



# Domestick Privacies: Samuel Johnson and the Art of Biography

*David Wheeler*

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Biography was Samuel Johnson's favorite among literary genres, and his *Lives of the Poets* is often regarded as the capstone of his career. The central place of biography in his oeuvre is explored in this collection of nine original essays by leading Johnson scholars. Varied in their focus and approach, the essays range from a philosophical overview of Johnson's notion of the relation between life and art, to a detailed reading of the *Life of Milton*, to a speculation on the value of the *Lives* in the classroom.

Emerging clearly in the essays are the dual concerns—artistic and intellectual—that can be pursued in Johnson's biographical writings. On the one hand, they are complex creative works that reward literary analysis, traditional and modern. On the other, with their wide range, they offer a special insight into Johnson's eighteenth-century world—the state of biography at the time, the tradition of English poetry, literary criticism and its philosophical values, and, of course, Johnson himself with his powers and failings.

*Domestick Privacies* thus offers important new perspectives not only to professed Johnsonians but to all who study biography, criticism, and the eighteenth century.

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