

= Joseph Johnson (publisher) =

Joseph Johnson (15 November 1738 ? 20 December 1809) was an influential 18th @-@ century London bookseller and publisher . His publications covered a wide variety of genres and a broad spectrum of opinions on important issues . Johnson is best known for publishing the works of radical thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft , William Godwin , Thomas Malthus , and Joel Barlow , feminist economist Priscilla Wakefield , as well as religious dissenters such as Joseph Priestley , Anna Laetitia Barbauld , Gilbert Wakefield , and George Walker .

In the 1760s , Johnson established his publishing business , which focused primarily on religious works . He also became friends with Priestley and the artist Henry Fuseli ? two relationships that lasted his entire life and brought him much business . In the 1770s and 1780s , Johnson expanded his business , publishing important works in medicine and children 's literature as well as the popular poetry of William Cowper and Erasmus Darwin . Throughout his career , Johnson helped shape the thought of his era not only through his publications , but also through his support of innovative writers and thinkers . He fostered the open discussion of new ideas , particularly at his famous weekly dinners , the regular attendees of which became known as the " Johnson Circle " .

In the 1790s , Johnson aligned himself with the supporters of the French Revolution , and published an increasing number of political pamphlets in addition to a prominent journal , the Analytical Review , which offered British reformers a voice in the public sphere . In 1799 , he was indicted on charges of seditious libel for publishing a pamphlet by the Unitarian minister Gilbert Wakefield . After spending six months in prison , albeit under relatively comfortable conditions , Johnson published fewer political works . In the last decade of his career , Johnson did not seek out many new writers ; however , he remained successful by publishing the collected works of authors such as William Shakespeare .

Johnson 's friend John Aikin eulogized him as " the father of the booktrade " . He has also been called " the most important publisher in England from 1770 until 1810 " for his appreciation and promotion of young writers , his emphasis on publishing inexpensive works directed at a growing middle @-@ class readership , and his cultivation and advocacy of women writers at a time when they were viewed with skepticism .

= = Early life = =

Johnson was the second son of Rebecca Turner Johnson and John Johnson , a Baptist yeoman who lived in Everton , Liverpool . Religious Dissent marked Johnson from the beginning of his life , as two of his mother 's relatives were prominent Baptist ministers and his father was a deacon . Liverpool , at the time of Johnson 's youth , was fast becoming a bustling urban centre and was one of the most important commercial ports in England . These two characteristics of his home ? Dissent and commercialism ? remained central elements in Johnson 's character throughout his life .

At the age of fifteen , Johnson was apprenticed to George Keith , a London bookseller who specialized in publishing religious tracts such as Reflections on the Modern but Unchristian Practice of Innoculation . As Gerald Tyson , Johnson 's major modern biographer , explains , it was unusual for the younger son of a family living in relative obscurity to move to London and to become a bookseller . Scholars have speculated that Johnson was indentured to Keith because the bookseller was associated with Liverpool Baptists . Keith and Johnson published several works together later in their careers , which suggests that the two remained on friendly terms after Johnson started his own business .

= = 1760s : Beginnings in publishing = =

Upon completing his apprenticeship in 1761 , Johnson opened his own business , but he struggled to establish himself , moving his shop several times within one year . Two of his early publications were a kind of day planner : The Complete Pocket @-@ Book ; Or , Gentleman and Tradesman 's Daily Journal for the Year of Our Lord , 1763 and The Ladies New and Polite Pocket Memorandum

Book . Such pocketbooks were popular and Johnson outsold his rivals by publishing his both earlier and cheaper . Johnson continued to sell these profitable books until the end of the 1790s , but as a religious Dissenter , he was primarily interested in publishing books that would improve society . Therefore , religious texts dominated his book list , although he also published works relating to Liverpool (his home town) and medicine . However , as a publisher Johnson attended to more than the selling and distributing of books , as scholar Leslie Chard explains :

Besides the actual selling of books to the public , the bookseller saw to their publication , arrangements with printers , with advertisers , with other booksellers in the city , the provinces , and even foreign countries , in short to their distribution . He also sold , incongruously but typically , patent medicine . But what probably most occupied his time was the welfare of his authors : at the most he fed and housed them , but at the least he served as banker , postal clerk and packager , literary agent and editor , social chairman , and psychiatrist .

As Johnson became successful and his reputation grew , other publishers began including him in congers ? syndicates that spread the risk of publishing a costly or inflammatory book among several firms .

== == Formative friendships == ==

In his late twenties , Johnson formed two friendships that were to shape the rest of his life . The first was with the painter and writer Henry Fuseli , who was described as " quick witted and pugnacious " . Fuseli 's early 19th @-@ century biographer writes that when Fuseli met Johnson in 1764 , Johnson " had already acquired the character which he retained during life , ? that of a man of great integrity , and encourager of literary men as far as his means extended , and an excellent judge of their productions " . Fuseli became and remained Johnson 's closest friend .

The second and possibly more consequential friendship was with Joseph Priestley , the renowned natural philosopher and Unitarian theologian . This friendship led Johnson to discard the Baptist faith of his youth and to adopt Unitarianism , as well as to pursue forms of political dissent . Johnson 's success as a publisher can be explained in large part through his association with Priestley , as Priestley published dozens of books with him and introduced him to many other Dissenting writers . Through Priestley 's recommendation , Johnson was able to issue the works of many Dissenters , especially those from Warrington Academy : the poet , essayist , and children 's author Anna Laetitia Barbauld ; her brother , the physician and writer , John Aikin ; the naturalist Johann Reinhold Forster ; the Unitarian minister and controversialist Gilbert Wakefield ; the moralist William Enfield ; and the political economist Thomas Malthus . Tyson writes that " the relationship between the Academy and the bookseller was mutually very useful . Not only did many of the tutors send occasional manuscripts for publication , but also former pupils often sought him out in later years to issue their works . " By printing the works of Priestley and other of the Warrington tutors , Johnson also made himself known to an even larger network of Dissenting intellectuals , including those in the Lunar Society , which expanded his business further . Priestley , in turn , trusted Johnson enough to handle the logistics of his induction into the Royal Society .

== == Partnerships == ==

In July 1765 , Johnson moved his business to the more visible 8 Paternoster Row and formed a partnership with B. Davenport , of whom little is known aside from his association with Johnson . Chard postulates that they were attracted by mutual beliefs because the firm of Johnson and Davenport published even more religious works , including many that were " rigidly Calvinistic " . However , in the summer of 1767 , Davenport and Johnson parted ways ; scholars have speculated that this rupture occurred because Johnson 's religious views were becoming more unorthodox .

Newly independent , with a solid reputation , Johnson did not need to struggle to establish himself as he had early in his career . Within a year , he published nine first editions himself as well as thirty @-@ two works in partnership with other booksellers . He was also a part of " the select circle of bookmen that gathered at the Chapter Coffee House " , which was the centre of social and

commercial life for publishers and booksellers in 18th @-@ century London . Major publishing ventures had started at the Chapter and important writers " clubbed " there .

In 1768 Johnson went into partnership with John Payne (Johnson was probably the senior partner) ; the following year they published 50 titles . Under Johnson and Payne , the firm published a wider array of works than under Johnson and Davenport . Although Johnson looked to his business interests , he did not publish works only to enrich himself . Projects that encouraged free discussion appealed to Johnson ; for example , he helped Priestley publish the Theological Repository , a financial failure that nevertheless fostered open debate of theological questions . Although the journal lost Johnson money in the 1770s , he was willing to begin publishing it again in 1785 because he endorsed its values .

The late 1760s was a time of growing radicalism in Britain , and although Johnson did not participate actively in the events , he facilitated the speech of those who did , e.g. , by publishing works on the disputed election of John Wilkes and the agitation in the American colonies . Despite his growing interest in politics , Johnson (with Payne) still published primarily religious works and the occasional travel narrative . As Tyson writes , " in the first decade of his career Johnson 's significance as a bookseller derived from a desire to provide dissent (religious and political) a forum " .

= = = = Fire = = = =

Johnson was on the verge of real success when his shop was ravaged by fire on 9 January 1770 . As one London newspaper reported it :

Yesterday morning , between six and seven o 'clock a fire broke out at Messrs. Johnson and Payne 's , Booksellers , in Paternoster Row , which consumed that house , Mr. Cock 's , Printer , and Mr. Upton 's , an Auctioneer ... in which last mentioned house was kept the whole stock of Bibles , Common Prayers , Etc. belonging to the Proprietors of the Oxford Press ... It was a considerable time before the engines could be brought to play to any purpose , on account their being clogged by ice and snow . The several families were all in bed when the fire was first discovered , and Mr. Johnson had but just time to alarm his partner and the rest of the family , and they escaped , saving only some of their books of account , the whole stock in trade and furniture being destroyed .

At the time Fuseli had been living with Johnson and he also lost all of his possessions , including the first printing of his Remarks on the Writings and Conduct of J. J. Rousseau . Johnson and Payne subsequently dissolved their partnership . It was an amicable separation , and Johnson even published some of Payne 's works in later years .

= = 1770s : Establishment = =

By August 1770 , just seven months after fire had destroyed his shop and goods , Johnson had re @-@ established himself at 72 St. Paul 's Churchyard ? the largest shop on a street of booksellers ? where he was to remain for the rest of his life . How Johnson managed this feat is unclear ; he later cryptically told a friend that " his friends came about him , and set him up again " . An early 19th @-@ century biography states that " Mr. Johnson was now so well known , and had been so highly respected , that on this unfortunate occasion , his friends with one accord met , and contributed to enable him to begin business again " . Chard speculates that Priestley assisted him since they were such close friends .

= = = Religious publications and advocacy of Unitarianism = = =

Immediately upon reopening his business , Johnson started publishing theological and political works by Priestley and other Dissenters . Starting in the 1770s , Johnson published more specifically Unitarian works , as well as texts advocating religious toleration ; he also became personally involved in the Unitarian cause . He served as a conduit for information between Dissenters across the country and supplied provincial publishers with religious publications , thereby enabling

Dissenters to spread their beliefs easily . Johnson participated in efforts to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts , which restricted the civil rights of Dissenters . In one six @-@ year period of the 1770s , Johnson was responsible for publishing nearly one @-@ third of the Unitarian works on the issue . He continued his support in 1787 , 1789 , and 1790 , when Dissenters introduced repeal bills in Parliament , and he published much of the pro @-@ repeal literature written by Priestley and others .

Johnson was also instrumental in Theophilus Lindsey 's founding of the first Unitarian chapel in London . With some difficulty , as Unitarians were feared at that time and their beliefs held illegal until the Doctrine of the Trinity Act 1813 , Johnson obtained the building for Essex Street Chapel and , with the help of barrister John Lee , who later became Attorney @-@ General , its licence . To capitalize on the opening of the new chapel in addition to helping out his friends , Johnson published Lindsey 's inaugural sermon , which sold out in four days . Johnson continued to attend and participate actively in this congregation throughout his life . Lindsey and the church 's other minister , John Disney , became two of Johnson 's most active writers . In the 1780s , Johnson continued to advocate Unitarianism and published a series of controversial writings by Priestley arguing for its legitimacy . These writings did not make Johnson much money , but they agreed with his philosophy of open debate and religious toleration . Johnson also became the publisher for the Society for Promoting the Knowledge of the Scriptures , a Unitarian group determined to release new worship materials and commentaries on the Bible . (See British and Foreign Unitarian Association # Publishing .)

Although Johnson is known for publishing Unitarian works , particularly those of Priestley , he also published the works of other Dissenters , Anglicans , and Jews . The common thread uniting his disparate religious publications was religious toleration . For example , he published the Reverend George Gregory 's 1787 English translation of Bishop Robert Lowth 's seminal book on Hebrew poetry , *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* . Gregory published several other works with Johnson , such as *Essays Historical and Moral* (1785) and *Sermons with Thoughts on the Composition and Delivery of a Sermon* (1787) . Gregory exemplified the type of author that Johnson preferred to work with : industrious and liberal @-@ minded , but not bent on self @-@ glorification . Yet , as Helen Braithwaite writes in her study of Johnson , his " enlightened pluralistic approach was also seen by its opponents as inherently permissive , opening the door to all forms of unhealthy questioning and scepticism , and at odds with the stable virtues of established religion and authority " .

= = = American revolution = = =

Partially as a result of his association with British Dissenters , Johnson became involved in publishing tracts and sermons in defence of the American revolutionaries . He began with Priestley 's *Address to Protestant Dissenters of All Denominations , on the Approaching Election of Members of Parliament* (1774) , which urged Dissenters to vote for candidates that guaranteed the American colonists their freedom . Johnson continued his series of anti @-@ government , pro @-@ American pamphlets by publishing *Fast Day* sermons by Joshua Toulmin , George Walker , Ebenezer Radcliff , and Newcome Cappe . Braithwaite describes these as " well @-@ articulated critiques of government " that " were not only unusual but potentially subversive and disruptive " , and she concludes that Johnson 's decision to publish so much of this material indicates that he supported the political position it espoused . Moreover , Johnson published what Braithwaite calls " probably the most influential English defence of the colonists " , Richard Price 's *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776) . Over 60 @,@ 000 copies were sold in a year . In 1780 Johnson also issued the first collected political works of Benjamin Franklin in England , a political risk as the American colonies were in rebellion by that time . Johnson did not usually reprint colonial texts ? his ties to the revolution were primarily through Dissenters . Thus , the works published by Johnson emphasized both colonial independence and the rights for which Dissenters were fighting ? " the right to petition for redress of grievance , the maintenance and protection of equal civil rights , and the inalienable right to liberty of conscience " .

= = = Informative texts = = =

After 1770 , Johnson began to publish a wider array of books , particularly scientific and medical texts . One of the most important was John Hunter 's A Natural History of the Human Teeth , Part I (1771) , which " elevated dentistry to the level of surgery " . Johnson also supported doctors when they questioned the efficacy of cures , such as with John Millar in his Observations on Antimony (1774) , which claimed that Dr James 's Fever Powder was ineffective . This was a risky publication for Johnson , because this patent medicine was quite popular and his fellow bookseller John Newbery had made his fortune from selling it .

In 1777 Johnson published the remarkable Laws Respecting Women , as they Regard Their Natural Rights , which is an explication , for the layperson , of exactly what its title suggests . As Tyson comments , " the ultimate value of this book lies in its arming women with the knowledge of their legal rights in situations where they had traditionally been vulnerable because of ignorance " . Johnson published Laws Respecting Women anonymously , but it is sometimes credited to Elizabeth Chudleigh Bristol , known for her bigamous marriage to the 2nd Duke of Kingston @-@ upon @-@ Hull after having previously privately married Augustus John Hervey , afterwards 3rd Earl of Bristol . This publication foreshadowed Johnson 's efforts to promote works about women 's issues ? such as A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) ? and his support of women writers .

= = = Revolution in children 's literature = = =

Johnson also contributed significantly to children 's literature . His publication of Barbauld 's Lessons for Children (1778 ? 79) spawned a revolution in the newly emerging genre . Its plain style , mother @-@ child dialogues , and conversational tone inspired a generation of authors , such as Sarah Trimmer . Johnson encouraged other women to write in this genre , such as Charlotte Smith , but his recommendation always came with a caveat of how difficult it was to write well for children . For example , he wrote to Smith , " perhaps you cannot employ your time and extraordinary talents more usefully for the public & your self [sic] , than in composing books for children and young people , but I am very sensible it is extreamly [sic] difficult to acquire that simplicity of style which is their great recommendation " . He also advised William Godwin and his second wife , Mary Jane Clairmont , on the publication of their Juvenile Library (started in 1805) . Not only did Johnson encourage the writing of British children 's literature , but he also helped sponsor the translation and publication of popular French works such as Arnaud Berquin 's L 'Ami des Enfants (1782 ? 83) .

In addition to books for children , Johnson published schoolbooks and textbooks for autodidacts , such as John Hewlett 's Introduction to Spelling and Reading (1786) , William Nicholson 's Introduction to Natural Philosophy (1782) , and his friend John Bonnycastle 's An Introduction to Mensuration and Practical Mathematics (1782) . Johnson also published books on education and childrearing , such as Wollstonecraft 's first book , Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1787) .

By the end of the 1770s , Johnson had become an established publisher . Writers ? particularly Dissenters ? sought him out , and his home started to become the centre of a radical and stimulating intellectual milieu . Because he was willing to publish multiple opinions on issues , he was respected as a publisher by writers from across the political spectrum . Johnson published many Unitarian works , but he also issued works criticizing them ; although he was an abolitionist , he also published works arguing in favour of the slave trade ; he supported inoculation , but he also published works critical of the practice .

= = 1780s : Success = =

During the 1780s , Johnson achieved success : he did well financially and his firm published more books with other firms . Although Johnson had begun his career as a relatively cautious publisher of

religious and scientific tracts , he was now able to take more risks and he encouraged friends to recommend works to him , creating a network of informal reviewers . Yet Johnson 's business was never large ; he usually had only one assistant and never took on an apprentice . Only in the last years of his life did two relatives assist him .

= = = Literature = = =

Once Johnson 's financial situation had become secure , he began to publish literary authors , most famously the poet William Cowper . Johnson issued Cowper 's Poems (1782) and The Task (1784) at his own expense (a generous action at a time when authors were often forced to take on the risk of publication) , and was rewarded with handsome sales of both volumes . Johnson published many of Cowper 's works , including the anonymous satire Anti @-@ thelyphora (1780) , which mocked the work of Cowper 's own cousin , the Rev. Martin Madan , who had advocated polygamy as a solution for prostitution . Johnson even edited and critiqued Cowper 's poetry in manuscript , " much to the advantage of the poems " according to Cowper . In 1791 , Johnson published Cowper 's translations of the Homeric epics (extensively edited and corrected by Fuseli) and three years after Cowper 's death in 1800 , Johnson published a biography of the poet by William Hayley .

Johnson never published much " creative literature " ; Chard attributes this to " a lingering Calvinistic hostility to ' imaginative ' literature " . Most of the literary works Johnson published were religious or didactic . Some of his most popular productions in this vein were anthologies ; the most famous is probably William Enfield 's The Speaker (1774) , which went through multiple editions and spawned many imitations , such as Wollstonecraft 's The Female Speaker .

= = = Medical and scientific publications = = =

Johnson continued his interest in publishing practical medical texts in the 1780s and 1790s ; during the 1780s , he brought out some of his most significant works in this area . According to Johnson 's friend , the physician John Aikin , he intentionally established one of his first shops on " the track of the Medical Students resorting to the Hospitals in the Borough " , where they would be sure to see his wares , which helped to establish him in medical publishing . Johnson published the works of the scientist @-@ Dissenters he met through Priestley and Barbauld , such as Thomas Beddoes and Thomas Young . He issued the children 's book on birds produced by the industrialist Samuel Galton and the Lunar Society 's translation of Linnaeus 's System of Vegetables (1783) . He also published works by James Edward Smith , " the botanist who brought the Linnaean system to England " .

In 1784 , Johnson issued John Haygarth 's An Inquiry How to Prevent Small @-@ Pox , which furthered the understanding and treatment of smallpox . Johnson published several subsequent works by Haygarth that promoted inoculation (and later vaccination) for the healthy , as well as quarantining for the sick . He also published the work of James Earle , a prominent surgeon , whose significant book on lithotomy was illustrated by William Blake , and Matthew Baillie 's Morbid Anatomy (1793) , " the first text of pathology devoted to that science exclusively by systematic arrangement and design " .

Not only did Johnson publish the majority of Priestley 's theological works , but he also published his scientific works , such as Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air (1774 ? 77) in which Priestley announced his discovery of oxygen . Johnson also published the works of Carl Wilhelm Scheele and Antoine Lavoisier , both of whom made their own claims of having discovered oxygen . When Lavoisier began to publish works in France on the " new chemistry " that he had developed (which included today 's modern notions of element and compound) , Johnson had these translated and printed immediately , despite his association with Priestley who argued strenuously against Lavoisier 's new system . Johnson was the first to publish an English edition of Lavoisier 's early writings on chemistry and he kept up with the ongoing debate . These works did well for Johnson and increased his visibility among men of science .

= = = Johnson Circle and dinners = = =

With time , Johnson 's home became a nexus for radical thinkers , who appreciated his open @-@ mindedness , generous spirit , and humanitarianism . Although usually separated by geography , such thinkers would meet and debate with one another at Johnson 's house in London , often over dinner . This network not only brought authors into contact with each other , it also brought new writers to Johnson 's business . For example , Priestley introduced John Newton to Johnson , Newton brought John Hewlett , and Hewlett invited Mary Wollstonecraft , who in turn attracted Mary Hays who brought William Godwin . With this broad network of acquaintances and reputation for free @-@ thinking publications , Johnson became the favourite publisher of a generation of writers and thinkers . By bringing inventive , thoughtful people together , he " stood at the very heart of British intellectual life " for over twenty years . Importantly , Johnson 's circle was not made up entirely of either liberals or radicals . Chard emphasizes that it " was held together less by political liberalism than by a common interest in ideas , free enquiry , and creative expression in various fields " .

As Tyson notes , although " Johnson 's circle " is usually used in the singular , there were at least two such " circles " . The first was made up of a group of London associates : Fuseli , Gregory , Bonnycastle , and Geddes . The second consisted of Johnson 's writers from farther afield , such as Priestley , Thomas Henry , Thomas Percival , Barbauld , Aikin , and Enfield . Later , more radicals would join , including Wollstonecraft , Wakefield , John Horne Tooke , and Thomas Christie .

Johnson 's dinners became legendary and it appears , from evidence collected from diaries , that a large number of people attended each one . Although there were few regulars , except perhaps for Johnson 's close London friends (Fuseli , Bonnycastle and , later , Godwin) , the large number of luminaries , such as Thomas Paine , who attended attests to the reputation of these dinners . The enjoyment and intellectual stimulation that these dinners provided is evidenced by the numerous references to them in diaries and letters . Barbauld wrote to her brother in 1784 that " our evenings , particularly at Johnson 's , were so truly social and lively , that we protracted them sometimes till ? but I am not telling tales . " At one dinner in 1791 , Godwin records that the conversation focused on " monarch , Tooke , [Samuel] Johnson , Voltaire , pursuits , and religion " [emphasis Godwin 's] . Although the conversation was stimulating , Johnson apparently only served his guests simple meals , such as boiled cod , veal , vegetables , and rice pudding . Many of the people that met at these dinners became fast friends , as did Fuseli and Bonnycastle ; Godwin and Wollstonecraft eventually married .

= = = Friendship with Mary Wollstonecraft = = =

The friendship between Johnson and Mary Wollstonecraft was pivotal in both of their lives , and illustrates the active role that Johnson played in developing writing talent . In 1787 , Wollstonecraft was in financial straits : she had just been dismissed from a governess position in Ireland and had moved back to London . She had resolved to be an author in an era that afforded few professional opportunities to women . After Unitarian schoolteacher John Hewlett suggested to Wollstonecraft that she submit her writings to Johnson , an enduring and mutually supportive relationship blossomed between Johnson and Wollstonecraft . He dealt with her creditors , secured lodgings for her , and advanced payment on her first book , *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) , and her first novel , *Mary : A Fiction* (1788) . Johnson included Wollstonecraft in the exalted company of his weekly soirées , where she met famous personages , such as Thomas Paine and her future husband , William Godwin . Wollstonecraft , who is believed to have written some 200 articles for his periodical , the *Analytical Review* , regarded Johnson as a true friend . After a disagreement , she sent him the following note the next morning :

You made me very low @-@ spirited last night , by your manner of talking ? You are my only friend ? the only person I am intimate with . ? I never had a father , or a brother ? you have been both to me , ever since I knew you ? yet I have sometimes been very petulant . ? I have been thinking of those instances of ill @-@ humour and quickness , and they appeared like crimes . Yours sincerely ,

Mary .

Johnson offered Wollstonecraft work as a translator , prompting her to learn French and German . More importantly , Johnson provided encouragement at crucial moments during the writing of her seminal political treatises *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) .

= = 1790s : Years of radicalism = =

As radicalism took hold in Britain in the 1790s , Johnson became increasingly involved in its causes : he was a member of the Society for Constitutional Information , which was attempting to reform Parliament ; he published works defending Dissenters after the religiously motivated Birmingham Riots in 1791 ; and he testified on behalf of those arrested during the 1794 Treason Trials . Johnson published works championing the rights of slaves , Jews , women , prisoners , Dissenters , chimney sweeps , abused animals , university students forbidden from marrying , victims of press gangs , and those unjustly accused of violating the game laws .

Political literature became Johnson 's mainstay in the 1790s : he published 118 works , which amounted to 57 % of his total political output . As Chard notes , " hardly a year went by without at least one anti @-@ war and one anti @-@ slave trade publication from Johnson " . In particular , Johnson published abolitionist works , such as minister and former slave @-@ ship captain John Newton 's *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* (1788) , Barbauld 's *Epistle to William Wilberforce* (1791) , and Captain John Gabriel Stedman 's *Narrative , of a Five Years ' Expedition , Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796) (with illustrations by Blake) . Most importantly he helped organize the publication of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) , the autobiography of former slave Olaudah Equiano .

Later in the decade , Johnson focused on works about the French revolution , concentrating on those from France itself , but he also published commentary from America by Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe . Johnson 's determination to publish political and revolutionary works , however , fractured his Circles : Dissenters were alienated from Anglicans during efforts to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts and moderates split from radicals during the French revolution . Johnson lost customers , friends , and writers , including the children 's author Sarah Trimmer . Braithwaite speculates that Johnson also lost business due to his willingness to put out works that promoted the " challenging new historicist versions of the scriptures " , such as those by Alexander Geddes .

Scholars are , however , careful to note that except for Benjamin Franklin 's works and Joel Barlow 's pamphlets , Johnson did not print anything truly revolutionary . He refused to publish Paine 's *Rights of Man* and William Blake 's *The French Revolution* , for example . It is almost impossible to determine Johnson 's own personal political beliefs from the historical record . Marilyn Gaull argues that " if Johnson were radical , indeed if he had any political affiliation ... it was accidental " . Gaull describes Johnson 's " liberalism " as that " of [a] generous , open , fair @-@ minded , unbiased defender of causes lost and won " . His real contribution , she contends , was " as a disseminator of contemporary knowledge , especially science , medicine , and pedagogical practice " and as an advocate for a popular style . He encouraged all of his writers to use " plain syntax and colloquial diction " so that " self @-@ educated readers " could understand his publications . Johnson 's association with writers such as Godwin has previously been used to emphasize his radicalism , but Braithwaite points out that Godwin only became a part of Johnson 's Circle late in the 1790s ; Johnson 's closest friends ? Priestley , Fuseli , and Bonnycastle ? were much more politically moderate . Johnson was not a populist or democratic bookseller : he catered to the self @-@ educating middle class .

= = = Revolution controversy = = =

In 1790 , with the publication of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* , philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke launched the first volley of a vicious pamphlet war in what became known as the Revolution Controversy . Because he had supported the American Revolution , friends and

enemies alike expected him to support the French Revolution . His book , which decries the French Revolution , therefore came as a shock to nearly everyone . Priced at an expensive five shillings , it still sold over 10 @, @ 000 copies in a few weeks . Reformers , particularly Dissenters , felt compelled to reply . Johnson 's periodical , the Analytical Review , published a summary and review of Burke 's work within a couple of weeks of its publication . Two weeks later , Wollstonecraft responded to Burke with her Vindication of the Rights of Men . In issuing one of the first and cheapest replies to Burke (Vindication cost only one shilling) , Johnson put himself at some risk . Thomas Cooper , who had also written a response to Burke , was later informed by the Attorney General that " although there was no exception to be taken to his pamphlet when in the hands of the upper classes , yet the government would not allow it to appear at a price which would insure its circulation among the people " . Many others soon joined in the fray and Johnson remained at the centre of the maelstrom . By Braithwaite 's count , Johnson published or sold roughly a quarter of the works responding to Burke within the following year .

The most notable of all of these responses was Thomas Paine 's Rights of Man . Johnson originally agreed to publish the controversial work , but he backed out later for unknown reasons and J. S. Jordan distributed it (and was subsequently tried and imprisoned for its publication) . Braithwaite speculates that Johnson did not agree with Paine 's radical republican statements and was more interested in promoting the rights of Dissenters outlined in the other works he published . After the initial risk was taken by Jordan , however , Johnson published Paine 's work in an expensive edition , which was unlikely to be challenged at law . Yet , when Paine was himself later arrested , Johnson helped raise funds to bail him out and hid him from the authorities . A contemporary satire suggested that Johnson saved Paine from imprisonment :

The time may come when J ? n 's aid may fail ;
Nor clubs combin 'd preserve thee from a jail .

Alarmed at the popular appeal of Paine 's Rights of Man , the king issued a proclamation against seditious writings in May 1792 . Booksellers and printers bore the brunt of this law , the effects of which came to a head in the 1794 Treason Trials . Johnson testified , publicly distancing himself from Paine and Barlow , despite the fact that the defendants were received sympathetically by the juries .

= = = Poetry = = =

During the 1790s alone , Johnson published 103 volumes of poetry ? 37 % of his entire output in the genre . The bestselling poetical works of Cowper and Erasmus Darwin enriched Johnson 's firm . Darwin 's innovative The Botanic Garden (1791) was particularly successful : Johnson paid him 1 @, @ 000 guineas before it was ever released and bought the copyright from him for £ 800 , a staggeringly large sum . The poem contains three " interludes " in the form of dialogues between a poet and his bookseller . The bookseller asks the poet what Tyson calls " leading questions " in order to elucidate the poet 's theory of poetry . Tyson comments " that although the flat questions of the practical @-@ minded bookseller may be meant to parody Johnson 's manner , most likely Darwin did not have him or any other particular bookseller in mind " . After the success of The Botanic Garden , Johnson published Darwin 's work on evolution , Zoonomia (1794 ? 96) ; his treatise A Plan on the Conduct of Female Education (1797) ; Phytologia ; or , the Philosophy of Agriculture and Gardening (1800) ; and his poem The Temple of Nature (1803) . According to Braithwaite , The Temple of Nature was Zoonomia in verse and " horrified reviewers with its warring , factious , overly materialistic view of the universe " .

Johnson continued to publish the poetic works of Aikin and Barbauld as well as those of George Dyer , Joseph Fawcett , James Hurdis , Joel Barlow , Ann Batten Cristall and Edward Williams . Most of the poets that Johnson promoted and published are not remembered today . However , in 1793 , Johnson published William Wordsworth 's An Evening Walk and Descriptive Sketches ; he remained Wordsworth 's publisher until a disagreement separated them in 1799 . Johnson also put out Samuel Taylor Coleridge 's Fears of Solitude (1798) . They were apparently close enough friends for Coleridge to leave his books at Johnson 's shop when he toured Europe .

Johnson had a working relationship with illustrator William Blake for nearly twenty years : Johnson commissioned around 100 engravings from Blake ? more than any other publisher ? including the second edition of Wollstonecraft 's Original Stories from Real Life (1791) and Darwin 's Botanic Garden . Johnson may also have had some connection with Blake as a writer , judging from galley proofs of his French Revolution (1791) . Yet , in An Island in the Moon , Blake represents Johnson as " a bookseller without aesthetic values whose repetitive questions reveal his ignorance " .

= = = Translations = = =

As part of his endeavour to expose the public to more foreign @-@ language works , Johnson facilitated the translation of educational texts , serious fiction , and philosophy (he was less interested in translating popular novels) . In particular , he promoted the translation of the works of persecuted French Girondins , such as Condorcet 's Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind (1795) and Madame Roland 's An Appeal to Impartial Posterity (1795) , which he had released in English within weeks of its debut in France . His publication of a translation of Constanin Volney 's deistic Les Ruines , ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires (1791) quickly became a bestseller . Johnson also had some of the most prominent French children 's literature translated , such as the works of Madame de Genlis .

Johnson 's most significant contribution in this area was his promotion of German @-@ language literature . Fuseli encouraged him to publish translations of important new German authors , such as Goethe and Schiller . Johnson was one of the few British publishers arranging for the translation of German moral philosophy in the 1790s , and his most important translated publication was arguably Johann Herder 's Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit (1776) , which introduced many of the historical and anthropological methods of thought already present on the Continent to Britons . Instead of attempting to faithfully reproduce texts , almost all of Johnson 's translators followed the 18th @-@ century practice of freely adapting their texts , for example by substituting " British " counterparts of " German " examples .

= = = Analytical Review and other periodicals = = =

Johnson 's first periodicals , Gospel Magazine (1766 ? ?) , The Universal Museum and Complete Magazine (1765 ? 1770) , and The Monthly Record of Literature (1767) , like many 18th @-@ century journals , lasted only a short while , but his later attempts were much more successful . In 1783 , he financed the first quarterly medical periodical in London , the London Medical Journal , founded by Samuel Foart Simmons , a prominent physician . Explaining the journal 's goals , Simmons wrote that it would provide " an account of new medical books and useful discoveries in physic , and at the same time be a repository for original essays " . The journal lasted until 1790 when it was replaced by another Johnson @-@ Simmons venture , Medical Facts and Observations , which ran until 1797 .

In 1788 , Johnson and Thomas Christie , a Unitarian , liberal , and classicist , founded the Analytical Review . It was a gadfly publication , which offered readers a summary and analysis of the flood of new publications issuing from the presses at the end of the 18th century and provided a forum for radical political and religious ideas . Although it aimed at impartiality , its articles were often critical of the Pitt administration and supportive of the French revolutionaries . Tyson calls it " the most outspoken journal of its day " , but Chard argues that it was " never particularly strident and certainly not radical " . It was also instrumental in promoting scientific , philosophical , and literary foreign @-@ language publications , particularly those in German and French . Compared to Johnson 's earlier periodicals , which were generally " marginal sectarian efforts " , the Analytical Review was quite popular . At 1 @, @ 500 copies per issue , it did not have the circulation of the Gentleman 's Magazine , which averaged around 4 @, @ 550 , but it was influential despite its more limited readership . Its conservative counterpart and nemesis was the Anti @-@ Jacobin Review , established specifically to counteract the effects of the Analytical and other radical media outlets . The Analytical was suspended at the end of 1798 following the deaths of Christie and Wollstonecraft

in 1796 and 1797 respectively , and the retirement of other contributing editors .

In 1796 Johnson joined in a venture to start The Monthly Magazine . Founded by his neighbour Richard Phillips and edited by his friend John Aikin , it was associated with Dissenting interests and was responsible for importing much German philosophical thought into England . According to Marilyn Butler , it " combined many of the best features of the periodicals of the century . It was a miscellany , but more intellectual and much more bookish than the [Gentleman 's Magazine] ; hospitable to readers , it nevertheless high @-@ mindedly projected an ideal of liberal , middle @-@ class intellectuality that anticipates both the innovative writing and projected readership " of Blackwood 's and Fraser 's .

= = = Changing political winds = = =

With the beginning of the violence of the Reign of Terror (1793 ? 94) , those in Britain who had initially supported the French Revolution began to rethink their position and the government became increasingly concerned about the possibility of a British revolution akin to that of the French . The ardour of radicalism that had prevailed in the early 1790s dissipated . Booksellers were arrested and tried for seditious libel , and many of Johnson 's authors either stopped writing or became more conservative . Only a few , like Paine , veered further left . After being forced to testify at the trial of Paine and Thomas Hardy , Johnson published fewer incendiary works , among them Joel Barlow 's Advice to the Privileged Orders (1792) . Braithwaite describes it as " without doubt the most extreme that Joseph Johnson ever published (taking him immoderately close to what he later , jokingly , described as a ' hanging ' offence) " . However , once it became clear that Barlow , like Paine , was becoming radicalized , Johnson refused to publish any more of his works . In 1794 Johnson even considered emigrating to America with Priestley to escape the increasing pressure he felt from conservatives and the government .

= = = = 1798 : Trial and imprisonment = = = =

Following the publication of Paine 's provocative Rights of Man in 1791 , a sedition law was passed in Britain and , in 1798 , Johnson and several others were put on trial for selling Gilbert Wakefield 's A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop Llandaff 's Address to the People of Great Britain , a Unitarian work attacking the privileged position of the wealthy . The indictment against Johnson , written on a six @-@ foot parchment roll , read in part :

The said Attorney General of our said Lord the King ... giveth the Court here further to understand and be informed that Joseph Johnson late of London bookseller being a malicious , seditious , and ill @-@ disposed person and being greatly disaffected to our said sovereign Lord the King ... wickedly maliciously and seditiously did publish and cause to be published a certain scandalous malicious and seditious libel .

Braithwaite explains , " an English jury , in effect , was being asked to consider whether Joseph Johnson 's intentions as a bookseller were really as dangerous and radical as those of Thomas Paine " . An issue of the Analytical Review was even offered as evidence against Johnson . Despite having retained Thomas Erskine as his lawyer , who had successfully defended Hardy and Horne Tooke at the 1794 Treason Trials , and character references from George Fordyce , Aikin , and Hewlett , Johnson was fined £ 50 and sentenced to six months imprisonment at King 's Bench Prison in February 1799 . Braithwaite speculates :

If the conduct of the Attorney @-@ General and the Anti @-@ Jacobin are to serve as any kind of barometer of government opinion , then other scores were clearly being settled and it was not merely for [Johnson 's] involvement in the sale of Wakefield 's pamphlet but his tenure ... as a stubbornly independent @-@ minded publisher in St Paul 's Churchyard , prominently serving the irreligious and unconstitutional interests of ' rational ' dissent and dangerously sympathetic to the ideas of foreigners (most visibly through the pages of the Analytical) that Joseph Johnson was ultimately being brought to book .

Johnson 's friends accused Erskine of using the trial as a political platform and not thinking of the

best interests of his client . Johnson 's imprisonment was not harsh ; being relatively wealthy , Johnson rented a home for himself within the prison , where he continued to hold his weekly soirées .

Although Johnson still believed in the free exchange of ideas and was not embittered by his stay in prison , his publishing habits changed dramatically . After he was released , Johnson published very few political works and none were controversial . Other booksellers followed suit , and Johnson 's friend , Unitarian minister Theophilus Lindsey , wrote that " Johnson 's fate deters them all " . Johnson lost authors after the trial and experienced a noticeable decline in business . Furthermore , he gained fewer new authors , his stalwarts like Priestley began to complain that he was not attending to their business , and he was forced to cease publishing the Analytical Review .

= = 1800s : Declining years and death = =

As publishing began to change its form in the late 18th and early 19th centuries , large publishing houses pushed out small , independent booksellers . Johnson did not attempt to form or join one of these new firms . In the late 1790s and early 19th century , Johnson 's business declined , particularly as his relatives , John Miles and Roland Hunter , began to take over the daily operations ; Miles was uninterested in the business , and Hunter did not have Johnson 's commercial sense or his ability to choose successful manuscripts . In January 1806 , Johnson 's premises were wracked by a second fire , destroying the building and all of his stock .

Although not as active in routine business , Johnson still took an interest in political events . For example , he spearheaded the efforts of the booksellers of London and Westminster to appeal a new copyright law in 1808 . Moreover , although Johnson did not publish controversial political works after his imprisonment , he still undertook important publishing ventures . For example , he administered the publication of a forty @-@ five volume work entitled The British Essayists , edited by Alexander Chalmers ; the complete works of Samuel Johnson ; and a ten @-@ volume set of Shakespeare . Johnson published in more congers during the last decade of his life than at any other time . He also occasionally published important new authors , such as the political economist Thomas Malthus , whose Essay on the Principle of Population (1798) sparked a long debate between idealists and pragmatists . His emphasis on educational books continued or even increased as his interest in publishing contentious political works diminished . He also continued to support his friends , as with Godwin , who needed financial rescue after his play , Faulkener , cost him £ 800 .

Johnson 's authors became increasingly frustrated with him towards the end of his life , Wakefield calling him " heedless , insipid , [and] inactive " and Lindsey describing him as " a worthy and most honest man , but incorrigably [sic] neglectful often to his own detriment " . Priestley , by then in Pennsylvania , eventually broke off his forty @-@ year relationship with the publisher , when his book orders were delayed several years and Johnson failed to communicate with him regarding the publication of his works . Most of the authors who became upset with Johnson were those writing religious or literary works , the riskiest publishing ventures .

= = = Death = = =

Afflicted by a " chronic respiratory disease " for many years , Johnson died at his home and office on 20 December 1809 , at the age of 71 . The exact nature of his malady is unclear , but his great @-@ nephew Miles wrote to Maria Edgeworth that Johnson was incapacitated with " spasms " and " asthma " near the end of his life . Never having married , he bequeathed his business concerns to his great @-@ nephews , Hunter and Miles (Hunter took over the business , but could not retain Johnson 's impressive author list and floundered due to his lack of business " acumen ") . Johnson 's remaining £ 60 @, @ 000 fortune was shared among friends and family : for example , he willed a £ 200 annuity to Fanny Imlay , daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft , and £ 100 to one of Joseph Priestley 's sons . Johnson was buried at Fulham , where he had rented a country home since 1804 , under an epitaph by his life @-@ long friend Henry Fuseli :

Beneficent without ostentation , ever ready to produce merit and to relieve distress ;
Unassuming in prosperity , not appalled by misfortune ;
Inexorable to his own , indulgent to the wants of others ;
Resigned and cheerful under the torture and malady which he saw gradually destroy his life .

According to Chard , Johnson 's obituaries , both those written by his friends and those not , " consistently stress his generosity and his principles " , particularly his integrity . William Godwin 's obituary of 21 December 1809 in the Morning Chronicle was particularly eloquent , calling Johnson an " ornament to his profession " and praising his modesty , his warm heart , and the integrity and clarity of his mind .

= = Legacy = =

Johnson published more books in more fields than any other publisher of his time : " virtually every giant of the second half of the eighteenth century in medicine , science , religion , philosophy , political thought , education , and poetry published at least one work with Johnson " . Johnson 's publications helped to " demystify medicine " for the public and were integral to the scientific revolution . His periodical , the Analytical Review , can be seen as a precursor to the New Statesman . By the end of his career , Johnson had acquired a majority or monopoly share in the ownership of the works of : Shakespeare , Milton , Alexander Pope , Joseph Addison , Richard Steele , Samuel Johnson , and all of the major novelists of the period (except Samuel Richardson)

Johnson was known for fostering the development of new writers without worrying about maximizing profits , and for printing works on principle , even if he knew they would make little money . His risky publication of Joel Barlow 's Advice to the Privileged Orders (1792) , for example , sold 600 copies and barely broke even . He was also instrumental in the creation of the female professional writer , a role that began opening to women only at the end of the 18th century in Britain . By nurturing the writings of Anna Laetitia Barbauld , Charlotte Smith , Mary Hays , Mary Wollstonecraft , and Maria Edgeworth , he gave women the opportunity to demonstrate that they could be both successful and significant authors . Additionally , he published works promoting women 's equality , such as Hays 's An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain (1798) , which called for an end to the tyrannical rule of men over women ; Johnson 's Analytical Review reviewed the work extensively and approvingly .

Johnson was remarkably adept at recognizing new writing talent and making innovative works appealing to the public . More importantly , he functioned as a catalyst for experimentation by bringing disparate authors together . While Johnson promoted his authors , he retreated into the background himself . His friend John Aikin explained that he had " a decided aversion to all sorts of puffing and parade " ; Johnson 's unassuming character has left historians and literary critics sparse material from which to reconstruct his life . For 200 years , it was assumed that all of Johnson 's business records and correspondence had been destroyed , but in the early 1990s , one of his " letter books " was discovered in an old desk . It contained copies of letters written to business associates as well as friends from 1795 to 1809 . His letters to other publishers discuss " paper , printing , engraving costs , delivery dates , breaches of copyright , binding charges and accounts " whereas his letters to friends include missives to Priestley , Maria Edgeworth , Erasmus Darwin , Charlotte Smith , and others . This material has allowed scholars to theorize more concretely about Johnson 's life and work .

Johnson 's publications were rarely luxury goods : he priced his merchandise competitively , but always within the reach of the middle class , the audience he most wanted to serve . One way that he reduced costs was by printing texts in the provinces and then importing them to London ; many of Priestley 's works , for example , were printed locally in Birmingham . Johnson did not take great care with the printing of many of his books ; they are full of errors and poorly bound . But as they were often printed extremely quickly to respond to a particular event , this was expected by his contemporaries .

Before Johnson 's generation of booksellers , publishers were not highly respected ; Johnson 's

sterling reputation helped publishing to become a more reputable business . His advocacy of cheap books , his desire to foster extensive provincial and foreign connections are all a part of why Johnson has been called " the most important publisher in England from 1770 until 1810 " .

= = Publishing statistics = =

According to Chard , in the 48 years of his career , Johnson published around 2 @, @ 700 imprints , averaging 56 per year . About half of these were pamphlets (e.g. sermons , religious tracts , political leaflets) and many were reprints ; therefore he averaged around 20 to 30 new books per year . About 25 % of his publications were of anonymous authors ; these were usually political or religious works . He published more religious works than any other genre (1 @, @ 067 titles) . Johnson made roughly 750 copies for each print run , although many of his political and religious works would have been printed in editions of 250 , as their topics were often ephemeral .