THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

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Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
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INTRODUCTION

As the very selective bibliography which follows will amply show, much has already been written about Tobias Smollett's personality and fiction. There is little reason to believe that the renewal of interest, which originated in the United States about 1925, will cease suddenly. Smollett, a notoriously fiery-tempered Scotsman and an apt illustration of the 'perfervidum ingenium Scotorum', forever ready to blow his Caledonian top, even when he should have known better as a canny Scot naturally inclined to weigh the pros and cons before launching into action, was an angry young man of the 1740s. Although he belonged to a good family, he had no personal fortune at his disposal, and like many another enterprising Scotsman in the eighteenth century, he had to fend for himself in a world which was not precisely friendly to the droves of northerners flocking south. Samuel Johnson's sneeringly arch remark to Mr Ogilvie, a native of Scotland, on 6 July 1763, is an apt summary of the more or less patent hostility felt and expressed by many Englishmen then: 'the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England'! This was somewhat uncharitable, as the 'great Cham'—a literary nickname Smollett coined in a letter to John Wilkes (16 March 1759)—must have forgotten by 1763 that he himself with his pupil David Garrick had left Lichfield, Staffordshire, for London in 1737.

Smollett, after attending Glasgow University for some years without taking any degree, interrupted his apprenticeship with two well-known local surgeons, William Stirling and John Gordon, and left for London some time after June 1739. As L. M. Knapp[1] has ably demonstrated in his standard biography, young Smollett's situation should, most emphatically, not be confused with Roderick's, the eponymous hero of his first novel published in 1748. Although Smollett's ready cash must have been relatively limited, he was no 'friendless orphan', as he described poor Roderick in the Preface. Probably the most accurate assessment of the newly arrived aspiring author's situation in London, is to be found in the 'Memoirs' published by his friend and biographer John Moore, in the 1797 edition

[1] L. M. Knapp (see Select Bibliography), pp. 24–7. Henceforth referred to as Knapp.

of Smollett's works: 'He set out accordingly with a small sum of money and a very large assortment of letters of recommendation: whether his relations intended to compensate for the scantiness of the one by their profusion in the other, is uncertain; but he has been often heard to declare, that their liberality in the last article was prodigious.' (I, cxv). A caveat to readers of Smollett's *Roderick Random* still tempted to stumble into the ever-gaping trap of facile bio-criticism is therefore not out of order here. As I have tried to show in my *Novels of Tobias Smollett* (1976), nothing has been more damaging to Smollett's literary reputation than the obstinately perverse assimilation of his person with his fictional personae, especially his first hero Roderick Random, and with the cantankerous Welsh squire Matt Bramble, a type of *bourru bienfaisant*, or in other words, a misanthrope with a heart of gold, doing good by stealth, in his last, and probably most successful novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). Critics would loop the fictional loop all too easily, from the boisterous, if not roisterous young blade 'on the make' in London, to the kindly, if choleric grumbling squire, who by the end of the epistolary novel is seen to have mellowed into a decent paternal and avuncular figure. Roderick is no more Smollett's autobiographical portrait than Matt Bramble: both are fictive creations of his literary talent, endowed with an entirely autonomous life of their own. This tendency to view Smollett's personality—human and literary—in the light of his fictional characters may be called 'inverted autobiography'.[1]

This is not to say, of course, that there are no links between Smollett's actual 'lived' experiences and his first novel *Roderick Random*, which is obviously a young man's novel, still fresh from his fast-moving personal experiences, such as his departure from Scotland in 1739; his startled discovery of the fascinating kaleidoscope of glittering life in the metropolis; the abortive struggles of a dour young author to have his unfortunate tragedy *The Regicide* staged in London; the unbelievably harsh, even nightmarish world of the Navy on board the *Chichester* during the ill-fated and extravagantly costly (both in good guineas, but even more so in callously cheap human lives) expedition to Cartagena in the West Indies (1740–1); his quick wooing and winning of a Jamaican beauty and heiress, Anne Lassells; his return to England and his efforts to set up as a

[1] See my *Novels of Tobias Smollett*, pp. 40–67, 'Autobiography and the Novels'.

surgeon in London. Meanwhile he maintained a fervent interest in literature, as is shown by his lyric—which appeared in slightly altered form in *Roderick Random*—'A New Song' (1745), his 'Tears of Scotland'—a poem composed after the Jacobites were defeated at Culloden on 16 April 1746, throbbing with sorrow and tightly controlled patriotic fervour for his 'hapless Caledonia'—and finally by his vitriolic Popean verse satires, *Advice* (1746) and its companion poem, *Reproof* (1747). Although little or nothing is known about Smollett's life from his return to England about February 1742 to mid-1744, it is in no way exaggerated to advance that young Smollett's life between his departure from Glasgow in 1739 to the publication of his first novel in January 1748 had been exceptionally fast-paced and fruitful in character-moulding experiences. By 1747 or 1748, he had even sired a daughter, Elizabeth, whose untimely death in April 1763 dealt Smollett and his wife a crushing emotional blow, from which the fond father probably never quite recovered.

This rapid sketch of Smollett's manifold activities before the publication of *Roderick Random* would be incomplete without some mention again of his continued and well-nigh obsessive efforts to get *The Regicide* produced in London. Smollett, like Johnson in 1737 with his *Irene*, left Scotland with his much cherished tragedy in his pocket. Between 1739 and 1749, when at long last the poor tragic brainchild of Smollett was published by subscription, *The Regicide* became a sort of dramatic and psychological millstone round his neck. Some of the bitterness and harshness of the author's lasting resentment may be felt still glowing in the self-vindicating preface of the play, and certainly in the pathetic story of Melopoyn's disappointments and rebuffs in Chapters LXII and LXIII of *Roderick Random*. But Melopoyn should nevertheless not be viewed as the autobiographical representation of Smollett the young thwarted playwright. At best, or worst, Melopoyn is a fictive *doppelgänger*, stemming from Smollett's gnawing artistic frustration, but no factually faithful specular image.

In the span of nine years, Smollett had amassed enough factual, psychological, and ethical experience (especially as a surgeon's second mate during the Cartagena expedition) on which to draw for the rest of his writing life. It certainly stood him in good stead, particularly for the raw material of *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* (1751). But leading a fairly adventurous life is not tantamount to becoming the author of celebrated novels of adventure. Through-

out the eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth, at a time when British power was seeking 'vi et armis' to expand its economic dominion over distant lands and seas, thousands of men led much more adventurous lives than Smollett, who after his *Wanderjahre* became perforce very much of an overworked stay-at-home, heaping upon himself incredibly heavy burdens of financially necessary translations, compilations, or literary journalism. Smollett did not revisit his native Scotland until 1753, and afterwards travelled there on two occasions only, in 1760 and in 1766. He made the Grand Tour only belatedly in 1763–5, at a time when he was morally battered and physically sick, as the all too often querulous tone of the opening letters in his *Travels through France and Italy* (1766) makes stridently clear. He had already been on the Continent some time before 1744, and in 1749.

He spent the summer of 1750 in Paris, travelled again to the Continent in the summer of 1759, but always on fairly brief visits, curtailed by the chronically low state of his finances. It was a grim irony that Smollett, the ardent patriot viscerally attached to his homeland, should have been, in a touristic way, the discoverer of Nice and the French Riviera during his frantic search for health in 1763–5, and also that he should have died in Leghorn (17 September 1771), where he had been residing for two years after leaving England in the autumn of 1768, thousands of miles away from his English and Scottish friends, amongst Italians for whom he displayed little understanding or fondness, at least in his *Travels through France and Italy*. Neither the spirit of peripatetic adventures, nor the Romantic lure of Mediterranean climes, had induced Smollett to expatriate himself. But Smelfungus, as Sterne somewhat unfairly nicknamed Smollett in *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), ran a losing unSternean race with consumptive death, reaching its eschatological close with the tranquil fortitude of a genuine adventurer who knows that the game is up. Famous dying words tend to be notoriously apocryphal. Smollett—unlike Voltaire on his deathbed in 1778, who is reported to have exclaimed as a lamp flared up, 'Les flammes! Déjà!'—according to one of his nineteenth-century biographers, Oliphant Smeaton (*Tobias Smollett*, Edinburgh, 1897) displayed no such fear, but departed for his last adventure to 'The undiscover'd country from whose bourn / No traveller returns' with the following words of stoical appeasement to his wife: 'All is well, my dear.'

Unlike Richardson and Fielding, whose literary reputations were already well established by 1747–8, Smollett was but another struggling tiro who had published nothing apart from one song and three poems, for whose critical reception we have to rely on his word only. Not without some understandable authorial pride, he wrote to his Scottish friend Alexander Carlyle in 1747 that *Advice* and *Reproof* had 'made some Noise here, and a Ballad set to Musick under the name of the Tears of Scotland, a Performance very well received at London, as I hope it will be in your Country which gave Rise to it'.[1] Again, the only source of information concerning the composition of his *The Adventures of Roderick Random*—to give the book its full title—is to be found in Smollett's correspondence with Carlyle, in a letter written probably in December 1747:

> Since I wrote my last Letter to you, I have finished a Romance in two small Volumes, called the Adventures of Roderick Random, which will be published in a Fortnight. It is intended as a Satire on Mankind, and by the Reception it has met with in private from the best Judges here I have reason to believe it will succeed very well. As I have long ago disposed of the Copy, I know not what Method the Booksellers will follow in the Sale of it, but I believe some Hundreds will be sent to Scotland. If you shall light on it, read it with Candour, and report me and my Cause aright.[2]

The novel was duly advertised in several London newspapers, for instance the *General Evening Post* (15–17 December 1747): 'Next Month will be publish'd in two neat pocket-volumes (Price bound 6s.) The Adventures of Roderick Random ... Printed for J. Osborn in Pater-noster-row.' Another advertisement in the same newspaper appeared in the issue for 7–9 January, announcing the date of forthcoming publication as 21 January 1748. As an entry for January 1748 in the printer William Strahan's main ledger (now in the British Library) shows, 2,000 copies were issued anonymously, certainly a large order for a first novel by an unknown author, especially when compared with the 3,000 copies—also printed by Strahan, for Millar—of Fielding's first edition of *Joseph Andrews* (1742). As L. M. Knapp was the first to discover in 1932,[3] some 6,500 copies of

[1] Knapp, *Letters* (see Select Bibliography), p. 5. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*.

[2] Ibid., pp. 6–7.

[3] See Knapp, pp. 94–5. See also O. M. Brack and J. B. Davis's 1970 article, and A. H. Smith's invaluable London Ph.D. thesis, 1976, cited in the Select Bibliography.

Roderick Random came off Strahan's presses from January 1748 to November 1749. A second edition with frontispieces by Hayman and Grignion was quick to follow in April 1748, then a third in January 1750, and a fourth—the last one Smollett is known to have revised himself, and to which he added the 'Apologue' included in the present volume—printed by August 1754, but postdated 1755 for the usual commercial reasons, as actual publication had been delayed until the autumn of 1754. By 1770, *Roderick Random* had reached its eighth London edition. There is no doubt that 'the success of *Roderick Random* was immediate, impressive, and prolonged'.[1]

The printed critical data concerning the book's reception are relatively scarce, and it would be pointless to reproduce here the scanty relevant material gleaned by F. W. Boege and L. M. Knapp, who have had to rely mostly on passing references and allusions in private letters. Of more interest are the successful young author's reactions, as expressed in another letter to his friend Carlyle (7 June 1748). There Smollett unashamedly basks in his recent literary fame, as his authorship was not kept secret for long in London, although as late as 1752 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in a letter from abroad to her daughter the Countess of Bute still thought *Roderick Random* had been written by Fielding. Two main points emerge from Smollett's triumphant letter. First, with an oblique, if somewhat touchingly naïve, outburst of authorial vanity, he seeks to excuse 'several inaccuracies in the Stile' by coyly discovering to his friend 'that the whole was begun and finished in the Compass of Eight months, during which time several Intervals happened of one, two, three and four Weeks, wherein I did not set pen to paper, so that a little Incorrectness may be excused'. This is certainly a sly bid for 'puff oblique'! Secondly, Smollett expresses grave, and apparently sincere, concern at the unpleasant and unfortunate tendency to view *Roderick Random* as more or less autobiographical, with the twofold consequence that he was assimilated with his eponymous hero, and that many people, such as his old schoolmaster, John Love, thought that they were the thinly disguised models for most of his vitriolic satirical portraits. Much of the subsequent critical misinterpretation of Smollett's first novel and later fiction stems from this curiously perverse disregard of his solemn caveat:

[1] Knapp, p. 94.

I shall take this Opportunity therefore of declaring to you, in all the sincerity of the most unreserved Friendship, that no Person living is aimed at in all the first part of the Book; that is, while the scene lies in Scotland and that (the account of the Expedition to Carthagene excepted) the *whole* is not so much a Representation of my Life as of that of many other needy Scotch Surgeons whom I have known either personaly or by Report.[1]

In a century notorious for libels and libel suits, Smollett, in spite of his lashing satirical propensities, no doubt felt he had to be careful: a resolution he did not always manage to keep up, since he was to attack most virulently Admiral Knowles in the May 1758 issue of his *Critical Review*, with the smarting result that he was heavily fined and sentenced to three months' imprisonment in the King's Bench Prison (Nov. 1760–Feb. 1761). On two separate occasions again, Smollett tried desperately to clear his book from the disastrous implications of persistent autobiographical misreading. To the fourth edition of 1755, as already stated, he felt it necessary to affix the monitory pictorial 'Apologue', whose final paragraph is noteworthy for its archly serious tone. Then, as late as 1763, in a reply to an admiring American reader's 'fan letter' he again most solemnly affirmed:

The only Similitude between the Circumstances of my own Fortune and those I have attributed to Roderick Random consists in my being born of a reputable Family in Scotland, in my being bred a Surgeon, and having served as a Surgeon's mate on board a man of war during the Expedition to Carthagene. The low Situations in which I have exhibited Roderick I never experienced in my own Person.[2]

At the age of twenty-seven, in about six months of actual work, Smollett had written a highly successful novel of about 220,000 words, a feat of literary rapidity he was to renew again in 1755–7, when, according to his biographer John Moore, he composed over 2,600 quarto pages of his *Complete History of England* (1757–8) in fourteen months. The penurious young Scot 'on the make' in the literary London of the late 1740s had undoubtedly managed to launch himself on its treacherous waters not with a whimper but a bang.

The critical appreciation of *Roderick Random* has all too often been marred by an insidious, and pernicious quasi-automatic labelling as 'realistic'. This supposes that the novelist does little but hold up a mirror to the external world, in which reality obligingly

[1] *Letters*, p. 8. [2] *Letters*, p. 112.

reflects itself, or to use an anachronic simile, the novelist is but a photographer and his work but a photographic plate on which the external world prints itself. This presupposition rests on the widespread concept of literature as a form of cognitive mimesis, more or less skilfully achieved according to each writer's particular sensibility and literary talent. Mimesis also supposes, in a most un-Heraclitean way, that 'reality' is a static, amorphous 'given', while it is, in fact, a constantly shifting sensuous construct, at the mobile intersection of a writer's individual perception and of a changing external world. In other words, the novel does not passively reflect a reality that would be given once and for all, but it seeks to *discover* it, through the sensuous apprehension of writers. A typical mimetic assessment of Smollett is Thackeray's in his *English Humourists* (1853): 'He did not invent much, as I fancy, but had the keenest perceptive faculty, and described what he saw with wonderful relish and delightful broad humour.' What Thackeray, although an acutely percipient critic at times, failed to see is that fiction is but the illusion of an illusion, or in keeping with the word's etymology, 'a skilful lie'. From the preceding concept of fiction, not as a mirror but as an individual (re)discovery of a dynamic reality, it follows that each novel is stamped and hallmarked by its character of fictive *uniqueness*, although some general patterns in the private adventures, in the psychological and ethical reactions of the heroes, may be traced. Furthermore, critical attention has been focused for too long exclusively on the binary relationship of the novelist to his finished literary product, without paying due attention to the ever-present 'reader over the shoulder', a discovery that Sterne was probably the first to exploit to its dazzlingly capricious full, in that intemporally most modern of books, *Tristram Shandy*. It is true also that long before John Preston in his *The Created Self* (1970), or Wolfgang Iser in *The Implied Reader* (1974) brilliantly sought to determine the reader's role in fiction, some eighteenth-century critics had perceived the part played by the anonymous but forever active reader. In Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760), in Dialogue XXVIII, actually composed by Mrs Elizabeth Montagu, the bookseller objects to Plutarch's somewhat indignant moralistic and didactic contentions: 'Our readers must be amused, flattered, soothed; such adventures must be offered to them as they would like to have a share in.'

From the foregoing considerations, the basic ambiguity of all

novels of adventure may be deduced. Such fiction is ambiguous because it is ambivalent, being structurally turned both toward the external physical world as apprehended by the author's specific perception, and toward that virtual world of the archreader who demands—as the Augustan age was, after the manner of Horace, keenly aware—to be entertained *and* morally instructed. This is what Cedric Watts has most aptly called the 'Janiform novel': 'As Janus is the two-headed god, a Janiform novel is a two-faced novel: morally it seems to be centrally or importantly paradoxical or self-contradictory.'[1] There is no doubt that *Roderick Random* is very much of an unintentionally Janiform novel, in which the young author, himself both repelled and fascinated by the rampant corruption and violence of the contemporary scene, despite his careful but conventional show of scrupulous moral didacticism, actually displays nearly constant duplicity and moral paradoxicality because, more or less consciously, he relies on what Cedric Watts (p. 41) calls 'the reader's imaginative complicity', not only with corrupt characters, but also with the fascinating spectacle of evil at work either in such microcosms as the closed world of the *Thunder*, or the macrocosms of whole nations engaging in absurdly bloody wars (for instance the expedition to Cartagena and the battle of Dettingen). It is also obvious that the 'Janiformity' of *Roderick Random* is technically enhanced by Smollett's use of the pseudo-autobiographical mode. The first person narrative makes it all the easier for the reader to identify vicariously with the hero, so that his comfortable armchair passivity is deftly seduced into a gratifying temporary illusion of almost godlike energy and invulnerability. Roderick goes through enough adventures to knock flat on their backs as many real-life heroes as the proverbial cat has lives. Roderick's toughness, buttressed by patience in adversity and also by that most powerful craving for revenge which pervades the novel, his dashing gusto for life, its hard knocks, bad bruises, but also for its carnal and financial sweets, make of Smollett's first hero a true archetypal figure of the Ulysses-type.

Much of the body-and-mind-shattering violence, for which Smollett has been so often blamed as a 'coarse' or, in eighteenth-century critical parlance, 'low' author, can be explained, if not entirely condoned, by the essential 'Janiformity' of his fiction, also

[1] Cedric Watts, 'Janiform Novels', *English*, xxiv, Summer 1975, no. 119, 40–9. Quotation, p. 40.

to be detected in his later novels, especially *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), and *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753). A case in point is Smollett's recurrent fascination with money, and to a lesser extent, sex, which must both rank very high in the hierarchy of archcorrupters. Without stressing the obvious autobiographical undertones, it is noteworthy that Smollett from the very beginning of his career expresses his haunting and harrowing concern about money. The poet in *Advice* (1746) is battling against poverty: 'From the pale hag, O! could I once break loose; / Divorc'd, all hell should not re-tie the noose!' (ll. 4–5), while in *Reproof* (1747) he flays various usurers, capitalists, financiers, and profiteers. Probably too little attention has been paid to the epigraph, taken from Horace's *Satires*, II.v (*Et genus et virtus nisi cum re vilior alga est*—see Notes), which appeared on the title-page of *Roderick Random*. The line is spoken by Ulysses, who finds himself destitute before going back to Ithaca. He is seeking advice from the seer Tiresias on how to repair the depredations caused by the riotous living of Penelope's suitors. The seer obliges with a series of worldly-wise pragmatic tips of more than dubious morality, including the ways and means of turning into a successful will-hunter. The satirical intent, although implicit, is obvious enough, and poor Ulysses returning penniless from his adventurous wanderings is little more than the stock-figure of the *adversarius*, whose apparently innocent questions and qualms afford ample scope for Tiresias's satirical pseudo-advice, a technique Smollett used in *Advice* and *Reproof*. Ulysses-Roderick is soon made to realize that money lies at the root of all his troubles, and Tiresias-Smollett harps on the theme from the very beginning to the very end of the novel.

In the opening lines of the novel it is striking how money asserts its baneful influence at once. The harsh old judge has 'a singular aversion' for beggars, he rejects his son for marrying privately 'a poor relation', and the pregnant mother in order to know the significance of a dream concerning her future offspring 'at last consulted a Highland seer, whose favourable interpretation he [Roderick's father] would have secured beforehand by a bribe, but found him incorruptible'. Roderick's childhood and schooling is marked by the callous financial neglect with which his grandfather the judge treats him, before disappointing his expectations, as well as his more clamorous female cousins', in a testament that leaves the totality of his fortune to a favourite grandson. From then on, nearly in every

chapter, money—usually the dire lack of it—will rear its ugly head, or the frantic, nearly obsessive quest for it, by means fair or foul. When Roderick, after a particularly penurious stretch in the French army, does come into some money thanks to the providential legacy his long-lost friend Strap has received (Chapter XLIV), as his store is quickly squandered away in fashionable London, he soon turns fortune-hunter (Chapter LIII) and woos the deformed Miss Snapper more for her bulging bags of guineas than for her gibbous protuberances. Even Roderick's supposedly romantic passion for the beautiful, if somewhat unreal Narcissa, is not devoid of financial connotations. A measure of his more mature and disinterested love will be his readiness to marry Narcissa, by the end of the novel, without her fortune ('Sans dot!'), which her brute of a brother unlawfully withholds from her. But in the very last lines of the novel, the reader is relieved to learn that, after a lawsuit, Roderick will 'certainly recover' his wife's fortune, a piece of intelligence confirmed in *Peregrine Pickle*, Chapter XXXVIII (see Notes).

After all these variations on the power of money, which are barely sketched here, the last three chapters of *Roderick Random* could be viewed as a grand finale of financial felicity (this being the symbolically meaningful last word of the novel). Thomson, another long-lost friend, not knowing Roderick's recent affluence due both to his trading venture (gold and slaves) and the 'cognitio' of his long-disappeared *and* rich father, is ready to help his old friend financially, while the two former messmates gloat over the fate of their old tyrannical commander, Oakhum, who is dead after having embezzled some of the *Thunder*'s prize money. Likewise, his cruel sycophant, Doctor Mackshane, is suitably punished by the retributive justice of a money-minded Providence, and now lies in prison, a destitute wretch, whom the two friends take ambiguous and furtive pleasure in relieving: 'ten pistoles', such is Roderick's delicious self-righteous generosity. Money is no longer an agent of corruption, but one of reward. Even the kindly Mrs Sagely receives a gift of thirty guineas, accompanied by the resolve of paying her an annuity to the same amount. Morgan, the friendly, if somewhat fiery-tempered Welsh surgeon's mate of the *Thunder*, is discovered by Roderick, settled in Canterbury as a well-to-do apothecary, where he 'married an apothecary's widow with whom he now enjoyed a pretty good sum of money'. By the end of the same Chapter LXVII, Roderick receives £15,000 from his father, which added to his own £3,000,

make him a rich gentleman indeed, while at the beginning of the following chapter, Narcissa receives an appreciative £500 from her future father-in-law. Old friends or enemies turn up, in a predictable way, and the end of the novel could be caricatured as a sort of fictional auditing of accounts, where old debts of gratitude are paid off, but old scores of hostility or resentment are settled as well, and with a vengeance. Banter, the coffee-house wit, asks for ten guineas, gets twenty and some apparently well-meaning advice to boot, which he is perhaps sensible enough to reject. Orson Topehall, Narcissa's brother, in his boorish letter to Roderick's father, simply refuses to believe that Don Rodriguez is a man of property. On the contrary, the ever generous Lieutenant Bowling promises to give two thousand guineas to Roderick's and Narcissa's first child. Suitably enough, in Chapter LXIX, the fox-hunting heir of the old judge has squandered his estate, so that Roderick's father can buy it back, thus retrieving his paternal estate. The Potions, who had let down Roderick when he was poor, get snubbed for their (lack of) pains, as well as one of Roderick's female cousins, who had also been unkind to him formerly: her husband has already spent her fortune. One can almost hear an authorial *sotto voce* 'Serves her right too', a kind of rough retributive justice, not totally devoid of *schadenfreude*, in spite of the cosy moral righteousness, implicitly shared by the reader.

Here Smollett touches one of the archetypal mainsprings of fiction. Beyond the slightly ridiculous financial prize-giving of a typically conventional ending, where the 'goodies' are suitably rewarded, and the 'baddies' no less adequately punished, he plays ambiguously and not unskilfully on the perennial fascination of evil on the one hand, and on a firmly grounded, if banal, inner certainty that the just will eventually triumph on the other. In Smollett's own words, taken from the morally bellicose Preface of *Roderick Random*, 'modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed, from his own want of experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind' will finally prevail and be rewarded accordingly. The long-thwarted just may even indulge in the luxurious thrill of charitable forgiveness. The now bankrupt fox-hunting cousin of Roderick is promised a commission in the army by Don Rodriguez who will purchase it. Miss Williams, the former prostitute—whose woeful tale is told during an appropriate stasis in the

action (Chapters XXII–XXIII)—and the already reformed companion of Narcissa, is married off to Strap, who receives £500 from the ever generous and bountiful Don Rodriguez. Once more, blasé modern critics, who find such a conventional happy ending—complete with a return to the 'good life' of the country as in all four other novels of Smollett's—ludicrous and improbable, should search beyond the stylized ethics of the coda. These same critics fail to see that such a happy ending as that of *Roderick Random*, beyond its apparent conventionality, 'represents a degree of wish fulfilment . . . [and] provides a way in which the author can thumb his nose at the spite and malice of those who hinder a young man's getting on in the world', to borrow the thoughtful analysis of David Daiches's 'Smollett Reconsidered'.[1] The author of *Roderick Random*, although this judgement will sound paradoxical, thus displays his own brand of moral optimism, by seeking to reconcile in his 'Janiform' novel the harsh world of violence with the somewhat gauche, but deeply yearned for, coexisting world of sensibility.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Smollett's treatment of sex, a notoriously difficult subject for an author with a strict Scottish Presbyterian upbringing. Samuel Johnson, in his well-known *Rambler* no. 4 of 31 March 1750, holds that the purpose of modern 'romances' is

> to teach the Means of avoiding the Snares which are laid by Treachery for Innocence, without infusing any Wish for that Superiority with which the Betrayer flatters his Vanity; to give the Power of counteracting Fraud, without the Temptation to practise it; to initiate Youth by mock Encounters in the Art of necessary Defence, and to increase Prudence without impairing Virtue.

A noble finality indeed, also expressed in an equally apotropaic manner by Smollett in his 'Dedication' of *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753), where he declares that his purpose is to set up his evil hero 'as a beacon for the benefit of the unexperienced and unwary, who from the perusal of these memoirs, may learn to avoid the manifold snares with which they are continually surrounded in the paths of life'. But in the fictional description of sexual activities, this moralistic high-mindedness is apt to become a flimsy, soon-forgotten pretext, as for instance in John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748–9)—better known as *Fanny Hill*—or in de Sade's

[1] See Select Bibliography. Quotation from p. 118.