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## SATIRE IN THE EXPEDITION OF HUMPHRY CLINKER BY TOBIAS SMOLLETT

Emrah ATASOY\*

### Abstract

Satire is a powerful technique used by numerous writers in order to reveal and criticize the problematic aspects of their societies. The contextual background of a literary work in this regard may play an instrumental role in such criticism, which is projected through either explicit or implicit satire depending on the choice of the writer. The Scottish writer Tobias Smollett's last novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), written in the epistolary form, is one of these literary texts that draws on satire through the technique of comparison, namely comparing England and Scotland. This article will in this respect present brief relevant information about the novel prior to the textual analysis and then discuss how Smollett makes use of satire, especially social and political satire illustrated from different characters' perspectives, in order to criticize England through letters with specific references from the primary text and relevant secondary sources.

**Keywords:** *Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, England, Scotland, Satire*

## TOBIAS SMOLLETT'İN *THE EXPEDITION OF HUMPHRY CLINKER* ESERİNDE HİCİV

### Öz

Hiciv, birçok yazarın içinde yaşadıkları toplumların aksayan yönlerini ortaya çıkarmak ve sonrasında eleştirmek için kullandığı bir tekniktir. Bu bağlamda, bir eserin bağlamsal arka planı böylesi bir eleştiride önemli bir rol oynayabilmektedir; ki bu da yazarın tercihinin bağlı olmakla birlikte, açık ya da örtülü hiciv olarak aktarılmaktadır. İskoç yazar Tobias Smollett'in mektup roman olarak kaleme alınmış *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) başlıklı eseri, hicvi kullanan böylesi metinlerden bir tanesidir. Eserde, İngiltere ve İskoçya karşılaştırılarak kıyaslama tekniği kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, metinsel analiz öncesinde, öncelikle eser hakkında konu ile alakalı kısa bilgi verilecektir. Çalışmanın devamında ise, Smollett'in mektuplar şeklinde yazılmış eserinde İngiltere'yi eleştirmek için hiciv yöntemini, özellikle de farklı karakterlerin çerçevesinden yansıtılan toplumsal ve siyasi hicvi nasıl kullandığı birincil ve konu ile ilgili ikincil eserlere atıflarla tartışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, İngiltere, İskoçya, Hiciv.*

\*Assist. Prof. Dr., Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Cappadocia University, NEVŞEHİR.  
e-mail: emrah.atasoy@kapadokya.edu.tr (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5008-2636>)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) by the Scottish writer Tobias Smollett is about five characters traveling from England to Scotland and their experiences on the way. Smollett presents a group of characters who compare and contrast what they observe throughout their journey. These characters share their experiences with one another through letters. The novel, written in the epistolary form, is divided into three volumes. The first volume covers a period of 2 months and 3 days. This part takes the reader from Gloucester to London. The second volume lasts for 2 months and includes the travel from London to Edinburgh. The last volume spans a period of 3 months and 12 days, which presents the adventures from Edinburgh to Manchester, and the travelers' plan to visit Chatsworth after Manchester. Brambleton Hall appears both in the beginning and at the end. Their expedition lasts for 7 months and 15 days during which the characters visit 27 different places. Smollett's characters are thus given the chance and opportunity to see many places that provide them with different perspectives, which contributes to the use of satire in the novel. These characters communicate their unique perception of what they observe during their travels. These observations and the way they are recounted in the letters set the satirical tone of the novel. This article will, in this respect, focus on how Smollett makes use of satire in order to criticize England, its politics and social life through these letters with a special focus on how social and political satire is presented from different characters' perspectives.

Satire plays an important role in Smollett's fiction, especially in his last novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. It provides the opportunity to question the established ingrained norms in society and introduces new perspectives. There are two kinds of satire: Juvenalian satire, which is bitter, angry, and harsh and Horatian satire, which is mild, tolerant, and amusing. Satire sometimes contains humor, which can increase its effectiveness. James Sutherland in his book, *English Satire* argues that,

the writer of satire is trying to persuade men to admire or despise, to examine their habitual assumptions, to face ugly facts, to look beneath the surface of things, to change sides in politics or religion, to return to the old and true, to abandon the old and outworn, to do this or to do the exact opposition---in short, to see, or to think, or believe whatever seems good to the writer of satire (1958: 5).

Satire in this regard enables the readers the means to assess what they read from a different angle. Michael Rosenblum also touches on certain characteristics of satire and the satirist in that the satirist creates his own world and an alternative model while presenting the society that is regarded as a bad one (1975: 556). The satirist evaluates what is happening around from his own point of view and brings forward an alternative possibility.

Smollett's novel, *Humphry Clinker* narrates what Matthew Bramble and the four people who are with him during his travels experience along the way. The novel's epistolary form presents multiple perspectives of these characters because each character has the opportunity to voice his/her opinion and idea through the letters. These letters also give information about the action, the place, and the date in the novel. Some letters are longer as compared to the others. Matthew Bramble's letters, Lydia's letters, and Jery's letters are mostly the longer ones. These characters voice their own thoughts and feelings, which increases the sense of individuality. The novel begins with Matthew Bramble's letter to Dr. Lewis, his physician and adviser. Jery describes Matthew Bramble as "*an odd kind of humorist, always on the fret, and so unpleasant in his manner*" (Smollett, 2009: 8). As Jery also points out, Bramble is a character who constantly criticizes. He feels affinity with Scotland when he is there; however, he does not feel the same when he is in London or in Bath. To exemplify, he is very much bored at a social gathering in Bath, which is clearly seen when he says:

I sat a couple of long hours, half stifled, in the midst of a noisome crowd; and could not help wondering, that so many hundreds of those that rank as rational creatures, could find entertainment in seeing a succession of insipid animals, describing the same dull figure for a whole evening, on an area, not much bigger than a taylor's shop-board (Smollett, 2009: 65).

As can be understood from his statement, Bramble does not feel at home in this social gathering; on the contrary, it stifles him, as he finds repetition boring. Byron Gassman states that Bramble's point of view is "*highly individualized [and] subjective,*" which is true since he presents his own subjective idea to the reader throughout the novel (1971: 163).

The fact that the other characters also have their distinct features strengthens the satirical tone of the novel. Lydia reacts mostly in a romantic way, whereas Jerry is tolerant. Bramble tells that Lydia "*can write, and spell, and speak French, and play upon the harpsichord; then she dances finely, has a good figure, and is very well inclined; but she's deficient in spirit, and so susceptible---and so tender forsooth*" (Smollett, 2009: 12). Furthermore, she has a good command of French and plays an instrument, the harpsichord. However, she lacks depth in spirit and is fragile, which is an example of the stereotypical image of a woman in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Jeremy Melford, whom Bramble describes as "*full of college-petulance and self-conceit; proud as a German count, and as hot and hasty as a Welch mountaineer*" also comments on the events (Smollett, 2009: 12). Gassman points out that Jerry is a "*good reporter, narrating events without the embroidery of personal animus or affectation, describing scenes with affable objectivity*" (1971: 161). He narrates the events objectively and keeps his personality in the background. Tabitha Bramble, Matthew Bramble's sister, loves men and marries Lismahago in the end. Lydia depicts her as follows:

In her person, she is tall, raw-boned, awkward, flat-chested, and stooping; her complexion is sallow and freckled; her eyes are not grey, but greenish, like those of a cat, and generally inflamed; her hair is of a sandy, or rather dusty hue; her forehead low; her nose long, sharp, and, towards the extremity, always red in cool weather; her lips skinny, her mouth extensive, her teeth straggling and loose, of various colours and conformation; and her long neck shrivelled into a thousand wrinkles---In her temper, she is proud, stiff, vain, imperious, prying, malicious, greedy, and uncharitable (Smollett, 2009: 60).

As can be seen, her appearance is narrated in detail with the female body as the focus point. Her gathering some money through the death of a sister implicates implicit criticism and satire.

In addition to these characters, Humphry Clinker, the servant in the novel, is not mentioned until page 82. He is brought up in a work house and later apprenticed to a blacksmith. As a good-hearted man, he preaches Methodism. He constantly shows his gratitude to Matthew Bramble and actually turns out to be his son, which is revealed towards the end of the novel. When the truth is revealed, his name changes into Matthew Loyd. His tie with M. Bramble is significant in that it reasserts the "*importance of familial connections in a world where all non-economic relationships seem to be disintegrating*" (Sussman, 1994: 610). This demonstrates how important the lineage is within the parameters of that society, as Humphry Clinker is ultimately transformed into Matthew Loyd.

Similarly, the other characters are also functional. They represent different classes, different perspectives, and different backgrounds with their unique observations of the places they visit, which reinforces the satirical tone of the novel. George Dennison masquerades himself as Wilson the actor so that he will not have to marry someone simply because his parents want him to do so. Since he comes from a family of high rank, his future wife must belong to the same class according to his parents; however, he does not want to marry someone whom he does not love. Lieutenant Lismahago gets married to Tabitha Bramble in the end and joins the group at Durham. He was a captive at the hands of the American Indians, which he recounts to the group. Hopkins states that Lismahago "*as a therapeutic foil helps to ameliorate Matthew's morbid imagination*" (1969: 174). He, in a way, relieves Matthew Bramble's pain and grief.

## 2. SATIRE IN THE EXPEDITION OF HUMPHRY CLINKER

Tobias Smollett uses satire, a powerful means of criticizing the problematic aspects in a society, due to several reasons, which Warner lists as follows:

First, it was an easy way to achieve comedy. Assuming certain objective, rational norms, the satiric novelist creates comic effects by juxtaposing against these standards the aberrant behaviour of his characters. [...] Second, the satiric perspective gave the novelist an easy way of establishing values in his novel world. [...] The ludicrousness of the priests, and so on, was to serve as a warning to men to avoid such actions (1972: 150).

Through Tabitha and Humphry Clinker, Smollett creates comic effects as their behaviors are all juxtaposed such as Clinker's preaching and Tabitha's endeavoring to find a husband. The use of satire in this novel offers a chance to re-think about the accepted norms, customs, and systems, which can be seen in Matthew Bramble's representation of England because he shatters the grandeur of England through his depiction.

The places are used functionally in the novel since they reflect the characters' emotions. Bath is depicted in various ways by different characters. Matthew Bramble and his group visit Bath due to health problems and they share their experiences in Bath with the receiver of the letter. For M. Bramble, this city is overcrowded and small, but full of people, actually more than it can sustain. Furthermore, he does not trust in what he eats or drinks there because there may be something dangerous or poisonous. He is afraid of getting infected, which keeps him from sleeping. Bramble accordingly says: "*We cannot even sleep, without risqué of infection. I say, infection--This place is the rendezvous of the diseased--You won't deny, that many diseases are infectious; even the consumption itself, is highly infectious*" (Smollett, 2009: 47). Bath is not promising; on the contrary, the reader is given rather a dark bleak, and pessimistic image of the city. Rosenblum states that Bramble "*visits Hot Well and Bath where society comes to clean and heal itself, but he discovers that there, it only bathes in its own dirt and spread its diseases*" (1975: 569). Bramble goes there to cure his gout, but he finds out that the city is actually ill with its problems. Thus, it can be stated that Smollett satirizes Bath through the main character Bramble so that he can communicate his concerns about the ills in society.

In this regard, Matthew Bramble does not see anything entertaining in Bath and feels suffocated by the crowd there. Bramble's perspective is, in this respect, an example of Juvenalian satire as it is bitter, angry, harsh, pessimistic, and bleak. Bramble is indignant at what he observes, which he presents in a rather harsh manner when he talks about the citizens: "*[T]hey are seen everywhere, rambling, riding, rolling, rushing, jostling, mixing, bouncing, cracking, and crushing in one vile ferment of stupidity and corruption--All is tumult and hurry; one would imagine they were impelled by some disorder of the brain, that will not suffer them to be at rest*" (Smollett, 2009: 88).

On the other hand, Jeremy Melford's tone is Horatian. His tone is mild, tolerant, and amusing as opposed to Bramble's tone: "*I am, on the contrary, amazed to find so small a place, so crowded with entertainment and variety. London itself can hardly exhibit one species of diversion, to which we have not something analogous at Bath, over and above those singular advantages that are peculiar to the place*" (Smollett, 2009: 48). Although Matthew Bramble comments on Bath in negative terms, Jery concentrates on the positive features of Bath such as having a variety of entertainment. Jery tells that Bath is colorful in terms of the group of people it has such as philosophers, poets, bishops, projectors, players, chemists, generals, judges, wits, and fiddlers. What also pleases him is that class does not matter in the public rooms there. Jery attends a ball in Bath and feels pleasantly delighted in the ball. He is not on the same page with his uncle about the plebeians' participation in the entertainments. Bramble, however, does not take delight in having the company of the plebeians because he is of the opinion that the mixture of all "*was destructive of all order and urbanity; that it rendered the plebeians insufferably arrogant and troublesome, and vulgarized the deportment and sentiments of those who moved in the upper spheres of life*" (Smollett, 2009: 51). Yet, Jery believes that they also have a right to pleasure and enjoyment.

Here, the multiplicity of perspectives adds to the satirical tone of the novel. Accordingly, Lydia Melford and Winifred Jenkins express their image of Bath in a different manner as compared to Matthew Bramble. It is a new world to Lydia, who expresses her feelings as follows: “*All is gayety, good-humoured, and diversion. The eye is continually entertained with the splendor of dress and equipage; and the ear with the sound of coaches, chaises, chairs, and other carriages*” (Smollett, 2009: 39). The city seems to captivate her, as dressing, the sound of coaches, music, balls, concerts, private parties, and assemblies all fascinate her. Her image of Bath is somewhat romanticized. Winifred Jenkins presents juxtapositions such as “*dressing, and fiddling, and dancing, and gadding, and, courting, and, plotting*” (Smollett, 2009: 42). Contrasts are thus given together at the same time, which illustrates how the image of Bath changes according to the perspective of each character in the novel.

In relation to the satirical tone of the novel, Smollett criticizes the materialist culture in England. The new society indulges itself in the desire to live more luxuriously. London serves as a good example of this materialist culture in the novel, which is pointed out as follows:

The tide of luxury has swept all the inhabitants from the open country [...] 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 summer excursions. They desert their dirt and drudgery, and swarm 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 (Smollett, 2009: 87).

Matthew Bramble points out that these people cannot live up to their expectations in London and therefore become thieves. This situation increases corruption and causes malfunctioning in society. Through Bramble, Smollett criticizes those who abandon their places in order to settle in London with the intention of establishing a more luxurious life. What is also satirized is people’s wish to live luxuriously and to wear fine clothes without the need to work. Their laziness is emphasized and criticized severely. Weed asserts that “*[t]he road in Humphry Clinker then, leads continually farther away from England’s corrupt and effeminate commercial culture, in which the stress on modernity occludes a real lack of civility*” (1997: 616).

In a similar vein, London is satirized severely. M. Bramble makes a comparison between Brambleton-hall and London through which he narrates how happy he is at Brambleton-hall. He stresses that his sleep is not disturbed by the noise, as he is within nature there. He can drink healthy and natural water and his bread is home-made there. The fruit he eats is delicious and the soil is fertile. Brambleton-hall offers him different forms of entertainment such as playing billiards and backgammon. However, his tone changes from optimism to pessimism when he comments on London, as he complains about the weather, water, and bread there:

If I would drink water, I must quaff the mawkish contents of an open aqueduct, exposed to all manner of defilement; or swallow that which comes from the river Thames, impregnated with all the filth of London and Westminster---Human excrement is the least offensive part of the concrete, which is composed of all the drugs, minerals, and poisons, used in mechanics and manufacture, enriched with the putrefying carcasses of beasts and men; and mixed with the scourings of all the wash-tubs, kennels, and common sewers, within the bills of mortality (Smollett, 2009: 120).

He does not appreciate the quality of water, food is not natural and healthy, and the soil is not fertile. Based on these remarks, it can be argued that Matthew Bramble, “*who is capable of making peace with his own sinful, libertine past*” becomes a powerful character for Smollett to satirize London (Markidou, 2010: 65).

Moreover, the press is also satirized through M. Bramble. It is criticized due to the fact that it becomes a mere tool at the hands of the politicians. Bramble believes that the press has become a means of manipulation. He adds that if it violates religion, charity, and law, it can give great harm to society. M. Bramble criticizes “*the general degeneracy of the times,*” and the press serves as a good example (Gassman, 1963: 399). Bramble underlines the fact that the press is pro-government, which is communicated as follows: “*Whatever mischief they may do in other respects, they certainly contribute, in one particular, to the advantage of government*” (Smollett, 2009:

103). The press in this regard contributes to the government in one way or another, which is satirized by Smollett through M. Bramble.

Illness also plays an important role in reflecting Smollett's satire since it is linked with the problems in society, namely the English society of the time. Matthew Bramble's illness is a sign of sickness in England of the period, which can be observed through implications in the novel. Mayer tells that "*Bramble is sick and England is sick; the illness of both will become more apparent as the journey unfolds*" (1992: 251). As he travels to cure his illness, the alleged "illness" of England is also introduced to the reader (emphasis added). In relation to this point, Weed states that the novel uses medicine and medical jargon to describe the ills of urbanization in England, which "*connects the problems of public and private political economy especially to the question of what it means to be a man in the eighteenth century*" (1997: 617).

As Smollett makes a comparison between England and Scotland through M. Bramble, Keymer argues that "*it is in Scotland that the travellers encounter cultural differences in its most marked and painful form*" (1995: 126). Additionally, the characters comment on the Act of Union of 1707, its advantages and disadvantages, and the geographical features. While praising Scotland, England acts like a foil highlighting the alleged outstanding characteristics of Scotland on which Matthew Bramble comments as follows:

Northumberland is a fine country, extending to the Tweed, which is a pleasant pastoral stream; but you will be surprised when I tell you that the English side of that river is neither so well cultivated nor so populous as the other. --- The farms are thinly scattered, the lands unenclosed, and scarce a gentleman's seat is to be seen in some miles from the Tweed; whereas the Scots are advanced in crowds to the very brink of the river, so that you may reckon above thirty good houses, in the compass of a few miles, belonging to proprietors whose ancestors had fortified castles in the same situations, a circumstance that shews what dangerous neighbours the Scots must have formerly been to the northern counties of England (Smollett, 2009: 207).

There are two different images of Northumberland given by M. Bramble. The English side does not have cultivation and is sparsely populated, whereas the Scottish side is populous. The Scots are presented as strong, which implies Smollett's attempt to "*recuperate contemporary Scotland, misrepresented in the dominant representations circulating at the time, in the present within the context of Britain*" (Lutz, 2001: 6). In this respect, comparing England with Scotland becomes an efficient means of satire in the novel.

Furthermore, political satire is also used by Smollett in order to criticize politics and injustice. He questions the authority of the juries and their biases against Scotland. In his opinion, juries are composed of "*illiterate plebeians*" that are easily manipulated (Smollett, 2009: 205). Corrupt juries favor the powerful ones and can charge someone even if there is no sufficient evidence. Malfeasance finds its place in different places such as law and education, which leads British jurisdiction to be regarded as corrupt by Matthew Bramble. Juries and courts in Scotland, on the other hand, are not described as fraudulent; on the contrary, they are depicted as skillful in jurisdiction. Bramble explains this point as follows:

Their [the Scots] college of justice is a bench of great dignity, filled with judges of character and ability. ---I have heard some causes tried before this venerable tribunal; and was very much pleased with the pleadings of their advocates, who are by no means deficient either in argument or in elocution. The Scottish legislation is founded in a great measure, on the civil law, consequently, their proceeding vary from those of the English tribunals; but I think, they have the advantage of us in their method of examining witnesses apart, and in the constitution of their jury, by which they certainly avoid the evil which I mentioned in my last from Lismahago's observations (Smollett, 2009: 232).

As can be seen, his depiction of the Scottish jurisdiction is in contrast with his depiction of its British counterpart. The Scottish justice is filled with dignity and qualified people. People trust in their jurisdiction and the lawyers are described as eloquent. Here, Smollett highlights the positive aspects of the Scottish system while revealing the alleged negative aspects of the British system, which functions as a powerful example of political satire.

Finally, the title of the novel is also worth explicating briefly. Humphry Clinker is the name of the servant in the beginning, who turns out to be Matthew Bramble's son. He is modest, devout, good-hearted, grateful, and preaches Methodism. Warner claims that the title is "suggestive" (1972: 159). In this regard, it can be argued that it also concerns the expedition of his social class. When the truth about his parentage is revealed, his social status changes and he climbs up the social ladder, which demonstrates the potential for class mobility.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has revealed that Tobias Smollett's epistolary novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* as a powerful text draws on satire to question and to criticize the established values of its time, which is accomplished through various metaphorical and geographical journeys of the characters. These characters visit numerous different places where they gain valuable transformative experiences, which provide an insight into the societal ambience of its time. These experiential journeys illustrate how the multiplicity of perspectives has a strong potential to add to the satirical tone of the novel.

In addition, this study has demonstrated that the use of satire in Smollett's novel provides a unique opportunity to re-consider and question the accepted norms, customs, and systems, which has been illustrated through Matthew Bramble's representation of England because he shatters the grandeur of England through his depiction. These characters' expedition is not only geographical, but also "a moral journey which culminates in the expediting or freeing of Humphry Clinker from the fetters of poverty, hunger, nakedness, and anonymity" (Goldberg qtd. in Warner, 1972: 158).

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