

“THE SQUINTASENSE OF SATIETY” CORRUPTION AND COMIC CURE IN HUMPHRY CLINKER

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Abstract:

*Tobias Smollett’s final novel, his masterpiece from 1771, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, is one of the first novels to explore (and question) the concept of the “United Kingdom” created by the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England in 1603 and the Union of the Parliaments in 1707.*

Now that the Scottish Parliament has achieved its own autonomy, the “writing back” which started with Smollett has perhaps reached some kind of fruition. What he deconstructed in the novel, which bears what has often been seen as the rudest title in English literature, is no less than the sense of a national identity, and its concomitant, the idea of a national language.

This paper will look at Smollett’s range of language in the multi-vocal epistolary novel, examining his play on language, society, class and region, and his risqué use of every kind of “low” allusion to bring out the Rabelaisian satire and carnival subversion of cherished notions of British-ness.

Keywords: *Wordplay; State of the nation; Epistolary; Eighteenth century.*