

= Thraliana =

The Thraliana was a diary kept by Hester Thrale and is part of the genre known as table talk . Although the work began as Thrale 's diary focused on her experience with her family , it slowly changed focus to emphasise various anecdotes and stories about the life of Samuel Johnson . The work was used as a basis for Thrale 's Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson , but the Thraliana remained unpublished until 1942 . The anecdotes contained within the work were popular with Thrale 's contemporaries but seen as vulgar . Among 20th century readers , the work was popular , and many literary critics believe that the work is a valuable contribution to the genre and for providing information about Johnson 's and her own life .

= = Background = =

Hester Thrale , when still Hester Lynch Salusbury , spent her youth writing letters and keeping journals . Her talents at writing won her the respect of her uncles , Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Thomas Salusbury , who later appointed her their heir . When Thrale was older , she became close to Johnson . It was natural to her to keep a detailed collection of anecdotes and stories of their time together , as of everything she experienced . The two initially bonded after Thrale gave birth to her first child , Queeney , in 1766 .

However , there were problems between Thrale and Johnson , along with " his defenders " during his life and in criticism since then , over their " gradual estrangement " from each other after the death of her husband . These problems were then heightened by her marriage to Gabriel Piozzi . After Johnson 's death , Thrale felt isolated because she believed that Johnson 's previous friends along with the public as a whole did not accept her , and some went so far as to claim she abandoned Johnson in his final moments . In particular , James Boswell , who resented Thrale and felt himself as her literary competitor , began to exploit the falling out between Thrale and Johnson 's friends in order to promote his Life of Samuel Johnson .

After the birth of Queeney , Thrale began to document the various moments in her daughter 's life in a " baby book " called The Children 's Book . The work eventually expanded to include documentation of the whole family and was retitled the Family Book . To encourage his wife 's writing her husband Henry Thrale gave her six blank diary books , with the title Thraliana on the cover , in 1776 . The work was intended as an Ana , which she admits her fascination with in the Thraliana : " I am grown quite mad after these French Anas ; Anecdote is in itself so seducing " . After searching for English models for writing her Ana , she settled on used John Selden 's Table Talk , William Camden 's Remains , and Joseph Spence 's Anecdotes as her guides . In May 1778 , she was given by Johnson a manuscript of Spence 's Anecdotes , but her first years of the Ana were written without an exact model .

Before the Thraliana , Thrale kept two sets of anecdotes : the first was devoted to Samuel Johnson and the other for miscellaneous events . She relied on these , along with her memory , to write the early portions of her work . Boswell , when trying to find information for his own work , wrote : " Mr. Thrale told me , I am not sure what day , that there is a Book of Johnsoniana kept int heir Family , in which all Mr. Johnson 's sayings and all that they can collect about him is put down ... I must try to get this Thralian Miscellany , to assist me in writing Mr. Johnson 's Life , if Mrs. Thrale does not intend to do it herself . " After Johnson 's death , Thrale used the Thraliana to create the Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson (1786) . The manuscript passed through many hands and was owned by A. Edward Newton until his death in autumn 1940 . The Thraliana was eventually published in 1942 , and it was produced by the Clarendon Press in England while its editor , Katharine Balderston , was prohibited from travelling across the ocean from Wellesley College because of World War II .

= = Ana = =

Thrale explains that her book is not for " diary @-@ keeping in the strict sense " when she writes : "

It is many Years since Doctor Samuel Johnson advised me to get a little Book , and write in it all the little Anecdotes which might come to my Knowledge , all the Observations I might make or hear ; all the Verses never likely to be published , and in fine ev 'ry thing which struck me at the Time . Mr Thrale has now treated me with a Repository , - and provided it with the pompous Title of Thraliana ; I must endeavour to fill it with Nonsense new and old . " These encouraging remarks from Johnson set the theme of the work as it became a new " Johnsoniana " collection . In particular , she transferred her previous notes and documentations about Johnson 's life into the collection .

In a 6 September 1777 letter , Johnson told Thrale to be " punctual in annexing the dates . Chronology you know is the eye of history " . However , the system of Ana allowed Thrale to group items by theme instead of by topics , like " Odd medical Stories " , to organize anecdotes , quotations , and stories . When Henry Thrale died while Thrale was writing Volume Three , the work became a diary for Thrale to discuss her thoughts and feelings after her loss . This volume soon began to describe Thrale 's feelings for Gabriel Piozzi . Throughout the Thraliana , Thrale examines how others view her , which reveals her anxieties that she had about how she was perceived . This is especially true when she writes : " Life has been to me nothing but a perpetual Canvass carried on in all parts of the World - not to make Friends neither - for I have certainly found very few - but to keep off Enemies " . Thrale initially did not want to write in the sixth volume of the Thraliana , but did so because " Johnson said that Pleasure might one day be made from such Nonsense , so I 'll e 'en finish this last Volume of Anecdote & store up no more Stuff " . However she did not stop journal writing after she finished but continued to write for the remainder of her life .

= = Critical response = =

Thrale 's anecdotes were popular when they were first published in various works , but many readers initially thought that her " relaxed and natural style " was vulgar . However , Martine Brownley points out that this style helped win over 20th century readers even though the work suffered from " unevenness " . Katherine Balderston regards the work as " what was almost , if not quite , the first English ana " . James Clifford declared that " there is much valuable evidence about the great man , " Samuel Johnson , within the Thraliana . He also stated that the work , along with her Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson , " established her reputation as a bluestocking writer of the late eighteenth century . Edward Bloom et al. claim that the Thraliana , as with her letters , lays " bare a woman 's psychology " .