



James Boswell: As His Contemporaries Saw Him

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This book draws upon letters, diaries, memoirs, book reviews, and newspaper articles to present a picture of James Boswell from the vantage point of those who knew him best. We hear what family, friends, rivals, critics, and satirists thought of the man who produced such notable works as *An Account of Corsica*, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*, and *The Life of Samuel Johnson*.

Few major authors have generated such wildly fluctuating estimates over the years as Boswell. Both as a writer and as a man, he has stirred debate for more than two centuries. Scholars and critics have long differed, for instance, as to whether his *Life of Johnson*, published in 1791, is the finest biography in English or just "a pretty book" of questionable accuracy. One commentator recently maintained that his published journals are 'the greatest English autobiographical epic,' while another has dismissed them as the 'diary of a nobody.' Boswell has been acclaimed the greatest of modern biographers, but also attacked as a mere sycophant and fool.

James Boswell: As His Contemporaries Saw Him reveals how contemporaries responded to the man's multifaceted talents and personality, and it reveals how estimates of James Boswell fluctuated just as wildly in his day as in ours.

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