747, however, the real value of the Warburton Shakespeare was as a working text, and, as we will see, one that remains profoundly resonant of still other forms of reading together. In terms of the definitions with which we began, for example (see Figure 1) Johnson and his assistants were clearly "in the same place" (*together*, sense 3), which we can identify as the garret in Gough Square, and, indeed, "in company" (*together*, sense 1). We know, for example, that Johnson had at least seven assistants at various points, including Francis Stewart, the brothers Alexander and William Macbean (both of whom Johnson already knew in the 1730s), Charles Maitland, Robert Shiells, Joseph [V.J.] Peyton, as well as a Mr. Stockton who, as Johnson stated in an early letter on *Dictionary* business to Robert Dodsley, was also "writing for him" in

1746.[2] Not all of these men were working at the same time but at least four of them were at work in 1747, making the garret a distinctively sociable workspace. As another well-known anecdote attests, Johnson, reading *Hamlet* as a child and "coming to the Ghost scene," suddenly "hurried upstairs to the street door that he might see people about him." In the *Dictionary* garret, however, he merely needed to turn around.

The garret also allows us to factor in Johnson's sense 6 of *together* or the idea of being together "in concert" and busy alongside "those engaged in the same affair." Seen historically, this is, of course, a condition that the *Dictionary* easily satisfies, given its status as a literally collective endeavour in which the garret's "laborious brethren," as described by William Macbean, were, with Johnson, all working together for the eventual benefit of readers of the finished text. Even so, in other familiar narratives of the *Dictionary*, we typically encounter a rhetoric of both work and reading in which qualitative considerations are marked. Johnson's "single-handed" achievement in making his *Dictionary* is a familiar component. The *Dictionary* was "one of the greatest single achievements of scholarship, and probably the greatest ever performed by one individual," as Walter Jackson Bate famously declared in his biography of Johnson in 1978. As likewise for Boswell, it was Johnson alone whose philological acumen (and "superior mind") made him the model of the good reader in making the "rich collection of authorities" on which the *Dictionary* depended.

Positioned between Johnson's *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth* in 1745, and the contract for his later Shakespeare edition (signed in the garret in 1756), Johnson's reading of Shakespeare for the *Dictionary* has, in this respect, been seen as particularly salient. As Bertrand Bronson argues in his introduction to volume 7 of the Yale Edition of Johnson's *Works*, it is Shakespeare who, across the *Dictionary*, creates "the backbone of Johnson's illustrative usage" in a quasi-glossary of one great writer

[2]. See Samuel Johnson to Robert Dodsley, 26 December 1746, in Bruce Redford (ed.), *The Letters of Samuel Johnson, Volume I: 1731–1772* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 41.

assembled by another. Readerly feats of this kind, he adds, made Johnson, in quality and quantity, "the unproclaimed but greatest living authority on Shakespeare's diction." The assembled Shakespeare quotations in the *Dictionary* are, as Henry Woudhousen has noted, a powerful symbol of Johnson as reader, and proof of his "astonishingly detailed reading of the plays."

Meanwhile, if there are, as we know, other readers in the garret, we have, like Boswell, tended to see these as merely "mechanical" – passive and dependent in the roles they play and the acts of reading they perform. As in other Johnsonian uses of *mechanical*, this can suggest the kind of unthinking or uninspired effort prominent in Johnson's assessment of Gray, who was, as he stated, "dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere […] he was a mechanical poet". A similar instance occurs in Johnson's comments on the actor Hannah Pritchard who was, as Johnson stated, "quite mechanical." "It was wonderful how little mind she had," Johnson elaborated in relation to *Macbeth*: "She no more thought of the play out of which her part was taken than a shoemaker thinks of the skin out […] of which he is making a pair of shoes." Her reading, Johnson argued, was entirely functional, and divorced from the wider meanings that better readers might recover.

Seen in this light, and in keeping with many accounts of the *Dictionary*, it is tempting therefore to see the garret as another locus of reading together and apart. In this version, if the assistants read, such reading is confined to the marked-up sections that Johnson's own annotations set out. Likewise, if, as Figure 2 also illustrates, they make their own contributions to the processes of textual annotation, this is evident only in the various pencilled strikethroughs which are imposed on Johnson's marginal capitals, confirming that the requisite copying has been performed. We can, perhaps, suggest a kind of pragmatic togetherness at best – a form of reciprocal activity between Johnson and assistants without which the finished *Dictionary* could not exist.

Nevertheless, across the Warburton Shakespeare (as well as elsewhere), we can recover other forms of readerly process which raise interesting questions for our own readings of Johnsonian

history as well as accompanying narratives of lexicography. Whether the assistants are quite as "mechanical" as we typically assume is, as I have explored in other publications, an important part of this.[3] Faced with Johnson's "hasty reading" and often hastier annotations, the assistants could, for example, be forced to move from being the passively dependent readers we expect to making a range of corrective or interpretative decisions. Underlined words which lacked the requisite marginal capital were not uncommon. Nor were marginal capitals which lacked the requisite in-text underlining. As in the annotated copy of *The Tempest*, there were three possible candidates — *stint, some,* and *sailor* — for the capital "S" which Johnson supplied in the margin of Act II, Scene 1. A similar quandary was presented by *else*, *every*, and *eyeball* — none of which were underlined — later in the same play. Johnson had provided the relevant capital "E" in the adjacent margin but precisely which word he had intended remained unclear. An underlined *inch-meal* accompanied by a marginal "T" in Johnson's hand (in Act II, Scene 2 of *The Tempest*) could be similarly perplexing.

Interventions of this kind were, of course, relatively limited in scope. However, across the Warburton Shakespeare, we can in fact identify a range of other and more significant forms of textual response. As in Figure 3, for example, and in clear contradistinction to the standard model advanced above, we have two readers and two different hands. Only one of these belongs to Johnson. The other belongs to one of the assistants. Both, literally and metaphorically, are on the same page; independently, both are reading *As You Like It*. Johnson's darker pencil picks out *cradle*, *flock,* and *golden*; the assistant, in a fainter hand, picks out *loth*, *search*, and *intendment*, as well as the indefinite article *a*.

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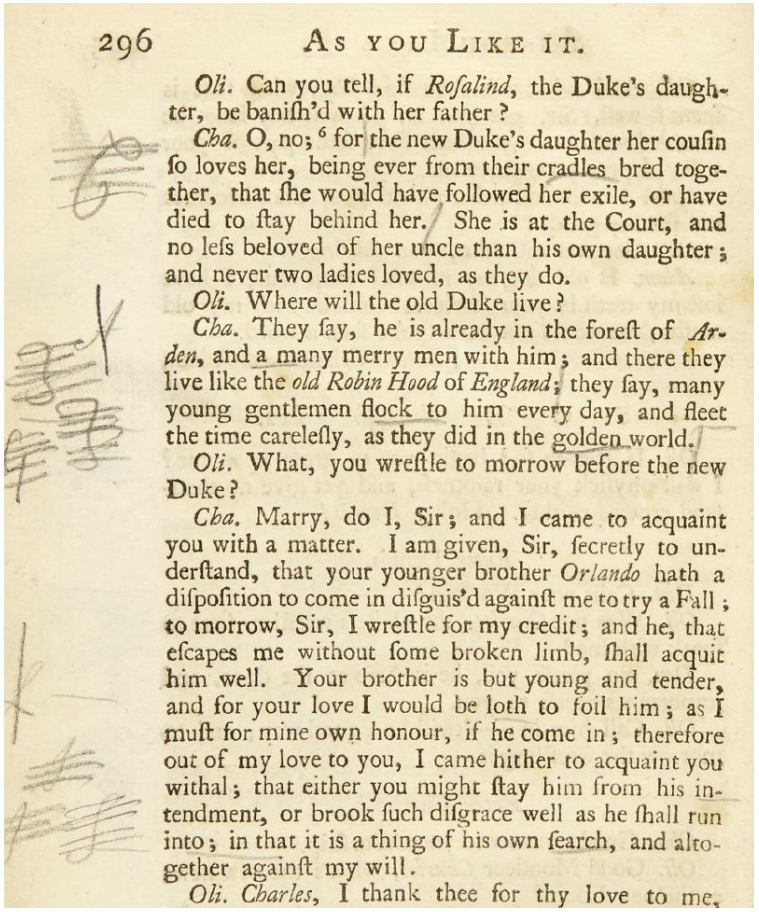
[3]. See, *e.g.,* Lynda Mugglestone, "Unheard voices, unseen hands; rethinking the making of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755)," forthcoming in *Expanding the Database of Late Modern English: Unheard voices, new data, other perspectives*, edited by Javier Ruano Garcia (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2026); "Drudgery, Drudges, and Samuel Johnson's Garret Lexicography," *The Scriblerian and the Kit-Cats* 57.2 (2025), 250–274; "Samuel Johnson and Francis Stewart: Collection and Collaboration in the *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755)," forthcoming in *Dictionaries. The Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America* (Summer, 2026).



296 AS YOU LIKE IT.

Oli. Can you tell, if *Roſalind*, the Duke's daughter, be baniſh'd with her father?

Cha. O, no; [6] for the new Duke's daughter her couſin ſo loves her, being ever from their cradles bred together, that ſhe would have followed her exile, or have died to ſtay behind her. She is at the Court, and no leſs beloved of her uncle than his own daughter; and never two ladies loved, as they do.

Oli. Where will the old Duke live?

Cha. They ſay, he is already in the foreſt of *Arden*, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the *old Robin Hood* of *England*; they ſay, many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time careleſly, as they did in the golden world.

Oli. What, you wreſtle to morrow before the new Duke?

Cha. Marry, do I, Sir; and I came to acquaint you with a matter. I am given, Sir, ſecretly to underſtand, that your younger brother *Orlando* hath a diſpoſition to come in diſguis'd againſt me to try a Fall; to morrow, Sir, I wreſtle for my credit; and he, that eſcapes me without ſome broken limb, ſhall acquit him well. Your brother is but young and tender, and for your love I would be loth to foil him; as I muſt for mine own honour, if he come in; therefore out of my love to you, I came hither to acquaint you withal; that either you might ſtay him from his intendment, or brook ſuch diſgrace well as he ſhall run into; in that it is a thing of his own ſearch, and altogether againſt my will.

Oli. Charles, I thank thee for thy love to me,

Figure 3. Hybrid annotation of Act 1, Scene 1 of *As You Like It.* Two hands are visible, and both readers have selected passages, underlined words, and written initial letters in the margin.

Hybrid textualities of this kind can, of course, usefully allow us to bring Johnson's sense 8 of *together* into play in which, ideas of "union" or "mixture" visibly inform the readerly togetherness we can see. Nevertheless, by the same token, it also presents us with a process of readerly destabilization in relation to our typical expectations of who does what in making Johnson's *Dictionary*. Johnson's annotations in the Warburton Shakespeare might therefore confirm his own role as prime reader in *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Two*

Gentleman of Verona, all of which occur in Warburton's first volume. But, as forensic palaeography confirms, it is our other hand who reads *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, annotating the whole text with striking attentiveness, while continuing to do so through almost all of volume II, comprising *Much Ado About Nothing, The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, as well as reading significant sections of the other volumes, including *Cymbeline* and *Richard III*.

The Warburton Shakespeare, uniquely among the surviving annotated texts, displays, in other words, a pattern of sustained shared reading in ways that impact the literary as well linguistic interpretations which have subsequently been put forward. If, as a range of critics have noted, Johnson drew heavily from *Henry IV, Part 2* in the *Dictionary*, most or all of the citations taken from that play were in fact marked by the second reader, rather than by Johnson. The same is true of the surprisingly high number of citations which were drawn from *Henry VIII*. In similar ways, it is this reader, rather than Johnson, who annotates the well-known "Song" in *Cymbeline*, and the "winter of our discontent" speech in *Richard III*. If recent comments by critics such as Tom Mason have linked the "extraordinary" wealth of annotations on the death of Beaufort and the corpse of Duke Humphrey in *Henry VI, Part II* not only to the *Dictionary* but to Johnson's own interest in these scenes, this, too, must now be reassessed.[4] Looking at the underlying text (see Figure 4), we again arrive at our same non-Johnsonian hand whose assembled citations were given to Johnson but were not, in fact, marked by him. As Johnson said to Boswell on their Scottish tour, "I am not responsible for all the words in the *Dictionary*." This, as the annotated Warburton Shakespeare proves, is indubitably true.

[4]. See Tom Mason, "Johnson's Editions of Shakespeare," in Greg Clingham (ed.) *The New Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 150–163.

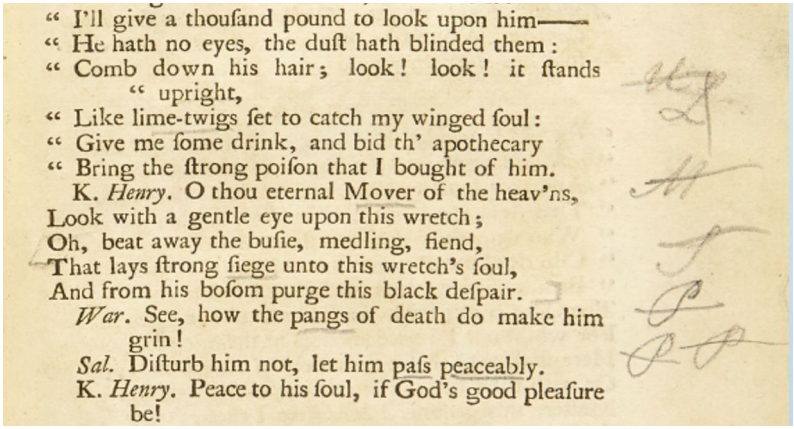

" I'll give a thouſand pound to look upon him——
" He hath no eyes, the duſt hath blinded them:
" Comb down his hair; look! look! it ſtands
" upright,
" Like lime-twigs ſet to catch my winged ſoul:
" Give me ſome drink, and bid th' apothecary
" Bring the ſtrong poiſon that I bought of him.
K. *Henry*. O thou eternal Mover of the heav'ns,
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch;
Oh, beat away the buſie, meddling, fiend,
That lays ſtrong ſiege unto this wretch's ſoul,
And from his boſom purge this black deſpair.
War. See, how the pangs of death do make him grin!
Sal. Diſturb him not, let him paſs peaceably.
K. *Henry*. Peace to his ſoul, if God's good pleaſure be!

Figure 4. Non-Johnsonian annotation in *Henry VI, Part 2* (Act 3, Scene 3)

Why this extended process of shared reading was adopted, and precisely whose hand it might be are, of course, equally significant questions in this respect. It remains possible (if unproven) that Johnson assigned the reading of plays he did not like, such as *Cymbeline,* to other helpers. "To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the improbability of the events in any system of life" would, as Johnson later stressed, "waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation." Johnson's dislike of puns and punning was equally well-known, and both *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (where Shakespeare's bawdy results in an extravagant wordplay on cuckolds and cuckoldry – all of which, we might note, was assiduously collected by our mystery hand), and *As You Like it* (characterized by the verbal sparring of Beatrice and Benedict) might perhaps also have been assigned on these grounds. Yet the fact remains that the same hand also documents the diction of *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar* — plays which, as Johnson's later edition proves, he valued highly.

As to who this is, I strongly suspect, on palaeographical evidence, that this is Francis Stewart, whose distinctive hand we can still see in the Sneyd-Gimbel materials at Yale as well as in his original contract now in the Hyde materials at Harvard. Both

contain features which are replicated in these surviving non-Johnsonian annotations in the Warburton Shakespeare volumes. "Whether men write court or Roman hand, or any other, there is something peculiar in every one's writing," as a citation from John Cockburn stated in the *Dictionary* under *hand*, here in the specific sense "form or cast of writing." "Cast," in this light, divides Johnson and Francis Stewart, just as it marks out, too, the hands of the other assistants.

Further evidence in Stewart's favour is arguably provided by the contract itself. As this specifies, he was, from the beginning, appointed not as a copyist or an amanuensis but was explicitly given a wider remit by which he was expected to "assist in compiling the dictionary." We should note, too, a later (if somewhat scurrilous) account of Stewart in vol. LXIX of the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1799) that alleges his role in selecting words and authorities, as well as a corroborating statement in the lexicographer Francis Grose's *Olio* (1796). At least in Johnsonian history, both of these have typically been downplayed, though here, too, the case for reassessment seems plain. Meanwhile, if other contentions in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (and, indeed, Grose) suggest Stewart's status as a "drinking man," this might also be supported by the range of citations he identified that were connected with drinking and food (including *venison*, *drink*, *brew*, *ale house,* and *pottle*) – though, by the same token, a diligent noting of words like *garret*, *ink*, *inkhorn*, *candle* and *margent*, as well as *working-day*, suggests other forms of biobibliography which are likewise left out of the stories we usually tell.

In reality, of course, if this is Francis Stewart, he can, importantly, be identified as a subtle and dedicated reader and one who, like Johnson himself, is fully attentive to the intricacies of the text. Whatever the underlying reasons for the readerly praxis that the annotated Shakespeare reveals, it was precisely by reading together that Johnson and Stewart created the extraordinary lexicographical record of Shakespearian diction that the *Dictionary* still records, and in forms that might well have been very different were Johnson reading alone. To misquote Bruce Redford, it is this surviving "converse" of the pencil, not the pen, that, in the twenty-

first century, can thereby take us towards these new facts of reading, and new models of collaborative work in the dictionary garret in Gough Square. As part of this, we should moreover now see the Warburton Shakespeare volumes as providing clear and compelling evidence that the assistants were far more than just mechanical copyists. Francis Stewart's careful annotation of *together* (Figure 5) in the quotation with which we began can, in conclusion, provide its own eloquent testimony of the shared reading, and sociable scholarship on which key aspects of the *Dictionary* depend.

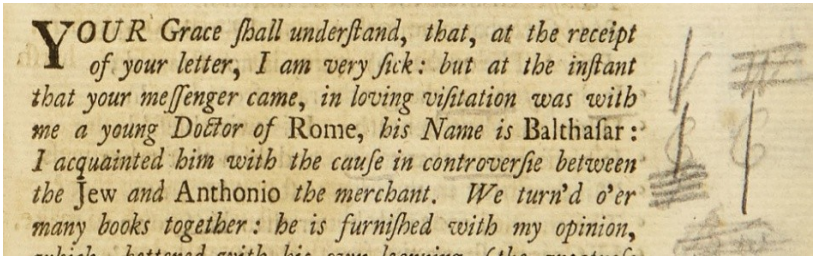

YOUR Grace ſhall underſtand, that, at the receipt of your letter, I am very ſick: but at the inſtant that your meſſenger came, in loving viſitation was with me a young Doctor of Rome, his Name is Balthaſar: I acquainted him with the cauſe in controverſie between the Jew and Anthonio the merchant. We turn'd o'er many books together: he is furniſhed with my opinion,

Figure 5. "We turn'd o'er many books together," *Merchant of Venice*, Act 4, Scene 1, lines 6–7, marked for use in the *Dictionary,* evidently by Francis Stewart.