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Sentimental journeys

by [Pat Rogers](#)

On *The Letters of Laurence Sterne*, edited by Melvyn New and Peter de Voogd.

Imagine that you were alive precisely two hundred and fifty years ago. It's not too hard, as Peter De Vries pointed out in another context, so long as you are an average mixed-up person, uncertain about the way the world seems to be heading. In the opening words of *1759: The Year Britain Became Master of the World* (2004), Frank McLynn argues that the year "should be as well known in British history as 1066," and that "most of the other, better-known school history dates" like Magna Carta and the Spanish Armada "pale into insignificance."

This claim makes little secret of its own exaggerated formulation. But it cannot be denied that, after earlier reverses, things had begun to go well for the allies in the Seven Years War. The victory of James Wolfe over Montcalm at Quebec saw the climax of a run of success that resulted in the French loss of Canada and fo ...

Pat Rogers is the author of *Johnson* (Past Masters), The Samuel Johnson Encyclopedia, and the entry for Johnson in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

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