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Robert E. Kelley

From Letter to "Letter":
Smollett's *Travels*



As far as we know, Tobias Smollett visited the Continent six times.¹ But unlike many other eighteenth-century authors (Addison, Gray, Walpole, Sterne, Gibbon, and Hume come to mind) who recorded at length their observations and impressions of life abroad in their personal letters, Smollett's surviving correspondence from his journeys is indeed scanty. Of the 108 letters included in the most recent edition of Smollett's correspondence only seven complete letters and a fragment of another were written on foreign soil.² From his fifth journey, July 1763 to June 1765, four letters survive (*Letters*, pp. 115-124); evidence suggests that Smollett dispatched five letters now lost.³ Of the surviving letters from this tour three—those of 11 July, 3 August, and 11 August—date from the first month of Smollett's visit and were written at Boulogne; the fourth, from Nice, is dated 6 February 1764. The letter of 3 August is to Alexander Reid, the others to William Hunter. Thus no letters remain from the final fifteen months of the tour, although Smollett presumably wrote many. A Boswellian treasure of source material this is not.

Fortunately Smollett did leave us a detailed account of this journey. A few months after his return to England he remarks in a letter to John Moore dated 13 November 1765:

The observations I made in the course of my Travels thro' France and Italy I have thrown into a series of letters which will make two Volumes in Octavo. They are now printing, and will be published in the spring. I will not answer for their Success with the public, but as I have given a sort of natural History of Nice, with my Remarks upon that climate and a Register of the weather, I hope the Performance may be usefull to other valetudinarians who travel for the Recovery of their Health. (*Letters*, p. 125)

In May 1766 his epistolary *Travels Through France and Italy*, one of his most spirited and controversial works, appeared.⁴ My purpose is, first, to examine in some (though not exhaustive) detail the relationship between the four personal letters and certain letters in the *Travels* to show how Smollett achieves some of his artistic effects in the latter. Second, I shall discuss how this relationship bears on the narrator of the travel volume.

Of course Smollett did a great deal more than "throw" his observations into a "Series of Letters" when he wrote the *Travels*. Although I regard the personal letters as one of the "manuscripts" of the *Travels*, I do not subscribe to the notion that the letters therein are mere recensions of Smollett's personal letters.⁵ Scholars have revealed the extent of Smollett's indebtedness to previous travel books, histories, and guidebooks purchased on his trip.⁶ Moreover, his earlier labors on his *History of England*, the *Compendium of Voyages*, Alexander Drummond's *Travels*, and numerous reviews of histories and travel books for the *Critical Review* afforded him many ideas, if not actual source material, for his own book. His personal correspondence, therefore, plays only one of many parts in the formulation of the *Travels*, but it is an important part. Perhaps Smollett either preserved copies of some of his letters intact, abstracted from them those portions which he considered useful for inclusion in his travel book, or added materials to the original letters.⁷ This expansion is his most characteristic device. One the other hand, he occasionally omits items in his personal letters as he recasts them, and some of these omissions are revealing. In so far as he

uses personal letters as a source for travel letters, Smollett generally moves from an informal, sometimes haphazard, presentation of material to a more studied, though seldom rigid, presentation.

In order to avoid the needless repetition and excessive detail involved in a chronological letter-by-letter comparison, I shall focus on a few significant topics—the seizure of Smollett's books, descriptions of places and people, Smollett's health—and techniques of alteration, expansion, and omission.⁸

Although Smollett did not usually require a monumental provocation to arouse his ire, the French obliged him soon after he set foot on their soil by commandeering the numerous books he had brought with him. Smollett treats the seizure of his volumes, among other items, in his first personal letter, dated 11 July 1763 and addressed to William Hunter, and in Letters II and III (15 July and 15 August) of the Travels.

His account of this difficulty in the letter to Hunter is rather off-hand:

My books are stopped at the Custom House of Boulogne, on pretence that they must be sent to Amiens in order to be examined by the *Chambre Syndicale*, lest they should contain something to the Prejudice of the state, and of the Catholic Religion. (*Letters*, p. 115:1)

In the published letter Smollett's language is so similar to that in the original letter as to suggest a direct borrowing:

. . . my books have been stopped at the bureau; and will be sent to Amiens at my expence, to be examined by the *chambre syndicale*; lest they should contain something prejudicial to the state, or to the religion of the country. (*Travels*, p. 9:II)

In the personal letter he goes on to inform Hunter that he has written to the Earl of Hertford and the Duchess of Douglas requesting their aid in recovering his books. In the *Travels*, on the other hand, he launches immediately into a spirited attack against this "species of oppression" (*Travels*, p. 9), likens it, with biting exaggeration, to the *droit d'aubaine*, and devotes the remainder of his account to the advice and efforts of his

landlord, M. Bouvier, on his behalf. He does not mention his appeals to Hertford and the Duchess until near the end of the Letter II (but he refers to them again in Letter III; *Travels*, p. 15). Obviously Smollett, in recasting this episode for the *Travels*, senses that he has an excellent story at hand and, especially in drawing the portrait of his pompous and affected landlord, plays it for what it is worth. He also enlarges on his own testy personality as a man quickly angered by what he considers the senseless tribulations imposed by the French, which inspire several outbursts elsewhere in the *Travels*. Smollett's account of the possible consequences of his deprivation is more specific in his personal letter than in his travel book:

I am afraid I shall lose all the Books, a Loss which I shall feel in many respects. For, I can neither write the Preface to the modern Universal History, nor finish the Continuation of my own History of England, without having the Books before me. Besides, my poor wife who does not understand much French will have no sort of literary Amusement. (*Letters*, p. 116:1)

I am exceedingly mortified at the detention of my books, which not only deprives me of an amusement which I can very ill dispense with; but, in all probability, will expose me to sundry other inconveniencies. (*Travels*, p. 10:II)

In the *Travels* he does not mention his chief suspicion, namely that his historical research and writing may be seriously hampered. In stead he transfers the notion of "amusement" from his wife to himself, thereby eliminating any symptoms of professional anxiety. Together these two alterations suggest that Smollett sought to avoid puffing his own works and, more important, to minimize the establishment of a strict autobiographical relationship between the traveler and the author.

Fortunately, Smollett's fears were unfounded, for his books were returned. He gives this brief account in Letter IV of the *Travels*:

I am infinitely obliged to D. H[ume] for the favourable manner in which he has mentioned me to the earl of H[ertford]. I have at last recovered my books, by virtue of

a particular order to the director of the douane, procured by the application of the English resident to the French ministry. (*Travels*, p. 21:IV)

In contrast, the letter of 11 August to Hunter, Smollett's third personal letter, provides a much fuller account of the proceedings leading to the return of the books. He does not, however, mention Hume's efforts on his behalf:

Two or three Posts ago, I took the Liberty to write a Letter to the Earl of Hertford in order to express my acknowledgement for the Trouble his Lordship had taken in the affair of my Books; and I gave him to understand that I had heard nothing of them since his Lordship had been so good as to recommend them to the attention of Mr. Neville at Paris.

Yesterday they were delivered to me unexamined in consequence of an order sent to the Intendant of Picardy; and this day I have written a Letter of Thanks to Mr. Neville, but as Lord Hertford may from his peculiar Benevolence of Disposition take the trouble of writing again to Mr. Neville on this subject . . . I shall take it as a very singular Favour if you will present my most respectfull Compliments to him, and let him know that the Books are restored. (*Letters*, p. 119:3)

Surely this report might have been incorporated into the travel book much as it stands without any damage to Letter IV. Smollett may have regarded it as an incident unworthy of further comment, but certain differences in effect between the two passages are perceptible. In the first place, Smollett's gratitude for the successful efforts of others is more apparent in his letter to Hunter, for he is careful to ensure that thanks are conveyed to the appropriate persons. Clearly, he is relieved that the affair has reached a happy conclusion, a relief less graphically communicated in the *Travels*.

In addition, Smollett omits in Letter IV the reference to the books' having been returned "unexamined." His worst fears, announced both in his first letter to Hunter and in Letter II of *Travels*, that the volumes would be rifled or confiscated, go unrealized. That they were not examined perhaps suggests a

French courtesy (even if granted under diplomatic pressure) which Smollett chooses not to reveal in the published account. This omission helps to foster the nationalistic fervor so prominent in the traveler's character; however, in view of the extended and lively treatment of this issue in Letter II the circumspect report of the recovery of the books in Letter IV seems anticlimactic.⁹

Although the *Travels* has been celebrated—and attacked—primarily for the forceful presentation of the traveler's personality, we must not forget that many of its pages are cast in the guide-book tradition which emphasized detailed accounts of places and people. Here, too, a comparison of the *Travels* to Smollett's letters is instructive.

Most of Letter III (and all of the two letters which follow) describes Boulogne and its inhabitants. Embedded in this account are two instances of close borrowing from the first letter to Hunter:

My friend Dr. Macaulay has been informed that the lower Town of Boulogne where I lodge is worse than Wapping. He has been much misinformed. The lower Town is much more pleasant than the upper Town. The streets are broad and clean and well paved, and the Houses very commodious. (*Letters*, p. 116:1)

You have been very much mis-informed, by the person who compared Boulogne to Wapping: he did a manifest injustice to his place which is a large agreeable town, with broad open streets, excellently paved; and the houses are of stone, well built and commodious. (*Travels*, p. 16:III)

The Lower Town is . . . much more considerable than the Upper, with respect to the beauty of the streets, the convenience of the houses, and the number and wealth of the inhabitants. (*Travels*, p. 17:III)

Smollett uses a single passage in his letter to Hunter as the basis for two judgments of the Lower Town in the *Travels*, judgments separated by much descriptive material which reinforces the foundation upon which they are made. The addition of "very" to "much misinformed" and of "manifest injustice" make the misinformation more flagrant and Smollett's efforts to correct the

error more vigorous, in keeping with the general tone of the *Travels*. Similarly, the addition of "open" (a conventional eighteenth-century term of approbation) and the replacing of "well paved" with "excellently paved" enhance further the appeal of the Lower Town. Smollett also describes the houses more concretely in the *Travels*, mentioning the type and quality of construction as well as their size and comfort. The second passage from the *Travels* is largely a rephrasing and expansion of its counterpart in the personal letter. These examples show the care with which Smollett reworks his source in order to achieve greater uniformity of impression in the *Travels*.

Smollett makes one noteworthy omission in his account of Boulogne in the *Travels*. Following the passage quoted above from the letter to Hunter, he says: "I would never desire to live in a more agreeable Place, if my Health did not require a milder Climate" (*Letters*, p. 116:1). This sentiment is not found in the published letter, for it need not be so directly stated in a document in which proliferation of detail suggests the congeniality of the city.¹⁰ Direct statement in the private letter gives way to suggestion in the public one.

In general, Smollett expands and particularizes in the travel volume his observations on the climate, wine, fish, fowl, harvesting, and fruit in his personal letter to Reid of 3 August, the second from Boulogne. Again, verbal echoes are present; for instance, "The season here is very backward" (*Letters*, p. 118:2) becomes "On our arrival here we found all kinds of fruit more backward than in England" (*Travels*, p. 22:IV).

Another significant resemblance may be noted at this point. The tone of Smollett's estimate of the inhabitants of Boulogne is quite similar in the letters and the *Travels*, although, as we might expect, the account in the latter is more detailed and clinical. Here is the passage from the letter:

Every thing here is done in a clumsy and slovenly manner, which is very disagreeable and even shocking to those who have been accustomed to English neatness; and there is total want of Delicacy in the manners of the People. They are generally civil, but they have no Sentiment, and their Ignorance and Superstition put me out of all patience. (*Letters*, p. 118:2)

The corresponding account in the fourth letter (pp. 27-31) and the fifth letter (pp. 32-37, 40-43) of the *Travels* is too long for quotation. There Smollett divides the Boulognese into three groups—the noblesse, the burghers, and the canaille—and discusses each in its turn, reserving his most scornful comments for the sloth and superstition of the Catholics. One striking point is that the personalities of the private correspondent and the travel writer are—as to tone—virtually identical. The vitriolic quality of the two letters in the *Travels* is more forceful because of the accumulation of detail, but it is no different in kind than in the letter to Reid. In both cases, Smollett displays the sharp eye for the revealing details of life and manners that is so crucial to his character. The similarity of tone indicates that Smollett had his letter to Reid at hand when he composed the fourth and fifth letters of the travel book.

By far the most elaborate description of any locale in Smollett's personal correspondence is that contained in the long letter to Hunter of 6 February 1764 written from Nice, where Smollett spent eighteen months. Most of his letter follows a meandering route through and around the city as Smollett describes flora and fauna, the River Paglion (now Paillon) and its advantage to the Piedmontese in repelling an invasion, the Maritime Alps, the white cassines and other houses, the quality of the air in relation to the mountains and the Mediterranean, the healthful climate, the magnificent view of the sea which he enjoys from his quarters, and the proximity of Nice to Marseilles, Genoa, and Turin.

Out of this welter of detail and augmented from material probably copied out in notes, Smollett, in Letter XIII of the *Travels* (one of twenty-six from Nice therein), has constructed a lengthy, orderly, and effective account of "this very remarkable place" (*Travels*, p. 116).

As John F. Sena has noted, the organizing principle of this letter is movement from general to particular.¹¹ Whereas Smollett begins his report in the letter to Hunter with a pleasing picture of flora and fauna, he devotes the opening portion of Letter XIII to a description of the county of Nice, moving quickly to the city itself. At this point the verbal echoes are prominent:

Nice is a narrow Town wedged in between a high mountain and the River Paglion which washes the walls on one side

and falls into the Mediterranean at the Distance of ten yards from the Corner of one of the Bastions. (*Letters*, p. 121:4)

On the west side of this mountain, and in the eastern extremity of the amphitheatre [formed by mountains], stands the city of Nice, wedged in between a steep rock and the little river Paglion, which descends from the mountains, and washing the town-walls on the west side, falls into the sea, after having filled some canals for the use of the inhabitants. (*Travels*, pp. 116-117: XIII)

The revised version is more precise, especially in terms of stipulating direction ("west"), size of the river ("little"), and its practical value to the citizens. The change from "high mountain" to "steep rock" reflects Smollett's persistent concern for accuracy.

There follows in the letter to Hunter a personal touch omitted in the published account when Smollett, with characteristic alliteration, likens the river to a "Scotch Brook divided into several small streamlets brawling over a broad Bed of Peebles" (*Letters*, p. 121). This reference to his native land he doubtless considered inappropriate (perhaps too personal) to the *Travels*, for there he merely indicated that this river divides "itself into several small streams" (*Travels*, p. 117).

In both accounts he notes how this river swells with rain, but he describes this process in different terms, first calling the river a "very formidable stream" (*Letters*, p. 121), then a "very formidable torrent" (*Travels*, p. 117). The reason for this change is immediately apparent. In the personal letter Smollett briefly describes how hundreds of French and Spanish soldiers drowned in the swollen river during an unsuccessful attack on Piedmontese forces in 1744. This account of the battle is expanded in Letter XIII. Smollett enlarges the damage to the invaders by the river, thereby justifying his calling it a "torrent" rather than a "stream." The most obvious effect of Smollett's additions, however, is the broader historical context in which the "little river" is placed. He rarely surrenders an opportunity to relate historical anecdotes because of the dignity and authority they confer on his travel book and because they tend to enrich his descriptions of topography and cities.

The transition from the brief account of the invasion to

Smollett's next topic in the letter to Hunter is, to say the least, abrupt:

The assailants lost five thousand men upon that occasion [he revises this figure to four thousand in the *Travels*, p. 117]. The maritime alps begin . . . (*Letters*, p. 122:4)

But in the *Travels* he is careful to proceed from the outskirts of Nice, where the Paillon is situated, to the city itself, describing its triangular form, topographical details, and a castle atop the rock which overhangs Nice.¹² This progression is clear and systematic, combining a panoramic view of the city with precisely observed details.

From this point, various passages in the original letter are included in the travel letter, but the rough sequential similarities that I have outlined are abandoned. Immediately after relating the anecdote of the shelling, Smollett proceeds to describe Nice:

This little town, situated in the bay of Antibes, is almost equidistant from Marseilles, Turin, and Genoa, the first and last being about thirty leagues from hence by sea; and the capital of Piedmont at the same distance to the northward, over the mountains. It lies exactly opposite to Capo di Ferro, on the coast of Barbary; and the islands of Sardinia and Corsica are laid down about two degrees to the eastward, almost exactly in a line with Genoa. This little town, hardly a mile in circumference, is said to contain twelve thousand inhabitants. The streets are narrow; the houses are built of stone, and the windows in general are fitted with paper instead of glass. This expedient would not answer in a country subject to rain and storms; but here, where there is very little of either, the paper lozenges answer tolerably well. (*Travels*, p. 118:XIII)

This passage represents in part the fusion of two remarks in the letter to Hunter separated from each other by several lines:

Even in the severest weather at Nice, very few People use Fires in their Chambers, and most of the Houses in Town have no Glass in their windows.

We lie right opposite to Algiers, and (I am told) can see the Island of Corsica when the sky is very clear. Our situation is in the Bottom of a Delightfull Bay within thirty leagues of Marseilles on one hand, and of Genoa on the other; we are at the same distance from Turin. (*Letters*, p. 122:4)

The first thing we notice is that the personal quality of the letter ("we lie," "our situation," "Delightfull Bay") is absent in the *Travels*. In Letter XIII Smollett favors a more objective, guide-book presentation of facts. The corresponding tightening of style can best be seen when Smollett transforms the loosely structured sentence concerning the relative locations of Marseilles, Turin, and Genoa into a precise, smooth sequence of detail. The personal letter-writer has given way to the professional traveler-historian.

The second half of the passage in the *Travels*, introduced by the identical phrase ("this little town") as the first half, thereby balancing these two sections of the paragraph, is even more revealing of the manner in which Smollett juggles details as he transfers data from the personal letter to the *Travels*. In the original letter his mentioning that household fires are not needed and that paper serves instead of glass in windows is preceded by an account of the mild climate, effected by the location of the mountains (*Letters*, p. 122). This description, in turn, is preceded by the following:

The mountains are covered with olives to the very tops, and these trees are green all the winter. The Eye is enchanted by a vast Number of white Cassines or Houses rising through the Trees, and each of these Cassines has a Garden with Groves of Oranges and loaded with Fruit. Some of these Houses are magnificent, but the greater part belong to Farmers and Citizens and look much better at a Distance than near at hand. Among them also are two Convents standing in a most imperial situation, and divers old fortified Castles wich add greatly to the Beauty of the Prospect. (*Letters*, p. 122:4)

Compare this somewhat haphazard accumulation of details with its counterpart in the *Travels*:

Amidst the plantations in the neighborhood of Nice, appear a vast number of white *bastides*, or country houses, which make a dazzling shew. Some few of these are good villas, belonging to the noblesse of this county; and even some of the bourgeois are provided with pretty lodgeable *cassines*; but in general, they are the habitations of the peasants, and contain nothing but misery and vermin. They are all built square; and being whitened with lime or plaister, contribute greatly to the richness of the view. The hills are shaded to the tops with olive-trees, which are always green; and those hills are over-topped by more distant mountains, covered with snow. When I turn myself towards the sea, the view is bounded by the horizon; yet, in a clear morning, one can perceive the high lands of Corsica. On the right hand, it is terminated by Antibes, and the mountain of Esterelles, which I described in my last. As for the weather, you will conclude, from what I have said of the oranges, flowers, etc., that it must be wonderfully mild and serene: but of the climate, I shall speak hereafter. Let me only observe, *en passant*, that the houses in general have no chimnies, but in their kitchens; and that many people, even of condition, at Nice, have no fire in their chambers, during the whole winter. When the weather happens to be a little more sharp than usual, they warm their apartments with a *brasiere* or pan of charcoal. (*Travels*, pp. 120-121:XIII)

Besides embellishing the beautiful aspects of the mountainside in keeping with his delight in viewing the landscape, Smollett achieves other significant effects in his arrangement of material in the *Travels*. By inverting the order in which he describes what he sees, Smollett exercises greater control over the reader's point of view. In the personal letter the houses are seen through the trees, which Smollett has already described, whereas in the *Travels* he describes the houses first, then the trees, then (an added detail) the mountains in the distance, the sea, and finally Corsica. Next, he telescopes the account of the climate in the letter to Hunter before moving on to the information about the lack of necessity of fires in the houses, a detail which he had used in the personal letter in connection with glassless windows. The two accounts of the houses themselves differ: in the letter

to Hunter Smollett does not mention the unhealthy aspects of these lodgings ("the misery and vermin"); he merely comments that they looked better from a distance than from near at hand. Again, the clinical vision of the traveler is emphasized.

The next major aspect of comparison may be dealt with briefly. Half of Letter XIII offers a detailed picture of the antiquities which abounded in the neighborhood of Nice, particularly of the ruins of Cemenelion (now Cimiez). This account is marked by the inclusion of three inscriptions, probably copied from guidebooks which Smollett ostensibly used as a source.¹³ Knowing Hunter's interest in antiquities, Smollett adds a brief postscript describing his visit to these ruins. The conclusion of the postscript relates directly to Letter XIII:

. . . and there is an old Temple now converted into a Peasant's House. The Portico is taken away. The arcades are built up with Rubble. The Peasant with his Family of nasty Brats live like so many Rats immediately under the Roof; and the space below serves for a stable, in which I found a starved Ox, a Jack-ass, and a He-goat. I mention this assemblage because in passing thro' Bergundy I saw three Animals of the same species drawing a Plough very peaceable together [cf. *Travels*, p. 71]. Here is no Learning, nor Taste of any kind. All is gothic pride, Ignorance and superstition. (*Letters*, p. 124:13)

The part called the Basilica, and about one half of the Cella Sanctior, remain, and are converted into the dwellinghouse and stable of the peasant who takes care of the count de Gubernatis's garden, in which this monument stands. In the Cella Sanctior, I found a lean cow, a he-goat, and a jack-ass; the very same conjunction of animals which I had seen drawing a plough in Bergundy. (*Travels*, p. 124:XIII)

Smollett's sense of outrage at this sacrilege is considerably muted in the *Travels*, where the description of the peasant and the concluding outburst are omitted. Furthermore, his amazement at the odd grouping of animals pulling the plow is, with the omission of the phrase, "very peaceable together," eliminated. Here Smollett reverses his usual practice of heightening his own

reaction in order to enforce the personality of the traveler.

One of Smollett's long suits as a novelist is his limitless capacity for the creation of boundlessly energetic and idiosyncratic characters. For a writer of Smollett's bent to ignore the possibilities of characterization offered him while touring France and Italy is difficult to conceive. Much of the flavor of the *Travels* is derived from Smollett's descriptions of and reactions to the persons with whom he has dealings of one sort or another—M. Bouvier and Joseph, his driver, for example. Only one extended portrait appears in the personal letters from Smollett's journey, but it corresponds in its pungency to the most well-known character sketch—that of Dr. Fizès—in the *Travels*.¹⁴ In the letter to Hunter from Nice Smollett observes:

I had the advice of one Dr. Fitzmorrice, an honest irish Physician of the Place [Montpellier]; and I consulted Dr. Fizès, the Boerhaave of Montpellier, who is an old sordid Scoundrel, and an old woman into the Bargain. I sent him my Case in Latin, which he answered in French. The Correspondence between us was diverting enough. If ever I return to England, you shall see the original Papers. (*Letters*, pp. 120-121:4)

I was favoured with the advice of Dr. Fitz-maurice, a very worthy sensible physician settled in this place: but I had the curiosity to know the opinion of the celebrated professor F_____, who is the Boerhaave of Montpellier. (*Travels*, p. 94:XI)

Until this point in the account of Fizès several noteworthy alterations have been made in the *Travels*. First, Dr. Fitzmorrice's role as the foil to Dr. Fizès is more firmly pointed; he is no longer merely an "honest irish Physician" but a "very worthy sensible" man who possesses attributes alien to his counterpart. Moreover, Smollett is "favoured" with his advice; he does not just have it. The contrast is developed further in a most economical way, for Smollett deftly changes Fizès' title from "Dr." to "professor," clearly a pejorative term.

In the *Travels* Smollett enlarges his capsule description of Fizès as "an old sordid Scoundrel, and an old woman into the bargain" by means of his characteristic vituperation. He piles up

the details of Fizès' rapaciousness, insolence, affectation, "brutality and presumption" (*Travels*, pp. 94-95), and caps the sketch by informing us that Fizès' specialty is the "great practice in the venereal branch" (*Travels*, p. 95).

Smollett's next step is to present what he calls in the letter to Hunter the "original Papers," indicating, of course, that he has in fact preserved certain documents from the tour. Smollett is certainly correct in assuming that Hunter, himself a physician, would desire to examine these documents, since they are copies of the letter in Latin sent to Fizès describing Smollett's symptoms and Fizès' reply in French (*Travels*, pp. 95-99:XI). In the letter, however, Smollett's reaction to Fizès' unprofessional use of French, let alone his analysis of the case, is muted; the exchange, he says, is "diverting enough." But in the *Travels* Smollett's surprise and anger are vigorously rendered:

I thought it was a little extraordinary that a learned professor should reply in his mother tongue, to a case put in Latin: but I was much more surprised, as you will also be, at reading his answer, from which I was obliged to conclude, either that he did not understand Latin; or that he had not taken the trouble to read my *memoire*. I shall not make any remarks upon the stile of his prescription, replete as it is with a disgusting repetition of low expressions (*Travels*, pp. 99-100:XI)

Whereupon he goes on to annotate various oversights in Fizès' reply and returns them to the "professor" (*Travels*, pp. 100-101). A further exchange of letters follows, during which Smollett loses his "fee" of twelve livres to Fizès. The remainder of the Fizès episode in the letter to Hunter deals with the Frenchman's diagnosis and nature of the remedies he prescribes. Most alarming to Smollett is Fizès' neglect of exercise, a remedy in which Smollett firmly believes. In the *Travels* his denunciation of Fizès is enforced by his use of clinical terminology and his repetition of an anecdote (perhaps apocryphal) of how Fizès' malpractice resulted in the death of a young man (*Travels*, pp. 102-103).

The most remarkable feature of this comparison is the method by which Smollett transforms the skeletal outlines of his picture of Fizès in the personal letter into a detailed, self-

contained episode of the *Travels* which fits neatly with the medical motif running through the volume. It is not an exaggeration to claim that Letter XI, with its drawing of character and character interaction, its realistic detail, and its sustained invective, constitutes a "novelistic" chapter, not unlike those in his fiction that contain portraits of unmannerly and incompetent physicians.

The Fizès episode, at least as regards the *Travels*, relates to Smollett's perpetual concern for his health, references to which abound in his correspondence and the *Travels*. As a physician, he was well aware of the rather advanced stage of the consumption which afflicted him; he undertook this journey not with the expectation of a cure but with the hope of forestalling the death he knew would soon come.

With respect to his health Smollett engages in his characteristic expansion of source material when he comes to write the *Travels*. In the first letter to Hunter he is brief and direct:

I have been out of order this Fortnight with a severe cold which has handled me severely, and reduced me so much that I now perceive the State of my Health becomes a very serious affair. (*Letters*, p. 115:1)

He begins Letter III of the *Travels* by mentioning his cold, but he then expands the single sentence of the original letter into two lengthy paragraphs in which he describes other symptoms of ill health, the remedies he has sought, and the means by which a Boulognese physician was cured of a similar illness (*Travels*, pp. 13-14). Knowing that as a doctor and as his friend Hunter would sympathize at once with his plight, Smollett sees no need to go into detail, whereas in the travel letter he indulges in clinical detail, one of the chief features of the *Travels*, in order to create sympathy for the letter-writer from a larger and more remoted audience.

As we have seen, the final letter to Hunter and Letter XI of the *Travels* deal with the infamous Dr. Fizès. As both documents make clear Smollett's condition, he felt, had been aggravated by the weather:

. . . it rained incessantly a whole week; and this change of

the Atmosphere relaxed me to such a degree that all my complaints returned together with a most uncomfortable Dejection of spirits. (*Letters*, p. 120:4)

A few days after my arrival, it began to rain with a southerly wind, and continued without ceasing the best part of a week, leaving the air so loaded with vapours, that there was no walking after sun-set; without being wetted by the dew almost to the skin. I have always found a cold and damp atmosphere the most unfavourable of any to my constitution. My asthmatical disorder, which had not given me much disturbance since I left Boulogne, became now very troublesome, attended with fever, cough, spitting, and lowness of spirits; and I wasted visibly every day. (*Travels*, p. 94:XI)

The report in the *Travels* presents a clearer picture of the elements which discomfit the traveler, whose ailments are, in the letter to Hunter, subsumed under the heading "all my complaints," presumably because Hunter already knows what they are. At the same time, as befits a travel book, the expanded description of the weather conditions is appropriate to Smollett's purpose of creating the atmosphere of a given locale. Thus the added details of the wind direction, the "vapours," the dew, the cold and the damp, and the inability to take walks generate a sense of oppression merely hinted at in the personal letter. Smollett becomes more pitiable because he describes his suffering so graphically. Here is another instance of Smollett's careful revision, for, having included the "fever, cough, [and] spitting" which beset him, he changes "Dejection of spirits" to "lowness of spirits" because the description no longer requires the force of the former word.

Smollett not only undertook his journey with physical suffering but also with great emotional distress. As he puts it in the letter to Alexander Reid, his friend and neighbor in Chelsea, he is grieved by the loss "of that which was dearer to me than Health itself, my darling Child, whom I cannot yet remember with any degree of Composure" (*Letters*, p. 117:3).¹⁵ In the first letter of the *Travels* Smollett describes his grief in more oblique and formal terms, combining it with his feeling about the political battles he has waged with John Wilkes:

You knew, and pitied my situation, traduced by malice, persecuted by faction, abandoned by false patrons, and overwhelmed by the sense of a domestic calamity, which it was not in the power of fortune to repair. (*Travels*, p. 1:I)

In comparison with his expression of sorrow in the letter to Reid, Smollett's distress over his daughter's death tends to fade in the series of balanced phrases describing other tribulations in the *Travels*. His use of "overwhelmed" is a direct borrowing from his letter to Smith and shows how Smollett uses a single powerful word in place of a longer descriptive phrase to express his feelings. But more important, he is striving for a brief self-portrait which will, in turn, reveal something meaningful about the traveler's personality, to be developed throughout the volume, namely his fortitude in the face of adversity. Therefore, he recounts in general terms the pressures under which he begins his journey. There is, to be sure, some loss of intimacy, but this is a sacrifice which Smollett makes without hesitation in order to serve his larger purpose.

It should be clear from the foregoing that I regard Smollett's personal letters in question as "manuscripts" of the *Travels*; indeed, the *Travels* is the only major work in the Smollett canon for which "manuscripts" are known to survive.¹⁶ And when these "manuscripts" happen to be actual letters composed on the journey, the proximity of the *Travels* to Smollett himself is close. Earlier critics—notably Laurence Sterne—never doubted that the *Travels* was essentially autobiographical and as such a reliable index to the author's personality.¹⁷ Lately, however, the autobiographical approach to the *Travels* has been questioned. Recent critics have focussed on the identity of the traveler, arguing that he is a deliberately constructed persona, but not agreeing on the precise nature of his personality. Ronald Paulson sees him as a fictive satirical observer of foreign manners in the Juvenalian fashion; John F. Sena argues that in the letter-writer Smollett creates a melancholic personality widely recognized in his day.¹⁸ Both interpretations rest on the conclusion that the letters in the *Travels* are completely artificial, not, as formerly believed, untouched or hastily revised copies of Smollett's personal letters from France and Italy.¹⁹ The notion that the letters in the *Travels* are not "merely personal" is now widely

held, and rightly so. But perhaps we have moved too far in the direction of a fictive "Smollett." The artificiality of the letters in the *Travels* does not necessarily preclude a substantial autobiographical element in the book, nor is it necessary to account for its artistry by positing Smollett's creation of a persona. On the other hand, I do not wish to suggest that Smollett wrote his personal letters from the continent strictly with their use as a source for the *Travels* in mind, although this possibility has never been confuted.

Writing under the pressures of financial difficulties, ill health, psychological stress, and unfinished literary projects, Smollett would have been foolish to ignore any documents—including copies of his personal letters—that could possibly serve him as he prepared the *Travels*. Though the differences between personal correspondence and travel-letter are often great, enough similarities exist to establish a connection between them, and this connection, as I have tried to show, is valuable in ascertaining some of Smollett's methods in creating a masterpiece of travel literature. His borrowings from personal letters cover a variety of topics found in the *Travels*, and the germ of the pictorial and dramatic quality of Smollett's art is observable in them. The *Travels* is the product of a conscious and careful use of many sources, and as one of the most important of those sources, Smollett's personal letters reveal that he did not always take as the Eleventh Commandment the contemporary notion that travelers must not write autobiographically.²⁰

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NOTES

¹See Lewis M. Knapp, *Tobias Smollett: Doctor of Men and Manners* (Princeton, 1949), pp. 44, 85, 86, 219, 248-64, 279-301.

²*The Letters of Tobias Smollett*, ed. Lewis M. Knapp (Oxford, 1970). Hereafter cited as *Letters*.

³It is certain that four letters are missing. Three of them, composed in Boulogne and addressed to Smollett's cousin, the

Duchess of Douglas, the Earl of Hertford, and Richard Neville, concern Smollett's efforts to recover his books, which were impounded upon his arrival in France. See *Letters*, pp. 116, 119. The fourth, sent from Nice, was to Dr. George Macaulay. See *Letters*, pp. 114, 121. According to the first editor of Smollett's correspondence, Edward S. Noyes, the letter to Macaulay formed the basis of Letter XII of the *Travels*. See *The Letters of Tobias Smollett, M.D.* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 83, 89, 213. The fifth letter, to Oakley Halford, was probably written at Boulogne. See *Letters*, p. 118.

⁴Tobias Smollett, *Travels Through France and Italy*, ed. Thomas Seccombe (Oxford, 1907). Hereafter cited as *Travels*.

⁵The most ardent exponent of this thesis is Seccombe: "The Letters appeared pretty much as he wrote them" (p. xiii); "They were written *ad vivum*, as it were, not from worked-up notes or embellished recollections" (p. xvii).

⁶This view was first advanced by Louis L. Martz, *The Later Career of Tobias Smollett* (New Haven, 1942), pp. 68-73, 88-89, and amplified by George M. Kahrl, *Tobias Smollett: Traveler-Novelist* (Chicago, 1945), pp. 101-108. See also Robert Donald Spector, *Tobias Smollett* (New York, 1968), p. 35.

⁷Martz, pp. 71-72.

⁸For the sake of convenience, Smollett's personal letters are numbered as follows: 1-11 July (to Hunter); 2-3 August (to Reid); 3-11 August (to Hunter); 4-6 February (to Hunter). The letters in the *Travels* are indicated by Roman numerals.

⁹One critic who stresses Smollett's strong nationalistic bias is Robert D. Spector, "Smollett's Traveler," *Tobias Smollett: Bicentennial Essays Presented to Lewis M. Knapp*, ed. G. S. Rousseau and P. G. Boucé (New York, 1971), pp. 231-246.

¹⁰Smollett may also have omitted the reference in the *Travels* for fear of being repetitious, for his letters on Nice contain many references to its appeal as a place of habitation. Smollett also remarks of Pisa: "the solitude that reigns in Pisa would with me

be a strong motive to choose it as a place of residence" (*Travels*, p. 222:XXVII). If repeated too often, such sentiments, in Smollett's mind, might have suggested indiscriminate praise, thereby undercutting his authority.

¹¹"Smollett's Persona and the Melancholic Traveler: An Hypothesis," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, I (1968), pp. 353-369; see pp. 356-357.

¹²The castle, Montaubon, provides another opportunity for a brief historical note on its demolition and reconstruction which, in turn, prompts Smollett to comment on the lack of fortifications of Nice and to relate how the French had shelled the English fleet in 1744 (*Travels*, pp. 117-118).

¹³Martz, p. 84.

¹⁴For a sympathetic, it brief, portrait of General James Paterson see *Letters*, p. 118:3 which forms the core of that in the *Travels*, pp. 15, 131-132:III,XIV.

¹⁵Smollett first mentions this calamity in a letter to Richard Smith of New Jersey (*Letters*, p. 113; dated May 8, 1763).

¹⁶Smollett's manuscript additions to the *Travels* are in the British Library and those to his histories in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

¹⁷See, for example, Thomas Seccombe, "Smelfungus Goes South," *Cornhill Magazine*, n.s., XI (1901), 194-195; David Hannay, *Life of Tobias George Smollett* (London, 1887), p. 149; Arnold Whitridge, *Tobias Smollett* (New York, 1925), p. 80; Herbert Read, *Reason and Romanticism* (London, 1926), p. 193; and, of course, Laurence Sterne in *A Sentimental Journey*, ed. Gardner D. Stout, Jr. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 116-118.

¹⁸Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 1967), pp. 190-192; Sena, "Smollett's Persona and the Melancholic Traveler: An Hypothesis," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, I (1968), 353-369.

¹⁹Again, see Seccombe, pp. xiii, xvii.

²⁰On the issue of the autobiographical element in eighteenth-century travel literature, see Charles L. Batten, Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1978), pp. 12-19.

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