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TOBIAS SMOLLETT'S *HUMPHRY CLINKER*
AND THE CERVANTINE TRADITION
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH FICTION

ABSTRACT: Traditional accounts of Cervantes' influence on Tobias Smollett (1721-1771) have focused on *Launcelot Greaves* to the detriment of the rest of his novels, particularly of *Humphry Clinker*. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that this work is not only the summit of Smollett's career, but also of his emulation of Cervantes and of the Cervantine tradition in eighteenth-century English fiction. *Humphry Clinker* provides a summa not only of different forms of quixotism explored in previous eighteenth-century novels, but also of different aspects of the quixotic principle, that is, of the theory and practice of fiction implicit in *Don Quixote*, developed by Fielding and Sterne beyond Cervantes. The paper first deals with the three quixotic figures of the novel (Lismahago, Bramble and Clinker), then moves on to the Cervantine juxtaposition of romance and realism sometimes referred to as *comic romance* and finally discusses the Cervantine features of the dialogical interplay of consciousnesses.

Most accounts of Smollett's career have insisted on his allegiance to the picaresque tradition, regarding *Launcelot Greaves* (1760-61) as an exotic quixotic sally, a diversion from the picaresque mainstream, explained by Smollett's translation of *Don Quixote* (1755). They also agree that his career reaches its zenith with *Humphry Clinker* (1771), where traces of the picaresque, if they can be discerned at all, are reworked in an altogether different mode, that of the epistolary novel.

This was the position stated by Giddings in his classic study on Smollett and the picaresque and widely accepted in Smollett criticism, although the extent or weight of the picaresque in Smollett's novels has proved to be a bone of contention and has been assessed in different ways.¹ Following in Giddings's footsteps, Spector stretched the argument beyond plausibility, turning both *Launcelot Graves* and *Humphry Clinker* into picaresque works and asserting that Smollett remained a picaresque novelist throughout his whole career.² Only Boucé, among the major Smollett scholars, put Cervantes on a par with the picaresque: he considered *Gil Blas* and *Don Quixote* active influences on *Roderick Random* (1748) and *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), which are then developed separately in *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) and *Launcelot Greaves*, respectively, and finally only the quixotic is still discernible in *Humphry Clinker*. His demonstration of this much more accurate outline was however disappointing and what is distinctively Cervantine before and after *Launcelot Greaves* turns out to be quite irrelevant.³ In all three cases the influence of Cervantes on Smollett remains basically restricted to *Launcelot Greaves*, which is considered to be the peak of his 'Cervantism', with occasional references to minor borrowings in previous and later novels which are seen as preparations to or echoes of this peak. The most recent long studies on Smollett by Skinner or Beasley have not changed this situation.⁴

And yet *Humphry Clinker* is not just a novel featuring a series of quixotic characters, as Niehus has correctly argued,⁵ but a full Cervantine

1 Robert Giddings, *The Tradition of Smollett* (London: Methuen, 1967), pp. 21, 70, 127-28.

2 Robert Donald Spector, *Tobias George Smollett* (Boston: Twayne, 1989), pp. x-xi, 110-11, 122-23.

3 Paul-Gabriel Boucé, *The Novels of Tobias Smollett* (London: Longman, 1976), p. 99.

4 John S. Skinner, *Constructions of Smollett: A Study of Genre and Gender* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996); Jerry C. Beasley, *Tobias Smollett, Novelist* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998).

5 Edward Niehus, "Quixote Figures in the Novels of Smollett", *Durham University Journal* 71 (1978/79), pp. 233-43. To my knowledge, this is the only analysis of *Humphry Clinker* in relation to Cervantes, along with my own "La otra cara de Cervantes en la novela inglesa del siglo XVIII: *Tom Jones* y *Humphry Clinker*", *Actas del II Congreso Internacional de la Asociación*

novel, and it is so to such an extent that I would dare to suggest that it is Smollett's most Cervantine novel. *Humphry Clinker* incorporates the lessons Smollett had already learned from Cervantes and develops them beyond what he had previously done. That is the reason why the Cervantism of *Humphry Clinker* has to a great extent passed unnoticed: it is more profound, complex and subtle as well as more creative. Of course if this is true then the picture of Smollett's career is substantially altered, because this implies, on the one hand, that with *Launcelot Greaves* the picaresque is dropped for good and, on the other, that the assumption that this work is the peak of Smollett's Cervantism is wrong. When we bring these two facts together and add that Cervantes was there from the very beginning, as I will attempt to demonstrate elsewhere, and therefore that his presence was not new but simply larger in *Launcelot Greaves*, then one must see that career as one building on Cervantes until it reaches its peak in *Humphry Clinker*. Of course this forces a reassessment of "the tradition of Smollett": perhaps he is not a picaresque author with a touch of Cervantes, but a Cervantine one with a picaresque tinge.

Placing Smollett in the Cervantine tradition, however, means that he is not just indebted to Cervantes, but also to previous authors in that tradition. And this is indeed the case with *Humphry Clinker*, which is related to most – not to say all – significant eighteenth-century English Cervantine works. Smollett's last novel is not only the last major Cervantine work of the century, its last great achievement, but also the melting pot of all previous achievements in the tradition, and in this sense it can be considered its summit. It is not far-fetched then to say that *Humphry Clinker* is not just a Cervantine novel but the apex of Smollett's Cervantine career and of the Cervantine tradition in eighteenth-century fiction.

1. Quixotic comedy

The presence of Cervantes in *Humphry Clinker* is most obviously felt in a series of figures who allude to or remind of Don Quixote in different but always explicit ways. Smollett's turn to literal quixotism in *Launcelot Greaves* might have developed his taste for explicit

de Cervantistas, *Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale Napoli* 37 (Nápoles, 1995), pp. 839-54.

quixotic figures like the one appearing at the very centre of *Humphry Clinker*. When the three-volume novel is well underway, in fact in the middle of volume II, Lieutenant Lismahago is introduced as “a tall, meagre figure, answering, with his horse, the description of Don Quixote mounted on Rozinante”⁶. Jery’s perfunctory perception of Lismahago’s quixotism (echoed later by Win Jenkins when he refers to him in her peculiar diction as a *Dunquicksset*, p. 306), based as it is on his physical appearance (pp. 188-89), is later confirmed by his behaviour and personality. In this same first scene he falls from his horse while dismounting, loses his periwig, thus showing his multi-coloured and patched head piece, and addresses the ladies with exaggerated formality and etiquette. The ridicule is turned into admiration after his presentation of himself as a soldier whose sacrifice for his country has not met its due reward and his declaration of disdain for either money or preferment (p. 190), a declaration of noble principles which, in endowing the fool with overtones of the hero, makes his resemblance to Don Quixote still closer.

This noble aspect of the quixotic figure, however, is immediately dismissed by the most authoritative of the correspondents, Jery, who describes Lismahago as a “self-conceited pedant, awkward, rude and disputacious [*sic*]” (p. 190). This introduces the character’s defining trait: Lismahago’s mind, Jery explains, is stored with learning acquired by his extensive reading and is also imbued with a permanent disposition to use this learning to combat other people’s views and opinions. Bramble rounds the portrait off when he asserts his belief that Lismahago “has rummaged, and read, and studied with indefatigable attention, in order to qualify himself to refute established maxims” (p. 203). The description aptly grasps the character’s quixotic core, with erudition playing the role of Quixote’s chivalric lore, disputation that of his romantic crusade against the world, and both defining his personality to the point of becoming, in truly quixotic fashion, monomaniac. His monomania is fleshed out in the letters written by Jery (pp. 191-201) and Bramble (pp. 202-07), where we hear of Lismahago arguing that the English language is spoken with greater propriety at Edinburgh than in London, that poverty is a blessing to

⁶ Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. Lewis M. Knapp & Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 188.

a nation, that the liberty of the press is a national evil, or that commerce will prove the ruin of every nation, to name but a few examples. The absurdity of some – but not all – of his theories as well as the obscurity of his sources, make Lismahago the kin of the quixotic pedant that recurs in eighteenth-century satires on learning from Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) through the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* (1741), written in collaborative way by the members of the Scriblerus Club (which included Swift himself and Pope), to Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67).⁷

To this basic quixotic core, other quixotic traits are added. He is also invested with the tendency to make speeches not called for, although not always devoid of sense, for example on the union of England and Scotland (pp. 275-81), and he is also immersed in quixotic episodes: like the Don, he is the object of a nobleman’s practical jokes and the subject of slapstick nocturnal confusions (pp. 297-300), both of which became hallmarks of English quixotic novels after Fielding’s imitation of Cervantes in *Joseph Andrews* (1742), where both feature prominently. Although at the end his aggressive and vindictive temper is softened and he turns into a more amiable figure, and despite the good sense, dignity, morality, and integrity Niehus attributes to him (pp. 242-43), he remains basically a ridiculous quixotic figure, and a clearly recognizable one. Romantic madness has been displaced into learned monomania, physical combat into verbal argument, but he is still a knight of the rueful countenance riding his Rocinante and ruled by a bookish humour, always ready for argumentative battle and frequently involved in ludicrous situations evoking episodes from Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*.

If Lismahago is quite a literal Quixote, he is not the only one. Some of his arguments are with Matthew Bramble, who is described by Jery as “a Don Quixote in generosity” (p. 267). Bramble’s generosity, of which there are many examples in the book, together with his inner nobility and benevolence or his concern and sympathy for other people’s misfortunes, which makes him not just provide money to relieve them but also shed tears when listening to them or witnessing a sentimental scene (pp. 263-65), bring him near the eighteenth-

⁷ On satire on learning and its connection to quixotism see Pedro Javier Pardo, “Satire on Learning and the Type of the Pedant in Eighteenth-Century Literature”, *BELLS* (Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies) 13 (2004), <<http://www.publicacions.ub.es/bells>>.

century type of the man of feeling, who, at least in novels such as Henry Brook's *The Fool of Quality* (1765-70) or Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), was depicted as a sentimental quixote. In coupling Bramble and Lismahago, Smollett might be attempting to suggest a contrast between two kinds of quixotism, or, in other words, between two ways of living, through the mind and through the heart, by intellect or by feeling, much in the way Sterne had done in *Tristram Shandy* by means of Walter and Toby. The conflict between both in *Humphry Clinker* is on the verge of becoming actual combat in the most quixotic adventure of the book (pp. 282-85). When Bramble reacts in fully quixotic fashion to Lord Oxmington's rude behaviour by defying him to single combat, he accordingly chooses quixotic Lismahago to deliver his challenge. Lismahago's quixotic errand is made to appear even more so by his escort, the servant Macalpine, who prompts Jerry to exclaim that "if Macalpine had been mounted upon an ass, this couple might have passed for the knight of La Mancha and his squire Panza" (p. 283). And then Smollett, in full Cervantine fashion, has Lismahago disarmed by the Lord's footmen and thrown into the horses' pond, after which he demands satisfaction to his honour from Bramble, who is ready to give it to him. The episode clearly points to the quixotic affinities between Bramble and Lismahago, who share not only the extreme and antiquated zeal for honour and for manners which is a feature of Don Quixote but also the eccentricity pointed out by Jerry when he writes that eventually "the two originals were perfectly reconciled" (p. 284). Bramble's eccentricity, however, does not stem from his characterization as a man of feeling.

Bramble is a quixotic figure insofar as he is a man of feeling, benevolence and honour in an unfeeling, malevolent and dishonourable world, but not only for that. Unlike most sentimental quixotes, who are usually innocent of the world and retain their innocence and faith in human nature despite their disappointments and misfortunes, Bramble is well aware of human frailty and debasement, so aware that, far from being an innocent optimist, he seems to be the opposite, a disillusioned pessimist, and therefore, in Preston's fortunate coinage, he is a *benevolent misanthrope* – and in this sense he resembles more closely the satiric Man in Black of the *Chinese Letters* (1762), as McKillop remarked, than the sentimental Primrose of *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), both by Goldsmith.⁸ The

source of Bramble's misanthropy separates him further from these characters and the general type they embody and bring him still closer to Don Quixote. Throughout the book Bramble's misanthropy is persistently associated with his illness: he sees humanity in such negative and vicious light because he is sick. But the equation also works in reverse direction: he is sick because humanity is disgusting, both in a material and a moral sense, he is nauseated both in physical and spiritual terms. This creates a link between body and mind, illness and corruption, which both Jerry and Bramble point out, and has been referred to by Paulson as "the moral-physical parallel"⁹.

However this may be, whether he sees humanity as sick because he himself is sick, or whether he is so because humanity is sick, Bramble's life turns around disease, both spiritual and physical, and both emanating from his body and impinging upon his mind, although the opposite is also true, that is, impinging upon his body and emanating from his mind. This is reflected in his letters, which abound in physical details about his lack of health and the progress of illness in his body as well as about the lack of sanitation and spread of infection in the world around him; and these are matched by detailed accounts of his moral disgust and revulsion at the contagious corruption and degradation he observes in society. Bramble's letters focus on his condition as a sick man and on the sick condition of the world, and in this sense it is only fit that they should be addressed to his doctor. Sickness becomes thus obsession, ruling passion, monomania, in short, quixotism, since it plays the same role as chivalry in Don Quixote: it is the lens through which Bramble sees human nature, the prism in which the world is refracted. Quixote's psychological malady is replaced by Bramble's physical one, but its effects on the perception of reality are quite similar. The leap from a

8 Thomas R. Preston, "Smollett and the Benevolent Misanthrope", *PMLA* 79 (1964), pp. 51-57, and *Not in Timon's Manner: Feeling, Misanthropy, and Satire in Eighteenth-Century England* (University of Alabama Press, 1975); Alan Dugald McKillop, *The Early Masters of English Fiction* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1956).

9 Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 191. My analysis of this aspect of Bramble's Quixotism is considerably indebted to Paulson's enlightening analysis of Bramble as a satirist (p. 195 *et passim*), and to his excellent book in general.

demented quixote to a diseased one points to a further step in the displacement of the quixotic figure: not only has monomania replaced madness, but this has physical instead of literary origins; it is nonetheless distinctively quixotic in its association with malady and in the way it determines worldview. Of course this implies a considerable expansion of the meaning of quixotism beyond the original one formulated by Cervantes, but this is in line with similar eighteenth-century transformations of Cervantes and particularly with Sterne's displacement of quixotism into hobby-horse, discussed below.

It is the interaction of both dimensions of Bramble's quixotism, the epistemological monomania which turns him into a misanthrope and the moral benevolence of the sentimentalist, which makes Bramble such an interesting quixotic figure. This apparently contradictory conjunction of monomaniac worldview and unworldly benevolence is of course modelled on Sterne's Uncle Toby, whose benevolent behaviour is similarly at odds with his military monomania. But, most important, it echoes Quixote's combination of epistemological madness and moral idealism, and makes Bramble a complex quixote – unlike the serious sentimental ones who displayed only one side of Don Quixote's personality. Bramble, like Toby, is a man of feeling made comic by his quixotic monomania, although there is a profound bond between those aspects lacking in Toby: his irascibility is an expression of his sensibility, he is sick because he is sensitive, both in physical and spiritual terms, in the same way as Don Quixote's idealism is inseparable from his madness. Bramble is a benevolent man made sick by the world, in a literal as well as figurative way, and in an epistemological as well as moral sense. In creating Bramble, Smollett has apparently gone a long way from Cervantes, but has blended in full Cervantine fashion the ridiculous and the admirable and has thus produced his most accomplished quixote, more so than more evident or literal quixotes like the basically comic Lismahago or the basically serious Launcelot.

And yet the gallery of quixotes in *Humphry Clinker* is not complete. There is still another quixotic figure, the eponymous hero, who appears halfway through the first volume (pp. 80-81) to become Bramble's servant, and in this role he is vaguely reminiscent of Sancho Panza in his simplicity, devotion to his master and comic blunders. His quixotism – still less evident or more displaced, at a further remove

from Don Quixote than Bramble's – is foregrounded when he becomes a Methodist preacher and Bramble characterizes him as a madman, someone "seduced by the reveries of a disturbed imagination" (p. 138). The physically diseased Quixote is thus pointing to a mental disease which in the eighteenth century was referred to as *enthusiasm*, a form of fanaticism or absorption of the mind in certain ideas or pursuits, particularly religious ones, which had come to be associated with religious dissenters – from Puritans to Methodists – and with quixotism – particularly after Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663, 1664 and 1678). In fact, only two years after the publication of *Humphry Clinker*, the reverend Richard Graves would make this association still more robust with the publication of a novel that he had started writing twenty years before, *The Spiritual Quixote; or the Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffry Wildgoose* (1773). Like Wildgoose, Clinker is a spiritual quixote, as is underscored by the fact that Niehus' description of the latter could perfectly be applied to the former: "The Quixote role which Smollett develops in Clinker is that of the naïve, innocent enthusiast. Clinker's imagination is kindled, not by books of chivalry, but by the sermons of George Whitefield. And with good intentions based on a dubious idealism he sets out to reform the world, not through practicing knight-errantry, but by preaching Methodism" (p. 241). Clinker's simplicity of heart and innocence of the world, again similar to Wildgoose's, adds an admirable dimension to his ridiculous quixotism, thus combining the enthusiasm distorting his view of reality with a good inner moral core. His quixotism is thus double-sided, and in this respect it is a replica of Bramble's in a minor key.

The connections between Clinker's religious enthusiasm and quixotism are made explicit not only by Bramble's view of him or by his kinship with Wildgoose but also by his behaviour. There is a very revealing instance of how enthusiasm penetrates the mind and becomes obsessive worldview when, on being falsely accused of highway robbery and being interrogated about it (p. 146), he interprets the words "guilt" and "confession" in religious instead of legal terms, so he answers the accusation in the affirmative and ends up by being called a "lunatic" and being sent to prison. The obsessive nature of enthusiasm is then displayed not only in words (there is another instance of this interpenetration between language and worldview on pp. 315-16), but also in deeds, so in prison we see

Clinker exercising his monomania, or, to use a quixotic metaphor, riding his enthusiasm, as he preaches to the inmates and actually converts some of them (150-51) – behaviour which recalls that of quixotic Primrose in the prison scene in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Clinker's quixotism must have seemed so obvious to Smollett that just after this episode he feels compelled to make the metaphor literal by mounting him on a real horse (p. 153) and giving him arms (p. 157), as he is endowed with the chivalric mission of protecting the company in their travels. This creates the characteristic quixotic inadequacy, in this case a man of religion acting as a bodyguard, which is reminiscent of Fielding's Adams, further exploited in a different way when Clinker attempts to save Bramble from drowning but in fact is about to drown him (p. 184) – a combination of good intentions and noble character with a misapprehension of reality resulting in a mock chivalric action which is again reminiscent not only of the Don but also of Adams. In fact Clinker's two defining traits, simplicity and religious enthusiasm, also remind one of Adams, and the connection is rounded off at the end when it is suggested that Clinker's future profession will be that of a vestry-clerk.

These parallels with Adams seem to be the finishing touch to the parade of quixotic figures evoked or used in the composition of the three quixotes of *Humphry Clinker*: the quixotic pedant and the sentimental quixote, Adams, Primrose and Wildgoose, Toby and Walter Shandy.¹⁰ All the major varieties of quixotic experience – as pedantry or feeling, as riding a horse or a monomania, as ludicrous obsession or admirable virtue – explored in previous fiction seem to peep out of the work and turn *Humphry Clinker* into a summa or encyclopaedia of eighteenth-century quixotism. This proliferation of quixotic figures in the same novel is only comparable to the gallery of quixotes in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, which also includes a quixotic pedant, Walter, a quixotic man of feeling, Toby, and a

¹⁰ For a full account of these quixotic figures see Susan Staves, "Don Quixote in Eighteenth-Century England", *Comparative Literature* 24 (1972), pp. 193-215; Edward Niehus, "Quixotic Figures in the Novels of Sterne", *Essays in Literature* 12 (1985), pp. 41-60; and Pedro Javier Pardo, "Formas de imitación del Quijote en la novela inglesa del siglo XVIII: *Joseph Andrews* y *Tristram Shandy*", *Anales Cervantinos* 33 (1995/1997), pp. 133-64.

quixotic parson, Yorick. As Skinner has perceptively remarked, in both novels the older interpretation of the quixotic figure as ridiculous and obsessive pedant is coupled with the new one emerging later in the eighteenth century and turning him into *amiable humorist*, that is to say, a laughable original or eccentric, a new interpretation of Don Quixote related to the English fascination with their own eccentricity and also to the changing theories of the comic studied by Tave in his book on this comic type.¹¹ Tave rightly argues that this new interpretation emerged with Fielding's Adams, who was an original ruled by humour and used for comic purposes, but of an amiable and good-natured type, so laughter was coupled with sympathy and admiration instead of derision and contempt, as had been the norm before: the reader laughed with him, and not at him. In fact, in the cases of quixotic figures like Adams, Yorick, Toby, Primrose, Bramble or Clinker, derision and contempt were diverted to the vices and corruption represented by other characters surrounding them and exposed by their quixotic innocence. Quixote thus became the instrument and not the butt of satire, as Paulson has argued in his study of satire in eighteenth-century fiction, so he was both amiable humorist and benevolent satirist, or, in other words, a comic satirist. This conception of comedy and satire expressed through the quixotic figure is a fully Cervantine one, and is the one prevailing in *Humphry Clinker*. But this use of quixotism is not the whole story of Cervantism in Smollett's novel, in fact it is only the first chapter. The involvement of these quixotes in stories which are romantic in a comic, Cervantine way, and the addition of more quixotic perspectives which interact with each other in a dialogical – again Cervantine – way, are the subsequent chapters.

¹¹ "It should be noted, however, that Lismahago is a particularly regressive quixotic avatar (derived from older purely satirical readings of Cervantes) and bears little resemblance to the 'amiable humorist' studied by Stuart Tave and to some extent exemplified in the present case by Bramble himself. One might even suggest that *Humphry Clinker* thus introduces the same bifurcation of the quixotic type – amiable eccentric versus obsessive pedant – achieved by Sterne with the Shandy brothers" (Skinner, *Constructions of Smollett*, p. 193). See Stuart Tave, *The Amiable Humorist: A Study of the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), and also John Skinner, "Don Quixote in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Reader Response", *Cervantes* 7 (1987), pp. 45-57.

2. Comic Romance

The emergence of quixotism in *Humphry Clinker* is a belated and gradual one: not until volume II do Humphry and Lismahago turn up or do we start to be fully aware of Bramble's quixotic nature. The presence of *Don Quixote* in *Humphry Clinker*, however, can be traced not only in the characters' quixotism, but also in the quixotic pattern, that is, in a larger narrative frame or structure deriving from Don Quixote's imitation of chivalric romance in a realistic – at times even picaresque – world. The quixotic pattern is an aspect of the *quixotic principle* formulated by Levin and it consists in submerging a romantic worldview in an anti-romantic or realistic world so as to play them against each other and record their comic discrepancy, although the romantic may also have objective existence in the world and the anti-romantic a subjective dimension as worldview.¹² The quixotic pattern puts side by side two sets of characters and adventures: on the one side, a romantic one constituted by the characters and adventures as seen, perceived, experienced in Don Quixote's mind, but also as taking place in the objective reality of certain interpolated stories (for example those of Cardenio, Luscinda, Dorotea and Fernando, which are borrowed from sentimental or pastoral romance); on the other side, an anti-romantic set consisting of the same characters and adventures as they actually take place, or as they are seen, perceived, and experienced by Sancho. The quixotic pattern can then be defined as the comic juxtaposition of romance with anti-romance or realism, and this is exactly what Fielding referred to as *comic romance* in the preface to *Joseph Andrews* and exemplified in this novel itself. Joseph is a romantic hero placed in an anti-romantic world, the protagonist of a romantic plot turning around his love for Fanny and the recovery of his true identity, but he also plays a part in the anti-

12 Harry Levin defined the quixotic principle as the discrepancy between the romantic imagination and reality and then traced the permanence of this principle in literary posterity in "The Quixotic Principle: Cervantes and other Novelists", *The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice*, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 45-66.

romantic plot whose protagonist is the quixotic Adams. In addition to this he is also endowed with some anti-romantic features, and this combination is further developed in the eponymous hero of *Tom Jones* (1749), where the quixotic plot is removed and replaced by a picaresque one whose protagonist is Tom himself. *Tom Jones* thus features a dual plot in which Tom is both romantic and picaresque hero in two parallel sets of adventures belonging to these antagonistic narrative patterns and combined or juxtaposed for comic purposes, although, as in *Joseph Andrews*, leading to a romantic apotheosis in which the hero emerges as a fully romantic one by recovering his noble identity and marrying the romantic heroine.¹³

What Fielding named *comic romance*, probably after the title and the manner of Scarron's *Roman comique*, is therefore a Cervantine invention, as Fielding himself acknowledged in the subtitle of *Joseph Andrews* – "Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes" – and as Baker has aptly pointed out when he defines the genre, if genre it may be termed, as "a kind of writing that is in some degree a modernized burlesque of chivalric romance and a mild chivalric romancing of the follies of ordinary life, an English rendering of Cervantes"¹⁴. This kind of writing was a feature not only of Fielding, but also of Smollett, who, as early as 1748, in the preface to his first novel, *Roderick Random*, hinted at this blend of romance and realism as the most distinctive feature of Cervantes's masterpiece, identified the same method in Lesage's *Gil Blas*, whose plan he admitted to having adopted, and then provided the key to his adoption of the Cervantine method via Lesage by announcing the positive qualities (innocence, education,

13 For the relation of Fielding's comic romances not only with Cervantes but also with the French imitators of Cervantes see Homer Goldberg, *The Art of 'Joseph Andrews'* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), particularly the first chapter, "Fielding's Prototypes: From Cervantes to Marivaux", pp. 27-72. See also Sheridan Baker, "Henry Fielding's Comic Romances", *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters* 45 (1960), pp. 411-19, and Pedro Javier Pardo, "La otra cara de Cervantes en la novela inglesa del siglo XVIII: *Tom Jones* y *Humphry Clinker*" (see note 5).

14 Sheridan Baker, "Humphry Clinker as Comic Romance", *Essays on the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. Rober Donald Spector (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 155.

birth) with which he had endowed his picaresque hero.¹⁵ And indeed *Roderick Random* is a comic romance in its combination of romantic and picaresque features in the hero, who is also the protagonist of a dual plot but emerges at the end as a full romantic hero by recovering his noble identity and marrying the romantic heroine, thus bearing a very interesting resemblance to Fielding's *Tom Jones*. This combination of picaresque and romance – the romantic picaresque that Smollett discerned as Lesage's contribution to the Cervantine comic-romantic pattern – is also at work in his two subsequent works: in *Peregrine Pickle* the picaresque hero is equally turned into a romantic one, while in *Ferdinand Count Fathom* he becomes a romantic villain. With *Launcelot Greaves*, however, Smollett substituted the quixotic for the picaresque in the comic-romantic equation (much as in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, although with important differences), so it is now the quixotic figure that is turned into a romantic hero: Smollett transforms Don Quixote into what he always wanted to be and never attained, a true hero of romance, the result being a sort of quixotic instead of picaresque romance. This implies a turn in Smollett's career, but not one so radical as has sometimes been represented, since Smollett is still working within the comic romance tradition and it is only the way of making romance comic that has changed from the picaresque to the quixotic. Smollett's career can therefore be described as a development from the picaresque to the quixotic as long as it is clear that romance, and particularly the Cervantine juxtaposition of romance and realism, that is, Cervantine romance, remains constant.¹⁶ *Humphry Clinker*, in

15 Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. Pierre-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. xxxiv-xxxv. After a lengthy discussion of the errors and drawbacks of romance, particularly their absence of verisimilitude or probability, Smollett turns to Cervantes and asserts that he discovered a better and proper use of it by bringing it down to earth (or making it "assume the sock", as he says), thus advocating not so much the discarding of romance as its right combination with reality.

16 My view is exactly the opposite of Giddings, who clearly separates the comic romance or comic epic as represented by Fielding's works and Smollett's *Launcelot Greaves* from Smollett's picaresque works, which according to him absolutely exclude romance (pp. 58, 62-63 and 67). This, in my view, is absolutely false, as any reader familiar with romance conventions will find out on his first reading of Smollett. For the permanence of romance in Smollett's works see Michael Rosenblum's enlightening article "Smollett and the Old Conventions", *Philological Quarterly* 55 (1976), pp. 389-402.

this as in other respects, is the culmination of that career in a most Cervantine fashion.

The romantic focus from the very beginning of the novel is of course Lydia's love-plot with Wilson. Wilson is an itinerant actor, but his gentlemanly mien and behaviour, particularly in the aborted duel with Jerry, his letter full of the rhetoric of romance perfectly in tune with Lydia's romantic letters, and his decision to follow Lydia in disguise throughout her travels, have the familiar flavour of romance. This is confirmed by the outcome, when, after long separation and darkening prospects, the impediment to their marriage is removed by the unexpected discovery, as a result of a series of coincidences, that Wilson is not only a gentleman – who had fled his home, changed his name and become an actor in order to avoid an enforced marriage – but the son of Bramble's old friend Dennison, thus confirming Lydia's romantic expectations that Providence would eventually arrange circumstances in order to reward virtue. This romantic plot follows closely that of French heroic romance, which also provided the basis for Fielding's comic romances,¹⁷ and recounted the story of a heroine and hero whose love is thwarted, usually by parental opposition owing to the low origins of one of them. After long separation involving travel and adventures, the discovery that those origins were in fact noble, usually as a result of a series of providential coincidences, paved the way to a romantic apotheosis in which marriage went hand in hand with recovery of identity. Of course in *Humphry Clinker* this romantic plot is set in the ordinary and recognizable eighteenth-century world, or, as Frye would have it, romance is displaced by realism.¹⁸ And indeed it is displaced in more than one sense and not only by realism: not just because it is submerged in contemporary reality but also because it disappears between outset and outcome and gives way to anti-romance.

As soon as Lydia's ill-fated love story has been set in motion, Tabitha's love adventures, that is to say, her equally absorbing and

17 This has been made perfectly clear by James Lynch in *Henry Fielding and the Heliodoran Novel: Romance, Epic, and Fielding's New Province of Writing* (London: Associated University Presses, 1986) and Hubert McDermott, *Novel to Romance: The 'Odyssey' to 'Tom Jones'* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

18 Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976.

doomed attempts to secure a husband, take the stage. Of course given Tabitha's age, physical appearance and personality (her selfishness, irritability and crudity of feeling), this love-plot is obviously a travesty of Lydia's, or, in Baker's words, a "spinsterish version of it" (p. 157): Tabitha is to the romantic heroine, here represented by Lydia, what Don Quixote is to chivalric heroes represented by Amadis. Tabitha is thus quixotic in a different way, insofar as she is Lydia's quixotic counterpart in what I have called the quixotic pattern, and Smollett seems to underscore that structural rather than inherent quixotism by making her suitors, real or potential, more or less quixotic figures. This is already hinted at in the characterization of Sir Ulic Mackilligut, the ceremonious and mock-chivalric knight of Ireland (pp. 29-30 and 62), and of Barton, whose pervasive and biased political views bring him close to the political quixote (pp. 95 and 101), to be openly acknowledged in the man who is the most explicit and literal quixote of the novel and will eventually become her husband, Lieutenant Lismahago. Smollett is not only making use of the comic-romantic pattern by juxtaposing the romantic and the anti-romantic, but also making the anti-romantic itself quixotic – instead of picaresque, as in previous fiction. This juxtaposition is dramatized at the end when the romantic and the quixotic couples are wedded side by side in the same ceremony, a quixotic twist – highlighted by Lismahago's and Tabitha's outmoded and bizarre apparel – to the romantic apotheosis fit for a comic romance. The final wedding ceremony thus joins not only people but also the two narrative threads that make up the quixotic pattern of the novel.

But the wedding is in fact a triple one – also Clinker's and Jenkins's – and thus points to a third thread in the pattern, although one that incorporates both the comic and the romantic. Clinker is first introduced in a picaresque key: he is hungry and in rags, the victim of extreme poverty and material want, and also an orphan with no "relation upon earth" to help his necessity and no permanent job, after having performed several trades, so he is in the position of radical solitude and alienation characteristic of the picaresque hero. After this introduction he immediately becomes Bramble's servant, a Sancho Panza in relation to a quixotic figure, and then he becomes quixotic himself in his role as a Methodist preacher. Clinker's metamorphoses through different narrative patterns are completed near the end, when his story undergoes a sudden romantic turn: through

a providential chain of coincidences and after producing the conventional romantic tokens which he carries in a wooden snuff-box on his chest, he recovers his true noble identity as Bramble's illegitimate son and is thus promoted to the status of romantic hero. Clinker combines the hero and the anti-hero (as well as the quixotic and the picaresque), although his promotion is a limited one and does not take him to a romantic apotheosis. Humphry is of noble birth, has a noble nature and alabaster skin, but he remains anchored in his anti-heroic world: he "marries not the lady but the serving maid comically trying to be one" (Baker, p. 159), with whom he fell in love when he saw by accident her usually hidden charms, and he has prospects of becoming a vestry-clerk. This incomplete accession to the heroic is also reflected in his name, which, as Baker explains, is "a high chivalric first name comically brought low in an epithet" (p. 155), as in all Smollett's previous novels, but the anti-romantic is intensified by the further meaning of *clinker* – excrement in scatological slang – and "with perhaps some further comedy intended by misspelling the chivalric name" (p. 156) – *Humphry* instead of *Humphrey*. Like his name, Clinker's plot juxtaposes the comic and the romantic, although it is also used as an anti-romantic counterpoint to Lydia's romantic plot, particularly in the contrast between their wedding nights. During Clinker's a cat with nutshells tied to its tails is put into his bedroom, an episode which is modelled on a similar adventure in *Don Quixote* (as Boucé has remarked¹⁹) and on the quixotic tradition of nocturnal comic confusions. It also serves as a reminder of Clinker's quixotic nature, since at first he interprets the din made by the cat as coming from a demon and responds to it through his religious monomania.

Lydia's romance is thus mirrored in Tabitha's anti-romance and both are brought together and echoed in Clinker's story. Smollett thus seems to experiment with different varieties of comic romance, in similar fashion as he did with varieties of quixotic experience. In the first one, Lydia-Tabitha, he follows Cervantes' juxtaposition of Don Quixote's anti-romantic plot with the interpolated romance plots, the same plan Fielding followed in juxtaposing the quixotic Adams with the romantic Joseph in *Joseph Andrews*. But Fielding had also blended both strains in Joseph's and Tom's characters and

19 See Boucé, *The Novels of Tobias Smollett*, p. 79.

adventures, rather in the way that the romantic and the anti-romantic coexist in *Don Quixote* – the former only in his mind. This is the line followed by Smollett in *Clinker*, although adding a further turn by making Humphry quixotic and therefore a mixture of Joseph – with whom he shares his initial situation, his love for a servant and his condition as servant of a quixotic figure – and Adams – who is also a religious and good-natured quixote. The crucial point of these experiments, however, is the fact that, as in *Don Quixote*, romantic and anti-romantic characters inhabit the same fictional universe, which results in the comedy of their collisions and also, more important, in a larger conception of reality which includes romance. This is perhaps the most essential difference between the Cervantine and the picaresque representations of the world as they were brought to life in seventeenth-century Spanish fiction, and one which is too frequently overlooked. Here also lies the connection between *Humphry Clinker* and Smollett's previous novels, which are all Cervantine comic romances, as well as his relation to other authors like Fielding. In this sense, it is worth noting that, despite Frye's indisputable vision of the novel as displaced romance, the permanence of romance is not sufficiently acknowledged in accounts of the rise of the English novel, which usually focus on the representation of contemporary reality: both the realism and the Englishness of the novel should be revised in the light of Cervantes and the Cervantine tradition. When we move beyond quixotic characters and episodes to an understanding of the Cervantine theory of fiction implicit in *Don Quixote*, then we are in a position to realize that Cervantes provided a pattern for manipulating romance within realism which is at work not only in Fielding or Smollett, but even in Richardson, as I have shown elsewhere.²⁰

And in this larger context it becomes apparent that this pattern makes realism not only romantic, but also dialogical, in the sense Bakhtin has given to this term in his writings.²¹ The quixotic princi-

20 Pedro Javier Pardo, "Novel, Romance and Quixotism in Richardson's *Pamela*", *Atlantis* 18 (1996), pp. 306-36.

21 Bakhtin, Mikhail, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). See also Gary S. Morson & Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

ple incorporates not just the conflict between the romantic imagination and reality, but also between vision and reality, world and worldview, and of course between different visions and worldviews, and therefore implies a representation of reality as a dialogue of perspectives. This dialogical pattern is also at work in *Humphry Clinker*, and this is where the epistolary method comes into the picture.

3. Cervantine Dialogism

Romance in *Humphry Clinker*, as in *Don Quixote*, is both plot and consciousness, and in both senses it is dealt with in the manner of Cervantes. As plot it is displaced to the background by other plots and juxtaposed with quixotic anti-romance; as consciousness, it is also displaced by and juxtaposed with other consciousnesses which make it appear quixotic. Lydia is not just a romantic heroine, but one who articulates her romantic worldview in letters which are caught up in a dialogue with other letters, not because they actually respond to each other, but because they offer contrasting, even conflicting perspectives on reality.

This is made clear from the very beginning of the novel. The first letter of the novel is addressed by Bramble to his doctor from Gloucester and refers to "a ridiculous incident that happened yesterday to my niece Liddy" (p. 5), which has made his health problems, recounted in detail, even worse, although his bad temper is coupled with his concern for the poor and the good works he commissions. In the second letter Tabitha gives directions for the maintenance of Brambleton-Hall to the housekeeper, and displays her concern for material things and for the maids' behaviour in her absence, particularly one Mary Jones who "loves to be rumping with the men" (p. 6). Her letter is full of malapropisms and misspellings, "most of them turning on sexual or other scatological jokes" – as Beasley, who aptly defines her as "sex-starved predator", has pointed out (p. 199) – and these are also a feature of Win's letter to the same Mary Jones, which displays a similar concern for material things and is a kind of replica of her mistress's letter in a lower key. Unlike Tabitha, however, she provides some details about Lydia running away with a player, a quarrel between the latter and Jerry, and Bramble preventing further harm by taking to the road. We get a complete account of all these points in Jerry's letter to his friend in Oxford, where he also proves his

eye for – and delight in – originals as well the detached and amused attitude that will become his defining trait: “I have got into a family of originals, whom I may one day attempt to describe for your amusement” (p. 8). The progressive disclosure or unravelling of Lydia’s romantic plot is completed by Lydia herself in her letter to her governess, which furnishes her point of view on the affair and depicts her as an innocent, virtuous, and obedient young woman. This letter is followed by still another one by the same correspondent but addressed to her friend and confidante, where she pours forth her most private feelings and gives full vent to her romantic worldview: she appears as a maiden in distress lamenting her misfortunes and expressing her trust in Providence.²²

Thus romance takes the centre of the stage in the initial letters introducing the five correspondents. Then a letter by Bramble follows, in which he provides the fullest account of the incident at Gloucester and a confirmation of Lydia’s romantic nature (her accomplishments, her swoons and tears, and her serious illness after her disappointment), but does so in such a realistic and commonsensical way that – along with the frame of ordinary matters encapsulating his narrative – he brings romance down to earth. Furthermore, he also subtly characterizes Lydia as a female Quixote by saying that she is a “good-natured simpleton, as soft as butter, and as easily melted . . ., she has got a languishing eye, and read romances” (p. 12), and by adding that she has been brought up in absolute isolation from the world – “cooped up in a boarding school”. In so doing he is blaming romances and her ignorance of the world for her romantic infatuation, much in the way Lennox did for Arabella’s in *The Female Quixote* (1752) – and also anticipating, as Beasley has pointed out (p. 190), Sheridan’s Lydia Languish in *The Rivals* (1775), another female quixote. He also depicts Wilson in a quixote key by suggesting that he acted a romantic part in his quarrel with Jerry – “the theatrical hero was too far gone in romance to brook such usage” (p. 12) – a judgement that seems to be confirmed by Wilson’s romantic letter to Lydia. But then romance moves to the

22 See also Boucé’s analysis of this initial set of six letters, which he uses to illustrate how the epistolary form is used as a “kaleidoscope” and in a dual pattern of opposition and repetition (*The Novels of Tobias Smollett*, pp. 194-95), in order to articulate “the prismatic vision”, the quintuple vision which allows Smollett to grasp the “organic multiplicity of life” in a text that Boucé characterizes as “a novel of discrepancy” (pp. 199-200).

background, for the following two long letters by Jerry clearly shift focus from Lydia to Bramble, who becomes the novel’s centre both as the main object of Jerry’s letters and also as the subject of his own letters.

The romantic is thus put in perspective and kept at a distance, not only because it is illuminated in a quixotic light by Bramble and then displaced by Bramble’s quixotic character, but above all because it is engulfed by the interplay of letters, consciousnesses, perspectives. This dialogical interplay – rather than the comic romance described above – becomes the major focus or action of the novel, in similar fashion as the dialogue between Don Quixote and Sancho is superimposed on the comic romance and becomes an additional – if not a major – focus or action of the novel. Admittedly, Smollett has developed the Cervantine interplay by introducing more participants in the dialogue and has transformed it by giving it epistolary form, and arguably has done so beyond recognition. But its point of departure cannot be more reminiscent of Cervantes: it is as if, by placing romance at the centre of the interplay of perspectives, Smollett was eager to suggest from the very beginning of the novel where he got his inspiration from. And then, even when romance, both as consciousness and plot, is displaced from the centre, other Cervantine features, already present in the initial letters, remain: the quixotic character of some of the participants – since their letters are ruled by an obsession and their outlook is distorted by monomania – and their arrangement through duality or contrast – since they can be grouped into pairs of foils correcting or complementing each other. A third feature may be added, namely, the perspectivist superimposition of contradicting or simply complementing points of view on the same object or event. Although it is true that other precedents for this method can be found, it is also true that, ever since its publication *Don Quixote* became the paradigm of perspectivism in the novel.

The defining traits of the five correspondents, their arrangement as foils and the perspectivist effect of their letters has been both aptly and amply commented in most accounts of *Humphry Clinker*,²³ so

23 See in this respect the particularly illuminating analyses by Paulson (*Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 202-4), Beasley (*Tobias Smollett, Novelist*, pp. 196-205) and Robert Alan Donovan, *The Shaping Vision: Imagination in the English Novel from Defoe to Dickens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 124-31, to whom my own analysis is much indebted.

there is no need to go into them in detail here, just to highlight their Cervantine character. Bramble is clearly positioned at the centre of the dialogical interplay of letters, and his basic quixotic features have already been explained above. The remaining correspondents can be described as foils to him and to each other placed in pairs on both sides of him, depending on the specific aspects of Bramble they share, correct or counterpoint and also on the way they do it. On one side we have his nephew and niece, Jerry and Lydia, who are positive foils insofar as they improve on what they have in common with Bramble, while on the other side there is his sister Tabitha, a negative foil for the opposite reason, and also her servant Win. Lydia's romantic disposition and delicacy of feeling echoes Bramble's generosity and sensitivity, but of course she lacks his misanthropic ill temper, and on the whole she stands for an idealizing outlook that contrasts with Bramble's debasing one. Jerry is, like Bramble, also a satirist, but a good-tempered one, or, in Paulson's terms, Horatian instead of Juvenalian (p. 201): his attitude is one of amusement rather than contempt, he is entertained rather than disgusted by people. But Jerry, unlike Lydia, has hardly a story of his own, as Donovan has remarked (p. 124), his role being that of the observer rather than the observed, that of providing a more normative or objective view of reality which contrasts with the distortions and excesses of the quixotic letter-writers, particularly Bramble but also Lydia or Tabitha. The latter is, like Lydia, another consciousness acting as a foil to Bramble – "She is, in all respects, a striking contrast to her brother" (p. 28), Jerry writes – but of a very different nature and for opposite reasons. She is also obsessed, perhaps in a less explicit but no less intense way than Bramble, by marriage – and sex – instead of health, the effect being a dis-tempered and sour character similar to her brother's. But of course she lacks his generosity of feeling, indeed she is the opposite, a miser for feeling as well as money, as engrossed in matter – her possessions and her sexual drive – as Bramble is in physical disease and pollution, but without his sensibility and benevolence. Her servant, Win Jenkins, is an imitator of Tabitha, eager to act a role – the lady – she is not fit for and driven by her desire to appear what she is not. In a way she plays Sancho to her quixotic mistress, a debased version of her ideas and pursuits seasoned with simplicity. Both Tabitha and Win are also foils to Lydia, representing a female material worldview opposed to Lydia's ideal one.

All these features and their interplay are best seen in the letters describing the cities they visit, Bristol Hot Wells, Bath, London, and Edinburgh, which provide the exemplary model of how perspectivism works in the novel – this is particularly true with respect to the letters about Bath. This is not surprising if we consider that Smollett, as Paulson has suggested, might have taken "the device of the multiple letter writers from Christopher Anstey's verse satire, *The New Bath Guide*, published in 1766" (p. 200). To Paulson's analysis of the differences between the two books – the new emphasis on the perceiving subject and the adoption of different points of view of the same object in *Humphry Clinker* – one may add the dual pattern just commented on and particularly the quixotism – conceived as distorting obsession – of some correspondents. It is true that neither Lydia nor Tabitha are fully quixotic, in the way Bramble is: Lydia is quixotic because she is romantic in an anti-romantic world, Tabitha because of her affinities with primary quixotic figures – like her brother she is ruled by monomania, with her husband she plays the quixotic counterpart to Lydia's romance. Their quixotism is also of a different kind from that of Lismahago and Clinker, since it is depicted through their writing rather than their acting, and its focus is consciousness rather than behaviour, although of course it also orients their actions. Bramble not only participates in both kinds of quixotism but is also at the centre of both sets of quixotic characters, who are all foils to him and are placed on either side depending on their negative or positive role, Tabitha and Lismahago on one, Lydia and Clinker on the other. Clinker and Lismahago thus act in a similar way to Lydia and Tabitha, respectively: Bramble's misanthropy and benevolence is flanked by Clinker's innocence and Lismahago's disputatiousness – Clinker represents a similar benevolence without his satiric temper, Lismahago a similar satiric temper without his benevolence. The fact that Lismahago and Clinker do not write letters because they are not part of the family and therefore of the initial expedition, but they are later incorporated and eventually become part of the family, makes good Jerry's initial dictum – "What a family of originals".

We might substitute *Quixotes* for originals, since, at least as far as the main characters are concerned, it amounts to the same thing. Clinker's case suggests that this quality runs in the blood, Lismahago's that it acts as a magnet. *Originality* seems to be Smollett's final redefinition of quixotism and seems to be a family matter. In both aspects one can dis-

cern Smollett's indebtedness to *Tristram Shandy*, where quixotism is redefined as hobby-horse and is also related to kinship. The quixotic figures of *Humphry Clinker* not only resemble those of *Tristram Shandy*, as we have seen above, but they also effect a similar displacement of quixotism from madness to obsession or monomania, and of its setting from the world at large to a domestic and family sphere, so on the whole they share a similar conception of quixotism as something less extraordinary and more related to everyday life. In fact it is perhaps the influence of *Tristram Shandy* which explains the differences in the conception of quixotism from Smollett's previous work, *Lancelot Greaves*. This has traditionally been considered his quixotic novel par excellence, but this is true only if we understand quixotism in a literal way, which is perhaps why that of *Humphry Clinker* has passed almost unnoticed. In the light of the preceding analysis, however, *Humphry Clinker* is not only a fully quixotic novel, but Smollett's most quixotic one, featuring his most accomplished quixote, Matthew Bramble, escorted by quixotic figures on both sides.

Indeed the influence of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is a pervasive one, and it is also apparent in the way *Humphry Clinker* transcends quixotism as behaviour or action to explore it as consciousness and narration, which is related to the new twist to the quixotic principle from comic romantic pattern to dialogical interplay of consciousnesses. If the reference for the former was Fielding, for the latter it is again Sterne: Fielding had explored the quixotic principle as the interplay of contrasting narrative ways of framing or shaping reality, Sterne as the interplay of diverging mental ways of doing it. And, once the focus shifts to quixotic consciousness and quixotes are multiplied in the same family, the dialogue they engage in is very different from the original one in *Don Quixote*. It is not Quixote versus Sancho, but Quixote versus Quixote, versus Quixote, versus Quixote. And as a result of this we are confronted with a world where human beings are trapped in their worldviews, in their monomanias and obsessions, in the prison houses of mind and language.²⁴ If the self is imprisoned in its quixotism, or the

24 Of course this also applies to the reader and the reading process, particularly to one as monomaniac as the present one, but this is not the right place to pursue these implications, just to hint at them with Cervantine irony and self-consciousness: a reader obsessed with Cervantes will see quixotes and quixotism everywhere. Since all readers, particularly academic ones, have their own ruling ideas and monomanias, I am afraid the scholarly endeavour is also a quixotic undertaking.

workings of the human mind are quixotic, then quixotism becomes something universal, a feature of the human condition: we are all quixotes, these novels seem to suggest, and they underscore this suggestion by creating a world populated by characters who are quixotic in different ways and degrees. In so doing, both *Tristram Shandy* and *Humphry Clinker* develop the epistemological issues that characterize the Cervantine novel – the problem of reality, the question of mediation, the relativism of perspective – beyond Cervantes.

The influence of *Tristram Shandy* is also conspicuous in the belated appearance and subsidiary role of the novel's eponymous hero. Like Sterne's work, *Humphry Clinker* disappoints the reader's expectations raised by the title, and focuses on Humphry's quixotic family, particularly his father, rather than on Humphry himself. The novel is not about *his* but *their* expedition in quest of health or husband, physical and spiritual harmony, although alternative interpretations of the word *expedition* have been provided to justify the title and underline the central role played by Humphry in this quest.²⁵ Furthermore, one could add that Clinker does indeed epitomize the novel's combination of quixotism and the quixotic pattern, since he is a quixotic hero and the hero of a comic romance, but the fact remains that he is excluded from the interplay of letters which is the most original contribution of the novel. Bramble is the true epitome and the centre of the novel: he is both quixotic actor and quixotic letter-writer, he is at the centre of the two sets of quixotes and of the interplay of worldviews, and he also participates in both comic romantic plots as father of Clinker and guardian of Lydia. The displacement of Clinker by Bramble is the best indication of the novel's final leap not only from Cervantine romance to Cervantine realism, or from romantic to dialogical realism, but from Cervantes through Fielding to Sterne.

After the preceding arguments the statements made at the beginning of this Cervantine journey through *Humphry Clinker* do not look perhaps so far-fetched. I think there is some justification to assert that *Humphry Clinker* is not only the summit of Smollett's career, but also of his Cervantism and of eighteenth-century Cervantism in general – the summit insofar as the final synthesis. Smollett

25 See Giddings, *The Tradition of Smollett*, p. 150, and Boucé, *The Novels of Tobias Smollett*, p. 248.

provides in his last novel the fullest or more comprehensive understanding of the Cervantine novel, incorporating and merging the contributions made to it by Fielding and Sterne and effecting a synthesis of both. If we add that Smollett used the epistolary method developed by Richardson in *Pamela* and particularly *Clarissa*, then his synthesis of eighteenth-century narrative modes is even more complete. Smollett's achievement is perhaps not comparable to Fielding or Sterne in originality and innovation or in the quality of single novels. Perhaps, only perhaps, *Tom Jones* is superior to *Roderick Random*, *Tristram Shandy* to *Humphry Clinker*, even *The Female Quixote* to *Launcelot Greaves*. But in *Humphry Clinker* Smollett is superior to them all because he is able to fuse all previous achievements into a synthetic whole, and it is in this whole that his originality lies. Smollett is the most inclusive of Cervantes' eighteenth-century imitators, and *Humphry Clinker* is a kind of summa not only of the different kinds of Quixote but also of different kinds of novel which Cervantes' example spawned in eighteenth-century English fiction, a summa of different interpretations or versions of both quixotism and the quixotic principle. In this light, Smollett is not only a major Cervantine novelist, but he may be the most Cervantine one. The title of *English Cervantes* traditionally conferred upon Fielding should perhaps be contested, were it not for the fact that Smollett was Scottish. Unfortunately, Smollett cannot be called the Scottish Cervantes either, for Walter Scott was granted the title some years later. This is just one more instance in which Smollett has not been treated very fairly by literary posterity.

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