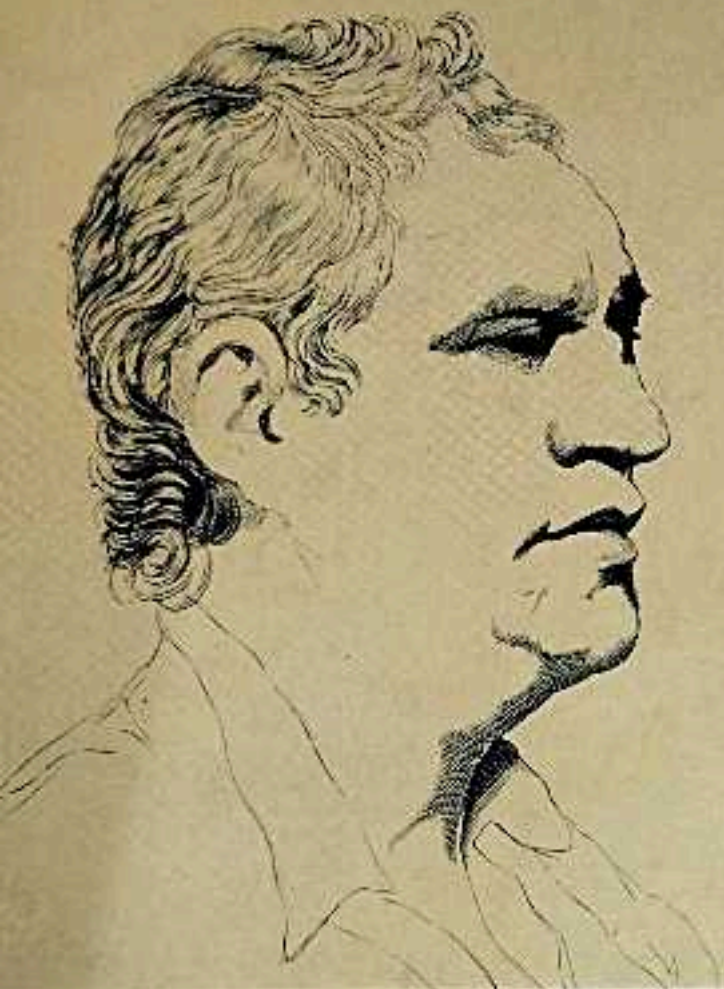


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THE *Achievement* OF  
*Samuel Johnson*  
WALTER JACKSON BATE

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF  
SAMUEL JOHNSON



*The Achievement of*

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Walter Jackson Bate



A GALAXY BOOK

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## PREFACE

THE PRESENT BOOK is hardly more than an expanded essay on the theme of its title. For the subject is large, and special aspects of it have been repeatedly explored for over a century. But it is large because it is hypnotic, and people cannot let it alone. No matter how much the detail about him continues to accumulate, the character and achievement of Johnson still grip the human imagination and conscience, constantly rising above the waves of our commentary, and moving us to reconsider them. Also the mere size of the subject is one excuse for this book. Largeness and variety offer protection as well as challenge. Where no one work, however detailed, can pretend to a rounded completeness anyway, briefer interpretations such as this are able to take heart, and are free to vary among themselves without fear of copying or contradicting each other. A writer is 'not wholly useless,' as Johnson said, who merely diversifies the 'surface of knowledge' and calls us back 'to a second view.' Johnson will stand repeated views as few other men can.

The emphasis in this book has been on Johnson's own writing, especially on that part of his writing which is concerned with human experience in the broadest sense. Instead of trying, however, to duplicate the existing analyses of his indi-

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF

# Samuel Johnson

by

WALTER JACKSON BATE

A major reinterpretation of Johnson for the twentieth century, this book discusses the man as a great thinker and humanist rather than as an eccentric personality. It is the life story of Johnson's mind, telling how, against almost insurmountable odds, he rose through struggle into greatness.

'No one else, I think, has ever more successfully attempted to codify the profoundest of Johnson's convictions in such a way as to illuminate and unify his thinking.'

—Joseph Wood Krutch, *Saturday Review*

'... a fine book... first rate. This, we insist without hesitation, is what ought to be said about Johnson, and it is admirably expressed... original and compelling... fascinating discussions of particular passages from the essays. The fullness and richness of Johnson's thought in his writings is brought out again and again.'

—*Johnsonian News Letter*

'It is one of the most valuable, and moving, contributions yet made to Johnsonian studies, since it tackles in pertinacious detail the central question in these studies: the relation of the man... to the writings.'

—J. C. Bryce, *The Review of English Studies*

Walter Jackson Bate is Professor of English at Harvard University. His other books include *The Stylistic Development of Keats*, and *Criticism: The Major Texts*.

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