2. This incident has been related differently by Hester Lynch (Thrale) Piozzi and with still greater variation by Richard Cumberland. See their recollections in this book.

Goldsmith and Johnson*

ARTHUR MURPHY

Johnson felt not only kindness, but zeal and ardour for his friends. He did every thing in his power to advance the reputation of Dr Goldsmith. He loved him, though he knew his failings, and particularly the leaven of envy which corroded the mind of that elegant writer, and made him impatient, without disguise, of the praises bestowed on any person whatever. Of this infirmity, which marked Goldsmith's character, Johnson gave a remarkable instance. It happened that he went with Sir Joshua Reynolds and Goldsmith to see the fantoccini, which were exhibited some years ago in or near the Haymarket. They admired the curious mechanism by which the puppets were made to walk the stage, draw a chair to the table, sit down, write a letter, and perform a variety of other actions with such dexterity, that *though Nature's journeymen made the men, they imitated humanity*¹ to the astonishment of the spectator. The entertainment being over, the three friends retired to a tavern. Johnson and Sir Joshua talked with pleasure of what they had seen; and says Johnson, in a tone of admiration, 'How the little fellow brandished his spontoon!' 'There is nothing in it,' replied Goldsmith, starting up with impatience; 'give me a spontoon; I can do it as well myself.'

NOTES

Arthur Murphy (1727–1805), a leading playwright and actor of the age.

1. Alluding to Hamlet's instructions to the players in *Hamlet*, III, ii, 31–2.

* *Essays on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson*, LL.D. (London: 1792) pp. 96–7. Editor's title.