

SMOLLETT AND THE SORDID KNAVES:  
POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE ADVENTURES OF AN ATOM

By

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The History and Adventures of an Atom is Tobias Smollett's vitriolic attack on English politics and politicians from the perspective of his conservative political philosophy, as expressed in The History of England and his political journalism. Smollett does not conform to the stereotype of the Tory as a Jacobite, an enemy of liberty and an advocate of unlimited royal prerogative. Rather, he aligns himself with the independent country gentlemen, who were suspicious of the central government as the source of foreign involvements and the wars that went with them, defense expenditures and the taxes that went with them; and a reluctance to see agriculture displaced in favor of commerce as the staple of the British economy. The only remedy for England's ills, he suggests in The Briton, is a Patriot King, who will rule for the good of all the people and whom he sees embodied in George III.

Smollett's satire employs the nonhuman narrator, the Atom, to evoke the malign associations of Epicureanism. The Age saw Epicureanism as contributing to the decline of great states, like Athens and Rome,

by undermining public virtue and encouraging a selfish, effeminate luxury. In the Atom, the Duke of Newcastle embodies all of the vices of Epicureanism: he is a glutton, an effeminate coward, a statesman motivated only by the pursuit of his selfish pleasures.

Smollett attacks England through allegory, using as his vehicle incidents from the history of Japan to expose the danger of the shift in power from the King to a powerful Prime Minister. The object of this attack is William Pitt, who becomes in Smollett's eyes a greater tyrant than Robert Walpole. Smollett also uses traditional political icons from the propaganda of his time—such as the puppet master, the hydra, and the quack—to attack Bute as an incompetent politician and William Pitt as an evil demagogue appealing to the mob.

In his analysis of Pitt's control over the mob, Smollett draws from the same tradition used by Swift to attack enthusiastic preachers. Like them, Pitt claims a direct inspiration for his political programs and raises himself to the status of a god in the eyes of the people. He uses words to confuse rather than enlighten them, and he feeds them a diet of yeast to intoxicate them to an enthusiastic frenzy. Smollett also attacks Lord Bute as a political enthusiast who has converted himself into thinking that he is a martyr.

The positive norms and values which are used to judge England are difficult to find in the Atom because of the bleakness of Smollett's vision. A reference to the philosopher Cebes evokes a tradition derived from Prodicus, which sees life offering a choice between pleasure and virtue. Applying this standard to politics, the Atom explores the disastrous consequences of the choice of pleasure. The path of virtue

is better embodied in Smollett's other works of the 1760s, particularly Launcelot Greaves and Humphry Clinker. In these works, Smollett embodies virtue in the country gentleman, the beatus vir of Horace, living independently on his happy rural seat. Because England has abandoned these traditional values, she is prey to the politics of faction and demagoguery which brings her to the verge of destruction in the Atom.

## INTRODUCTION

The critical neglect of Tobias Smollett's History and Adventures of an Atom is probably caused in part by the absence of any external evidence that it was written by him. Published anonymously in April, 1769<sup>1</sup>—apparently as an All Fool's Day present to the English people—the Atom was never acknowledged by Smollett. The first attribution of the book to him came in the London Chronicle immediately upon publication: "This work, which is attributed to the author of Roderick Random, is a satirical political history of the publick transactions, and of the characters and conduct of some great men in a certain kingdom, to which the author has given the name of Japan, during the late and present reigns."<sup>2</sup> The editor of the 1777 edition of Smollett's Plays and Poems did not list it as one of his works, but the editor of the 1790 edition of his works did.<sup>3</sup> Since that time literary tradition has assigned the Atom to Smollett, and the book has now been canonized by its inclusion in the Iowa scholarly edition of his works.<sup>4</sup>

Although it is not the purpose of this study to prove that Smollett wrote the Atom, I hope that such a conclusion becomes inevitable during the course of the argument. In his later works Smollett developed the habit of using the same examples—usually culled from his reading for the History of England and his editorial compilations—to illustrate the same points in much the same choice of words. There are simply too many echoes of other Smollett passages in the Atom for it to have been written

by anyone else. Here are two examples which have thus far gone unnoticed. During a digression on witchcraft in the Atom, Smollett brings up "the famous trial of Urban Grandier, canon of Loudun in France, who was duly convicted of magic, upon the depositions of the devils, Astaroth, Eusas, Celsus, Acaos, Cedon, Asmodeus, Alix, Zabulon, Neptholim, Cham, Uriel, and Achas."<sup>5</sup> In his edition of Voltaire, Smollett wrote the following note about Father Grandier: "He was brought to his trial, and found guilty on the evidence of the following devils, Astaroth, of the order of the Seraphim, and chief of the possessing demons, Eusas, Gelsus, Acaos, Cedon, and Asmodeus, of the order of the thrones; Alex, Zabulon, Neptholim, Cham, Uriel, and Achas, of the order of principalities; in other words, by the Ursulines, supposed to be possessed by these devils."<sup>6</sup> The order of the devils is the same in both instances; there are only some minor differences in spelling, probably typographical.

Similar esoteric lore is contained in the second example, taken from a digression on kicking in the Atom. Smollett declares that the French have an aversion to kicking because they are subject to the piles:

This is so truly the case, that they have no less than two saints to patronize and protect the individuals afflicted with this disease. One is St. Fiacre, who was a native of the kingdom of Ireland. He presides over the blind piles. The other is a female saint, Haemorrhioissa, and she comforts those who are distressed with the bleeding piles. (380)

This passage is an elaboration of a similar one in the Travels Through France and Italy: "Some suppose Veronica to be the same with St. Haemorrhioissa, the patroness of those who are afflicted with the piles, who make their joint invocations to her and St. Fiacre, the son of a Scotch king, who lived and died a hermit in France."<sup>7</sup> Why Smollett

decided to change St. Fiacre's nationality is a mystery, but we can feel fairly safe in assuming the appearance of both Saints in these two works is not merely a coincidence.

Smollett's satire in both of these examples is directed at one of his favorite targets, French superstition, so it is not surprising that he should use the same illustrations. There are many similar parallel passages in the Atom, and these will be pointed out throughout this study.

The critics have not been kind to the Atom. Most Smollett scholars dismiss it in a sentence or two and seem to be most offended by the ferocity of the attack on specific politicians. David Hannay terms it "mere animal nastiness."<sup>8</sup> Lewis Melville calls it "a dull book written by a man incited to venom by severe ill health."<sup>9</sup> Lewis Knapp says it is "violent and unpleasant," an opinion echoed by Laurence Brander, who notes its "concentrated virulence."<sup>10</sup> Alan D. McKillop describes it as "a coarse roman à clef whose only point is political satire."<sup>11</sup>

Despite these low opinions, the Atom has received some scholarly attention, but it has been confined to suggesting sources and analogues. James R. Foster has made a circumstantial case for Smollett's authorship by linking the attitudes expressed in the Atom to Smollett's political writing in The Briton; Louis Martz has examined the influence of Smollett's editorial work on the Universal History; and Arnold Whitridge has concentrated on the historical accuracy of the character portraits.<sup>12</sup> It is no exaggeration to say that the only literary criticism of the Atom has been Ronald Paulson's three page discussion in Satire and the

Novel in Eighteenth Century England.<sup>13</sup> Paulson's opinions are important and they will be referred to later in this study.

Some scholars have declared that the Atom is important for an understanding of certain aspects of Smollett's career. In an excellent consideration of Smollett as historian, Donald Greene writes that "The History and Adventures of an Atom . . . needs to be studied carefully along with The History of England in any study of Smollett's political career (if indeed Smollett wrote The Atom)."<sup>14</sup> Robert Donald Spector maintains that the book has to be considered for any proper assessment of Smollett's literary career:

It is of some importance to be able to identify the Atom as Smollett's. Written at a time when Smollett was supposed to be growing milder and turning completely away from the picaresque tradition, the book retains all the old vitality and picaresque techniques. From Roderick Random to Humphry Clinker there is, therefore, a consistency in Smollett's fictional world that has sometimes been obscured by criticism of his final novel; and the Atom is a warning to those who choose to see a marked dichotomy in his work.<sup>15</sup>

Political satires like the Atom are almost guaranteed critical neglect because critics find only topical or local interest in them. A modern writer of political satire, Philip Roth, sums up the situation very well:

Political satire isn't a kind of writing that lasts. Though satirists by and large deal with enduring social and political problems, their comic appeal lies in the use they make of the situation at that moment. It's unlikely that reading even the very best satiric works of another era we feel anything like the glee or the outrage experienced by a contemporary audience. Subtleties of wit and malice are wholly lost over the years, and we're left to enjoy the broadest, least

timebound aspects of the work, and to hunt through footnotes in order to make connections and draw inferences that are the teeth and claws of this sort of writing.<sup>16</sup>

According to Roth, there is only one way to escape the trap of topicality and enter into the realm of literature: "The trick, apparently, is to turn yourself from a proper noun into an adjective, and the best way to accomplish that is to die."<sup>17</sup> He cites Swift and Rabelais as having accomplished this transformation. It is unlikely, however, that such a fate awaits Smollett. Whenever critics search for the appropriate adjective to describe the Atom, it is inevitably "Swiftian."<sup>18</sup> Smollett, it seems, is doomed to a reputation as just one more seer of excremental visions.

The topical nature of political satire should not be held against it, for it is the very nature of all satire to be topical. Edward Rosenheim, Jr., in fact, defines satire as

an attack upon discernible, historically authentic particulars. The "dupes" or victims of punitive satire are not mere fictions. They, or the objects which they represent, must be, or have been, plainly existent in the world of reality; they must, that is, possess genuine historical identity.<sup>19</sup>

The survival of satire thus becomes problematic; later readers are likely to enjoy the work for reasons other than the delight in the attack on historical particulars. As Rosenheim expresses it, "when . . . the historical identity of a satiric victim pales or disappears with time, the satiric quality of the work diminishes accordingly and its continued survival comes to depend upon facts, whether accidental or artistic, which are extrinsic to its original satiric character."<sup>20</sup> Rosenheim

goes on to say that the task of examining satirical writing is more difficult than the study of other kinds of literature:

The artist whose audience is particularized, whose mission is limited by historical circumstances, and whose motives are of the same genuine but ephemeral sort which most of us share most of the time is probably harder to understand and admire than is the writer whose "message" is transparently intended for posterity. But he is none the less an artist, for all that. If we are prepared to understand, if not necessarily to admire him, let us begin on his own terms.<sup>21</sup>

Rosenheim's words can serve as the epigraph to this study, the task of which is to understand Smollett's mission in the Atom as he understood it. Only then can we ask the correct critical questions in order to assess accurately the value of his work.

One very important question is, "What kind of satire did Smollett like to write?" Rosenheim is again helpful, with his distinction between "persuasive" and "punitive" satire. Persuasive satire, according to Rosenheim, is highly rhetorical and "may truly 'expose' evils or infirmities hitherto unrecognized by its audience; it may elicit blame, employing any of countless intellectual or emotional strategies, for individuals, groups, institutions, or ideas; it may urge its audience to future action in some measure hostile, against the object under attack."<sup>22</sup> In punitive satire, on the other hand,

The object under satiric treatment emerges, to be sure, in an unfavorable light, but it is a light which is accepted a priori by the audience. No new judgment is invited; no course of action is urged; no novel information is produced. The audience, rather, is asked chiefly to rejoice in the heaping of opprobrium, ridicule, or fancied punishment upon an object of whose culpability they are already thoroughly convinced.<sup>23</sup>

These are not meant to be mutually exclusive categories, but rather the two extremes of a satiric spectrum on which particular satires can be located. Some satires are examples of both categories at the same time. Rosenheim cites the passage describing the rope-dancing ability of Flimnap, the Lilliputian treasurer in Gulliver's Travels, who is meant to represent Sir Robert Walpole. According to Rosenheim, to call Walpole a "rope-dancer" is either a "mere epithet" or an "apt epitome," depending on the reader's willingness to accept the attack.<sup>24</sup>

If we apply these distinctions to Smollett's work, it becomes clear that his satire is punitive. He is fond of heaping opprobrium on his satiric victim and he is often content with mere epithet rather than apt epitome. Sometimes the punitive nature of his satire becomes a literal event in his fictions; some of his satirist-heroes, like Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle, actually mete out physical punishment to their victims. It is the assumption of the audience's a priori agreement, however, which best describes Smollett's work. His satire seldom employs the more elaborate rhetorical strategies, especially the sophisticated use of the persona described by Maynard Mack in "The Muse of Satire."<sup>25</sup> If Matt Bramble's denunciations of the beau monde seem excessive, for example, it is because little effort is made to persuade the reader that the criticism is just. Sometimes Smollett miscalculates his audience's willingness to agree; in fact, Ronald Paulson sees Smollett's literary career as a search for a proper spokesman for his satire, one who would be agreeable to his audience. One lamentable consequence of Smollett's penchant for punitive satire has been the attribution of the character traits of his heroes—usually

the less agreeable ones—to Smollett himself, a tendency Paul-Gabriel Boucé calls "inverted autobiography."<sup>26</sup>

There is no need to find a psychological explanation for Smollett's preference for punitive satire. There is a long literary tradition from Juvenal's saeva indignatio to the railing satyr-satirist of Elizabethan satire, who flaunted the artlessness and anger of his attack as a badge of his sincerity. Even more applicable to Smollett's case perhaps is the tradition of Scottish satire, which is almost exclusively punitive, its ferocity deriving from its origins in the magical curse.<sup>27</sup> Vivian Mercier gives a good description of the Irish poetry of personal abuse, which he compares to the Scots flyting, a form of the débat in which the satirist and an adversary heap invectives—usually excremental—upon each other:

Such poems are as tiresome to the modern reader as the Scots "flytings," for the victim of such satire is not allowed to retain any individuality; it would be impossible for any human being to display all the blemishes assigned to him, so that the ridicule of known foibles cannot be the purpose of such lampoons. If the satirists are in earnest, they must desire to wound rather than to arouse laughter or punish wickedness.<sup>28</sup>

Mercier is speaking of verse written in the Middle Ages, but the ferocity of Scottish satire was undiminished in the eighteenth century, as the following passage written by James Boswell suggests:

The difference between satire in London and in Scotland is this: In London you are not intimately known so the satire is thrown at you from a distance, and however keen, does not tear and mangle you. In London the attack on character is clean boxing. In Scotland it is grappling. They tear your hair, get you down in the mire, and not only hurt but disfigure and debase you.<sup>29</sup>

The fierce and personal nature of Smollett's satire can thus be explained by reference to this tradition of which Smollett, proud Scot that he was, was surely aware.

The much more difficult question of Smollett's political opinions is so complicated that it will be the topic of the first chapter of this study. Smollett's political position can be ascertained from his historical writing and journalism, but it has been oversimplified by scholars who have termed him a Tory. Smollett was a political conservative, to be sure, but his opinions do not conform to the stereotype of the Tory as a Jacobite, an enemy of liberty, and an advocate of unlimited royal prerogative.

After discussing Smollett's political attitudes, the remainder of my study will be devoted to an extensive examination of The Adventures of an Atom. First, the choice of a nonhuman narrator, the Atom, will be considered, as well as the Epicurean associations implied in such a choice. Smollett draws upon a long tradition of historians and thinkers who associated Epicureanism with the decline of great states to imply that England is on the verge of dissolution.

Secondly, Smollett's use of allegory and emblematic imagery will be discussed. The allegory derives from the history of Japan which was part of the Universal History edited by Smollett; the emblematic imagery is traced to the traditional political icons used in the political satire—both written and graphic—of his time.

The next chapter will examine Smollett's debt to the literary tradition of satire culminating in the work of Jonathan Swift. Particular attention is paid to his application of Swift's analysis of religious enthusiasm to politics.

The last section will deal with the satiric norms or values implied in the Atom. These are often difficult to find in punitive satire, and Smollett's desire to cast a plague on all political factions submerges them even more. Smollett's values go beyond mere politics, however, drawing upon the literary tradition of rural felicity deriving from the beatus ille theme of Horace and a philosophical tradition represented by the fairly well-known ancient philosopher, Cebes.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Louis Martz, The Later Career of Tobias Smollett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 90, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Lewis Knapp, Tobias Smollett: Doctor of Men and Manners (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> Knapp, pp. 282-83.

<sup>4</sup> For a summary of the bibliographical problems concerning the Atom, see O M Brack, Jr., "The History and Adventures of an Atom, 1769," PBSA, 64 (1970), 336-38.

<sup>5</sup> My text is W. E. Henley, ed., The Works of Tobias Smollett (New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1901), XII, p. 330. All subsequent references are given in the text.

<sup>6</sup> The Works of M. de Voltaire, ed. T. Smollett, T. Francklin and others, 4th edition (Dublin: R. Moncrieffe, 1772), V, p. 138. Hereafter cited as Voltaire.

<sup>7</sup> Tobias Smollett, Travels Through France and Italy (1766; facsimile rpt. New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 37. Hereafter cited as Travels.

<sup>8</sup> The Life of Smollett (London: Walter Scott, 1887), p. 150.

<sup>9</sup> The Life and Letters of Tobias Smollett (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1926), p. 233.

<sup>10</sup> Knapp, p. 282; Laurence Brander, "Tobias Smollett," in Bonamy Dobree and J. W. Robinson, eds., British Writers and Their Work, No. VI (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> The Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1956), p. 170.

<sup>12</sup> James R. Foster, "Smollett and the Atom," PMLA, 67 (1953), 1032-46; Martz, Later Career, pp. 90-104; Arnold Whitridge, Tobias Smollett: A Study of His Miscellaneous Works (New York: Privately printed, 1925), pp. 92-119.

<sup>13</sup> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 192-94.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Greene, "Smollett the Historian," in G. S. Rousseau and P-G Boucé, eds., Tobias Smollett: Bicentennial Essays Presented to Lewis Knapp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 28, n. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Tobias George Smollett (New York: Twayne, 1968), p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Lelchuk, "On Satirizing Presidents: An Interview with Philip Roth," Atlantic (Dec., 1971), p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> Lelchuk, p. 83.

<sup>18</sup> Hannay, p. 149; Brander, p. 120; Whitridge, p. 98. All make the comparison to Swift.

<sup>19</sup> Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Rosenheim, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Rosenheim, p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> Rosenheim, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenheim, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Rosenheim, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> The Yale Review, 41 (1951), 80-92.

26 "Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Biographies of Smollett," in Rousseau and Boucé, eds., Tobias Smollett, p. 201. Although Boucé's essay deals with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biographies, the tendency continues to the present day. Laurence Brander's rhetorical question concerning Smollett's authorship of the Atom is one example: "If Smollett did not write it, what other perverted genius did?" (Brander, p. 121). A more recent example is Alice Green Fredman, "The Picaresque in Decline: Smollett's First Novel," in John H. Middendorf, ed., English Writers in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 189-208. Professor Fredman flatly states that Smollett "tends to identify with his hero" (p. 192), and so Matthew Bramble is a "fine self-portrait" (p. 204). The ferocity of Smollett's satire is explained as an attempt "perhaps to compensate for lacking protective irony as a mode of defense and mediation from experience" (p. 198). The satirical attacks in the Travels Through France and Italy are described as "paranoid explosions" (p. 198, n. 12). Since we still know very little about Smollett's life, such speculations are impossible either to prove or disprove.

27 Most of the scholarship dealing with the Celtic satirist as a magician concerns the Irish rather than the Scottish tradition. The pioneering work is Fred Norris Robinson's "Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature," in Studies in the History of Religions Presented to Crawford Howell Troy, eds. D. G. Lyon and G. F. Moore (New York: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 95-130. See also Robert C. Elliott, The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 18-49 for the Irish tradition. The entire study, however, is relevant here.

28 Vivian Mercier, The Irish Comic Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), p. 146.

29 Quoted in Mary Claire Randolph, "The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory: Its Possible Relationships and Implications," SP, 38 (1941), 139. It originally appeared in Boswelliana, ed. Rev. Charles Rogers (London, 1874), p. 237.

CHAPTER I  
SMOLLETT'S POLITICS

If Tobias Smollett were not a novelist of some reputation, his political opinions would be of little interest, for they are neither original nor unusual. Nor should we expect them to be, for Smollett did not pretend to be a political philosopher. He was, however, a novelist who drew—perhaps more than most writers—upon his life and opinions for his art. He had no qualms about introducing his personal opinions or prejudices into his work, often satirizing thinly disguised public officials and other notables in his novels. It is therefore important that his political opinions be correctly evaluated so that his art can be accurately understood, particularly The History and Adventures of an Atom, Smollett's most sustained political satire.

For some critics, the investigation of Smollett's political opinions is reason for despair. M. A. Goldberg, for example, finds that "Smollett's political position is . . . ambiguous and contradictory."<sup>1</sup> Goldberg is perhaps reacting to Smollett's self-confessed conversion from Whiggism, or to his shifting attitude toward William Pitt the Elder, who is dismissed sarcastically in a poem in 1746, praised extravagantly in the dedication to Smollett's Complete History of England, criticized tentatively in 1760, attacked ferociously in 1763, and, finally, made the villain in The Adventures of an Atom in

1769. Faced with this variety of political stances, one can sympathize with Goldberg.

Other Smollett scholars discover a less contradictory pattern. Byron Gassman, for example, finds that "Smollett did arrive during the final years of his career at a firm and fairly consistent political position . . . clearly manifest in the Briton and subsequent journalistic works."<sup>2</sup> Gassman also points out that this position was worked out while Smollett was writing his History of England:

But whatever doubt may remain about Smollett's early political tendencies, a careful analysis of The Complete History of England, published in 1758, shows that, by this time, he had abandoned whatever Whig principles he may have at one time endorsed and, thoroughly disillusioned with the political principles and practices of the first four decades of Hanoverian rule, was quite in sympathy with Tory attitudes.<sup>3</sup>

Smollett's History was attacked by the Whigs as a Tory history as soon as it was published. He anticipated this reaction and tried to head it off with a review in his journal, the Critical Review, which concluded: "The tories will slight him as a lukewarm friend, the whigs will brand him as a disguised Jacobite: For our parts, were we allowed to judge of his principles from this performance, we should conclude, that he is so far a tory, as to love and revere the monarchy and hierarchy; and so much a whig, as to laugh at the notions of indefeasible right and nonresistance."<sup>4</sup> The ploy did not work, and to this day Smollett's work is considered a Tory history.<sup>5</sup> This view is encouraged by Smollett's letter to John Moore in 1758, in which he writes: "I have, as far as in me lay, adhered to Truth without espousing any faction, though I own I sat down to write with a warm side to those principles

in which I was educated. But in the Course of my inquiries, the Whig ministers and their abettors turned out such a Set of sordid Knaves that I could not help stigmatising some of them for their want of Integrity and Sentiment."<sup>6</sup> We should note that Smollett does not say that he became converted to Tory principles, only that he has abandoned the uncritical Whig attitudes he held before his historical research. In fact, he maintains that he belongs to no faction.

Smollett repeats this assertion of impartiality in another letter from the same year. Writing to William Huggins on 2 July, 1758, he says:

I can safely say I had no other view in the Execution of that work than historical Truth, which I have displayed on all occasions to the best of my Knowledge without Fear or affection. I have kept myself independent of all Connexions which might have affected the Candour of my Intention. I have flattered no Individual; I have cultivated no Party. I look upon the Historian who espouses a Faction, who strains Incidents or willfully suppresses any Circumstances of Importance that may tend to the Information of the Reader, as the worst of Prostitutes. I pique myself upon being the only Historian of this Country who has had Honesty, Temper and Courage enough to be wholly impartial and disinterested.<sup>7</sup>

It is not surprising that Smollett should flatter himself about his independence, but Donald Greene's appraisal of the History is cast in the same terms: "A reading of Smollett's History should at least convince us that 'Tory', as applied to that work, indicates nothing more than a refusal to be bound by the strict Whig party line of interpretation of the events of British history and an insistence on exercising some independence of judgment concerning them."<sup>8</sup>

The question of Smollett's political position is complicated by the absence of any precise ideological meaning for the terms "Whig" and "Tory" by the middle of the eighteenth century. As Donald Greene points out, "parties were not parties in the modern British sense: groups of politicians were held together, tenuously, not by allegiance to formulated principles, to platforms, but by shifting personal allegiances and similarity of interest."<sup>9</sup> There was no need for disciplined parties' adhering to a party program, because the modern office of Prime Minister, who commands a Parliamentary majority, had not yet evolved (although Robert Walpole was Prime Minister in fact if not in name). Neither had the legitimacy of an organized Opposition ready to form a government been established. Opposition to the King's government still had the taint of rebellion in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Smollett himself understood that "Whig" and "Tory" were terms pretty much empty of meaning. In the Briton No. 35 he dismisses them as "terms invented by knaves and adopted by fools." And in the Briton No. 38 he calls them "war-words" which "like Guelph and Ghibelline, or like the cabalistical terms Abraxas and Abracadabra, [are] the more efficacious, the less they are understood."

Although a precise definition of "Tory" is probably impossible, the term did have certain associations in the eighteenth century which may be useful to pinpoint Smollett's political position. Tory was often used as a synonym for Jacobite, a charge to which Smollett was particularly susceptible because he came from Scotland. When his History was published, Whig critics seized upon an innocuous passage recounting the death of James II in exile as proof of his Jacobitism. Despite his

nationality, however, Smollett had no allegiance to the Stuarts; he was a Lowland Scot, and most of Charles Stuart's support was in the Highlands. And, as Smollett himself liked to point out, many of the troops that defeated Charles at Culloden were Scots loyal to England.<sup>10</sup>

Smollett denied the charge of Jacobitism in a letter to Dr. William Hunter: "Mr. Secretary Conway [Secretary of State under Rockingham in 1765] himself will never be able to persuade me either that I am a Jacobite, or that I ever exhibited the outward Signs and Symptoms of that Infection."<sup>11</sup> Smollett's good friend, Dr. Alexander Carlyle, agrees: "Smollett tho' a Tory was not a Jacobite," he writes in his autobiography.<sup>12</sup>

Besides Jacobitism, Tory could mean three things after 1714, according to Donald Greene:

- (1) one whose sympathies and interests were generally those of the country members of the House of Commons;
- (2) very loosely, a supporter of various groups opposing the Walpole-Pelham-Rockingham Whig Succession;
- (3) after 1784, a supporter of the younger Pitt and his supporters, and so, among other things, an opponent of the French Revolution and what it stood for.<sup>13</sup>

Where does Smollett fit among these positions? He died before the third position was defined by Edmund Burke. The second, however, clearly applies to Smollett, for he not only supported Lord Bute but became his political propagandist by writing the Briton. Most important, Smollett also shared some—thought not all—of the attitudes of the country gentlemen. J.G.A. Pocock delineates their political position in this manner:

The business of Parliament is to preserve the independence of property, on which is founded all human liberty and all human excellence. The business of administration is to govern, and this is a legitimate activity; but to govern is to wield power, and power has a natural tendency to encroach. It is more important to supervise government than to support it, because the preservation of independence is the ultimate political good. There exists an ancient constitution in England, which consists in a balance or equilibrium between the various organs of government, and within this balance the function of Parliament is to supervise the executive. But the executive possesses means of distracting Parliament from its proper function; it seduces members by the offer of places and pensions, by retaining them to follow ministers and ministers' rivals, by persuading them to support measures—standing armies, national debts, excise schemes—whereby the activities of administration grow beyond Parliament's control. These means of subversion are known collectively as corruption, and if Parliament or those who elect them—for corruption may occur at this point too—should be wholly corrupt, then there will be an end to independence and liberty.<sup>14</sup>

Donald Greene isolates "their independence of vested political interests and their skepticism of current political cant"<sup>15</sup> as characteristics of the country gentlemen, precisely the qualities Smollett claims for the History of England. As we shall see, Smollett also sides with the country gentlemen on specific issues—for example, the Militia Bill, septennial Parliaments, isolationism, excise schemes, corruption. If agreeing with the country interest is Toryism, then Smollett is a Tory, although Donald Greene prefers the term "Independent."

Yet, as Greene points out, "Smollett's 'Toryism' . . . is difficult to fit into any neat predetermined pattern."<sup>16</sup> Within a generally conservative political framework, Smollett holds positions which can only be described as Whiggish. Anyone who supposes that a Tory would oppose the Glorious Revolution will be surprised by the following passage from the History, which is so remarkable that it deserves to be quoted at length:

The constitution of England had now assumed a new aspect. The maxim of hereditary, indefeasible right was at length renounced by a free parliament. The power of the crown was acknowledged to flow from no other fountain than that of a contract with the people. Allegiance and protection were declared reciprocal ties depending upon each other. The representatives of the nation made a regular claim of rights in behalf of their constituents; and William III ascended the throne in consequence of an express capitulation with the people. Yet, on this occasion, the zeal of the parliament towards their deliverer seems to have overshot their attachment to their own liberty and privileges: Or, at least, they neglected the fairest opportunity that ever occurred, to retrench those prerogatives of the crown to which they imputed all the late and former calamities of the kingdom. Their new monarch retained the old regal power over parliaments to its full extent. He was left at liberty to convoke, adjourn, prorogue, and dissolve them at his pleasure. He was enabled to influence elections, and oppress corporations. He possessed the right of choosing his own council; of nominating all the great officers of state, and of the household, of the army, the navy, and the church. He reserved the absolute command of the militia: So that he remained master of all the instruments and engines of corruption and violence, without any other restraint than his own moderation, and prudent regard to the Claim of Rights and principle of resistance, on which the Revolution was founded. In a word, the settlement was finished with some precipitation, before the plan had been properly digested and matured; and this will be the case in every establishment formed upon a sudden emergency in the face of opposition. (I, 15-16)<sup>17</sup>

These are sentiments any Whig could be proud of. In the first place, Smollett espouses the contract theory of government, a basic principle of Whig political theory.<sup>18</sup> In the second place, he suggests that the Revolution did not go far enough, that the King still held the same powers that James II had used to become a tyrant. The passage also supports Smollett's claim in the review of the History that he is enough a Whig to laugh at the principles of indefeasible right and nonresistance.

In the History, Smollett often questions particular Parliamentary legislation because it gives too much power to the King. In the account

of the Parliamentary session of 1758, for example, we find this passage:

The signal trust and confidence which the parliament of England reposed in the king, at this juncture, was in nothing more conspicuous than in leaving to the crown the unlimited application of the sum granted for augmenting the salaries of the judges. In the reign of king William, when the act of settlement was passed, the parliament, jealous of the influence which the crown might acquire over the judges, provided, by an express clause of that act, that the commissions of the judges should subsist quandiu se bene gesserint, and that their salaries should be established; But now we find a sum of money granted for the augmentation of their salaries, and the crown vested with a discretionary power to proportion and apply this augmentation: A stretch of complaisances, which, how safe soever it may appear during the reign of a prince famed for integrity and moderation, will perhaps one day be considered as a very dangerous accession to the prerogative.  
(III. 234-35)

It appears, then, that Smollett does not fit the stereotype of the Tory as a foe of the Revolution and a defender of the King's prerogative. On the contrary, he defends the constitution, including the revolutionary settlement, and he is ever vigilant lest the King overstep the bounds of his prerogative and encroach upon the liberty of the English people.

Smollett was quite proud of the degree of freedom permitted the English people. In fact, in a review of Fulke and Francis Greville's Maxims, Characters and Reflections, he asserts a position which was very popular throughout the century: that eccentricity is a source of national pride because it is a sign of English liberty:

Our characters are perhaps more strongly influenced by that spirit of liberty and independence, which enables every man to pursue his own natural bias

and turn of thinking, without fear of punishment or censure. Our singularities grow up as nature implanted them. Our education is as various as the whims and caprices of our parents: our enquiries are unlimited and unrestrained. We are not overawed in our politics, or restricted in our notions of religion; but at liberty to drink at every fountain of science, and give a loose to every flight of the imagination.<sup>19</sup>

Against this background we are better able to assess Smollett's fulminations about liberty of the press in the Briton, which, perhaps more than any other writings, have contributed to his image as a Tory. The implication drawn from them is that Smollett opposed liberty of the press, which is not true. It is also observed that Smollett is hypocritical, since his billingsgate is no better than that of the anti-ministerial writers he criticizes. It is true that his remarks are intemperate, but he was by and large simply falling into the tone of the so-called Magazine War, in which his Briton and Arthur Murphy's Auditor defended the policies of Lord Bute—especially his plans to end the Seven Years War—against the attacks of the Whig journals, the Monitor and the North Briton, the latter edited by John Wilkes, whose contributions have been described by one of his admirers as "gross and explicit."<sup>20</sup> "Personal abuse," Robert R. Rea states quite bluntly, "was the groundwork of the periodical struggle."<sup>21</sup> Smollett justified his own writing in the Briton No. 37: "The reader will remember, that I did not lift the pen in this dispute, until I saw my S[overeig]n, whom I am bound to honour, and his M[iniste]r whose virtues I had cause to respect, aspersed with such falsehood, and reviled with such rancour, as must have roused the indignation of every honest man." What Smollett seems to complain about, then, is not liberty of the press, but what he

calls in No. 32 "brutal licentiousness." He was perhaps genuinely concerned about the disruptive consequences of injudicious criticism of the King and his minister, which he termed in No. 24 "a torrent of the foulest slander and abuse, poured upon the character of a Prince, who deserves to be the darling of his people; upon the reputation of a minister, whose conduct has defied the severest scrutiny of malice."

Smollett thought that it was the duty of the government to prosecute his adversaries for seditious libel (Briton, No. 32):

It is a duty the government owes itself, because, without such execution [of the law], its authority must grow into contempt. It is a duty to the community, because, if these miscreants escape, their success will encourage other vermin of the same species to raise disturbances in the common-wealth, where a few examples, in terrorem, would awe the whole dastardly tribe into silence and submission.

When I talk of examples, I do not mean that the government should exert any power unknown to the constitution. I do not mean that any new trammels should be hung upon the liberty of the press. . . . No, I would have the delinquents left to the authority of the law; to the equity of a fair trial; to the verdict of a British jury.

In the History, Smollett speculates about what might have happened if the laws had been enforced:

Had the promulgators of the first defamatory libels that appeared against the k[ing] and his family, been apprehended and punished according to law, the faction would have found it a very difficult task, in the sequel, to engage either printer or publisher in their service: . . . but they were emboldened by impunity to proceed in their career, to confirm their calumnies by unrefuted falsehoods, and to give a loose to the most audacious scurrility; until the minds of the people were so deeply and so universally tainted, that it became hazardous to call the libellers to account. (IV, 310-11)

In a letter dated 18 May 1770, Smollett ascribes the failure to prosecute to "the absurd Stoicism of Lord Bute, who set himself up as a pillory to be pelted by all the Blackguards of England, upon the Supposition that they would grow tired and leave off."<sup>22</sup> According to Smollett, by the time he had entered the fray to defend Bute, the law would have been to no avail, for any prosecution would only have made the slanderers more popular. In the Briton No. 4, he compares the supposedly libellous North Briton to Orator Henly, who "was in hopes of attaining the pillory, or of being brought to the cart's-tail; events which would have given him consequence among the multitude on whom he depended." Ironically, something very much like this happened when John Wilkes was prosecuted for libelling the King in the notorious North Briton No. 45.

If evidence is needed to demonstrate Smollett's support of the liberty of the press, one need only look at his account of the Playhouse Bill in the History. The bill was Robert Walpole's attempt to stifle criticism of his administration on the stage and it was, in Smollett's words, "obliquely levelled at the liberty of the press." Most of the account is given to the "excellent speech" of the Earl of Chesterfield, whom Smollett praises as a politician and (Dr. Johnson to the contrary) as a patron:

One of the greatest blessings we enjoy, one of the greatest blessings a people can enjoy, is liberty. But every good in this life has its alloy of evil. Licentiousness is the alloy of liberty. It is an ebullition, an excrescence. It is a speck upon the eye of the political body, which I can never touch but with a gentle, with a trembling hand, lest I destroy the body; lest I injure the eye upon which

it is apt to appear. If the stage becomes at any time licentious, if a play appears to be a libel upon the government, or upon any particular man, the king's courts are open; the law is sufficient to punish the offender. If poets and players are to be restrained, let them be restrained as other subjects are, by the known laws of their country; if they offend, let them be tried as every Englishman ought to be, by God and their country. Do not let us subject them to the arbitrary will and pleasure of any one man. A power lodged in the hands of a single man to judge and determine without limitation, controul, or appeal, is a sort of power unknown to our laws, inconsistent with our constitution. It is a higher, a more absolute power than we trust even to the king himself; and, therefore, I must think we ought not to vest any such power in his majesty's lord chamberlain. (II, 215)

Lord Chesterfield's sentiments are exactly those of Smollett in the Briton No. 32.<sup>23</sup>

Even though Smollett held some political principles in common with the Whigs, he did not consider himself one, for reasons he makes clear in his definition of a modern Whig:

In speaking of the modern Whigs, we must forget the original principles by which that party was distinguished, and remember that they were now characterized by nothing but the implicit attachment they had shewn to the house of Hanover; since the accession of which family to the throne, they had engrossed the administration with a most iniquitous spirit of exclusion; conforming themselves with the most servile complaisance to the prejudice and predilection of their prince; enhancing the prerogatives of the crown, in contradistinction to all avowed maxims of their sect; and maintaining their influence, partly by calumniating those of their fellow-subjects, who disapproved of their measures; but chiefly a uniform system of corruption, which they established and maintained in order to secure a constant majority in parliament. While they were thus employed in sapping insensibly the very foundations of the constitution, they affected on all occasions a spirit of toleration in matters of religion, they professed the abhorrence of their ancestors to the doctrine of passive obedience and indefeasible hereditary right: They took every opportunity to give themselves credit for the revolution,

to stigmatize the family of Stuart, and to brand all their political adversaries with the odious names of Tory and Jacobite; which they affirmed to be synonymous terms. Such were the modern Whigs, comprehending many noblemen and gentlemen of great fortune and influence, the whole body of Protestant dissenters, the majority of the creditors of the nation, the managers of the public funds and the greater part of the directors of all the monied corporations, so necessary to a government obliged to maintain an expensive war on the sole strength of public credit. (IV, 255-56)

This definition of modern Whig principles follows the analysis of the realignment of political interests after the Revolution formulated by Viscount Bolingbroke, whom Smollett read for his historical research.<sup>24</sup> In the Craftsman and A Dissertation Upon Parties, Bolingbroke accused the Whigs under Robert Walpole of abandoning their original principles. He tried to incorporate many of the old Whig principles into his own political philosophy in an effort to forge an opposition, consisting of country gentlemen and dissident Whigs, to Walpole. One of Smollett's favorite ploys in the Briton was to suggest that his own political philosophy was more truly Whig than that of his adversaries.

Smollett's analysis can be discussed under two headings: the modern Whig association with the monied interest, and the accusation of corruption. He regarded the shift in political power from the landed interest to the monied interest as absolutely disastrous to the liberty and independence of the English people. His vision of genuine political society is the same as that attributed to Bolingbroke:

Political man in Bolingbroke's "genuine" political society was an independent man, an owner of property who was therefore capable of exercising his own judgment on matters of state, calling upon his own wisdom, virtue, and good sense. He was not dependent on other politicians, ministers, or financial institutions for his course of action; nor were political

men, as a body, dependent on dependent men for whom tallies, stocks, or other interests determined political interests. The function of government was not to pursue any special policy; it was to protect the properties base for the continued independence of the individual.<sup>25</sup>

This image of the independent political man is in turn based upon a hierarchical vision of society, derived from Aristotle:

At the center of Bolingbroke's imagery, as in Aristotle's notions of politics, is the household or family unit with the independent master at its head, and in a fixed subordinate position beneath him, dependent servants. For both Aristotle and Bolingbroke independence was equated with the possession of real property and dependence with its absence. For this reason money men were the natural servants of the landed political masters.<sup>26</sup>

The modern Whig association with the monied interest, to the exclusion of the landed interest, thus inverted the natural hierarchy, shifting power from those most qualified to govern to those least qualified to do so. The independent landed gentleman could afford to support the public interest because his income derived from the land, but the government creditors, whose wealth derived from the interest they collected from loans, servilely supported the Whig administrations. Private greed was thus elevated over the public interest.

Smollett also regarded the landed gentry as the guarantors of the public interest. In the Briton No. 18 he characterizes George III's council as "composed of men eminent for their wisdom and integrity, who by their rank and understanding, are qualified for the office of advising their Prince, and by their extensive property, inalienably attached to the interest and concerns of the people." And in the Briton No. 35 he declares "that the people of this nation, are not

to be ruled under an exclusion of three fourths of the men of natural property in their country, equal at least to their antagonists in integrity and abilities, from all posts of power and trust in the government."

Smollett also considered society to be a hierarchy, as Byron Gassman explains: "Smollett's conviction . . . was that true English liberty was the liberty of living in an ordered, well-regulated, and well-administered society, a situation impossible when factions, created by the levelling sentiment that all have an equal right to govern, were continually struggling to displace one another."<sup>27</sup> Smollett expresses this sentiment in the Briton No. 16 in which he rejects the notion "that every individual has an equal right to intermeddle in the administration of public affairs; a principle subversive to all government, magistracy and subordination; a principle destructive to all industry and national quiet, as well as repugnant to every fundamental maxim of society." Only "the honest, the sober, the thriving sons of industry, who have an interest in the country they inhabit, who have sense to value the blessings they enjoy," should have a voice in government, he declares in the Briton No. 4.

Smollett saves his most vitriolic attacks for those politicians who sought popular support from the London mob, the vulgus mobile, the disaffected masses who had no stake in government because they had neither property nor the franchise, and whose political voice could only be expressed destructively through riots. In the Briton No. 6 he denounces them as "the base, unthinking rabble . . . without principle, sentiment or understanding." To appeal to these dregs of

society is to abandon the principles of subordination that he believed in.

The result of the modern Whigs' alliance with the monied interest was general corruption and its virtual synonym, luxury. The word "corruption" should be understood both in its everyday sense of bribery and the selling of offices and in a special political sense, defined by Polybius and Machiavelli, of a disruption of the balanced constitution, as J.G.A. Pocock explains:

Even the most perfect equipoise could only be maintained through human care and attention, and since that was fallible, some theoretical attention had to be paid to the cause and cure of degeneration in the balanced constitution. In Machiavelli, the most influential of the Renaissance transmitters of Polybius, the technical term for this sort of degeneration is "corruption." It arises when the balance is disturbed, typically through the encroachment of one of its . . . constituents upon the others; and since, in Machiavellian thought, stability in the political system is a precondition of morality in the individual life, corruption is a moral as well as a political phenomenon.<sup>28</sup>

Corruption, then, is a fact of political degeneration, and luxury implies the same process in private life.

Smollett's attack on corruption and luxury joins a flood of similar attacks, including the satire of Swift, Pope, and Gay in the first half of the eighteenth century. "John Brown," writes Louis Bredvold,

summed up the whole case thoroughly and elaborately when he published in 1757 his famous Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times. The "ruling character" of the times he asserted to be "a vain, and selfish effeminacy." He laid the blame impartially

at the door of every portion of the public; but the political significance of his indictment is evident from his characterization of Walpole "in these few words, that while he seemed to strengthen the Super-structure, he weakened the Foundations of our Constitution."<sup>29</sup>

For Smollett, the history of England since the Revolution revealed an alarming pattern of corruption which undermined the constitution, kept able men out of government service, and contributed to the depravity of the general populace. It started as early as the reign of William and Mary, when the belief was established

that every man consulted his own private interest at the expence of the public: A belief that soon grew into a maxim almost universally adopted. The practice of bribing a majority in parliament had a pernicious influence upon the morals of all ranks of people, from the candidate to the lowest borough-electer. The expedient of establishing funds of credit for the raising of supplies to defray the expence of government, threw large premiums and sums of money into the hands of low, sordid usurers, brokers, and jobbers, who distinguished themselves by the name of the monied-interest. Intoxicated by this flow of wealth, they affected to rival the luxury and magnificence of their superiors; but being destitute of sentiment and taste, to conduct them in their new career, they ran into the most absurd and illiberal extravagancies. They laid aside all decorum; became lewd, insolent, intemperate and riotous. Their example was caught by the vulgar. All principle, and even decency, was gradually banished; talent lay uncultivated, and the land was deluged with a tide of ignorance and profligacy. (I, 137-138)

Smollett repeats this charge for virtually every Whig administration which follows. It should be pointed out that the principle of subordination also applies to corruption. Corruption starts in the higher orders of Parliament and the administration and gradually works its way down to the vulgar. The nouveau riche ape the gentry, but their

tastelessness and lack of breeding become readily apparent. The price paid for a society based on wealth rather than on the natural hierarchy is a decay of learning and culture. Since the lower classes imitate their betters, a reformation of manners must start at the top if it is to succeed. One should keep this in mind when reading Smollett's attacks on the mob.

As one might expect, however, Smollett reserves his most trenchant attack for Robert Walpole, who systematized the practice of corruption:

He was endued with a species of eloquence, which, though neither nervous nor elegant, flowed with great facility, and was so plausible on all subjects, that even when he misrepresented the truth, whether from ignorance or design, he seldom failed to persuade that part of his audience for whose hearing his harangue was chiefly intended. He was well acquainted with the nature of the public funds and understood the whole mystery of stock-jobbing. This knowledge produced a connexion between him and the money-corporations, which served to enhance his importance. He perceived the bulk of mankind were actuated by a sordid thirst of lucre; he had sagacity enough to convert the degeneracy of the times to his own advantage; and on this, and this alone, he founded the whole superstructure of his subsequent administration. . . . He knew the maxims he had adopted would subject him to the hatred, the ridicule, and reproach of some individuals, who had not yet resigned all sentiments of patriotism, nor all views of opposition: but the number of these was inconsiderable, when compared to that which constituted the body of the community; and he would not suffer the consideration of such antagonists to come in competition with his schemes of power, affluence and authority. (II, 137-38)

Later in the History, when Walpole asserts at the Parliamentary debate over his removal from office that he never bribed any member, Smollett remarks: "Such a declaration as this, in the hearing of so many persons, who not only knew, but subsisted by his wages of corruption, was a

strong proof of the minister's being dead to all sense of shame and all regard to veracity." (II, 251) This is the same portrait of Walpole that we find in the writings of Pope, Swift, Gay, and especially Bolingbroke, who, according to James T. Boulton, "considered that the venal methods practised by Walpole were more dangerous 'than Prerogative ever was'; and 'the Means of establishing a Government of arbitrary Will, by Corruption, [is] more likely to prove effectual, than those of doing it by Prerogative ever were.'"<sup>30</sup>

Smollett agrees with Bolingbroke in the first chapter of his account of George II's reign:

The nature of prerogative, by which the liberties of the nation had formerly been often endangered, was now so well understood, and so securely restrained, that it could no longer be used for the same oppressive purposes. . . . The vice, luxury, and prostitution of the age, the almost total extinction of sentiment, honour, and public spirit, had prepared the minds of men for slavery and corruption: The means were in the hands of the ministry: The public treasure was at their devotion. (II, 136)

In fact, Smollett felt that Walpole and his successors had become more powerful than the King. "The Whig ministers," he writes in the Briton No. 35, "have always been known to plume themselves in the feathers they plucked from the prerogative; and have added to their own persons that importance which they have filched from the crown"; but, he adds, the English people "abhor to see a fellow subject strutting in the spoils of prerogative and usurping the attributes of sovereignty."

Smollett is kinder to Walpole's successor, Henry Pelham, whom he calls "a man of honesty and candour, actuated by a sincere love for

his country, though he had been educated in erroneous principles of government, and in some measure obliged to prosecute a fatal system which descended to him by inheritance." (II, 389) He has nothing good to say about Pelham's brother, the Duke of Newcastle, whom he considered not only corrupt but incompetent. In the Briton No. 38, Newcastle is pictured in a dream vision as "an old pilot conveyed through the public streets upon an ass, his face turned to the tail, with a cap and bells upon his head, a slavering-bib under his chin, and a rattle in his hand." Worse things, as we shall see, are said about him in The Adventures of an Atom.

Throughout the History, Smollett favors any legislation which might limit the ability of the Whigs to corrupt the political process. He cheers the defeat of Robert Walpole's Excise Bill because "it would produce an additional swarm of excise-officers and warehouse-keepers, appointed and paid by the Treasury, so as to multiply the dependents on the crown, and enable it still further to influence the freedom of elections." (II, 280) He also favors the repeal of the Septennial Act, which called for parliamentary elections every seven years instead of every three years, because members who had been bribed would stay in office longer. Both of these measures were also favored by the landed gentry.

But these legislative actions were only temporary solutions as far as Smollett was concerned. In his account of the year 1759, he gives a despairing summary of the political situation in England and suggests one solution:

The extensive influence of the crown, the general corruptibility of individuals, and the obstacles so industriously thrown in the way of every scheme contrived to vindicate the independency of parliaments, must have produced very mortifying reflections in the breast of every Briton warmed with the genuine love of his country. He must have perceived that all the bulwarks of the constitution were little better than buttresses of ice, which would infallibly thaw before the heat of ministerial influence, when artfully concentrated: That either a minister's professions of patriotism were insecure; or his credit insufficient to effect any essential alteration in the unpopular measures of government; and that, after all, the liberties of the nation could never be so firmly established, as by the power, generosity, and virtue of a patriot king. (III, 577-78)

This last phrase recalls Bolingbroke's treatise, The Idea of a Patriot King, published in 1749 but written in the 1730s. In that work he adopts Machiavelli's position that a nation can become so corrupted that only a strong virtuous man can restore it to its original principles. According to Boulton, "Bolingbroke emphasized the need for a patriot king who would impose discipline on society without exploiting the situation to achieve a personal despotism."<sup>31</sup> Although Machiavelli's strong man uses force, Bolingbroke's "Patriot King" employs the example of his own behaviour to a far greater extent than coercion to rescue the state from corruption."<sup>32</sup> A Patriot King is above party; he chooses ministers on their merits alone; he cares only for the welfare of his people.

In the Briton, Smollett draws upon these phrases to describe George III. In No. 17, for example, George is described as "a patriot-king, whose chief aim is the happiness of his people." And in No. 18, Smollett addresses this plea to his readers:

Let us depend upon the paternal affection of a virtuous Sovereign, who can have no views distinct from the interest and happiness of his people. Let us depend upon the care and fidelity of an honest minister, who is engaged by every tie of loyalty, of honour, and of interest, to promote the patriot designs of his Master, to consult the glory and welfare of the nation.

In the very first issue of the Briton, Smollett presents an even more eulogistic portrait of George III:

Our Sovereign's character is in all respects so amiable as to engage the affections of every one not blasted with envy: . . . his heart benevolently sympathizes with all the children of distress: . . . his hand is liberally opened to every appearance of merit: . . . his sole aim is to augment and secure the happiness of his people with the independence of his crown.

The last two passages—with their emphasis on George's paternal sympathy for the children of distress—suggest that Smollett's image of political society, like Bolingbroke's, is based on the family. George III is like a father to his subjects, and he will use his prerogative to restore the hierarchical structure of society which alone secures liberty.

It may seem ironic, and perhaps hypocritical, to find Smollett defending royal prerogative in the Briton after warning of its dangers in the History, but we should remember that Smollett, like Bolingbroke, saw the system of corruption as a greater danger than prerogative. Smollett's position is both reasonable and constitutional, for, as Greene points out, "the responsibility of the cabinet to Parliament rather than to the Crown was not accepted as constitutional until well on into the nineteenth century. The king was supposed to be the effective chief executive of the nation."<sup>33</sup>

Smollett defends the independence of the monarchy because, as he puts it in the Briton No. 35, "all experience, and all history informs us, that the genius of the people of England inclines them to monarchy." When his adversaries accused him of advocating an unlimited monarchy, he responded in the same paper:

God forbid that the British monarchy should be ever other than independent: but, because it is independent, does it follow, that it is unlimited? I am afraid, the expression itself is little better than nonsense. British monarchy, however independent, must be limited by the constitution; if it is not, it is no longer British monarchy, but despotism. As to independency, unless it is independent within itself, if it is subject to the controul either of foreign power or domestic insolence, it equally ceases to be British monarchy.

This passage is crucial, not only for the proper understanding of Smollett's political position but also as an illustration of the delicate balancing act that distinguishes all writing concerning the English constitution after the Glorious Revolution.

The English monarchy is independent of Parliament, but it does not have unlimited powers. If the King oversteps the constitutional limits of his prerogative, then British monarchy has dissolved into despotism. As we have seen, Smollett, like almost every eighteenth-century political theorist, argued that this had in fact happened during the reign of James II, and he feared that the revolutionary settlement had not gone far enough in curbing the King's power.

If the monarchy becomes subject to what Smollett calls "domestic insolence," then the monarchy is transformed into a republic. This is probably a reference to the objections of his adversaries that George III's ministers, particularly Lord Bute, were unpopular. In Briton No. 36,

Smollett replied that the King's right to choose his ministers was not only constitutional but a basic principle of Whig doctrine:

It is the first Article of the Whig's creed, and indeed the sum of all the rest, That the King has a right to chuse his servants, and that all his loyal subjects should enjoy equal liberties and privileges. Thus it was settled at the Revolution, and confirmed again by the succession of the present Royal Family: but both these articles you renounced and violated, in a late reign, as well as in the present: for then, and now, you would allow the King to have no servants, but such as you thought fit to impose upon him, nor any subjects a post or place, but such as you chose to promote.

King George III, then, is only reasserting a privilege that had fallen into disuse during the Whig administrations of Robert Walpole and his successors.

The last threat to the independence of the monarchy cited by Smollett, foreign control, is probably a reference to the many alliances formed by George II to protect Hanover from attack. In his account of the Parliamentary session of 1759, Smollett objects to the new treaty with Prussia because it gives discretionary power, not to the King of England, but to Frederick the Great: "On the whole, this was perhaps the most extraordinary treaty that ever was concluded; for it contains no specification of articles, except the payment of the subsidy: Every article was left to the interpretation of his Prussian majesty." (III, 378)

The reference to Frederick the Great introduces another important topic in Smollett's political opinions: his opposition to the Seven Years War. In his historical account, he never resists an opportunity to condemn it, and he devotes a large part of the first chapter on

George III's reign to a summary of Israel Mauduit's Occasional Thoughts on the Present German War, an anti-war tract which is, in Smollett's words, "a recapitulation of the remarks and reflections disseminated through the course of this history." (IV, 123)

Most of Smollett's objections can be found in the following passage:

Many friends of their country exclaimed against the projected army of observation in Germany, as the commencement of a ruinous continental war, which it was neither the interest of the nation to undertake, nor in their power to maintain, without starving the operations by sea, and in America, founded on British principles; without contracting such an additional load of debts and taxes, as could not fail to terminate in bankruptcy and distress. To those dependents of the ministry, who observed, that as Hanover was threatened by France for its connexion with Great Britain, it ought, in common gratitude, to be protected, they replied, That every state, in assisting any ally, ought to have a regard to its own preservation: . . . That the reluctance expressed by the German princes to undertake the defence of these dominions, flowed from a firm persuasion, founded on experience, that England would interpose as a principal, and not only draw her sword against the enemies of that electorate, but concentrate her chief strength in that object, and waste her treasures in purchasing their concurrence: That exclusive of an ample revenue drained from the sweat of the people, great part of which had been expended in continental efforts, the whole national debt incurred, since the accession of the late king, had been contracted in pursuance of measures totally foreign to the interest of these kingdoms. (III, 81-82)

In the first place, we should note that Smollett does not object to the campaign in America; it was quite obviously in England's interest to protect her colonies from the depredations of the French and the Indians. He does, however, oppose the war on the continent, and his strategy relied upon England's superior sea power to repel any

invasion from the continent, supply and reinforce the Americans, and prey upon French trade routes.<sup>34</sup> But, as the passage indicates, Hanover was the tail that wagged the dog of British foreign policy. George II doted on the Electorate, and in order to secure it from invasion he had signed a defensive treaty with Frederick the Great, which, in Smollett's words, "entailed upon Great Britain the enormous burden of a continental war, without being productive of one advantage . . . to England or Hanover." (III, 53) The French strategy was simple: to invade Hanover, "because they knew the English would meet them there and fight them at such a disadvantage as might balance all the success of the British arms in every other part of the world." (IV, 126)

This opposition to the continental connection was a constant in Smollett's political thinking. He was not enthusiastic about any of the wars England had fought on the continent since the Revolution; indeed, he almost sees them as one long war. The continental connection began with William III, who wanted to act as "umpire in all contests in Europe," (I, 331) and who bequeathed a war to Queen Anne, and which was in fact named after her. Then the Hanoverians made the connection stronger because of their attachment to Hanover. Perhaps the most futile of all the wars was the War of Jenkins' Ear, in which Smollett himself had served as ship's surgeon. He observes that "after the troubles of the empire began, the war was no longer maintained on British principles. It became a continental contest, and was prosecuted on the side of the allies without conduct, spirit, or unanimity." When the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was signed, it avoided the very issue over which the war was fought: "The right of English subjects

to navigate in the American seas, without being subject to search, was not once mentioned, though this claim was the original source of the differences between Great Britain and Spain." The upshot of the war was "a dreadful expense of blood and treasure, disgrace upon disgrace, and an additional load of grievous impositions, and the national debt accumulated to the enormous sum of eighty millions sterling." (III, 384-85) This was the lesson of history for Smollett and this is why he opposed the Seven Years' War.

Smollett also opposed wars because they tended to upset the balance of the constitution; emergency measures had a way of becoming permanent after the emergency had passed. When England feared invasion during the Seven Years' War, Smollett favored the Militia Bill to deal with the threat, and, as Greene points out, this was "a traditional Tory position of favoring the home-grown (if incompetent) militia, of which the country gentlemen formed the corps of officers and their tenants and dependents the body of troops, and which was theoretically directly responsible to Parliament, as against the innovation of a regular standing professional army, directly under the control of the Crown."<sup>35</sup> Smollett wanted nothing to do with standing armies; one of his complaints about William III is that "he procured a parliamentary sanction for a standing army, which now seems to be interwoven in the constitution." (I, 331)

One of Smollett's tasks in the Briton was to defend the efforts of the Bute administration to negotiate a peace, which were in progress as he wrote. One argument in favor of the war was that "the Church was in danger," but Smollett had a low tolerance for political cant of any

kind, and this cliché seems to have rankled him more than any other because it was always used by unscrupulous politicians as a rallying cry to go to war on the continent. When William Pitt used the expression in an address to Parliament in 1758, Smollett was moved to make a long rebuttal in the History. He begins by observing that a compliant Parliament would have voted funds

even though no mention had been made of the Protestant religion, which to men of ordinary penetration, appeared to have no natural concern in the present dispute between the belligerent powers, although former ministers had often violently introduced it into messages and speeches from the throne, in order to dazzle the eyes of the populace, even while they insulted the understanding of those who were capable of exercising their own reason. This pretext was worn so threadbare, that, among the sensible part of mankind, it could no longer be used without incurring contempt and ridicule.

Smollett then makes an inventory of the Protestant countries in Europe and finds that two of them, Denmark and the United Provinces, are neutral, and that the rest--Sweden, Hungary, and Russia--are allied with the two great Catholic powers--France and Austria--against England and Prussia. Smollett concludes:

As, therefore, . . . no act of oppression towards any Protestant state or society [was] pointed out, except those that were exercised by the Protestants themselves, . . . the unprejudiced part of mankind will be apt to conclude that the cry of religion was used, as in former times, to arouse, alarm, and inflame; nor did the artifice prove altogether unsuccessful. Notwithstanding the general luke-warmth of the age in matters of religion, it produced considerable effect among the fanatic sectaries that swarm through the kingdom of England. The leaders of those blind enthusiasts, either actuated by the spirit of delusion, or desirous of recommending themselves to the protection of the higher powers, immediately seized the hint,

expatiating vehemently on the danger that impended over God's people; and exerting all their faculties to impress the belief of a religious war, which never fails to exasperate and impel the minds of men to such deeds of cruelty and revenge as must discredit all religion, and even disgrace humanity. (III, 233-34)

Such words, one might think, would deliver the coup de grace to any argument that the church was in danger, if indeed anyone actually believed it to be.

As the passage above suggests, Smollett was no friend of dissenters. In the History, he laments the spread of fanaticism during the reign of George III, declaring that "the progress of reason, and free cultivation of the human mind, had not . . . entirely banished those ridiculous sects and schisms of which the kingdom had been formerly so productive." (IV, 106) Of course, he supported the Church of England, but for political rather than religious reasons. "I consider the Church not as a religious but as a political Establishment," he wrote to John Moore, "so minutely interwoven in our Constitution that the one cannot be detached from the other, without the most imminent danger of Destruction to both."<sup>36</sup> Like most conservatives, he regarded religious heterodoxy as a sign of political subversion. Whenever the dissenters expressed a political opinion, they were almost always on the wrong side, as far as he was concerned. When dissenting preachers objected to a provision of the Militia Bill which called for troops to exercise on Sunday, he snorted: "Nothing could be more ridiculously fanatic and impertinent than a declaration of such a scruple against a practice so laudable and necessary, in a country where that day of the week is generally spent in merry-making, riot, and debauchery." (III, 86)

On other religious topics, Smollett's attitudes and opinions are difficult to determine. He does not appear to have been a deeply religious man; he betrays little interest in dogma, and even Knapp, his biographer, is not sure what religion he professed, although Knapp notes that Smollett was associated with the Church of England as a citizen of Chelsea.<sup>37</sup>

We now turn to what may be the most fascinating topic in Smollett's political opinions: William Pitt. Smollett's changing attitudes have been briefly outlined above; Pitt was for a time the repository of Smollett's hope and later the source of his disillusionment. A detailed look at his feelings toward Pitt is called for, however, because it touches on almost every point we have discussed so far: corruption, the mob, patriotism, the royal prerogative, the continental war. It is also important because Smollett's attitudes are a key to The Adventures of an Atom in which Pitt is ferociously satirized under the name of Taycho.

The first mention of Pitt is found in Smollett's first published work, Advice, a formal verse satire printed in 1746. In line 21, he calls Pitt "th' unshaken Abdiel yet unsung,"<sup>38</sup> a reference to Abdiel in Book V of Paradise Lost, "unshaken" by Satan's speech urging rebellion and who stayed on the side of the good angels. It is an ironic reference because Pitt is included in a rogue's gallery of corrupt Whigs, including the detested Duke of Newcastle, the Duke of Grafton, the Earl of Granville, the Earl of Bath, the Earl of Cholmondeley, and Sir William Yonge. As Knapp points out, "Smollett was merely reflecting the sharp reaction against Pitt at that time, when as the result

of a sudden reversal in his policy toward George II, he became Paymaster and the object of a widely circulated satirical ballad, 'The Unembar-rassed Countenance.'" 39

By 1757, however, Smollett so admired Pitt that he dedicated his Complete History of England to him, and therein gives this portrait of him:

This gentleman had been originally designed for the army, in which he actually bore a commission; but fate reserved him a more important station. In point of fortune he was barely qualified to be elected member of parliament, when he obtained a seat in the house of commons, where he soon outshone all his compatriots. He displayed a surprising extent and precision of political knowledge, an irresistible energy of argument, and such power of elocution, as struck his hearers with astonishment and admiration. It flashed like the lightning of heaven against the ministers and sons of corruption, blasting where it smote, and withering the nerves of the opposition; but his more substantial praise was founded upon his disinterested integrity, his incorruptible heart, his unconquerable spirit of independence, and his invariable attachment to the interest and liberty of his country. (II, 352)

This is the portrait of a patriot: a man of integrity, incorruptible, and devoted to his country. Nor were these personal attributes the only thing that recommended Pitt to Smollett. When Pitt was brought into the administration as secretary of state after a series of military disasters early in the Seven Years War, Smollett was delighted because he "had, upon sundry occasions, combated the gigantic plan of continental connections with all the strength of reason, and all the powers of eloquence." (III, 82) His solicitous attitude toward Pitt can be seen by contrasting his treatment of the trial of Admiral Byng with the trials of Admiral Knowles and George Sackville. Smollett considers Byng the scapegoat of the incompetent ministry of the Duke

of Newcastle, but he is more judicious about the other two because the military fiascos at Rochefort and the Battle of Minden occurred while Pitt was a part of the ministry.

But Smollett soon became uneasy about Pitt. In the Critical Review, we find this comment: "The public has a right to know, and no doubt, will know in due time, why those continental measures, which were so lately damned to reprobation, are now resumed in the face of day, and carried on at such enormous expense."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Pitt had pursued the continental war with vigor, and the early military disasters had become great victories. But in victory or defeat, Smollett's attitude toward the continental war was unchanged; in a letter to John Harvie, dated 10 December, 1759, he writes:

The people here are in high spirits on account of our successes, and Mr. Pitt is so popular that I may venture to say that all party is extinguished in Great-Britain. That Minister is certainly in this respect the most surprising phenomenon that ever appeared in our hemisphere. If he had broke the spell by which we are bewitched to the continent, I would have pronounced him the greatest man that ever lived.<sup>41</sup>

When George III ascended the throne, Smollett was encouraged by his desire to end the war. Pitt, however, resisted these efforts and resigned from the government when his recommendation to expand the war against Spain was rejected. Smollett repeats the following attacks on Pitt with approval:

They taxed him with inconsistency, want of principle, and the most turbulent ambition. They asserted that he had no sooner forced himself into the administration by dint of popularity, than he turned tail to those very principles by the very possession of which that popularity was acquired: That he plunged with the most desperate precipitation into those continental measures against which it had been the business

of his life to declaim: . . . That he not only espoused those interests which he had so often stigmatized as disgraceful to the crown, and pernicious to the kingdom; but espoused them with such warmth as no former minister durst avow, without running the risk of falling a sacrifice to popular resentment: That enamoured of this new idol, he squandered upon it immense sums, so as to impoverish his country, and accumulate the load of her debts to such a degree that she could scarce crouch under his burden. (IV, 219-20)

The pattern of integrity had become the pattern of changing principles when it suited him. If Smollett's attitude toward Pitt changed, it was because Pitt had changed. In a communication published on the front page of The Gazeteer and London Daily Advertiser for Thursday, October 7, 1762, he writes: "Though Mr. P[itt] as a M[iniste]r, afterwards adapted [sic] those very principles against which he had so long and so strenuously declaimed, I was surely under no obligation to follow his example; to renounce the maxims which I had always avowed, and violate my conscience out of respect to his character."<sup>42</sup> This want of principle becomes a recurring theme in the Briton. In an address to the Whigs in No. 36, Smollett cautions: "Besides, gentlemen, you are not sure that you don't count too fast, when you reckon him of your side, for you know, that his principles are of the motley kind. . . . So far as we can judge this gentleman's publick conduct, he seems never to have any set of fixed principles at all, but that, on the contrary, he left himself at the convenient liberty of veering about as his occasions required."

Demagoguery is another charge levelled against Pitt in the Briton, for his eloquence was now being used to stir up mob sentiment against the Bute administration. In the Briton No. 5, he is accused of having "raised himself into a colossal idol of popularity." In

No. 37, Smollett refutes a comparison that had been made between Pitt and Scipio Africanus, saying that Scipio did not "climb upon the shoulders of the mob to the first offices of the state. . . nor use the lowest arts of popularity to play upon the passions of the vulgar, and raise the most dangerous spirit of discontent among his fellow-citizens."

Another criticism of Pitt in the Briton is his acceptance of a pension when he resigned. To Smollett, this cast severe doubts on Pitt's reputation for incorruptibility. In No. 7, he says that he never believed Pitt was moved by avarice, and added: "therefore I was the more surprised when he accepted of a pension." At best, Pitt's denunciation of the policy of peace after he had accepted the King's bounty was "kicking his heels in the face of his benefactor," as Smollett writes in No. 3. Seen from Smollett's perspective, Pitt's transformation from incorruptible patriot to corrupt demagogue is indeed remarkable, and it is no wonder that Pitt became the villain of The Adventures of an Atom.

In sum, it can be said that, although Smollett's positions on particular men or events superficially exhibit the contradictions that annoy Milton Goldberg, his basic political stance is indeed fairly consistent, as Gassman suggests. This consistency comes from Smollett's identification with the conservative political philosophy of the landed interest. It is a natural allegiance, for Smollett himself was born into that class and, had he lived four years longer, would have succeeded his cousin James as master of Bonhill.<sup>43</sup> Like the landed gentlemen, Smollett regarded the English constitution as a balance of

independent parts. He was suspicious of power and became alarmed when one part—either King or Parliament—threatened to dominate the other. He valued stability and subordination, which he associated with the ownership of land by a natural aristocracy, and he was appalled by the shift in power to the monied interest during the Whig administrations of Robert Walpole and his successors. The system of corruption instituted by the Whigs seemed to Smollett to be more dangerous to English liberty than the King's prerogative ever was, and he supported every piece of legislation designed to dismantle it. Eventually he came to the conclusion that the degeneracy of the times could be arrested only by the rule of a Patriot King like George III, above party and ruling by the force of virtuous example. Smollett acted on his convictions by becoming a ministerial writer, defending the Patriot administration of Lord Bute, especially his efforts to end the Seven Years War.

Smollett's hope that a Patriot King and his administration would restore English liberty was disappointed. The Patriot program failed for a number of reasons—among them, the idealism of the venture, the formidable array of Whig politicians in opposition to the administration, and the political inexperience of Lord Bute. The Peace of Paris was virtually the only accomplishment of the Patriots, and as soon as it received the approval of Parliament, Lord Bute resigned.

Smollett's political disappointment was aggravated by his broken health and the death of his only child, Elizabeth, aged fifteen. He left England, seeking warmer climes to recover his health. The first letter of his Travels Through France and Italy reveals his state of mind: "You know with what eagerness I fled from my country as a scene of illiberal dispute, and incredible infatuation, where a few worthless

incendiaries had, by dint of perfidious calumnies and atrocious abuse, kindled up a flame which threatened all the horrors of civil dissention."<sup>44</sup> The same bleak picture of England on the brink of collapse is presented in The History and Adventures of an Atom.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Goldberg, Smollett and the Scottish School (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1959), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Byron Gassman, "The Briton and Humphry Clinker," SEL, 3 (1963), p. 414.

<sup>3</sup> Gassman, p. 398.

<sup>4</sup> Critical Review, 5 (1758), 2.

<sup>5</sup> For a review of the reputation of Smollett's History, see Donald Greene, "Smollett as Historian," pp. 25-30.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Knapp, ed., The Letters of Tobias Smollett (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 65. Hereafter cited as Letters.

<sup>7</sup> Letters, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> Greene, "Smollett as Historian," p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Greene, The Politics of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> The Briton No. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Letters, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Carlyle, Anecdotes and Characters of the Times, ed. James Kingsley (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 99.

<sup>13</sup> Greene, Politics, p. 13.

14 J.G.A. Pocock, "Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," William and Mary Quarterly, 22 (1965), 565.

15 Greene, Politics, p. 8.

16 Greene, "Smollett as Historian," p. 53.

17 References in the text are to Tobias Smollett, The History of England (Philadelphia: Robert Campbell and Co., 1796-97), 4 vols. In order to explain my preference for this edition, a brief summary of the publishing history of Smollett's historical writings is necessary. In 1757-58, Smollett published in four volumes The Complete History of England, covering British history from Julius Caesar to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. In the 1760s, Smollett updated the work to 1765 by printing weekly installments and eventually gathering them together in book form as The Continuation to the Complete History of England. Most readers encounter Smollett the historian in the "Continuation to Hume's History" format, which was neither Smollett's nor Hume's idea but a bookseller's gimmick concocted after both men were dead. Since Hume's History ends with the Glorious Revolution, the booksellers used Smollett's History and Continuation to carry the account to the death of George II in 1760. As a result, the first part of the History and the last part of the Continuation are consigned to oblivion. The American edition I am using is another "Continuation of Hume," but it is superior to the others because it reprints the Continuation complete to 1765. Since the years 1757-65 are crucial for the understanding of the Atom, I have decided to use this edition.

18 Smollett also espouses the contract theory in the Critical Review, 2 (1756), 471-72.

19 Critical Review, 1 (1756), 220.

20 George Nobbe, The North Briton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 39.

21 Robert R. Rea, The English Press in Politics 1760-1774 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 31.

22 Letters, p. 137.

23 Liberty of the press was a thorny issue for any eighteenth-century writer who addressed the issue. Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Swift on Liberty," JHI, 13 (1952), 137-38, points out that Swift, like Smollett, urged Bolingbroke to make examples of opposition pamphleteers during the negotiations for the Treaty of Utrecht, but that he later attacked

Walpole for trying to curb the press. According to James T. Boulton, David Hume also had second thoughts about the liberty of the press, which are reflected in the revisions he made in the various editions of his Essays: "Whereas in 1742—the first edition—he extolled the value of a free press addressing an intelligent public, in 1777 he omitted these sentiments and described 'the unbounded liberty of the press' as 'one of the evils attending mixed forms of government'" (Arbitrary Power: An Eighteenth Century Obsession, inaugural lecture, University of Nottingham [1967], p. 17).

24 In his edition of Voltaire, VI, p. 54, Smollett makes reference to "my lord Bolingbroke's Memoirs" in a footnote.

25 Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and His Circle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 81.

26 Kramnick, p. 80.

27 Gassman, p. 410.

28 Pocock, p. 509.

29 "The Gloom of the Tory Satirists," in Pope and His Contemporaries, eds. James L. Clifford and Louis Landa (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), p. 13. Brown's book received a generally favorable notice in the Critical Review, 3 (1758), 338-47.

30 Boulton, p. 10.

31 Boulton, p. 16.

32 Jeffrey Hart, Viscount Bolingbroke: Tory Humanist (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 126-27.

33 Greene, Politics, p. 5.

34 J. H. Plumb, The First Four Georges (London: B. T. Batsford, 1956), p. 88, points out that this was also William Pitt's war strategy before he became part of the administration.

35 Greene, Politics, pp. 157-58.

36 Letters, p. 73.

37 Knapp, Tobias Smollett, p. 307.

- <sup>38</sup> Donald M. Korte, "Tobias Smollett's 'Advice' and 'Reproof'," Thoth, 8 (1967), 49.
- <sup>39</sup> Lewis Knapp, "Smollett and the Elder Pitt," MLN, 59 (1944), 250.
- <sup>40</sup> Critical Review, 6 (1758), 171.
- <sup>41</sup> Letters, p. 87.
- <sup>42</sup> Quoted in Knapp, "Smollett and the Elder Pitt," p. 255.
- <sup>43</sup> Alice Parker, "Tobias Smollett and the Law," SP, 39 (1947), 545.
- <sup>44</sup> Travels, p. 1.

CHAPTER II  
ATOMS AND POLITICS

Why the adventures of an Atom? That is, why did Smollett choose a nonhuman narrator, the Atom, to tell his story? Critics who have addressed this question have pointed out that novels with nonhuman narrators were enjoying a literary vogue during the time the Atom was written. They note in particular Voltaire's Micromegas (1752), which Smollett himself translated,<sup>1</sup> and Charles Johnstone's Chrystal, or the Adventures of a Guinea (1760; 1765). Chrystal does indeed have much in common with the Atom, for it covers the same period of English history and, though not so exclusively a political satire as Smollett's work, it deals with many of the same public figures: George II, Pitt, Lord Bute, Admiral Byng, John Wilkes, Charles Churchill, to name a few. In his discussion of the nonhuman narrator in both Johnstone and Smollett, Ronald Paulson points out that "Johnstone makes Chrystal not only a guinea but, at the same time, the spirit of gold, which can enter into the possessor's mind."<sup>2</sup> The episodes of Johnstone's satire are, therefore, according to Paulson, "held together by the theme of man's lust for and dependence on gold."<sup>3</sup> Curiously, Paulson does not suggest a similar function for the Atom, namely that the Atom symbolizes the "spirit" of Epicureanism, which in the minds of many thinkers of the age was associated with the decline of great states, especially Athens and Rome.

Epicurean philosophy had a generally bad reputation in the seventeenth century. According to Charles Harrison:

The basic objection to both Democritus and Epicurus was their theology. Both were accounted atheists. Of course it was generally recognized that they had admitted the existence of gods; but the word "atheism" was subject to considerable subtlety of interpretation. Some years earlier (1640), Thomas Fuller had distinguished three kinds of atheists: in life and conversation; in will and desire; in judgment and opinion. This last is a group of "speculative atheists," among whom the Atomists came to be accounted preeminent. "The word atheist," says Fuller, "is of large extent: every polytheist is, in effect, an atheist; for he that multiplies a Deity annihilates it; and he that divides it destroys it."<sup>4</sup>

The second objection to Epicureanism was that it urged the practice of hedonism.

Many thinkers found much to admire in Epicureanism, however, and their explanations of the philosophy did much to rehabilitate it by the turn of the seventeenth century. In Epicurus's Morals (1656), Walter Charleton met the theological objections to Epicureanism by adopting the Christianized atomism of Pierre Gassendi, who argued that Epicureanism was not necessarily contrary to Christian doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Stanley's History of Philosophy separated the actual doctrine of Epicurus from the hedonism derived from Aristippus and the Cyrenaics, which had been confused with Epicureanism.<sup>6</sup> In "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus," Sir William Temple dwelled upon the virtues of Epicureanism, which he noted were not very different from the Stoics: "The Stoics would have [happiness] to consist in virtue, and the Epicureans in pleasure; yet the most reasonable of the Stoics made the pleasure of virtue to be the greatest happiness; and the best of the Epicureans

made the greatest pleasure to consist in virtue; and the difference between these two seems not easily discovered."<sup>7</sup> Temple further explains that Epicurean pleasure consists of "tranquility of mind and indolence of body," not the pursuit of sensual pleasure often associated with Epicureanism.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these efforts, there was still an antagonism toward Epicureanism in the eighteenth century, especially among historians examining the decline of Rome. In general, these historians agreed that Epicureanism had contributed to the decline in the Roman republic by undermining the devotion to public service which had sustained its political life. Unfortunately, the connection between Epicureanism and decline was so commonplace that it was more often asserted than explained, so that it is difficult to pin down exactly how the philosophy destroyed the state.

Perhaps the bluntest, if not the clearest, exposition of the malign effects of Epicureanism can be found in Montesquieu's Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline:

I believe the sect of Epicurus, which was introduced at Rome toward the end of the republic, contributed much toward tainting the heart and mind of the Romans. The Greeks had been infatuated with this sect earlier and thus were corrupted sooner.<sup>9</sup>

The effect of Epicureanism, according to Montesquieu, was the erosion of religious values. Citing Polybius as the authority that "a Greek's oaths inspired no confidence, whereas a Roman was, so to speak, enchained by his," Montesquieu goes on to quote a letter from Cicero to Atticus concerning a bribe offered to some consuls to get them to

swear falsely.<sup>10</sup> The lesson Montesquieu draws from this association is this:

Aside from the fact that religion is always the best guarantee one can have of the morals of men, it was a special trait of the Romans that they mingled some religious sentiment with their love of country. This city, founded under the best auspices; this Romulus, their king and their god; this Capitol, eternal like the city—these, in earlier times, had made an impression on the mind of the Romans which it would have been desirable to preserve.<sup>11</sup>

Montesquieu does not explain how Epicureanism contributed to the erosion of religious values. Presumably it was the atheistic aspect of Epicureanism—the belief that the gods did not meddle in the affairs of men—which caused the Romans to break their oaths. In any case, Montesquieu forges a connection between Epicureanism, the undermining of established religion and the corruption of the political process through bribery—a chain of events which one finds repeated in other analyses of the decline of nations.

Because the Prince was also the head of the Church of England, English thinkers, even more than Montesquieu, considered any philosophy which threatened religious beliefs to be politically subversive. Very often their discussion of religious and political subversion comes in the context of Epicureanism. In Section XI of An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, for example, David Hume discusses the practical consequences of natural religion. The section is cast in the form of a dialogue between Hume and a friend who offers a speech for Epicurus to deliver to the people of Athens, arguing that his philosophy is not subversive to the state. Hume's answer to the speech is this:

Men reason not in the same Manner you do, but draw many Consequences from the Belief of a divine Existence, and suppose, that the Deity will inflict Punishments on Vice, and bestow Rewards on Virtue, beyond what appears in the ordinary Course of Nature. Whether this Reasoning of theirs be just or not, is no Matter. Its Influence on their Life and Conduct must still be the same. And those, who attempt to disabuse them of such Prejudices, may, for aught I know, be good Reasoners, but I cannot allow them to be good Citizens and Politicians; since they free Men from one Restraint upon their Passions, and make the Infringement of the Laws of Equity and Society, in one respect, more easy and secure.<sup>12</sup>

With this answer to his friend, Hume vindicates the position he takes earlier in Section XI "that a wise Magistrate can justly be jealous of certain Tenets of Philosophy, such as those of Epicurus, which denying a divine Existence, and consequently a Providence and a future State, seem to loosen, in great Measure, the Ties of Morality, and may be suppos'd for that Reason, pernicious to the Peace of civil Society."<sup>13</sup>

Eighteenth-century thinkers applied the lessons they learned from ancient history to contemporary affairs and they noticed a connection between the decline of modern states and Epicureanism. In his Thoughts on Various Subjects, written during a visit with Pope in 1726, Swift finds analogies between Rome and England during the reign of Charles II: "The Epicureans began to spread at Rome in the empire of Augustus, as the Socinians and even the Epicureans, too, did in England toward the end of King Charles the Second's reign. . . . They both seem to be corruptions occasioned by luxury and peace, and by politeness beginning to decline."<sup>14</sup> Like Montesquieu and Hume, Swift seems first to be concerned about the impact of Epicureanism on religious values. Linking Epicureanism with the anti-Trinitarian doctrine of the Socinians, Swift implies that both are subversive to orthodox Anglicanism.

In the second part of his remarks, Swift establishes a further link between Epicureanism and luxury. Montesquieu makes a similar connection in the section of the Considerations previously alluded to. Following his discussion of bribing public officials, Montesquieu writes:

The greatness of the state caused the greatness of personal fortune. But since opulence consists in morals, not riches, the riches of the Romans, which continued to have limits, produced a luxury and profusion which did not . . . . With possessions beyond the needs of private life it was difficult to be a good citizen.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to distinguish cause and effect in the relationship between Epicureanism and luxury, but both Montesquieu and Swift agree that economic prosperity combined with the Epicurean emphasis on personal pleasure will lead to the dissolution of the state and the loss of liberty for its citizens.

Many writers, including Smollett, feared that the increased prosperity would make the English luxurious. The most forceful and pessimistic exposition of this belief is found in John Brown's Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times, where Brown writes that "the Character of the Manners of our Times . . . on fair examination, will probably appear to be that of a 'vain, luxurious, and selfish EFFIMINACY.'"<sup>16</sup> Brown is especially concerned about the effect of luxury on the ruling classes:

For though the Sum Total of a Nation's immediate Happiness must arise, and be estimated from the Manners and Principles of the Whole; yet the Manners and Principles of those who lead, not of

those who are led; of those who govern, not of those who are governed; of those, in short, who make Laws or execute them, will ever determine the Strength or Weakness and therefore the Continuance or Dissolution of a State.<sup>17</sup>

Besides undermining established religion and contributing to the rise of luxury, Epicureanism was considered detrimental to the state because it discouraged involvement in politics as being contrary to its vision of private ease and contentment. It is probably this aspect of Epicureanism which caused Gibbon to include the Philosophy as one of the causes of the decline of Rome: "The rich and polite Italians, who had almost universally embraced the philosophy of Epicurus, enjoyed the present blessedness of ease and tranquility, and suffered not the pleasing dream to be interrupted by the memory of their old tumultuous freedom."<sup>18</sup> The ruling classes of Rome, then, contributed to its decline by not trying to arrest it, thereby losing their freedom in the process.

One Roman who did not acquiesce to the erosion of liberty was Cato, who was admired by followers of all factions as the paragon of public virtue. According to James William Johnson,

Cato possessed the most apt qualifications to become a practical guide for the Englishman. He had been the epitome of self-sacrifice and patriotism, yet he was but one man, a single private citizen, in a representative republic. He lacked the ambition and thirst for fame which rendered kings suspect in their actions. He eschewed luxury and extravagance, as well as the other characteristics of the intemperate man. His reason and self-control were Neo-Classical ideals. As a model, however, Cato was not so far removed from the generality of mankind as to be a useless abstraction or an unapproachable ideal. Cato's admirers thought him a working model, a man for practical men to look to and imitate.<sup>19</sup>

Cato was a Stoic and his behavior during the decline of the Roman republic offers a striking contrast to that of the Epicurean nobility described by Gibbon. In his Life of M. Tullius Cicero, Conyers Middleton makes an explicit contrast between Stoicism personified by Cato and Epicureanism personified by Atticus. "In an age. . . of the utmost libertinism," writes Middleton, "when the public discipline was lost, and the government itself tottering, [Cato] struggled with the same zeal against all corruption, and waged a perpetual war with a superior force, whilst the rigour of his principles tended rather to alienate friends, than reconcile enemies; and by provoking the power that he could not subdue, helped to hasten the ruin which he was striving to avert."<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Atticus "had all the talents that could qualify a man to be useful to society: great parts, learning, judgment, candour, benevolence, generosity; the same love of his country, and the same sentiments in politics with Cicero, whom he was always advising, and urging to act, yet determined never to act himself, or never at least so far, as to disturb his ease, or endanger his safety."<sup>21</sup> In order to exalt his own subject, Cicero, Middleton concludes that both men were equally ineffective in halting the decline of Rome: "Thus two excellent men, by their mistaken notions of virtue, drawn from the principles of their philosophy, were made useless in a manner to their country; each in a different extreme of life; the one always acting and exposing himself to dangers, without the prospect of doing good; the other, without attempting to do any, resolving never to act at all."<sup>22</sup> For many English Patriots in the eighteenth century, Cato's zeal was preferable to Atticus' timidity.

To sum up, in the eighteenth century Epicureanism was associated with the decline of nations. The philosophy was understood to undermine religious principles which were the bulwarks of the state, for religion instilled in the citizens principles of right and wrong, of eternal reward and punishment without which no state could long survive. The Epicurean emphasis on personal pleasure and contentment could easily degenerate into a selfish pursuit of luxury and sensuous pleasure, which inevitably led to a decline in the state. Finally, Epicureanism discouraged good men from participating in politics, leaving the important task of governing to men of less virtue and ability.

By choosing an Atom as his narrator, Smollett evokes all of these evil associations with Epicureanism. His particular target is the Duke of Newcastle, named Fika-kaka in the Atom, who embodies all of the faults of the English ruling class envisioned by John Brown in his Estimate. With men like Fika-kaka in charge of the state, dissolution is inevitable, and by the end of the satire Japan, that is England, is on the verge of collapse.

In order to explain how Fika-kaka rose to such eminence, the Atom has recourse to the vocabulary of Epicureanism. Fika-kaka enjoys an intimacy with Got-hama-baba (George II) because "they were like twin particles of matter, which, having been divorced from one another by a most violent shock, had floated many thousand years in the ocean of the universe, till at length, meeting by accident and approaching within the spheres of each other's attraction, they rush together with an eager embrace, and continue united ever after." (241) The Atom evokes the Epicurean doctrine of the creation by a fortuitous concourse

of atoms. Since Fika-kaka has "no understanding, no economy, no courage, no industry, no steadiness, no discernment, no vigour, no retention," (239) he could not have been elevated to his position because of his merit.

The anatomy of Newcastle's faults is often cast in terms of the malign association with Epicureanism. In the first place, Fika-kaka is an Epicurean in the vulgar sense of the term: he is a glutton. Smollett describes the ill effects that result from Newcastle's delights at table:

He hired cooks from China [France] at an enormous expence, and drank huge quantities of the strong liquor distilled from rice, which, by producing repeated intoxication, had an unlucky effect upon his brain, that was naturally of a loose, flimsy texture. The immoderate use of this potation was likewise said to have greatly impaired his retentive faculty; inasmuch as he was subject upon every extraordinary emotion of spirit to an involuntary discharge from the last of the intestines. (240)

Newcastle's impaired mental "retentive faculty," his proverbial absent-mindedness, manifests itself in his failure to control his bowels. His involuntary discharges when he is agitated continue to embarrass him throughout the satire.

Newcastle's preoccupation with food interferes with his political duties; it does not take much to sidetrack him from politics to recipes during a political address to the cabinet:

I have been so hurried with state affairs, that I could not eat a comfortable meal in a whole fortnight: and what rendered this misfortune the greater, my chief cook had dressed an olio à la Chine. I say an olio, I say an olio, my lords, such an olio as

never appeared before upon a table in Japan--by the lord it cost me fifty obans; and I had not time to taste a morsel. (275)

This episode could be used to illustrate Cato's complaint that there was a greater interest in food than in public service during his time,<sup>23</sup> for Fika-kaka never returns to the subject to be discussed at the meeting--what to do about the loss of Motao (Minorca), one of the early military disasters of the Seven Years War.

It may be significant, too, that the dish which distracts Fika-kaka is an olio, a highly spiced stew. In his Estimate, John Brown denounced this luxurious cuisine:

High Soups and Sauces, every Mode of foreign Cookery that can quicken Taste, and spur the lagging Appetite, is assiduously employed. The End of Eating is not the allaying of natural Hunger, but the Gratification of sordid and debasing Appetite. Hence the most inflaming Foods, not those which nourish, but those which irritate, are adopted; while the cool and temperate Diets that purify the Blood, are banished to inferior Tables.<sup>24</sup>

Fika-kaka has moved beyond the mere satisfaction of hunger to the stimulation and gratification of appetite. He is willing to pay a great price for his pleasures (fifty obans), but his country pays a greater price through his neglect of his duty.

Not even the pleasures at table, however, can match the sensual pleasure Fika-kaka receives from submitting to the debasing ritual of being kicked by his sovereign: "He presented his posteriors to be kicked as regularly as the day revolved; and presented them not barely with submission, but with all the appearance of fond desire: and truly this diurnal exposure was attended with such delectation as he never

enjoyed in any other attitude." (243) Fika-kaka yearns for the kicks of Got-hama-baba because he suffers from an itching of the podex caused by "the juxtaposition of two atoms quarelling for precedency, in this the Cuboy's seat of honour. Their pressing and squeezing and elbowing and jostling, though of no effect in discomposing one another, occasioned all this irritation and titillation in the posteriors of Fika-kaka." (244)

Fika-kaka's condition is alleviated somewhat by the abrasion caused by the kicks of his king. But on one memorable occasion a prodigious kick inserts the Atom, who had been located under the nail of the king's great toe, "exactly in the interstice between the two hostile particles, which were thus in some measure restrained from wrangling; though it was not in my power to keep the peace entirely. Nevertheless, Fika-kaka's torture was immediately suspended; and he was even seized with an orgasm of pleasure, analagous to that which characterizes the ecstasy of love." (245)

Having experienced this orgasm, Fika-kaka easily moves from the desire to relieve his itch to the quest for sensual pleasure. The Atom declares that "pleasure and pain are simple, independent ideas, incapable of definition; and this which Fika-kaka felt was an ecstasy compounded of positive pleasure ingrafted upon removal of pain." (245) Fika-kaka thus moves from the Epicurean ideal of bodily indolence through avoiding pain to the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure.

Fika-kaka discovers a way of increasing his pleasure when he asks a flunkey with a beard

to make oral application to the part affected. The proposal was embraced without hesitation, and effect even transcended the hope of the Cuboy. The osculation itself was soft, warm, emollient, and comfortable; but when the nervous papillae were gently stroked, and, as it were, fondled by the long elastic, peristaltic, abstersive fibres that composed this reverend verriculum, such a delectable titillation ensued, that Fika-kaka was quite in raptures. (246)

Like the gluttons described by "Estimate" Brown, Fika-kaka makes a luxurious habit of inflaming his appetite in order to have it satisfied by his bearded underlings:

That which he intended at first for a medicine he now converted into an article of luxury. All the Bonzas who enrolled themselves in the number of his dependants . . . were enjoined every day to perform this additional and posterior rite of worship so productive of delight to the Cuboy, that he was every morning impatient to receive the Dairo's calcitration, or rather his pedestrian digitation; after which he flew with all the eagerness of desire to the subsequent part of his entertainment." (246-47)

In order to indulge his appetite, Fika-kaka chooses his dependents according to the length, color, and texture of their beards. He prefers black beards, however, because of the electrical crackle emitted during posterior osculation. The Atom explains that "a black beard, like the back of a black cat, becomes a phosphorous in the dark, and emits sparkles upon friction," (248) and Fika-kaka "being ignorant of philosophy, ascribed it to some supernatural virtue, in consequence of which they were promoted as the holiest of the Bonzes [priests]. But you and I know, that such a phosphorous is obtained from the most worthless and corrupted materials, such as rotten wood, putrefied veal, and stinking whiting." (249) By having those who seek his patronage

this debasing ritual, Fika-kaka ensures that the governing classes will be composed of the most worthless and corrupted materials mentioned in the passage. Pursuing his own pleasure, he ignores the consequences to the state.

The intimations of homosexuality, suggested by the sexual ecstasy Fika-kaka experiences while his flunkeys kiss his arse, are probably deliberate. "Estimate" Brown points out in a passage already quoted that luxury leads to effeminacy. Historians also pointed to the depraved sexuality portrayed in Petronius as an example of the corruptions of Epicureanism. Pope made similar innuendoes about the sexuality of Lord Hervey in his character of Sporus; Lord Hervey's sexual tastes are seen as the outward manifestation of his corrupt alliance with Robert Walpole. Smollett is also fond of such innuendoes: Earl Strutwell in Roderick Random tries to seduce the hero by inquiring about his opinion of the love depicted in Petronius, and in Peregrine Pickle there is a feast in imitation of the ancients recalling Trimalchio's feast in The Satyricon.

Fika-kaka displays not only the pursuit of sensual pleasure often associated with Epicureanism but also the absence of religious principle. This want of principle is dramatized in an incident where Fika-kaka inquires about the nature of the soul. He is led to this inquiry by the suspicion that Taycho (Pitt) has achieved his mastery over the mob by witchcraft. Smollett presents his thinking this way:

"For if there is no devil," said he, "there is no soul to be damned; and it would be a reproach to the justice of heaven, to suppose that all souls are to be saved, considering what rascally stuff mankind are made of." This was an inference which gave him great disturbance; for he was one of those who would rather

encounter eternal damnation, than run risk of being annihilated. (331)

Fika-kaka calls on twenty priests to explain the nature of the soul to him and they give him twenty different answers. More confused than ever, he asks the advice of Mura-clami (Lord Mansfield):

"My dear Mura, as I have a soul to be saved!--A soul to be saved!--ay, there's the rub!--the devil a soul have I! Those Bonzes [priests] are good for nothing but to kiss my a-se; a parcel of ignorant asses! Pox on their philosophy! Instead of demonstrating the immortality of the soul, they have plainly proved the soul is a chimera, a Will-o'-the-wisp, a bubble, a term, a word, a nothing! My dear Mura! prove but that I have a soul, and I shall be contented to be damned to all eternity!" "If that be the case," said the other, "your Quambukuship [Excellency] may set your heart at rest: for, if you proceed to govern this empire, in conjunction with Taycho [Pitt], as you have begun, it will become a point of eternal justice to give you an immortal soul (if you have not one already), that you may undergo eternal punishment, according to your demerits." (332-33)

It is not surprising that the priests cannot give Fika-kaka the answers he seeks, because they are as corrupt as he is, having achieved their position not through merit or virtue but because of their willingness to debase themselves to satisfy Fika-kaka's sensual appetite. After hearing Mura-clami's argument that he has a soul in order to be punished for his sins, Fika-kaka demonstrates the depth of his corruption:

The Cuboy was much comforted by this assurance, and returned to his former occupations with redoubled ardour. He continued to confer benefices on his back-friends, the Bonzes; to regulate the whole army of tax-gatherers; to bribe the tribunes, the centurions, the decuriones, and all the inferior mob-drivers of the empire. . . . He possessed all the pomp of ostentation; the vanity of levees, the pride of being kicked by his

sovereign and kissed by his Bonzes; and, above all, the delights of the stomach and the close-stool, which recurred in perpetual succession, and which he seemed to enjoy with a particular relish: for, it must be observed, to the honour of Fika-kaka, that what he eagerly received at one end, he as liberally refunded at the other. (332-33)

Religious principle is dead in Fika-kaka, so the prospect of eternal damnation only moves him to redouble his efforts to pursue his selfish pleasures while undermining the political process through bribery and corruption. By dramatizing Fika-kaka's defiance of God's justice, Smollett is suggesting that Newcastle, despite his ludicrous idiosyncrasies, is no mere fool but a genuine villain.

Mura-clami's speech on divine justice brings into focus the other references to Providence and the will of the gods in the satire. The intimacy between Got-hama-baba and Fika-kaka, for example, is said to fulfill "the ends of Providence" (240) and there are other references (392) to the "interposition" of Providence. The traditional signs of decline—Epicureanism, the pursuit of personal pleasure, the decline of public virtue, the corruption of the political process through bribery, the erosion of religious principle—are thus placed in a larger context as God's judgment on the people of England for turning away from Him.

In the "Advertisement From the Publisher to the Reader," which precedes the Atom, S. Etherington, Smollett's fictional publisher, compares the Atom to "the Vision of Ezekiel, or the Lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet." (226) The Atom is indeed a jeremiad, a generalized denunciation of the badness of the times. Just as Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity when the

Israelites turned away from God, so too does Smollett predict the decline of England into the "gulph of perdition" which opens up on the last page of the Atom.

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NOTES

- 1 Foster, p. 1032.
- 2 Paulson, p. 193.
- 3 Paulson, p. 192.
- 4 Charles Harrison, "Ancient Atomists and English Literature in the Seventeenth Century," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, 45 (1934), 26.
- 5 For a discussion of Charleton's version of Epicurus, see Thomas Franklin Mayo, Epicurus in England 1650-1725 (Dallas: Southwest Press, 1934), pp. 33-42.
- 6 Mayo, pp. 51-54.
- 7 Sir William Temple, Five Miscellaneous Essays, ed. Samuel Holt Monk (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 6.
- 8 Temple, p. 7.
- 9 Charles de Secondat, baron de la Brede et de Montesquieu, Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline, ed. David Lowenthal (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 97.
- 10 Montesquieu, p. 97.
- 11 Montesquieu, p. 98.
- 12 David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Other Essays, ed. Ernest C. Mossner (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 142.

- 13 Hume, p. 130.
- 14 Quoted in Mayo, p. 213
- 15 Montesquieu, p. 98.
- 16 John Brown, An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times, 7th ed. (London, 1758), p. 19.
- 17 Brown, pp. 16-17.
- 18 Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. J. B. Bury, 5th ed. (London: Methuen, 1909), I, p. 60.
- 19 James William Johnson, The Formation of English Neo-Classical Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 105.
- 20 Conyers Middleton, The Life of M. Tullius Cicero (London, 1823), II, p. 436.
- 21 Middleton, II, p. 436.
- 22 Middleton, II, p. 437.
- 23 Donald Earl, The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 45.
- 24 Brown, p. 23.

CHAPTER III  
ALLEGORY AND EMBLEM

The writer of political satire in the eighteenth century always ran the risk of prosecution for seditious libel. According to Laurence Hanson,

A seditious libel . . . was one likely to bring into hatred or contempt, or to excite disaffection against, the King or his heirs, the government, the Houses of Parliament, or the administration of Justice, or to incite people to alter anything in Church or State by other than lawful means. Nor was it libellous only to condemn the existing government. It was equally criminal to libel the State as an institution.<sup>1</sup>

The breadth of this definition virtually precluded direct criticism of political affairs, and even writers who made their points obliquely through innuendo often went to great lengths to head off the possibility of prosecution.

Some of the mysterious circumstances surrounding the publication of the Atom may have been sensible precautions taken to stay out of court. Anonymous authorship is only the most obvious ploy. James R. Foster thinks that the juggling of printers may have been a trick to "baffle the authorities" further concerning the authorship of the Atom,<sup>2</sup> a remarkable precaution indeed, for Smollett was living in Europe out of reach of English law. Another possible ploy is the misdating of the first edition as 1748 instead of 1769, which is apparently deliberate, because Smollett's fictional publisher, "S. Etherington," says

that he received the manuscript "in the present year 1748." (225) Fraudulent dates were often employed by publishers of satire because it was legally important to have the edition closest to the author's original manuscript to determine if he had written the libel.<sup>3</sup> Since, as C. R. Kropf notes, most defenses in libel actions were "usually based on technicalities,"<sup>4</sup> It appears likely that these subterfuges were attempts to lay the groundwork for a defense against seditious libel. Since Smollett had already received an expensive legal education when he lost a libel action brought by Admiral Knowles, for which he served eleven weeks in King's Bench Prison, his caution is understandable.

Smollett does not make his points directly in the Atom itself but employs the time-honored device of allegory. "For the benefit of you miserable mortals," the Atom tells Nathaniel Peacock, "I am determined to promulgate the history of one period, during which I underwent some strange revolutions in the empire of Japan, and was conscious of some political anecdotes now to be divulged for the instruction of British ministers." (229) This hint is taken up by "S.Etherington" in his "Advertisement From the Publisher to the Reader" where he supplies the source for Smollett's Japanese allegory:

As to the MS. before I would treat for it, I read it over attentively, and found it contained divers curious particulars of a foreign history, without any allusion to, or resemblance with, the transactions of these times. I likewise turned over to Kempfer and the Universal History, and found in their several accounts of Japan many of the names and much of the matter specified in the following sheets. (225-26)

By protesting too much about the irrelevance of the Atom to current events, "Etherington" invites the reader to make analogies. The Atom, then, poses as a dream vision and a mirror for magistrates, "predicting" English history from the perspective of 1748 and using the history of Japan as its allegorical vehicle. The irony for Smollett's readers is that from the perspective of 1769 the prophecy had come true.

Smollett's knowledge of Japanese history probably came from the second source mentioned by "Etherington," the account of Japan and the East Indies in the Universal History, which in turn relied heavily upon Engelbert Kaempfer's History of Japan, published in two volumes in 1727-28. Smollett had been involved in much of the editing and compilation of material in the Universal History, but it does not seem likely that he compiled the History of Japan.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after the Universal History volume was published, however, a notice appeared in the Critical Review, which Louis Martz attributes to Smollett.<sup>6</sup> This review appears to be the germ of the Atom. Seizing upon the author's comparison of Japan and England, the reviewer lists other similarities in coasts, climate, produce, resources, and, above all, "the genius and disposition of the people." The reviewer concludes his comparison of the English and the Japanese with this description of their similar vices and foibles: "The Japanese are proud, supercilious, passionate, humourous, and addicted to suicide; split into a multitude of religious sects, and so distracted by political factions, that the nation is at last divided between two separate governments."<sup>7</sup> This description of the Japanese is very much in the spirit of Smollett's denunciations of the mob in The Briton and his characterization of the Japanese in the Atom.

In the Atom, however, the oblique method of talking about England by talking about Japan is far more specific than the article in the Critical Review. The elements from Japanese history are carefully selected for their analogous relationship to very specific targets of satire. A good example of this use of analogies is Smollett's adoption of the Japanese religion of Fakku-basi to stand for English foreign policy regarding Hanover. The Universal History gives this account of the establishment of Fakku-basi: "Bupo, otherwise called Kobot, landed in Japan, from the Indies and brought with him, on a white horse, a book, called Kio, containing the mysteries of his religion; not long after which, a temple was erected to him, which is still called Fakkubasi, or the temple of the white horse."<sup>8</sup> This passage serves as an outline for Smollett's account in the Atom, but more details are added to make it fit the English situation:

The prince, who held the reins of government in the short period which I intend to record, was not a lineal descendent of the ancient Dairo, the immediate succession having failed, but sprung from a collateral branch which was invited from a foreign country in the person of Bupo, in honour of whom the Japanese erected Fakku-basi, or the temple of the white horse. So much were all his successors devoted to the culture of this idol, which, by the by, was made of the vilest materials, that, in order to enrich his shrine, they impoverished the whole empire. (234-35)

By adding the information about the interrupted succession, Smollett transforms Bupo into George I, who also came from a foreign country. Smollett's readers would have associated the religion with Hanover because of the white horse, which not only refers to the idol in the temple but also to the insignia worn by the hated Hessian mercenaries

when they were quartered in England.<sup>9</sup>

Smollett dwells on the religious aspects of Faku-basi, calling it in another passage "the orthodox faith in Japan, . . . founded, as St. Paul saith of the Christian religion, upon the evidence of things not seen." (262) Smollett also provides a creed for Faku-basi, "which the Japanese ministers swallowed as glib as the English clergy swallowed the thirty-nine articles." (263) Besides nonsensical tenets, like the belief that the moon is made of green cheese, the creed includes an overt expression of Hanoverian foreign policy: "I believe that the island of Nippon is joined to the continent of Jeddo, and that whoever thinks otherwise shall be damned to all eternity." (262) Smollett emphasizes the religious aspects of Faku-basi to point out that the English position regarding Hanover is not a rational foreign policy but a superstition based on the evidence of things not seen. It asserts a connection between English and Hanoverian interests which does not exist, yet the English ministers are willing to impoverish the kingdom to protect the Electorate. Faku-basi also serves as an appropriate vehicle to convey Smollett's disgust over the slogan, "The Church is in danger," which, as we have seen, he considered a cant phrase meaning that Hanover was in danger.

Smollett also found a parallel with English history in the fate of the Japanese rulers:

Antiently the emperors were likewise sovereign pontiffs, under the title of dairo's; at which time, their persons and dignity were held so sacred that not only every rebellion against them, but even every contravention to their decrees . . . were detested as crimes against the Deity itself. . . . And as they lived thus in the grandest splendor, luxury, and

effeminacy, they committed the chief care of the civil, and all the military, affairs to their prime minister, who was styled cubo, . . . and it was by one of these cubo's that the dairo's were stripped of their whole civil authority. . . . The former is still permitted to live in the same state and grandeur as his ancestors did, and the latter is still obliged to pay him a kind of homage, as if he acted only as his deputy, or viceroy: but all that is mere ceremony.<sup>10</sup>

Concerned as he was with the erosion of the King's prerogative, Smollett must have found the Japanese Dairo an apt emblem for the King of England. In fact, the Dairo is used as an emblem for the figurehead monarch in the Briton No. 25, in which Smollett poses as a citizen of London who recommends that the Lord Mayor of London become the de facto ruler of England:

You may be surprized, that in this sketch of reformation, I have scarce mentioned the k[in]g by name; but the truth is, I would consider it as a name only, a vox et praeterea nihil. I would have the k[in]g of E[n]glan[d] like the last Caliphs of Bagdat, or the Dairo of Japan, or that race of sovereigns, known in France by the epithet Faineans. They enjoyed the nominal honours, the personal veneration of the subjects, the form, the pomp, the trappings and gewgaws of royalty; but the substance of empire, the power, the influence and authority resided in the sultan, the cuba, and the mayor of the palace.

The citizen of London impersonated by Smollett represents all the enemies of subordination, who would "reform" the English constitution by bringing the King down to their level in order to improve their status.

In the Atom, Smollett adopts the relationship between the Dairo and the Cuboy to describe the shift in power from the King to the prime minister, which alarmed him:

Japan was originally governed by monarchs who possessed an absolute power, and succeeded by hereditary right, under the title of Dairo; but in the beginning of the period of Foggien, this emperor became a cypher and the whole administration devolved into the hands of the prime minister, or cuboy, who now exercises all the power and authority, leaving the trappings of royalty to the inactive Dairo. (234)

The cuboy or prime minister in the Atom is named Taycho, and stands for William Pitt. According to the Universal History, the Japanese Taycho was a military hero of common birth who "stripped the emperors of the last remains of their secular authority, and made himself absolutely independent of them in secular affairs."<sup>11</sup> Although Pitt never led men into battle, he did take charge of the war after he became a part of the administration and was credited with the British victories. "Since Marlborough," J. H. Plumb writes, "England had never known such a triumph of arms. The public's regard for Pitt bordered on idolatry."<sup>12</sup>

Once in office, the Japanese Taycho, like Pitt, does not take long to establish a tyranny. Before he can take over the conduct of the war, he has to "establish a despotism in the council of Twenty-Eight, some members of which had still the presumption to offer their advice towards the administration of affairs." (341) Taycho/Pitt refuses to co-operate with the other members of the council, responding to questions at a meeting with baby talk. He then blindfolds the King and padlocks the lips of the ministers, explaining that

it was necessary that his imperial majesty should remain in the dark, and that the whole council should be muzzled for a season, otherwise he could

not accomplish the great things he had projected in favour of the farm of Yesso [Hanover]. . . . He therefore exhorted him to undergo a total privation of eye-sight, which was at best a troublesome faculty, that exposed mankind to a great variety of disagreeable spectacles. (342-43)

Because of his attachment to Hanover, the King gives in. Smollett's lesson is clear: the erosion of the King's prerogative results in a tyrant like William Pitt.

It can be said, then, that Smollett went to some pains to find appropriate analogies from the history of Japan to express his satirical thrusts against the folly of Hanoverian foreign policy and the danger to the constitution of the shift in authority from the King to the prime minister. One suspects, however, that the accuracy of the analogies was probably lost on his readers, who can hardly have been expected to consult Kaempfer, despite Smollett's two footnotes referring to the work.

If the Japanese imagery in the Atom was obscure to Smollett's readers, the same cannot be said for the rest of the emblematic imagery, which draws upon a tradition of political iconography found in pamphlets, ballads, newspapers, and pictorial satire going back a century or more. Graphic satire in particular had become an effective transmitter of political propaganda by the middle of the eighteenth century. According to Herbert Atherton,

Before 1727 the bulk of graphic satire occupied a subsidiary place, as frontispiece and illustration to pamphlet and broadside. By the 1760s the political print, in which the graphic design was the focus of attention, with verses and commentary in ancillary roles, flourished. The publication of collections of prints in book-form, beginning in the late 1750s, is proof of the independent identity of this satiric form.<sup>13</sup>

As M. Dorothy George points out, most of these prints—especially during the Bute administration—were anti-ministerial:

It seems odd that the Ministry made almost no attempt at pictorial counter-propaganda, though there were ministerial journalists and pamphleteers (much abused in the prints). Speaking very roughly, there are extant some 400 prints against Bute—not counting all the copies and piracies—and only four on the other side.<sup>14</sup>

Quantity should not be equated with effectiveness, however. One of the prints supporting Bute was William Hogarth's The Times (1762), which depicted Pitt, John Wilkes, Charles Churchill, and other opposition figures as incendiaries fanning the flames of faction and interfering with the efforts of George III and his ministers to put out the fire. Wilkes and Churchill sought to diminish the impact of this print drawn by an artist of Hogarth's talent and prestige by launching a campaign of personal abuse, which accused Hogarth of prostituting his talent for personal gain.

It is hard to exaggerate the grossness and scurrility which characterize the verbal and graphic political satire of this period. Most of the attacks on Bute, for example, asserted a sexual relationship between him and the King's mother, which left little to the imagination.<sup>15</sup> Smollett attacked the scurrility of the prints in the Briton No. 16 and No. 32; in the latter he urges in all seriousness that the vendors and publishers "be scourged, branded and have their ears cut off." He never understood why the administration did not take legal action on the grounds of seditious libel and attributed the inaction to Lord Bute's "absurd stoicism." M. Dorothy George, who

agrees that the prints probably were actionable, suggests that the administration did not want the offensive libel circulated further by the publicity which a trial would engender.<sup>16</sup>

As a ministerial writer, Smollett was himself caricatured in the prints. James R. Foster's article on "Smollett and the Atom" reproduces a print of Smollett "as zany to Bute, the Mountebank, who offers his gold lozenges to the 'bonny lads from the north of the Tweed' as a sovereign remedy for their 'golden itch.'"<sup>17</sup> Atherton reproduces another attack on Smollett, John Bull's House sett in Flames [BMC 3890], which reverses the imagery of The Times by portraying Bute and his allies as incendiaries with Pitt attempting to put out the flames. Bute says, "Brother SMALL WIT We had better retreat."<sup>18</sup> These personal attacks may have inspired Smollett to respond with a political "cartoon" of his own, the Atom, drawing upon the same arsenal of political icons that his enemies used against him.

The only direct allusion to graphic art in the Atom is <sup>to</sup> Hogarth, which comes during the ministerial deliberations over the loss of Motao (Minorca). Having lost control of his bowels out of fear of the mob (as he often does in the Atom), Fika-kaka (Newcastle) "sat about five seconds in silence, having in his countenance nearly the same expression which you have seen in the face and attitude of Felix on his tribunal, as represented by the facetious Hogarth, in his print done after the Dutch taste." (275) Smollett refers to Hogarth's Paul Before Felix Burlesqued, a parody of his own painting Paul Before Felix. Paul's effect on Felix has been to move his bowels, and the governor sits on his throne with an expression of embarrassment and discomfort, the perfect analogy to Newcastle.

Paul Before Felix Burlesqued is not a political print, but Smollett appears to have had Hogarth's The Times in mind in another passage where Taycho (Pitt) attacks the continental connection:

He declared, that not a man should be sent to the continent, nor a subsidy granted to any greedy, mercenary, freebooting Tartar [Frederick the Great]; and threatened, that if any corrupt minister should dare to form such a connexion, he would hang it about his neck, like a millstone, to sink him to perdition. The bellows of Taycho's oratory blew up such a flame in the nation, that the Cuboy and all his partizans were afraid to whisper one syllable about the farm [Hanover]. (285)

According to J. H. Plumb, Pitt in fact made a speech using the figure of the millstone to characterize the continental connection.<sup>19</sup> Since he later came to support Hanoverian foreign policy when he was admitted to the administration, he condemned himself out of his own mouth, as far as Smollett was concerned. A millstone appears hanging around Pitt's neck in The Times marked "3000 pounds per annum" the amount of a pension granted to him after he left the government. Smollett and other ministerial writers often referred to Pitt sarcastically as "The Great Pensioner," criticizing him for accepting it from the King whose policies he attacked after he left office. In Smollett's mind, Pitt's about-face concerning Hanover was a greater hypocrisy than accepting the pension, so he changes the meaning of the millstone accordingly. Also, in The Times Pitt is seen fanning the flames with a bellows, just as Taycho does in the Atom.

The clearest example of Smollett's borrowing from graphic political satire, however, is his account of the abortive expedition against the coast of China (France):

In surveying the shore through spying glasses, [the commander] perceived the whole beach instantaneously fortified, as it were, with parapets of sand, which had escaped the naked eye; and at one particular part, there appeared a body of giants with very hideous features, peeping, as it were, from behind those parapets; from which circumstance the Japanese general concluded there was a very formidable ambuscade, which he thought it would be madness to encounter, and even folly to ascertain. . . . I shall now, Peacock, let you into the whole secret. This great officer was deceived by the carelessness of the commissary, who instead of perspectives, had furnished him with glasses peculiar to Japan, that magnified and multiplied objects at the same time. . . . The large parapets of sand were a couple of mole-hills; and the gigantic faces of grim aspect, were the posteriors of an old woman sacrificing sub dio, to the powers of digestion. (321)

This passage seems to be based on a print entitled The Whiskers. Or S<sup>r</sup> Jn<sup>o</sup> Suckling's Bugga Boh's [BMC 3625], published in 1757. The print depicts the English commander on the deck of his ship surveying the shore through a telescope. On the shore, a troop of women expose their posteriors to the ship. A thought balloon issues from Sir John Suckling which says, "Oh! Lord. I am sure they are the Swiss Guards. I know them by their Broad Faces & their Whiskers." The description of the print in the British Museum Catalogue points out that "this print is intended to ridicule the failure of the expedition sent against Rochefort, especially that part of the defense of Sir John Mordaunt, the commander in chief, where he magnified the probable number of the French forces prepared to oppose him." Smollett has reduced the troop of women to one old woman, and Sir John Mordaunt's exaggeration of the number of troops is attributed to the special glasses issued by the commissary, but otherwise the imagery is identical. Smollett's readers would surely have made the connection between the print and this account.

Once the Atom is placed against the background of political iconography, other bizarre elements become intelligible. The prominent buttock-kicking and buttock-kissing, for example, might strike the modern reader as an appropriate reductive metaphor for the relationship between superior and inferior in politics—and perhaps it is. Smollett, however, restricts this practice to the reign of George II; when George III ascends the throne, Newcastle offers himself to be kicked, but the new King refuses. "Different reigns," Smollett observes drily, "different customs." (377)

By restricting the custom to George II, Smollett appears to be reviving some old satires against that sovereign from the 1730s. Smollett himself noted in the History that George II was reputed to have a short temper when he was young.<sup>20</sup> James R. Foster points out, further, that "it was common knowledge that George II often gave vent to his anger by kicking his hat or wig around; and the story of how he kicked the famous quack, Dr. 'Spot' Ward, who while examining an infected royal thumb gave it a painful squeeze, circulated widely."<sup>21</sup> This personal quirk was exploited by graphic satirists in 1737 when the King was very unpopular. M. Dorothy George describes two prints satirizing George:

Aeneas in a Storm [2326] shows the King's ship tempest-tost, while Britannia waits his return to England from Hanover; one of the winds in the clouds is kicking a hat. Much more disrespectful is The Festival of the Golden Rump [2327] in the same year. . . . It is based on "The Vision of the Golden Rump" in Common Sense or the Englishmen's Journal (written by Lord Chesterfield and others) for 19 March: the King is a "pagod" on an altar, a satyr with a golden rump; his high priestess (the Queen) tried to appease him "when he lifted up his cloven hoof to correct his domesticks."<sup>22</sup>

Common Sense for 11 June 1737 also printed "An Essay on Kicking," in which the author suggests that "Kicking might be introduced into publick Business instead of Bribing; I don't doubt but it might answer all the same Purposes, for I am firmly of the Opinion, that whoever will take a Bribe will take a Kicking." Fearing that the King might exhaust himself if he tried to kick everyone in his numerous court, the author adds, "I should therefore be of Opinion, that no body should have the Honour of being kick'd by the Sovereign except the first Minister, the principal Secretaries of State, the President of his Councils, and some few others the great Officers of the Crown."

Kicking, then, was understood to be a symbolic action summing up the topsy-turvy morality of George II's reign. To be kicked was no longer a sign of disapproval but of honor, just as bribe taking was transformed from an immoral practice to the habitual means of governing the nation. Kicking carries these same associations in the Atom.

It is important that the new reign should bring new customs, for it implies that George III will repudiate the immoral practices of the previous reign:

This Dairo never dreamed of kicking those whom he delighted to honour. It was a secret of state which had not yet come to his knowledge; and Yak-strot [Bute] had always assured him that kicking in the breech always and everywhere implied disgrace, as kicking the parts before, betokens ungovernable passion. (377-78)

Tutored in the principles of Patriotism by Lord Bute, George III promises to restore morality to government, bestowing honors because the recipients are worthy of them, not because he needs their votes

in Parliament. Smollett introduces a discordant note, however, when he says that George has not yet learned this "secret of state," implying that George will learn the necessity of bribery. Unfortunately, this turns out to be the case, for the corruption of politicians has gone on for so long that Lord Bute is forced to make an alliance with Henry Fox (Fokh-si-rokhu), who distributes perquisites to the Members of Parliament: "Fokh-si-rokhu and his brother-undertakers, having the treasure of Japan at their command, had anointed the greatest part of the assembly with a certain precious salve, which preserved them effectually from the fascinating arts of Taycho [Pitt]." (411-12) The kicking may have disappeared during the reign of George III, but the practice of bribery continued.

The buttock-kissing in the Atom also can be found in political propaganda. Maynard Mack describes one print [BMC 2447], published in 1740: "Entitled Idol Worship or the Way to Preferment, it portrays a broad bared Walpolian posterior straddling a road that leads under a great gate to various government employments and requiring to be paid suitable homage by all who wish to pass beneath it."<sup>23</sup> As the heir to Walpole's corrupt political system, Newcastle demands the same homage in the Atom.

The political icons found in the prints also shed some light upon what is perhaps the most grotesque incident in the Atom—Fika-kaka's [Newcastle's] metamorphosis into a woman. The transformation occurs after Fika-kaka has been shunted aside by the new administration; Gio-gio [George III] prevents him from "touching a certain sum out of the treasury, which he had been accustomed to throw out of his windows

at stated periods, in order to keep up an interest among the dregs of the people." (396) Deprived of his capacity to buy votes, Fika-kaka loses power in the administration and becomes, in effect, an old woman.

A study of political prints reveals that this imagery is not original with Smollett. George points out that in the prints "Newcastle was often a goose or an old woman, sometimes an ass, the dupe of Fox, and misled by his own minister and all-powerful secretary, Andrew Stone."<sup>24</sup> The first two icons are especially important in the Atom, because they mark the final two steps of Fika-kaka's fall from power. Fika-kaka first begins to worry his followers when he starts to have conferences with midwives, but the more alarming incident comes when "observing a nest with some eggs, which the goose had quitted, he forthwith dropped his trowsers, and squatting down in the attitude of incubation, began to stretch his neck, to hiss and to cackle, as if he had been really metamorphosed into the animal whose place he now supplied." (386-87) These signs of his effeminacy are confirmed when one of his underlings prepares to render the expected posterior osculation and "spied something, or rather nothing, and was exceedingly affrighted." Gio-Gio and Yak-strot (Bute) have Fika-kaka examined by a jury of matrons who find him non mas: "The unhappy Cuboy, being thus convicted, was divested of his office, and confined to his palace in the country; while Gio-gio, by the advice of his favorite, published a proclamation, declaring it was not for the honour of Japan that her treasury should be managed by . . . an old woman." (397) The icons of the goose and the old woman, which had been associated with Newcastle as emblems of his distracted and ineffectual character, are used by

Smollett as demeaning metaphors to describe Fika-kaka's fall from high office. His manliness derives solely from his power to distribute bribes and offices to other politicians. Stripped of this power, he reverts to his true nature: He becomes first a goose and then an old woman.

In his treatment of Lord Bute and William Pitt, Smollett employs political icons and motifs which were almost archetypal figures in the popular imagination, having perhaps the same status to the eighteenth century audience that the Republican elephant or the Democratic donkey have in today's editorial cartoons. Taken together, they comprise what Atherton has termed "The Statesman's Progress," a complex of images and themes depicting the rise, temporary success, and downfall of evil ministers. "The Statesman's Progress" was the collective creation of the Opposition writers to Robert Walpole and provided Smollett with an arsenal of abusive icons and motifs to attack the politicians of his time.

Smollett's presentation of Lord Bute in the Atom is perhaps the most important aspect of the satire, because it revises considerably the picture of him in The Briton. As a ministerial writer, Smollett had no choice but to heap encomiums on Bute which he perhaps did not believe himself. While he no doubt preferred Bute to Pitt, he had reservations about Bute's performance while in office, which he could express in the Atom.

Smollett depicts Bute as a puppet master, which is a political icon with a long history of negative connotations. The first appearance of the puppet show as a metaphor for politics in graphic satire

shows Charles II as "a raree-show man with his pack on his back, a peep show containing the Parliament which he is carrying off to Oxford."<sup>25</sup> The raree-show was so called because the French puppet masters mispronounced the English words when calling out their performance. The general development of the metaphor is clearly set out in this print: Parliament is a stage for its puppet members who are in reality controlled by the King.

It is an indication of the shift in power from the King to the prime minister that the puppet-master emblem was used so extensively in ballads, poems, plays, and prints to depict Robert Walpole. Walpole was often shown manipulating politicians by pulling red and blue strings, symbolic of his Order of the Bath and Order of the Garter. Malcolm C. Largmann points out some of the connotations of the puppet show metaphor:

Judgments against Harlequin and Punch performances by serious drama critics in eighteenth-century journals, because such productions obscured the conceptual meaning of the action and, consequently, reduced the didactic impact of the piece, afforded Tory journalists an additional barb with which to pierce Walpole's supposed double-talking and double-dealing. The First Minister is cast not merely as a low character but his conduct is reflected in a vulgar stage genre.<sup>26</sup>

Even after Walpole left office, he was suspected of manipulating politics behind the scenes and attacked in a print entitled The Screen

[BMC 2540]:

Walpole (now Lord Orford) behind the screen is still Punch, pulling the strings of puppet M. P.s; Pulteney "Dear William," is informed:

. . . He was the Punch at first you saw;  
 He gives the other Puppets Law,  
 And by his secret Strings he still  
 Governs the others as he will;  
 And all the difference that is known.  
 You only hear another Tone:  
 The Puppet Man,--behind the Screen,  
 Is the same man,--although not seen. 27

A variation of the puppet theme surfaced during Newcastle's administration in a print entitled Punch's Opera with the Humours of Little Ben the Sailor [BMC 3394]. Lord Hardwicke, Lord Holderness, Newcastle, Fox, Lyttleton, and Anson are presented as puppets by a raree-show man who says, "These are my Figures of Fun Toute Nouveau (sic)." The British Museum Catalogue points out that "each puppet is marked with one or more fleurs-de-lis, thus signifying the alleged subservience of the ministers to French counsels." This print uses to advantage the well-known fact that raree-show men were usually French to imply the manipulation of English policy from abroad.

Like every other derogatory political emblem, the puppet-master metaphor was applied to Lord Bute, especially after he resigned from office on April 8, 1763. "For many years," George notes,

he remained a political boggy: the favourite, the personification of "secret influence." This widely held belief lost all touch with reality from 1765, but persisted as part of the Whig doctrine of an attempt by George III to regain the power of the Crown and subvert the Constitution by ruling through "King's Friends" and so by-pass the Cabinet. All this is fully illustrated and exaggerated in the prints, where Bute remains a prime villain throughout the war with America--indeed for about thirty years. The note was set as soon as he resigned in a print with a title highly disrespectful to the King: The S----- Puppitt Shew or the whole Play of King Solomon the Wise [4040]. Bute and the Devil are on the stage, drawing back a curtain to display a row of puppets among whom are the King and his mother.

Bute says, "Tho' I am out it's known for Certain,  
I prompt 'em still behind the Curtain." The King:  
"War is no more & Smileing Peace/ Shall Taxes thro  
the Land encrease."28

It is a sign of Smollett's disenchantment with Bute that he uses so unflattering an image as the puppet-master to characterize him. He does, however, change the emphasis of the metaphor to express his conviction that, despite his good intentions, Bute did not have the political ability to put the Patriotic program into effect. Previously, the icon was used to express the fear that one man could dictate to politicians the way a puppet-master controls his puppets, but in the Atom Yak-strot (Bute) is satirized as an incompetent puppet-master whose puppets will not take orders. He is a comic figure, desperately trying to arrange coalitions between incompatible factions in the Cabinet, without success. He is a fool rather than a knave.

At first Yak-strot tries to work his will with the current composition of the Cabinet, but he soon changes his mind:

Yak-strot, who understood mechanics, and had studied the art of puppet playing, tried an experiment on the organs of the cabal, which he tempered with individually without success. Instead of uttering what he prompted, the sounds came out quite altered in their passage. . . . In short, they were found so perverse and refractory that the master of the motion kicked them off the stage, and supplied the scene with a new set of puppets made of very extraordinary materials. They were the very figures through whose pipes the charge of mal-administration had been so loudly sounded against the Ximian [Scotch] favourite. They were now mustered. . . and hung upon the pegs of the very same puppet-shew man against whom they had so vehemently inveighed. (422)

As one might expect, this alliance with the ministers who had earlier denounced him does not work out:

The first exhibition of the new puppets was called Topsy-turvy, a farce in which they overthrew all the paper houses which their predecessors had built; but they performed their parts in such confusion, that Yak-strot interposing to keep them in order received divers contusions and severe kicks on the shins, which made his eyes water; and, indeed, he had in a little time reason enough to repent of the revolution he had brought about. (423)

Eventually, Yak-strot becomes so desperate that Taycho is taken back into the administration. Smollett calls this "the greatest masterpiece in politics that ever Yak-strot performed. Taycho, the formidable Taycho! whom in his single person he dreaded more than all his other enemies of Japan united, was now become his coadjutor, abettor, and advocate." (425)

Not even Taycho's presence can keep the government from collapsing, however. Taycho falls prey to mental illness—Plumb describes Pitt as a victim of "bouts of profound melancholia" during this period<sup>29</sup>—and the other politicians form a conspiracy against Yak-strot,

tampering with some of the acting puppets, to join their cabal, and make head against their master. These exotics grew so refractory, that, when he tried to wheel them to the right, they turned to the left about; and instead of joining hands in the dance of politics, rapped their heads against each other with such violence, that the noise of the collision was heard in the street; and, if they had not been made of the hardest wood in Japan, some of them should certainly have been split in the encounter. (427)

In this passage, Smollett is working a variation on the old joke that politician-puppets are dumb placemen who neither speak nor think independently.<sup>30</sup> These placemen think only too independently; they work against the orders of their master, only to knock their block heads together.

All of Bute's attempts to form a coalition to govern England fail. The end of the Atom finds Yak-strot desperately trying to impose some order without success:

He now summoned council after council to deliberate upon conciliatory expedients; but found the motley crew so divided by self-interest, faction, and mutual rancour, that no consistent plan could be formed; all was nonsense, clamour, and contradiction. The ximian favourite now wished all his puppets at the devil, and secretly cursed the hour in which he first undertook the motion. He even fell sick of chagrin, and resolved in good earnest to withdraw himself entirely from the political helm, which he was now convinced he had no talents to guide. (433)

Bute's administration collapses both because of his own incompetence and the self-interest of the faction arrayed against him.

If Smollett's criticism of Bute is tinged with some sympathy, his attack on Pitt paints him as the blackest of villains. Virtually every icon and motif of "The Statesman's Progress" is used to abuse Pitt and to reinforce the analogy between him and the detested Robert Walpole.

One motif in both the political propaganda against Walpole and the Atom is the theme that the evil minister is aided by Fortune. As Atherton explains, "the notion that prosperous ministers were the 'insolent Creatures of Fortune' was the usual explanation of how vice could temporarily gain triumph over virtue."<sup>31</sup> Atherton points to R-B-n's Progress in Eight Scenes [BMC 1938] in which Fortune in the image of a semi-naked female presides over the triumph of Robert Walpole. Fortune is also prominent in the frontispiece of Bolingbroke's A Dissertation upon Parties [BMC 2150], and in The Wheel of Fortune, or, the Scot's

Step, Completed [BMC 2537] her wheel provides the motif.

In the Atom, Pitt's success in getting popular support for his political programs is dismissed as the fortunate concurrence of the inconstant feelings of the English people with Pitt's intentions:

One would have imagined that all the inconsistencies and absurdities which characterize the Japonese [English] nation, had taken their turns to reign, just as the interest of Taycho's [Pitt's] ambition required. When it was necessary for him to establish new principles, at that very instant their levity prompted them to renounce their former maxims. Just as he had occasion to fascinate their senses, the daemon of caprice instigated them to shut their eyes, and hold out their necks, that they might be led by the noose. . . . Thus every thing concurred to establish for orator Taycho a despotism of popularity, and that not planned by reason, or raised by art, but founded by fatality and finished by accident. (293-94)

Pitt's good fortune persists when he decides to take personal charge of the war: "The time was now come when Fortune, which hitherto smiled upon the Chinese [French] arms, resolved to turn tail to that vainglorious nation, and precisely at the same instant Taycho undertook to display his whole capacity in the management of the war." (341) The great English military victories are thus explained away as the mere shift of fortune.

Smollett exposes the role of chance in Pitt's military success by making the reader privy to his strategic ruminations. This, for example, is Pitt's strategic reasoning for the campaign against Quebec:

He reflected that fortune, which had such a share in all military events, in inconstant and variable; that as the Chinese had been so long successful in Fatsisio [North America], it was now their turn to be unfortunate. He reflected that the demon of folly was capricious, and

that it had so long possessed the rulers and generals of Japan, it was high time it should shift its quarters and occupy the brains of the enemy, in which case they would quit their advantageous posts, and commit some blunder that would lay them at the mercy of the Japanese. (346)

Again fortune co-operates with Pitt. The capture of Quebec was a great victory, marred only by the death of the English commander, Wolfe, whom Smollett praises both in the Atom and in the History.

Another motif from political propaganda employed by Smollett against Pitt is the theme of the "king in toils." "The belief in a captive sovereign, exploited and befuddled by conniving ministers," writes Atherton, "was a logical derivation of the legal fiction that the king could do no wrong—a stock charge of Leicester House Oppositions. This myth does not begin to appear in the prints until the era of the Pelhams."<sup>32</sup> Prints from this period usually depict the King, either in his own person or as the British lion, fettered by his ministers. The Mirrour: Or the British Lion's back friends detected [BMC 3487] shows that "the lion's front legs are in fetters, attached to chains which four members of Newcastle's government hold at the right side of the lion."<sup>33</sup> Tempora Mutantur [BMC 3886] employs a similar motif: George III is depicted in his own person sitting on the throne blindfolded.<sup>34</sup>

Smollett employs similar imagery in an episode where Taycho [Pitt] succeeds in having the Cabinet muzzled and the King blindfolded: "He assured the Dairo [King] it was necessary that his imperial majesty should remain in the dark, and that the whole council should be muzzled for a season, otherwise he could not accomplish the great things he had projected in favour of the farm of Yesso [Hanover]." (342) Taycho

exhorts the King "to undergo a total privation of eye-sight, which was at best a troublesome faculty, that exposed mankind to a great variety of disagreeable spectacles." (343) Out of his concern for Hanover, the King consents to Pitt's wishes: "Rather than the dear farm should fall into the hands of the Chinese [French], I would be contented to be led about blindfold all the days of my life. Proceed in your own way. I invest you with full power and authority, not only to gag my whole council, but even to nail their ears to the pillory, should it be found necessary for the benefit of Yesso." (344) Smollett's use of the "king in toils" motif does not exculpate George II from responsibility for the policies of his reign; rather, he is seen as willingly giving up his authority to the tyrant, Pitt.

Of all the political icons used in Smollett's attack on Pitt, perhaps the most damaging are the hydra and the quack, which represent the mob and Pitt, respectively. Pitt and the mob are complements; he not only manipulates the mob through trickery and deceit, but he is also the expression of its will. The relationship between the hydra and the quack is an allegorical depiction of the importance of Pitt's popularity which vaulted him into political prominence.

As George points out, the hydra had a varied genealogy and was used for a variety of propagandistic purposes: "A monster with seven heads or more, verging sometimes towards a medieval dragon, sometimes a hydra, sometimes a blend of Beast and hydra, became part of the stock-in-trade of the satirical artist. It may represent a person or persons, or sometimes a grievance, such as Excise or 'Corruption.'"<sup>35</sup> The hydra's derivation from the Beast of Revelation made it a good vehicle

to attack anyone who would undermine the religious or political order—usually the Roman Catholic Church or the dissenters. Such a monster appears in a print entitled Faction Display'd [BMC 1508], which is a High Church reply to Daniel Defoe's poem of the same title. George describes the print as "An attack on Whigs as Presbyterians, Latitudinarians and Deists: a seven-headed monster attacks Sacheverell; its central head is the Pope, and 'The Whore of Babylon' sits playing a fiddle. The others are Hoadley, Defoe, Richard Baxter, Ridpath, Tindal, and Toland."<sup>36</sup>

As religious dogma gradually became separated from political issues, the hydra lost its theological overtones, but it remained a symbol of unpopular ministers and programs. Graphic artists adapted the monster's many heads with varying degrees of ingenuity to express popular objections to certain measures. The hydra was used, for example, to attack Robert Walpole's excise scheme:

Britannia Excisa [1936], a ballad attributed to Pulteney, was illustrated in woodcut with one of the long succession of many-headed monsters of English political folklore. A scaly creature, blend of hydra, medieval dragon, and Beast of Revelation, with webbed wings and the claws of a bird of prey, draws Walpole's coach, turning one of its seven heads to vomit coins into his lap, while others gulp at the necessities of life—a leg of mutton, a sheep, a tankard, a goblet, a tobacco pipe.<sup>37</sup>

In this instance, the hydra graphically expresses the objections to the excise: that it would tax the necessities of life only to put more money into the hands (or, rather, the lap) of Robert Walpole, thus consolidating his tyranny.

During the political controversies of Smollett's time, the hydra was enlisted to castigate unpopular ministers in prints. One example is The Lying Hydra [BMC 3663], which attacks Henry Fox as a monster with many fox heads, each one telling a different lie. The British Museum Catalogue explains the probable cause of Fox's unpopularity:

This doubtless refers to Fox's conduct when accepting office as Secretary of State with the Duke of Newcastle's administration—a post which he held from November 25, 1755, till December 14, 1756, when he was succeeded by his rival Pitt. Acceptation of this post involved agreement in the "German" policy of the King, and voting for subsidies to be paid to Continental powers, with the object of securing Hanover from attack.

An opponent of the German subsidies, Smollett would have appreciated this variation of the hydra.

So unpopular a minister as Lord Bute could not escape being satirized as a hydra. George describes one print attacking him:

In a print of December, 1762, The Vision or the M-n-st-l Monster [3982], Bute was described in a parody of Biblical language (a form of humour that became very popular): ". . . I saw a Beast rise up out of the Sea from the North, and many who were Sons of Corruption worshipped ye Beast. . . ." Pictorially, the creature does not conform to the canon—he has not seven heads, but a dog's head wearing a Scots bonnet and an earl's coronet. He is a hideous dragon with webbed wings, claws, scaly neck, and three tails. One leg is a fox which devours a soldier (Henry Fox was paymaster), the other is a goose (the Duke of Bedford as peace negotiator). The monster devours Britannia and Habeas Corpus and tears at Magna Charta. An imp, Hogarth, is preparing to paint a flattering portrait of the monster, one of many attacks for The Times.<sup>38</sup>

The artist's imagination appears to have failed him in this print, for he can find no way to use the hydra's many heads to make his point.

Other physical details associated with the monster are filled in, however, to take advantage of the stock response the hydra would evoke in the audience.

If these evil associations are not enough, Smollett adds two other epithets to the hydra, the Blatant Beast and Legion. The Blatant Beast, of course, refers to the symbol of evil from Book VI of The Faerie Queen. Richard Neuse explains the significance of the Blatant Beast in Spenser's design:

. . . when the moral governance of the society as symbolized by the court has disintegrated, . . . the Blatant Beast is unleashed. In a sense, the Beast takes over the function of moral arbiter or judge, in the form of many-tongued "public opinion," rumor, gossip, scandal, "fame." As such, it is or perhaps becomes the perfect expression of a mass society: impersonal, anonymous, indiscriminate, and unendingly clamorous.<sup>39</sup>

All of these qualities apply to the mob in the Atom. Pitt's appeal to the mob as the final arbiter of values is thus an appeal to the very worst elements of human society.

Legion refers to the evil spirits whom Jesus caused to leave a man and enter the Gadarene swine. When Jesus asks the name of the spirit (Mark v, 9), the reply is "My name is Legion for we are many." Depicted as hydra, Blatant Beast or Legion, the mob is seen as an evil spirit possessing the body politic.

It should be stressed, however, that in the Atom the many-headed monster is no mere metaphor. In the course of the satire, the hydra is presented as a real beast, which acts the way an animal ordinarily would, thus reinforcing the impression that the Atom reads like the

legend to a political cartoon. Taycho's (Pitt's) control over the hydra, for example, is presented as a taming of the monster: "This furious beast not only suffered itself to be bridled and saddled, but frisked and fawned, and purred and yelped, and crouched before the orator, licking his feet, and presenting its back to the burdens which he was pleased to impose." (291)

There are some passages in the Atom where the beast's actions recall the symbolic actions of the hydra in the prints. Smollett's account of an actual incident following George III's wedding when the mob attacked Lord Bute's carriage and lionized Pitt is presented this way in the Atom: "At length Mr. Orator Taycho, with his cousin Lob-kob [Temple], appearing in a triumphal car at the city-gate, the blatant beast received them with loud huzzas, unharnessed their horses, and, putting itself in the traces, drew them through the streets of Meaco [London], which resounded with acclamation." (409) The tableau of the hydra pulling Taycho's carriage through the streets recalls a similar image in Britannia Excisa, mentioned above, where the beast draws Walpole's carriage. Pitt the tyrant is thus linked with Walpole the tyrant, and the beast represents the source of their power--in Pitt's case, the mob; in Walpole's, the excise.

The beast's vomiting, which is so prominent in Britannia Excisa, is adopted by Smollett in a different--but not inappropriate--context in the Atom: the propaganda wars between the ministerial writers and Pitt's supporters. Smollett's metaphor for the propaganda wars is a dirt-throwing match where the writers hurl balls of filth at each other, not an inaccurate image for the historical reality. Smollett

acknowledges the failure of Bute's defenders in the propaganda contest: "Taking the field, a sharp contest and pelting match ensued; but the dispute was soon terminated. Yak-strot's [Bute's] versifiers turned out no great conjurors on the trial . . . . The rhymes they used produced no other effect upon Legion but that of setting it a-braying."

(413) Smollett has ironic admiration for the abilities of Llor-chir Charles Churchill), whose "oracles not only commanded the passions, but even influenced the organs of the beast in such a manner, as to occasion an evacuation either upwards or downwards, at the pleasure of the operator." (412) This talent serves him well, for when Yak-strot (Bute) enters the fray and is knocked down by a well-aimed ball of filth, Churchill "no sooner beheld him prostrate, than advancing with the monster, he began to repeat his rhymes, at which every mouth and every tail of Legion was opened and lifted up, and such a torrent of filth squirted from these channels, that the unfortunate cuboy was quite overwhelmed." (415)

Further discussion of the mob as hydra is impossible without considering the role of William Pitt. As stated above, Pitt and the mob are complements: They are both inconstant, shifting their allegiance whenever their self-interest demands it. Perhaps for this reason Smollett applies the epithet "Cerberus" to both the mob (277) and to Taycho (281).

In the Atom, Taycho is depicted as the itinerant quack doctor selling his political programs as remedies for the nation's ills. The figure of the quack does not have as long a history in political propaganda as the hydra, but it does go back at least as far as the

administration of Robert Walpole. George describes one print [BMC 1931] from that period:

Walpole as a quack doctor, his brother Horatio beside him as his zany, enters Norwich in his gig (the quack was the eighteenth century embodiment of riches got by humbug and chicane). He holds three papers: "Excise," "A Cure for Religion," "A Cure for Trade." The zany proclaims his master's feats; the mob retort, "that's nothing he has cur'd a whole Bench of Bishops of Religion"; ". . . Why he has almost cur'd a whole Nation of their Trade."<sup>40</sup>

In Smollett's time, the quack was enlisted to attack Lord Bute. The State Quack, a print published in September, 1762, depicts Bute as a quack proclaiming "To mend the CONSTITUTION & cause a plentiful EVACUATION" while holding aloft two "political Clysters," the Peace ending the Seven Years War and Union (i.e., the Act of Union between England and Scotland, an allusion to Bute's penchant for appointing his countrymen to fill political posts). To his left, a zany (Smollett once again?) blows a trumpet to attract a crowd; to his right, the Princess dowager performs on a tightrope, a jack boot (a pun on Bute) in her lap. Other remedies, "soporifics," labeled "Auditer," "Briton" and "TIMES" can be seen on a table, referring to the ministerial writers and Hogarth's print.<sup>41</sup>

Smollett adopts this symbol of chicane and applies it to Pitt and his programs, which he had once described in the Briton No. 35 as "so many ministerial pills rammed down the throats of a free people." He uses much the same language to describe the first measure Taycho forces on the hydra, a subsidy to Brut-an-tiffi (Frederick the Great):

He crammed down their throats an obligation to pay a yearly tribute to Brut-an-tiffi, in consideration of his forbearing to seize the Dairo's farm, a tribute which amounted to seven times the value of the lands, for the defence of which it was paid. When I said crammed, I ought to have used another phrase. The beast, far from showing any signs of loathing, closed its eyes, opened its hideous jaws, and as it swallowed the inglorious bond, wagged its tail in token of entire satisfaction. (292)

Like a true quack, Taycho makes his unpalatable remedies acceptable to his deluded patients.

Taycho's remedies not only placate but also intoxicate the monster to extravagant enthusiasm. An example is the diet of yeast, which Smollett uses as a metaphor for Pitt's policy of plunging the nation into debt to finance the war with the hope that the debt could be paid off by seizing trade from the enemy:

He composed a mess that should fill their bellies, and, at the same time, protract the intoxication of their brains, which it was so much in his interest to maintain. He put them on a diet of yeast. . . . The individuals thus inflated were seen swaggering about the streets, smooth and round, and sleek and jolly, with leering eyes and florid complexion. (319)

The quack's remedy gives the appearance of prosperity—the people are smooth and round—but it is literally built on air. Pitt's economic policy is based on the tenet that the nation becomes more prosperous as it goes more deeply into debt, and absurd proposition as far as Smollett is concerned, but acceptable to the mob because the remedy intoxicates them.

Like all quack preparations, however, the effects eventually wear off, leaving the patient worse than before: "The beast's faculties, slender as they were, seemed now greatly impaired, in consequence of

that arch empiric's practices upon its constitution." (426) The mob begins to understand the folly of Taycho's political programs, especially the great debt incurred to fight the war:

Legion began to have some sense of its own miserable condition. The effects of the yeast potions which it had drunk so liberally from the hands of Taycho, now wore off. The fumes dispersed; the illusion vanished; the flatulent tumour of its belly disappeared with innumerable explosions, leaving a hideous lankness and such a canine appetite as all the eatables of Japan could not satisfy. (427)

By this time, Taycho has already been driven from office and Yak-strot has to cope with the rising discontent.

The allegorical elements of the History of Japan and the traditional icons of political propaganda both express Smollett's fear that the constitution of England has been subverted, transforming a kingdom of free subjects into a society dominated by an arbitrary tyrant like Pitt. Such a tyranny is made possible by the dearth of talented men of virtue in government, the abdication of responsibility by the King, and the manipulation of the mob by a demagogue. Smollett fears that the process has gone too far to be stopped, hence the futility of the Patriot program as it is presented in the Atom.

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## NOTES

- 1 Laurence Hanson, Government and the Press 1965-1763  
(London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 17.
- 2 Foster, p. 1044.
- 3 C. R. Kropf, "Libel and Satire in the Eighteenth Century,"  
ECS, 8 (1974), 166.
- 4 Kropf, p. 158.
- 5 Martz, Later Career, p. 96, n. 26.
- 6 Louis Martz, "Tobias Smollett and the Universal History,"  
MLN, 56 (1941), 12.
- 7 Critical Review, 8 (1759), 188-89.
- 8 Quoted in Martz, Later Career, p. 94.
- 9 Foster, pp. 1034-35 notes that Shebbeare's Third Letter to the People of England, another political satire, also uses the white horse as a symbol for Hanover.
- 10 Quoted in Martz, Later Career, pp. 97-98.
- 11 Quoted in Martz, Later Career, p. 99.
- 12 J. H. Plumb, Chatham (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 82.
- 13 Herbert Atherton, Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth  
(Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), p. 259.
- 14 M. Dorothy George, English Political Caricature to 1792  
(Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), I, p. 121.
- 15 See Atherton, pp. 217-221.
- 16 George, p. 122.
- 17 Foster, p. 1039.

18 Atherton, plate 108. The numbers in brackets in quotations and in the text refer to the British Museum Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires, ed. F. G. Stephens, vols. 1-4 (London, 1870-73).

19 Plumb, p. 52.

20 History, IV, p. 101.

21 Foster, p. 1034.

22 George, pp. 85-86. A reproduction of this print can be found in Maynard Mack, The Garden and the City (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), plate 37.

23 Mack, Garden and City, p. 149. See also Atherton, pp. 199-200.

24 George, p. 102.

25 George, p. 57. See Plate 16 for a reproduction of this print.

26 Malcolm G. Largmann, "Stage References as Satiric Weapon: Sir Robert Walpole as Victim," Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research, 9 (1970), 40.

27 George, pp. 92-93.

28 George, p. 125.

29 Plumb, p. 120.

30 Largmann, p. 40.

31 Atherton, p. 195.

32 Atherton, p. 142.

33 Atherton, p. 144.

34 Atherton, plate 107.

35 George, p. 5.

- 36 George, p. 70.
- 37 George, p. 82.
- 38 George, pp. 124-25.
- 39 Richard Neuse, "Book VI as Conclusion to The Faerie Queene," in Essential Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1972), p. 373.
- 40 George, p. 83.
- 41 A reproduction of this print can be found in Horace Walpole, Memoirs and Portraits, ed. Matthew Hodgart (New York: Macmillan, 1963), facing p. 153. The editor dates the print September, 1760, but this is clearly an error since a sign hanging from the zany's trumpet reads, "5 Sep. 1762 Wandsworth Epistle." Since Hogarth's The Times, which was published in September, 1762, is included among the "soporifics," the print cannot have been published earlier.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLITICAL ENTHUSIASM

In addition to charting England's decline from the ordered liberty of a hierarchical society under the King to the demagogic tyranny of William Pitt, Smollett in the Atom offers an analysis of Pitt's rise to power in terms of what Bernard Schilling has called the Conservative Myth. Smollett portrays Pitt as abusing his gifts—especially his eloquence—to divide the kingdom and to exploit the credulity of the dregs of society for the purpose of self-aggrandisement. Pitt is presented as the political equivalent of the religious enthusiast, claiming direct inspiration from God as the source of his dogma and eagerly seeking converts.

In his explanation of the Conservative Myth, Schilling points out that one of the dangers to the state is the man with superior gifts: "In the conservative myth to this day, nothing is more steadfastly maintained than the paradox of superior gifts as futile and dangerous. . . . The over-quick and ingenious, the too elevated spirit, torments himself and others," because "great ability means energy resisting control."<sup>1</sup> Schilling goes on to link this fear of the man with superior gifts to enthusiasm:

The constant fears lest personal energy as seen in the intellectual, emotional, or imaginative faculties get beyond a safe control, converge finally upon the term

"enthusiasm." From suggesting a high form of religious contemplation, "enthusiasm" finally draws to itself the meaning of all the accumulated fear-words of the conservative myth: passion, imagination, poetical inspiration, emotion, rhetoric, eloquence, and figurative language, and the various ways in which vanity brings on self-assertion--these and all their accompanying dangers that the late 17th century thought it had reason to fear seem implied by "enthusiasm."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Schilling points out, Swift in A Tale of a Tub adds to this complex of associations the note of madness:

The energy displayed in great individual ability, taking as it does so many forms difficult to control, leads to self-assertion, the break-up of corporateness, division of men into contending groups, disturbance of the unruly and changeable mass of mankind into final upheaval, disruption, rebellion--what is all this but madness? In the conservative myth, it is literally insane to do anything which might possibly overturn the established order.<sup>3</sup>

Schilling rightly points to A Tale of a Tub as the locus classicus of the themes he discusses, and if Smollett's satire is regarded as "Swiftian," it is because Swift's satirical themes and techniques had become common coin by the middle of the eighteenth century. Swift's attack on religious enthusiasm, for example, was used to satirize the Methodists in Smollett's time. Albert Lyles discusses a satire entitled A Plain and Easy Road to the Land of Bliss (1761), which is a continuation of the allegory of the coats from A Tale of a Tub and in which the Methodists are called "Eolists."<sup>4</sup>

In the Atom, Smollett evokes the qualities of the dangerous statesman listed by Schilling when he describes Taycho (Pitt) as "stimulated by the turbulence of his disposition, which would not allow

him to rest." (281) In order to fulfill his ambitions, he raises himself to "great consideration in this self-constituted college of the mob." (280)

As we have seen in Chapter I, moreover, Smollett was suspicious of reformers who pretended to speak for the people, calling them in Briton No. 16 "a trivial sort of reformers [who] have espoused the plebeian interests, from an innate aversion to all order and restraint." Smollett argues that the reformers do not really represent the people, but rather the canaille: "forlorn Grubs and Garetteers, desperate gamblers, tradesmen to porters, hungry pettifoggers, bailiff-followers, discarded draymen, hostlers out of place, and felons returned from transportation." The satirical catalogue of the dispossessed and criminal classes who would impose their will upon the nation perhaps conveys Smollett's objection to Pitt better than his more abstract arguments.

Smollett resisted including this segment of society in government because of the mob's innate instability. In the Briton No. 16, he invites his readers to look at the decline of Athens for a precedent of what would happen to England:

There we shall meet with nothing but faction, animosity, persecution, ingratitude and disquiet. We shall find the people of Athens led about by every turbulent orator in their turns, like an ill-tamed monster, from vanity to vice, from folly to caprice, from the lowest depth of despondence to the giddy height of elation.

These sentiments are typical of conservative thinkers of the age. For example, Swift also used Athens as a precedent in A Discourse of the

Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome, in which he observes that popular assemblies "are composed of Men with all their infirmities about them; they have also the ill Fortune to be generally led and influenced by the very worst among themselves; I mean, Popular Orators, Tribunes, or, as they are now stiled, Great Speakers, Leading Men, and the like."<sup>5</sup>

In the Atom, Smollett makes it clear that Taycho (Pitt) is raised to power by appealing to the mob. A cabinet meeting discussing the loss of Motao (Minorca) is suddenly disrupted by "the apparition of Taycho's head nodding from a window that overlooked their deliberations." Taycho invites Fika-kaka (Newcastle) to "cast your eyes upon the steps by which I ascended." Fika-kaka sees "an occasional stair" hastily constructed from the motley materials supplied by Taycho's followers, including an old fig box, an empty kilderkin, a bag of soot, and a rotten pack saddle. Smollett ends this passage with a comic catalogue recalling his catalogue of canaille in the Briton No. 16: "The artificers who erected this climax, and now exulted over it with hideous clamour, consisted of grocers, scavengers, halter-makers, carpenters, draymen, distillers, chimney-sweepers, oysterwomen, ass-drivers, aldermen, and dealers of waste paper." After having struck a bargain with Fika-kaka to admit him to the administration, "Taycho retreated through the window to the court-yard, and was conveyed home in triumph by that many-headed hydra, the mob, which shook its multitudinous tail, and brayed through every throat with hideous exultation." (286-88)

Pitt's control over the mob comes from his persuasive eloquence, and in his attack on Pitt's oratory, Smollett draws from the tradition used by Swift in satirizing the dissenting preachers of his day. Smollett's abuse of Pitt in the Atom is also a continuation of the campaign

to discredit him in the Briton No. 32, where Pitt is described as "the great methodist of mock patriotism [who] mounted the rostrum, like a candidate of ancient Rome, soliciting the mob in a flannel gown, the frowsty badge of courted popularity." There is a similar scene in the Atom, where Taycho addresses the mob by mounting "an old tub, which was his public rostrum, and waving his hand in an oratorical attitude." (310-11) The tub, of course, recalls the pulpit from which the enthusiastic preachers in A Tale of a Tub and The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit addressed their listeners.

In A Tale of a Tub, the reason for elevating the speaker above his listeners, we should recall, has an Epicurean explanation appropriate to the Epicurean context of the Atom:

The deepest Account, and the most fairly digested of any I have yet met with, is this, That Air being a heavy Body, and therefore (according to the System of Epicurus) continually descending, must needs be more so, when loaden and press'd down by Words; which are also Bodies of such Weight and Gravity, as it is manifest from those deep Impressions they make and leave upon us; and therefore must be delivered from a due Altitude, or else they will neither carry a good Aim, nor fall down with a sufficient Force.<sup>6</sup>

The use of words to daze rather than to appeal to the understanding is also a good description of Taycho's oratorical technique.

Taycho's oratorical style relies on paradox, "which never fails to produce a wonderful effect upon a heated imagination and a shallow understanding," (311) for

after a weak mind has been duly prepared, and turned, as it were, by opening a sluice or torrent of high-sounding words, the greater the contradiction proposed,

the stronger impression it makes, because it increases the puzzle, and lays fast hold on the admiration; depositing the small proportion of reason with which it was before impregnated, like the vitriol acid in the copper mines of Wicklow, into which if you immerse iron, it immediately quits the copper which it had before dissolved, and unites with the other metal, to which it has a stronger attraction. (312)

Paradox is not the only rhetorical weapon in Taycho's arsenal:

He knew perfectly well how to express the same ideas by words that literally implied their opposition. . . . He knew how to invert the sense of words by changing the manner of pronunciation. . . . He was well aware that words alter their signification according to the circumstances of times, customs, and the difference of opinion. . . . He knew when to overwhelm [the brain's] feeble faculty of thinking, by pouring in a torrent of words without any ideas annexed.<sup>7</sup>(313-14)

This reduction of words to mere sound or noise is a staple of dissenting sermons, as Swift says in The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit:

For, it is to be understood, that in the Language of the Spirit, Cant and Droning supply the Place of Sense and Reason, in the Language of Men: Because in Spiritual Harangues, the Disposition of the Words according to the Art of Grammar, hath not the least Use, but the Skill and Influence wholly lye in the Choice and Cadence of the Syllables; Even as a dis-creeet Composer, who in setting a Song, changes the Words and Order so often, that he is forced to make it Nonsense, before he can make it Musick.<sup>8</sup>

Taycho is something of a composer himself, for his oratory is "a species of music to the mob, as agreeable as the sound of a bagpipe to a mountaineer of North Britain." (281) According to Swift, the dissenters' habit of preaching by conveying sound through the nose "becomes perfectly to resemble the Snuffle of a Bag-pipe, and is found to be equally attractive to British Ears."<sup>9</sup> The point of these musical analogies is explained by David B. Kesterson:

In his objection to music on grounds that it lacks good sense, Swift is adhering to the eighteenth-century insistence on reason as a force governing the senses. Good sense must always prevail over sensory stimulation, but too often it is wanting in music. Composers, in putting words to melody, frequently distort meaning and thus violate reason. As a result, music often appeals only to the emotions, an appeal which was anathema to Swift.<sup>10</sup>

Smollett shared this low opinion of music, writing in a note to his edition of Voltaire: "What music may have gained in composition, it seems to have lost in expression: For the modern refinements of this art are calculated to tickle the ear, rather than wake or assuage the passions of the heart."<sup>11</sup>

Taycho's oratorical techniques, which are designed to befuddle the shallow understanding of the mob, are eminently successful, especially when he convinces the people that "they should part with their wives and their children, their souls and their bodies, their substance and their senses, their blood and their suet, in order to defend the indefensible farm of Yesso [Hanover], and to support Brut-an-tiffi [Frederick the Great], their insupportable ally." (315) In the Briton No. 22, Smollett explained the folly of such a policy by comparing the English treasury to a cask:

If any person would undertake to fill a cask that leaked six gallons in an hour, with a pipe that runs no more than two in the same time, would not every hearer perceive at once, and own the folly of the undertaker? Yet, such a project would not be more preposterous than that of prosecuting the war until we indemnify ourselves with our conquests. Instead of supplying what is already wasted, we should only drain ourselves to the bottom; and when once our public credit is cracked, all Europe will rejoice at our bankruptcy.

In the Atom, Smollett gives a similar speech to Mura-clami (Lord Mansfield), who cannot believe that the people will accept Taycho's policy:

"If," said he to himself, "they are not altogether destitute of human reason, they must, of their own accord, perceive and comprehend this plain proposition; a cask of water that discharges three by one pipe, and receives no more than two by another, must infallibly be emptied at the long run. Japan discharges three millions of obans [pounds] every year for the defence of that blessed farm, which were it put up to sale, would not fetch one-sixth part of the sum; and the annual balance of her trade with all the world brings in two millions: ergo, it runs out faster than it runs in, and the vessel at the long run must be empty."  
(317)

Smollett points out that Mura-clami is mistaken because "he had endeavored to investigate the sense, but he had never fathomed the absurdities of human nature." (317) The mob accepts Taycho's plan, lock, stock, and barrel.

In order to explain how the mob could accept a proposal so contrary to common sense, Smollett uses a musical analogy which is also found in A Tale of a Tub: "Orator Taycho acted as a faithful ally to Brut-an-tiffi, by stretching the bass-strings of the mobile in such a manner as to be always in concert with the extravagance of the Tartar's demands, and the absurdity of the Dairo's predilection." (316) In a similar passage, Swift writes:

There is a peculiar String in the Harmony of Human Understanding, which in several individuals is exactly of the same Tuning. This, if you can dextrously screw up to its right Key, and then strike gently upon it; Whenever you have the Good Fortune to light among those of the same Pitch, they will by a secret necessary Sympathy strike exactly at the same time.<sup>12</sup>

Swift's explanation, as Philip Harth points out, "carries the disparaging suggestion that the disciples of these philosophers [Epicurus, Descartes, and their like] have assented to their doctrines, not

because of the rhetorical powers of their authors, nor because of the inherent credibility of these theories, but because of the physical condition of the disciples themselves."<sup>13</sup> Confronted by the public acceptance of a similarly irrational political program, Smollett resorts to the same mode of attack.

The physical condition of Pitt's disciples is undermined by the diet of yeast, which makes them susceptible to his preposterous political programs. Lyles points out that one explanation of the religious enthusiasm of the Methodists was "the fermenting of enthusiastic yeast put into the heads of the converts."<sup>14</sup> And where the diet "did not agree with the stomach," Taycho "employed his emissaries to blow up the patients a posteriori." (319) A similar physical inducement to enthusiastic frenzy is employed by Swift's Aeolists: "At other times were to be seen several Hundreds link'd together in a circular Chain, with every Man a Pair of Bellows applied to his Neighbor's Breech, by which they blew up each other to the Shape and Size of a Tun; and for that Reason, with great Propriety of the Speech, did usually call their Bodies their Vessels."<sup>15</sup> Taycho's succeeds in stirring the crowd to a pitch of enthusiastic delirium

and in a little time the whole nation was converted; that is, they were totally freed from those troubles and impertinent faculties of reason and reflection, which could have served no other purpose but to make them miserable under the burdens to which their backs were now subjected. . . . All was staggering, staring, incoherence and contortion, exclamation and eructation.  
(320)

In other words, the nation has achieved Swift's "sublime and refined Point of Felicity, called, the Possession of being well deceived; The

Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves."<sup>16</sup> Harth's remarks on this passage from Swift are equally applicable to Smollett's satire:

Since those who join enthusiastic sects and accept enthusiastic schemes. . . do not share the madness of their leaders, they still have the use of reason but choose to ignore it. They prefer the deceptions of the imagination to the discoveries of reason because delusion itself is a euphoric existence which they actively seek and eagerly experience.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the rest of the satire, Smollett describes Taycho's political control over the people in terms of religious enthusiasm: "The Japanese had quiteely resigned all their natural perceptions, and paid the most implicit faith to every article broached by their apostle Taycho. The more it seemed to contradict common reason and common evidence the more greedily was it swallowed as a mysterious dogma of the political creed." (361) The assertion of the superiority of one's private beliefs over common sense was a frequent accusation made against enthusiastic sects. Lyles points out that similar charges were made against the Methodists:

The anti-Methodist attacked what he considered a denigration of reason and an extolling of fancy. In his eyes the Methodist asserted that the will of God as expressed through the operations of the Holy Spirit, or what the Methodist alleged to be that will, was obviously superior to simple reason or common sense. The Methodist affirmed the superiority of his private sense to the common sense, that knowledge common to all rational men."<sup>18</sup>

In the Atom, Taycho's conviction that he is not like the rest of men leads inevitably to the belief that he is a god, resulting literally in his apotheosis:

[The mob] now considered this demagogue as the supreme giver of all good, and adored him accordingly. The apostle Bupo was no longer invoked. The temple of Fakku-basi was almost forgotten, and the Bonzes were universally despised. The praise of the prophet Taycho had swallowed up all other worship. (365-66)

In converting the nation to the belief in his own divinity, Pitt has committed the Augustan sin of Pride, the reluctance to accept one's status on the isthmus of a middle state in the plan of Creation and the desire to elevate oneself higher on the Great Chain of Being.

In Smollett's view, political enthusiasm is an occupational disease of leaders; even Lord Bute suffers from a mild case. In the History, Smollett uses the term to explain Bute's apparent indifference to the attacks on him by the anti-ministerial propagandists:

All this torrent of abuse the earl of Bute sustained with a degree of fortitude that bordered upon stoicism, and might have been very easily mistaken for insensibility. . . . This very extraordinary person was really an enthusiast in patriotism. . . . He was of the opinion that virtue, by its own intrinsic efficacy, would in the end triumph over all opposition; therefore, he did not think it necessary to reinforce it by means of any temporizing art, auxiliary law, or other precaution. (IV, 309-10)

Smollett came to regard Bute's indifference as folly for a practical politician and perhaps the source of his ineffectiveness in gaining support for his programs. In particular, as we have previously seen, he saw Bute's failure to prosecute the anti-ministerial writers as an "absurd Stoicism." This opinion governs the treatment of Bute in the Atom, but there is a glimmer of it in the History: "Had Lord Bute been a minister by profession, he no doubt would have got the better of all opposition; but that character in him was only occasional." (IV, 310)

In the Atom, Bute--called Yak-strot--is bespattered by the balls of filth hurled against him by his opponents:

Yet although discomfited, he was not discouraged. On the contrary, having at bottom a fund of fanaticism, which, like camomile, grows faster for being trod upon, he became more obstinately bent than ever upon prosecuting his own schemes for the good of the people in their own despite . . . . Though every part of him still tingled and stunk, from the balls of the enemy, he persuaded himself that not one of their missiles had taken place; and there was something of divinity in his person. (413-14)

Tak-strot takes the field against his enemies again; he is pelted with balls of filth, knocked off his feet, and covered with vomit from the Hydra:

He was now pretty well undeceived, with respect to the divinity of his person; but his enthusiasm took a new turn. He aspired to the glory of martyrdom, and resolved to devote himself as a victim to patriotic virtue. (415)

In his ludicrous desire to be a martyr, Bute resembles Jack in A Tale of a Tub:

He would stand in the Turning of a Street, and calling to those who passed by, would cry to One: Worthy Sir, do me the Honour of a good Slap in the Chaps: To another, Honest Friend, pray, favour me with a handsom Kick on the Arse: Madam, shall I entreat a small Box on the Ear, from your Ladyship's fair Hands? Noble Captain, Lend a reasonable Thwack for the Love of God, with that Cane of yours, over these poor shoulders. And when he had by such earnest Sollicitations, made a shift to procure a Basting sufficient to swell up his Fancy and his Sides, He would return home extremely comforted, and full of terrible Accounts of what he had undergone for the Public Good.<sup>19</sup>

Yak-strot seems seized by a similar delusion that he suffers for the common good. He quits the field after his encounter with the hydra quoting Horace:

Virtus repulsae nescia sordidae  
 Intaminatis fulget honoribus;  
 Nec sumit, aut ponit secures  
 Arbitrio popularis aurae

These lines come from Horace's Odes 3:2, which read in James Michie's translation:

Unconscious of mere loss of votes and shining  
 With honours that the mob's breath cannot dim,  
 True worth is not found raising or resigning  
 The fasces at the breeze of popular whim.<sup>20</sup>

Yak-strot is quoting from one of Horace's patriotic odes, the one where he urges Roman youths to pursue glory and virtue on the battlefield rather than as a politician trying to gain votes. These sentiments are admirable, but placed in the context of Yak-strot's ignominious encounter with the Hydra they seem ironic. Bute was successful neither on the battlefield against the anti-ministerial writers nor as a practical politician. The quotation from Horace serves as a mock-heroic deflation of Bute's delusions of grandeur.

If Bute's enthusiasm is comic because is so unsuccessful, Pitt's is more serious because he has managed to delude the whole nation into accepting his godlike attributes. Smollett underlines the seriousness of this blasphemy by suggesting that God had allowed Pitt's project for the use and improvement of madness in a commonwealth to succeed in

order to punish the English people: "Thus every thing concurred to establish for orator Taycho a despotism of popularity, and that not planned by reason or raised by art, but founded on fatality and finished by accident. Quos Jupiter vult perdere prius dementat." Whom Jupiter would destroy, he first makes mad.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Schilling, Dryden and the Conservative Myth (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1961), pp. 58-59.

<sup>2</sup> Schilling, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Schilling, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Lyles, Methodism Mocked (London: Epworth, 1960), p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> A Tale of a Tub With Other Early Works 1969-1707, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), pp. 226-27.

<sup>6</sup> A Tale of a Tub, eds. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), p. 60. Hereafter referred to as Tale.

<sup>7</sup> Smollett's catalogue of Pitt's oratorical devices is similar to Locke's discussion of the abuse of words in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Philadelphia, 1856), p. 325: "First, he that hath words of any language, without ideas in his mind to which he applies them, does, so far as he uses them in discourse, only make a noise without any sense or signification. . . . For all such words, however put into discourse, according to the right construction of grammatical rules, or the harmony of well turned periods, do yet amount to nothing but bare sounds, and nothing else."

<sup>8</sup> Tale, p. 278.

<sup>9</sup> Tale, p. 281.

<sup>10</sup> David B. Kesterson, "Swift and Music," TSSL, 12 (1969), 689.

<sup>11</sup> Voltaire, VII, p. 61.

- <sup>12</sup> Tale, p. 167.
- <sup>13</sup> Philip Harth, Swift and Anglican Rationalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 118.
- <sup>14</sup> Lyles, pp. 104-105.
- <sup>15</sup> Tale, p. 153.
- <sup>16</sup> Tale, p. 174.
- <sup>17</sup> Harth, p. 119.
- <sup>18</sup> Lyles, p. 41.
- <sup>19</sup> Tale, pp. 269-70.
- <sup>20</sup> The Odes of Horace, trans. James Michie (New York: Orion, 1963), p. 169.

CHAPTER V  
VALUES AND NORMS

A nation whose citizens are prey to every whim, divided by contentious factions, led either by fools who are victims of their own enthusiastic fancies or by demagogues whose specious oratory bamboozles the mob into accepting policies which will bankrupt and destroy the kingdom--this is the grotesque vision of England offered in The History and Adventures of an Atom. Smollett's picture is so relentlessly bleak, so devoid of hope, that the reader is hard pressed to find any positive value or norm embodied in the work itself by which to judge where the fools and knaves have gone wrong or how the collapse of England can be averted.

When confronted with this situation, the reader may be forced to follow the advice of Northrop Frye, who writes in a symposium on norms in satire:

Of course a moral norm is inherent in satire: satire presents something as grotesque: the grotesque is by definition a deviant from a norm: the norm makes the satire satiric. This is a very different thing from saying that the satirist must "put something in" to represent a moral norm. It is the reader who is responsible for "putting in" the moral norm. The satirist may simply be presenting something as grotesque and appealing to the reader's sense of the norm in seeing it as such.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, we shall be "putting in" the norms and values which

are expressed in Smollett's imaginative writings of the 1760s, from Launcelot Greaves to Humphry Clinker.

The rationale for restricting the discussion to these works is well expressed by Louis Martz, who sees in parts of Launcelot Greaves (written after an almost ten-year hiatus from novel writing) a new use of materials:

These parts are not "new" in the sense that they represent ideas never used before by Smollett. They are "new" because Smollett approaches them with a different focus and emphasis. They form set pieces with primarily political and historical purposes. Instead of concentrating upon the adventures of his hero in these parts, Smollett seems interested in giving a set picture of contemporary conditions. He had, of course, used such topical materials in his earlier novels, but seldom with such concentration, such overtly topical aims. These incidents point the way to the distinctive content of Smollett's later creative period: topical, historical materials.<sup>2</sup>

The Atom can be viewed as the logical extension of this development in Smollett's later career. The hero has been dispensed with completely, leaving only the "set picture of contemporary conditions" presented in the worst light for purposes of satire.

The search for values or norms in the Atom is not satisfied by Patriotism, which was presented in The Briton as a political platform for the restoration of public virtue in England. Smollett provides a long summary of the maxims of government which Yak-strot (Bute) has taught the new Dairo:

That the emperor of Japan ought to cherish the established religion, both by precept and example: that he ought to abolish corruption, discourage faction,

and balance the two parties by admitting an equal number from each to places and offices of trust in the administration: that he should make peace as soon as possible, even in despite of the public, which seemed insensible of the burden it sustained, and was indeed growing delirious by the illusions of Taycho [Pitt], and the cruel evacuation he had prescribed: that he should retrench all superfluous expense in his household and government, and detach himself entirely from the accursed farm of Yesso [Hanover], which some evil genius had fixed upon the breech of Japan, as a cancerous ulcer through which all her blood and substance would be discharged.  
(374)

Having provided this excellent summary of the Patriot program, Smollett then demolishes it point by point:

These maxims were generally just enough in speculation, but some of them were altogether impracticable; for example, that of forming an administration equally composed of the two factions, was as absurd as it would be to yoke two stone-horses and two jack-asses in the same carriage, which instead of drawing one way would do nothing but bite and kick one another, while the machine of government would stand stock-still, or perhaps be torn in pieces by their dragging in opposite directions. . . . Another impracticable maxim of Yak-strot, was the abolition of corruption, the ordure of which is necessary to anoint the wheels of government in Japan, as grease is to smear the axeltree of a loaded waggon. His third impolitic (though not impracticable) maxim, was that of making peace while the populace were intoxicated with the streams of blood and elated with the shows of triumph.  
(374-76)

Patriotism, then, proves to be an inadequate program for restoring England, in part because of its excessively idealistic or "speculative" nature, and in part because the degeneracy of the times makes it impossible to eliminate faction and abolish corruption without bringing government to a standstill.

Smollett, however, is as distrustful as ever of party politics. His conviction in the Briton No. 35 that Whig and Tory "were terms invented by knaves, and adopted by fools" also informs the discussion of parties in the Atom:

The people of Japan had been long divided between two inveterate parties known by the names of Shit-tilk-umsheit, and She-it-kums-hi-til, the first signifying more fool than knave; and the other more knave than fool. Each had predominated in its turn, by securing a majority in the assemblies of the people; for the majority had always interest to force themselves into the administration: because the constitution being partly democratic, the Dairo [King] was still obliged to truckle to the prevailing faction. To obtain this majority, each side had employed every art of corruption, calumny, insinuation, and priestcraft; for nothing is such an effectual ferment in all popular commotions as religious fanaticism. No sooner one party accomplished its aim, than it reprobated the other, branding it with the epithets of traitors to their country, or traitors to their prince; while the minority retorted upon them the charge of corruption, rapaciousness, and abject servility. In short, both parties were equally abusive, rancorous, uncandid, and illiberal. (374-75)

The Patriots, who are supposed to be above party, do not improve upon this sorry record. They are equally open to charges of corruption. In order to get the approval of Parliament for the Peace of Paris, "Fokh-si-sokhu [Henry Fox, Bute's ally in the administration] and his brother-undertakers, having the treasure of Japan at their command, had anointed the greatest part of the assembly with a certain precious salve, which preserved them effectually from the fascinating arts of Taycho." (411-12). The "precious salve," we can be sure, is the same ordure which "anointed" the wheels of government in the passage quoted above.

The Atom, then, is a plague on both the parties and the Patriots too. It expresses a considerable modification of some of Smollett's sentiments in The Briton, where as a political propagandist he had no choice but to support the Bute administration unreservedly.

If Smollett "puts in" a moral standard to judge the vices and follies he attacks, he does it in a passage describing George II's advisers:

There was as great a variety of characters, as we find in the celebrated table of Cebes. Nay, indeed, what was objected to the philosopher, might have been more justly said of the Japanese councils. There was neither invention, unity, nor design among them. They consisted of mobs of sauntering, strolling, vagrant, and ridiculous politicians. Their schemes were absurd, and their deliberations like the sketches of anarchy. All was bellowing, bleating, braying, grinning, grumbling, confusion, and uproar. It was more like a dream of chaos than a picture of human life. If the DAIMON, or genius, was wanting, it must be owned that Fika-kaka [Newcastle] exactly answered Cebes's description of TEICHE, or fortune, blind and frantic, running about every where, giving to some and taking from others without rule or distinction; while her emblem of the round stone, fairly shows his giddy nature. . . . Here, however, one might have seen many other figures of the painter's allegory; such as Deception tendering the cup of ignorance and error, opinions and appetites; Disappointment and Anguish; Debauchery, Rapine, Perjury, and Sacrilege; but not the least traces of the virtues which are described in the group of true education, and in the grove of happiness. (261-62)

Very little is known about Cebes, the philosopher referred to in this passage, except that he was a Theban and reportedly a disciple of Socrates. His work, however, was quite well known, for, according to Samuel Chew, "The Table of Cebes . . . was enormously (and to the modern taste inexplicably) popular during the Renaissance. It described a lost ancient painting (tabula, 'table,' or 'tablet'). Hans Holbein

the Younger, in a great woodcut (1522) which was repeatedly used to adorn title pages, 'reconstructed' the painting from the description."<sup>3</sup> Cebes' Table was no less familiar to eighteenth-century readers; in fact, Earl Wasserman places it in a philosophical frame of mind derived from Prodicus, which saw the quest for true happiness involving a choice between opposing values:

To the culture of Johnson's day the prototype of the theme that happiness in its fullest sense depends upon a choice between opposing alternatives was Prodicus' Choice of Hercules, which represents that hero electing Virtue's arduous road of life instead of Pleasure's easy path and which was collated with the traditional moral interpretation of the Pythagorean Y, the bivium vitae.<sup>4</sup>

Prodicus' work in the original Greek or in Latin translation was a standard text in the education of any English schoolboy and, according to Wasserman, "the consequence of the prevalence and educational role of Prodicus was a widespread moral bias toward conceiving of human happiness as attainable if one makes the right choice between clearly defined alternatives, especially between virtus and voluptas."<sup>5</sup> Cebes' Table complements Prodicus by implying that life is a journey consisting of choices between alternative values. Wasserman writes:

In referring glancingly to the two roads of life, Prodicus' Choice implies a journey, but is itself static; in Cebes' Tablet the journey of life is narrated in full, but moral elections are made along the way although the factor of choice is not made central as it is in Prodicus. The fusion of the two forms therefore was easily effected, since the two works imply each other.<sup>6</sup>

A summary of Cebes' Table is now in order. The allegorical painting explained by the guide is a rendition of the progress of the

soul through life. As the soul enters life, it is given advice by Divine Genius (the Daimon of the passage from the Atom). Each soul also drinks from the cup of ignorance and error offered by Deceit, "who leads men astray."<sup>7</sup>(p. 68) The soul then forgets the advice of Divine Genius and enters the first enclosure (or court as some translations have it) where it falls under the sway of Opinions, Desires, and Pleasures, represented as courtesans. This enclosure is governed by Fortune who dispenses with a capricious hand "such things as by the multitudes are accounted good," that is, "smiles, honour, noble birth, children, tyrannies, kingships, and other things like these." (p. 68)

The soul can break out of this enclosure if Fortune sends Repentance, in which case the soul may move on to the enclosure of True Learning, which is located at the top of a mountain and where the grove of happiness is also found, or the soul may move to False Learning as an intermediate step. If Repentance visits those souls in False Learning, they may move on to True Learning, but some souls remain in the domain of False Learning forever. In the enclosure of True Learning are found the following virtues: "knowledge, fortitude, justice, integrity, modesty, decency, freedom, abstinence and gentleness." (p. 74)

According to Cebes' allegory, then, humanity is divided between the multitudes who are dominated by Fortune and the few who seek True Learning. The two goddesses are contrasted physically and emblematically. Fortune is pictured as a "blind distracted creature" (p. 67) standing on a round stone, which signifies "that her gifts are neither secure

nor stable. For the losses and disappointments are very great and very severe, when anyone reposes any trust in her." (p. 68) True Learning, on the other hand,

is a beautiful woman, her countenance sedate, having already attained to the middle and most judicious part of her age, in a plain dress, and without any affected ornaments, and she stands not upon a round stone, but upon a square one, that rests upon the ground with great firmness. (p. 73)

Those souls who have attained True Learning rediscover the advice of Divine Genius, which they had forgotten because they drank from the cup of ignorance and error:

He bids them put no trust in [Fortune], and not to believe that they have firm and secure possession of anything whatever, that any of them receive from her, not to account it their own; for nothing hinders her from taking those things away and giving them to others. . . . For she does nothing with reason, but at random, and as things fall out. . . . He orders therefore that they should receive the things that she gives, and with them go their own way quietly to obtain a stable and secure gift. (pp. 78-79)

The stable and secure gift, of course, is True Learning and her attendant virtues.

Applying Cebes' allegory to the English cabinet, Smollett places them in the first enclosure of souls who are seduced by the courtesans called Opinions, Desires, and Pleasures. They cannot provide leadership but are themselves captives of their own ambition, greed, and fear. Their councils are the sketch of anarchy because they are the victims of Fortune, whom Smollett associates with Newcastle because he distributes his bribes and perquisites without rule or distinction. Deprived

of leaders who follow true and lasting values, England's future is left to fortune, as the country drifts from crisis to crisis until disaster overtakes her.

Since both Prodicus and Cebes urge the choice of virtus rather than voluptas, it is not surprising that both are placed in the Stoic philosophical tradition. In some notes prepared for a treatise on Cebes' Table, which he did not live to write, the Earl of Shaftesbury says:

One may divide the moral philosophy into three sorts: one that establishes a Providence disposing all things in the most beautiful order, and giving to man a capacity to attend to its laws and to follow them; another that attributes the disposition of things to atoms and chance and that makes the pursuit of pleasure its end; and the third that takes neither way, but judges things not to be at all comprehensible, and therefore suspends opinion entirely. Socrates and the branch derived from Chrysippus were of the first sort, Aristippus and Epicurus of the second, and Phrrho of the third. . . . The picture writ by Cebes and the manual of Epictetus are two little pieces that apparently belong to the divine system of philosophy, and Cebes was one of those who knew and conversed with Socrates. (87)

Eighteenth-century readers of Prodicus and Cebes would most likely encounter them in the context of Stoicism. Wasserman points out that "the Greek and Latin versions of Prodicus appeared repeatedly in the eighteenth century in company with Epictetus' Enchiridion and the Tabula of Cebes,"<sup>8</sup> and English translations of Cebes were often bound with Epictetus' Manual and in at least one instance with Marcus Aurelius' Meditations.<sup>9</sup>

If we apply the figure of the bivium vitae to the Atom, we see that it explores the disastrous consequences following the choice of

voluptas rather than virtus, of Epicureanism rather than Stoicism, of a philosophy which teaches that the universe is ruled by chance rather than one which believes in a providential order--in other words, precisely the complex of associations with the decline of great civilizations which was examined in Chapter II. The bleak pessimistic tone of the Atom is the result of Smollett's concentration on the one path actually chosen by the English people; the virtues they have shunned make their appearance only in fleeting allusions.

A picture of the values not taken by the English people is not to be found in the Atom, then, but in other works Smollett wrote around the time of its composition, such as "The Ode to Independence,"<sup>10</sup> which also offers a contrast between luxury and virtue. A little more than half the poem consists of a rather tedious account of the mythological genealogy of the Spirit of Independence (he is the offspring of Liberty and Disdain) and the progress of Independence through Venice, Holland, Switzerland, Arabia, Tartary, and Corsica. This section climaxes on a personal note in the last four lines of Strophe III:

He, guardian genius, taught my youth  
Pomp's tinsel livery to despise:  
My lips by him chastis'd to truth  
Ne'er pay'd that homage which the heart denies.<sup>11</sup>

In the next stanza (Antistrophe III), Smollett launches into a generalized attack on a society that has elevated shallow and spurious values and abandoned the Spirit of Independence:

Those sculptur'd halls my feet shall never tread,  
 Where varnish'd Vice and Vanity combin'd,  
 To dazzle and seduce, their banners spread;  
 And forge vile shackles for the free-born mind.  
 Where Insolence his wrinkl'd snout<sup>12</sup> uprears,  
 And all the flowers of Spurious fancy blow;  
 And Title his ill-woven chaplet wears,  
 Full often wreath'd around the miscreant's brow:  
 Where ever-dimpling Falshood, pert and vain,  
 Presents her cup of stale profession's froth;  
 And pale Disease, with all his bloated train,  
 Torments the sons of Gluttony and Sloth.

Unwilling and unable to espouse these values and wear the "vile shackles  
 for the free-born mind," the poet turns to the country to find the  
 Spirit of Independence in Antistrophe IV:

Nature I'll court in her sequester'd haunts  
 By mountain, meadow, streamlet, grove, or cell,  
 Where the poised lark his evening ditty chaunts,  
 And Health and Peace and Contemplation dwell.  
 There Study shall with Solitude recline;  
 And Friendship pledge me to his fellow-swains,  
 And Toil and Temperance sedately twine  
 The slender chord that fluttering life sustains:  
 And fearless Poverty shall guard the door;  
 And Taste unspoil'd the frugal table spread:  
 And industry supply the humble store;  
 And Sleep unbribed his dews refreshing shed:  
 White-mantled Innocence, ethereal sprite,  
 Shall chase far off the goblins of the night;  
 And Independence o'er the day preside,  
 Propitious power! my patron and my pride.

In this stanza, Smollett rings changes on a tradition of poetry praising the rural ideal, which originated in the poems of Horace and continued in the English country-house verse of the seventeenth century through the poetry of Pope. Maynard Mack has admirably summed up the picture of the country gentleman according to this tradition, concluding with a quotation from "To Penshurst":

Their picture of the country gentleman living on his estate and so far as possible by it, seeking no city gain or court preferment, radiating through the land practices of provident abundance, occupying a great house "rear'd with no man's ruin, no man's groan," caring for his tenants and so loved by them that

all come in, the farmer, and the clown:  
And no one empty-handed, to salute  
[The] lord, and lady, though they have no sute--  
this is Pope's picture, too.<sup>13</sup>

It is also Smollett's. We have seen in Chapter I that Smollett allied himself with the political aspirations of the country gentlemen because their independent stance represented the best instinct of the English people. In the Ode," however, the political vision has been transformed into a literary--and one could say mythic--tradition of the Horatian beatus vir in his happy rural seat. Independence, which was a public virtue according to the political vision, becomes a state of mind possessed by the happy man in the literary tradition.

A good explanation of Smollett's understanding of independence, as expressed in the "Ode," can be found in the "Observations" which are sometimes published with it, and which were written by Dr. William Richardson, who edited the original manuscript in Smollett's hand. Richardson writes:

According to the acceptance of our author, liberty means the security of our lives and possessions, and freedom from external force: independence is of higher import, and denotes that internal sense and consciousness of freedom which beget magnanimity, fortitude, and that becoming pride which leads us to respect ourselves, and do nothing unworthy of our condition.

The achievement of this "internal sense and consciousness of freedom" traditionally comes after the abandonment of politics. Mack points out that poems in praise of the rural ideal in the seventeenth century "sprung up in part from the political and social stresses dramatized by the Civil Wars, and from the abyss sensed between one vision of England and another which was to be institutionalized after 1688."<sup>14</sup> In despair over the political fate of the kingdom, one turns toward the happy rural seat to cultivate not only one's garden but also the values personified in the last stanza of Smollett's poem. One can speculate that a similar mood of pessimism--brought on by Smollett's experience in politics governed by irreconcilable factions, his disgust over the rising tide of republicanism, and the abandonment of every principle of decorum and subordination--moved him to write the "Ode to Independence" and The History and Adventures of an Atom.

In the novels that bracket the "Ode to Independence" and the Atom, Launcelot Greaves (published in book form in 1762) and Humphry Clinker (1771), one finds the same satirical attack on English life from the Country perspective. There is, however, a subtle shift in emphasis in the figure of the country squire. In Launcelot Greaves, the gentleman is the embodiment of public virtue; he is the knight-errant out to reform the kingdom. In Humphry Clinker, the gentleman is Matthew

Bramble, who has no illusions about reforming society. He seeks only health and peace of mind, which he finds in the rural ideal. This gradual retirement from political life has a parallel in the later career of Alexander Pope. According to Isabel Rivers, Pope

saw the present, particularly in The Dunciad, not so much as a decline from the past, nor as the end of a cycle, but as a complete inversion of the ideals of civilization, a final uncreation of the good society. This attitude meant that he was unable to see any prospect of reversing this trend, any political means that would avert decay. The independence that is the basis of his poetic role in the Imitations of Horace is not the independence prized by Bolingbroke. It does not signify the wealth of the free landowner who is able to resist the inveiglements of corrupt bureaucracy, but an anti-social position that to some extent forced on him by the state of society and his inability to find a place in it.<sup>15</sup>

Launcelot Greaves is quite unbelievable as a fictional character; he is, as David Evans points out, "a good example of what Sheldon Sacks has called a 'walking concept'; that is, a character who is a spokesman for the values he represents--here the ideals of charity, justice, noblesse oblige."<sup>16</sup> In other words, Smollett eschews believability in order to embody in Launcelot Greaves the unambiguous expression of the ideals he espouses.

Noblesse oblige is a good summary of Greaves' chivalric code: "It was his opinion that chivalry was an useful institution while confined to its original purpose of protecting the innocent, assisting the friendless, and bringing the guilty to condign punishment." (p. 149) The early chapters of the work give numerous examples of Greaves as a champion of the oppressed, the most notable being his rescue of the starvinb orphans of his father's gamekeeper, who have been victimized by a bailiff. After Greaves reminds his father of his duties as a squire, the bailiff is dismissed and the orphans and their mother are given relief (pp. 22-23).

Greaves is also the defender of order, decorum, subordination, and good sense. "I see and distinguish objects as they are discerned and described by other men," he says, "I reason without prejudice, can endure contradiction, and, as the company perceives, even bear impertinent censure without passion or resentment. I quarrel with none but the foes of virtue and decorum, against whom I have declared perpetual war." (p. 13) Greaves' allegiance to the value of subordination moves him to scorn ostentatious middle-class farmers. According to his boyhood friend, Tom Clark:

He had no communication with your rich yeomen; but rather treated them and their families with studied contempt, because forsooth they pretended to assume the dress and manners of the gentry. . . . I have heard Mr. Greaves ridicule them for their vanity and awkward imitation; and therefore, I believe, he avoided all concerns with them, even when they endeavoured to engage his attention. It was the lower sort of people with whom he chiefly conversed, such as ploughmen, ditchers, and other day labourers. To every cottager in the parish he was a bounteous benefactor. He was, in the literal sense of the word, a careful overseer of the poor. (p. 21)

Like a good country squire and political idealist, Greaves takes care of his less fortunate tenants and ignores the yeomen who presume to rise above their station.

If Greaves has a fault, it derives from his idealism. He becomes an enthusiast: "Hitherto every thing went right, and every unprejudiced person commended the Knight's conduct: but, in a little time, his generosity seemed to overleap the bounds of discretion; and even in some cases might be thought tending to a breach of the king's peace. For example, he compelled, vi et armis, a rich father's son to marry

the daughter of a cottager, whom the young fellow had debauched." (p. 40)

In this case, Greaves, as champion of the poor, is pitted against his old adversary, the rich yeoman. His cause is just, but his method of forcing the fellow to marry the girl does, indeed, overstep the bounds of discretion.

Greaves' real error, however, is his attempt to impose his values by force of arms as a knight-errant upon the kingdom at large. As long as he remains on his estate where he has real authority, Greaves can promote justice, but when he goes on the road he gets into trouble. The misanthropic Ferret warns Greaves early in the work:

"What! (said Ferret) you set up for a modern Don Quixote?—The scheme is rather too stale and extravagant. What was an humorous romance, and well-timed satire in Spain, near two hundred years ago, will make but a sorry jest and appear equally insipid and absurd, when really acted from affectation, at this time a-day, in a country like England." (p. 12)

We should consider the source, but Ferret is right. In a degenerate country like England, the chivalric ideals of Launcelot Greaves will be viewed as an anachronism. His ideals, admirable though they may be, will excite only ridicule. His quest is Quixotic, and he will be considered absurd and a little mad.

Greaves' ineffectuality is dramatized when he intervenes in a political rally in Chapter IX, "Which may serve to shew that true patriotism is of no party." (p. 71) The candidates are Sir Valentine Quickset and Mr. Isaac Vanderpelft, both of whom harangue the electors from "an occasional theatre, formed of a plank supported by the upper board of the publick stocks, and an inferior rib of a wooden cage

pitched also for the accommodation of petty delinquents." (p. 74)  
 As one might expect, the speeches delivered from this oratorical machine display the cant of both political factions.

Representing the mossback Tory position, Sir Valentine Quickset sees his mission in Parliament to "cross the ministry in every thing, as in duty bound, and as becomes an honest vreehoulder in the ould interest." He gives this promise to the crowd: "I'll engage one half of my estate that I never cry yea to your shillings in the pound," a reference to the four shillings to the pound land tax that the landed gentry never failed to complain about. He also sounds the obligatory warning that the church is in danger, exclaiming, "vor all they have done vor H[anove]r, I'd vain know what they have done vor the church." (p. 74)

Mr. Isaack Vanderpelt's speech rings familiar changes on the Whig position, while insinuating that his rival is a papist and a Jacobite:

He owned himself a faithful subject to his majesty king George, sincerely attached to the protestant succession, in detestation and defiance of a popish, an abjured, and outlawed pretender; and declared that he would exhaust his substance and his blood, if necessary, in maintaining the principles of the glorious revolution.

He also makes a thinly disguised offer to bribe the electors by declaring that "he had fourscore thousand pounds in his pocket, which he had acquired by commerce, the support of the nation, under the present happy establishment, in defence of which he was ready to spend the last farthing." (p. 75)

When Greaves addresses the crowd, he tries to impress upon them the seriousness of their duty as electors. He then launches into an attack on the know-nothingism of Sir Valentine Quickset, calling him "an illiterate savage, scarce qualified, in point of understanding, to act as a country justice of the peace," who "professes himself the blind slave of a party, without knowing the principles that gave it birth, or the motives by which it is actuated, and thinks that all patriotism consists in railing indiscriminately at ministers, and obstinately opposing every measure of the administration." (p. 76) Mr. Isaac Vanderpelt is no better in Greaves' estimation. He is "a sordid knave, without honour or principle, who belongs to no family whose example can reproach him with degeneracy; who has no country to command his respect, no friends to engage his affection, no religion to regulate his morals, no conscience to restrain his iniquity, and who worships no God but mammon." Greaves accuses him of practicing "national usury, receiving by wholesale the rewards of venality, and distributing the wages of corruption by retail." (p. 77) Greaves concludes: "Let me therefore advise and exhort you, my countrymen, to avoid the opposite extremes of the ignorant clown and the designing courtier, and choose a man of honesty, intelligence, and moderation, who will--." (p. 77) At this point, Greaves' speech is interrupted by the missiles hurled at him by both factions, who will hear nothing of moderation.

The same ineffectuality displayed by Greaves in the election rally is repeated throughout the novel. Greaves is repeatedly arrested and imprisoned, and at one point he is confined in a madhouse where he laments:

How little reason. . . have we to boast of the blessings enjoyed by the British subject, if he holds them on such a precarious tenure: if a man of rank and property may be thus kidnapped even in the midst of the capital; if he may be seized by ruffians, insulted, robbed, and conveyed to such a prison as this from which there seems to be no possibility of escape. (p. 190)

Some wrongs are righted and some oppressors, like Justice Cobble, are punished, but these victories are more due to the legal strategies of Tom Clark than the valor of Launcelot Greaves. Eventually Greaves wins the hand of Aurelia, whom he has been pursuing throughout the work and with whom he returns to his happy rural seat, which the reader may assume he will govern with his usual benevolence and magnanimity.

Politics plays a smaller role in Humphry Clinker, because Matt Bramble seems to have given up hope that politics can improve the kingdom. After a Mr. Fitz-owen solicits his vote, Matt writes:

I know nothing so abject as the behaviour of a man canvassing for a seat in parliament--This mean prostration (to borough-electors especially) has, I imagine, contributed in a great measure to raise that spirit of insolence among the vulgar; which, like the devil, will be very difficult to lay. . . . But we are all a pack of venal corrupted rascals; so lost to all sense of honesty, and all tenderness of character, that, in a little time, I am fully persuaded, nothing will be infamous but virtue and public-spirit.<sup>17</sup>

To be sure, there is satire against particular politicians. The Duke of Newcastle, for example, is even more ridiculous than he is in the Atom (if that is possible), because the attack is less fanciful. No reference is made to an itching podex, but, as in the Atom, Newcastle is satirized for his giddiness and poor memory. Even his ignorance that Cape Breton is an island is mentioned again.<sup>18</sup>

In Humphry Clinker, however, satire of specific issues gives

way to a generalized denunciation of an entire society caught up in a tide of luxury and the ostentatious, tasteless display of wealth.

Bramble notes the dire effect this has had on the country gentlemen:

The tide of luxury has swept all the inhabitants from the open country--The poorest 'squire, as well as the richest poor, must have his house in town, and make a figure with an extraordinary number of domestics. The plough-boys, cow-herds, and lower hinds, are debauched and seduced by the appearance and discourse of those coxcombs in livery, when they make their summer excursions. They desert their dirt and drudgery, and swarm up to London, in hopes of getting into service, where they can live luxuriously and wear fine clothes, without being obliged to work; for idleness is natural to man.  
(p. 87)

The corruption of English society pervades every aspect of life. Bramble complains about the general atmosphere of the places he visits as well as about specific vices and follies. He attacks the water at Bath, the food and water in London, the bustle of the crowds in the streets. "In short," Bramble says about the last, "there is no distinction or subordination left--The different departments of life are jumbled together." (p. 88)

Bramble measures the degeneracy of English society by the standard of his own happy rural seat, Brambleton Hall. The early letters show him to be a benevolent landlord as he instructs Dr. Lewis to give a widow a cow and some money to clothe her children (p. 5), to go easy on a poacher (pp. 14-15), to find a place at a neighbor's house for a young girl after she has recovered from an inoculation for smallpox.

(p. 38) Disgusted by the smells of Bath, Bramble yearns for "the pure, elastic, animating air of the Welsh mountains--O Rus, quando te aspiciam."

(p. 66) The Latin tag is the first of two quotations from Horace;

the second comes after Bramble's disgust with London life: "From this wild uproar of knavery, folly, and impertinence, I shall fly with double relish to the serenity of retirement, the cordial effusions of unre-served friendship, the hospitality and protection of the rural gods; in a word, the jucunda oblivia vitae, which Horace himself had not the taste to enjoy." (p. 123) As Byron Gassman points out,

both these Horatian lines come from the sixth satire of the second book, the one in which Horace contrasts the contented life of a typical day on his Sabine farm with the physical and social distractions of a typical day in Rome. This satire is also the one that ends with the famous fable of the city mouse and the country mouse, and it is perhaps not too fanciful to see Matthew Bramble as one of the late metamorphoses of Horace's country mouse.<sup>19</sup>

The picture Bramble paints of his "country comforts" (p. 118) at Brambleton Hall in the same letter is one of a bustling estate which provides everything necessary for a good life.

Even when Bramble leaves the town to journey in the English countryside, he does not find the serenity, friendship, or hospitality he enjoys at Brambleton Hall. Instead, he discovers the same taste for ostentatious display of wealth that disgusts him in London. On his way to Scotland, Bramble stops at the estate of Squire Burdock, who boasts of maintaining "old English hospitality," (p. 164) but whose house "looks like a great inn, crowded with travellers, who dine at the landlord's ordinary, where there is a great profusion of victuals and drink, but mine host seems misplaced; and I would rather dine upon filberts with a hermit, than feed upon venison with a hog." (p. 165) Burdock's neighbor, Mr. Pimpernel, on the other hand, errs on the side of miserliness. After visiting him, Bramble writes that "in point of

hospitality and good breeding, our cousin Burdock is a prince in comparison of this ungracious miscreant, whose house is the lively representation of a gaol." (p. 171)

When Bramble and Squire Burdock's wife quarrel over whether Jerry's income of 2000 pounds a year is enough to make him an independent member of Parliament, Smollett uses the opportunity to preach his doctrine that even a moderate income from a clear estate will make a man independent. "I told her," Bramble says, "I had the honour to sit in parliament with her father, when he had little more than half that income; and I believed there was not a more independent and incorruptible member in the house." (p. 167) We had earlier been given a hint of Bramble's own independence when he had a seat in Parliament. "Whilst I sat in parliament," Jerry quotes him as saying after they meet Newcastle, "I never voted with the ministry but three times, when my conscience told me they were in the right." (p. 98)

The most pathetic victim of the degenerate taste of English society is Bramble's friend, Baynard, who dreams of living off his country estate. Unfortunately, Baynard is married to a woman whose "ruling passion was vanity, not that species which arises from self-conceit or superior accomplishments, but that which is of a bastard and idiot nature, excited by shew and ostentation, which implies not even the least consciousness of any personal merit." (p. 287) She forces Baynard to keep a London town house, turns the country house into a "temple of cold reception" (p. 290), and transforms the landscape of the estate so that it produces nothing: "every article of housekeeping, even the most inconsiderable, was brought from the next

market town, at a distance of five miles." (p. 292)

Baynard is contrasted with Charles Dennison, who has achieved the "pitch of rural felicity" (p. 320, according to Matt Bramble). The secret of Dennison's success is the familiar virtue of moderation: "He was very moderate in his estimate of the necessaries, and even of the comforts of life—He required nothing but wholesome air, pure water, agreeable exercise, plain diet, convenient lodging, and decent apparel." (p. 322)

Baynard is given his chance to achieve this rural felicity when Bramble takes over his affairs after the death of Baynard's wife. Bramble sells the London town house, dismisses unnecessary servants, sells superfluous plate and furniture to help pay off Baynard's debts, restores the natural landscape so that the estate will produce income, and introduces him to Charles Dennison. "He is indeed charmed with our society in general," Bramble writes, "and declares that he never saw the theory of true pleasure reduced to practice before." (p. 343)

This vision of rural felicity is so charming that the reader may not realize that Dennison's and Baynard's estates are located in a geographical never-never land. In contrast to the usual practice, the letters in this section of Humphry Clinker bear no place names. "The disappearance of precise geographical notation here," Cassman points out, "helps remove the novel's final vision of England from historical and geographical particularity. The effect is as if the travellers were still in England, but the England bound by the historical latitude and longitude of George III's precarious kingdom."<sup>20</sup> Smollett himself believes in the values he articulates in Humphry Clinker, but he knows

that the English people have rejected them. England would be restored to its former felicity if it embraced these values, but Smollett does not think it will happen. Humphry Clinker can be seen as another example of the "elegiac action" that Paul Fussell sees in so many eighteenth-century works:

When we penetrate deeply into the themes of eighteenth-century works, we begin to sense that every serious Augustan writer conceives of his role as that of laudator temporis acti. . . . In the eighteenth century, as Thomas Edwards has suggested, "the celebration of virtue must be an elegy." To write satire is implicitly to undertake elegiac action, for all satire assumes some identifiable paradigm of virtue which folly has willingly let die.<sup>21</sup>

It can be argued that Bramble finds his values embodied in a real geographical location--Scotland. It is true that he finds much to admire in Scotland and that he prefers it to England. But we should remember that to journey north of the Tweed in the eighteenth century was to journey into the past. Scotland was generally considered to be a backward country at least fifty years behind England in economic development. The qualities Bramble admires in the Scots, therefore, would be anachronistic as far as England was concerned. Angus Ross is right, I think, when he writes:

The contemporary Scottish situation as he saw it was the situation of civilization in miniature. Poor, backward, and hampered by geographical and economic difficulties, the Scots had yet cultivated certain virtues that thrive on struggle. Now, sixty years after the union with England, their circumstances were improving; they, in turn, were threatened by luxury.<sup>22</sup>

The threat of luxury, which seems to emanate from London to all corners of England like a pestilence, is indeed approaching Scotland. We should note that it has already reached as far north as Harrigate, which is the neighborhood of the ostentatious Squire Burdock and the miserly Squire Pimpernel. Nor is Brambleton Hall in England, but in Wales at a geographically imprecise location somewhere in the Black Mountains near Crickhowell and Abergavenny. In no instance are the values Bramble espouses to be found in England.

The imaginative works of Smollett's later career can be seen as explorations of the theme of independence, which Smollett extolls both as a public and a private virtue. As a public virtue, independence keeps the citizen alert to the national interest and protects him from the blandishments of a corrupt political system which would enslave him. As a personal virtue, it signifies an internal sense of peace and freedom gained from the pursuit of the lasting values of learning and virtue.

In his exploration of independence, Smollett incorporates elements of a political vision held by the landed gentry, a literary tradition dating back to Horace and a philosophical tradition expressed in The Table of Cebes. In Launcelot Greaves and Humphry Clinker, he combines the political and literary traditions in the figure of the country squire as the embodiment of the values he believes in.

Smollett's last two works, the Atom and Humphry Clinker, however, suggest that he had given up hope in a political regeneration of England. The Atom is a grotesque vision of England as a kingdom of slaves where the virtue of independence has been stamped out. Humphry Clinker

emphasizes the theme of retirement from English corruption and the development of independence as a personal virtue of the beatus vir in his happy rural seat.

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NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> "Norms, Moral or Other, in Satire," Satire Newsletter, 2 (Fall, 1964), 9.
- <sup>2</sup> Martz, Later Career, p. 15.
- <sup>3</sup> Samuel Chew, The Virtues Reconciled: An Iconographic Study (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), p. 72.
- <sup>4</sup> Earl Wasserman, "Johnson's Rasselas: Implicit Contexts," JEGP, 74 (1975), 6.
- <sup>5</sup> Wasserman, p. 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Wasserman, pp. 14-15, n. 27.
- <sup>7</sup> References in the text are to "The Picture of Cebes" in Anthony Ashley Cooper, Second Characters or the Language of Forms, ed. Benjamin Rand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914). This translation was found among Shaftesbury's unpublished papers, but it is probably not by him. The fragmentary notes at the end of the text probably are his.
- <sup>8</sup> Wasserman, p. 7, n. 7.
- <sup>9</sup> The Table is bound with Epictetus' Manual in the translation of John Healy (editions of 1610, 1616, 1636) and John Davies of Kidwelly (1670). John Stanhope's Epictetus: A Poem (1709) also contains Cebes and the Table is bound with Jeremy Collier's translation of Marcus Aurelius' Meditations (1701).
- <sup>10</sup> Howard S. Buck, Smollett as Poet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 77. Knapp, Tobias Smollett, p. 289, dates the composition of Vols. I and II of Humphry Clinker between 1765 and 1768.
- <sup>11</sup> My text is from The Works of the English Poets, ed. Alexander Chalmers (London, 1810), XV, pp. 537-90, which includes William Richardson's "Observations on Dr. Smollett's Ode to Independence."

<sup>12</sup> I have restored Smollett's original word choice. The editor of the poem thought Smollett's word unpoetic and substituted "front." How unpoetic, but how Smollettian! For Richardson's tampering, see Luella F. Norwood, "The Authenticity of Smollett's Ode to Independence," RES, 17 (1941), 62.

<sup>13</sup> Mack, Garden and City, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> Mack, p. 110.

<sup>15</sup> Isabel Rivers, The Poetry of Conservatism (Cambridge: Rivers Press, 1973), p. 206.

<sup>16</sup> "Introduction" to The Life and Adventures of Launcelot Greaves (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. xvii.

<sup>17</sup> The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, ed. Lewis Knapp (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 76-77.

<sup>18</sup> Gassman, "The Briton and Humphry Clinker," pp. 403-04, n.8, points out that the Cape Breton anecdote was a common joke.

<sup>19</sup> Byron Gassman, "Humphry Clinker and the Two Kingdoms of George III," Criticism, 16 (1974), 100-01.

<sup>20</sup> Gassman, "Two Kingdoms," p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Fussell, The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), p. 283.

<sup>22</sup> "Introduction" to Humphry Clinker (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967), p. 19.

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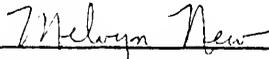
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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