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## "Some Pieces in the British Magazine" and "A Small Part of the Translation of Voltaire's Works": Smollett Attributions

Barbara L. Fitzpatrick  
*University of New Orleans, moyakniga@icloud.com*

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perhaps for this very reason, their acceptance is to me more important than anything else.

When Hunter acknowledged the value of "creative speculation" and "guesses based on eccentric criteria," he did so with the qualification that they not be "tangled up in more reasoned discussions." Certainly, let us not confuse knowledge of the heart, which can never be tallied up, with knowledge based on data that can be collected and counted. But why is it that we are seldom forthright about our scholarly loves? Surely, we can find an honourable place for hunches and knacks, not separate from but as distinct and specified features of our most carefully reasoned discussions.

University of New Mexico

**"Some Pieces in the British Magazine" and  
"A Small Part of the Translation of Voltaire's Works":  
Smollett Attributions**

**Barbara Laning Fitzpatrick**

As a Textual Editor for the University of Georgia Press edition of *The Works of Tobias Smollett*, I have become involved with the problems of making attributions to Smollett's canon. In common with Johnson and Goldsmith, Smollett often wrote, compiled, edited, or translated for booksellers, and much of his writing was anonymous. For some works, such as the prose tales and essays in Smollett's *British Magazine*, obscurity has been so complete that few twentieth-century readers know they exist, let alone concern themselves with their attribution; for others, such as the translation of *Candide*, "tradition" has credited Smollett with the labour, and, for the most part, there the matter has rested. In both cases no fully convincing documentary evidence—no autograph letter acknowledging a work, no receipt specifying payment for a job—has yet come to light proving or disproving Smollett's authorship. On the other hand, there is more than ample external evidence that Smollett wielded editorial control over the larger publishing ventures that included these works. There is also his own claim that he contributed to both ventures: in a letter in May 1763, Smollett listed many of his works, among which he included "Some Pieces in the British Magazine" and "A small part of the Translation of Voltaire's works."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of Tobias Smollett*, ed. Lewis M. Knapp (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 113.

Furthermore, there is corroborating internal stylistic evidence that Smollett himself wrote many of the early pieces in the *British Magazine* and there may be evidence that he translated *Candide*. It is this stylistic evidence in particular, along with the external evidence, that I am examining in studies of these works.

It is certainly true that for one reason or another no one has ever attempted a full-scale study of these publications. One obvious excuse for ignoring them would be the degree of difficulty involved in mounting a convincing argument for attributing them to Smollett; a related excuse would be (and has been) that these works would hardly qualify for inclusion among Smollett's best writing, with the implication being that the investigations are not worth the effort. I see compelling reasons, however, for pursuing both projects. Certainly, if they are Smollett's, they belong in his canon, regardless of "quality" or the degree of "creativity" they exhibit. While Smollett's reputation today rests on his abilities as a novelist, in his own day he was known as well as a reviewer, historian, translator, journalist, and editor, and he often filled at least two of these roles simultaneously. Every new attribution to his established canon increases our understanding of Smollett as a writer and enriches our growing knowledge of what it meant to be a professional author in the mid-eighteenth century. A study of the *British Magazine* pieces can contribute significantly to our knowledge of Smollett's role as writer and editor in that periodical. A study of *Candide* can settle once and for all whether Smollett did indeed perform the translation traditionally ascribed to him and, if it is his, will add to what is known of his methods of translation. In both we should begin to see the complexity of interaction among writer or translator, editor, and—where there is evidence—proprietors or investors in the publication. Such complexity is often acknowledged in the abstract but rarely demonstrated with detailed evidence.

While editing Smollett's serialized novel *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, I became well acquainted with the general contents of the periodical in which that novel originally appeared, Smollett's *British Magazine; or, Monthly Repository for Gentlemen and Ladies* (1760-67). There are a number of intriguing anonymous articles in it, of which the lead article may serve as an example. In the opening number of the magazine, published in January 1760, appears part one of a three-part oriental tale, "The History of Omrah, the Son of Abulfaid." This anonymous serial, continued in February and March, contains close stylistic parallels to *Sir Launcelot Greaves* and Smollett's other prose writing, yet the one piece of external evidence for its authorship—a 1798 edition of Goldsmith's *Essays and Criticisms*—attributes it to Goldsmith. For most of this century Smollett and Goldsmith scholars have argued back and forth concerning the authorship of "Omrah" and other anonymous pieces in the *British Magazine*. Ironically, two of the foremost Goldsmith editors, first Ronald S. Crane and later Arthur Friedman, maintained that many of the periodical's articles are stylistically *not* Goldsmith's and so kept them out of the Goldsmith canon. More recently, on the other hand, the Smollettian James G. Basker claimed that they *are* Goldsmith's (Basker based his claim solely on the external evidence) and stated his intent to publish an "edition" of the Goldsmith pieces now supposedly re-

covered from the *British Magazine*.<sup>2</sup> Richard C. Taylor, a Goldsmith scholar, has recognized Basker's claim for Goldsmith's authorship of the *British Magazine* pieces, but he has evinced uneasiness about their contents; he observes that "the newly attributed tales, although they frequently display the rough quaintness and patriarchal morality exhibited in [Goldsmith's] other fiction, are at times shockingly vulgar and distinctly uncharacteristic."<sup>3</sup>

Taylor has put his finger on one of several easily perceived stylistic traits in "Omrah" and the other pieces. Some of the physical descriptions in them are indeed "shockingly vulgar" if perceived as Goldsmith's; however, when compared with Smollett's grotesque descriptions, they are not at all unusual. Thus, readers familiar with the harshly physical worlds of *Roderick Random* and *Humphry Clinker* would not be surprised by the repulsive details of the following scene from "Omrah":

At length, in a dark corner of the cottage, [Omrah] discovered an old hag, lying extended on a mat, and groaning with all the agony of distemper. He approached this miserable object, notwithstanding an almost intolerable stench that annoyed his nostrils; but she was incapable of conveying the least verbal information. There was hardly any vestige of her nose remaining: her teeth, her palate, and her throat, were half consumed with putrefying sores. What he could not learn from her tongue, he guessed from her condition. Dread and abhorrence winged his flight from this infectious scene.<sup>4</sup>

An accurate depiction of disease symptoms (Smollett was trained in medicine) is but one aspect of a discernible Smollettian style. Robert Adams Day, in his superb edition of *The History and Adventures of an Atom*, wrote of "Smollett's familiar linguistic exuberance" and pointed out that "the style of the *Atom* is thick with Smollettisms," words and phrases that recur with regularity throughout Smollett's writing.<sup>5</sup> But one does not need to be an editor immersed in Smollett's writing to notice the repetition; even casual readers will be struck with Smollett's preference for certain stock language, such as "given to understand," "was fain to," "notwithstanding," or "transported." Groups or clusters of such expressions, coupled with the concrete physical details typical of Smollett's descriptions of characters, provide strong internal evidence for Smollett's authorship. My study of "Omrah" and other prose pieces from the *British Magazine* will rely not only on external facts of Smollett's role in the periodical, but also on this type of stylistic evidence.

Despite the 1798 attribution of the *British Magazine* pieces to Goldsmith, I anticipate making, without much difficulty, a convincing argument for Smollett. Identifying the *Candide* translator, however, is another matter.

Voltaire's *Candide* was originally published in 1759 and was quickly followed by two English translations in the same year. The translation traditionally

2 James G. Basker, *Tobias Smollett: Critic and Journalist* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), pp. 195, 313n58.

3 Richard C. Taylor, *Goldsmith as Journalist* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993), p. 90.

4 *British Magazine* 1 (January 1760), 6.

5 Tobias Smollett, *The History and Adventures of an Atom*, ed. Robert Adams Day (Athens: University Press of Georgia, 1989), pp. xv, lvi.

ascribed to Smollett appeared in 1762. Entitled *Candid: or, The Optimist*, it was part of volume 23 of the thirty-six-volume translation of the *Works of M. De Voltaire* published in London from 1761 through 1769 and edited by Smollett and Thomas Francklin. For well over two hundred years many readers have simply assumed that Smollett translated this *Candide*: the 1937, 1944, 1955, and 1967 Everyman editions, and 1977 Franklin Library edition are based on the "Smollett" translation. Yet, clear documentary evidence for Smollett's presence as actual translator is lacking. The 1762 title-page reads "*The Works of M. de Voltaire*. Translated from the French. With Notes, Historical and Critical. By T. Smollett, M.D. T. Francklin, M.A. and Others." It is known that Smollett edited the prose works in the collection, contributing the notes, for he admitted as much in the May 1763 letter when he claimed a "small part of the Translation of Voltaire's works, including all the notes historical and critical to be found in that Translation."<sup>6</sup> But whether a "small part of the Translation" meant *Candide* is not clear.

In his doctoral dissertation Chau Le-Thanh demonstrated that the translator of the 1762 *Candid* worked from both a 1761 French text and a "pony," one of the 1759 English translations. Le-Thanh examined the three texts closely and concluded that the translator, who was clearly at ease with the French language, used the pony as a means of producing his own version as rapidly as possible. The translator practised what Le-Thanh called "translation through revision: a readiness to borrow words, phrases, even paragraphs from an earlier version, but generally with an open eye for errors and departures from the original."<sup>7</sup> In his study Le-Thanh demonstrated that the editor—Smollett—wrote the notes for all the prose volumes, but he was unable to prove whether Smollett also translated *Candide*.

The problem is a difficult one. I propose to employ the stylistic data gathered from the *British Magazine* study in an examination of the *Candide* translation. Even if the translation is Smollett's, however, it is probable that many of his habitual "Smollettisms" will be suppressed; certainly they should not be present in the parts of the translation based directly on the pony. But given the lack of any other evidence in favour of or against Smollett, I believe a stylistic analysis is the best way to tackle the problem.

University of New Orleans

6 *Letters*, p. 113. One of the notes to *Candid* demonstrates Smollett's eye for medical accuracy and supports his authorship of the quotation from "Omrah" discussed above. In part 1, chap. 4 of *Candid*, Pangloss is described as cured of venereal disease "with only the loss of one eye and an ear." Critical of Voltaire's ignorance in this medical matter, Smollett corrects the description in a footnote: "The author seems to be but indifferently acquainted with the effects of this distemper, otherwise he would have mentioned his nose and his palate, among the particulars of his loss, rather than the ear, which is seldom, if ever affected in this disorder." *Candid: or, The Optimist* (London, 1762), p. 15.

7 Chau Le-Thanh, "Tobias Smollett and *The Works of Mr. de Voltaire*, London, 1761-1769." PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1967, p. 212.