

THE ECCENTRICS OF TOBIAS SMOLLETT'S NOVELS

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CHAPTER I

SMOLLETT'S HEROES

The vitality and richness of Smollett's novels emanate not from his protagonists or the picaresque plots contained therein but from the great variety of eccentrics who populate the pages of the books. They are the joie de vivre of Smollett's readers and prove to be both fine entertainment and objects deserving examination. Although the emphasis of this research lies in uncovering the prototypes of Smollett's eccentrics, the method of characterization, and the author's techniques in transferring them to the pages of the novels, the analyst must consider the protagonists of the novels. Even though these principal figures are not actually eccentrics, they are the only serviceable threads which hold together the multiple and unrelated episodes, plots, subplots, and characters in his novels. The major eccentrics are always linked with the hero and, like the hero, usually turn up in each of Smollett's novels, possessing new names but having essentially the same sets of character traits. Hence, the male protagonists are first considered here, to give the reader a useful image of Smollett's fictional milieu before they encounter the eccentrics.

Critics who class Smollett as a picaresque novelist and his "heroes" as picaros do so without defining the terms and without realizing that their use of them is quite often as inaccurate as it is handy. Some apply "picaresque" to any fiction whose protagonist is a rogue. Still others confuse the type with the novels of low-life or adventure, assuming that any book which contains a rogue, an exciting plot, and a few realistic slum scenes is a picaresque novel.

Actually, the picaresque novel is a restricted genre:
it

is the comic biography (or more often the autobiography) of an anti-hero who makes his way in the world through the service of masters, satirizing their personal faults, as well as their trades and professions. It possesses, therefore, two poles of interest,--one, the rogue and his tricks; the other, the manners he pillories.¹

The limitations of this definition immediately explain why some scholars have used the term loosely. They hesitate to exclude many novels which are overwhelmingly picaresque in tendency, but do not strictly follow this precise definition; therefore for professional convenience and expediency, they merely expand the definition to fit such books. When one realizes that the limits of the picaresque form were rigidly defined on the continent before 1700² and were never

¹Frank W. Chandler, The Literature of Roguery (Boston, 1932), I, 5.

²Ibid., pp. 32-35.

strictly adhered to in England at all, it is obvious that the term picaresque lost its exact meaning.

Early in the eighteenth century, the picaresque novel proper attained perfection in LeSage's Gil Blas. However, only by destroying the genre did this novel achieve immortality: once LeSage had exploited the meager possibilities of trickery of and satire on masters, his successors faced the dilemma of merely duplicating Gil Blas or completely metamorphosing the genre.

In the preface to The Adventures of Roderick Random, Smollett not only praised Gil Blas immoderately, but stated that his own work was modeled on it. In the following year, 1749, his translation of LeSage's masterpiece was first published in London. Undoubtedly the Frenchman's influence on the Scot was enormous, and similarities in the work of the two men must be expected. But to discredit Smollett's work as being modeled exclusively on the picaresque formula would fall short of recognizing the full merits of Smollett's contributions to the English novel.

Smollett departed from the picaresque tradition considerably, as did many of his contemporaries. The light heart of the Spanish picaro and the light hand of the French adventurer are lost in the English rogue. In assembling tricks, English authors forfeited much of their satire of men and manners.

Defoe had gone so far as to eschew even humor.³ Smollett, however, was involved primarily in the legacy of the romance of roguery. LeSage first realized the fictional opportunities of roguery romance, and Smollett became heir to the possibilities of the form.

It [Gil Blas] resembled its Spanish forebears in the adventurous career of its anti-hero--his shifts of condition through the service of masters, his satire at their expense, his progress from poverty to a competence, his survey of actual manners, and the looseness of his story with its interpolated biographies and lack of organic unity. It differed from these in its choice of an anti-hero from respectable middle-class life, in minimizing his roguery, awakening his conscience, and softening his heart. It varied his changes of masters with more of adventure and intrigue, sharpened his satire to a finer edge, applied it to individual types more often than to mere professions, led its central personage to a higher place in the social scale, and left him more thoroughly convinced of honesty as the best policy.⁴

Smollett took additional liberties with his central male characters. Without fear of misapplication, gallant, rogue, and villain are terms appropriate, for the most part, to Smollett's leading men. Except for the infamous Count Fathom, each man seems to possess all the characteristics inherent in each term. Gracious virtues and base caprices--gallantry and cupidity, lofty thought and sewer humor, altruism and extreme selfishness--exist together in each man. Moreover, these protagonists strongly resemble one another--as if one were merely the continuation of the central figure in a preceding

³Ibid., p. 1.

⁴Ibid., p. 22.

novel (e.g., Count Fathom's sociopathic condition or Sir Launcelot Greaves' Don Quixotism). Only Matt Bramble seems to avoid the extremes of character found in all of Smollett's other central figures. He is the aging picaresque who has learned from experience, evolving into a psychologically and morally mature man, a result of the processes of time unknown to all other of Smollett's heroes.

Specifically, Smollett deviated from the picaresque tradition with his first picaresque, Roderick Random, by de-emphasizing his service to masters. In spite of his position with the surgeon, the apothecary, and the poetess, Roderick is primarily an adventurer. "He is the person to whom things happen; he lacks fixed characters, and is not even a rogue consistently."⁵ Smollett seemed to admire his first creation, although Roderick was ever ready to dissipate or play pranks without compunction. Roderick's vivacity and courage in the process of sowing youthful wild oats overshadow his obvious lack of morality.

In this novel Roderick deludes himself into believing that he is victimized by the villainy of the world. Yet he is rather victimized by his delusion: he rationalizes from the wickedness of society the excuse for his own immorality and then lashes out in furious obscenity when he is worsted. In his repeated struggles for economic security, he tries to

⁵Ibid., II, 311.

beat society at its own game: his attempt to win the heartless Melinda Goosetrap is a perfectly ruthless act of fortune hunting.

Smollett had the ability to work himself into a rage by the situations he created, for with hackles rising, he dashed into the fight and heaped onto Melinda a savage satire, implying that Roderick is somehow a blameless fellow and a fine fellow, simply because Melinda starts the whole affair. From the beginning, Roderick never realizes or cares to realize that he behaves as badly as the rest.

Roderick's moral naivete' again manifests itself in his long and disastrous feud with Miss Lavement at the time he is living in as her father's apprentice. The quarrel stems from the lady's scorning him at first as an inferior until she meets him one day well-dressed and well-mannered. At this point she is all too willing to make peace far-reaching in its implications. With his characteristic improvidence, however, Roderick rudely ignores her advances; but in a typical Smollettian bedroom mix-up, Roderick vengefully enjoys her, she having mistaken him for her lover. Once she discovers this error, hers is the final victory. For revenge, she plants valuable medicines from her father's shop in Roderick's storage box in his room. When these drugs are discovered by the apothecary, Roderick is immediately dishonorably discharged and thrown from the house. "Thus,"

says Roderick, "I found myself by the iniquity of mankind, in a much more deplorable condition than ever!"⁶

Perhaps it never occurred to Smollett that his picaro and his tormentor are equals in pride and criminality. In resorting to malice and trickery, Smollett declared a war that he could not hope to win. As is shown by the lack of psychological growth of this first picaro, the author's stubborn refusal to be reconciled to the world seemed to produce the bulk of his barbaric abuse of mankind. Man as he is seems to have kept Smollett in a continual state of furious disappointment, and this dark mood ironically enough magnified and blackened the very vices he abhorred.

Sneer as Smollett might, however, Roderick's behavior is not entirely untouched by the old Scot's sensibilities. Observe, for instance, his conduct in a fashionable London theater:

How often did I enjoy the happy indifference of those choice spirits who beheld the distress of the scene without discovering the least symptom of approbation or concern! My attention was engaged in spite of myself, and I could not help weeping with the heroine of the stage; though I practiced a great many shifts to conceal this piece of impolite weakness.⁷

Though the novelist's insight into the psychology of others scarcely existed, Roderick Random is a memorable

⁶Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Roderick Random (New York, 1880), Part I, p. 198.

⁷Ibid., Part II, p. 239.

character in eighteenth-century fiction. Smollett drew a figure in whom sentimentality and malice, pity and indignation, sensitivity and stupidity incessantly battle, as the character in turn struggles against the outer world.

Roderick is a scoundrel and a fool but also understandably human: at once complicated and inconsistent. Smollett said in the preface to Roderick Random that Roderick is a case of "modest merit struggling with every difficulty."⁸ Roderick, however, is far less and far more than that.

In the first twenty chapters of Roderick Random, instances of crime, villainy, malice, and barbarity are heaped up one on another, being heightened by exaggerated characterizations and tedious, shocking details. Miss Lavement's victory over Roderick is the climax of the first part. Whether he is to blame or not, Roderick is disgraced, almost penniless, and somewhat embittered. He has even found his fiancée in bed with another man. But time heals his harsh judgment against his fiancée. Fate (Smollett's most frequent deus ex machina) brings them together again.

After Roderick has moved from the apothecary's in disgrace, he takes up new quarters considerably less comfortable than his previous rooms. He no sooner moves in than he hears a girl groaning in the next room. It is his old fiancée.

⁸Ibid., p. xlviil.

He finds her almost lifeless, and he revives her. They embrace warmly, though she knows that she has wronged him and he realizes she is a whore. Even though the technique is melodramatic, the reunion scene is effective. Suddenly there is friendship to make distress durable; whatever now happens the two of them will have the luxury of not starving alone. When Roderick offers to share his last farthing with her, narrative, character, and theme fuse to give the reader a rare glance at characters created by Smollett who are psychologically plausible and understandable.

Smollett's next novel, Peregrine Pickle, appeared in 1751. Since it contained the scandalous autobiography of Lady Vane under the title "Memoirs of a Lady of Quality,"⁹ the sales were enormous. Although Peregrine Pickle is written in the third person, it lacks even the most modest claim Roderick Random made to unity, relying more on satire and burlesque of Smollett's enemies. Peregrine is Roderick grown more profligate. Like Roderick, Peregrine's haphazard succession of adventures leads him to prison, and happiness is arrived at in both novels, not by the merit of the central figure, but by Smollett's traditional deus ex machinas-- wealthy fathers and willing brides.

In this second novel the service to masters is dispensed with. Peregrine is primarily a mischief maker, committing

⁹Smollett, Peregrine Pickle (New York, 1880), p. iv.

more rogueries than Roderick, but seemingly being less of a picaro. Frank Chandler states that Peregrine elicits no sympathy, for he struggles against no odds. "Moreover, he is malicious and depraved."¹⁰ This judgment is perhaps too strong. At the time Smollett was writing Peregrine Pickle, his first book was the talk of London. He was successful and quite delighted about it. His ferocity and sourness are much less apparent in his second book. The author apparently let Roderick, now Peregrine, pursue his adventures with more freedom.

Smollett seemed to have run into trouble, however, when he attempted to unify the hero's philanderings into a central problem: will Peregrine reform and deserve Emilia, or will he go to pieces? It is rather the book that falls to pieces--for the unity is externally forced; it does not come from the characters themselves. Peregrine the practical joker and Peregrine the rational animal are simply not the same man. It is the consistent mood of Roderick as the speaker that strings the various adventures into an organized narrative. But Peregrine seems to be two or more persons masquerading under a single name, producing a novel that vacillates between good farce and bad psychology.

The comedy in Roderick Random fails because it is too brutal, Smollett having been in too constant a fury over the

¹⁰Chandler, II, 313.

wickedness of man to laugh without savagery. In Peregrine Pickle the farce dances along in graceful lewdness, a hundred pages at a time passing by without a single snarl out of Smollett. Nor was social satire beyond the powers of the new Smollett. The incident in which Peregrine passes off a foul-mouthed prostitute as a lady at a very elite social gathering, besides being uproariously funny for its comic language and richness of detail, stands as a devastating comment on the persons of quality who accept her as one of their own kind. If Peregrine's tutelage (shades of Pygmalion) could bring about this transformation overnight, the author was perhaps suggesting that whores and ladies are not so far apart after all. What high society demands of its members in the way of fashionable chatter and elegant manners is an absurd criterion of eligibility, especially if this polish is acquired so easily and so completely that discerning matrons can be deceived until the girl breaks out in the best of the Billingsgate vernacular.

Not all of the farce and satire in which Peregrine is involved is subtle. Smollett was frequently less ingenious, and his old bawdy violence had a way of turning up occasionally to mar his new light touch. Peregrine Pickle, however, generally achieves humor which Roderick Random egregiously lacks, though the former emphasizes horseplay rather than satire. Above all, since Smollett could sometimes laugh heartily at Peregrine's disappointments, it shows that he

was achieving objectivity toward his hero (himself, that is) and toward life in general.

If Smollett condoned the acts of Roderick and Peregrine, he must certainly have created Count Fathom to arouse the reader's antipathy. In the opening of Ferdinand Count Fathom (1753) the author stated his intention to design a rascal "to serve as a beacon for the benefit of the inexperienced and unwary."¹¹ Smollett, however, grew weary of his villainous creation, and the book trails off into the melodrama of wronged innocence triumphing over evil.

Ferdinand Count Fathom is what psychologists, were they to examine Smollett's dullest picaresque, would diagnose as a sociopath. He is without conscience or character, without deep hatred or love, and is occupied chiefly with obstacles blocking his most ephemeral and petty desires. Since Smollett described a villain who is without talent and is a mere bore, the struggle of evil against good in the guise of Fathom and Renaldo is forced and overly dramatic.

The Castilian subplot, which deals with Don Diego's marriage and supposed double homicide, incongruously plunges the reader into a Corneillian love-honor conflict and all the melodrama that accompanies it. This particular piece of literary perambulation destroys what little progress Smollett had made in achieving unity of structure.

¹¹Smollett, Count Fathom (New York, 1880), Part I, p. 4.

The unity of the novel is further dissipated by Smollett's attempts to edify morally by overstereotyping Count Fathom and to give the readers a sample of Gothic horrors by relating an incident of murder involving Fathom on a dark, stormy night. When Smollett described Fathom's finding himself locked in a small attic room with a corpse, expecting to be violently murdered at any moment, the novelist further modified the picaresque tradition by anticipating the "thriller." Though well done in itself, this episode, like the Castilian subplot, weakens the unity of the whole. Even with Smollett's didactic purpose and clever innovations showing through, however, Ferdinand Count Fathom is not without glimmerings of the amoral farce of Peregrine Pickle.

Ferdinand Count Fathom attempts to be farcical, heroic, melodramatic, realistic, and well-constructed, all in one artistic exhalation; Smollett was juggling too many genres at once. He was moving away from the picaresque tradition toward what appears to be a combination of Fielding-like organization and Richardson-like morality. Ferdinand Count Fathom is most successful, however, when Smollett's farce and melodrama are prominent in the narrative.

In Smollett's next novel, Sir Launcelot Greaves (1760-61), the chief male character has completely lost the picaro form and is nothing but a refurbished Don Quixote. Only in the minor characters did Smollett retain the picaresque tradition.

Sir Launcelot Greaves was the first English novel of any appreciable length to be published serially--no doubt its chief claim to fame. Between Ferdinand Count Fathom and Sir Launcelot Greaves, Smollett had brought out his Complete History of England (1757-1758), besides translating Don Quixote (1755), writing a play, The Reprisal (1757), and editing the Critical Review (1755-1757). He could find time for a novel only in jail, where he spent three months for libeling the pusillanimous Admiral Knowles. These circumstances may explain the weaknesses of the book and the faded image of the picaro, completely enervated and uninteresting.

If Ferdinand Count Fathom was weakened by the use of too many literary traditions, Sir Launcelot Greaves is almost incoherent for the same reason. The book opens on a note of Gothic melodrama when the hero dramatically enters the scene in full armor, carrying his unconscious squire out of a raging tempest into safety. The reader discovers immediately that Launcelot is no picaro, but rather an anglicized Don Quixote, carrying a militant seventeenth century sensibility below his breastplate: he is out to do battle with vice. But the conceit is dull, and Smollett undoubtedly came to realize this, for from Ferret, one of Smollett's cynics, in the dialogue immediately following the knight's entrance comes the following:

"What!" said Ferret, "you set up for a modern Don Quixote? The scheme is rather too stale and extravagant."

What was a humorous romance and well-timed satire in Spain near two hundred years ago, will make but a sorry jest, and appear equally insipid and absurd when really acted from affectation, at this time of day, in a country like England."¹²

Smollett was accordingly obliged to emphasize ludicrous, ridiculous, farcical, and mock-epic language to undercut the hero's own knight-errantry. The minor characters, though fewer in number than in his other novels, take on a much greater significance, carrying on the entertainment of the reader while the hero bungles through one windmill tilt after another. There is also a love plot here which, though discolored by absurd romance, can be traced to Booth's narrative in Fielding's Amelia. Smollett's Aurelia Darnet, however, falls far short of the original.

In brief, Sir Launcelot Greaves suffers from a Quixotic complex. The Gothic melodrama and listless romance further detract from the book's merits, and Sir Launcelot is the feeblest of all Smollett's heroes.

When Smollett wrote The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker in 1771, he was dying and he knew it. The book is a farewell to the world that he had so often insulted and entertained; it is his last judgment and gruff show of affection for a world filled with oddities, injustices, and paradoxes. As early as 1761 he had written Garrick,

I am old enough to have seen and observed that we are all playthings of fortune and that it depends

¹²Smollett, Sir Launcelot Greaves (New York, 1880), pp. 18-19.

upon something as insignificant and precarious as the tossing up of a half-penny, whether a man rises to affluence and honours, or continues to his dying day struggling with the difficulties and disgraces of life. I desire to live quietly with all mankind.¹³

This mellow mood and dignified frame of mind sets the tone of Humphrey Clinker. Smollett had laid aside the techniques and preoccupations of those who had affected him--Fielding, Cervantes, Swift, Richardson, and Sterne--and had eschewed all but the barest outline of the picaresque tradition. There are no main problems or central themes. Five characters simply go on a journey together, meet the vicissitudes of life, and four of them find mates. Matt Bramble alone remains celibate. He is the aged picaro, more mellow than Roderick or Peregrine, seldom feeling the stings of the outside world, nor wishing combat as did Sir Launcelot.

Smollett's customary gusty language is retained in Humphrey Clinker. Matt Bramble's speculations on the foreign substances in the Bath waters are just as unattractive as the most infrequent description of retchings and chamber pots in his earlier works. Occasionally Smollett flared up at society in scorn of its ill manners, but by and large, Smollett had made his peace with the human race.

When Bramble laughs, it is no longer the guffaw of Peregrine, and when he melts in compassion, the romantic

¹³Edward S. Noyes, The Letters of Tobias Smollett, M. D. (Cambridge, 1926), p. 51.

agony and desperation of Roderick is purged. Matt Bramble makes this book Smollett's masterpiece. The author's objectivity about himself makes a wholly conscious self-portrait possible. Matthew (Smollett) is "a good man and a kind man, but a little soured over with illness, a little disenchanted, somewhat valetudinarian."¹⁴

Not that the reader cannot still laugh heartily at the antics of his fellow man, or be moved by the sight of injustice or malice; but Smollett was weary and above all wanted to be comfortable until he died.

The central figures examined here have all been likened to Smollett the man in some degree. Historically, there is no doubt of the autobiographical nature of Roderick Random, and endless incidents in his four major novels could undoubtedly be traced back to adventures or mishaps in Smollett's life. To understand his heroes is to understand the author. Smollett, above all other major figures of English letters, was incapable of getting into the mind of someone else. Shakespeare could talk like Lady Macbeth or Iago, Falstaff or Coriolanus, Anthony or Thersites, and be equally convincing in any of the roles. Even Richardson could understand Mrs. Jewkes, but Smollett's unique literary impediment was to talk like himself and no one else; he seemed unable to project

¹⁴Arthur Machen, "Preface," The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (New York, 1929), p. x.

successfully a moral point of view essentially different from his own. His heroes or anti-heroes are seen from the inside out; but the minor characters are always presented externally. The externals of the heroines, supporting heroes, and eccentrics are graphically but superficially presented to the reader.

As a literary device within a tradition, the "picaro," as he has been encountered in Smollett, presents difficulties to the scholar of the picaresque tradition. Frank Chandler has set rather arbitrary distinctions between the picaresque novel, the rogue story, and the adventure novel. According to that critic's definitions, Smollett cannot be called a writer of the picaresque novel. And it is true that Smollett, although deeply influenced by LeSage, did make his own innovation in the tradition and did not adhere strictly to the definition. Another critic, William Huse, more interested in defining the spirit rather than the letter of the type, comments that

it would appear that once the type broke away from the original picaresque form, it expanded and changed so greatly that its central characteristic became no more than this: the passage of a character through a wide range of experiences which bring him in contact with widely diversified social types.¹⁵

No form of literature can long stay unchanged without losing its original vitality. Smollett adopted the spirit of

¹⁵William W. Huse, Jr., "Pickle and Pickwick," Washington University Studies, X (1922), 144.

picaresque tradition in writing his lively and vigorous novels. His license with this form in no way enervated the heroes nor gave a mortal wound to the genre.

CHAPTER II

SMOLLETT'S HEROINES

If the reader should be monotonously dismayed at times with Smollett's predictable heroes, with their lack of interesting individual differences and with the same character traits and singleness of purpose, patience is still needed, for there is yet one more stumbling block to recognition of Smollett's genius. This obstacle is his heroines, artificial flowers without bloom or scent whom Smollett labored into position so that the eighteenth century readers' romantic inclinations and Puritanlike morality were appeased. Since "love is a mere device for ending the story with marriage,"¹ the heroines' character development counts for little. In all but a single instance, Smollett's leading ladies are tediously duplicated from a die first cast by Richardson, but lack the frequently maddening personality quirks which sometimes made the latter author's heroines somewhat human and interesting.

The social environment reflected by Richardson's Pamela is logically what must be first analyzed in order for the

¹Frank W. Chandler, The Literature of Roguery (Boston, 1932), II, 311.

reader to grasp the nature of Smollett's heroines and his intent in creating such lackluster characters.

Utter and Needham believe that "if every woman in life is a daughter of Eve, so is every heroine in fiction a daughter of Pamela."² If this is not true of all heroines in fiction, it most certainly is of Smollett's and most of his contemporaries'.

The eighteenth century heroine was created from the upper middle classes, whose

women were more ornament than a useful part of the economic system; the Eighteenth Century ideal of woman combined the moral attributes of a Puritan inheritance with qualities lifted from a chivalric past. Like so many Eighteenth Century ideals, it was a compromise: emphasizing virtue, it was neither ascetic nor frankly utilitarian; stressing sensibility, it eschewed romantic passion no less than frank sensuality. An attempt to temporize between a monkish austerity, a romantic expansiveness, and the robust common sense of the Eighteenth Century, it seems a pale and lackluster ghost of an ideal.³

That this model should have been used by so many English writers, especially Smollett, is a literary mystery.

Virtue is the key to the concept of this heroine; this virtue implies dutifulness, obedience, and purity on one hand and pity, generosity, and other expansive virtues on the other. Moreover, this virtue was less spiritual than practical, the

²Robert P. Utter and Gwendolyn B. Needham, Pamela's Daughters (New York, 1936), p. 1.

³Edward C. Mack, "Pamela's Step-daughters: the Heroines of Smollett and Fielding," College English, VIII (1947), 293.

apex of this practicality being physical chastity. "Certainly, sexual virtue . . . was the sine qua non of the Eighteenth Century heroine."⁴ Unless the girl was chaste, she could not be virtuous, regardless of her other redeeming traits. However, since marriage was always the goal, the heroine was not to remain a virgin: a wife who was faithful to her spouse was both virtuous and chaste.

Next to virtue, sensibility was the most important part of the heroine's make-up. Perhaps she presaged the coming wave of romantic sentimentalism, of the sentiments of pity, benevolence, and love. Most of her other personality traits, as well as her physical appearance, were in accord with this "sensibility":

With her gentility of manner, her girlish, symmetrical beauty, her delicate air, her modesty and submissiveness, her fainting fits, her frequent tears, her prudery of words and actions, her studied innocence of even her own natural functions, and her ignorance of politics or history or science or philosophy or anything except a few "accomplishments," such as speaking French and playing on the harpsichord, she was the very essence of softness and passivity and gentility.⁵

In the further dehumanization of this heroine, love for the man of her choice was to be, without passion or ecstasy, an agglutination of sisterly affection, esteem, and gratitude. In return she received sentimental love from a good and pure man. Once this couple was married, they were to spend their lives in bucolic domestic happiness, surrounded by the

⁴Ibid., p. 294.

⁵Ibid.

cultivated simplicity dear to the eighteenth-century heart. In real life this kind of marriage necessitated money and position, and these were always implied, although not particularly emphasized. Moreover, in defense of the real life upper-middle-class girl of small means, she had no other choice, if she were not to starve, but to be married. And it was necessarily her business to protect her virginity from would-be ravishers, cashing in on it eventually for a good match.

In Richardson's Pamela the virtuous heroine a little too obviously is not only able to marry the man who attempted to seduce her, but also compliments herself and is applauded by society for being able to capture wealth and position by using chastity as a trump card. And, of course, Pamela married and lived happily ever after; at least, the part of the book covering her married life has seemed forever to numerous impatient readers.

Curiously enough, Smollett reproduced this eighteenth-century heroine quite well. From Narcissa of Roderick Random to Lydia in Humphrey Clinker, his leading ladies differ from this standard as little as they do from one another. Being endowed above all with virtue and discretion, they dedicate themselves almost exclusively to the preservation of their chastity against Smollett's villains as well as his heroes, "who were little less predatory than his villains."⁶

⁶Ibid., p. 295.

Perhaps even more important to Smollett's heroines is their concern with the appearance of virtue. Outwardly (though Smollett knew better) these ladies are paragons of delicacy, elegance, and classic symmetry, possessing "a soft and feminine grace which attracts the sympathy and engages the protection of every human beholder."⁷ What other attributes his heroines may have possessed remain recondite to the scrutiny of the reader. If the ladies ever used their minds for more than writing and spelling, speaking French, playing on the harpsichord, dancing finely or evoking a "strain of vocal music more plaintive than the widowed turtle's moan, more sweet and ravishing than Philomel's love-warbled song,"⁸ only God and Smollett knew of it.

Where does all this divine perfection lead? Marriage, of course! Matt Bramble, on this subject, feels that "in the choice of a husband, a young woman ought not to sacrifice the feelings of her heart for any consideration upon earth."⁹ This liberality is not, however, in keeping with Smollett's practices as a novelist, which never leave the impression that love alone is enough. His heroines all come from families of some prominence and wealth, daughters of country

⁷Ibid., p. 296.

⁸Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (New York, 1880), Part I, p. 219.

⁹Ibid., Part II, p. 216.

gentlemen and merchants. In all but one instance, Smollett married the heroines off to husbands with enough wealth to place them in social positions not beneath their former status.

This question of personal fortune was truly important, for how could they have lived in pastoral bliss and solid comfort without wealth? Even Lydia in Humphrey Clinker, who would have married a poverty-stricken stroller, ended up with a gentleman who was her social equal and possessed a greater fortune. Emilia in Peregrine Pickle may have said that she would marry Peregrine, even if he were penniless; but, fortunately, she never had to do it. It was Smollett's procedure to marry his heroines off--usually in the last chapters, sparing the reader the agony of their wedded bliss--and to marry them well.

Narcissa marries Roderick in Chapter LXVIII, next to the last chapter of Roderick Random. Emilia with great delicacy accepts Peregrine's proposal and marries him in "Chapter the Last." In Ferdinand Count Fathom the pattern is varied, since Monimia, the most tepid of Smollett's dull heroines, does not marry the protagonist of the novel. However, she does marry a rich and socially prominent young man in the last chapter of the novel. The protagonist is also ensnared in the matrimonial noose.

Sir Launcelot Greaves returns to the familiar. Aurelia and Sir Launcelot's "banns of marriage were regularly

published, . . . and the ceremony was performed in the parish church"¹⁰ in "Chapter the Last." Only in Humphrey Clinker does the hero escape marriage, but the heroine, Lydia, does not. Jerry Melford, her brother, writes in a final letter in the closing pages, "The fatal knots are now tied. The comedy is near a close, and the curtain is ready to drop."¹¹ It is almost as if Smollett were eternally at a loss on how to conclude his novels, for he always contrived a romance which ends in marriage at the finish of the book.

It is not necessary to be very familiar with Smollett to recognize that his treatment of his heroines is completely incongruous with the remainder of his work. What is known about Smollett--his temperament and his beliefs--seems to belie these lifeless and tedious characterizations. For as Smollett saw the world, "there was little room in it for the ideal at all and less chance for its success."¹²

Smollett created heroes who outwitted this wicked world by not being overly moral or discreet. Why did he create heroines hardly able to survive an ill-advised kiss, let alone a world he saw as evil and hard? When Matt Bramble says of Lydia that she is "a good natured simpleton, as soft as butter,

¹⁰Smollett, Sir Launcelot Greaves (New York, 1830), p. 389.

¹¹Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, Part II, p. 268.

¹²Mack, p. 296.

and as easily melted,"¹³ Smollett may have indirectly expressed his view of the eighteenth-century heroine. His special genius was in picturing the world's folly and evil humorously or satirically. Outside his heroines there is no suggestion that he was ever attracted to the conventional ideals of his age.

Hence one is tempted to conclude that in creating his heroines, Smollett was capitulating to public taste and that doing portraits of the sugar-without-spice women, such as Narcissa and Emilia, was merely a distasteful chore for him. His treatment of these heroines lends weight to this idea. One critic of Smollett theorizes that

exact reproduction is likely to occur when one is so completely out of sympathy with an ideal as to prevent reconciliation between the personal and the conventional. Smollett not only made reproductions but made them so badly that no one could possibly mistake them for the original. His heroines are mere stereotypes. They never learn or develop and seldom act . . .¹⁴

By accepting the sentimental ideal of the eighteenth-century heroine, Smollett tacitly approves of Pope's concept of women:

Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
"Most Women have no Characters at all."¹⁵

¹³Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, Part I, p. 15.

¹⁴Mack, pp. 296-297.

¹⁵Alexander Pope, "Epistle II, To a Lady," Epistles to Several Persons (London, 1951), p. 45.

CHAPTER III

SMOLLETT'S ECCENTRICS

General Observations

Together let us beat this ample field,
Try what the open, what the covert yield;
The latent tracks, the giddy heights explore
Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;
Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,
And catch the Manners living as they rise;
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can,
But vindicate the ways of God to Man.¹

As one might travel from the geographic North Pole to the magnetic one, the reader may choose to pass from Smollett's heroes and heroines to examine the core of the novelist's peculiar genius--his eccentrics. Too subjective in portraying his heroes and too skeptical to create convincingly idealistic heroines, Smollett found his forte in farcical travesty, slashing caricature, pictures of romantic horror, or occasionally half-humorous, half-tender portraits. It was these curious and dynamic patchwork figures of eighteenth-century humanity that made Smollett one of the most widely read novelists of his period.

To consider, however, the popularity of these eccentrics only in Smollett's age would be to omit an important consequence

¹Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man (London, 1950), pp. 13-14.

of his works: it is the universality of human quirks that he has so realistically recorded that transcends the topical quality of his "originals." Today, when conformity is stressed, his novels offer an opportunity to observe the extravagant, quixotic, and cracked-brain literary types of the eighteenth century. Certainly, this world of eccentrics built by Smollett is a contribution to the eccentric types in English literature.

Though Smollett did not have a sophisticated or philosophical bent, he did have artistic intent. In creating his eccentrics his purpose was in part to entertain. Since the eighteenth century in England was a period when the literary artist was liberating himself from the bondage of the patron, he was faced with the time-honored exigency of feeding himself. If the author entertained the readers, he was popular and sold at the bookstores. Smollett possessed this ability to create diversion for the readers with his humorous characterizations.

However, even to the most casual of Smollett's readers, it is obvious that the author was frequently satirizing his world: man, his manners, and his institutions. Of course, his chief tools were his eccentrics, ranging in size from delicately shaped needles to harvest-sized scythes. "They [the eccentrics] were offsprings of the union between the humor convention and the rising spirit of satire."² As it

²L. M. Ellison, "Elizabethan Drama and the Works of Smollett," PMLA, XLIV (1927), 859-860.

has already been noted, humor's function is to entertain. On the other hand, Smollett felt that the purpose of satire was to reform. It was his chore to merge the two qualities into a palatable combination. In his preface to Roderick Random, Smollett summed up what he thought constituted successful satire:

Of all kinds of satire there is none so entertaining and universally improving, as that which is introduced, as it were, occasionally, in the course of an interesting story, which brings every incident home to life; and, by representing familiar scenes in an uncommon and amusing point of view, invests them with all the graces of novelty, while nature is appealed to in every particular.³

Although Smollett in Roderick Random attempted mainly to arouse pity and compassion for the protagonist, he better succeeded in pointing out the follies of ordinary life. It is Smollett's satire, not his sentiment, which was his genius.

In the preface to Ferdinand Count Fathom, Smollett stated that he attempted "to instruct the ignorant and to entertain the vacant . . . to subject folly to ridicule and vice to indignation."⁴ But the book's morality is external, its world unreal. It is a fiction neither of manners nor of characters. When Smollett tried too hard to moralize, as in Ferdinand Count Fathom with the superimposed contrition of

³Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Roderick Random (New York, 1880), p. xlv.

⁴Smollett, Ferdinand Count Fathom (New York, 1880), Part I, p. 4.

the wicked and the miraculous victory of good, he failed both as a satirist and humorist.

Though Smollett was at times unsuccessful in his attempt to marry his somewhat soured temperament and his keen, commercial eye and dissecting pen, he more often succeeded in asserting "the ancient prerogative of comedy to correct and reform, and deplore the current taste for the insipidities of the 'genteel' cult."⁵

Nevertheless, Smollett failed to perceive and to make apparent the meaning of experience; his eccentrics never grow up; they remain two-dimensional and so overdrawn that their like are not to be found in the world. But they exist with enormous vitality on the page. For all the distorted people in it, Smollett's world has an inner fidelity. Just as Tamberlaine is raised from fantasy to nightmarish reality by Marlowe's imagery, Smollett's originals are credible in their own fictional environment, brought to life by Smollett's ingenious methods of exaggeration and emphasis.

Almost without exception, Smollett's most memorable comic figures were drawn from some powerful bias of personality which isolated them from the ordinary man. The repeated emphasis of these peculiarities produces an accumulation of external idiosyncrasies which culminates in caricature. However, "it is to be expected Smollett's predilection for

⁵Ellison, p. 853.

the humor convention is to be explained mainly by its utility in the service of satire."⁶ Hence, the character's master passion becomes his master folly. The emphasis and exaggeration characteristic of the English humor convention and intrinsic to Smollett's techniques, undoubtedly serve his ends, not only of satirizing the generic vices of society, but of serving his own personal ends in avenging his quarrels and enmities. Using literature as a means of promoting one's personal grievances and achieving revenge was an acceptable and a frequent practice. Many of his satirical portraits are recognizable; many have been lost to time; but the motivating animosity with which they were drawn is still discernible.

The Important Eccentrics

The eccentrics who run amuck on almost every page of Smollett's novels were drawn mostly from a common stockpile of types, apparently characters who were staples of the eighteenth-century novel; and Smollett used the popular types repeatedly in his works. The most frequently occurring characters are the faithful servant to the hero, the older man who befriends the hero, the shrew, the beautiful young lady of questionable virtue, the duenna, the dandy, and the maid serving an important person. However, Smollett's most

⁶Ibid., p. 855.

memorable characters do not necessarily fall into these categories; some eccentrics are unique, being the first of their type in fiction. Smollett's repetitious use of the picaresque formula demanded a constant supply of these eccentrics, and he drew abundantly from the literary stereotypes and from his own imagination to create his numerous eccentrics, who overflow the pages and turn practically every novel into a Bedlam.

When one of Smollett's heroes runs afoul of the world and finds himself in a dilemma of finance or romance--in some way without protection from a society he has found essentially uncharitable, the hero is supplied with an expedient deus ex machina: a devoted manservant. In his first novel Smollett created Hugh Strap, who shared the major experiences or, at least, the most trying ones, of Roderick's peregrinations through England and Europe.

Except those who are dressed in an extreme manner, such as the dandies and slovens, Smollett did not describe in any detail the physical appearances of his young men. Because of the dearth of physical description, a picture of Strap's appearance can hardly be conjured up by the reader. But of his humorous character and his fanatical loyalty to Roderick, the reader receives ample evidence.

Strap's early sentiments toward Roderick are attested by Roderick himself:

The attachment of Strap [for Roderick] flowed from a voluntary disinterested inclination, which had manifested itself on many occasions on my behalf, he having once rendered me the same service I had done Gawky [a fellow schoolmate], by saving my life at the risk of his own; and often fathered offenses that I had committed, for which he suffered severely, rather than I should feel the weight of the punishment I deserved.⁷

Roderick is not deceived; Strap continues in his role, sharing all the adventures and misadventures which Rory has authored, but not without some complaint:

God sent us well out of this place; we have been in London eight-and-forty hours, and I believe we have met with eight-and-forty thousand misfortunes.--We have been jeered, reproached, buffeted, pissed upon, and at last stripped of our money; and I suppose by and by we shall be stripped of our skins.⁸

Even though Strap has spirit, he has an inexplicable submissiveness to the adventurer. After Roderick has lost to card sharpers all the funds he has brought with him to London, Strap moralizes to him, but ends in giving his master his own funds. "There's all I have in the world; take it, and I'll beg for you, steal for you, go through the wide world with you, and starve with you; for though I be a poor cobbler's son, I am no scout."⁹

This tenacity with which Strap hangs to Roderick soon becomes nigh intolerable, for Strap is overexcitable and a bit of a bore. In Rory's own impatient words, "Notwithstanding

⁷Smollett, Roderick Random, Part I, pp. 27-28.

⁸Ibid., p. 124.

⁹Ibid., p. 125.

this misfortune [once again Rory has had a misadventure, and Strap has suffered the consequences], such was his transports at finding me safe and sound, that he almost stifled and stunk me to death with his embraces."¹⁰

After the two have arrived together in London, they are separated from each other over several lengthy periods. However, when they do reunite, Strap invariably has to salvage Roderick's finances and self-respect. Though Smollett may not have intended the reader to impute any special significance to this occasion, Strap is rewarded by his master by being permitted to marry the maid of the hero's wife, a former whore and friend of Rory's.

Tom Pipes, an old salt off the landship of Commodore Trunnion in Peregrine Pickle, is a second Strap. Although the beginnings of Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle differ, the adventures of the heroes, after they leave home, vary little except for the names of stock characters and of places. Pipes' career is diversified. First, he is the loyal attendant to Hawser Trunnion and takes his share of the hard knocks intended for the Commander during brawls. Proof of this is shown in the following lines: "There's poor Pipes, who was beaten into all colors of the rainbow for taking your [Trunnion's] part, and giving you time to sheer off."¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., p. 163.

¹¹Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, Part I, p. 19.

Second, Pipes becomes the servant to Peregrine when the boy goes off to school. The seaman assumes much the same role in his new master's fights and comes out of these fracas little better than out of the Commodore's:

. . . and when Pipes, brandishing his cudgel, stepped forward to engage him [an irritable gardener], [the gardener] leveled his weapon with such dexterity at his [Strap's] head that, had the skull been made of penetrable stuff, the iron edge must have cleft his pate in twain. . . . Pipes, though a little disconcerted, far from being disabled by the blow, in a trice retorted the compliment with his truncheon.¹²

Peregrine's growing older into a young gentleman has no effect on Pipes' dedication to his master, Pipes' adhering to his favorite as Strap did to his. In a time of great need and in a manner much like Strap's, Pipes offers his entire fortune to Perry, who is confined to the Fleet. "He spread his whole stock [fifty-five pounds] upon the table, for the acceptance of Peregrine; who being very much affected with his fresh instance of his attachment expressed his satisfaction . . ."¹³

Smollett's Timothy Crabshaw, in Sir Launcelot Greaves, is a welcomed change from the previous two servants, who are rather dull at times. In fact, Crabshaw and his horse Gilbert are the source of most of this book's humor, Crabshaw

¹²Ibid., pp. 141-142.

¹³Ibid., Part II, p. 172.

being a peevish clout, lazy, complaining, and not of the most intrepid nature. The question

what should have induced our knight to choose this here man for his squire, is not easy to determine; for, of all the servants about the house, he was the least likely either to please his master, or engage in such an undertaking [knight-errantry].¹⁴

When Crabshaw learns that he has been selected for the role of Sancho Panza in Launcelot's planned Quixotic sagas, he is none too hasty in assenting. Greaves, however, applies an expedient, which results in a more tractable attitude:

Timothy kept such a bawling, after he had received the blow from Sir Launcelot, that everybody on the field thought that some of his bones were broken. . . . Tim . . . groaning piteously, creeps back to the courtyard, with his body bent like a Greenland canoe. . . . Sir Launcelot . . . told him, there was nothing so good for a bruise, as a sweat; and he had the remedy [a horsewhip] in his hand. . . . So saying, he employed the instrument so effectually, that Crabshaw soon forgot his fractured ribs, and capered about with great agility.¹⁵

After giving this thorough drubbing, the knight orders Crabshaw to return the following morning prepared either to do service or to receive further corrective treatment. "Nobody dreamed that he would next day present himself at Greavesbury Hall; nevertheless, he was there very early in the morning; and even closeted a whole hour together with Sir Launcelot."¹⁶

¹⁴Smollett, Sir Launcelot Greaves, p. 73.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 74-75.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 75.

As opposed to his two predecessors, Crabshaw's motivating principles of fidelity arise from somewhat different sources.

If Launcelot is a bit insane in his affecting sixteenth-century armor and tilting with windmills, Crabshaw is certainly just as mad in his perversity of dispositions. The following account of the two launching their career of knight-errantry bears this out:

These precautions being taken, the knight, one morning, at daybreak, mounted Bronzomarte, and Crabshaw, as his squire, ascended the back of a clumsy cart-horse, called Gilbert. This, again, was looked upon as an instance of insanity in the said Crabshaw; for, of all the horses in the stable, Gilbert was the most stubborn and vicious, and had often done mischief to Timothy while he drove the cart and plow. When he was out of humor, he would kick and plunge as if the devil were in him. He once thrust Crabshaw into the middle of a quick-set hedge, where he was terribly torn; another time he canted him over his head into a quagmire, where he stuck with his heels up, and must have perished, if people had not been passing that way; a third time he seized him in the stable with his teeth by the rim of the belly, and swung him off the ground, to the great danger of his life;¹⁷

a marriage, no doubt, which could have been made only in Heaven.

In his intrepidity, Crabshaw again differs from the first two servants. Sir Launcelot and his man have barely set out to combat the world's iniquities when they encounter their first fracas. Here, Crabshaw shows his mettle. "Crabshaw, seeing himself clear of the fray, did not tarry to take leave of his master, but made the most of his way to Greavesbury

¹⁷Ibid., p. 76.

Hall, where he appeared hardly with any vestige of human countenance . . ."¹⁸ Even though Crabshaw redeems himself in the knight's eyes, he is never a willing accomplice to Launcelot's knight-errantry. When Greaves threatens to dismiss his man dishonorably from his service, Timothy announces to the knight that it would be the greatest favor he could do to him, "to turn him out of a service in which he knew he should be rib-roasted every day and murdered at last."¹⁹

Regrettably, Crabshaw's entertaining differences from Strap and Pipes are resolved as the novel develops. His role as jester ends, and he becomes merely another servant. A lawyer, Tom Clark, replaces him. Clark possesses the same hovering devotion and affection for the hero as his precursors in Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle. This is borne out in a reunion scene after Sir Launcelot has mysteriously disappeared: ". . . the tender hearted Tom Clark, running up to the knight, with his eyes brimful of joy and affection, forgot all the forms of distant respect, and throwing his arms around his neck, blubbered in his bosom."²⁰ Now Tom is the devoted servant, but on a somewhat higher social level and gets his just desserts at the novel's end:

¹⁸Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 82.

²⁰Ibid., p. 329.

he is married to Dolly Cowslip, who, by coincidence, is revealed as a cousin to Launcelot.

Humphrey Clinker, the loyal servant to Matt Bramble in Humphrey Clinker, reverts completely to form. Though more fully developed than his predecessors, Humphrey seems the result of Smollett's improved techniques rather than of any new insight into human behavior.

The reader's first encounter with Clinker comes at a very hilarious point in the novel. By dint of carelessness of one of the postillions an accident befalls the coach in which the principal characters of the novel are riding. The postillion is fired; but since there is no one else around better qualified, Clinker is hired to replace him. But Clinker is a poor, shabby fellow; and Tabby, Matt's sister, wastes no time in lodging a complaint against him at the coach's next stop:

She said that he was such a beggarly rascal, that he had ne'er a shirt to his back; and had the impudence to shock her sight by showing his posteriors, for which act of indelicacy he deserved to be set in the stocks. Mrs. Winifred Jenkins [of a kinder nature] confirmed this assertion, with respect to his nakedness, observing, at the same time, that he had skin as fair as alabaster.²¹

That he is a beggarly rascal at this time, Tabby is right in asserting, for, as Matt observes,

He seemed to be about twenty years of age, of a middling size, with bandy legs, stooping shoulders, high forehead,

²¹Smollett, The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (New York, 1880), Part I, pp. 124-125.

sandy locks, pinking eyes, flat nose, and long chin; but his complexion was of a sickly yellow. His looks denoted famine; and the rags that he wore could hardly conceal what decency requires to be covered.²²

However, the boy is not without skills and spirit, endearing himself to Matt Bramble in the following dialogue:

"Suppose I was inclined to take you into my service," said he [Bramble], "what are your qualifications? What are you good for?"--"An' please your honor," answered the original, "I can read and write, and do the business of the stable indifferent well. I can dress a horse and shoe him, and bleed and rowl him; and, as for the practice of sow-geldings, I won't turn my back on e'er a he in the country of Wilts. Then I make hog puddings and hob-nails, mend kettles, and tin sauce-pans. . . . I know something of a single stick and psalmody, . . . I can play upon the Jew's harp, sing Black-eyed Susan, Arthur O'Bradley, and divers other songs. I can dance a Welsh jig, and Nancy Dawson; wrestle a fall with any lad my inches, when I'm in heart; and under correction, I can find a hare when your honor wants a bit of game."²³

And Clinker did not want for devotion, for "he [Clinker] would follow him [Bramble] to the world's end, and serve him all the days of his life without fee or reward."²⁴ To the end of the book Humphrey serves Matt Bramble, even saving the latter's life at the risk of his own. In a scene reminiscent of Strap's rendering the same service to Roderick,²⁵ Clinker pulls Bramble from the water. Matt is grateful:

"I do believe it, Humphrey," said the squire; "but as you think it was your duty to save my life

²² Ibid., p. 125.

²³ Ibid., p. 129.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

²⁵ Smollett, Roderick Random, Part I, p. 28.

at the hazard of your own, I think it is mine to express the sense I have of your extraordinary fidelity and attachment."²⁶

In this scene, Bramble rewards Humphrey, but the servant's real fortune is yet to come. By coincidence Matt discovers that Humphrey is his illegitimate son. From this point the book takes a very predictable course. Matt very generously gives the boy a great deal of money and an estate. He further rewards his son by allowing him to marry Tabitha's young maid, Winifred Jenkins, the very same girl who earlier had likened the fairness of Humphrey's skin on his backsides to alabaster.

The respective dialects of Strap and Pipes are the only major differences observed in these two characters. Strap is a true Scotsman, whereas Pipes is an old salt. Otherwise, the two are much alike. Crabshaw differs from these two by virtue of his cowardly and perverse nature. Humphrey, lacking Crabshaw's cowardice but having some of his awkwardness, is a greatly improved Strap-Pipes, his being both more humorous and original than his forerunners.

Smollett, apparently with almost the same purpose in mind as he had had with the devoted servant, introduced, in Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle, the older man who befriends the hero, in most instances helping him out of bleak circumstances. In portraying these particular men, Smollett relied mainly on outward marks of manner and speech,

²⁶Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, Part II, p. 220.

emphasizing the latter in the case of the seamen. Tom Bowling, the first of Smollett's remarkable salts, opportunely appears in Chapter III to save young Roderick from an inhumane situation, delivering him to London and finding him an apprentice-ship.

Smollett's detailed physical description of the man leaves the reader aware of a durable protector:

He was a strong built man, somewhat bandy-legged, with a neck like that of a bull, and a face which, you might easily perceive, had withstood the most obstinate assaults of the weather. His dress consisted of a sailor's coat, altered for him by the ship's tailor, a striped flannel jacket, a pair of red breeches, japanned with pitch, clean gray worsted stockings, large silver buckles, that covered three fourths of his shoes, a silver laced hat, whose crown overlooked the brims about an inch and a half, a black bob wig in buckle, a check shirt, a silk handkerchief, an [sic] hanger, girded to his thigh by a tarnished laced belt, and a good oak plant under his arm.²⁷

And the reader is not deceived, for during an argument with Mr. Syntax, arch-villain and Rory's schoolmaster, Bowling uses his physical powers to resolve the disagreement:

My uncle having upbraided the arbitrary wretch with his inhumanity to me, told him that he proposed to give him a little discipline for the good of the soul, which he immediately put in practice [with the good oak plant] with great vigor and dexterity. The smart application to the pedant's withered posteriors, gave him such an exquisite pain, that he roared like a mad bull, danced, cursed, and blasphemed, like a frantic bedlamite.²⁸

²⁷Smollett, Roderick Random, Part I, pp. 13-14.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 30-31.

Bowling's particular dialect and his singular sense of humor are brought together effectively in the scene where Rory's grandfather is lying on his deathbed. The old grandfather has expressed a desire to see all his descendants, and Bowling has obliged by bringing Random to the house.

My uncle [Bowling] approached him [Rory's grandfather] with these words: "What! he's not aweigh? How fare ye, old gentleman?--Lord have mercy upon your poor sinful soul." Upon which the dying man turned his languid eyes toward us, and Mr. Bowling went on, "Here's poor Rory come to see you before you die, and receive your blessing. What, man! don't despair--you have been a great sinner, 'tis true, what then? There's a righteous judge above--a'n't there?--He minds no more than a porpoise. Yes, yes, he's a-going--the land crabs will have him, I see that his anchor's apeak, i' faith."²⁹

Bowling has a relatively small role in Roderick Random, but he does befriend Roderick and help change his fortunes.

Another older man who befriends Roderick is a certain Launcelot Crab, a surgeon. This man's reasons for taking Rory into his home are not motivated by his love for humanity--as were the generous acts of Rory's other benefactors--but by his desire to take revenge on a druggist named Potion and to use the boy as a drudge. The surgeon is one of Smollett's most disagreeable characters:

This member of the faculty was aged fifty, about five feet high, and ten around the belly; his face was capacious as a full moon, and much of the complexion of a mulberry; his nose, resembling a powder-horn, was swelled to an enormous size, and studded all over with carbuncles; and his little gray eyes reflected the rays

²⁹Ibid., pp. 43-44.

in such an oblique manner, that, while he looked a person full in the face, one would have imagined he was admiring the buckle of his shoe.³⁰

However, Crab is such a monstrosity that he becomes not only too hideous for comedy but too particular for satire on professions and manners. Crab appears only briefly in the book, staying only long enough to make life unpleasant for the hero.

The character type of the older man who befriends the hero reaches its comic and tender heights in Peregrine Pickle but also ends here, this kind of original ceasing to exist in Smollett's works after this novel.

By far the most amusing of all of the classification is Commodore Hawser Trunnion, a landlocked salt who built his own ship from a castle and lived out his later years there, fighting many imaginary demons and one real one, his wife; being both charitable and unpredictable to his servants and farmers, and doting upon his favorite, Perry, even after he has proved himself somewhat of a rascal. He is an obstreperous man, demanding and peevish, his speech almost unintelligible, but the reader will well remember him for his mad antics, his comical wisdom, and his charitable heart.

Smollett was sparing in physical description of the Commodore, but what he did provide establishes that Trunnion has but one eye.

³⁰Ibid., p. 54.

He was in stature at least six feet high, though he had contracted an habit of stooping, by living so long on board; his complexion was tawny, and his aspect rendered hideous by a large scar across his nose, and a patch that covered his eye.³¹

With Trunnion's peevish, demanding, loud, and almost unintelligible speech, the novel abounds. Below is a sample argument between the Commodore and his servants over an accident with Trunnion's coach.

After a pause of some minutes, the conversation was begun by this ferocious chief, who, fixing his eye upon the lieutenant with a sternness of countenance not to be described, addressed him in these words: "D--n my eyes! Hatchway, I always took you to be a better seaman than to upset our chaise in such fair weather. Blood! Didn't I tell you we were running bump ashore, and bid you set in the lee-brace, and haul upon a wind?" "Yes," replied the other, with an arch sneer, "I do confess as how you did give such orders, after you had run us foul of a post, so as that the carriage lay along, and could not right herself." "I run you foul of a post!" cried the commander; "d--n my heart! You're a pretty dog, an't you, to tell me above board to my face?"³²

And these ridiculous arguments, with their incomprehensible sea gibberish, run throughout the book until the Commander dies. However, Trunnion's ill-tempered disposition alters considerably when it concerns itself with his nephew, Perry. Throughout the adventures of Young Pickle the old man is frequently ill-used by him, but this in no way affects Hawser's affection for the boy.

³¹Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, Part I, p. 12.

³²Ibid., pp. 12-13.

In an argument which follows a disagreement concerning Perry's attachment to the lovely Emilia,³³ Peregrine breaks with his uncle, who has so generously supplied the boy with money and a manservant while Pickle was away at school. Letters of redress and recrimination are exchanged between the two, but the old salt's pride gives first:

My Good Lad,--If I gave offense in my last letter, I'm sorry for 't, d'ye see; I thought it was the likeliest way to bring you up; but in time to come, you shall have a larger swing of cable. When you can spare time, I shall be glad if you will make a short trip and see your aunt, and him who is

Your loving godfather and humble servant,
Hawser Trunnion

P.S.--If you want money, you may draw upon me, payable at sight.³⁴

As far as the narrative of Peregrine's adventures is concerned, Trunnion's value to the story is almost completed at the end of the first four volumes. At the conclusion of the novel his final reward is the willing of his wealth, which is considerable, to his nephew.

If Trunnion is the funniest of this group, Cadawaller Crabtree is certainly the most interesting. The hero he befriends is Peregrine, but the friendship is based upon a mutual desire to be entertained rather than upon the older man's wishing to assist the younger one. Cadawaller is an old rogue--a misanthrope, cynic, and mischief maker. Peregrine and Crabtree meet in London's high society, and, finding

³³Ibid., Chapters XVII-XVIII.

³⁴Ibid., p. 226.

themselves suitably matched, go about methodically to create havoc in the lives of the pompous and hypocritical people of fashion. Cadwallader affects deafness and Peregrine naiveté. What results from these men's adventures forms some of the most humorous scenes in Smollett's novels. At times the humor becomes invective, and the satire loses its sparkle, but the scenes are always entertaining.

Peregrine looks upon Cadwallader as a great curiosity when he first meets him. In a few short days Perry gains the older man's close acquaintance, the reason for this being, in Crabtree's own words, that

there is something in your [Peregrine's] disposition which indicates a rooted contempt for the world, and I understand you have made some successful efforts in exposing one part of it to ridicule of the other. It is upon this assurance that I offer you my advice and assistance, . . .³⁵

With the friendship sealed, the hero learns more about the misanthrope's travels and his attitudes toward the world.

In short, I have traveled over the greatest part of Europe, as a beggar, pilgrim, priest, soldier, gamester, and a quack; and felt the extremes of indigence and opulence, with the inclemency of weather in all its vicissitudes.³⁶

Here is the picaresque spirit; yet Crabtree has a wisdom more profound than that of a picaro's. "I have learned that the characters of mankind are everywhere the same; that common

³⁵Ibid., Part III, p. 16.

³⁶Ibid.

sense and honesty bear an infinitely small proportion to folly and vice; and that life is at best a paltry province."³⁷ Crabtree is amazingly similar to Matt Bramble; their philosophies are different, perhaps, but their conclusions about life are much the same. Compare these opinions of Bramble's with the preceding quotations:

But we are all a pack of venal and corrupted rascals; so lost to all sense of honesty, and all tenderness of character, that, in a little time, I am fully persuaded, nothing will be infamous but virtue and public spirit.³⁸

In short we live in a vile world of fraud and sophistication . . .³⁹

Gadwallader remains close by Perry throughout the remainder of the book and, like Bramble, enjoys the final marriage scenes with their connubial bliss; but he stays single and happy in his own sour way to the book's end.

Departing from the character of the misanthropic male, this study of eccentrics comes to the most ludicrous, yet the least original, eccentric that Smollett invented: the shrew.⁴⁰ Other than the opprobrious concepts inherent in the term, Smollett's viragos have a number of social disabilities: they are single and rapidly advancing toward old age and permanent

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, Part I, p. 110.

³⁹Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁰Utter and Needham, Pamela's Daughters, Chapter VII.

spinsterhood; and they have an extremely frightening or disagreeable demeanor, a rapaciousness that would shame the Vandals, a penchant for all marriageable men, and occasionally an expeditious religious fervor.

These ladies do not present a pretty picture of femininity but one that is amusing and infinitely more provocative than the unconvincing portraits of the Narcissas and Monimias that Smollett painted. After the reader has examined all Smollett's novels, he will find that all the shrews, wherever they may appear, seem to be either an exact duplication or merely another side of some perfected model of a shrew which Smollett held in his mind. Tabitha Bramble, Matt Bramble's sister, is unquestionably this model shrew brought to life in Humphrey Clinker.

Smollett's first version of the shrew is a coarse-grained caricature of the learned lady in Roderick Random, the aunt of Narcissa.

Her forehead was high and wrinkled, her eyes were large, grey, and prominent; her nose was long, sharp, and aquiline; her mouth of vast capacity; her visage meagre and freckled, and her chin peaked like a shoemaker's paring knife; her upper lip contained a large quantity of plain Spanish, which, by continual falling, had embroidered her neck, that was not naturally very white; and the breast of her gown, that flowed loose about her with a negligence poetic, discovering linen that was very fine, and to all appearances never "washed but in Castilian streams." Around her lay heaps of books, globes, quadrants, telescopes, and other learned apparatus. Her snuff box stood at her right hand, at her left lay her handkerchief sufficiently

used, and a convenience to spit in appeared on one side of her chair.⁴¹

Though more of an unkempt old maid than a shrew, she is evidence of a character type germinating in Smollett's mind, later to appear more fully developed in Peregrine Pickle in the form of Miss Grizzle Pickle, sister to Perry's father and later wife to the good Commodore:

Exclusive of a very wan (not to call it sallow) complexion, which perhaps was the effects of her virginity and mortification, she had a cast in her eyes that was not at all engaging, and such an extent of mouth, as no art or affection could contract into any proportional dimension. Then her piety was rather peevish than resigned, and did not in the least diminish a certain stateliness in her demeanor and conversation, that delighted in communicating the importance and honor of her family, which, by the bye, was not to be traced two generations back.⁴²

Being an old maid, she is naturally conscious of her age. At her brother's wedding reception, she industriously eclipses the bride with a thousand coquetries, macabre vivacity, and a vocal solo, for which she accompanies herself on the harpsichord. In great modesty, she informs "those whom it might concern, that she was no less than three years older than the bride; though had she added ten to the reckoning, she would have committed no mistake in point of computation."⁴³

⁴¹Smollett, Roderick Random, Part II, pp. 172-173.

⁴²Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, Part I, p. 4.

⁴³Ibid., p. 29.

Like many an old maid living with a single brother, Grizzle tyrannically runs the household. However, Gamaliel's marriage to the somewhat shrewish Mrs. Pickle ends her reign.

The presumption was like a thunderbolt to Mrs. Grizzle, who began to perceive that she had not succeeded quite so well as she imagined, in selecting for her brother a gentle and obedient yoke-fellow, who would always treat her with the profound respect which she thought due to her superior genius, and be entirely regulated by her advice and direction.⁴⁴

Being superseded at home in the only job she could have claimed to have done with any proficiency, Grizzle determines to alter the state of affairs by marriage, a goal, by anyone less spirited, considered altogether unfeasible:

. . . this was no other than to make a conquest of the commodore's heart, which the reader will easily believe was not very susceptible of tender impressions; but, on the contrary, fortified with insensibility and prejudice against the charms of the whole sex, and particularly prepossessed to the prejudice of that class distinguished by the appellation of old maid, in which Mrs. Grizzle was by this time unhappily ranked. She, nevertheless, took the field, and, having invested this seemingly impregnable fortress, begun to break ground . . .⁴⁵

Though met with voluble and obstinate opposition by the Commodore, the old maid invents diverse stratagems--such as only desperate and clever women could have dreamed up--and puts them into practice, teasing and torturing poor Trunnion into wedlock. Once in Trunnion's fortress as his wife, Grizzle fights for control with the shrew's weapons. However, they live many happy, though tumultuous, years together,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 35.

Grizzle's irrational and peevish behavior being modified by her marriage and time.

An interesting speculation on Grizzle's fate had she not found a mate is one which Smollett supplied the reader in the person of Miss Withers, encountered later in Roderick Random. Rory is deceived in believing that the billets-doux he has received from Miss Withers are from a lonely young girl named Miss Sparkle, whom he had seen only once through her closet window. Since the letters are marked with that address, what else is he to think? When Rory is admitted to the parlor, he has a surprise waiting for him.

Heaven and earth!--how shall I paint my situation, when I found Miss Sparkle converted into a wrinkled bag, turned of seventy! I was struck dumb with amazement and petrified with horror! This ancient Urganda perceived my disorder, and, approaching with a languishing air, seized my hand, asking in a squeaking tone if I was indisposed. Her monstrous affectation completed the disgust I had conceived for her at first appearance; and it was a long time before I could command myself so much as to behave with common civility. At length, however, I recollected myself, and pronounced an apology for my behavior, which, I said proceeded from a dizziness that seized me all of a sudden. My hoary Dulcinea, who, no doubt, had been alarmed at my confusion, no sooner learned the cause to which I now ascribed it, than she discovered her joy in a thousand amorous coquetries, and assumed the sprightly airs of a girl of sixteen. One while, she ogled me with her dim eyes, quenched in rheum; then, as if she was ashamed of that freedom, she affected to look down, blush, and play with her fan; then toss her head, that I might not perceive a palsy that shook it, ask some childish questions with a lisping accent, giggle and grin with her mouth shut, to conceal the ravages of time upon her teeth; leer upon me again, sigh piteously, fling herself about in her chair to show her agility,

and act a great many more absurdities that youth and beauty can alone excuse.⁴⁶

Predictably, the business of matrimony is soon broached by the lady:

Left to our mutual endearments, Miss Withers (for she was still a maiden) began to talk of matrimony, and expressed so much impatience in all her behavior, that had she been fifty years younger, I might possibly have gratified her longing without having recourse to the church; but this step my virtue, as well as interest, forbade.⁴⁷

Miss Withers is perhaps Smollett's ugliest caricature, and the point of his satire is lost in the unsavory descriptions. Nevertheless, Miss Withers could be a frustrated, unmarried Grizzle Pickle grown old.

If in English literature an award for creating the universal standard for the shrew could be established, this honor would certainly go to Smollett for his portrait of Tabitha Bramble in Humphrey Clinker. Although young Smollett saw the world somewhat differently from the manner in which he viewed it when he had grown to his full professional maturity, arrived at in Humphrey Clinker, he persevered in his first concept of the shrew to the very end of his writing career. In the preceding portraits the reader can observe these ladies--their general demeanor and their principal aims in life. Little more is presented of them except that one

⁴⁶Smollett, Roderick Random, Part III, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 44.

can infer the frequent misery emanating from their own discontent, which they deal out to others.

Tabitha Bramble, the arch-shrew of Smollett's novels, is more fully developed than her precursors, but does not differ much physically or in character from them. Through the eyes of her nephew, Jerry Melford, the reader is afforded knowledge of Tabby's person:

Mrs. Tabitha Bramble is a maiden of forty-five. In her person she is tall, raw-boned, awkward, flat chested, and stooping; her complexion is sallow and freckled; her eyes are not gray, but greenish, like those of a cat, and generally inflamed; her hair is of a sandy, or rather dusty hue; her forehead low; her nose long, sharp, and towards the extremity, always red in cold weather; her lips skinny, her mouth extensive, her teeth straggling and loose, of various colors and conformation; and her long neck shrivelled into a thousand wrinkles. In her temper she is proud, stiff, vain, imperious, prying, malicious, greedy, and uncharitable. In all likelihood her natural austerity has been scoured by disappointment in love; for her long celibacy is by no means owing to her dislike of matrimony; on the contrary, she has left no stone unturned to avoid the reproachful epithet of old maid.⁴⁸

In fact, Tabby has a long and disastrous history of romance to her credit. And neither is she a woman for whom it is easy to feel sisterly love. Even her brother's affection for her is questioned by Jerry:

He [Matt] really has an affection for this original [Tabitha] which maintains its ground in defiance of common sense, and in despite of that contempt which he must certainly feel for her character and understanding.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, Part I, p. 92.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

However, Tabby is suspected of being a bit human, for Jerry continues,

Nay, I am convinced, that she has likewise a most violent attachment to his person; though her love never shows itself but in the shape of her discontent; and she persists in tormenting him out of sheer tenderness.⁵⁰

Her perverseness of character is not merely limited to her brother, but is extended charitably to all. She "keeps the whole family in disquiet and uproar. She is one of those geniuses who find diabolical enjoyment in being dreaded and detested by their fellow creatures."⁵¹

The parasitic old maid, ever painfully aware of her dependent position, usually knows with exacting finesse when to leave off pursuing her passion for the discontent of others. Not so with Tabby. In an incident involving Humphrey's accidentally spilling soup on her and stepping on her dog, Chowder, the shrew peremptorily tells her brother that either Humphrey must go or she will. The following situation ensues:

Mr. Bramble's eyes began to glisten, and his teeth to chatter. "If stated fairly," said he, raising his voice, "the question is, whether I have spirit to shake off an intolerable yoke, by one effort of resolution, or meanness enough to do an act of cruelty and injustice, to gratify the rancor of a capricious woman. Hark ye, Mrs. Tabitha Bramble, I will now propose an alternative in my turn. Either discard your four-footed favorite, or give me leave to bid you eternally adieu. For I am determined that he and I shall live no longer under

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

the same roof; and now to dinner with what appetite you may.⁵²

With this come-uppance, Tabitha's fiery temperament is somewhat quenched, but only temporarily.

Material gain and matrimony, not necessarily in this order, are those subjects which most frequently engage Tabby's attention during her waking hours--and probably her sleeping ones, too. In matters of money she quibbles over each detail, even though "at present her capital is increased to about four thousand pounds; and her avarice seems to grow every day more rapacious."⁵³ But the industry with which she applies herself to the close management of her brother's house and to her own financial matters is of only secondary concern, for she harbors a dream, writing her housekeeper at Brambleton Hall that "before it's too long, perhaps I may show Matt, that I was not born to be the household drudge to my dying day."⁵⁴ Her vision is of marriage, the desire of which is a symptomatic disorder of the genre.

Jerry Melford, speaking again of his aunt, says that "that undefatigable [sic] maiden is determined to shoot at every sort of game,"⁵⁵ and that

⁵²Ibid., pp. 131-132.

⁵³Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁴Ibid., Part II, p. 18.

⁵⁵Ibid., Part I, p. 98.

though she is a violent churchwoman, of the most intolerant zeal, I believe in my conscience she would have no objection, at present, to treat on the score of matrimony with an Anabaptist, Quaker, or Jew; and even ratify the treaty at the expense of her own conversion.⁵⁶

She pursues this aim with the same industry with which she manages her brother's home or torments those around her. An amusing scene, which typifies any one of her numerous hunts, is given below:

Mrs. Tabitha goes more than halfway to meet his advances; she mistakes, or affects to mistake, the meaning of his [Barton's] courtesy, which is rather formal and fulsome; she returns his compliments with hyperbolic interest, she persecutes him with her civilities at table, she appeals to him for ever in conversation, she sighs and flirts, and ogles, and by her hideous affectation and impertinence, drives the poor courtier to the very extremity of his complaisance; in short, she seems to have undertaken the siege of Barton's . . . heart, and carries on her approaches in such a desperate manner, that I don't know whether he will not be obliged to capitulate.⁵⁷

In brief, this is the aging coquette driven to the extremities only old maids know. However, Tabitha ends as did her predecessor, Grizzle Pickle, even though Tabby has to suffer through the entire novel--with many traps laid and escapes made--before she ensnares a partner. Though Lishmahago is hardly an outstanding catch himself, the reader looks upon Lishmahago with no great envy. He perhaps reconciles himself

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 149.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 149-150.

to his fate, having heard that "it is better to marry a shrew than a sheep."⁵⁸

The servant to the hero, the older man who befriends the hero, and particularly the shrew are all stock figures to be found in novels by Smollett and in the novels of many of his contemporaries. There are many other eccentrics, however, who appear only once in his novels and whose likes are not found outside his works. They serve little purpose in the development of the immediate narrative, in the organization of the work, or in its satire. It is as though they were merely a self-indulged whim of the author, placed on the pages briefly to evoke a few laughs or to enable him to vent his spleen on a type that appeared in London society or perhaps simply to serve as page fillers. In any case their function in the novel is secondary to the picaro's adventures or the satiric purpose of the book.

The most remarkable of these characters is Mr. Morgan, a Welsh seaman. Obviously he was drawn from Smollett's experience at sea, and he bears an undeniable similarity to Bowling, Trunnion, and Pipes. He has no function in the novel other than that of an isolated character in a segment of Rory's life, and he was not used as a stock figure in any other of Smollett's novels.

⁵⁸James Howell, Familiar Letters, I, 1645, in H. L. Mencken, A New Dictionary of Quotations on Historical Principles (New York, 1942), p. 1045.

Morgan is the first mate of the ship on which Rory has been pressed for service. In appearance "he was a short thick man, with a face garnished with pimples, a snub nose turned up at the end, an excessive wide mouth, and little fiery eyes, surrounded with skin puckered up in innumerable wrinkles."⁵⁹ Although given to fits of vociferous shouting and quick to be offended, Morgan has a capacity for charity: "'As for a gentleman in distress,' said he, shaking me [Roderick] by the hand, 'I love him as I love my own powels. . . .'"⁶⁰ In the scene in which Rory is first introduced to the ship's mess, Rory rankles Morgan, who, in turn, gives him a good verbal drubbing. However,

all differences being composed, he [Morgan] untied his bundle, which consisted of three bunches of onions, and a great hump of Cheshire cheese, wrapped up in a handkerchief; and taking some biscuit from the cupboard, fell to with a keen appetite, inviting me to a share of the repast.⁶¹

Rather than his character, it is Morgan's dialogue and actions that render him a solitary eccentric in eighteenth-century novels. In a scene in which Rory accidentally upsets the sick bay's collective chamber pot, Random finds that he has

not unlocked a box of the most delicious perfume: it was well for me that my nose was none of the most delicate, else I know not how I might have been affected by this vapor, which diffused itself all over the

⁵⁹Smollett, Roderick Random, Part II, p. 50.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 52.

⁶¹Ibid.

ship, to the utter discomposure of everybody who
 tarried on the same deck . . .⁶²

The Welshman appears, having had "intelligence by his nose
 of the approach of something extraordinary."⁶³ Being dis-
 composed and given to homely proverbs and metaphors, Morgan
 cries,

"Goo have mercy upon my senses! I believe the enemy
 has poarded us in a stink pot!" Then directing his
 discourse to the steward, from whom he imagined the
 odor proceeded, he reprimanded him severely for the
 freedom he took among gentlemen of birth, and threatened
 to smoke him like a padger with sulphur, if he ever
 should presume to offend his neighbors with such smells
 for the future.⁶⁴

These scenes, which Smollett drew with perhaps question-
 able taste, the vitality of the dialogue, along with the
 ludicrousness of the situation, give the Welshman a remark-
 able character.

Morgan reappears in Peregrine Pickle to give his opinion
 of what Rory has said of him in Roderick Random. The Welsh-
 man and Perry are engaged in conversation:

Mr. Random, my goot sir, I believe upon my conscience
 and salfation, is my very goot friend and well-wisher;
 and he and I have been companions, and messmates, and
 fellow-sufferers, look you; but nevertheless, for all
 that, peradventure he hath not pehaved with so much
 complaisance, and affability, and respect, as I might
 have expected from him; because he hath revealed, and
 tivulged, and published our private affairs, without
 my knowledge, and priorty and consent; but as Goo is
 my Savior, I think he had no evil intention in his
 pelly . . .⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, Part I, p. 295.

Still possessing his curious accent, but now lacking in fire, Morgan in Peregrine Pickle is not the same likable salt that he is in Roderick Random. In Smollett's second novel he used the sailor as a device for inserting additional material about Roderick's adventures after Roderick Random had been published.

A character blended perhaps from parts of the characters of Defoe's Moll Flanders and Richardson's Miss Jewkes is the mother of Count Fathom. She is the virago--a "modern Amazon; who in point of courage, was not inferior to Semiramis, Tomyris, Zenobia, Thalestris, or any boasted heroine of ancient times."⁶⁶ The description, though true in an ironic way, is rather misleading to the reader, for she is merely a camp follower in Marlborough's campaign in Flanders. "Certain it is, the Count's mother was an Englishwoman, who, after having been five times a widow in one campaign, was, in the last year of the renowned Marlborough's command, numbered among the baggage of the allied army,"⁶⁷ which still she was serving, supplying the enlisted men with clean linens and refreshing streams of Geneva. And her value to the men did not stop here:

Nor was her philanthropy altogether confined to such ministrations [as those noted above]; she abounded with "the milk of human kindness," which flowed

⁶⁶ Smollett, Ferdinand Count Fathom, p. 25.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

plentifully among her fellow creatures; and to every son of Mars who cultivated her favor, she liberally dispensed her smiles, in order to sweeten the toils and dangers of the field.⁶⁸

However, the lady's chief occupation lies elsewhere. Armed with a poniard and a bag, she acts the scavenger and plunders successfully all that lie disabled in the field. "In short, she had, with amazing prowess, delivered some fifty or threescore disabled Mussulmen of the pain under which they groaned, and made a comfortable booty of the spoils of the slain. . . ." ⁶⁹

This English Penthesilea has a character more avaricious in nature than benevolent, and she soon becomes quite adept at relieving the dead or dying enemy of their trappings. In one scene she sees a Turkish leader drop, his horse being killed, and he being trapped under it. Without hesitating, she goes "running towards him with the nimbleness and intrepidity of a Camilla, described a semicircle in the progress of her assault, and attacking him on one side plunged her well-tried dagger in his throat." ⁷⁰

Her greed is her downfall, however. One of her intended victims outwits her by lying quietly on the field:

She no sooner eyed the golden crescent than, inflamed with curiosity or cupidity, she directed thitherward her steps, and discerning the carcass of a man, from

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 17.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 23.

which, she thought, there would be a necessity for disengaging it, she lifted up her weapon, in order to make sure of her purchase; and in the very instant of discharging her blow, received a brace of bullets in her brain.⁷¹

This mischance concludes the mortal pilgrimage of Smollett's Amazon.

Smollett had trouble in creating an arch-villain. Even though a character at a novel's beginning is almost a fiend, the book seldom closes without his moral reformation. But such alteration of character is not always a credible evolution; all too often it appears to have been deliberately contrived for purposes of moral instruction. Even the notorious psychopath Count Fathom reforms and in Humphrey Clinker settles in a small village

as a practitioner in surgery and physic, and for some years wrestled with all the miseries of indigence; which, however, he and his wife had borne with the most exemplary resignation. . . . In short, the adventurer Fathom was, under the name of Grieve, universally respected among the commonality of the district, as a prodigy of learning and virtue.⁷²

In Sir Launcelot Greaves Smollett created, however, a villain named Ferret, whose changes are quantitative rather than qualitative. He is a stereotyped trouble-maker and fraud at the beginning of the story, but ends as nothing more than a restless misanthrope. Ferret's appearance is somewhat less than agreeable:

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁷²Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, Part II, p. 265.

The solitary guest had something very forbidding in his aspect, which was contracted by an habitual frown. His eyes were small and red, and so deep set in the sockets, that each appeared like the unextinguishing snuff of a farthing candle, gleaming through the horn of a dark lantern. His nostrils were elevated in scorn, as if his sense of smelling had been perpetually offended by some unsavory odor; and he looked as if he wanted to shrink within himself from the impertinence of society. He wore a black periwig as straight as the pinions of a raven, and this was covered with a hat flapped, and fastened to his head by a speckled handkerchief tied under his chin. He was wrapped in a great coat of brown frieze, under which he seemed to conceal a small bundle.⁷³

And the reader quickly learns about the lawyer's character, for Smollett presented a neat summary of it in the first chapter of the book:

. . . his character [was] distinguished by three peculiarities. He was never seen to smile; he was never heard to speak in praise of any person whatsoever; and he was never known to give a direct answer to any question that was asked; but seemed, on all occasions, to be actuated by the most perverse spirit of contradiction.⁷⁴

Throughout the course of the book, Ferret is either getting into some senseless trouble or ensnaring others in fraudulent practices and legal difficulties. He is a bully without heart, a trickster without ingenuity. His antics are motivated by discontent rather than hatred, and he is mischievous rather than evil. At the end of the novel, Ferret has made his peace with all the main characters of the story and has been graciously requested to remain with

⁷³Smollett, Sir Launcelot Greaves, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 4.

Launcelot and his wife, to spend his last days with them. At first Ferret agrees to this request, but Smollett's happy endings seem to produce the same symptoms in the lawyer as in many of the author's readers:

. . . the novelty of this situation soon wore off, and all his [Ferret's] misanthropy returned. He could not bear to see his fellow-creatures happy around him, and signified his disgust to Sir Launcelot, declaring his intention of returning to the metropolis, where he knew there would be always food sufficient for the ravenous appetite of his spleen.⁷⁵

Ferret and Crabtree of Peregrine Pickle are remarkably alike in spirit, and they bear many of the traits of character found in Matt Bramble in Humphrey Clinker.

Another lawyer whom Smollett draws uncomplimentarily is Micklewhimmen, a Scot. His portrait is certainly a study in perverse nature, but it is not one devoid of humor. When the reader first encounters him, Micklewhimmen is being pursued by the tireless Tabitha. Obviously, in these matters of the heart, he is a novice, for "his respects were particularly addressed to her [Tabitha], and he did not fail to mingle them with religious reflections, touching free grace, knowing her bias to Methodism, which he also professed upon a Calvinistic model."⁷⁶

Other than having this dangerous shortcoming, Micklewhimmen is a clever old rogue. Jerry Melford observed that

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 346.

⁷⁶Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, Part I, pp. 269-270.

though seemingly precluded from the use of his limbs, [Micklewhimmen] had turned his genius to good accord. In short, by dint of groaning and whining, he had excited the compassion of the company so effectually that an old lady, who occupied the very best apartment in the house, gave it up for his ease and convenience.⁷⁷

The ladies of the house are constantly vying with one another to serve him. "All this attention he repaid with a profusion of compliments and benedictions . . ."⁷⁸

Jerry surmises that Micklewhimmen is not such an invalid as he pretends to be, for he eats heartily and drinks claret from a bottle marked "stomachic tincture."⁷⁹ Melford's suspicions are fully confirmed the night there is a fire alarm:

Everybody leaped naked out of bed, and in a minute the whole house was filled with cries and confusion. There were two stairs in the house, and to those we naturally ran; but they were both so blocked up by the people pressing upon one another, that it seemed impossible to pass without throwing down and trampling upon the women. In the midst of this anarchy, Mr. Micklewhimmen, with a leather portmanteau on his back, came running as nimbly as a buck along the passage; and Tabby, in her under petticoat, endeavoring to hook him under the arm, that she might escape through his protection, he fairly pushed her down, crying, "Na, na, gude faith, charity begins at hame!" Without paying the least respect to the shrieks and entreaties of his female friends, he charged through the midst of the crowd, overturning everything that opposed him, and actually fought his way to the bottom of the staircase.⁸⁰

On the following day Micklewhimmen defends his actions with this classic bit of rationalism:

Ye'll please to observe, ladies, there are twa independent principles that actuate our nature; one is instinct,

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 269.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 270.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 272-273.

which we have in common with the brute creation, and the other is reason. Now, in certain great emergencies, when the faculty of reason is suspended, instinct takes the lead, and when this predominates, having no affinity with reason, it pays no sort of regard to its connections; it only operates for the preservation of the individual, and that by the most expeditious and effectual means.⁸¹

With his fraud discovered, the lawyer braces up his nerves with claret and shows the crowd how the excitement has loosened up his limbs. "A fiddler being at hand, this original started up, with his bloody napkin over his black tie-periwig, and acquitted himself in such a manner, as excited the mirth of the whole company."⁸² Fortunately for him, however, he never regains the good graces of Tabitha.

Affectation in a woman, if she is young, is excusable-- if she is old, understandable, but this trait becomes offensive when it is found in any man. Smollett finds no beauty of character in the eighteenth-century dandy and dissects him unmercifully for the reader with his usual methods of emphasis and exaggeration. Captain Whittle, the effeminate successor to the monstrous Captain Oakum as commander of the Thunder, and Lord Strutwell, a notorious London homosexual, are two fops who appear in Roderick Random. The scene in which Whiffle comes aboard the Thunder to take command is paradoxically both humorous and repulsive. But in any case,

⁸¹Ibid., p. 275.

⁸²Ibid.

this scene gives the reader a detailed account of the dress and manner of an affected prig.

Our new commander came on board in a ten-oared barge, overshadowed with a vast umbrella, and appeared in everything the reverse of Oakum, being a tall, thin, young man, dressed in this manner: a white hat garnished with a red feather, adorned his head, from whence his hair flowed upon his shoulders, in ringlets, tied behind with a ribbon. His coat, consisting of pink-colored silk lined with white, by the elegance of the cut retired backward, as it were to discover a white satin waistcoat embroidered with gold, unbuttoned at the upper part to display a brooch set with garnets, that glittered in the breast of his shirt, which was of the finest cambric, edged with right Mechlin. The knees of his crimson velvet breeches scarcely descended so low as to meet his silk stockings, which rose without spot or wrinkle on his meager legs, from shoes of blue Meroquin, studded with diamond buckles, that flamed forth rivals to the sun! A steel-hilted sword, inlaid with gold, and decked with a knot of ribbon which fell down in a rich tassel, equipped his side; and an amber headed cane hung dangling from his wrist. But the most remarkable parts of his furniture were, a mask on his face, and white gloves on his hands, which did not seem to be put on with an intention to be pulled off occasionally, but were fixed with a curious ring on the little finger of each hand.⁸³

The juxtaposition of the Thunder's crew with the captain's entourage, the members of which so impregnate the air with perfumes that "one may venture to affirm the clime of Arabia Felix was not half so sweet-scented,"⁸⁴ is satire of the most clubfooted variety. Furthermore, Whiffle's anguished writhings, when assaulted by Morgan's aroma, are too exaggerated to be credible. Since the scene appears in a context of

⁸³Smollett, Roderick Random, Part II, pp. 132-133.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 133.

rotting food, gaping wounds, horror, and death described in Smollett's most realistic vein, it is too unpleasant to achieve the aims of satire and only occasionally effects humor.

Every conceivable physical or mental quirk or moral weakness mankind possesses is resolved in diverse characters in Smollett's novels. Usually, the eccentric and his governing trait or physical irregularity appear only briefly in the narrative; but, in the instance of *Tabby*, and a few others, the reader has ample opportunity to observe the eccentric and his antics in sundry situations. In the characterizations a favorite device of Smollett's is the selection of a name which suggests the appearance, the occupation, or the ruling passion of a character. The novelist's adeptness in contriving such names serves the reader: the eccentric's master folly or passion or his occupation is made clear without elaborate preliminaries.

In naming his eccentrics Smollett's inventiveness never seemed to fail him. Each of his books contains such names by the score. The following⁸⁵ are the most effective:

Roderick Random: Tom Bowling (bowlegged sailor), Hugh Strap (barber), Jeremy Gawky (stupid fellow), Mr. Syntax (usher), Mr. Roger Potion (apothecary), Captain Oakum (sailor), Mr. Launcelot Crab (miscreant), Smack (coachman), Rifle

⁸⁵F. D. Wierstra, Smollett and Dickens (Den Helder, Holland, 1928), pp. 83-84.

(highwayman), Swaney Waddle (pedlar), Shuffle (cardsharp), Boniface (suave landlord), Captain Weazel (coward), Mrs. Abigail (lady's maid), Isaac Rapine (usurer), Jack Rattle (fatuous, obstreperous fellow), Jenny Ramper (girl-about-town), Tom Rinser (valet-de-chambre), Mr. Cringer (fawner), Mr. Staytape (tailor), Mr. Lavement (apothecary), Mr. Snarler (bullying examiner), Mr. Concordance (schoolmaster), Mrs. Coupler (procuress), Mr. Vulture (bailiff), Mr. Simper (effeminate man), Mrs. Sagely (a wise woman), Mr. Medlar (busybody), Miss Sparkle (lovely girl), Mr. Topeshall (drunkard), Mr. Bellower (actor), Melopoyne (poet), Jack Marlin-spike (sailor).

Peregrine Pickle: Hawser Trunnion (Commodore), Jack Hatchway (naval officer), Tom Pipes (boatswain's mate), Admiral Bower (owes his promotion to his wife), Tunley (inn-keeper), Mr. Keepstick (schoolmaster), Mr. Roger Ravine (attorney), Mr. Jumble (tutor), Mr. Pallet (painter), Mr. Hornbeck (cuckold), Mr. Clover (wealthy gentleman), Mr. Metaphor (poet), Cadawaller Crabtree (misanthrope).

Ferdinand Count Fathom: Doctor Looby (awkward, clumsy fellow), Miss Biddy (old busybody), Mr. Minikin (delicate and effeminate man), Squire Stub (short, blunt-spoken person), Sir Mungo Barebones (extremely thin man), Sir Stentor Stiles (loud-voiced, upright gentlemen).

Sir Launcelot Greaves: Tom Clarke (attorney), Mr. Isaac Vanderpelt (unprincipled stock-jobber), Justice Gobble (greedy scoundrel), Richard Bumpkin (clodhopper), Mr. Tapley (brewer), Prickle (quarrelsome fellow), Captain Clewline (sailor), Mr. Shackle (evil proprietor of a madhouse).

Humphrey Clinker: Mrs. Drab (very plain woman), Parson Marrofat (dropsical person), Mopstick (charwoman), Tabitha (old maid).

Smollett's technique in presenting his eccentrics was two-dimensional. The author was not involved in an analysis of character, but in how it manifested itself. The reader gets a description of the eccentric, mostly objective, and little else. The minor original, as well as the major eccentric, often is treated with great precision, particularly the one who is bizarre and presents a striking contrast to his fellow men. The idiosyncrasy is then exaggerated by such frequent repetition that it leaves the name--as well as a graphic picture of the eccentric--thoroughly impressed upon the reader's mind. In the more fully drawn eccentric portraits, Smollett resorted to an objective cataloguing of physical characteristics and the minutiae of everyday behavior to accomplish this same aim.

CHAPTER IV

SOURCES OF SMOLLETT'S ECCENTRICS

Critics all agree that Smollett produced prolifically, whether it were characters, incidents, or scenes; but they disagree on what the sources of his eccentrics were. Scott declared that Smollett's distinguishing characteristics arose from the powers and fruitfulness of his creative imagination. Thackeray disagreed, observing that Smollett's novels are merely the recalling of his own adventures, his characters being copies of people he observed in life.¹ Smollett in his preface to Roderick Random admitted, "I have not much deviated from nature in facts, which are all true in the main, although the circumstances are altered and distinguished to avoid personal satire."² In the same preface he also owned that in purpose and structural planning he had composed his works on the model of LeSage and Cervantes, indicating that he was not ignorant of or uninterested in the literary past.

Thackeray is perhaps more nearly right than Scott, in arguing that Smollett relied more upon observation than

¹L. M. Ellison, "Elizabethan Drama and the Works of Smollett," PMLA, XLIV (1927), 859-860.

²Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Roderick Random (New York, 1880), p. xlv.

inventiveness for his novels. If this be so, from where did these characters spring that he so ingeniously brought to fictional life? Possible sources to be pondered are the characters he had met in earlier literary works, such as LeSage's Gil Blas and Cervantes' Don Quixote. However, the influence upon Smollett by the picaresque and burlesque writers should not be overemphasized.

Besides his obligations to Aleman and Cervantes, to Scarron, LeSage, and Furetière, he [Smollett] has, in strict truth, to come to reckoning with more than one of his country men: with Defoe for the model of his style, with Swift for the manner of grotesque exaggeration that marks much of his satire, and with the writers of Elizabethan drama for a diffused obligation, which extends from the turn of a phrase to the outlines of a character and the motivation of an incident.³

In considering Smollett's indebtedness to Elizabethan drama, the reader will probably find little resemblance between Smollett and Shakespeare. With the great disparity in their personalities--Shakespeare's serenity and deep understanding of the human condition and Smollett's ferocity and impatience with his fellow men--the two writers would seem to be sharply opposed. But both were humorists, and both took immense delight in life. Shakespeare did not revolt from humanity in the raw, but neither did he make an obsession of the brutality and sordidness of his fellow men. Nevertheless, he did create characters which Smollett found

³Ellison, p. 843.

irresistible to imitate. "The point at which Shakespeare comes closest to the rugged life of the actual world is precisely the point at which Smollett comes closest to Shakespeare."⁴

Smollett frequently mentioned Shakespeare's works in his novels, and it was the realistic comedies which influenced the novelist most.⁵ As Lee Ellison indicates, most of Smollett's borrowings were from these comedies; yet Smollett never achieved Shakespearean humor. Perhaps it was beyond the novelist's grasp or his interest. Smollett had little conception of humor except for the comic victims, whom he frequently assaulted with ridicule and scorn. These comic figures fail to promote the general hilarity by joining in the merriment and have no part in the mirth for which they are responsible.

Smollett's Morgan, surgeon's mate on board the Thunder and fellow sufferer with Roderick Random under the brutal tyranny of Captain Oakum and Dr. Mackshane, is a direct descendant of one of Shakespeare's characters. "The original of Morgan is none other than the valiant and choleric Welshman, Captain Fluellen, friend and compatriot of Henry V and veteran of Agincourt."⁶ The resemblance here is too close to be accidental. All the essential elements of character

⁴Ibid., p. 844.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 849.

are common to both--the fiery Celtic temper, the personal and racial pride, the self-assertiveness, the courage, the sturdy independence, the fatuous devotion that each man has to every idea that originates with himself, and, above all, the ludicrous, naive stubbornness which endears the character and accentuates his native honesty and honor.⁷

Morgan combines, in about the same proportion as his original, the humor which grows out of the mild burlesque of national characteristics with the humor of personal idiosyncrasy. Moreover, although Morgan bears some marks of the conventionality that soon enervates the comic type, the uniqueness of his shipboard environment serves to render him substantially individual. As it has been suggested by Professor Ellison, Smollett's methods of portraying Morgan even repeat Shakespeare's small tricks of dialect as well as the patterns of sentence accent and rhythm to the letter.⁸

Illustrations of the accent, as well as the character of these two eccentrics, can be compared in the following dialogues:

Fluellen: I will you asse my friend, Captain Gower. The rascally, scald, beggarly lousy, praging knave, Pistol, which you and yourself and all the world know to be no petter than a fellow, look you, now, of no merits, he is come to me and prings me pread and salt yesterday, look you, and bid me eat my leek. . . .

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 350.

(Enter Pistol)
 . . . God pless you, Aunchient Pistol!
 You scurfy, lousy knave, God pless you.
 . . . I peseech you heartily, scurvy, lousy
 knave, at my desires, and my requests, and
 my petitions to eat, look you, this leek.⁹

Morgan reacts in a similar way when he discovers that his private stock of cheese and onions has been visited by thieves.

"As Cot is my judge," he cried, "and my salfation, and my witness, whosoever has pilfered my provisions is a lousy, peggarly, rascally knave! and by the soul of my grandsire, I will impeach, and accuse, and indict him of roppery, if I did but know who he is."¹⁰

The realistic London comedy of Shakespeare with its bustling, boisterous life naturally would have appealed to Smollett and would evoke comparison with what he himself had seen and heard while mingling with the London polyglot in his day. However, Shakespeare's influence on Smollett was perhaps limited, for Smollett's braggarts, dupes, fools, and swaggerers are not of the Shakespearean strain. "Smollett's hand was too heavy and his temper too hot for that fine shading of comic character which wins indulgent sympathy even for the follies of man."¹¹

Elizabethan drama with its rugged setting--the brutal and extravagant phrases of Falstaffian humor--had a strong

⁹William Shakespeare, Henry V, in The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1942), p. 741.

¹⁰Smollett, Roderick Random, Part II, pp. 103-104.

¹¹Ellison, p. 851.

appeal to Smollett. This influence, working upon Smollett's natural disposition, sharpened his combative instinct and taught him some measure of agility in using the weapons of satire and invective. In the Elizabethan comedy of humours, Smollett found not only a congenial subject matter but also a model for his method of offensive warfare, which he eventually turned to practical account.

Smollett actually is more indebted to Jonson than to Shakespeare. The novelist's and Jonson's attitudes and artistic temperaments can be closely related. "Sturdy commonsense, a prevailing ironic view of the world, and a keen eye for the outward show of character and manners mark indelibly the entire work of both."¹² Each man was attracted to the realities of life and hated affectation, pretense, and sham. Neither was troubled even slightly with that "delicacy of taste which finds the more pungent flavors of life too strong."¹³ Smollett's conception of character as well as his method of presenting it, was exactly that which is universally imputed to Ben Jonson. "And Smollett's novels are the direct agency through which the Elizabethan humour comedy was transmitted to Dickens and the lesser humorists of the nineteenth century."¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 852.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 855.

In Smollett's novels, particularly Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle, one meets the whole multitude of Jonsonian gallants, gulls, malcontents, and boastful cowards in a new eighteenth-century idiom but with the vices, passions, and follies of Elizabethan times. A typical aggregation of such "humours" is the company of some coffeehouse gallants into which Roderick Random is introduced upon his return from Europe. For the occasion Roderick's social mentor is Dr. Wagtail:

"Gentlemen, your most obedient servant--give me leave to introduce my friend, Mr. Random to your society." Then turning to me [Roderick], "Mr. Random, this is Mr. Bragwell--Mr. Banter, sir--Mr. Chatter--my friend, Mr. Slyboot, and Mr. Ranter, sir."¹⁵

Each member of this group represents the generalized quality suggested by his name. Some of these men have equivalents in Jonson. Wagtail may have been suggested by Jonson's Fastidious Brisk in Every Man Out of His Humour, Banter by Carlo Buffone in the same play, and Bragwell merely drawn from the "roaring boy" type in Jonsonian drama brought up to date.¹⁶

Smollett, like Jonson before him, seized upon sharply defined traits of personality and represented his eccentrics as under the exclusive control of these peculiarities. This method appears to be useful in representing either the abnormalities of characters and manners for humorous effect,

¹⁵Smollett, Roderick Random, Part II, pp. 259-260.

¹⁶Ellison, pp. 857-859.

or the follies and vices of man for censure and improvement.

Other fountainheads of Smollett's characters were his friends, acquaintances, and enemies, who appear in novels only thinly veiled. Smollett's greatest eccentrics are caricatures of mankind, drawn from ruling traits and occupations, or are distilled from the essence of some personality of the time.

Although strict identification of a character in a novel with a person in real life is at best pure guesswork, unless the author at one time or another freely admits a connection, Smollett created many a scene and character that can be traced to his own experiences and observations, either because the author lacked the subtlety of disguise or the propriety to care. Smollett's volcanic temperament, being succored by his Scotch pride and operating in a brawling period of English letters, aided and abetted many a quarrel. Swords, guns, and the Borgia method no longer being in vogue or legal as means of achieving revenge, the pen became a popular weapon. In all his novels Smollett practiced the habit of personal satire, though this was disguised to a degree. His novels were intended as satires upon mankind, and in effectuating this aim "he felt free, like Swift, to satirize specific individuals as well as types."¹⁷ Smollett's

¹⁷Lewis M. Knapp, "A Sequel to Smollett's Humphrey Clinker," Times Literary Supplement, October 6, 1932, p. 716.

criticism, though just at times and usually honest, was mostly germinated and nourished by his own displeasures and reverses.

Smollett's most famous and prolonged quarrels can in one way or another, with the exception of that with Admiral Knowles, be traced to his play the Regicide, his very first serious literary attempt. The majority of the quarrels pass through Roderick Random and culminate in Peregrine Pickle. Unearthing old quarrels, though not ordinarily a useful employment, is in this case an instructive one, both about Smollett's own character and the sources of some of his humorous eccentrics.

Smollett, while still in Scotland and eighteen, wrote the Regicide, a play which "is of no intrinsic value, nor does it contain the seed of later achievement."¹⁸ When Smollett left for London, still in his teens, he was armed with a little money, a few letters of recommendation and his play. One of his first missions in the city was an attempt to induce someone to produce his play. Nothing but failure crowned his endeavors, and Smollett subsequently became disillusioned with the theatrical system and those involved in it.

In his very first novel, Roderick Random, Smollett bluntly recapitulated his misadventure, feebly cloaking it

¹⁸Howard S. Buck, A Study in Smollett (New Haven, 1925), p. 54.

as "Melopoy'n's Story," inveighing rather strongly against those involved, perhaps distorting unconsciously because of his misfortunes.

A brief study of Melopoy'n's story would be of some aid here. According to Howard Buck, the key to the characters in Melopoy'n's story is as follows:

1. Melopoy'n--Smollett
2. Marmozet--Garrick
3. Brayer--James Lacy, joint manager with Garrick of the Drury Lane Theatre
4. Earl Sheerwit--the Earl of Chesterfield
5. Supple--Fleetwood, manager of Drury Lane prior to Garrick and Lacy
6. Vandal--John Rich, manager of Covent Garden
7. Bellowe--Quin
8. Lord Rattle--a composite of most patrons
9. Father O'Varnish--a real person and a friend to Smollett but not yet identified.¹⁹

Melopoy'n's account begins with the fortunes of the play under the tender mercies of the gouty Supple (Fleetwood), who accidentally burns the manuscript. The next fall the play is again presented to Supple, revised at Lord Rattle's suggestion and at this time given a reading by Bellowe (Quin). Two years elapse without any action. Supple then sells his

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 56-57.

patent (the managership of the Drury Lane Theatre) to Brayer (Lacy). The process has to begin again: Lord Rattle induces Brayer to read the play, and Brayer agrees to produce the play the following season. In the meantime Bellower (Quin) receives the play for reading and consideration of a role. At the beginning of the following year, instead of producing Melopoy'n's play as promised, Brayer presents another work.

Melopoy'n withdraws his play in anger, taking it to another patron for consideration. Earl Sheerwit (Chesterfield) reads the play and in turn asks Vandal (Rich) to consider it for production at Covent Garden. He rejects it. Then Brayer condescends to have another look at it. After numerous delays, Brayer agrees to produce it the following winter. But when the season arrives, Brayer is in partnership with Marmozet (Garrick) and has to have his consent. Marmozet, however, is already engaged to produce the works of another author.²⁰

With this flimsy disguise, Smollett aired all the real and imagined injustices he had received from these men. All the people involved in the episode of Smollett's Regicide eventually fell victim to the novelist's vituperative pen. To illustrate Smollett's technique of personal satire, only one of these individuals needs to be examined.

²⁰Smollett, Roderick Random, Part III, Chapters LXII-LXIII.

James Quin, though later in Humphrey Clinker reconciled with Smollett, is lampooned unmercifully in both Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle. In Melopoy'n's story he first appears as the unnamed actor.²¹

When I waited upon him with the manuscript, I found one of the actors [Quin] with his lordship [composite patron], who immediately introduced him to my acquaintance, and desired him to read a scene of my play. This task he performed very much to my satisfaction, with regard to emphasis and pronunciation; but he signified his disgust at several words in every page, which I presuming to defend, Lord Rattle told me, with a peremptory look, I must not pretend to dispute with him, who had been a player these twenty years, and understanding the economy of the stage better than any man living. I was forced to submit, and his lordship proposed the same actor should read the whole play in the evening before some gentlemen of his acquaintance, whom he would convene at his lodgings for that purpose.

I was present at that reading; and I protest to you [the reader], my dear friend, I never underwent such a severe trial in the whole course of my life as at that juncture; for although the player might be a very honest man, and a good performer, he was excessively illiterate and assuming, and made a thousand frivolous objections, which I was not permitted to answer. However, this piece was very much applauded on the whole; the gentlemen present, who, I understood, were men of fortune, promised to countenance and support it as much as they could.²²

This is a particularly mild bit of satire on Quin.

However, the actor does not escape so lightly in Peregrine Pickle. Quin, being a huge, ponderous man and a gourmand, was pelted heavily by Smollett on this account: "His action resembles that of heaving ballast into the hold of a ship."²³

²¹Buck, p. 72.

²²Smollett, Roderick Random, Part II, p. 184.

²³Smollett, Peregrine Pickle (New York, 1880), p. iv.

Quin's notion of portraying violent emotion was that of "tearing a passion to rags."²⁴ He was not above showy and cheap histrionics:

He acts the crafty, cool, designing Crookback, as a loud, shallow, blustering Hector; in the character of the mild patriot Brutus, loses all temper and decorum; nay so ridiculous is the behavior of him and Cassius at their interview, that, setting foot to foot, and grinning at each other with the aspect of two cobblers enraged, they thrust left sides together with repeated shocks, that the hilts of their swords may clash for the entertainment of the audience, as if they were a couple of Merry Andrews.²⁵

As it has already been noted, Smollett labeled Quin as "Mr. Bellower" in Roderick Random.

Observing that Quin's old-fashioned ranting was reinforced by an equally dated set of histrionics, Smollett asserted that "his gestures are so just and significant that a man, though bereft of hearing, might, by seeing him only, understand the meaning of every word he speaks."²⁶ Smollett's vindictiveness, denuded by realistic technique, reached its acrimonious peak in the following descriptions of Quin.

Not that I would exclude from the representation the graces of action, without which the choicest sentiments, clothed in the most exquisite expression, would appear unanimated and insipid; but these are as different from the ridiculous burlesque as is the demeanor of Tully in the rostrum from the tricks of a Jack-pudding on a mountbank's stage. . . . I have known a Gascon [Quin] whose limbs were as eloquent as his tongue; he never mentioned the word sleep without reclining his head upon his hand; when he had occasion to talk of a horse, he always started up and trotted

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., Part IV, p. 126.

across the room, except when he was so situated that he could not stir without incommoding the company, and in that he contented himself with neighing aloud. . . . One day he expressed his desire of going backward with such natural imitation of his purpose, that everybody in the room firmly believed that he had overshot himself, and fortified their nostrils accordingly; yet no man ever looked upon this virtuoso to be the standard of propriety in point of speaking or deportment. For my own part, I confess that the player in question would, by dint of these qualifications, make a good figure in the character of Pantaloon's lacquey, in the entertainment of Perseus and Andromeda, and perhaps might acquire some reputation by turning the Revenge into a pantomime; in which case, I would advise him to come upon the stage provided with a handful of flour, in order to besmear his face when he pronounces "pale and aghast," etc.; and methinks he ought to illustrate the adder with a hideous hiss.²⁷

What had Quin done? He had merely been candid about Smollett's play. Like Fleetwood and Garrick, Quinn had been selected to patronize the play. The actor had been careless with what he had considered to be an indifferent play and had mislaid the manuscript, much to Smollett's chagrin. This mishap and a hesitancy based on what is salable in the theater, to recommend the production of the play, resulted in Smollett's prolonged animosity toward Quin.

Not all the portraits drawn from life which appear in the novels are of Smollett's enemies. One of his most memorable characters is Lieutenant Obadiah Lishmahago: "Like much which is excellent in Smollett, the character had its inception in personal experience, a short friendship with a Scottish professional soldier in the American service--

²⁷Ibid., pp. 129-130.

Captain Robert Strobo."²⁸ There is no way of knowing how much of his adventurous career the captain revealed to Smollett, but Strobo's hazardous enterprises were unquestionably both varied and exciting.

Captain Strobo was a professional soldier, an individualist, and something of a zealot. Likewise, Lishmahago is a Scot, "the only fully developed Scot to be found in all the pages of Smollett; not even Roderick, Strap, or Micklewhimmen are such thoroughgoing studies in racial characteristics."²⁹ Smollett ignored Strobo's adventurous career as a soldier, concentrating on dress, habits, and temperament in the characterization of the lieutenant. Guided by his proclivity for caricature, Smollett subordinated the attractive qualities of Strobo's nature--heroism, modesty, agreeable social graces, devotion to duty--to the eccentric twists of the captain's disposition and of the author's imagination.

George Kahrl depicts the real-life man as a strong, brave, and resourceful captain, hostage at Quebec and Fort Duquesne, condemned to death as a spy by the French, an intelligent aide of General Wolfe, and one of the leaders in the battle on the Plains of Abraham.³⁰ In the name of humor, note what Smollett did to the man in transferring him to paper in Humphrey Clinker:

²⁸George M. Kahrl, Tobias Smollett: Traveler-Novelist (Chicago, 1945), p. 132.

²⁹Ibid., p. 141.

³⁰Ibid., p. 143.

A tall meagre figure, answering, with his horse, the description of Don Quixote mounted on Rozinante, appeared in the twilight at the inn door, while my aunt [Tabitha Bramble] and Liddy [Lydia Melford] stood at the window in the dining room. He wore a coat, the cloth of which had once been scarlet, trimmed with Brandenburgs, now totally deprived of their metal, and he had holster-caps and housing of the same stuff and same antiquity. Perceiving ladies at the window above, he endeavored to dismount with the most graceful air he could assume; but the stirrup, when he wheeled off his right foot, and stood with his whole weight on the other, the girth unfortunately gave away, the saddle turned, down came the cavalier to the ground, and his hat and periwig falling off, displayed a headpiece of various colors, patched and plastered in woeful condition [he had been scalped by Indians]. The ladies, at the window above, shrieked with affright, on the supposition that the stranger had received some notable damage in his fall; but the greatest injury he had sustained, arose from the dishonor of his descent, aggravated by the disgrace of exposing the condition of his cranium; for certain plebians that were about the door, laughed aloud, in the belief that the lieutenant had got either a scald head, or a broken head, both equally opprobrious.

He forthwith leaped up in fury, and snatching one of his pistols, threatened to put the hostler to death, when another squall from the women checked his resentment. He then bowed to the window, while he kissed the butt-end of his pistol, which he replaced, adjusted his wig in great confusion, and led his horse into the stable.³¹

Simply to have been an acquaintance of Smollett's, whether friend or foe, was to hazard some risks to personal dignity and propriety.

Besides those personages with whom Smollett came into contact, England abounded in the eccentrics who were well tolerated--either because of their numbers or their being

³¹Smollett, The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (New York, 1880), Part II, pp. 14-15.

sources of entertainment for those around them. If the author ever exhausted the numerous possibilities of caricature presented to him by his friends and enemies, he would find no problem in simply sitting quietly in a coffeehouse or tavern and listening to stories about actual characters, who would need little doctoring to become among the most notable of Smollett's creations.

The following account is the record of an actual occurrence that could have been taken from any of the author's novels, so similar is it in nature to the mixed-up bedroom farces found in them. The character in question is Reverend George Harvest (1682-1742), who was somewhat absent-minded.

Another time, in one of his absent fits, he mistook his friend's house, and went into another, the door of which happened to stand open; and no servant being in the way, he rambled all over the house, till coming into a middle room, where was an old lady in bed of a quincy, he stumbled over the night stool, upset her chamber pot, threw a clothes horse down, and might not had ended there, had not the affrighted patient made a noise at his intrusion. . . . The lady was cured of her quincy by laughter.³²

Compare this with representative scenes from Roderick Random and observe the resemblances:

The painter, finding himself thus intruded into the bedchamber of he knew not whom and dreading the resentment of the possessor, who might discharge a pistol at him . . . was overwhelmed with consternation, and redoubled his exertion to accomplish a speedy retreat, sweating all the time with fear, and putting up petitions to Heaven for his safety.³³

³²Eccentric Biography (author not given) (Boston, 1825), p. 213.

³³Smollett, Roderick Random, Part I, p. 88.

or

About midnight, my companions' bowels being disordered, he got up in order to go backward; but in his return, mistaking one door for another, entered Weazel's chamber.³⁴

What follows is a typical orgy of confusion.

The real butts of Smollett's satire are the pompous professional men who hide behind their jargons and positions. It is with this group that Smollett achieved a genuine synthesis of farcical humor and scalding satire. Of his own medical profession he was extremely disdainful, the physician throughout his books being consistently part hoax and part a mass of misinformation. In the fifteenth chapter of Ferdinand Count Fathom, this attitude is humorously set forth:

. . . a physician without practice had one comfort to which his bretheren [sic] were strangers, namely, that the seldomer he had occasion to prescribe, the less he had upon his conscience, on account of being accessory to the death of his fellow creatures.³⁵

Indisputably Smollett had his reservations about the efficacy of eighteenth-century medicine. On his deathbed, Commodore Trunnion in Peregrine Pickle declared:

Here has been a doctor that wanted to stow me choakful of physic; but, when a man's hour is come, what signifies his taking his departure with a 'pothecary's shop in his hold.³⁶

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Smollett, Ferdinand Count Fathom (New York, 1830), Part II, p. 112.

³⁶Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, Part III, p. 20.

Not only the physicians but the rank and file of the apothecaries, waiting women, nurses, and maids in waiting come into his line of satirical fire. In Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Ferdinand Count Fathom, and Humphrey Clinker, he was forever burlesquing quacks, berating charlatans, and blasting medical hypocrites and nincompoops. He inveighed against them individually and collectively; he envisioned these sons of Paean functioning as a corrupt crowd, organized against the public welfare; and he invariably held them up to ridicule and bantering abuse. However, there is only one from this group who plays any considerable role as an eccentric in his novels; this is Akenside, a physician in Peregrine Pickle.

It is the law and those which serve its ends, however, that receive the most lambasting satire of all the professions and professional men with which Smollett dealt; the portraits which evolved were drawn almost wholly without humor. In Ferdinand Count Fathom Smollett dissected lawyers, particularly the Templars, first in conjunction with the French abbés, in Chapter XXII, and later alone, in Chapter XXXVII. Smollett found neither Templar nor abbé of much worth to mankind:

In a word, the abbés are a set of people that bear a strong analogy to the templars of London. Fools of each fabric, sharpers of all sorts, and dunces of every degree, profess themselves of both orders. The templar is, generally speaking, a prig, so is the abbé: both are distinguished by an air of petulance and self-conceit,

which holds a middle rank betwixt the insolence of a first rate buck, and the learned pride of a supercilious pedant . . .³⁷

Later in the novel, after an exposé of legal corruption, Smollett's assault on lawyers comes to a head in the following:

His counsel behaved like men of consummate abilities in their profession; they exerted themselves with equal industry, eloquence and erudition, in their endeavors to perplex the truth, browbeat the evidence, puzzle the judge, and mislead the jury.³⁸

Smollett's novels are rich in characters, scenes, and situations having to do with courts and prisons; the tone used by Smollett in treating these indicates that he felt that trial and imprisonment were life's changes of fortune rather than the bestowal of justice in society.

Justice Gobble in Sir Launcelot Greaves, Chapter XI, is a typical example of greed and ignorance seated beside the scales of Justice:

The justice himself was a little, affected prig, who endeavored to solemnize his countenance by assuming an air of consequence, in which pride, impudence, and folly were strangely blended. He aspired at nothing so much as the character of an able spokesman; and took all opportunities of holding forth at vestry and quarter sessions, as well as in the administration of his office in private.³⁹

³⁷Smollett, Ferdinand Count Fathom, Part I, p. 160.

³⁸Ibid., p. 309.

³⁹Smollett, Sir Launcelot Greaves (New York, 1830), p. 150.

His numerous unkind portraits of the law

indicate that in Smollett's opinion the courts are more likely to persecute than to protect the citizen, and that often, instead of serving the ends of justice, the law becomes a tool for the unscrupulous and criminal.⁴⁰

Since Smollett had gone to sea for a number of years (1739-1742), it is not difficult to understand that this life would have influenced him strongly. The vivid recollections of Carthage, retold in Roderick Random, and possibly of La Guaira, of the dangerous and unique lives of the seamen, remained with Smollett many years after he had left the navy, and to these memories he later returned in his novels. Although not so bent on satire, Smollett created some eccentrics who are among the most memorable of all the originals in his novels. The comic seamen, Commodore Trunnion, Jack Hatchway, and Tom Pipes of Peregrine Pickle, Captain Bowling of Roderick Random, and Captain Crowe in Ferdinand Count Fathom, are all humorous old salts who bring life and vitality to Smollett's pages with their sea-soaked dialogue and madcap antics.

It would be an endless task, for the most part theoretical, to attempt to explore all sources of Smollett's characterizations. Smollett was a humorist by profession and a satirist by nature, and his sardonic smile came largely from what he gained from his literary background and from what he himself

⁴⁰Alice Parker, "Tobias Smollett and the Law," Studies in Philology, XXXIX (1942), 596.

lived and observed. He synthesized these elements of his life into eccentrics of every shape and size for purposes of humor and satire.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

All of Smollett's novels, including his The Adventures of an Atom (1769), which has not been discussed in this thesis, assume the characteristic form of the rogue story. In the development of each book there is a looseness of plan, dependence upon coincidence, and, most important, the conduct of a central character through varied experiences and adventures in which he meets representatives from all areas of the social milieu of his time. Roderick, Pickle, and Fathom all set out on journeys to broaden their minds and increase their fortunes and to observe new places and make new contacts. Sir Launcelot and Matt Bramble differ from the other preceding protagonists in their aims, but these two do travel and observe new places and meet many new characters. Launcelot is out to do battle with vice, and Matt is taking a farewell journey through England and Scotland, as well as a number of parting thrusts at society.

By his own admission, Smollett was influenced by the picaresque novel as exemplified in LeSage's Gil Blas and Cervantes' Don Quixote. When Smollett's first three heroes and LeSage's Gil Blas are compared, many similarities are

apparent: Roderick, Peregrine, and Fathom, like Gil Blas, are young men in search of economic security; after a period of around-the-clock adventuring, they marry and settle; their experiences involve some humor and an abundance of satire on mankind. However, the differences between Smollett's heroes and LeSage's picares outweigh the similarities.

Although Smollett may have adopted the rapid narration and two-dimensional characterization of LeSage, he is not guilty of the Frenchman's refinements of elegant repartee and tolerance of human frailty. The world of Smollett's picares is ugly, brutal, and obscene. Disgust, contempt, and anger overwhelmed Smollett as he viewed his fellow men, and his adventurers live and travel through novels full of monstrous barbarity. Even though Smollett's harsh judgment of the world is somewhat ameliorated in Sir Launcelot Greaves and Humphrey Clinker, the author's basic displeasure with the world is still manifest.

Smollett's purpose in writing was twofold: to entertain the reader and to satirize man and his society. To accomplish his aim, the author created eccentric personalities in the old Elizabethan humour convention. He used charactonyms freely, naming his eccentrics according to an occupation or a ruling trait. But in description of character Smollett attempted no complexity. A single trait (or in the more important characters, several) usually suffices to give the

reader all that Smollett considered necessary for satire or humor.

Smollett never developed his characters. Neither the eccentrics nor the heroes and heroines alter or mature by their contact with their environment or other characters. But Smollett created these originals brilliantly, then brought them together so that the maximum amount of entertainment might be extracted from their interaction. These fictional creations are comedy characters, created and utilized in Ben Jonson's way--by interplay without development.

However, Smollett's twofold purpose of satire and humor is not always fully realized, these eccentrics frequently being portrayed only humorously, lacking any obvious satiric intent, or being too vindictively drawn to achieve humor. All too frequently the comic weaknesses of the characters excite, not sympathy or understanding, but scorn and distaste. Often the characters are fools or villains or rogues who always overplay their hands; the villains and rogues are overtaken by justice, retribution, and token compunction. The fools are usually left to suffer their own ridiculousness and stupidity.

Smollett's form for the novel derives from LeSage and Cervantes, his manner of satire and humor is Elizabethan, and the sources from which he drew his eccentrics were not

only the eighteenth century's literary staples (i.e., the shrew, the dandy), but also his friends and enemies and his observation of the stereotypes evolved from man's institutions.

When Smollett is assessed as a novelist, the criterion for judgment should be the comic characters he created. In most instances the critic who finds Smollett the least important of the five major eighteenth-century novelists is justified. Smollett lacked the ability to unify and give purpose to his novels; and he lacked subtlety of imagination, deftness in caricature, and skill in creating unique and original episodes.

However, he did rise above these shortcomings by virtue of his eccentrics and their comic interplay, regardless of their being staple character types presented in stock situations. It was Smollett's own peculiar genius to present scenes which are quite remarkable for devastating humor and dissecting satire, even though these episodes are found together in novels which have little unity other than a rogue and a contrived romance, which always hangs gravidly and gloomily over the novels and presages the final marriage scenes and tedious dialogue on connubial bliss.

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