TWENTIETH-CENTURY interest in Mrs. Piozzi was stimulated by James Clifford's ground-breaking biography and Katharine Balderston's edition of the diary Thraliana (1776-1809), both published by the Clarendon Press in 1941 and 1942 respectively. Her letters—when she was the wife of Henry Thrale—to Dr. Johnson have been printed by R. W. Chapman in 1952. Mary Hyde of Four Oaks Farm, Somerville, New Jersey, has continued to excite curiosity in the lady by concentrating upon her association with Boswell in The Impossible Friendship (Harvard University Press, 1972). Only recently, in 1977, Mrs. Hyde has produced for the same press an account of The Thrales of Streatham Park, an analysis and editing of the manuscript (94 ff.) of Mrs. Thrale called originally The Children's Book, or Rather Family Book.

The significant work of our predecessors has provided us with a starting point for a three-volume edition of the selected letters of Hester Lynch Piozzi, which we now have in preparation. As the Thrale era ends and the Piozzi years begin, we are concerned with the Minerva-like emergence of a vibrant new personality, a woman capable of triumphing over a gossipy society that frowned upon her second husband so foreign, so Catholic, and so much beneath her in station. Whereas

Professor Chapman limited his selection to Mrs. Thrale's correspondence with Johnson, we wish to present her letters to a broad and infinitely varied group of recipients: actresses and antiquarians, well-bred ladies and scholars, school-boys and scientists, the worldly and the scrupulously pious. Moreover, we want to show that her epistolary energy acquired new literary worth when she became Mrs. Gabriel Piozzi. Finally, we want her to tell her own story—biographical and intellectual—and she tells it with élan in her letters.

Specifically, we are committed to editing the letters written by Hester Lynch Piozzi between 23 July 1784, when in London she married for the second time, and 2 May 1821, when she died—probably of cancer—in Clifton. In actual fact, these letters will be prefaced by several written shortly before her remarriage. This correspondence, anticipating the arrival of Gabriel Piozzi, bursts with exuberance and a defiance of those who questioned her right to happiness. Creating their own ambience of hostility and resolution in which the marriage itself took place are her letters to Dr. Johnson, in which the tone altered between peace-making and determination; the inexorable yet troubled letters to Queeney; and those to Fanny Burney whom she emotionally dismissed forever as the "aimable traitresse". These letters, about ten in number, introduce a new life that continued for the next thirty-seven years. The edition as a whole will make available some nine hundred letters (almost half of those extant), most of which have never been published before. There will also be an appendix containing a descriptive catalogue of omitted letters, present locations, and—when possible—shelf marks.

Often too quick to take offence, Mrs. Piozzi never suffered from an excess of humility. Even in admitting mistaken judgements, she rarely denigrated herself. At the same time that she wrote her letters, she appraised their worth as literary and historical documents, as testimonials of an unrewarded virtue, that cried out—she assumed—for preservation and publication. Writing to John Salusbury on 17 March 1811, she optimistically prophesies, "When the black, deep, dividing Gulph is pass'd by your poor Aunt, you will consider these Pages as her Shadows; and prize them accordingly— not for
their Wit, because the Head that has nothing better than Wit in it, is scarce worth a Stroke from a French Guillotine: but for the Heart which dictates every Line. . . .

Strong-minded and insistent always, she nevertheless suffered frustration in this desire, and in others as well. The relatively few letters that have been printed are either fragmented, viciously bowdlerized, or edited in hit-and-run fashion. We have only to examine those to Samuel Lysons printed in Bentley's Miscellany in 1850, or the ninety-four to Edward Mangin—bits and pieces published as Piozziana (1833). The important letters to Mrs. Pennington—important because they are personal and singularly feminine—signal the brutality visited upon Mrs. Piozzi's correspondence. These were edited by Oswald G. Knapp in 1914. Some of the most candid, more than forty, were ignored; the remainder purified by ellipses and confused editorial commentary which can suddenly and irrelevantly appear in the middle of a letter. Both women, the letter-writer and the recipient, would have been appalled at Knapp's edition: Mrs. Piozzi because she could not accept an editorial meddler (at least in so far as her own correspondence was concerned), and Penelope Pennington because she once boasted that she had the best, the most financially lucrative of her friend's letters.

In the very act of carrying on an epistolary exchange, Mrs. Piozzi urged certain persons (those to whom she wrote regularly) to preserve her letters. Clearly, the Reverend Leonard Chappelow did as he was ordered. Just after he died, she received a letter written by George Jenyns:

Madam

I regret that so melancholy a duty devolved upon me,—to inform you of the death of your old and much valued friend Mr Chappelow. He had for a long time been in a very precarious state both of mind and body,—latterly he grew weaker—and on Monday last without any apparent pain or uneasiness left his earthly abode.—I find amongst his papers a packet of letters carefully tied up with directions to be forwarded to you.—which I will take care shall be done immediately.  

Retiring and fussy, self-effacing and deferential, Chappelow remained Mrs. Piozzi's devoted friend for a quarter of a century.

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1 Rylands English MS. 585.94 (hereafter Rylands).
2 Rylands 559.1. The letter is dated 19 September 1820.
And her devotion equalled his. She never laughed at his pose of scientific naturalist or his bachelor's prissiness. Each tolerated the eccentricities of the other, and more important, they maintained their loyalty. Writing from Penzance on 25 September 1820, Mrs. Piozzi asked her daughter Susanna Thrale:

Do you remember my poor dear old Friend Mr. Chappelow? His Nephew wrote to me to say he had been careful of my Letters—which he, Mr. Jenyns, Son or Grandson to the Author Soame Jenyns, would send after me to Bath. I wonder what will be done with his beautiful Verses on the Swallow! poor dear Mr. Chappelow! and how soon he follow'd his Mock: Enemy—Streatham Davies! They were always laughing at each other, and vous autres merry Maidens laughing at them both: but the jokes are over, and as Mercutio would say—They are Grave Men now.1

Poor and lonely now, she could yet call up sympathy for friends who had been deprived of life, a gift to which she clung tenaciously.

Others—friends, stewards, business acquaintances, neighbours—were probably as obedient as "poor dear Mr. Chappelow"; so timid he could not bear to see his one long poem set in type for public viewing. There are therefore several large or special blocks of letters from which we shall draw those that best satisfy the intention of this edition: her letters to Samuel Lysons (1784-c. 1814), in the Hyde Collection and the Houghton and Huntington Libraries; to Leonard Chappelow (1786-1818), in the John Rylands University Library; to Sophia Byron (1784-9), in the Rylands; to the Reverend John Roberts (1804-20), in the Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum; to Mrs. Pennington (1788-1804, 1819-21), in Princeton University Library; to Thomas Whalley (1789-1816), in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library; to the Williams family of Bodylwyddan (1796-1821), some hundred of which—copies and originals—are in the Victoria and Albert; to John Salusbury and his wife (1804 [1813]-21), in the Rylands; to Edward Mangin (1816-21), in Princeton University Library; to Sir James Fellowes and his family (1815-21), in the Osborn Collection and

1 Bowood Papers. Letters from Mrs. Piozzi to her daughters, 1780-1821: Lansdowne MSS.
in various libraries—the Beinecke, the Pennsylvania Historical Society, the Houghton, the Huntington, the Pierpont Morgan (to name but a few). There are other letters, often sporadic and less polished than those already mentioned, that are essential to the autobiography: for instance, those to her youngest daughter Cecilia (1795-1821), at the Rylands; and to Robert Ray (1797-9), at Princeton University Library. A large quantity of business letters—for instance, 142 to Alexander Leak and his wife and a smaller number to Clement Mead—can, when carefully culled, give a stunning glimpse into the behaviour of Mrs. Piozzi harassed by the need for money, bewildered or infuriated by her daughters’ attitude toward the remodelling of Streatham Park, and yet intrigued by the challenge of choosing correct wallpaper patterns and colours of paint. In addition to all these, there still remains the sometimes fascinating isolated letter or small collection in private hands. Even if these are never published, we wish to discover their whereabouts, for frequently they illuminate cryptic allusions or add to the constantly shifting portrait of Hester Lynch Piozzi.

The greatest concentration of her letters, about 1,000, written between 1784 and 1821 is housed in the Rylands. And as important as are her letters to others, so very often are the replies. Again the Rylands makes available an astonishing number to Mrs. Piozzi: at least 1,371 from correspondents as diverse as Arthur Murphy, Michael Lort, Sir Lucas Pepys, Sophia Byron, Samuel Lysons and his brother Daniel, the Ladies of Llangollen, Sarah and William Siddons, William Augustus Conway, the erudite Clement Francis and his sister Marianne, called with some understatement the “prodige” by her grandfather, Dr. Charles Burney. Of the various libraries in American Universities, Princeton offers slightly more than three hundred: the large correspondence with her one feminine intimate, Penelope Pennington; that with the Reverend Edward Mangin; a smaller block to Robert Ray; and some random letters to others.

1 The letters to Leak and Mead are owned by Mrs. Mary Hyde, Four Oaks Farm, Somerville, New Jersey.
2 Frances Burney d’Arblay to her husband, dated 10 December 1812, in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
Two private collectors, one at Four Oaks Farm in New Jersey and another at Bowood in England, have large holdings. Mrs. Hyde owns nearly four hundred letters that Mrs. Piozzi sent to different people in the last thirty-seven years of her life. Indeed, this collection is second only to the Rylands in actual numbers. The Marquis of Lansdowne has a comparable number, most of them written to the Thrale daughters; of these, forty-eight have been printed in the Queeney Letters. As recently as October 1975, Sotheby's sold to a mysterious "Mr. Barber" some 550 letters which Mrs. Piozzi wrote to the Williams family, close friends and neighbours in Denbigh. Almost entirely unpublished, this voluminous collection, spanning the years 1796 to 1821, is the lengthiest known series of her letters, which range in subject from Sarah Siddons to Napoleon, from whist-table gossip to international news and politics. Recognizing the merits of Mrs. Piozzi's epistolary style, the Williams family proposed a posthumous edition of the correspondence. But threats of legal injunction from Sir John Piozzi Salusbury, Mrs. Piozzi's adopted son and heir, forced John Williams to relinquish the project.¹

Hester Lynch Piozzi had so complex a personality, was in fact so much a creature of reason and mood, that she often appears as a whirling paradox. She struck out for independence and a realization of self, yet she seemed usually to require the reassurance of those about her. Wishing to be learned, she nonetheless saw erudition as alien to or even destructive for a woman whose role, by class definition, was social and domestic. In a journal written for Salusbury, she commented: "I would not advise you to breed your Girls to Literature: My Happiness was almost all made by it, but it is not the natural Soil, whence Females are likely to find or form a perfect Felicity."² While she enjoyed the act of composition, she had to confess that "Life is scarce long enough to talk, & to write, and to live to rejoice in


² "Minced Meat for Pyes", in the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
what one has written.”¹ She tried for literary fame even as she admitted fame itself was an ignis fatuus.

The paradoxes never cease. She played her part of acquiescence, obedient to the duties of daughter and wife. At the same time she sought to dominate both family and friends; her tongue, her money—when she had it—her strength of will, all became weapons of control. Her great capacity for love, on the other hand, was not matched by others. Not even Piozzi could provide “the soft passion” she desired, even demanded, from him. She wanted to be a writer, creative and intelligent, but she never struck fire professionally. Perhaps she lacked adequate talent; perhaps she was too involved as a “Mère de Famille”, a preoccupation that drives from “a female Parent’s head a Conversation concerning Wit, Science, or Sentiment, however She may appear to be impressed with it at the moment”. Beginning her second volume of Thraliana on 18 September 1777 with a biographical sketch of Dr. Johnson, she defends herself against those who reproach her for tardiness in recording his obiter dicta: “... if one is to listen all Evening and write all Morning what one has heard; where will be the Time for tutoring, caressing, or what is still more useful, for having one’s Children about one: I therefore charge all my Neglect to my young ones’ Account.” We feel her frustration, her “rage”, as Mrs. Spacks justly points out, “beneath... her protestations of entire devotion to parents, husband, children”.²

But she is not a paranoid, responding as “one who, always unable to gain sufficient reassurance, begins to believe that she’s getting less than nothing”.³ Certain facts loom large in her life. She had enemies, at least people who taunted or mocked her, used her or cast her aside on need. Her daughters suspected her motives as much as she suspected theirs. Sir John Salusbury mangled her love and trust. She was, in short, often abused, offensively and painfully. Her enemies were real, but so were her friends: some like Leonard Chappelow, Mrs. Siddons, Marianne and Clement Francis offered her lasting affection from

¹ Thraliana, i. 257.
² Ibid. i. 158; Patricia Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York, 1975), p. 200.
³ Spacks, p. 205.
which she drew strength; others—Mrs. Pennington, for example—fought with her only to find new understanding; still others—Edward Mangin, Sir James Fellowes and his family—stood devotedly by her for the last six years of her life. She herself recognized both hostility and loyalty from those who encircled her. By July 1820, when she was too tired to deceive even herself, she remarked in her diary: “At my Death the Battle about my Merits and no Merits will be renewed over my Memory. Friends wishing to save it—Foes contending for the Pleasure of throwing it to the Dogs like the Body of Patroclus in Homer.” The savagery of her borrowed imagery underscores the tumult of her buried life.

The personality of H. L. P. may forever escape full comprehension. It seems to us, however, that her letters, selected, dovetailed, and verified by editorial apparatus, confirm the seeming polarities of her nature. They lay bare a woman’s psychology, as does Thraliana, but they go beyond her diary in time, in intellectual and spiritual scope; the external woman is as real as the hidden psyche. The letters, then, prove an anger disciplined by reason, an intelligence, an awareness of self and the world about her that has too often been dismissed. Indeed, only her letters can justify her right to literary immortality. Her editors find it difficult to resist the temptation of an edition of “complete” letters. Still they must admit that to do so would engage them rather viciously in what can only be called Operation Overkill. Certainly not everything she wrote elucidates the autobiography or contributes to the cumulative study of social history. Business directions, cards of thanks, tea or dinner invitations, hastily scratched notes of formal assent or regrets have value, yet the value is so circumscribed as to warrant exclusion from a selected edition of Mrs. Piozzi’s correspondence. What we have in mind is an epistolary ort, such as the following:

Mrs. Piozzi returns Compliments, and is by no means well enough today to answer for herself next Wednesday; hopes Mr. and Mrs. Layard are well. No. 8/ Gay Street. Octr. 23d—1819—/ Bath.

1 Rylands 616.
2 Piozzi, Miscellaneous Papers, Princeton University.
In her late seventies at this time she often ailed for a day or two, sometimes as long as a week. That is hardly exceptionable in an "Octogenaire", the word she wryly used about herself when she wrote to younger friends. She probably did pull herself together to visit the Layards, probably played a rubber of whist with them, but unless she wrote another letter detailing the talk at their house—if, indeed, she made it there—why print this note, which by itself adds little or nothing to her life narrative or to a commentary on the times?

Moreover, the lady played an epistolary game, whether consciously or not. We think it was far more conscious than she would usually admit, for it tested her sensitivity to individuals and her ability to write for different audiences. On one occasion, at least, she confessed her versatility to John Salusbury, then only fifteen. "I am just Thinking," she wrote, "how unlike my Letters to you are to those I write to my young friend Marianne Francis; who works at the Greek Verbs in mi till I am forced to beg She will make Truce with Study, and go see a Play or something to divert Thought; and not fancy Scholarship the sole Clue to Felicity, although Ignorance is the certain Road to Ruin."¹ In this instance the letters to these two young people differed in content. But more frequently letters to diverse correspondents varied less in subject matter than in tone. Quite simply what happened is that she would pen a particular piece of news to three or four different people; the facts remained the same but the language, a detail or two, the verve altered to suit the personality and interests of the recipients. For example, writing from Brynbella to Clement Francis at Cambridge, she solicits the critical opinion of Byron's poetry and offers her views on The Giaour. In a letter the following day to Leonard Chappelow, she asks if he is familiar with the poet, but neglects all critical discussion in favour of mentioning her personal attachment to Byron's grandmother. Hence, even as both epistles deal with Lord Byron, one appeals to the bright young scholar at college while the other interests the withdrawn Mr.

Chappelow. It can of course be fascinating to watch such alteration as an act of epistolary skill, but it can also make for highly repetitious reading. Mrs. Piozzi was rarely a bore. Why impose upon her a quality that she fortunately did not possess? With a sense of audience (of which she too was always conscious) we have passed by letters that describe trivia or merely restate information already given.

Between 1784 and 1821 she wrote more than two thousand letters; their precise number cannot be determined. Obviously not all of them can be important or reveal literary excellence. To intersperse the incidental with the substantive in the name of completeness would simply vitiate her eagerness to dramatize a life narrative that she deemed exciting and a good read; we would even thwart her desire to be part of a literary tradition. Those letters, which she meant to be preserved in print, place her squarely in the splendid epistolary heritage of the eighteenth century, along with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lord Chesterfield, Edmund Burke, Horace Walpole and Fanny Burney. Not only do her letters have quality in and of themselves, but they provide, as Professor Clifford points out, "an enduring record of people and events, a kaleidoscopic picture of the age in which she lives. This is her chief claim to remembrance; this her value to the social historian of to-day."  

She recognized that the importance of her correspondence depended upon editorial integrity and tactful selectivity. She looked about her carefully for a literary executor and chose Sir James Fellowes, her "ever best friend". As she viewed his task, he was "to cull what poems and anecdotes he might think fit from Thraliana and her miscellaneous papers", to pick out those letters that would constitute a printed record of her life and times. Within a year of first meeting him, she wrote him into

1 The letter to Clement Francis is dated 17 January 1814 and is directed to him at Caius College/ Cambridge (Osborn Collection in the Beinecke Library). The letter to Mr. Chappelow is dated 18 January 1814 (Rylands 561.146).
3 The letter (Huntington MS. 6151) is to Sir James Fellowes and is dated 21 March 1819, Bath.
4 Clifford, H. L. Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale), p. 458.
her will, dated 29 March 1816, as co-executor with John Salusbury and left him a token £200 to carry out his duties as editor.¹ She never made a decisive move without first telling him of it. Probably in May 1820 she acknowledged without any hint of morbidity that "My dear Sir James Fellowes as Friend and Executor has a Right to know the Destination of his Amie Octogenaire." In that same letter, written shortly before she set out for Penzance, she inserted information pertinent to a literary executor. "Mr. Iveson permits me a Garrett where if I die you will find my Valuables.—Thraliana in a Tin Box for fear of Fire." Such a remark pleads with Sir James to assure his friend that he would "be careful of [her] literary Fame", that he would find for her the creative immortality which she had always desired.²

Long before she designated her literary executor, however, she anticipated the publication of certain blocks of letters. She goaded her friends, as we have already noted, to save those she sent, and even to promise their eventual return. With pride she boasts to Salusbury, "'Tis the Fashion to say my Letters of the years 1817, 18, and 19—are better than those of 1768 or 70—et cætera."³ She wrote in what she called "a large loose hand" and usually dated precisely, attesting to her eagerness to make an editor's task as congenial as possible.⁴ She held back little of her private world in the correspondence and deliberately highlighted its dramatic episodes: an adoration of her second husband, whose physical ailments frequently rendered him a screaming mass of pain and ulcerous sores; her quarrels and

¹ P.R.O., Prob. 11/1645, proved 22 June 1821. The Will reads, in part: "I do hereby make it my request to the aforesaid Sir James Fellowes that he will permit me to join his name with that of the aforesaid John Salisbury Piozzi Salisbury in the execution of these my settled purposes". ("Salisbury" is the variant spelling.)

² The letter to Sir James is in the collection of the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. The reference to "literary fame" appears in a letter to William Conway, dated 29 May 1819, in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Notable European Women, Case 13, Box 19. See also William Dorset Fellowes's comments written on the back of Mrs. Piozzi's letter to him, dated 31 August 1820, now at the Beinecke Library, MS. Vault/ File.

³ Rylands 590.433. The letter is dated 12 May 1819, Bath.

⁴ Thraliana, i. 158.
truces with her four daughters; her almost silent grief at the death of Gabriel Piozzi (26 March 1809); her socially active widowhood at Bath; her exile and poverty-ridden boredom in the west of England; and finally her pavanne-like return to Bath.

Clearly she intended a selected body of letters to function as an autobiography, a prolonged chat during which she talked about herself, her family and friends. Anyone who knew her kindled to her delight in bright conversation. As Dr. James Currie described this quality to Francis Trench on 1 September 1789:

She expects to talk and to be listened to, & her conversation flows in a perpetual stream. We travelled over France & Italy together, and discussed the manners & characters of the people.... She has observed them with a penetrating tho' with a female eye, & her remarks are therefore the more amusing. We talked of love, marriage, cicisbeosism, & various points of that kind; on which she was very explicit... tho a lady, she is quite a philosopher....

H. L. P. would have shrugged away such masculine condescension, but she would have relished Dr. Currie's appreciation of her talent, one which she carried over into her letter writing. Moreover, she visualized her correspondence as documents, colloquial, informative, and admittedly biased, that would capture anyone interested in the events of George III's reign and the Regency: the threat—as she saw it—of the French Revolution and Napoleon's adventures in conquest, the difficulties of maintaining a landed estate in North Wales during periods of depression and political unrest, the state of medicine in her time, the excitement of travel on the Continent and in Great Britain, the intrigues of holding salon-court from Streatham to Bath and places between.

Because she thought of her letters in this dual role, we have to face an inevitable question. How reliable, in literal fact, are they? The answer is not long in coming. When she writes of immediate incidents, soon after they occur, she is accurate in her reporting despite some blur of egocentricity and prejudice. What preserves these accounts from distortion is the very openness of her self-interest and bias. When, on the other hand, she indulges in recollection, she is honest enough in setting down the broad outlines of these earlier experiences. But the great men who played their part in them did not always speak as she
remembered the dialogue. It is usually witty dialogue, quite trenchant, but as often as not, it is her aphorism or mot, her one-liner with only the flavour of the original speaker. That is, she records her verbal give-and-take with people like Johnson, Burke, Garrick, and others as indeed it could have occurred, because she had an undeniable sense of their conversational style. But such dialogues must always remain hypothetical; we cannot authenticate them.

What she expected of Sir James Fellowes as executor, he failed to do. Not that she erred in choice. She simply failed to consider the personalities of her predatory heirs. While Sir John Salusbury played his role of fox-hunter and squire with consummate enthusiasm, he was dubious of anything or anyone literary. He promised Sir James co-operation, but while he made his promises he carefully locked away his aunt’s papers at Brynbella. As if this were not sufficient self-protection, he prevented the posthumous publication of her papers and letters owned by others; his threat of legal action against the Williams family provides cogent evidence. Perhaps he wished to avoid association with anyone who might be labelled blue stocking, or perhaps he was offended by her descriptions in several letters of his relentless greed and social ambition. Whatever the case, he held the papers hostage and sold, as if for retribution or ransom, a large part of her library, paintings, prints, silver, and other valuables, first in 1823 and then again in 1836. Not until 1901 and for several years during the first decade of the twentieth century were large masses of her holograph material sold by Major E. P. Salusbury through Sotheby’s.1

1 H. L. P.’s letters to Mrs. Pennington were sold in December 1917 by Hodgson and Company; her letters (29) to the Rev. Dr. Whalley were auctioned by Sotheby’s on 14 December 1926. Several of her letters to Mr. and Mrs. Leak were sold by Sotheby’s on 1 December 1938, 19 March 1940, and 20 March 1948. Other letters were sold by Christie’s (19 December 1963), Maggs (Winter, 1972), John Wilson (Spring, 1972, 1973), Francis Edwards (1973), Sotheby’s (July 1974), John Wilson (Summer 1974), Sotheby’s (20 May 1975), Goodspeed’s “Flying Quill” (September 1975), John Wilson (1975), Maggs (Spring, 1976). This is only a partial listing of the significant sales (the first miniscule disposition of two notes at Sotheby’s took place in January 1877). Her letters, whether as individual pieces or in blocks, have sold steadily from 1901 until the present. There was a falling-off of sales during the depressed thirties and the two World Wars.
Many of Mrs. Piozzi’s letters are retrospective; they draw on the Johnson years and clarify her perceptions of relationships with people like Boswell, Dr. Burney and his daughter Fanny, Burke, Baret, Reynolds, Murphy, Anna Seward, Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Montagu, and others. Of these relationships perhaps the most poignant is the one that finally dissolved in stubbornness and acrimony during the spring of 1784. Fanny Burney was haunted by the dissolution, writing about it a whole generation later in laborious French over a period of more than six months. She began the *histoire* in mid-May 1804 with an almost immediate flashback to 1778 and her emergence as the author of *Evelina*. All through the Exercise Book she moves about as a grateful, talented Cinderella who carefully undercut the role of Mrs. Thrale as the step-mother far less cruel than vain, importunate and over-possessive of her protégée.

As Fanny Burney wrote on, she remembered years past, years which detailed Mrs. Thrale’s vanity, the *froideur* of Queeney, the terrible attacks of apoplexy suffered by Mr. Thrale. Finally, unaware of her own priggishness, she forced herself to describe the arrival of Piozzi as the passionate lover and the marriage itself.

*Le Jour même de ce Mariage à jamais étonnant Elle m’écrit, pour me faire part de son bonheur, et pour me demander mes felicitations. Cela m’étoit trop. Je n’ai vu ce fin de tant de surpris, de chagrins, d’efforts inutiles, qu’avec la douleur la plus vive, et affecter de la joie m’aurait été aussi impossible que de la sentir. Je répondis tristement à sa demande, et quoique toujours avec affection et tendresse, car je l’aimai de tout mon coeur, je n’avais pas la force, ou plutôt l’hipocrisie, de lui faire des felicitations quelconques.—Au reste, je l’ai fait aussi peu disgrâtable que je l’ai pu : Mais certes c’étoit une lettre a marquer que rien ne m’avoit fait changer d’avis à son égard. Quelle étoit ma réponse (—peut on imaginer une telle?—c’étoit un court, sec réproche du froideur avec lequel j’avois reçu l’avis de son bonheur ! une lettre commençant Chère Mlle. Burney—: & finissant—votre tres obeissante servante et ceci après des lettres, ju à la, d’une telle chaleur de tendresse, que plutot elles avoient l’air d’être écrites avec passion qu’avec amitié !— Je fus cruellement choquée, blessée—comment a t-elle pu croire que de changer son caractère changeroit le mien? que de la voir oublier tous ses premiers sentiments aussi bien que de renoncer à tous ses premiers devoirs, seroit pour moi un sujet de felicitation, et que j’aurois du ou pu avoir un air de satisfaction pour une conduite que j’avois regulièrement autant que j’ai pu...*
PORTRAIT OF A GEORGIAN LADY

C'est à Norbury que j'ai reçu cette cruelle Lettre qui m'a affligée au fond du cœur,—quoique j'étois avec deux amies—ah Ciel ! combien plus choses encore que celle qui des ce tems j'ai perdue !—quelles anges consolatrices !—passe ! passe !—ou mon histoire ne fera jamais. J'étois long avant que de répondre à cette Lettre—et ma reponse fut aussi soignée que melancholique ! Je n'osais pas écrire tout de suite, et dans la chaleur de mon ame offensée, de peur que de lui dire ce que sa lettre m'a peine meriter pourroit la compromettre avec son mari, et puisqu'elle étoit enfin à lui, je ne voulais pas pour tout au monde avoir couru le moindre risque de l'embrouiller avec lui pour qui elle avoit perdu ou renoncé tout autre. Je lui ai simplement écrit que je ne voudrois pas lui parler de la douleur avec laquelle j'avois lu les premières lignes tracées par sa main qui m'avoit fait de la peine ; mais que je me recommanderois pour ma seule défense à sa mémoire, et que jusqu'à ce qu'elle me rendroit la justice que j'attendrois d'elle, je la prierois de ne plus m'écrire. Je ne me rappelle pas si c'étoit tout de suite, ou quelque temps après que j'eusse sa réponse ; mais c'étoit écrite d'une tout autre manière,—c'étoit pour me faire part de son dessein de partir tout de suite l'Italie, de m'assurer de son bonheur, en ajoutant : ainsi, tranquilizer votre bon coeur, je vous en prie, ma très chère. J'ai oublié de vous dire que j'avois dit en p.s. de ma lettre, que je desirois presenter mes complimens à M. Piozzi, contre qui je n'avois jamais rien voulu puisque je n'avois jamais rien vu à blâmer—Après tout ceci je lui écrivis une lettre pleine de tendresse et contenance, avec les meilleurs souhaits pour que sa felicité seroit permanente, et l'assurant que je brulerois la seule de ses Lettres que je ne pourrois pas revoir avec plaisir, afin qu'il n'y auraient aucun reste de rien qui pourroit en aucun sorte nuire à l'amitié et à la reconnoissance je lui avois vouée. Nous voici, donc, retablis dans notre veille amitié, et nos premieres liaisons—n'es-ce pas ? je l'ai vu comme cela bien sincerement—mais, la semaine passa sans réponse,—le mois—et, bref, jamais n'en ai-je reçu aucune ! Jusqu'à cette heure, pas un mot d'elle ne m'est revenu ! Le pourquoi m'est entièrement inconnu.

Fanny Burney never forgot Mrs. Piozzi. She sought over the years to explain her conduct to Queeney, and even to Sophia and Susanna. Fanny urged her niece Marianne Francis to arrange an opportunity for reconciliation. But to Mrs. Piozzi, who could actually tabulate "the enemies I have outlived", the breach—once made—could not be mended. Writing to John Salusbury in the spring of 1813 about Mme d'Arblay's "Visits and caresses", she observes:


2 Rylands 616.
When Connections are once broken, 'tis a foolish Thing to splice and mend; They never can (at least with me) unite again as before. Life is not long enough for Darning torne Friendships; and they are always a Proof however neatly done, that the Substance is worn out. A new Dress can be better depended upon.1

She cut her protégée off without anything more lasting or profound than a sigh. She nonetheless remained interested in Fanny's failed dramatic efforts, in Camilla, which she enjoyed, and in The Wanderer, the Gallicisms and grammatical solipsisms of which both amused and irritated her. But meetings after 1784 were, at least for Mrs. Piozzi, formally polite, an exercise in studied civility, even during a visit of condolence in 1818 shortly after General d'Arblay had died. Each woman saw the quarrel from her own perspective. If Fanny disdained Gabriel Piozzi, then his wife took offence not only for herself but for him. She could never forgive the woman by whose ingenue grace she felt betrayed: "Mme D'Arblay...is charming—She always was;——but I will never trust her more."2

Many letters reveal H. L. P.'s knowledge of current literature. Whatever the failures of her heart, she rarely permitted her mind to stop thinking. Her emotions were unpredictable, but her curiosity continued quick. She read Goethe, Robert Southey, James Beattie, Harriet Lee, Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More, George Crabbe, the Gothic novelists—Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, Mary Shelley—Joanna Baillie, Walter Scott and Byron. She read the last more out of loyalty to his grandmother, whose epitaph she wrote, than to the young poet who, she suspected, spilled forth feelings without either control or decorum. Indeed, she thinks "Lord Byron's Pegasus is moulting his Wings" by 1818.3 Earthy as she was in her correspondence, certainly not squeamish about describing medical diagnoses and their treatments, she considered physical specificity in literature un-

1 Rylands 587.184. The letter is dated 14 May 1813.
2 The remark appears in a letter (Huntington) to Sir James Fellowes, dated 15 October 1818, Bath.
3 Ibid. For H. L. P.'s letters to Sophia Byron see Rylands 546. For additional information concerning H. L. P.'s attitude toward Lord Byron see Rylands 561.146; and H. L. P. to Clement Francis, 17 January 1814, and H. L. P. to Marianne Francis, 30 September 1818, both in the Osborn Collection of the Beinecke Library at Yale University.
warranted and downright vulgar. Hence, she confesses, "The Writers of this Day" frequently disgust and terrify her.¹

Often her tests for this new literature were severely critical, formed by the values of Dr. Johnson, who felt sufficient rapport with her literary tastes to dictate his "Life of Pope" to her.² At other times her judgements were grounded upon gossip or sympathy and good-willed morality: she wrote generously of William Cowper and of Sarah Fielding "teized and taunted" by her brother Henry. Several of the letters dealing with these matters show her competence to interpret genre literature, if in somewhat sweeping terms. She dismissed the new fiction as "watery gruel". She admitted to Mrs. Pennington in August 1801 that "Our Novel Writers have a Right to hate me who set my face so against Fiction, and who have endeavoured (tho' fruitfully) to make Truth palatable: but when they boast that my Book [Retrospection] is liked only by the Old Heads of Houses at Oxford and Cambridge, and chained up in the Bodleian or All Souls: 'tis such a Vaunt as the French make when they chain their Ships ashore."³ Her contempt for the novel was surpassed only by her abounding disgust for the current theatre, whose demise she prognosticated despite friendship with Sarah Siddons, John Kemble, and Arthur Murphy. All these great figures of the stage acquire three-dimensional personalities in her letters and in the case of Mrs. Siddons and Arthur Murphy, in theirs to her.

Significantly only Mrs. Piozzi published, not Mrs. Thrale. It is as if her pent-up energies suddenly found release now that she was freed from the constant demands of Thrale, of maternity and dying children, of overwhelming personalities like Johnson, Reynolds, Garrick, and the Burneys, who frequented the houses in Streatham or Grosvenor Square. During the period between 1784 and 1821 she wrote and published as many of her manuscripts as she could—from the Florence Miscellany (1785) through

¹ She makes the comment in a letter to Sir John Salusbury, dated 14 February 1818 (Rylands 590.397).
² In the possession of the Pierpont Morgan Library.
³ The letter (Princeton) is addressed to Mrs. Pennington/Dowry Square/Hot Wells/Bristol.
the *Johnsonian Anecdotes* (1786) and the *Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson* (1788) to the encyclopaedic *Retrospection* (1801), and all those that went between.¹ Committed to being a wife (if not to motherhood), she was equally committed to being a professional writer. Busy in the summer of 1788 with her *Observations and Reflections*, she writes to Sophia Byron, "I have with me for the constant Occupation of my Thoughts, a Husband, a Child, and a Book"."² She took this part of her life earnestly, struggled with booksellers for the best contracts, and worked intensely to meet deadlines. She had a sense of subject as well as of readers. Sometimes, to be sure, she aspired too keenly, as in *Retrospection*, which set forth a Review of the Most Striking and Important Events, Characters, Situations, and Their Consequences, which the Last Eighteen Hundred Years Have Presented to the View of Mankind. The vastness of the subject apparently overwhelmed her; facts intermingled with myth, and errors ran rampant over the pages. If she failed in this effort, she managed to wrest popular success from *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* and even from a work as potentially drab as the *British Synonymy* where she enlivened subject with a stylistic élan, at once chatty and familiar.³

In the correspondence concerned with her published books, she gives their history from conception to marketing plans; she discusses their reviews so that willy-nilly she provides insight into the commerce of bookselling and the quality of public taste. She waged war with hostile reviewers because a paper war sold books even as she rationalized her deficiencies as their spite. Hurt as she was by critics, she attempted to shrug them off as yet another source of annoyance in an uneven life. At the same time, however, her spirited if somewhat impulsive replies to their charges show her defending her professional life with the same

¹ *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany*, 2 vols. (1789); *The Three Warnings* (1792); *British Synonymy*, 2 vols. (1794); *Three Warnings to John Bull Before he Dies* (1798).
² Rylands 546.4. Dated 8 June 1788.
³ The *British Synonymy* went through two editions in 1794, the year of its publication. Ten years later in Paris a five-instalment version appeared in Parsons and Calignani's *British Library* (vols. 14, 16, 18, 20, 22).
determination she used to defend her private one. While _Retrospection_ was being mauled in journals and periodicals, she wrote to Leonard Chappelow from Brynbella on 18 June 1801. She thanked him for his loyalty, outlined her reasons for refuting the critics, and sought his approbation and assistance:

My Dear Mr. Chappelow/ is really very kind to be so angry—but it would not be worth while to quarrel if every one could judge fairly as you can. 'Tis for the Sake of Readers in distant Provinces—and People abroad too— that form a Judgment of Books from what The Critical Reviewers say of them, that I feel interested in repelling their Charge of Ignorance. Many Female Friends too, and demi Scavans will catch at this Publication, and consider the Imputation as unanswerable, if I answer it not.

Another Reason. If we sit down tamely, and sit down _long_, the Reply will be worth less, as supposed to be more studied; and People will care less who gains or loses in the Controversy. Besides that these Rejoinders &c. contribute to Selling A Work about which some bustle has been made— If we sit still we sink quietly to nothing: The Book is light, and so is a Shuttle Cock; beating it forth and back _keeps it up_.

Let them see that they made false Charges, and shew the World as Daniel did the Eastern King whose Dragon he got Leave to potency; that they are not Immortal or Invulnerable—and now said he when the Creature burst in sunder— _Lo these be the Gods ye worship._

Perhaps indeed the Critical Reviewers never heard the Story; _such_ Ignorance would be more pardonable than never to have heard of Regnard the French Poet—of whom Their Friend Voltaire speaks largely, and says Boileau broke his Heart by writing against him—Did they never read Boileau neither? If French is out of their Way—some of Regnard's Adventures may be found in the Universal Museum 1765—I forgot what Month.

Looking over my Manuscript I found the Words concerning the Lyon and the Slave written thus. "Aulus Cellius relates the Story of the Lyon whose grateful Recollection spar'd the Slave, observing that they had often been met in the Streets together during the Reigns of Caligula and Claudius collecting Money from Children and Passers by."

Errors of the Press are certainly numerous but it is cruel to take advantage of them so: Gillet has printed Lewis the fourth for Lewis the 14th and Joseph the _fifteenth_ in Letters, when the Manuscript had Joseph 1st in _Figures_: unaccountably enough to be sure.

Shew Mr. Gillon this Letter Dear Sir, and make me up a little Pamphlet of Refutation. Non c'h Tempo da perdere. I have written Robson of Bond Street—who sent me the Review—an Answer to their principal Charges,—to lye about his Shop, and shew People my own Defence in my own Hand Writing. Look at it yourself, I dare say Mr. Gillon has already show'd you my Epistle to him. The Story of Hyder’s Ali’s Tumour on his Back was told me by Mrs. Light, and She knew it for a Fact: you remember Mrs. Light at Streatham Park, She married Captain Anstey afterwards.— Mr. Gillon’s Brother knew the Fact too, and helped her Escape from Hyder who would have caught her if he could for his
Seraglio— at least his Agents— but her Husband and his Friend sent her safe to Ceylon, where She stole the Cinnamon Tree and brought it (when out of Danger) back to our Settlements in India.

Mr. Gillon and Mrs. Anstey are both dead, and I can get no written Evidence of the Fact.—they called him Herod Ali— because he killed the Babies to make a Poultice of their Liver in consequence of a Quack’s recommendation.

The Story of Caroline and Adelaide Broyard I have the power of Authenticating when called upon.

And now Adieu! Dear Mr. Chappelow and forgive all this Trouble from Yours ever/ H : L : P.

I am most anxious to see the British Critic— The Monthly Review will abuse the Book I doubt not, but they will do it better I am afraid: These Men are no formidable Foes; let us kill them first.

Mr. Piozzi has had his Fit of Gout and is mending—how is your own Health? Pray accept all our best Regards and Thanks.

Mr. Gillon has written again and I am more convinced, and my Spirits quieter, since I hear the Book’s Sale has not suffer’d: but I rejoice that the Critic himself at least sees my Defence—it is a very polite one; and cannot offend.

Adieu, and do the best for me you can, and get a Purchaser for our fine Horses among your fine folks. Mr. Gillon will tell you all. Adieu and thank you kindly.

Mrs. Piozzi’s letters vary not merely in tone but in structural technique. Occasionally a letter will seem to concentrate upon a single topic. Such is the brief response to Dr. Burney’s congratulations of 1784. Yet even though her note conveys formal politeness, it suggests far more than it says: her gratitude for kindness at a time when she needed more than she received; her ironical allusion to Fanny’s prudery; her relief that a tense cordiality, one that she shared with Gabriel, need not be fragmented; her sense of triumph over malicious gossip. Implicit in the note was the indubitable fact that she married the man she adored and let all hold their peace forever after.

The Compliments of Congratulations which we have received from many friends—from most indeed; have been less dear to both of us than the kind Letter which came this Moment to my hands from dear Dr. Burney. I long however for the good Wishes of your amiable Daughter more than I can express; my own Daughters write very kindly, and the Inhabitants of this Place which I shall love as long as I live—stifle us with tenderness and Civility. Business however will call us from [Bath] in a few days which I shall at least have to make me amends— the Pleasure of saying with how much Sincerity I answer Dear Dr. Burney’s/ Most Affectionate and faithful Servant/ H : L : Piozzi.

Volti Subito
[In the hand of Gabriel Piozzi]

1 Rylands 560.111. Addressed to Rev. Mr. Chappelow/ No. 12 or 13 Hill Street/ Berkeley Square/ London.
PORTRAIT OF A GEORGIAN LADY


Single-mindedness, then, appears rarely in her correspondence. More often a letter will focus on one theme, but will explore its various ramifications; her self-defence to Chappelow, cited a moment ago, is an example. To divert the recipient, she frequently provides a deliberate ramble here and there. Bored almost to exasperation at Weston-super-Mare, she gave over part of a Saturday to remembrance of her past. Yet she knew that nostalgia has meaning primarily for the individual absorbed in recollection. So in her letter to the Reverend Edward Mangin penned that same night, she reminisced about what it meant to be a woman in her station and time. But lest she become maudlin, she shifted her remarks so as to emphasize her realistic acceptance of mortality. Moreover, she made a tapestry connecting past and present with allusions to Johnson as well as to Henry Hunt and the country's political tensions.

No indeed Dear Mr. Mangin—if I know myself, I am not low-spirited, nor disposed to think myself dying—though feelingly assured that If I lose Health—Life must follow.—At my Age There is no Time for Sickness and accommodation, and Disposition, and dawdling:—my Desire is to leave all straight and smooth behind me—praying that Things may not be very crooked and rough—in the Path before me—but as the Boys say—There is a long Account to shew up, and one must think of it whether one will or no.

Johnson said We lived in a besieged Town—all of us: and that we ought not Slumber at our Posts as if the Enemy was retired from the Ground:—if so, how much more vigilant should we be? nous autres Octogenaires?—Our Slumbers will be like those of a Soldier sleeping on the Attack.

Life is a Magic Lanthorn certainly, and I think more so to Women, than to Men: who often are placed very early in a Procession which they follow up regularly, and slide on; Labetur et Labetur almost unconsciously:—but we Females (myself for Example.) I pass'd the first 20 Years in my Father and Uncle's Houses, connected with their Friends, Dwelling-Places and Acquaintances; and fancying myself at home among them:—No such Thing.

¹ Dated 2 August [1784], this letter is in the Osborn Collection of the Beinecke Library. It is directed to Dr. Burney/ St. Martins Street/ Leicester Fields.
Marriage introduced me to a new set of figures, quite new; nor did I ever see but distantly and accidentally, any of the old group or their residences from that day to this,—my mother alone excepted. She lived near me indeed for nine years out of the seventeen I pass'd under Mr. Thrale's protection, and wearing his name for years longer,—another marriage drove that set of figures quite away, and I began the world anew,—with new faces round me, and in new scenes too: for Wales was as much out of my usual beat,—as Italy, my first husband having only seen enough of it to create his aversion.—I did however fancy when Piozzi built me a beautiful house on the estate and in the country my parents quitted in my early childhood—that I was got home again somehow tho' oddly; quite a mistake was that.—Bath is my home: and since I made it such; you, my dear sir, who have so contributed to sweeten it to my taste, are really very kind in wishing me to set up my rest there.

It is the safest, and most proper place of abode for me. I thought London was to have run mad this last week—but the fever of reform is not yet hot enough.

You will see the great men who think they are making hunt and company their tools to pull down one set of ministers and put up another set which they can command:—will at length be used as tools by the multitude, who are honest in the avowal of their meaning, however absurd. They mean like the wise men of Gotham to pull the pins out of London Bridge and oil them:—and I remember wondering when a baby, why that was thought so very foolish a project, for I doubted not but they wanted something—as we say—to be done to them.

Indeed a later adventure showed me how cautiously a work of reformation must be conducted: An old wall we wished to repair down in Denbighshire,—was all overgrown with ivy: cut it away said we; but it has grasped the stones it loosen'd at beginning, replied an experienced workman; and if we cut away—the whole will drop to pieces,—the wood now helps to support that wall, to which it once clung for support itself,—so I recollected the more serious allegory of the corn and tares,—and let the business rest.

I shall be glad when you have either exposed or extinguished that fraudulent fellow of whom it appears you have no small cause to complain.—There are among the vile vices one's heart most abhors I think,—and my heart assures me dear edward will never practise or submit to such: He will be a high-minded boy. Among all the babies that swarm upon the sands of weston super mare, our little Angelo is most delicately beautiful,—he should have been a lady.

The octagon chapel being shut up—as a public place—strikes me as comical: Mr. grinfield is gone to laura this very day. Such weather sure was never seen as this year. Lady salisbury has written to me and says her husband is low spirited: She sends tender and anxious compliments and enquiries concerning dear Mrs. Mangin with a thousand regards to Miss Emily in which she truly and [tear] family's ever faith [tear] H: L: P.

Her typical letters touch upon a variety of subjects adjusted to the interests of her correspondents. And this technique holds

1 Dated 4 September 1819, this letter (Princeton) was addressed to Rev: Edward Mangin No. 10 Johnstone Street Laura Place Bath.
true no matter when or to whom the letter was written. So in 1800 she sent to Penelope Pennington a long chat made up of gossip about fashionable women and petty squabbles, of visitors to Brynbella, of Mrs. Siddons's family, of her daughter Cecilia's mother-in-law. Carefully placed in all this random talk are reflections on war, on the human condition, and affairs of state. The serious is measured out to meet the intellectual capacity of Penelope, who tended to be a "hanger-on" and whose middle-aged head was too often given to "romantick Love".

Dear Mrs. Pennington's Eyes yet serve her I find to write the very charmingest Letters in the World; and Doctor Randolph is of the same Opinion: That to the Travellers was admirable, and my own first received—most Excellent. They left Wales yesterday and have carried ugly Weather home with them; but I hope and think that the bright Sun illuminated their last Glimpse of Denbighshire from the Heights round romantic Llangollen. I never saw People so well or so happy or so good humoured on a Journey, where Inconveniences must necessarily arise, such as would seize many Tempers accustom'd to Home Life. Every body in our Neighbourhood would have adored them had they staid long enough: but Duty called, and you expected them, and they are flown away.

What the meaning can be of Bread rising is past my Power to divine: Wheat falls, and Grass grows, and these Rains have put out the Fires which injured the hilly Grounds. Nothing is truer than your Observation of Man's counteracting Providence in all they can—but of late times some Permission seems to have been given them that it should be counteracted. Victory bestows Honour on our Arms, but produces no Good to our Nation; Plenty creates no Peace, and Opulence no Wealth among us: I cannot fathom it—We have been upon the Eve of a general Pacification thro' all Europe—but I scarce expect Quiet in any Country (much less our own) to be the Consequence of such extensive Treaties.

'Tis pleasant to see any body Happy now, and the Dear Randolph's Company was a Cordial. My amiable Neighbour Lady Orkney's Felicity is too Tumultuous, one is fearful of its not lasting. Her son marries Miss Ormsby, whom perhaps you have seen—and certainly heard of—She will have 10000 £ o'Year: a fine form, and unblemished Manners—Gentle withal and young:—A Match that pleases all the World I think.

Poor dear Jane Holman complains of the Greatheeds that they were too fine to visit her in London; She is recovering from her severe Lying In, and will I hope be happy tho' the World was all displeased at her Connexion.

Mrs. Siddons will have a cruel Loss if her husband dies, though he was no profess'd Wit, nor Beau—nor Damon: and tho' I doubt me much if he was even the very prudent Man folks take him for. Yet will he be a Loss,—and seldom comes a better's no bad Proverb. Her Son was expected to make his Fortune among the Fair at one Time, but I now hear no more on't.

Mrs. Wynne, Cecilia's mother-in-law is come home to Wales ten Years Younger than she left it, and infinitely handsomer of Course. I do not think
that will be my Case when I leave home next; but selling my Book advantageously will I suppose heighten my Bloom. We must have Things as they are—as Baretti used to say when he threw ill at Backgammon: My Master’s capital Health must keep mine up; I never saw him in better Looks, and Mrs. Randolph will tell you how smart he has made old Bachýgraig—the Name of which they both forgot I’m sure, before two Miles were past—and Lord Mountjoy only saw Llewenny. Whenever Lady Hesketh crosses your Walks say to her how much I respect her, and how glad I feel that the sweet little Princess is to be happy in virtuous and wise Attendants on her Infancy, Lady Elgin and Miss Hunt. “Never harm nor Spell nor Charm will come that Faery’s Pillow nigh—while They sing her Lullaby”.

Brynbella is the fashion: We have People coming to take Views of it, and Travellers out of Number—Tourists the silly word is.

Miss Thrales are among the Lakes, I believe there are modish Places now for Summer as for Winter modish Streets. Comical enough! Yet the general face of Things must be confessed very gloomy: tho Stocks rise and that comforts many who look superficially—or that never look at all beyond Finsbury Square and Hyde Park Corner.

My Fear is lest Mr. Pitt should be one of those—if such the Case He will be amazed whenever the evil Moment comes, which would only grieve, not amaze.

Kind words to all you Love./ Yours/ H: L: P.

Some six years later the epistolary technique remained the same; the tone and subject matter change only because the times and recipient were different. The consistently “Poor dear Mr. Chappelow”, dedicated to serving the lesser nobility and in particular the spiritual needs of Lord Bradford’s family, needed cheering up. Like others of his time—and ours—he sometimes succumbed to the foul fiend melancholia. H. L. P. responded to his cri du coeur. She consoled, bucked him up with war and literary news, all of which silently urged him to stand up to adversity. Almost as if she felt she had not provided enough courage, she reminded him of those less fortunate than himself and of ubiquitous death seizing the young and old alike. In short, she allowed him the right to cry a bit but then gently she suggested that he become less aware of himself and more alert to the world around him. Why waste time in lamentation when the grave waits inexorably for all? Her letter to Leonard Chappelow is a brilliant stroke of spiritual psychology, one designed to animate the Anglican soul, even to the point of quoting from Hudibras.

1 The letter (Princeton), dated Saturday night, 6 or 7 September 1800, is directed to Mrs. Pennington/ Dowry Lane/ Hot Wells/ Bristol.
After so long Silence such a lowspirited Letter afflicts me seriously; Poor dear Mr. Chappelow! Indeed I am very sorry.

Lord Bradford and his charming Family keep well I hope, and you must try and be cheerful notwithstanding these public Vexations. We are not Buonaparte’s Subjects yet, I think few of us would outlive the day we were declar’d such;—it would kill me sooner than cold Water by half.

Are not you very sorry for his Admirals Villeneuve and Linois? one forced on Suicide, and one plunged in disgraceful Penury—Surely no Frenchmen will serve such a Master, and his new Slaves in Greece and Italy will get tired of the Yoke in Time. Nothing so terrifies me as the Dread of his getting over Land to India, and really if Alexander sits quiet to see him possess’d of the old Graecian Peloponesus I know not where or how he can be stop’d. Will Russia suffer such a dismemberment of the Turkish Empire? which all her Sovereigns for these last Hundred Years have consider’d as their own lawful Prey? 'Tis difficult to believe that a Lyon will stand still, while Wolves devour a fat Bullock before his Face.

You are perfectly correct about the Malignity of Reviewers; They fall upon Friend and Foe: and Joanna Baillie being ill-treated by her own Countrymen—The Edinburghers may shew how Impossible it is for them to let any Work take its fair Chance with the Public which comes not forth from their own Junto. Lock your Verses up therefore—if you are averse to running the Gauntlet, but don’t destroy them; There is no Justice in such Conduct: wait till better Times, and amuse your Self at your Leisure without provoking their Envy, or suffering your Feelings to be wounded by this Malice. A Writer who faces the Reading World in these days, must be as callous as Sir Knight, who says:

I have been beaten till I know
What Wood the Cudgel’s of, by th’ Blow;
And kick’d till I can tell you whether
The Shoe were Spanish, or Neat’s Leather.

I never see any Review but when I am at Bath—and cannot hear how they have treated Cumberland’s entertaining Work; it is sweetly written sure—say what they will;—a most pleasing Mixture of Fact and Sentiment—Seriousness and Levity—I read it over Three Times—borrowing it,—and bought it after all.

Mr. Piozzi sends you 1000 Compliments—he will not try to repel his Gout you may assure Yourself, and Doctor Kinglake seems no Perswasive Writer; I doubt his having done much harm to anybody—but one is so desirous of finding a Reason for Death always, as if Death waited for Reasons. Many young People who never felt Gout have died suddenly this Year, and very many who never heard of Doctor Kinglake—I wonder you that are a Naturalist should express no Surprise at our Paucity of Rain these last 12 Months: The Springs are strangely low, the Ground parch’d and arid—and a tall Man—Lord Bulkeley for example might have walked over the Avon at Bath on the 1st of Decr. 1805 or on the 1st of May 1806—when all Rivers are wont to be full from the Autumnal or Spring Rains. Our Wheat looks thin here, and poorly; and my new planted Shrubs are gasping for Thirst.

Lord and Lady Kirkwall and Countess of Orkney have left the Neighbourhood, so have the dear Blaquieres, poor Cecy Mostyn has a sad Loss of them—her Husband is at Bath for his Health—She and her Boys at Segroid. It was
Susanna you were walking with I believe, but tis no Matter—She was the Swinger at least so many Years ago.

Convey this Letter free Cost to them Dear Mr. Chappelow and accept my good husband’s best Wishes with those of/ Yrs. ever/ H : L : P.¹

Two years before her death, she continued to write letters with usual vigor, making use of the free-wheeling structure she liked best. In one to the Reverend Edward Mangin, she moved from subject to subject but in each instance with more profundity than she exhibited in those letters to Mrs. Pennington and Leonard Chappelow, which we have already seen. A sometimes intense feminist, she struck out at the male novelist, who never "makes Female Characters respectable—No Man of the present Day I mean, they only make them lovely".² Nevertheless, she would not suffer fools gladly, whatever their sex. In the epistle to Mangin, dated 25 July 1819 from Weston-super-Mare, she dismissed those "Charmers" who, with self-conscious chic, planned to visit the newly opened Houses of Parliament during the debates. As she warmed to her political discussion, she seemed almost "paranoid". And yet as a member of the landed gentry in North Wales, she—along with many members of her class—was genuinely horrified by the economic unrest among factory workers in the textile cities of England. Clearly she had forebodings about the mass hysteria that seized her friends and neighbours.

Appalled at what she observed, she took hold of herself and abruptly switched the topic to that of the theatre. She revealed her satisfaction in knowing the great names of the stage, almost as if she partook of their glory. Because the image of death wandered ceaselessly through her mind, in this instance she forced herself to recall the recently deceased Samuel Lysons. But her memory was mixed with cunning and a fear that he had left behind a vast array of "Caricatures and Insolent Speeches" made on her second marriage. What significance these satires could have had for her thirty-five years after the event eludes comprehension. Apparently, while her ego could take battering,

¹ Dated 4 June 1806 from Brynbella (Rylands 561.134). The reference to "Sir Knight" is from Samuel Butler, Hudibras, II. i. 221.
² To Mrs. Pennington, 16 May 1800 (Princeton).
it would not stand for diminution. Implicit in her remarks about Lysons is an unvoiced appeal to Edward Mangin that he see to the destruction of offending broadsides.

A Thousand Thanks Ymås as the Spaniards say of the Years they wish one: Your own dear Letter is worth 100 Newspapers—altho' at this Time I feel them most deeply interesting— Not so the few People I converse with— "They apprehend nothing but Jollity," like pretty Perdita in the Winters Tale—a Lady Twice her Age told me this Morning that the People were chusing a new Parliament— and that Ladies would be admitted to hear their Debates—The old-fashion'd Churls shut us out added she; but we will have some fun now.

Surely The Gulls, and the Gull's Horn-book would be more companionable than such Charmers. But no one will believe the Nation in Danger, Poor old Britannia! surrounded with Fire as she is; till like famous Madame Blanchard, We see her tumbling from her proud Height at once, and then the French will cry "Ah mes Amis! quel beau Coup de Théâtre !" Mr. Mangin meantime who can think a Century in a second; must be well aware of what will happen when the new Parliament fixes as a Dictator, and levies an Army to maintain its self-created Rights.

The Plots seem thickening fast about Brynbella, Chester Gaol is but 26 Miles from the Door, I wonder what they think of it!

Dear Siddons thinks only of her own Glory 'tis plain,—and nothing can fill a Mind not quite preoccupied, so full as her reading of Macbeth. Truly does the Courier say She acts the Ghost Scene in the Play better than Garrick did—He bullied the Spectre, and appeared to call him Names—as with much more Propriety—Satan treats Death in Milton. Mrs. Siddons when She has said Hence recoils into herself, and adds in a low and terrified Tone horrible Shadow! then recovering cries out triumphantly—Unreal Mockery hence! Apropos I never can learn what is become of my friend and Favourite Conway— Mr. Ward meets my Eye in the Newspapers as being much approved of in the Hay Market— and wisely did dear Doctor Johnson say that History was a magnifying Glass—for when you read—were his Words; that Rome or Athens were in Consternation: not a Creature was Consternated—some went to Work, others to see the Play, and no Man eat less Supper for all the Proscriptions of Caesar Antony and Lepidus. — In the Year 1780 however, he changed his Note, as witness his Letters to me; where he confesses that every body was consternated.

My astonishment is perhaps greater that the People of our Stock Exchange at London should suffer themselves to be baffled or swindled out of near a Million of Money by Babies: Boys of 14 and 15 Years old who made themselves Bears the People say, Cubs they ought to be:—for no less than 900,000£.

Does Doctor Gibbes care about these Concerns? I'm sure he troubles himself about the Wiltshire Election, for I saw his friend's Name, that genteel Mr. Everett; but have forgotten whose Side he took.— Hannah More too, she has written a new Book, and the Name has slipt my Memory.

Dear Mrs. Mangin's Name and Miss Emily's and her sweet little Brother's are ever in my heart, and often in my Tongue— but Sammy Lysons' Death displeases me: he picked up such odd Things.
Indeed I remember many Years ago when we breakfasted with him at his Chambers, that he shewed me a snug Corner as he called it—of his Library, and told me it was full of all the Caricatures and Insolent Speeches made on my Marriage with Mr. Piozzi—I wonder if he burned them! If he did not, I trust his Brother the Clergyman will; for he is a Man with a Family, and will perhaps not see any fun in making needless Enemies.

Adieu Dear Sir—tell the Ladies how dearly I love them and how little I sympathize with the delicate Fair one that got her Head broke at the County Election—

Dr. Gibbes will supply my Expressions of tender Concern for her.

Adieu Dear Sir! and accept the kindest Wishes of Your Oldest—perhaps newest Friend/ that is as Affectionate as your poor/ H : L : P.

A Thousand Thanks for the Paper.  

III

If she seemed to favour one epistolary method over another, she never reined her curiosity or willingness to write on any and all subjects. Her letters, then, become a fascinating autobiographical record, as compelling as any work of realistic fiction told by a fairly reliable first-person narrator. She took pleasure in writing about herself: her birth into an ancient and genteel family, her learning, her two marriages. In response to the Monthly Mirror's request for a biographical statement, she tried for modesty and succeeded because she held to facts without overt editorial commentary. At the same time she chose the facts carefully, stressing her social conservatism, her intelligence, and her desirability as a woman. She played many roles, especially those that suggested obedience and defiance, intellectuality and passionate feminity.

Mrs. Piozzi feels much obliged to the Gentlemen who are Proprietors of The Monthly Mirror, and is happy to find that Mr. Barber's Miniature resembles her much more than ever Sir Joshua's large Picture did. She begs to sign herself wholly into their Hands who have already been very polite.

Mrs. Piozzi did send Mr. Bellamy a Sheet of Paper saying whose Daughter Wife and Mother She had been, that no Mistakes might deform their agreeable Work. She mention'd Bodvel in Caernarvonshire as the Place of her Birth, and said her Parents had been married four Years before She their only Offspring came into the World.—More of Herself She really does not know. A Life of H : L : P. would be only a Panegyric on her Friends; they all lov'd Literature, and wished to teach it her; and She lov'd them, and was desirous to learn.

1 Directed to the Rev. Edward Mangin at his Johnstone Street residence in Bath (Princeton).
'Twas not from Masters commonly so called, that She acquired her little Portion of Celebrity, but from the Instruction of her Mother and Relations—and from the unfrequency in those Days of highly accomplish'd Females.

Her Father John Salusbury of Bachýgraig—mentioned by Pennant in his Literary Life—first Page I think—married his Cousin Hester Maria Cotton, whose Virtue and Elegance, whose Charms of Person and Conversation have been faintly sketched in Doctor Johnson's Epitaph. Her Father's Brother was Sir Thomas Salusbury, many Years Judge of the High Court of Admiralty—There were only those two Brothers: and the Youngest: bred a Civilian married Anna Maria Daughter to Sir Henry Penrice who brought him no Children to engross her Fondness, or to inherit her numerous Excellencies and large Estate—so that She loved Mrs. Piozzi as her own Daughter and destined Heiress. This Lady was a Woman of extensive Acquirements, and all their Acquaintance was among literary Characters; who delighted in filling and adorning the mind of H: L: P.

Doctor Parker now Rector of St. James's, tried to teach her Latin; Hogarth said he would make a Connoisseur of her: Mr. Quin the famous Actor taught her to read Milton—and she sate a Baby in Mr. Garrick's Lap at the fireworks for the Peace of Aix la Chapelle. Doctor Collier of the Commons called himself her Preceptor, Sir James Marriott profess'd himself her Admirer,—but her Dear Aunt died—and her Uncle fixed on Henry Thrale of Southwark for her Husband.

To this Unaristocratic Marriage John Salusbury of Oldfashion'd Prejudices in favor of ancient Families, haughtily refused his Consent: but dying in 1762—the Octr. following Sir Thomas and Mrs. Salusbury attended their favourite Child to her new Habitation Streatham Park Surrey Where and at the Borough She lived with her Husband a Life so completely domestic that She really never went out to dinner with a Friend or ever saw the Inside of a Theatre from the Day she married till her eldest Daughter could accompany her. The Conversations of Mr. Murphy Doctor Johnson Mr. Burke Doctor Burney and a long et cetera of Wits and Scholars and Professors of ev'ry liberal Art, contributed to render that Life exceedingly agreeable, and sooth the Cares consequent upon the frequent Losses among her numerous Little ones—The Death of her incomparable Mother, and the Neglect of her Uncle who took a second Wife and tho' he had no children, disinherited his long fondled Niece when She had two Sons living by the Man of his own Choice Mr. Thrale—to whom he had often explicitly promised his whole Estate in Addition to her original Fortune of 10000£.

To divert her Uneasiness Mr. Thrale took her to see her Native Country in 1774—and gave her a little Tour upon the Continent in 1775—and dying six Years after left her a Widow with four Daughters. When the Eldest was nearly of Age Mrs. Piozzi in 1784 married her present Husband; and made with him a Journey over Italy Germany and France. On their return or soon after, Mr. Piozzi built the little elegant Villa she now dates this Letter from: in the most beautiful Spot of the Vale of Clwydd, within a Mile of old Bachýgraig—ever uninhabitable as a Dwelling House, but handsome as an Ornament to the Country and celebrated in Pennant's North Wales, Grose's Antiquities &c. The first of these Works The Snowdonia is full of Anecdotes concerning Mrs. Piozzi's Family, of which it may perhaps divert the Town to tell that Colonel William Salusbury
of Bachymbyd was commonly known in 1646 by Name of Hosanaugleisau—or Salusbury Blue Stockings, but they first came to England with the Conqueror; when all the young Adventurers of Consequence thro' Europe followed his Person, and among them Adam de Saltzburgh Son of Alexander Duke and Prince of Bavaria from whom H: L: Piozzi’s Father and Mother both were lineally descended.

Here are all the Materials that my Memory can collect; and of these the Gentlemen will dispose as they please—detaining the Public as short a Time as possible on so barren a Subject; and excusing the Expence and Trouble of this long Letter which they themselves so expressly and obiligingly desired from/their most obedient Servant/ Hester Lynch Piozzi.1

After her marriage in 1784, she gave herself over to being a bride who, while on a prolonged honeymoon, still found time to scavenge material for her Johnsonian Anecdotes and to carry on a running feud with Boswell. By 1786, from Venice, she described to Samuel Lysons her delight in the popularity of the Anecdotes, her anticipation of a volume of Johnson’s letters, her stunning social success, not only among Europeans but Englishmen abroad. Her letter glistens with a triumphant sense of self, one with whom she is utterly at peace.

Dear Mr. Lysons/ You have been a very kind and a very active Friend to me indeed, and I only beg you will add to your other favrs. that of believing me grateful, till you find me so.

Two Letters from you dated on the 28th of March the other the 21st of April, saluted me at my Arrival here: and nothing can exceed my Sense of the Public’s generous Approbation; for Curiosity might easily have sold the first Edition of any Book about Dr. Johnson, but the other Copies must have ow’d their Reception to kinder Motives. Will you ask if Mr. Selwin had a Volume sent him? but Mistakes will be made in all little Matters of Ceremony when the Writer is at so great a Distance, they must be considered as Errata of which I wonder there are so few. It would be very kind of you to make Cadell send me two or three of them to Lyons directed to Monsieur Sipolina. When I publish the Letters there will be an opportunity given of correcting past Errors, and till then I shall hold a most flegmatick Silence to all that may be Said.

Mrs. Montagu has written to me very sweetly, but the bad Roads and good Company kept us so long on the Way between Rome and Venice, that I never got her Letter till Yesterday.—

We were paid however for coming through Loretto, Ancona, &c. by the Sight of a Country which in Beauty, Riches and disposition of Parts exceeds all I ever saw—Oh I vastly superior to the Neapolitan State, which is so talked of as full of Situations peculiarly striking. The Adriatick Sea is delicious to drive by; and I shall attend to her annual Marriage this Year, and keep her Weddingday with still more Interest in her Happiness than I did last.

1 To the Monthly Mirror, 17 June 1798 (Huntington MS. 20831).
I wish you were taking Views of this lovely City with us all: Mr. and Mrs. Greatheed, Mr. Shard, Mr. Chappelow and ourselves came down the Brenta in a Bark together three Days ago—with Music, and cold Chickens, and Cyprus Wine; and here we met Mr. and Mrs. Whalley of the Crescent at Bath, and we live in a most delightful Society indeed. Mr. Piozzi is so kind to us all in this his charming Country; and it is so hard to tell whether the English or the Venetians love him best. Dr. Lort knows Mr. Chappelow intimately, so does the Bishop I believe: dear Mr. Coxe met us again at Bologna, but his ill Health is a drawback upon all our Comforts.

We bought few Things at Rome, but I shall shew you one Caneletti which one must love because tis the best Representation of Piazza St. Marco, which after all we have seen still holds the first Place in my heart, for Elegance and Architecture; and I thought yesterday that Tintoret’s Paradise here in the great Hall looked very well after Michael Angelo’s last Judgment.

If you think me partial, remember that my Husband is A Subject of Venice;—and excuse me. The Weather has not been particularly good, heavy Rains with hot Winds and little Sun: but the Country is really fine as long as it lasts, and when one is once fix’d in this Town for a Month, one regrets neither Bird Beast nor Flower, but contents oneself with the Court of Amphitrite, and lives in the Water till it becomes one’s native Element.

You will soon hear all I say confirmed by our amiable Friend Mr. Parsons, who will be in London this Autumn, and seek for your Friendship and Acquaintance: the Florence Miscellany will introduce You to his Character, and all our clever People will like him I am sure. The dear Greatheeds will not be long neither before they join the Coterie— but we have all Switzerland to travel over, which they have already seen, and keeping firing our Imaginations about it so, that I am half afraid of meeting with a Disappointment. What a foolish thing it is for People not to learn drawing in their Youth! and how much happier you painters are in a fine Country than any of us. I hope the Exhibition is brilliant this Year, and that your Views will be liked as they deserve.

Tell me all the news dear Mr. Lysons, but you really are very good in writing so often, and I should do nothing but thank you, if I was not sure you would rather hear twenty other Things. Direct now to Monsr. Bonet Banker at Milan, and believe me with the truest Regard./ Your ever faithful and affectionate Friend/ and obliged Sert./H : L : Piozzi./ My husband sends his Compliments.  

In other letters she narrates her own story of editing the Johnson Letters, a hard-to-believe yet still credible tale of innocence and deception. Important in this particular chapter is the correspondence with Samuel Lysons and Leonard Chappelow. With no sense of irony in this case, she wrote to the former on Holy Thursday 1787, telling him of a cache of “about forty letters of Johnson’s [found] in the old trunk, which may very well

1 Dated 11 May 1786 from Venice, this letter (Huntington MS. 6925) was addressed A Monsieur/ Monsieur Sam: Lysons/ chez le Reverend Monsr. S: Peach/ at East Sheene/ near Mortlake/ Surrey/ London/ Angleterre.
be printed—No need to expunge with salt and lemons all the names I have crossed—let the initials stand; it is enough that I do not name them out; civility is all I owe them, and my intention not to offend is shown by the dash ".".

Genuinely religious and political, she discusses the life of the spirit and the world of affairs with tough-minded detail. She detests the makers of the French Revolution, condemning their anarchy as a plague which might spread its contagion across the channel to British soil. By January 1798 she added Napoleon to her list of enemies for she justly prophesied his lust for empire. Because of Mr. Piozzi, she followed Napoleon’s march through Italy, detailed his military activity there, and “the Rapacity of these vile French, false as they are cruel, and insolent as they are successful”. She tolerated the exiled Bourbons as the legitimate rulers of France. She nevertheless saw in them a weakness worthy only of contempt. She was a monarchist who feared the republican spirit whether it was lodged in Charles James Fox and the Foxites or in Richard Carlile. In the aftermath of the French Revolution and long afterwards, she—along with others in the conservative squirearchy—saw homespun revolutionaries everywhere. She did not, however, blink away immorality in England’s Royal Family; she did not minimize or even hush-hush (as did her one-time friend Mme. d’Arblay) the sexual peccadilloes of the Duke of York, the Prince Regent, and Princess Caroline. Impatient with their misconduct, she remarked to the Reverend Daniel Lysons on 10 December 1798 that “the Mysteries of Carlton house surpass those of Udolpbo—may they end as these do, in mere Nihility”. She was not a prig. Still she censured the personal scandals of the Royalty if only because their lives, so public by nature, provoked further unrest among a restless people.

1 In the Hyde Collection. The letter is addressed to Samuel Lysons, Esq., at Rodmarton, near Cirencester. It is dated Holy Thursday [1787]. Her reliance on Lysons to help her in “editing” Johnson’s letters is revealed in an undated note, probably written in 1787. “I enclose you some trifling Letters from Johnson, and some too melancholy for me to endure the Reading of; they are on my dear Son’s Death: if your Heart is as hard as that Alexander’s we talk so much in our Letters, you perhaps may like them. Write me Word what you do with my Stuff, and pray take Care to scratch names out. Yours is a very serious Trust. . . .”
Her social values, inseparable from a religious position, are a complex of apparent contradictions. Yet as in all her thinking, less so in her emotional reactions, she reveals remarkable integrity. She prided herself in origins sufficiently ancient and landed. She nonetheless understood the power of the rising middle class and did not challenge it. She had sufficient economic shrewdness to recognize the formidable staying power of money, of vast fortunes becoming still more vast. She distrusted the religious dissent associated with these new men—the merchants and manufacturers whom she associated with Methodism and Protestantism outside the Church of England. She herself adhered to the principles of the Anglican Church and its rituals, but she was drawn to its evangelical movement epitomized in the Clapham sect, in people like William Wilberforce, Arthur Young, Charles Grant, and the Venn brothers. She admired these affluent men who carried their humane beliefs into the market place and on to the hustings, who harangued against slavery and anti-Catholicism on the floor of the Commons.

Indeed, she accepted most people (except her methodically specified “enemies”) regardless of their skin colour, their faith, or lineage. Thus, writing from Bath in 1789, she described the famous “Bridge Tower, the African Negro... whose Son plays so enchantingly upon the Violin as to extort Applause from the first Professors”.

Perhaps on this occasion she was intrigued by a flamboyant personality and by real talent. In her attitude toward the poor, she regarded charity not as an amiable instinct but as a rational attribute. She divided the poor into two groups. The first, like the Manchester rioters, she would treat severely because they threatened English stability. At the same moment her compassion for the second group—the obedient poor—seems without limits. She fumes with frustration when she acknowledges that “a Labourer’s Wages does not suffice to buy Bread for his family. Welsh folks might eat Oats and Barley you’ll say; so they might: but there is neither Oats nor Barley to be had”. Letter after letter details the living conditions of the poor in the early nineteenth century in both the cities and

1 This letter (Rylands 559.11) is dated 7 December 1789 and is directed to the Rev. Leonard Chappelow at his usual address in Berkeley Square.
the country: the food they eat, the houses in which they live, the jobs they sometimes have, and the diseases from which they die. Often the details of the matter are related with deliberation; less often the horrors attendant on poverty are implied. Illustrative of the latter is an anecdote she related to Edward Mangin:

My fellow Lodgers have been diverted by an April-Fool-Trick—out of Season—played me by Young Salusbury.
Six days ago here comes a poor Man—a Labourer in a Smock Frock—enquiring for Mrs. Piozzi—See he could not, for one Eye was quite out, and the other just extinct—hear what she would say to him—impossible; he was stone-deaf: but he could tell my Bessy—in Welsh—how he had beg’d Sir John of Brynbella as he called him to give him Two Pounds, because his Honour’s good Aunt used always to give him Two Pounds on a Whitsunday Morning—Bessy believes that he plagued Salusbury so— he was at last provoked to say—"Well! go look for my good Aunt, you will find her at Bath.” The wretched Man took him au Pied de Lettre, and walked all the way till hither he came for Two Pounds—sans Eyes, sans Ears, Sans Language or good health.

When we had cooled his Fever, I dispatched him across the Channel here into the Principality where he will do—at worst better than in England— having lain in the Streets of Bath the Night before we saw him. A good Supper was however likely to have comforted him, but this was a Hôtel—a Cut-finger Club—and someone who had Eyes, snatched his Plate from before him—Who had none—and left him to the Lamentation and Derision of our Fellow Lodgers and Boarders.

Such is the World! and such as its Inhabitants.¹

If we allow for the bias with which she viewed suffering among the deprived, then her letters constitute an important document in economic history.

Her correspondence creates a progressive portrait of H. L. P. as she is transformed from a vivacious bride to a widow and then quickly to an old woman who accepted age but resented looking old. Whenever she could in her correspondence, she moderated the resentment, usually in the disguise of an anecdote:

If Dear Sir James Fellowes still continues under Discipline, this Anecdote of Hogarth—and of his little Friend may amuse him. My Father and he were very intimate, and he often dined with us. One Day when he had done so, My Aunt and a Groupe of young Cousins came in the Afternoon,—Evenings were earlier things than they are now, and 3 o’Clock the Common Dinner Hour.

I had got a then new Thing I suppose, which was called Game of the Goose: and felt earnest that we children might be allow’d a round Table to play at it—

¹ Dated from Weston-super-Mare on 18 July 1819, the letter (Princeton) is addressed to Edward Mangin in Bath.
but was half afraid of my Uncle's and my Father's grave looks. Hogarth said good-humouredly, I will come My dears and play at it with you: our Joy was great, and the Sport began under my Management and Direction. The Pool rose to Five Shillings, a Fortune to us Monkeys; and when I won it—I caper'd for Delight.

But the next Time we went to Leicester Fields Mr. Hogarth was painting—and bid me sit to him—and now look here said he I am doing this for you—you are not 14 Years old yet I think, but you will be 24; and this Portrait will then be like you.

'Tis the Lady's last Stake—See how She hesitates between her Money and her Honour, Take you care; I see an Ardour for Play in your Eyes and in Your heart—don't indulge it, I shall give you this Picture as a Warning, because I love you now. You are so good A Girl.

—in a fortnight's Time after that Visit we went out of Town—

He died somewhat suddenly I believe—and I never saw my poor Portrait again—Till going to Fonthill many, many Years afterward I met it there, and Mr. Piozzi observed the likeness—when I was shewing him the fine House then deserted by Mr. Beckford.

The Summer before last it was exhibited In Pall Mall as The Property of Lord Charlemont—I asked Mrs. Hoare who was admiring it, if She ever saw any Person it resembled—She said No, unless it might once—have been like me and we turned away to look at something else.

With regard to Play—I have been always particular in avoiding it, so that I scarce know whether the Inclination ever Subsisted or not—

The Scene he drew will certainly never remind anyone of poor H: L: P. &c no one but yourself knows the Story.

Her vanity smarted beneath the wrinkles. And so when "That grave Mr. Lucas" brings his son to visit her that he might see "the first Woman in England", she refers to herself as "one of the Curiosities of Bath... and one of the Antiquities". But no matter what her age or situation, she had a real zest for things and people, for being alive even as she contemplated mortality. Her mornings may be "Black! Blacker! Blackest!" but by most afternoons she could enjoy her game of whist for stakes. In this portrait we sense her attitude toward the long-dead Mr. Thrale for whom she protested—a bit too loudly perhaps—loyalty and gratitude, toward Gabriel Piozzi whom she loved despite the horror of his degenerating illness. As early as 1798 she wryly wrote of her "Domestic Comforts. On the 20th of October My poor Master went to Bed with a raging Fit of Gout

1 The letter (Houghton) is dated 30 October 1815.
2 The remark appears in a letter to Sir James Fellowes, dated 19 October 1815 (Princeton AM 17952).
in Breast Side Back and Collar Bone—but soon fixing in one Heel and one Toe,—it tore them open into the most frightful Ulcers I or poor Mr. Moore ever did behold. There has the Gout gnawed and bitten for 12 entire Weeks—during which Time has the truly wretched Patient suffered Torments inexpressible, and I believe rarely endured.”¹ We see her relationship with her daughters: their continual sniping at one another, their enduring correspondence, their presence at her deathbed with her hand reaching out to each of them. It is a portrait that presents her as a woman who can face the world down and as one with glaring weaknesses. She is a lion-hunter ready to exploit the lion and yet able to tear into the person in the leonine skin—Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mrs. Montagu, even Dr. Johnson, for example. Mrs. Piozzi was a professional writer who detested reviewers and even those who offered constructive criticism. She was a wit, whose venom was aimed at children, at “enemies” listed in numerical order, and friends.

Her letters provide us with a laminated understanding of the person, one layer biographical, the other social. We realize that she is a strong individual, who took what life offered; and what it offered was sometimes bitter. She was not above terror, but she learned to accept it with calm, accepting its inevitability. Her essential courage becomes a dramatic symbol in an incident which she once related to Mrs. Pennington:

When I was going over the Alps with Mr. Piozzi the sight of a dreadful Precipice made me afraid and I said I would walk—it was very late in a fine Summer Evening—Sit still, cried my Master. I cannot sit still, replied I. stop, stop, You disturb the Drivers you will make them overturn us—pray sit still. No I would not sit still, I would walk: Well walk away then said Mr. Piozzi if you will walk; There are a Troop of Wolves ranging the Mountains now—I was told so at the last Inn: They will find their Prey out in an Instant. Oh! you can’t imagine after that how still and quiet I sate in the Carriage.²

And we realize as well the difficulties faced by a woman who clung to her identity as a wife, a widow, a sometime mother, but who always asserted her independence and intellectual equality in a male-dominated society.

¹ The letter (Princeton) is dated 10 January 1798 and directed to Mrs. Pennington/Dowry Square/Hot Wells/Bristol.
² Ibid.