

public que le souverain, car un individu est plus sujet à la folie ... Mais Diderot dit par ailleurs à ces souverains qu'il est dans la nature du pouvoir de ne pas souhaiter ces institutions modératrices. Il leur suggère, sous des formes détournées et prudentes, que le despote ne peut écouter cette philosophie politique, même s'il fait venir le philosophe à sa cour et se fait le mécène de ses travaux. Double échec semble-t-il, et des princes et des philosophes; un échec qui annonce une autre époque, celle des intendants et des gestionnaires, des sciences de la nature et du développement des techniques utiles, ce à quoi nul ne peut rien, si ce n'est de penser ce « torrent ».

Livre décevant, diront certains, puisqu'il ne brille ni par l'originalité de ses interprétations ni par les rapprochements inédits auxquels il se risquerait. Livre fort utile, en tout cas, pour ceux qui enseignent la philosophie française du XVIII^e siècle; et livre salutaire surtout, parce qu'il fait vivre une belle tradition de rigueur et de clarté, dont les universitaires en général, et certains diderotiens en particulier, s'éloignent parfois trop, à leurs dépens. On ne retrouve certes pas dans les pages de Colas Duflo l'ironie et les clins d'œil que les lecteurs de Diderot sont habitués à savourer; et cette pensée n'est jamais vraiment problématisée par une discussion de ses limites ou à travers les enjeux d'aujourd'hui. Mais il s'agissait avant tout d'accompagner le philosophe et de faire voir la cohérence de son intention, sans redoubler par de nouvelles difficultés celles de sa réception. Pari tenu.

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Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. *The History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote*, trans. Tobias Smollett, ed. Martin C. Battestin and O.M. Brack, Jr. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2004. xlix+942pp. US\$100. ISBN 0-8203-2430-2.

Tobias Smollett. *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves*, ed. Robert Folkenflik and B. Laning Fitzpatrick. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2001. 368pp. US\$60. ISBN 0-8203-2307-1.

Tobias Smollett seems destined to remain on the fringes of the British literary canon. Despite a jam-packed career that included forays into nearly every genre, in his own day he never won lasting acceptance from the Johnsonian literary mainstream. Posthumously, the Romantics marginalized him for being too moralistic, the Victorians snubbed him for being too crude, and the modernists patronized him for being too undisciplined. Even the emergence of more historically sensitive forms of criticism made little room for Smollett, with Ian Watt's seminal *The Rise of the Novel* giving him only the most glancing

of treatments. Indeed, contemporary critics have not been much more accommodating, the latest example being Smollett's lamentable absence from Terry Eagleton's new *The English Novel: An Introduction*.

Why does Smollett always seem to be on the outside looking in? Generically speaking, the answer may lie in his unfashionable preference for romance over realism. With their wandering plots, coarse physical comedy, and "flat" characters, Smollett's novels have always fitted awkwardly into canons and classrooms alike. (The exception that proves this rule is *Humphry Clinker*, the most tightly structured, least bawdy of Smollett's fictions.) Indeed, as long as the main line of development of the eighteenth-century novel is viewed as the slow but inexorable movement from the fantastic and ideal (Behn) to the quotidian and satiric (Austen), Smollett will continue to seem like the odd man out. Only when the above-mentioned linear narrative of the novel's rise is abandoned or reconfigured, as in Deidre Lynch's recent *The Economy of Character*, can Smollett be seen to participate in the novel's multiple lines of development in the eighteenth century. Viewed in this light, Smollett's true contribution to literary history becomes clear: he took the European genre of the picaresque romance, left for dead by most reputable authors at the time, and resuscitated it for a new generation of British readers.

As the two books under review here demonstrate, Smollett was probably more familiar with the conventions of European romance than any other British author of his day. Indeed, he was clearly under the influence of Cervantes' comic masterpiece (which is both romance and romantic satire) when he published his first novel, *Roderick Random*, in January 1748. Already at work on a translation of Le Sage's equally formative *Gil Blas* (which would be published the following October), less than six months later Smollett agreed to begin what would turn out to be his masterpiece of European translation: *The History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote*. As Mary Helen McMurrin has recently reminded us, the marketplace for literary translation in eighteenth-century Britain was hot: translations of French novels and romances constituted up to one-third of the published works in any given year (McMurrin, "National or Transnational? The Eighteenth-Century Novel," in *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*, ed. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001], 53). Like his reputation, Smollett's translation of Cervantes has seen both good times and bad; after being warmly received by his contemporaries, it was subsequently attacked for being vague, inaccurate, and even plagiarized. This new edition should put these charges to rest and restore the initial high standing of the work. Since most of the notes gloss Smollett's translation rather than Cervantes' text, I would not recommend it for first-time readers of *Don Quixote*; for those wishing to experience Cervantes' text as many eighteenth-century British readers would have encountered it, however, this is the perfect edition. The text, edited by O.M. Brack, Jr, is crisp and clear, and adequate attention is paid to most of Smollett's attempts to translate Cervantes' idiosyncratic Spanish into

idiomatic English. (For example, Smollett's use of "Gripes and grumblings" for the original's "Duélos y quebrantos," which describes Quixote's usual breakfast fare in the opening chapter, receives almost an entire page of fascinating commentary.) Batestin's introduction makes brevity the soul of wit by focusing primarily on the work's publishing history. The text also includes Smollett's own "Life of Cervantes," which reveals that the Scotsman not only admired his great predecessor but also identified with him: "Cervantes, whether considered as a writer or a man, will be found worthy of universal approbation and esteem; as we cannot help applauding the fortitude and courage which no difficulty could disturb, and no danger dismay; while we admire that delightful stream of humour and invention, which flowed so plenteous and so pure, surmounting all the mounds of malice and adversity" (19). Biography as (idealized) autobiography was never more eloquent, or more obvious.

Given such high praise—as well as the success of Smollett's translation—it was perhaps predictable that Smollett would eventually turn his novelistic powers towards creating an updated, British version of Cervantes' great comic creation. *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves*, however, is much more than a mere knock-off. As Robert Folkenflik's fine introduction makes clear, Smollett's latter-day knight is not the naive delusional of Cervantes' original; instead, Greaves is a man on a clear mission to correct the ills, inadequacies, and inequalities of his society. (While Folkenflik provides several possibilities for the origin of Greaves's name, I wonder whether a simple pun is the solution: Launcelot *grieves* for the decayed state of contemporary rural Britain.) Moreover, while the novel intervenes in many contemporary political issues of Smollett's day, it is fascinating to see how Smollett negotiates his ambivalence regarding the ongoing Seven Years War by placing various dimensions of his changing political positions in the mouths of different characters. None of this, of course, takes away from the sheer fun and frolic of Smollett's typically boisterous narrative, but it does help account for why the novel takes a surprisingly sober turn near the end (when Greaves finds himself committed to an asylum) before ushering in a characteristically happy ending. Laning Fitzpatrick's text is immaculate, her notes are superbly helpful, and her exhaustive textual appendices are almost as interesting as the collection of invaluable illustrations and engravings that accompanies the text.

Ultimately, these two volumes are unlikely to garner Smollett wider critical or popular acclaim: like Sterne, Smollett seems destined to play the role of eccentric uncle in the family of eighteenth-century British literature. For those who already read, study, and teach his works, however, these editions of *Don Quixote* and *Launcelot Greaves* are valuable additions to the current offerings. Smollett's status in the canon of British literature may never be assured, but these texts should find a secure place in any collection of Smollett's works.

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