

mann Boerhaave (1668-1738) for the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1739 that first awoke in him "that love of chymistry which never forsook him" (6, 7). But beyond the observation that this hobby certainly sensitized Johnson to the possibility of chemical word origins in a manner not duplicated by the training or interests of most later etymologists, little more can be said, and one is left to follow one's personal preferences in the matter. As for me, I choose to believe Johnson.

But what of my 300 demonically grinning Freshmen? On thinking it over, I suspect that the word gibberish is a bit too esoteric for most of them to use on a regular basis and that I should be more concerned about the origins of such phrases as "that sucks" - undoubtedly derived from early Greek writings on hydrostatics and the theory of the siphon.

Notes and References

1. T. Bergman, "Of the Origin of Chemistry" in *Essays, Physical and Chemical*, Mudie and Fairbairn, Edinburgh, 1794, p. 4.
2. S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. 1., Offor et. al., London, 1820.
3. E. Radford, *Unusual Words and How They Came About*, Philosophical Library, New York, NY, 1946.
4. In a debate that took place in the 1920s and 1930s, the British historian E. J. Holmyard maintained that Jabir was an actual 8th century alchemist and that the Latin works of Geber were an imperfect



An imaginary portrait of Geber

translation of as yet undiscovered Arabic originals. The opposite position was taken by the German scholar J. Ruska, and Ruska's pupil, Paul Kraus, finally came to the conclusion that the entire Arabic Jabirian corpus was actually fabricated in the 9th century by members of an Isma'elite religious sect. I am unaware of whether this debate has ever been satisfactorily resolved.

5. E. J. Holmyard, ed., *The Works of Geber Englished by Richard Russell, 1678*, Dent, New York, NY, 1928, p. 5, a reproduction of the 1678 edition.

6. E. R. Atkinson, "Samuel Johnson's 'Life of Boerhaave'", *J. Chem. Educ.*, 1942, 19, 103-108.

7. D. J. Swaine, "Samuel Johnson's Interest in Scientific Affairs", *J. Chem. Educ.*, 1948, 25, 458-459.

NOTICE TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS AND AUTHORS

As you have undoubtedly noticed, it has been nearly six months since you received an issue of the *Bulletin*. The reason for the delay involves an extensive reorganization of our production and editorial procedures. The increasing size of the issues and the increasing number of library subscriptions have made it difficult, even with our already erratic schedule, for a single person to handle all aspects of the editing, layout, reviewing, printing and distribution. Consequently the Chemical Heritage Foundation has agreed to come in as a third sponsor of the *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry*, along with the Oesper Collection in the History of Chemistry of the University of Cincinnati and the Division of the History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society.

Beginning with this issue all production and distribution aspects of the *Bulletin* will be handled by the Chemical Heritage Foundation under the supervision of our Associate Editor, Dr. James J. Bohning. As indicated on the subscription form on the back cover, all new subscriptions and all claims for missing or damaged issues should be directed to Dr. Bohning at The Chemical Heritage Foundation, Suite 460B, 3401 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6228. All matters relating to manuscripts, book reviews and letters to the editor should continue to be sent to Dr. William B. Jensen, Editor, *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry*, Department of Chemistry, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0172.

In order to catch up on our publication schedule we hope to publish issues 12 through 16 during 1993. Because of its large size, the special Faraday issue (No. 11), mailed in July, will count not only as the last issue of the 1991 year but as the first issue of the 1992 year. This issue (No. 12) will count as the second issue for 1992 and issue 13 as the third. Issues 14, 15 and 16 will constitute the 1993 subscription and will hopefully be completed by early spring of 1994 - an event that will finally put us back on schedule. We appreciate your patience. *William B. Jensen, Editor*