THE STRUCTURE OF LAURENCE STERNE'S
TRISTRAM SHANDY

by

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ABSTRACT

Basically, a study of the structure of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* involves an analysis of the point of view of both the author and the narrator, and hence of variations on the first-person narration that are found in this novel. *Tristram Shandy* is related wholly in the authorial and historical present, and the reader is included in the narrator's discourses [as well as the fictional characters] of Tristram's own world. Hence, one must apply a considerable degree of critical objectivity when examining the narrator's role in the novel.

A second problem is the importance of the fictional world that Tristram is ostensibly concerned with -- that is, his birth and upbringing within the social environment of Shandy Hall, because the process of Tristram's narration proceeds to usurp most of the novel, shouldering out events at Shandy Hall, which are left half-introduced, or unfinished, or barely hinted at, and we are left with a fairly complete portrait of Tristram Shandy, but not of his life at Shandy Hall.

A third problem is that of the inherent structure of the novel, which necessarily is centered around the dominant, controlling voice of the narrator. Although this structure has been dismissed as chaotic or irregular or formless, it does possess definite patterns which allow for the addition
of further units. As *Tristram Shandy* is basically an open-ended novel allowing for infinite expansion, its chronology and subject matter are designed to cohere only in terms of Tristram's entire life; thus we find the events and characters are remembered in the authorial present. The novel moves back and forth on different levels of the historical present, and besides setting out an accumulative amount of remembered biographical detail, presents a projected picture of the mind of an individual in the process of remembering and narrating. A close study of the associational links between chapters clearly reveals the above points, for significantly, these links are all easy to follow and accumulative in effect.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how the structure of the novel proceeds from the dominant single point of view that Tristram represents, how the ostensible autobiographical subject matter is eventually subjugated to this personality in operation, and how the structure of the novel functions efficiently towards this end. Chapter I examines the Tristram persona and Chapter II the Yorick persona, in order to determine how they function in this first-person narration, and to what combined effect. Chapter III on Shandy Hall examines the characters of the novel, exclusive of Tristram, with a view to motivational factors that may proceed from them and that impinge on his story. And Chapter IV examines the associational and
chronological structure of the novel in terms of the actual patterns and linkages Sterne provided his segmentalized novel with, and draws a general conclusion from this study.
TEXTUAL NOTES

1. I have used the single hyphen (-), double hyphen or dash (--), triple hyphen (---), and quadruple hyphen (----) to approximate Sterne's use of variable length dashes.

2. All references to Volumes and Chapters, with the exceptions of the epigraphs prefacing each section of the thesis, are given by Roman and Arabic numeral only. For example, I, 1 for Volume I, Chapter 1.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance given me over the past two years by Dr. John Hulcoop, without whose suggestions and patience this thesis could not have been completed.

And to Sybil, my Rock of Gibraltar.
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INTRODUCTION

...But rather courteously give me credit for a little more wisdom than appears upon my outside. (Volume I, Chapter 6)

Laurence Sterne's novel, *Tristram Shandy*, is famous for its apparent irregularity of form, but it has certainly survived 200 years not because it is something "odd" but because of the regularity of its original structure and the unity of impression it conveys. *Tristram Shandy* is a first-person narrative in which the narrator assumes for himself certain conventional prerogatives of the autobiographical form as they were already employed before 1759: a total control of event and commentary, the use of the literary convention of "memory" which implies total recall, and a tone of intimacy reminiscent of close conversation. But the structure of this novel, from the 18th century to the present, has been dismissed as impossibly chaotic. Its resemblances to Menippean satire or the collection of humorous anecdotes,¹ the stream-of-consciousness novel,² "an exactly executed historical novel,"³ dramatic monologue,⁴ and irreverent fictitious histories of voyages or "lives"⁵ have all been noted, and a case for *Tristram Shandy*'s identification in terms of genre with each of these categories has been generally overstated. The novel does lend itself to
such categorizing in terms of conventional forms. For example, superficially the novel does appear to have a "structure modeled on the operative character of consciousness," that is, we are seeing the mind of the author in the process of creation. But this is true of any first-person fictional account and Tristram's self-consciousness is not unique in literature. Similarly, one generalized facet of Tristram Shandy's peculiarly self-reflective point of view has been seized upon by many critics as all-important, and the overall nature of the novel's structure lost to view.

Tristram Shandy is actually a fictional autobiography that reveals distinctly original structural techniques, though these bear basic resemblances to techniques employed by Sterne's predecessors in 18th century fiction. The degree of originality of a fictional technique is highly debatable, however, and although sources have been found for Sterne's handling of time, his subject matter, and even his style, direct correspondences with preceding works are hard to pin down, though wholesale borrowing from Robert Burton and similar collections of anecdotes is easy to point out. However, a close study of the novel's structure will elucidate those techniques in Tristram Shandy which are employed in an original manner and those which appear as wholly new.

The conscious artistry Tristram displays in presenting the material of his novel and keeping the process of
entertainment going really is generated on a higher level by the conscious artistry of Sterne in creating Tristram-and-his-novel-in-progress. The two main sub-plots (Tristram's life and Uncle Toby's "amours"), the logical progression of events in the narrative through association, the changing of time continua to create the effect of an active process of remembering, and overall tight organization of the novel (to be examined in Chapter IV) which underlies Sterne's natural defence of Tristram Shandy's original tone and structure by endowing the narrator Tristram with the pose of a crack-brained eccentric— all involve highly complex literary techniques.

Tristram Shandy is a fiction, and therefore must ultimately function as a work of art independent of the character and life of its creator. Hence we must not read Tristram Shandy as an autobiographical account of Sterne writing his own novel. But although the events and opinions in this first-person novel all emanate from Tristram, certain recurrent interests that were also Sterne's remind one frequently that a parallel in terms of personality and interests existed between Laurence Sterne and his creation, Tristram Shandy. The preoccupation with his readers' critical reactions, a sense of Christian faith and benevolence as counterbalance to the disinterested fatality at work in the universe, the problems raised by the "motley" nature of
his novel, an eccentricity of tone, and apostrophes within the novel to Tristram on his ineptitude or poor health—all link Sterne and Tristram as creator and persona. However, the "self-apostrophes" offer an instance in which the persona of Tristram, the crack-brained author, reveals itself as an obvious artifice. Hence, one may well regard the Sterne-Tristram relationship as a mask, and such a hypothesis is substantiated by Tristram's speeches and actions. As Tristram moves from "jests to serious matters and from the serious back again to jests" throughout the whole novel, this kinetic motion in subject emphasizes the fluidity of role the narrator maintains. When the "controlling strings" of hints of omniscient determinism or rhetorical address on the part of the narrator, become visible, Tristram is seen as a manipulated puppet; when pathos induced by contemplation or illness produces complete objectivity on the reader's part towards Tristram, Tristram resembles a mask, like Aunt Dinah's in VIII, 3, which is "half seen through." But for the greater part of the novel, Tristram is both a sentimental character and an eccentric narrator, and functions as an independent projection of Sterne as author; hence Tristram is a persona throughout Tristram Shandy.

A persona may be said to be a fictional creation objectifying certain of the author's own literary and social concerns, and functioning as a semi-autonomous, though artistically distinct means by which the author can present or
resolve these concerns. This creation must also fulfill
the requirements of the term persona (literally "other
person or self") by paralleling the author's intellectual
or social activities so closely that the parallel is un-
mistakable. The literary autonomy of such a character
therefore is restricted by the necessary close resemblances
between author and creation. In order to maintain the
correct sense of proportion between illusion and reality
that fiction requires on the part of the reader, a one-to-
one identification of the persona and the author is necess­
arily precluded. In Tristram Shandy, the narrator is a
persona defined by ironic sidelights on his own personality
and actions which make clear that Tristram is to be taken
primarily as a fictional creation, with the many resemblances
to Sterne's own character and actions to be accepted as
comic "shadow" to the main actions of the narration and the
Shandy family.

Both the characters of Tristram and Yorick in Tristram
Shandy function as personae, Tristram's position as a first-
person narrator and Yorick's as an eccentric and comic Anglican clergymen both paralleling Sterne's. In contrast to
these two characters, the other characters in the novel,
especially those also resident at Shandy Hall, function as
"comic instruments", serving Sterne's satiric or comic pur-
poses. Their individual characteristics are made secondary,
in terms of comic interaction, to the humorous possibilities
in speech and action provided by their conflicting interests.
This interaction is outlined in Chapter III of this thesis, as a prelude to a study in Chapter IV of the associative structure of the novel, of necessity centered organically around Tristram's personality. However, before the function of Shandy Hall is examined, the Tristram and Yorick personae must be studied, because they represent the thematic perspective with which we must view the narrative as a structural unit. This is the concern of Chapters I and II, to which we now turn.
INTRODUCTION

FOOTNOTES


5 See Helen Sard Hughes, "A Precursor of Tristram Shandy," Journal of English & Germanic Philology, XVII (1918), 227-251, for an example of such a case for a literary precedent to Sterne's novel.


8 From the title page to Volumes III & IV.
CHAPTER ONE

THE TRISTRAM PERSONA

"And who are you? said he.--Don't puzzle me; said I."
(Volume VII, Chapter 33)

Tristram's Pose

A necessary distinction must first be made between what Tristram would like his readers to believe about himself and his writing, and the degree of artificiality that this "pose" is shown to possess. The basic assumption we are asked to make is that Tristram, who is telling what is ostensibly his life's story, is remarkably objective about his own past actions. This, of course, is a conventional authorial prerogative practised in earlier 18th century biographical fictions. But a more important assumption is that the reader will accept Tristram's ineptitude as an author; for upon this is based most of the colloquy between reader and author, and all of the sympathy for motive and action that the novel must elicit to successfully engage the reader's attention.

The narrator of Tristram Shandy is ostensibly an eighteenth-century gentleman, well-travelled and educated, with a penchant for ribald story-telling and ironic innuendo that permeates his autobiography. In Volume IX, we see
Tristram "in a purple jerkin and yellow pair of slippers, without either wig or cap on."¹ This is the Tristram who has caught asthma in Flanders, who hurls his wig up to the ceiling or his slippers across the room while composing his novel, and coughs up blood in Volumes VIII and IX (pp. 419 & 482). This is the Tristram Shandy who is buffeted about in the novel by Fortune with "pitiful misadventures and cross accidents" (p. 8), principally the incidents of the squashed nose, his mis-naming by the curate, the circumcising sash-window, and the incompleteness of Tristra-paedia. This is Tristram the character, who according to Uncle Toby's prediction, "should neither think nor act like any other man's child." (p. 5)

TRISTRAM: THE AUTHOR

The pathetic figure of Tristram the character is underlined by an emphasis on his ineptitude as an author. This is pointed out in apostrophe-like passages where Tristram is addressed (suddenly) specifically and objectively, ostensibly by himself, but since the effect is to heighten the pathos of Tristram's "life-situation", a separation of Sterne and his first-person narrator is achieved. One also feels that Sterne has turned to his own concerns here, and they are no longer Tristram's.

Tristram is said to write according to mood and a passive attitude is contrasted with an excited one in III, 28:
Lord! how different from the rash jerks, and hare-brain'd squirts thou art wont, Tristram! to transact it with in other humours,--dropping thy pen,--spurting thy ink about thy table and thy books,--as if thy pen and thy ink, thy books and thy furniture cost thee nothing.

The degree of reader objectivity resulting from this passage heightens an impression of Tristram's pathetic ineptitude. In VIII, 6, Tristram's book is not selling, and he is thus obviously failing as an author:

Inconsiderate soul that thou art!. What! are not the unavoidable distresses with which, as an author and a man, thou art hemm'd in on every side of thee--are they, Tristram, not sufficient, but thou must entangle thyself still more?

Is it not enough that thou art in debt, and that thou hast ten cartloads of thy fifth and sixth volumes still--still unsold, and art almost at thy wit's ends, how to get them off thy hands.

Pathos and ineptitude are here combined. These apostrophes appear to me to constitute changes of perspective that are not only unmotivated in their immediate context and hence startle the reader from his acceptance of the narrator's conventions, but also achieve a degree of pathetic objectivity too strong for us to remain with Tristram, but entirely appropriate for an identification of the speaker as Sterne, who here as author is stretching the the necessary constant authorial perspective of a first-person narrative too far.

More frequent than these self-addresses are references by Tristram in the course of his narrative to the problems of organizing his subject, and a concern with the effect of
the book on its readers. This latter concern is also part of a close relationship between storyteller and audience that is built up in Volume I and sustained for a definite purpose -- the establishment of a mainly one-sided conversation, as a basis for the comic entertainment in a printed medium that Tristram Shandy represents. In Volume I, Tristram says:

Writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is), is but a different name for conversation: As no one who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all; — so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.

For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own.

(p. 83).

This passage compliments the reader's sagacity and imaginative powers, digs at the complete omniscience of authorial voice (which authors like Henry Fielding assumed), and reminds the reader that Sterne expects him to make connections he himself does not think necessary to include. A hint of deliberate mystification is present also. He follows this introduction with a series of things the reader must now imagine -- the end of Slop's tale, the end of Obadiah's tale, Mr. Shandy going upstairs, and Slop preparing for action. In other words, the reader is to clear the stage for action by himself.

Ian Watt maintains:
When, to this close and complex interplay between the narrator and the audience, we also add a story that is both richly amusing in itself and diversified with every sort of digression and interpolated story, we are some way towards understanding the special nature of Sterne's humour. In a more straightforward novel...the possibilities of humour are largely limited to having comic characters and situations, or to the author's making amusing remarks about them...Kant wrote that "laughter arises from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" and no one has been more skillful than Sterne in suddenly undermining the expectations which he has aroused in the reader.2

This "undermining" process, playing on what the reader might ordinarily expect in an autobiographical novel, reappears often in the novel, and has an opposite effect to that of employing the reader's imagination.

Tristram's ostensible ineptitude as an author, then, is revealed, through his subtle manipulation of the reader's role in Tristram Shandy as participating audience, to be a conscious "pose" (and a clever one) employed in order to enlist sympathy and perhaps an unquestioning acceptance for his peculiar novel's shape.

THE "IMPOSSIBLE PROJECT."

The apparent loose structure of the book, with its back and forward motion and all-inclusive plan, introduces what may be termed a further problem of "perpetual motion." In IV, 13, Tristram observes that "the more I write, the more I shall have to write" (p. 214), and: "I shall never overtake myself--whipp'd and driven to the last pinch, at the worst I
I shall have one day the start of my pen—and one day is enough for two volumes—and two volumes will be enough for one year.—" (p. 215). Thus, although the book is obviously given an open-ended structure that allows for almost unlimited expansion upon its basic subject (Tristram's life and opinions), to include all the relevant details of Tristram's background would exhaust the narrator's lifetime, even though it provides the narrator with an assured annual income for an indefinite period of time.

The recognition of such a problem by Tristram (and hence Sterne) would imply that Tristram is incapable of selecting properly relevant details and eliminating the irrelevant. An agglutinative structure, on first glance, is easy to compose. However, the book is intelligently structured in its finished form, and although the characters are not described physically, nor are many of the major influential events in their lives given (for example, we are given only those in Tristram's life that Walter considers important), the characters' opinions tell us more about them than would a catalogue of facts. Since the basic constituents of a person's character are emotional and one must provide motivation for his actions if he is to be a credible personality, a simple list of events by itself is an unsatisfactory biographical technique.

As characters, the men and women of *Tristram Shandy* are successful. J. P. Priestley and W. M. Thackeray are but
two readers and critics of Tristram Shandy who have testified to the strength and memorability of Sterne's comic conceptions as characters. Although at first glance the characters of Tristram Shandy are as peculiarly constructed as the whole of the novel, and we are never given their physical appearance, they each have a unity of conception and consistency of reaction that gives them credibility. Furthermore, as Fluchère notes: "Their eccentricities never stop them from belonging to the feeling human family. That is why their intellectual aberrations, their whims, their manias, even their occasional intolerance, are made up for by the permanence of their emotional ties." 

A comic parallel to the impossibility of Tristram's ever completing his biographical project is Walter Shandy's Tristra-pedia. Tristram remarks, as he has done a volume earlier about his own composition, "every day a page or two of the Tristra-pedia became of no consequence" (V, 16); though Tristram outgrows the educational philosophies contained in the Tristra-pedia he does not outstrip the content of his own novel in terms of its applicability to his own position. Tristram Shandy is continually relevant as (noticeably) Tristram frequently reminds us that he is creating the linkages of subject and that he is still in the process of composition.

The "impossibility" of Tristram's completion of his
novel not only allows him to write for an indefinite period of time, but serves a thematic purpose. Tristram does not want to finish his autobiography, for the only end can be a plateau of achievement -- at a definite point in time -- from which he can relegate all the events of his earlier life into an orderly and meaningful sequence, as Moll does in Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. However, Tristram's novel is structured and relies thematically on its presentation in the historical present. The constant relevancy of memory to the present and hence its formative influence on the future, and the action of writing as a constructive process are the twin *foci* of the novel. The end of such an organic process can only be dissolution in death and an inevitable negation of the process through its ending.

"DIGRESSIONS" AND "PROGRESSIONS"

Early in Volume I, Tristram defends the meanderings of his story on biographical grounds:

...when a man sits down to write a history,--tho' it be but the history of Jack Hickathrift or Tom Thumb, he knows no more than his heels what lets and confounded hindrances he is to meet with in his way,--or what a dance he may be led, by one excursion or another, before all is over. Could a historiographer drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule,--straight forward...without ever once turning his head aside either to the right hand or to the left,--he might venture to foretell you to an hour when he should get to his journey's end;--but the thing is, morally speaking impossible: For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make... which he can no ways avoid. He will have views and prospects to himself perpetually soliciting his eye, which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly; he will moreover have various...
...Accounts to reconcile:
   Anecdotes to pick up:
   Inscriptions to make out:
   Stories to weave in:
   Traditions to sift:
   Personages to call upon:
   Panegyricks to paste up at this door:
   Pasquinades at that:

(p. 28)

Here the meanderings are called "deviations" and not "digressions". However, later in the novel, Tristram calls them "digressions" and discusses them as conventional forms.

Novelists before Sterne claimed the right to digress from a biographical narration of events, as Fielding does in *Tom Jones*:

Reader, I think proper, before we proceed any farther together, to acquaint thee what I intend to digress, through this whole history, as often as I see occasion, of which I am myself a better judge than any pitiful critic whatever; and here I must desire all those critics to mind their own business, and not to intermeddle with affairs or works which no ways concern them; for till they produce the authority by which they are constituted judges, I shall not plead to their jurisdiction.

But Tristram examines the structure of his novel more closely than Fielding does in the above conventional 18th century exercise of an author's prerogative. In I, 22, Tristram subdivides his work into "digressive and progressive movements", metaphorized as cogs and intersecting wheels within a machine. However, what he calls "digressions" are not only structurally necessary to keep the machine going, but he claims they are the best part of the book: "Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine;—they are the life,
the soul of reading;—take them out of this book for instance, --you might as well take the book along with them" (p. 55). This statement would suggest that the "digressions" are not excrescences upon the main narrative -- if one is to take it as the relating of the events of Tristram's life. Semantically, since they constitute his opinions, they are as important to the novel as the other half of the title. Narrative in the traditional sense of a story related progressively and setting forth definite facts is not the method of Tristram Shandy; the whole book is one long protracted and increasingly involuted digression upon the life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman, which would ordinarily be rendered in factual form. Opinions and their derivatives -- especially man's "tendency to take his mental abstractions for real entities" and the construction of logical systems reinforcing one's "hobbyhorsical" ideas-- are certainly the subject and satirical target of Tristram Shandy, as Sterne tells us in the Greek motto prefixed to Volume I, which states: "It is not things themselves that disturb men, but their judgements about these things." The events and apparent digressions of the novel can thus be seen as a single narrative unit, welded together in the historical present of Tristram's verbalizing consciousness.

At this point, one must consider the distinctions that Tristram (and hence Sterne) is careful to draw regarding "narrative" and "digressions". Tristram warns his readers
in I, 6, that they may "think him somewhat sparing of his narrative on...first setting out", but to:

...bear with me,—and let me go on, and tell my story my own way:---or if I should seem now and then to trifle upon the road,---or should sometimes put on a fool's cap with a bell to it, for a moment or two as we pass along,—don't fly off,—but rather courteously give me credit for a little more wisdom than appears upon my outside;—and as we jog on, either laugh with me, or at me, or in short, do any thing,—only keep your temper.

(pp. 8-9)

In this passage, the twin personae Sterne is to use — those of the eccentric author, Tristram, and the parson-jester Yorick, are hinted at, and the original nature of his story's structure introduced.

In I, 22, Tristram describes his novel as a piece of machinery:

...the machinery of my work is of a species by itself; two contrary motions are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with each other. In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive too,—and at the same time.

(p. 54)

...from the beginning of this, you see, I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections, and have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going;—and what's more, it shall be kept a-going these forty years, if it pleases the fountain of health to bless me so long with life and good spirits.

(p. 55)

The contrary motions (according to convention) of progression and digression, I would argue, have been consolidated into
one structure, seemingly "rhapsodical" or fragmented, but moving backwards and forwards in time (by utilizing Tristram's memory) to fill in Tristram's story as a painter would cover a canvas with layers and areas of paint to complete the total picture. In VI, 33, Tristram says: "in good truth, when a man is telling a story in the strange way I do mine, he is obliged continually to be going backwards and forwards to keep all tight together in the reader's fancy...." (p. 351); and in V, 25:

'Tis a point settled,—and I mention it for the comfort of Confucius, who is apt to get entangled in telling a plain story—that provided he keeps along the line of his story, he may go backwards and forwards as he will,—'tis still held to be no digression.

This being premised, I take the benefit of the act of going backwards myself.

(p. 289)

By remaining on the "line of the story", Tristram is thus justified in including whatever incidents he feels are relevant. He has already said that ideally "nothing which has touched me will be thought trifling in its nature, or tedious in its telling" (p. 8). In I, 22, Tristram notes that:

...tho' my digressions are all fair, as you observe,—and that I fly off from what I am about, as far and as often too as any writer in Great-Britain; yet I constantly take care to order affairs so, that my main business does not stand still in my absence..." (p. 54)

implying that not only is all the material he includes
valuable, but all the "digressions" are interconnected and contribute to the story he is constructing, piece-meal, out of his memories. Throughout the novel, Tristram refers to "digressions" when he means a shift of focus from one character to another or the introduction of an illustration or anecdote; but although he uses the term in its recognized sense of a deviation from the main course, Tristram is aware that his book is a compound of digressions. His continual remarks hinting that he is controlling the progress of the novel and his concern with its reception underline this.

On the title page of Volume VII, the most obvious digression in the book, in which Tristram goes abroad to escape Death, the Latin motto from Pliny's *Letters* reads: "For this is no digression from it, but is the main subject itself." In this volume, Tristram moves away from Shandy Hall, and covers both distance and time, and although Tristram is the central character of the events described, the speed of the narration contrasts sharply with the stretched-out moments at Shandy Hall. Volume VII, then, is not a conventional digression, as Sterne warns us, but an example of a period of time experienced as of short duration — the events and their recording in Tristram's mind concur in length and importance — and it balances the periods of time mentally of long duration (to Tristram's mind) found in Volumes I to VI. In his physical attempt to escape the approach of Death, Tristram merely foreshortens
time. In terms of Tristram's consciousness of death, the volume also focuses previous references to illness and death upon the imminence of death in the present. With the exception of one later reference to Tristram's hemorrhaging lungs in Volume VIII (p. 419), Volume VII replaces the cogniscence of death with a celebration of life's comedy both within its own limits as an individual volume and coda-like for the rest of the novel.

THE NOVEL'S "PURPOSE"

Evidence of Tristram's contradictory statements about his purpose in writing *Tristram Shandy* includes his statement in III, 28: "...I sat down to write my life for the amusement of the world, and my opinions for its instruction" (p. 159), a traditional eighteenth century division of aesthetic purpose to be found in many early novels. Defoe's fictitious "autobiographies" purport to offer moral instruction (though perhaps only to cultivate a broader reading public than "honest Dick and Doll"); in his preface to *Moll Flanders*, Defoe claims that:

...this work is chiefly recommended to those who know how to read it, and how to make good the uses of it which the story all along recommends to them; so it is to be hop'd that such readers will be much more pleas'd with the moral than the fable, with the application than with the relation, and with the end of the writer than with the life of the person written of.
...In a word, as the whole relation is carefully garbled of all the levity and looseness that was in it, so it is applied, and with the utmost care, to virtuous and religious uses. None can, without being guilty of manifest injustice, cast any reproach upon it, or upon our design in publishing it.

In the "Preface" (1759) to *Clarissa*, Samuel Richardson says:

From what has been said, considerate Readers will not enter upon the perusal of the Piece before them, as if it were designed only to divert and amuse. It will probably be thought tedious to all such as dip into it, expecting a light Novel, or transitory Romance; and look upon Story in it (interesting as that is generally allowed to be) as its sole end, rather than as a vehicle to the Instruction...?

He has already stated explicitly that Clarissa's person and story are to be viewed as exemplary, an attitude he underlines by discussing the doctrine of punishment and rewards at the end of his novel.

Henry Fielding begins *Joseph Andrews* with the following passage on the illustrative merit of novels:

It is a trite but true observation, that examples work more forcibly on the mind than precepts; and if this be just in what is odious and blameable, it is more strongly so in what is amiable and praiseworthy. Here emulation most effectually operates upon us, and inspires our imitation in an irresistible manner. A good man therefore is a standing lesson to all his acquaintance, and of far greater use than a good book.

But as it often happens that the best men are but little known, and consequently cannot extend the usefulness of their examples a great way; the writer may be called in aid to spread their history farther, and to present the amiable pictures to those who have not the happiness of knowing the originals; and so, by communicating such valuable patterns to the world, he may perhaps do a more extensive service to mankind than the person whose life originally afforded the pattern.
This comment is echoed in Fielding's dedication of *Tom Jones* to George Lyttleton (1749):

...I declare, that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history. This honest purpose you have been pleased to think I have attained: and to say the truth, it is likeliest to be attained in books of this kind; for an example is a kind of picture, in which virtue becomes, as it were, an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness, which Plato asserts there is in her naked charms.

Besides displaying that beauty of virtue which may attract the admiration of mankind, I have attempted to engage a stronger motive to human action in her favour, by convincing men that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her. 11

Significantly, Fielding continues to say: "I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices." 12 This is an attitude echoed by Sterne in his praise of the value of laughter in his dedication of *Tristram Shandy* to Sir William Pitt (1760):

"I live in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill Health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles, but much more so, when he laughs, that it adds something to this Fragment of Life!! (p. 2)

and in Tristram's discussions of Shandyism, a physiological (and hence, perhaps, psychological) panacea against "the spleen." 13

But the paradoxical attitude of the book's author to its avowed purpose is clearly put forward in VI, 17:

...I write a careless kind of a civil, nonsensical, good-humoured Shandean book, which will do all your hearts good---And all your heads too,--provided you understand it. (p. 332)
However, the instruction is to be considerably more subtle than the entertainment. There are numerous claims for its seriousness of purpose, which are immediately belied by their contexts. Tristram implies in I, 20, while chastising the inattentive lady, that his book will "infallibly" impart knowledge if properly read, and at the same time, in a similar fashion to Defoe, Richardson and Fielding before him, he states a reason for his rebuke:

'Tis to rebuke a vicious taste which has crept into thousands beside herself,—of reading straight forwards, more in quest of the adventures, than of the deep erudition and knowledge which a book of this cast, if read over as it should be, would infallibly impart with them. (p. 43)

But this is undercut by the next passage: "The mind should be accustomed to make wise reflections, and draw curious conclusions as it goes along; the habitude of which made Pliny the younger affirm, 'That he never read a book so bad, but he drew some profit from it.'" (p. 43) One must "make the best" of Tristram Shandy, it is implied, though its erudition is superficial and frequently borrowed. In III, 31, Tristram refers to his novel as a book of "strict morality and close reasoning" while worrying about sexual innuendoes, which renders his statement ironic.

On the other hand, as well as being widely read, his book will be received as pure entertainment, as "a book for a parlour window." This idea is supported by Tristram's pose as a jester, and insistence on the value
of laughter. The stimulation of laughter is Tristram's most frequent concern.

**SPONTANEITY**

Tristram poses as an author who writes with complete spontaneity. As he says in VI, 6: "Ask my pen,--it governs me,--I govern not it." (p. 316) In VIII, 2, he says:

...of all the several ways of beginning a book which are now in practice throughout the known world, I am confident my own way of doing it is the best---I'm sure it is the most religious---for I begin with writing the first sentence---and trusting to Almighty God for the second. (p. 415)

But this is contradicted by the following sentences:

'Twould cure an author for ever of the fuss and folly of opening his street-door, and calling in his neighbours and friends, and kinsfolk, with the devil and all his imps, with their hammers and engines, &c., only to observe how one sentence of mine follows another, and how the plan follows the whole. (pp. 415-16)

This hints that the succession of ideas and events is the structure of the novel, and that the frequent "changes of subject" are not "digressions" but part of the unique structure of *Tristram Shandy*. His sentences and chapters are well-connected and comprise a unified whole.

The physical structure of the book is "justified" by Tristram's supposedly inept and capricious treatment of the chapters in each volume. In fact, the chapters comment on an action or speech, present another point of view, or more:
the content of chapters for they do not end an episodic
development, but leave a point up for consideration, suggest
a remark, or terminate a verbal comment by the narrator or
a character (see Chapter IV for a discussion of the struc-
tural function of the chapters in each volume).

At the beginning or ends of chapters, Tristram often
appears to change subject impulsively, part of his mocking:
treatment of the traditional subject or time division imp-
lied by chapter divisions. In I, 23, he signals the utili-
zeation of an impulse as follows: "I have a strong propensity
in me to begin this chapter very nonsensically, and I will
not balk my fancy.—Accordingly I set off thus." (p. 55)
And in IV, 10:

--A sudden impulse comes across me—drop the curtain,
Shandy—I drop it—Strike a line here across the paper,
Tristram—I strike it—and hey for a new chapter?

The duce of any other rule have I! to govern myself by
in this affair—and if I had one—as I do all things out
of all rule—I would twist it and tear it to pieces, and
throw it into the fire when I had done—Am I warm? I am,
and the cause demands it—a pretty story!' is a man to
follow rules—or rules to follow him?

(p. 211)

But as Tristram says in IV, 25: "there is no end, an'
please your reverences, in trying experiments upon chapters"
(p. 237). The spontaneity is clearly revealed as burlesque.

In IX, 25, Tristram requests that the world "let
people tell their stories their own way," a repetition of
his comment in I, 4: "in writing what I have set about, I
shall confine myself neither to his rules [Horace] , nor to
any man's rules that ever lived" (p. 6). As can be seen in his sensitivity to criticism as well as attitude to his audience, the author is very much aware of current literary standards, but he often couples this awareness with a parody of the point under discussion. These are the "pasquinades" promised in I, 4. The author demands the right to be original, yet his originality consists partly of parody upon the established models.

"His own way" consists of a disarranged series of incidents and connective commentary. However, the story, as a result of its rapid pace and quick shifts of time or focus, lies more in the telling than in what it tells. The process of writing is the real focus of the book, and hence Tristram is its principal subject, for he is the means by which the process must continue. This process is one of memory as well as narration, and Tristram's self-consciousness as well as rapid pace of narration emphasizes his central organic role in the novel.

**Tristram as Persona**

Tristram, with his apparently chaotic novel (always about to slip from his control), his concern with the reactions of its readers and critics, and giving the distinct impression of a crack-brained ("Shandy-ish") personality, is a *persona* of Sterne the author. He relates a fictitious autobiography, but the persons, events and ideas satirized...
within it have factual parallels in Laurence Sterne's Yorkshire or childhood background. Dr. Slop is the thinly veiled obstetrician Dr. John Burton; Yorick is based on Sterne himself. Didius represents Dr. Francis Topham, principal subject of *A Good Warm Watchcoat* (1759); Eugenius is John Hall-Stevenson. As Yoseloff says, however, "the autobiographical elements are to be found in the characterizations, thoughts and attitudes expressed, rather than in the details of events in the book." The past events of Tristram's life are hence not those of Sterne's early life. Although Sterne claimed that: "All locality is taken out of the book—the satire general," the above models for his characters are too readily recognizable from life, and the parallels between Tristram as author and Sterne as author are too close to be accidental.

Sterne's close identification in "air and originality" with Tristram throughout the novel is further complicated by Sterne's behavior in real life. Fluchère suggests:

Sterne is one of those rare writers who has manipulated his borrowed personalities without concealing the artifice, and who finds himself so much at home in the fictional character that he yields to the temptation of acting it a little in the real world.

"'Tis however a picture of myself" writes Sterne of his novel just after its publication and he capitalized on the "original" air of the novel by travelling to London in the first week of March, 1760, where he quickly became the hit of "the season". He writes to Catherine Fourmantel in
March, 1760:

My Lodgings is every hour full of your great People of the first Rank who strive who shall most honour me—even all the Bishops have sent their Compliments to me, & I set out on Monday morning to pay my Visits to them all.—I am to dine with Lord Chesterfield, this week &c &c—and next Sunday Lord Rockingham takes me to Court...21

and in another letter:

...from morning to night my Lodgings, which by the by, are the genteelest in Town, are full of the greatest Company—I dined these 2 Days with 2 Ladies of the Bedchamber—then with, Lord Edgecomb—Lord Wilchelsea, Lord Littleton, A Bishop—&c &c—

I assure you my Kitty, that Tristram is the Fashion...22

In the next eight years, Sterne capitalized on his book's popularity. As he wrote to David Garrick from Paris on March 19, 1762:

...for be it known I Shandy it away fifty times more than I was ever wont, talk more nonsense than ever you heard me talk in your days—and to all sorts of people. Qui le diable est ce homme la—said Choiseul, t'other day—ce Chevalier Shandy—you'll think me as vain as a devil, was I to tell you the rest of the dialogue...23

and later in April, 1762: "I Shandy it more than ever, and verily do believe, that by mere Shandeism sublimated by a laughter-loving people, I fence as much against infirmities, as I do by the benefit of air and climate."24 In his letters, he goes under Tristram's name three times,25 including a letter of 1765 addressed to an admirer, Mrs. F(erguson), written entirely in the persona of Tristram Shandy, including the signature (see Appendix 1 for the text of this letter).
References to Shandyism and the hero of his novel abound in Sterne's letters. Thus, Sterne in his own life acknowledged and developed affinities between himself and his creation Tristram and, to a great extent, emphasized the qualities with which he endowed his persona in Tristram Shandy.

Tristram as Puppet:

But although Sterne can be seen to identify to a great degree with Tristram, both within the novel and in real life, he achieves enough objectivity about Tristram to admonish him in the novel in III, 8; III, 28; IV, 32; and VIII, 6. In these passages, the tone of Tristram, "the writer with problems", becomes that of Sterne as sympathetic puppeteer, addressing a misshapen caricature of himself that objectifies his own faults and deals with Sterne's own problems. The concern with "the critics" and their reception of Tristram Shandy is such an authorial problem voiced frequently by Tristram, but which was also Sterne's. So are the problems of organizing material while writing a novel.

The "voice" in any first-person narration must be a projection of the author. However, the "controlling strings" become evident in the above passages and also where Tristram feels his life has been influenced by (significantly) a higher power. Tristram's continual misfortunes underline what Tristram claims early in the book, in I, 5:
—I have been the continual sport of what the world calls Fortune; and though I will not wrong her by saying, She has ever made me feel the weight of any great or signal evil;—yet with all the good temper in the world, I affirm it of her, that in every stage of my life, and at every turn and corner where she could get fairly at me, the ungracious Duchess has pelted me with a set of as pitiful misadventures; and cross accidents as ever small HERO sustained. (p. 8)

One may add to this Yorick's predilection to ill-luck (related by Tristram), which arises from his actions: "... there is a fatality attends the actions of some men: Order them as they will, they pass thro' a certain medium which... twists and refracts them from their true directions" (p. 18). In Tristram Shandy, the individuals, and especially Tristram, are influenced chiefly by small incidents; and the consequences of such events are emphasized in I, 15 (the marriage articles), I, 19 (Tristram's mis-naming), III, 8 (nose), and IV, 27 (the chestnut). These "powers of time and chance" (p. 461) are reinforced by the occasional application of the theory of "humours" or controlling passions (as in I, 1); a reminder of the importance of self-knowledge (cf. II, 17— the sermon on conscience); and an acceptance of the unexplainable or mysterious in life:

But mark, madam, we live amongst riddles and mysteries—the most obvious things, which come in our way, have dark sides, which the quickest sight cannot penetrate into; and even the clearest and most exalted understandings amongst us find ourselves puzzled and at a loss in almost every cranny of nature's works; so that this, like a thousand other things, falls out for us in a way, which tho' we cannot reason upon it,—yet we find the good of it, may it please your reverences and your worships—and that's enough for us. (p. 219)
The supposedly unpredictable nature of "misfortunes" in the Shandy household, headed by Walter Shandy, is mentioned by Tristram in I, 21; III, 23; and III, 28. However, one suspects that Walter brought the evils down upon his own head, since he

...was serious;—he was all uniformity;—he was systematical, and, like all systematical reasoners, he would move both heaven and earth, and twist and torture every thing in nature to support his hypothesis...

(p. 41)

and hence continually "crucified TRUTH." Most of his own self-induced problems he appears richly to deserve, after his statement to Uncle Toby: "What is the character of a family to a hypothesis?...—Nay, if you come to that—what is the life of a family" (p. 52). But one can see, if Tristram's belief in determinism follows Walter's (as two critics of Tristram Shandy would contend), the very causality of the "misfortunes" of the Shandy family as a theory or hypothesis constructed by Tristram, which resembles those of his father in frequency of mis-application and all-inclusiveness. But Tristram says, significantly, at the end of Volume II,

You may raise a system to account for the loss of my nose by marriage articles,—and shew the world how it could happen, that I should have the misfortune to be called TRISTRAM, in opposition to my father's hypothesis, and the wish of the whole family, God-fathers and God-mothers not excepted...but I tell you before-hand it will be in vain...

(p. 116)
Surely, Tristram's concern with the inevitability and also causality of his accidents, is part of his completely contradictory pose as the "confused author" of *Tristram Shandy*.

**Conclusion:**

But one cannot regard Tristram solely as Sterne's puppet-like "double." Tristram's role as narrator makes him the most important character in the novel, and he is both directly and indirectly responsible for its progress. Tristram the character is an exaggerated physical and mental version of his creator. However, it is more profitable to see Tristram as Sterne's most complete persona in *Tristram Shandy*. In this first-person novel, the degree of continuity of voice Tristram maintains, even though it reveals itself as a conscious pose, leads one to the conclusion that Tristram is a mask that Sterne puts on, and not a substitute or double. The exaggeration of the characters and incidents in the novel supports this view; Shandy Hall is not a reflection of Sterne's contemporary world or even an idealized version where benevolence rules. And though Tristram's novel may make its way in the world better than Tristram (p. 255), this does not parallel Sterne's own situation, since he lived for 20 years in reasonable comfort at Sutton before *Tristram Shandy* brought him money, preferment, and fame.
CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES


2 Ian Watt, "Introduction" to *Tristram Shandy*, p. xxx.


4 Fluchere, Laurence Sterne, *From Tristram to Yorick*, p. 287.


8 Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, pp. 4-5.


FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

11 Fielding, Tom Jones.

12 Fielding, Tom Jones.

13 Cf. Volume IV, Chapter 22 & Chapter 32.

14 Cf. Fluchère, Laurence Sterne, pp. 161-174 for a thorough discussion of this aspect of criticism.


18 Curtis, ed., Letters, p. 76.

19 Fluchère, Laurence Sterne, p. 335.

20 Curtis, p. 86.


22 Ibid., p. 102.

23 Ibid., p. 157.

24 Ibid., p. 163.

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

26 Cf. Curtis, pp. 99-100, 120, 121, 138, 139, 181, 186, 188, 234, 238, 244, 252, 255.

CHAPTER II.

THE YORICK PERSONA

He had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his wit and his humour,—his gibes and his jests about him.—

(Volume I, Chapter 12)

"PARSON YORICK"

Yorick in many ways is the more original of the two personae Sterne developed in his novels. The fictional clergyman "never carried one single ounce of flesh upon his own bones, being altogether as spare a figure as his beast" (p. 15), and,

...instead of that cold phlegm and exact regularity of sense and humours, you would have look'd for, in one so extract-ed;—he was, on the contrary, as mercurial and sublimated a composition,—as heteroclite a creature in all his declen-sions;—with as much life and whim, and gaité de coeur about him, as the kindliest climate could have engendered and put together.

(pp. 19-20)

This description tallies with that of Sterne himself, as does the effect of Yorick upon his parishioners in I, 10:

To speak the truth, he never could enter a village, but he caught the attention of both old and young.—Labour stood still as he pass'd,—the bucket hung suspended in the middle of the well;—the spinning-wheel forgot its round,—even chuck-farthing and shuffle-cap themselves stood gaping till he had got out of sight; and as his movement was not of the quickest, he had generally time enough upon his hands to make his observations,—to hear the groans of the serious, —and the laughter of the light-hearted,—all which he bore with excellent tranquillity.

(p. 15)
However, Cross points out the extremely Cervantic quality of this description of Yorick:

This sketch...is rather too elaborate and too much in the style of Cervantes for exact truth, to say nothing of its being an apparent imitation of a passage in Shakespeare's King John. Still, tradition points in the Vicar of Sutton to a man who, especially when older, cared little for decorum. "So slovenly was his dress and strange his gait," antiquary handed down to antiquary, "that the little boys used to flock around him and walk by his side."1

In terms of temperament and attitude to his calling, however, there is a definite similarity.

In his letters, Sterne refers to himself as Yorick frequently.2 He also signed himself "Yorick" in a letter to Catherine Fourmantel,3 and continually identified with the fictional Yorick throughout his Journal to Eliza. As well, Sterne made good use of the reputation of the character Yorick in Tristram Shandy by publishing The Sermons of Mr. Yorick in May, 1760.

Yorick's role as clergyman in Tristram Shandy is extremely restricted. His life and end are briefly described in I, 10-12, to convey a moral: namely that "with all the titles to praise which a rectitude of heart can give, the doers of them are nevertheless forced to live and die without it." (p. 18) After this point, Yorick is for the most part absent from the novel, with these exceptions: his mislaid sermon (the eventual fate of which is given in II, 17); the consultation upon Tristram's name (IV, 23) and thus the "ecclesiastical consult" (IV, 26-30);
his involvement with the *Tristra-pedia* (V, 28-43; VI, 2, 5-13); as an audience to Uncle Toby (VI, 32); and in conversation with Walter (IX, 32-33). His benevolence of nature and modesty are placed in obvious comparison to those of Uncle Toby, who, however, does not have these qualities challenged by the world but rather has them affirmed in the sphere of Shandy Hall. Yorick also serves as a "touchstone" for Walter's theories, providing a listening ear and some comment, though his modesty restricts his verbal criticism of Walter's hypotheses.

Yorick is an exemplum of good character, even though his behavior lacks the degree of discretion the world at large and especially his fellow members of the cloth seem to demand. Tristram notes: "But, in plain truth, he was a man unhackneyed and unpractised in the world, and was altogether...indiscreet and foolish on every...subject of discourse where policy is wont to impress restraint" (p. 20). As Tristram comments in I, 12, "the temptations" for a natural form of jesting proved irresistible to Yorick.

**Yorick as Jester**

More important than Yorick's role as country parson and the general sketch of his character as it parallels that of Sterne, is his role as jester, made clear by Sterne's naming of him after Yorick, the court-fool in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Like the Shakespearean Yorick, this one is in the process of being remembered by the principal character; he is a close acquaintance of Tristram's father; his sense of
humour is his most notable feature; and his death stirs significant thoughts in the narrator. Yorick's character, too, is mercurial rather than phlegmatic, a necessity for a court jester, and his "life and whim" and "gaité de coeur" perhaps correspond to the first Yorick's "most excellent fancy."

With the decline of the number of real court-fools from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the role of jester moved to the theatrical fool and to the amateur figure of the virtuoso or "eccentric pedant". Tristram notes that the position of "king's chief Jester", by the eighteenth century "for near two centuries...had been totally abolished as altogether unnecessary, not only in that court [Horwendillus, King of Denmark], but in every other court of the Christian world." (p. 19) The court-fool traditionally was noted for physical or mental deformities, complete dependence on and a close association with the king or court, and often a superiority of person and character to other jesters. In Tristram Shandy, Yorick displays no more of the qualities of the Elizabethan theatrical fool than of those of the court-fool; the theatrical fool is described by Enid Welsford as possessing, "absurd mentality, grotesque physical appearance, familiarity with the spectators and partial independence of the plot." Yorick is eccentric rather than absurd; his grotesque figure is lovable; and the only professional thing about his
relationship with the people about whom he jests is Tristram's simile of "jester" and "jestee" in I, 11. On the other hand, he is distanced in most of Tristram's narration, a figure in the background, left undeveloped after the brief biographical and sentimental sketch in Volume I. Tristram as theatrical fool is a more satisfactory comparison, to be discussed later.

As an amateur fool cast as a pedant, Yorick is only non-professional and not a virtuoso, as the two Shandy brothers and Dr. Slop so obviously are. Instead he has characteristics of Miss Welsford's third classification of fool -- the buffoon. Yorick certainly utilizes his surroundings to display a "natural" humour, and we suspect that he, in common with the other inhabitants of Shandy Hall, is a spur-of-the-moment poet and storyteller.

Yorick's insistence on the Christian virtue of charity and his hatred of affectation or hypocrisy takes the jester's second function of truth-telling -- which concurs with his role as entertainer -- beyond the prescribed limits ordained by society. Eugenius says in warning to Yorick:

---In these sallies, too oft, I see, it happens, that a person laugh'd at, considers himself in the light of a person injured, with all the rights of such a situation belonging to him; and when thou viewest him in that light too, and reckons up his friends, his family, his kindred, and allies,---and musters up with them the many recruits which will list under him from a sense of common danger; --'tis no extravagant arithmetic to say, that for every ten jokes,---thou hast got a hundred enemies; and till thou hast gone on, and raised a swarm of wasps about thy ears, and art half stung to death by them, thou wilt never be convinced it is so. (p. 22)
A. E. Dyson points out that the jester must, "tell the truth...amusingly. Truth-telling is a privilege that must always be paid for, and traditionally the Jester pays by the immolation of himself." Yorick dies "broken-hearted" because of the censure of the world upon his accumulated "unwary pleasantry." In the destruction of his role as jester, we can see Yorick turned into a scapegoat. However, this is a paradoxical reversal of the Elizabethan overtones of his name, because the fool—both popular and literary—of that period served not only as a subject but as an arbiter of jest, who maintained a necessary sense of human proportion, and who was above retribution for his jests.

Yorick as jester, then, is a secondary character in *Tristram Shandy*, providing an intellectual foil to Walter and Toby, a moral exemplum in his eventual fate to all-at-large (as Yorick is to Hamlet), and displaying enough of the traditional qualities of the jester to lead one to expect that he will be a figure of humour throughout the novel. Instead, paradoxically, he is deliberately kept from the foreground and Tristram slips into the role of jester. Yorick, then, is a comic "red herring", inviting identification with the traditional fool (the jester is implied but rarely illustrated), and with Laurence Sterne, Prebendary of York.

**Tristram as Jester**

*Tristram* jests frequently and successfully throughout
the novel, and though he only refers to the traditional jester's garb of cap, bells and motley four times, he fulfills all the conventional requirements for the theatrical fool. He is crack-brained or "shandy-brained", and refers constantly to his poor memory and chaotic novel-in-progress; he is pictured in slippers and wig, "a lean and slippered pantaloon" with eccentric whims or impulses which incite sudden physical action as well as random ideas onto paper.

Tristram's confidential, trusting, admonishing, and entertaining relationship with his readers, singly or in groups, establishes what Ian Watt calls an "ultimate conversational rapport" similar to that of the clown's with his audience across the footlights. Watt also mentions that Sterne's sensitivity to the audience's reaction, his mobilization of his readers into antagonistic or sympathetic groups among themselves, his use of the typographical symbols (squiggles, hands, missing chapters, the marbled and black pages, the Gothic typescript), and of commentary on his own devices, are tricks in the repertoire of the jester. One must remember, however, that Tristram is the jester, and it is Sterne who has created this miserable and pathetic clown-figure. Although both are entertaining hypothetical audiences, Sterne is writing fiction, and protested on November 28, 1767: "The world has imagined, because I wrote Tristram Shandy, that I was myself more Shandean than I really
Not to be able to retire from the stage and take off his motley must have been most irritating to the author.

The popular comic figure of the Harlequin, a mute clown who communicates by pantomime and is given a black mask, can be seen influencing Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*. The importance of physical gesture in the events and the silent description are the most noticeable examples. Absurd action often promotes laughter, also, as when Dr. Slop descends inadvertently from his horse, Walter bites his wife's pincushion or, on a lower note, Trim waves his stick. But Tristram has none of the Harlequin's mysterious appearance and if Tristram does possess a truer view of the world than his audience, this is part of his pose as professional jester. In VIII, 3, Tristram refers to a "single mountebank" among the past four generations of Shandys, surely a passing reference to himself.

As a buffoon, Tristram rises to the occasion continually in constructing humorous occasions, anecdotes or *bon mots*. He makes laughter rise from his subject, from his readers, and from himself. The prevalence of scatological humour or "body-jokes", another technique of the buffoon, is also part of Tristram's role as a "natural" jester.

W. L. Gross has noted that Sterne "thoroughly understood Shakespeare's fools, and created anew a rare company of them. Then he set them at their wild play." Although
he refers here to Walter, Toby and the other characters we see at Shandy Hall, Tristram himself in the role of "sage-fool" bears some resemblance to Touchstone in *As You Like It,* Feste in *Twelfth Night,* and the Fool in *King Lear*. If we see Tristram as an "all-licensed" critic of the theorists (Walter and Toby), who uses comedy to deflate a situation or speech in order to suggest a right proportion; and as a commentator on the paradoxical nature of life, Tristram's jesting becomes ironically pointed. Irony has been said to presuppose an "inner circle" as audience, and this brings one round to the exclusive group entertained by the court jester or royal fool. Thus, Tristram's constant use of degrees of irony in *Tristram Shandy* can be seen as an essential device related to his role as court jester. Furthermore, Tristram as the central character and also "sage-fool", can be said to give the novel "a center for the comic mood", to use Northrop Frye's term, because he focusses all points of view into one, and supplies the reader with the novel's only standard of judgement, whether implied or explicit.

**Conclusion**

Tristram and Yorick are two separate personae that operate very differently in *Tristram Shandy*. Tristram is ostensibly a crack-brained author whose jesting and ironic repartee has the continuity of a wholly comic production. But his eyes are the lenses through which the reader must
look. Sterne's and Tristram's affinities have been acknowledged by Sterne, and the acceptance of a Shandean point of view is the idea behind many of Sterne's own letters and sermons. Tristram is principally then a mask of the author as creator. The novel focusses on its own writing, and we regard it through Sterne's own eyes, but with the distortion produced by the Tristram mask.

Ascertaining the amount of distortion coming from Tristram himself is the most difficult problem in the novel. Does Sterne jest with us, or not? When does irony become parody? And how much of the comedy arises from Tristram's ineptitude and personality? Frye suggests that:

"Tristram Shandy and Don Juan illustrate very clearly the constant tendency to self-parody in satiric rhetoric which prevents even the process of writing itself from becoming an oversimplified convention or ideal."17

It appears that we must take Tristram at his word as the author of Tristram Shandy, but recognize that the paradoxes existing in his treatment of the story constitute a comic device of considerable skill and therefore originate from Laurence Sterne. The agglutinative intellectualizing and strong ironic contrasts that make up these paradoxes result from the "anatomy"-like structure of Tristram Shandy. In the Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye points out that:

"The Menippean satirist, dealing with intellectual themes and attitudes, shows his exuberance in intellectual ways, by piling up an enormous mass of erudition about his theme or
in overwhelming his pedantic targets with an avalanche of their own jargon...."18 and:

At its most concentrated the Menippean satire presents us with a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern. The intellectual structure built up from the story makes for violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative, though the appearance of carelessness that results reflects only the carelessness of the reader or his tendency to judge by a novel-centered conception of fiction.19

The novel is being written, then, on two levels and by two narrators, the one superimposed on the other. Occasionally the mask slips or is removed, as I have noted, and we see the "puppeteer" or "the man behind the mask" — its creator.

The Yorick persona, on the other hand, is clearly both a biographical projection of Sterne as clergyman, and a traditional jester figure. Although Yorick evolves standards of sentimental appreciation and of the value of impulsive and instinctive benevolent action in A Sentimental Journey (1768), in this first novel, Yorick is a passive, not an active agent. And we see Yorick objectively, through Tristram.

It would appear that while Yorick, incongruously a parson-jester, hovers on the periphery of the Shandy household, a Laurence Sterne in appearance, Tristram, the real author, battles literary problems and is deeply involved in the machinations and conflicts of Shandy Hall. He cannot be objective about his own involvement. Contrariwise, without some objectivity, a narrative based solely on himself
would pattern itself on the seeming confusion of his mind. Tristram's reactions and Tristram's thoughts, without some involved but external "touchstone" for Tristram's actions, are insufficient to render Tristram's "life". Tristram's mind can be the sole arbiter but not the center of the stage. Shandy Hall, to be discussed in the next chapter, provides such a "touchstone" with which we can measure Tristram and his novel.
CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES


3 Curtis, p. 82.


6 This follows the traditional idea of the fool as a "natural", mentally unbalanced, but with an accurate second sight.


8 "Shakespeare makes the fullest possible use of the accepted convention that it is the Fool who speaks the truth, which he knows not by ratiocination but by inspired intuition. The mere appearance of the familiar figure in cap and bells would at once indicate to the audience where the 'punctum indifferens', the impartial critic, the mouth-piece of real sanity, was to be found." (Enid Welsford, The Fool, p. 269).

9 Cf. I, 6; II, 2; III, 18; VII, 26.

10 Ian Watt, "Introduction" to Tristram Shandy, p. xxix.

11 Curtis, pp. 402-403.
"Unlike the fool in cap and bells, the Harlequin can tap no hidden source of mysterious knowledge or unworldly wisdom. The fool had his niche in a divinely planned order of society, to whose dependent, ephemeral and often corrupt character it was his function to bear witness." (Enid Welsford, The Fool, p. 303).


14 Cross, The Life & Times of Laurence Sterne, p. 205.


16 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 175.

17 Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 234.

18 Frye, p. 311.

19 Ibid., p. 310.
CHAPTER THREE

SHANDY HALL

But nothing ever wrought with our family after the ordinary way. (Volume I, Chapter 21)

Shandy Hall, the setting of the story Tristram is to tell in his novel, harbors a benevolent crew of eccentrics: a retired merchant who is a pedantic logician; a retired soldier who spends twelve years playing war; an equally crack-brained set of obstreperous servants; and a still more curious whimsical group of friends, neighbours and associates. The very eccentricity of the characters' behavior and the comic repartee reminds one of the evenings Sterne reportedly spent at "Crazy Castle" (Skelton Hall) with the "Demoniacks." In terms of satire and comic role, each character at Shandy Hall has some representational value and, although Sterne may have stressed qualities in their characters that he approved or disapproved of, their manipulation is so objective as to render them effective comic instruments rather than personae. They are the individual components which when brought together form a comic reaction. Their achieving a compatibility without humorous clashes is inconceivable. They seem to exist only to stir laughter. "The Shandy family" serves to act as a basic stimulant providing Tristram with the material
if not the desire to write.

Tristram remarks in III, 39, that:

...the hand of the supreme Maker and first Designer of all things, never made or put a family together (in that period at least of it, which I have sat down to write the story of)---where the characters of it were cast or contrasted with so dramatic a felicity as ours was, for this end; or in which the capacities of affording such exquisite scenes, and the powers of shifting them perpetually from morning to night, were lodged and intrusted with so unlimited a confidence, as in the SHANDY-FAMILY.

The principle of contrast in character is a basic structural tenet in the Shandy family's composition, for all the characters are counterpointed by each other: that is, they constantly are shown in contrasting pairs.

Walter, a "philosopher in grain" and "one of the most regular men in every thing he did, whether 'twas matter of business, or matter of amusement, that ever lived..." (p. 6), with his "subacid humour," spends a great deal of time in the company of his brother Toby, whose greatest distinguishing features are, "a most extrean and unparall'd modesty of nature" and a military hobby-horse that deviates his thoughts at the slightest opportunity. While conversing, as Tristram notes, with Toby:

...when my father's imagination was heated with the inquiry, nothing would serve him but to heat my uncle Toby's too. My uncle Toby would give my father all possible fair play in this attempt; and with infinite patience would sit smoking his pipe for whole hours together, whilst my father was practising upon his head...

(p. 176)
But while Walter sticks tenaciously to an idea and constantly endeavours to communicate it to Toby, his brother as constantly interrupts with hobbyhorsical deviations, and disregards Walter's theories as impractical or impudent, responding with what Tristram calls the "Argumentum Fistulatorium" (whistling "Lillibullero").

Walter has the same trouble with Mrs. Shandy, in finding a ready and appreciative audience for his theories:

...she had a way...and that was never to refuse her assent and consent to any proposition my father laid before her, merely because she did not understand it, or had no ideas to the principal word or term of art, upon which the tenet or proposition rolled....This was an eternal source of misery to my father, and broke the neck, at the first setting out, of more good dialogues between them, than could have done the most petulant contradiction...

(pp. 470-471)

A virtuoso of a different calling from Walter is Dr. Slop, who enters Shandy Hall bristling like an aggressive hedgehog with the tenets of Roman Catholicism and the new science of obstetrics. He immediately conflicts with the practicality of Toby and the easygoing Anglicanism of Yorick.

Toby and Yorick also contrast in terms of their inner benevolence, which is natural and operates no farther than the sphere of Shandy Hall in Toby's case, but is applied towards and often misconstrued by the world in the case of the Christian-motivated Yorick. Toby thus represents the good-natured man and Yorick the benevolent man, whose
modes of conduct differ in application and hence in ultimate result. Toby is so tender-hearted that he literally will not hurt the hairs on a fly's head; while Yorick is generous and optimistic, but impractically expects reciprocity from the world on his own Christian terms. Thus, one serves as a simple positive exemplum; the other as a negative instructive example.

Tristram remarks in I, 21, that: "all the SHANDY FAMILY were of an original character at all" (p. 49). Mrs. Shandy is the perfect embodiment of this observation; she is portrayed as listening at the door or looking through keyholes ("the listening slave, with the Goddess of Silence at his back, could not have given a finer thought for an intaglio" -- p. 270), and making non-committal rejoinders to Walter's remarks. She is unperturbed at the Widow Wadman's revelations and Tristram's accidents; she does, however, turn successfully pale at the suggestion of a Caesarian, and she wins both arguments over the midwife and Caesarian (pp. 37 & 115) -- both situations in which her well-being is at stake. Tristram recognizes this peculiarly stubborn tendency on Mrs. Shandy's part, in his version of the argument over the midwife:

My father begg'd and intreated, she would for once recede from her prerogative in this matter, and suffer him to choose for her;—my mother, on the contrary, insisted upon her privilege in this matter, to choose for herself,—and have no mortal's help but the old woman's.—What could my father do? He was almost at his wit's end;—talked it over...
...with her in all moods;—placed his arguments in all lights;—argued the matter with her like a Christian,—like a heathen,—like a husband,—like a father,—like a patriot,—like a man:—My mother answered everything only like a woman; which was a little hard upon her;—for as she could not assume and fight it out behind such a variety of characters,--'twas no fair match;--'twas seven to one.---What could my mother do?---She had the advantage (otherwise she had been certainly overpowered) of a small reinforcement of chagrine personal at the bottom which bore her up, and enabled her to dispute the affair with my father with so equal an advantage,---that both sides sung Te Deum. In a word, my mother was to have the old woman...

(p. 37)

Walter's hypothesis is here defeated by a natural practicality similar to Toby's and Yorick's, but which is emphasized as a peculiarly feminine obstinacy. As Walter complains after a bout of this argumentation: "cursed luck! said he...for a man to be master of one of the finest chains of reasoning in nature,—and have a wife at the same time with such a head-piece, that he cannot hang up a single inference within side of it, to save his soul from destruction." (pp. 110-111) Tristram echoes his father's evaluation. Mrs. Shandy's "deliberate" density with regard to Walter's ideas is further mentioned in VI, 39:

It was a consuming vexation to my father, that my mother never asked the meaning of a thing she did not understand.---That she is not a woman of science, my father would say—is her misfortune—but she might ask a question.---My mother never did....

For these reasons a discourse seldom went on much further betwixt them, than a proposition,—a reply, and a rejoinder; at the end of which, it generally took breath...for a few minutes, (as in the affair of the breeches) and then went on again.

(p. 358)
Her defence (and attack) mechanisms are all passive.

The Widow Wadman, on the other hand, who as energetically engages Toby's attentions as Walter preempts most of Mrs. Shandy's, has a number of weapons she employs. Appropriately enough, she conducts a military campaign against the stronghold of Uncle Toby's heart, for even at the time of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), Tristram says:

"...as widow Wadman did love my uncle Toby—and my uncle Toby did not love widow Wadman, there was nothing for widow Wadman to do but to go on and love my uncle Toby—or let it alone" (p. 423). In her love-militancy,

...she could observe my uncle Toby's motions, and was mistress like wise of his councils of war [from the arbour]; and as his unsuspecting heart had given leave to the corporal, through the mediation of Bridget, to make her a wicket-gate of communication to enlarge her walks, it enabled her to carry on her approaches to the very door of the sentry-box, and sometimes out of gratitude, to make the attack, and endeavour to blow my uncle Toby up in the very sentry-box itself. (p. 425)

All that is described of her is her left eye, which is compared to a cannon and has the same effect upon Uncle Toby. Tristram gives the reader a blank page to describe the Widow Wadman "as like your mistress as you can—as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you" (p. 356), and adds:

A daughter of Eve, for such was Widow Wadman, and 'tis all the character I intend to give of her—"That she was a perfect woman..." (p. 420)
All in all, Widow Wadman is a dangerous threat to the stability of Shandy Hall. Mrs. Shandy has been absorbed into the background of the male members of the family, and is brought in only rarely to demonstrate or elaborate on a point related to or originating from a male Shandy. Widow Wadman introduces disorder from her precincts next-door, and thus performs a similar disruptive function to Dr. Slop. Significantly, we never get to the end of "the amours of my Uncle Toby with the Widow Wadman", for Tristram is interested in the comic process which constitutes life at Shandy Hall, and not in the denouement of the subplots of the novel.

Mrs. Shandy and the Widow Wadman do represent the passive and active extremes of womanhood. And discounting an anonymous midwife, three nuns, and several European maidens (Maria, Janatone, Nannette), they and their maidservants are the only women given any sustained attention in the novel. The midwife and nuns parallel Dr. Slop and the churchmen (Didius, Phutatorius, etc.) in the same counterpointing fashion that Mrs. Shandy and Widow Wadman do Walter and Toby. The placidity or stubbornness and contradictory natures of these women are emphasized, not their fidelity, charity or affection. In other words, they have a secondary place in the novel to the men. Only when they are argumentative do the women of Tristram Shandy create memorable comedy.
The servants at Shandy Hall are interesting foils to their employers and each other. Obadiah and Susannah are clearly contrasted in character, the one noted for stupidity if not simply obtuseness, the other for a sharp tongue and disastrous accidents which she blusters her way through. Although Tristram says that, "my father had a great respect for Obadiah" (p. 124), Walter implies that he is an ass (p. 266) and as he imparts his news solemnly, we see a parallel between Obadiah and the Shandy bull:

Now the parish being very large, my father's Bull, to speak the truth of him, was no way equal to the department; he had, however, got himself, somehow or other, thrust into employment—and as he went through the business with a grave face, my father had a high opinion of him. (p. 496)

Susannah is not a messenger or a solemn household fixture in the same way Obadiah is ("the outdoor man," as Work calls him); she gets caught up in all Tristram's disasters, and is obliged to play her part.² She says to Dr. Slop, "I never was the destruction of anybody's nose...which is more than you can say" (p. 314), an odd statement since she has just been involved in Tristram's accidental circumcision. Susannah's temper rules her actions, and her tongue is the cause of most of her troubles; as Tristram says: "Susannah was sufficient by herself for all the ends and purposes you could possibly have, in exporting a family secret" (p. 494). Her personality, all in all, is definitely a complete opposite to Mrs. Shandy's, just as
Obadiah's obtuseness and lack of humour counterpoint Walter's keen wit and "subacid humour."

Trim and Bridget are the practical "below-stairs" counterparts to Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman. Trim's attachment to Uncle Toby and his proficiency as a valet are constantly emphasized: "corporal Trim (...to the character of an excellent valet, groom, cook, sempster, surgeon and engineer, superadded that of an excellent upholsterer too)" (p. 420). And Trim is the efficient half of that particular hobby-horse (the bowling green). On the other hand, his loquaciousness, the "only dark line" in his character, links him to Susannah and Bridget. Trim is also often placed in contrast to the Shandy brothers; for example, his reaction to the news of Bobby's death and the reading of Yorick's sermon contrast Trim's "oratory" and rhetorical attitudes with Walter's. Furthermore, Trim's interpolation about his brother Tom in the Inquisition while reading Yorick's sermon shows a generous sensitivity parallel to Uncle Toby's.

Bridget and Trim are linked romantically and practically, especially during "the amours of Widow Wadman with my Uncle Toby." It is they who deal with the realities of "the amours" -- the wig, plush breeches, wicker-gate, map, and the answer to the Widow Wadman's question -- while the other pair (Uncle Toby and Widow Wadman) struggle in a web of implication and ignorance. Like the others at Shandy Hall, Uncle Toby and Widow Wadman cannot communicate but by accident, and even then their actions and words are open to
misunderstanding. On the other hand, the close contact within the precincts of the kitchen, reinforced by gossip about the Shandys "above-stairs", promotes a better understanding of the practical things of life. It is apparent that the servants' intellects are not capable of the sustained argumentation of the family. However, the servants possess a natural sensibility to and sympathy with the emotional problems of the Shandys and themselves that is unrestrained by social convention, over-systematization, or prejudice.

Tristram says in V, 6, that: "whatever motion, debate, harangue, dialogue, project, or dissertation, was going forwards in the parlor, there was generally another at the same time, and upon the same subject, running parallel along with it in the kitchen" (p. 271). However, while the interests of both groups run parallel, the treatment of such interests diverges. The servants are not interested in the intellectual possibilities of a situation. They encounter an event, deal with it, and put it away. But in the male Shandys, memories or the above obstacles of convention, systems or prejudices conflict with present realities, and the resulting incongruity is comic. To achieve a complete contrast in attitude, then, the "above-stairs" and "below-stairs" division is maintained, and is well-commented on by Tristram.

Besides the principle of contrast which further
delineates the characters of the Shanys, Sterne has created the "Dutch silk-mill" of Shandy Hall in order to illustrate the operation of the "variety of strange principles and impulses" and the resulting "odd movements" within the house. Although all the words and actions in the novel are directly or indirectly concerned with Tristram and are drawn from memory, the "strange principles and impulses" mentioned above are of readily predictable human behavior. The best illustration of the operation of the "silk-mill" of human nature represented by Shandy Hall is the novel's comic treatment of "obsessions".

Sterne extends the theory of "ruling passions" to one of "ruling opinions" via the metaphor of the hobby-horse.

A man and his HOBBY-HORSE, tho' I cannot say that they act and re-act exactly after the same manner in which the soul and body do upon each other; yet doubtless there is a communication between them of some kind, and my opinion rather is, that there is something in it more of the manner of electrified bodies....By long journeys and much friction, it so happens that the body of the rider is at length fill'd as full of HOBBY-HORSICAL matter as it can hold;---so that if you are able to give but a clear description of the nature of the one, you may form a pretty exact notion of the genius and character of the other.

(pp. 57-58)

Sterne himself wrote in 1760:

...reason and common sense tell me, that if the characters of past ages and men are able to be drawn at all, they are to be drawn like themselves; that is with their excellencies, and with their foibles—and it is as much a piece of justice to the world and to virtue too, to do the one, as the other.—The ruling passions et les égarements du cœur, are the very things which mark, and distinguish a man's character; in which I would as soon leave out a man's head as his hobby-horse—
But as Ian Watt says: "all these hobby-horses and cross-purposes exist in human beings who also have their full complement of ordinary affections and sympathies; and that makes all the difference. Walter and Toby are humorous characters, not embodied humours." 5

By contrasting each Shandy obsession with its counterpart, Sterne creates a humour, primarily of double entendre. The intended recipient of an idea either misunderstands or ignores a conversational gambit. Uncle Toby's conversations with Widow Wadman and Walter respectively illustrate this "principle". Besides "ruling opinions", the "strange impulses" of complete benevolence, compulsive systematization, and (it is implied) possessive lust in the case of Widow Wadman, run amok at Shandy Hall.

At Shandy Hall, Tristram's family and their friends give rise to what Tristram prefers to consider his most important memories. But linking the episodes at Shandy Hall together is Tristram's consciousness, an internal order imposed upon the material within the novel. In concentrating on the process of writing, as Tristram does so frequently and self-consciously throughout Tristram Shandy, this internal order, one not regulated by a linear chronology, opens out the possibilities inherent in autobiography of conveying more of personality than can be conveyed by a discussion of what a subject has done or what has been reported about him. Although the characters at Shandy Hall are all contrasted in attitude and personality by Sterne to serve a definite comic
purpose, the structure of the novel makes them necessarily of secondary importance to Tristram. It is around his use of memory and consciousness of the digressive nature of one's existence that the novel revolves.
CHAPTER THREE

FOOTNOTES

1 Discussed in Cross, The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne, pp. 129-134.

2 Cf. III, 27; IV, 14; V, 17-21.

3 Cf. Pope's Essay on Man, Epistle II, ll. 136-40, as follows:
"So, cast and mingled with his very frame,
The Mind's disease, its RULING PASSION came;
Each vital humour which should feed the whole,
Soon flows to this, in body and in soul:"

4 Curtis, p. 88. Also quoted in Fluchere, p. 284.

5 Watt, "Introduction" to Tristram Shandy, p. xviii.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ASSOCIATIVE STRUCTURE
OF TRISTRAM SHANDY

'Twould cure an author for ever of the fuss and folly of opening his street-door and calling in his neighbours and friends, and kinsfolk,...only to observe how one sentence of mine follows another, and how the plan follows the whole. (Volume VIII, Chapter 2)

Tristram Shandy is ostensibly a novel of memory. However, it is mainly tied to its first-person narrator not by his personal involvement in the events related, but by its criss-crossed time-scheme and those subject-links that connect each chapter with its neighbours and the book together as a whole. As A. A. Mendilow points out, the episodes in the novel are linked by "the association of ideas in the minds of the characters, and those linked in the mind of the quasi-autobiographer himself."¹ Tristram Shandy is not a chronological record of events, but a series of disarranged anecdotes and its self-conscious narrator continually holds the center of the stage as the medium through which all anecdotes must pass. So Tristram's personality is the inevitable center of this book, as it is the postulated subject and evident organizer of the material in the novel. And this central personality makes it clear that the novel emanates only from him, and that the "Sirs", "Madams," or "critics & reviewers" may make up part of his audience;
but though their comments may be useful, their criticism
is not.

The book is written wholly in the "historical present,"
giving the impression of a continuous first-person narra-
tion. But this "historical present" includes the authorial
present within which Tristram converses with his readers;
a discursive first-person present in which Tristram relates
anecdotes or illustrations and links the episodes in his
novel together; and the dramatic present of the many domes-
tic scenes within the Shandy family. The advantages of this
immediacy of presentation in terms of continuity with and
effect on the reader are obvious. One feels one is obser-
ving at first hand the scenes presented, and is given also
the impression by Tristram's familiarity with his audience
of a participatory and immediate process of entertainment.
The reader is thus involved as observer and participant,
and these roles are alternated so swiftly that one's degree
of involvement is kept at a constantly high level.

Fluchère suggests that: "Sterne understood that
chronology has no power to resuscitate the past; the only
thing that can give it life is a living consciousness of
the past as identified with the present."² Not only is
Tristram's past given more appeal by its presentation as
process (with all its varying factors and individual
nuances) rather than recorded fact, but Tristram's verba-
lized connections using the authorial present and his
discussions with his readers give relevance to what he relates; memory in *Tristram Shandy* is thus made both the subject and the tool. Tristram's consciousness of the process of remembering emphasizes the selective nature of his memories, and their non-random association, and reminds the reader of Tristram's "subconscious" and total involvement with his story. Since he is remembering and recording the material of the novel and does so diffidently he becomes the center of the book. Tristram remarks in II, 2, that Locke's *Essay upon the Human Understanding* is "a history-book...of what passes in a man's own mind" (p. 66) and from a purely structural point of view, *Tristram Shandy* may similarly be regarded as a slice of Tristram's own mind in operation (even if mainly a reflective slice).

**CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS**

The time-scheme of the novel is extremely disordered; the events are depicted neither chronologically nor causally. The narrative begins in March, 1718, with Tristram's conception, and ends in 1714, four years before his birth. In the nine volumes between, Tristram relates events dated 1644, 1685, 1689-90, 1693, 1695, 1697, 1701-02, 1704, 1706, 1713-14, 1716, 1718-19, 1723, 1728, 1748, 1750, and 1759-67 -- a span of 123 years with all the events related in some way to Tristram. These events are presented as existing in
Tristram's memory or within his range of observation in the present; thus, Tristram's consciousness arbitrates the time limits of each episode and the linking passages; and the distinctions drawn within the novel between an exterior or physical clock-time and interior "durational" time are acknowledged by Tristram as his.

The first two volumes introduce Tristram's story, his conversation with his readers and or critics, his consciousness of the time span over which he writes and that in which the reader reads, and the discrepancy between recorded mechanical or chronological time and durational time, which is an important structural device in the forward movement of the narrative. In these introductory volumes also, Tristram encounters the problem that is illustrated by the often purely associative progression of the narrative -- that of relevance. We see this illustrated in Tristram's difficulty in organizing his material and ostensible lack of editorial decisions.

The novel appears more of an intelligent "open-ended" story with purposely endless opportunities for expansion, than an inept attempt to organize a difficult subject. Tristram remarks in I, 14, that:

These unforeseen stoppages, which I had no conception of when I first set out;--but which, I am convinced now, will rather increase than diminish as I advance,--have struck out a hint which I am resolved to follow;--and that is,--not to be in a hurry;--but to go on leisurely, writing and publishing two volumes of my life every year...

(p. 29)
Thus, in Volumes I and II, Tristram supplies the background to his conception and birth, describes Walter's, Toby's, and Yorick's characters, and converses with his readers, introducing all the main levels of time. Volumes III and IV continue with the events on the night of Tristram's birth (November 5, 1718) but move into a study of Walter's theorizing, via his ideas on noses into Slawkenbergius' Tale, and then briefly cover another of the "tragedies" in Tristram's life, his mis-naming by Susannah and the curate, also an event of November 5, 1718. The Shandy household becomes a noticeably strong focal point of interest in these two volumes.

Volumes V and VI continue this interest with the relation of the news of Bobby's death (1719), Tristram's circumcision (1723), the beginning of the Tristra-pedia discussion (1719), and the conversation around the fire in the Shandy living-room which includes Walter, Toby, Yorick, Trim and Slop. "The amours of Widow Wadman with my uncle Toby" are also introduced, with Widow Wadman's attacks shown in media res (we are to learn the origin of her infatuation in Volume VIII). The story thus jumps from 1719 to 1723 to 1719 again, then to the period 1701-1713, not to mention numerous asides into the authorial present (including an explicit dating, in V, 17, August 10, 1761) and the interpolated stories of Le Fever (1706), and whiskers; the latter has its own independent time-scheme, though it
is related in the historical present. There are three of these stories in Volumes III and IV, and they usually are made to function as illustrative \textit{exempla}, in contrast to Tristram's anecdotes about his family and their friends, which contribute to the psychological operation of the Shandy household as "a Dutch silk-mill" of "principles and impulses". The anecdotes tie Shandy Hall together as one homogenous unit, given its congruity through the operations of Tristram's memory. His view of the events within the family is the glue holding it together for the reader.

Volume VII departs from the emphasis in the first six volumes on Tristram's birth and parturition, and shows Sterne experimenting to combine the different kinds of chronology kept separate up to this point. Tristram writes in the authorial present throughout, addressing his readers in two places, linking what he sees with his commentary in five places, and simply narrating his journey at first-hand through the rest of the volume. There is only one interpolation -- the story of the abbess of Andouillets. A remarkable continuity of tone is maintained by substituting for change in point of view change of subject, directly related to Tristram's physical movement across the Continent and the resulting rapid variety of scene, and Tristram's subsequent juggling of time \textit{continua} as well as association. The volume as a result of this sustained focus on Tristram (his is the only point of view) is a startling contrast to
Volumes I to VI, and VIII and IX where Sterne returns to his former pattern. The exaggeratedly fast pace of Volume VII (as pointed out in Chapter I of this thesis) also breaks the succession of durational moments that appear elsewhere in the novel.

In VII, 28, Tristram comments on "the most puzzled skein of all"—his role as author as he is writing on the Garonne (1762); his role as character, conversing with Walter and Uncle Toby in Auxerre; and his role as narrator, in which he has progressed as far as Lyons on his journey (1762); all of which converge at this point. The three time continua are brought to our attention here in an attempt to show their simultaneity of occurrence. Sterne is trying to suggest their combination rather than alternate them as in a more regular narrative. He also achieves a significant linkage between Volume VII and previous volumes and substantiates the introduction of further material about the Shandys. He chooses the narration in VII, 29, to eliminate possible confusion, though we see him return to a simultaneous treatment of the different time "streams" of his material in Volumes VIII and IX, using the same pattern employed in Volumes I to VI, where he skips from one day or year to another with the justification of pure thought association.

In Volumes VIII and IX, "the amours" (1701-13) take precedence, although Tristram's mounting "problems" with
his novel — what to put in (and by implication, what to leave out) and where — are emphasized at the beginning of Volume VIII. Tristram speaks as author six times, and adds connective or illustrative commentary in three places, but aside from these parts, Tristram's narration proceeds in a more or less straight line, displaying some of the "gravity" for which he ridicules chronologically progressive stories in VI, 40. There are no interpolated stories or major digressions, so that although Volumes VIII and IX follow the pattern set up in Volumes I to VI, they retain the unity of purpose and more progressive -- even linear -- development of Volume VII. They are written as though Sterne was running out of time (physically), which was certainly the case; and, having established the major characters and their interests, and Tristram's patterns as an author, he appears to have turned to "the amours" -- the choicest morsel in his book. The novel ends abruptly in 1714 with a pun that reminds one of Mrs. Shandy's association about time at the beginning of the novel, so that together with the popular connotation of a "cock and bull story," the novel is ended while still suspended in time. It does not end with Tristram finishing his memoirs; we watch him writing them throughout the novel, and it ends in media res with a bon mot that implies a union of Sterne's two personae and a circular motif of virility and impotency.
ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS AS A STRUCTURAL DEVICE

Not only is John Locke's theory of the association of ideas a satirical tool in the novel's principal characterizations, but Locke's emphasis on the rational connection between thoughts in the mental processes of observation, discernment, retention, syllogizing, and association of ideas, offers an explanation for the arrangement of events in *Tristram Shandy*. The novel is not, as Theodore Baird or B. H. Lehman would have it, a structural satire on Locke's theory of the association of ideas, with Tristram as the prime example. As Henri Fluchère points out, the satire on association of ideas is confined to characterization. John Traugott agrees: "Locke's is a rational system for comparing ideas and determining language. Sterne's is something else, but by developing the confusion or absurdity in Locke's rational system, Sterne has created a dramatic engine which controls situation and character." The chapters themselves are linked closely to one another, and their arbitrary lengths indicate a change of subject or speaker or focus, or the completion of an action or speech. And Tristram's repeated explanations or essays into the causes behind events produce the effect of a conscious order in the events. Tristram's transitions are also easy to follow and readily justifiable. Furthermore, in terms of all nine volumes, these changes, often accompanied by a shift to a different time continuum, generally reflect a psychologically realistic use of the narrator's imaginary memory.
An examination of the actual links between chapters and Tristram's superimposed commentary on these linkages will illustrate the organic function of all the material included in the novel, the rational nature of the connections, and the overall structure of the novel as a slice out of Tristram's memory.

Volume I

In Volume I, Chapters 1 to 3, Tristram begins ab Ovo, with his conception, and the significance of its circumstances, and gives the source of the opening anecdote as Uncle Toby. He converses with the reader in Chapter 4, before continuing with the background to his story. Another authorial discourse is given in Chapter 6, and then Tristram continues in Chapter 7 to discuss the village midwife. However, this leads him into Yorick's life and character, between the two parts of which (Chapters 9 & 10) he sandwiches a discussion of hobby-horses and his "open" dedication. The "black pages" at the end of Chapter 12 mark a coda of interest, where Tristram changes tack and moves into a discussion of his mother's marriage settlement (for the moment ignoring the midwife), and hence the "false alarm" of September, 1717. The arguments about the next lying-in in Chapter 18 introduce Walter's theory of Christian names (and his obvious relish for syllogisms). Then, in Chapter 20, reminding the reader that "I should be
born before I was christened," Tristram launches into a discourse on pre-natal christening, citing an article in French. From this theoretical note, Tristram moves to the Shandy parlour in Chapter 21 and the very first conversation between Toby and Walter requires an elucidation of Toby's character. Conscious of the digressive and lengthy tendencies of this character sketch, Tristram discusses his "digressions" in general in Chapter 22, character-sketching generally in Chapter 23, and hobby-horses in Chapter 24. The last chapter in the volume adds details on Toby's convalescence, and ends with an avowal to give no indication of what is to follow, although we infer that he will explain Toby's "unforeseen perplexities."

The chapters in Volume I are linked logically in the following ways: they explain a point already introduced, supply background to previous material, or contrast the events and characters of Shandy Hall with Tristram's opinions about them or his self-consciousness as an author. The authorial link between Chapters 1 and 2 is Tristram's conversation with his (male) readers. Chapter 3 gives the source of the anecdote ending Chapter 1, and hence background, and Chapter 4 explains the reasons for such "back-tracking."

Also in Chapter 4, a straight line signals typographically a change of focus and subject as Tristram returns to giving background to the night of March 1-2, 1718. Chapter 5 summarizes the significance of these events already related,
and continues the authorial discourse with "Madam" at the end of Chapter 4 into a non-inclusive first-person discourse with all his readers. Chapter 6, continuing with theory, offers another discussion of technique and the Shandean method of "progression," and Chapters 6-7 contrast related fact with theory (as do 2-3 and 3-4, and many later links). Chapter 7 ends with the introduction of hobby-horses, and this discussion is continued in Chapter 8. Again, Chapter 8 divides in half in subject, and the parody of a dedication found in the second half, is continued in Chapter 9. But Chapter 10 returns to the midwife — and fact and authorial theory are again set in contrast. The parson's story springs out of his connection with the midwife, and continues for three chapters, and is abruptly ended by the two black pages, after Yorick's character, family background, his behavior and its consequences have been sketched.

Tristram now returns to the midwife, but changes to his mother's marriage settlement, via a discourse in Chapter 13 on the necessity for a map, and in Chapter 14 on his agglutinative structuring of the novel. The discussion of Elizabeth Shandy's marriage settlement in Chapter 15, however, consists only of its quotation in full within the text of Tristram's story, and a comment on the ultimate consequences of this contract to Tristram. The link to Chapter 16 is one of subject, as Chapters 16 to 18 relate the immediate effects of the contract on Mrs. Shandy's unnecessary trip to London.
in September, 1717. Tristram's mother's victory in the argument over midwives is followed by a declaration of innocence in his relationship with Jenny, and the innuendoes of this passage link Chapters 18 and 19. Tristram proceeds in Chapter 19 to establish the intellectual background of Walter's character, that made the events of Chapters 15 to 18 occur.

Chapter 20 changes focus from the Shandys to Tristram's self-conscious authorship. In rebuking the inattentive "Madam", Tristram emphasizes the order of his narration, and the document underlines the purely theoretical nature of his discourse, which is a Walter-like syllogism in miniature. In Chapter 21, Tristram returns to Shandy Hall and Uncle Toby's character. Chapter 22 reverts to Tristram's self-conscious authorship with its digression of "progression" and "digression" and the contributory value of anecdotes; and Chapter 23 (though it ostensibly starts "nonsensically" ) deals with the methods of character-drawing; though it passes into parody, it ends with Toby's hobby-horse. This gives Tristram the link necessary to connect Chapters 23 and 24, and he continues his discussion of technique for the third straight chapter. But to conclude the volume on a conventional note, Tristram begins his explication of the reasons for and exact nature of Uncle Toby's hobby-horse, deliberately ending the chapter inconclusively.
Thus, in Volume I, Tristram's ostensibly major narrative concern:— relating the events of his life ab Ovo—is attended to only in Chapters 1, 2, 6 (the first half), 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18 (the first half), and 21. The rest of the volume supplies character sketches or individual histories of other Shandy Hall personalities such as Yorick or Toby, or -- more frequently -- inserts Tristram's running commentary on his story to the exclusion of all else. Authorial discourses appear in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23 and 24. Tristram's storytelling usurps the better part of the space usually allotted to the story, and the process is made equal if not superior to the story it produces.

Volume II

The structure of Volume II is much more straightforward; there are fewer authorial discourses than in Volume I: one on critics, one on the positioning of apostrophes, and one on the parallel passage of time to both the inhabitants of Shandy Hall and to the reader. There is also a passage of "let us imagine" (another occurs in VI, 29), used to foreshorten the events Tristram is relating. But the major part of this volume deals with more of the events on the night of Tristram's birth. From the history of Uncle Toby's wound -- the "unforeseen perplexities" of I, 25 -- which takes up Chapters 1 to 5, Tristram focusses on the events of the night of November 5, 1718: Slop's arrival (which interrupts
yet another of Walter's dissertations — one on the right and the wrong end of a woman), the missing "green bays bag", the discovery and delivery by Trim of Yorick's sermon, two more of Walter's theories (trade and "head-presentation" births), and of course the conversation between Walter, Toby and Slop as they sit waiting in the parlour.

The principle of contrast, using theory and narrative, is illustrated by the links between Chapters 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 10-11, and 18-19. The theories are those of novel-writing, and Tristram also reminds us explicitly of his overall plan in Chapters 4 and 5, where he changes subject from Uncle Toby's "amours" to "the parlour fire-side". Tristram also begins to start new chapters when he introduces a new interest, as he does with Dr. Slop in Chapter 9; and he separates speech, as self-contained anecdotes, from action, in linking Chapters 12-13, 13-14, 15-16 and 16-17. A slightly more unique technique is the connection of two chapters via a comma, indicating an unfinished sentence, as between Chapters 14-15. The other links in Volume II connect chapters ending in logical stops in speech or action, or carry on a progressive action during a definite time period (the night of November 5, 1718).

The motto prefacing Volumes I and II — "It is not things themselves that disturb men, but their judgements about these things"—appropriately summarizes the structure of these two volumes as well as their content, for they
delineate the discrepancy between recorded fact and opinion, and the role of opinion in the creation of fact; the alternate movement from author to reader to story by Tristram underlines this.

Volume III

Volume III follows the general pattern of Volume II, and is concerned mainly with the events of November 5, 1718. Tristram addresses two sections to his critics: Chapter 4, and the first part of Chapter 12; finally writes an Author's Preface in Chapter 29; apostrophizes himself once in Chapter 8; inserts two marbled pages as "the motley emblem of his work" between Chapters 36 and 37; and makes six other references to his current problems in organizing his material properly (in Chapters 14, 23, 28, 31 and 38 and 33). The rest of the volume continues the fireside conversation between Toby, Walter and Dr. Slop, until the latter is called upstairs; Tristram's first accident occurs and is related to Walter and Uncle Toby; and we learn the family background to Walter's obsession with noses. Walter also begins dissertations on obstetrical methods, curses and the succession of ideas (all of which are interrupted -- the curse successively by Trim, Toby or Slop). Ernulphus' curse, translated from the Latin, parallels the translation (also from Latin) of Slawkenbergius' Tale in Volume IV, and its presentation in the original text is a further parody of
the biographical tendency to documentation illustrated already by the author's inclusion of the marriage contract, the French dissertation on baptism, and Yorick's sermon, as well as an instance of variety of material, already seen in the use of the black and marbled pages.

The links between chapters in Volume III continue conversation or action, change subject, supply background, and, as in Volumes I and II, contrast authorial theory with anecdotes about the Shandys, related in the historical present. However, the links are forged much tighter than they have been before. Chapter 1 is linked back to II, 18 (the second to last chapter of Volume II) by the repetition of Uncle Toby's speech to Dr. Slop, and it is linked to Chapter 2 by the words "as follows," which indicate a direct continuation of the story, with speech following its introduction. Chapter 3 begins with Uncle Toby's words given for the third time (and this technique of repeating speeches after elaborating on their background is used again by Tristram in III, 6, and III, 32). The "as follows" connection occurs again in Chapters 5 and 10. There are also explicit references to the material of following chapters in Chapters 11, 40 and 42. In Chapter 42 a link is made with Slawkenbergius' Tale, which begins Volume IV.

In Volume III, Tristram again attempts to draw a one-to-one correlation between reading time and the historical (chronological) time of his characters' actions (cf. II, 8);
in III, 30, he explains that he must leave Walter "for half an hour," and indeed he does not return to Walter on the bed until IV, 2 (44 pages later in Watt's edition). And in III, 38, in an authorial discourse about his problems, Tristram exclaims:

...but I have fifty things more necessary to let you know first,—I have a hundred difficulties which I have promised to clear up, and a thousand distresses and domestic mis-adventures crowding in upon me thick and three-fold, one upon the neck of another,—a cow broke in (tomorrow morning) to my uncle Toby's fortifications...but there is no time to be lost in exclamations.-----I have left my father lying across his bed, and my uncle Toby in his old fringed chair, sitting beside him, and promised I would go back to them in half an hour, and five and thirty minutes are laps'd already-----Of all the perplexities a mortal author was ever seen in,—this certainly is the greatest,—for I have [Hafen Slawkenbergius's] foilio, Sir, to finish—a dialogue between my father and my uncle Toby, upon the solution of Prignitz, Scoderus, Ambrose Faraeus, Ponocrates and Grangousier to relate,—a tale out of Slawkenbergius to translate, and all this in five minutes less than no time at all...

(p. 175)

Here the reader is reminded of Walter's position, told explicitly what is to follow until Tristram returns to Walter, and Tristram claims sympathy for his agglutinative book, which of itself seems to try to encompass all. The discussion about time not only serves structurally as a diversion in its switch of focus from Walter's sources to Tristram, but it implies a tight time-structuring of the novel on three levels: Tristram's, the reader's, and the characters' own senses of time.

By shuttling back and forth between the story of the
operations of the Shandy household on November 5, 1718, and the authorial present (both in commentary on the events presented and in his discussion of authorial problems), Tristram emphasizes the relativity of these events to himself. He often changes from story to problem, in the middle of a chapter, as in Chapters 8, 12, 20, 23, 31, 36, and 38. Also, in constantly supplying background for Walter and Toby's reactions during the fireside conversation, he moves farther into the past. Although these anecdotes about the Shandys' earlier lives (before Tristram) or their ancestors' lives are told in the historical present, the total effect is to create another set of time levels; for example, those of great-grandfather and great-grandmother Shandy, grandfather and grandmother Shandy, Trim and Bridget's encounter with the bridge ("six or seven weeks" before the night of November 5, 1718), or "the one winter's night" when Walter, while discussing Slawkenbergius with Toby, demolishes his wife's thread-paper and pin-cushion. Furthermore, the multiplicity of time levels, as they are all related in the same historical present, appears to emphasize the constancy of a durational and purely cerebral view of time (both while experiencing its passing and while remembering an event) in contrast to chronological limitations on existence, which are the basis of an individual's conception of time in relation to others, but not of time as related to himself.

By Volume III, one sees Sterne's techniques of
associational links and changes in time continua becoming "conventionalized", in the sense that most of his techniques have by now been introduced and frequently used. Volume IV introduces more parodies of traditional chapter divisions as well as continuing the techniques already developed.

Volume IV

Volume IV, in terms of subject, translates Slawkenbergius' Tale; continues the events of November 5, 1718, as far as Tristram's christening, Walter's reaction and hence the meeting of ecclesiastics; and it also introduces Bobby's death in Chapter 31, to be continued in Volume V. Tristram launches into authorial theory eight times (in Chapters 9 - part, 10, 13, 15, 20, 22, 25-part, & 32), including chapters labelled a "chapter on sleep", a "chapter of chances", and a "chapter of things." Tristram is beginning to burlesque the content of chapters by promising to deal with certain subjects, independent of the events at Shandy Hall. He also leaves out Chapter 24, because the treatment of its subject was too well done to be included, although he briefly describes the said contents in Chapter 25, as well as commenting on the missing chapter and offering a moral to be drawn from his action, which follows a typographical symbol of a black hand to signal the need for attention. This technique of removing a section of the novel to generate the reader's curiosity is repeated in Volume IX with Chapters 18 and 19, although they are
restored later between Chapters 25 and 26, as "his honour has laid bleeding" on their account.

Another typographical linkage similar to the comma in II, 14, is the long dash ending Chapter 29.

In IV, 17, we find an explicit reference to authorial time, to be compared with earlier dates indicating the exact time Tristram is writing (for example, in I, 21: "this very rainy day, March 26, 1759"). Here he describes his actions of "not half an hour ago."

Two other uses of time in Volume IV are notable: progressive linkages between chapters where a following speech or action is definitely forecast (as in Chapters 2-3, 6-7, 25-27); and the frequent use of anecdotes or illustrative episodes from the Shandy past -- or tales, not of Tristram's authorship, both of which have their own time continua. In Volume IV, we do not have past Shandy episodes from a period before Tristram's birth; the episodes given follow in a progressive order from this event, and though each is presented as self-contained in time through its dramatic presentation in the historical present, they can be dated from November 5 to 7, 1718. The interpolated stories of Slawkenbergius' Tale and that of Francis I, unconnected in time to the rest of the volume, have more entertainment than illustrative value at their place in the narrative.

Other than the above techniques, the associational links in Volume IV follow the patterns established in
Volumes I to III of continuation, contrast, or change. "Jumps" or abrupt changes of scene are all progressive in nature, not regressive, as Tristram is not concerned in Volume IV with supplying background to his characters' actions so much as relating the remaining events of the night of November 5, 1718. Viewed together, Volumes III and IV display a reduction in the number of authorial discourses, which were intended to produce a contrast in structure and point of view in Volumes I and II. These volumes instead "pass from jests to serious matters and from the serious back again to jests" (see the title page to Volumes III and IV) not only in Tristram's raillery against critics but in the relating of Tristram's birth, with all its tragic and comic aspects.

Volume V

Volume V is concerned with events at Shandy Hall subsequent to Tristram's birth, including the reception of the news of Bobby's death (1719), Walter's writing of the Tristra-paedia (1719-23), and Tristram's circumcision (1723). The only interpolated story is that of "whiskers" in Chapter 1, and Tristram speaks in authorial discourse only five times, in Chapters 1, 8, 11, 15, and 25.

Tristram writes in the authorial present -- dating it August 10, 1761 -- only in Chapter 17, which relates the accidental circumcision. The principal changes shown by
the chapters are of focus — either from one speaker to another (as in Chapters 6, 32, and 37), or back and forward a short distance in time to give another point of view, or background in terms of previous events, to Tristram's most current concern in the narrative (as is done in Chapters 19, 24, and 26).

An instance of suspended action is found in Chapter 5, where Tristram's mother is left standing behind the parlour door till Chapter 13, presumably for five minutes (authorial time), while Tristram discusses the servants' reaction to Bobby's death, and though Tristram refers to her in Chapter 11 and mentions her curiosity in Chapter 12, she is not allowed to move till Chapter 13. However, this is the only instance of a double time scheme in the novel where one half is left suspended; usually the characters' time schemes progress while Tristram leaves them in order to deal with other things.

The chapters follow the close linkage, usually with Tristram's commentary, of Volumes III and IV. A direct connection with the following chapter is made between Chapters 2–3, 8–9, 10–11, 16–17, 18–19, 20–21, 21–22, 22–23, 28–29, 30–31, 34–35, and 39–40. The term "as follows" or "following," for example, occurs five times. Another technique, similarly employed in Volume IV, is that of the period and long dash, not ending a quotation, which connects Chapters 35 and 36.
Volume VI

Volume VI continues Walter's discussion of "auxiliary verbs"; the circumcision episode tails off into an altercation between Slop and Susannah in the kitchen (mentioned in V, 41); a discussion of a suitable tutor for Tristram leads to the narration of Le Fever's story by Tristram (though it occurred in 1706); Walter and Mrs. Shandy discuss putting Tristram into breeches (also in 1723); various incidents of Trim and Uncle Toby's "wars" (1701-13) are chronicled, and their conclusion introduces "the amours of Widow Wadman with my uncle Toby" (1713-14). The incidents in Volume VI are more varied than in Volume V, which concentrates mainly on three events and a number of Walter's theories. The volume also covers a greater period of time, from 1701-1723. With the exception of the story of Le Fever, which is definitely dated, there are no interpolated stories in Volume VI, and hence no independent time continua. And although the volume gradually regresses as Tristram's attention turns from the events occurring in or around his fifth year to his Uncle Toby's "amours," it still retains a continuity of environment -- that of Shandy Hall.

The links in Volume VI are mainly progressive continuations of Shandy events, but there are three changes of focus that create more abrupt transitions than were found in Volume V. Tristram moves from the parlour to the kitchen and from Uncle Toby to Slop between Chapters 2-3 and 13-14;
and from Tristram's breeches to Uncle Toby and Trim's "wars" between Chapters 20-21. The blank page for the description of Widow Wadman in Chapter 38 is a similar startling device designed to catch the reader's attention. More conventional links are Tristram's lapses into authorial theory in Chapters 1, 17-part, 20, 29, 33, 37-part, and 40, which are designed to draw the reader closer to the subject of the Shandean chapters, relate Walter's intellectual habits to Tristram's own, foreshorten events by using the reader's imagination (cf. III, 11) or complain of the problems of organization the novel presents. In Chapter 40, Tristram sketches five lines to represent his progress through the first five volumes, and indeed the "bumps and squiggles" on the lines can be identified from a study of the actual events in the novel (see Appendix 2). Tristram notes that: "In this last volume I have done better still--for from the end of Le Fever's episode, to the beginning of my uncle Toby's campaigns,--I have scarce stepped a yard out of my way..."(p. 360); the "yard" is Tristram's being put into breeches, which takes six chapters. Indeed, his narrative is gathering more continuity as it proceeds up to Volume VII, which has a geographically progressive continuity for most of its length.

Explicit temporal or physical connections between chapters occur frequently. At the beginning of VI, 11, Tristram promises that the history of Le Fever Jr. after
his father's death will be told "in the next chapter" (Chapter 12), as it is. Tristram promises in Chapter 16 to explain the "beds of justice" "in my next chapter" and does so. Tristram begins discussing Uncle Toby's modesty "ten pages at least too soon" in Chapter 29, and exactly ten pages later (in Watt's edition) he takes up the subject. In Chapter 31, Tristram notes that he mentioned Uncle Toby's lack of eloquence two years previously, hence in I, 21, published in 1759, an instance where authorial time is compared with reading time. And in Chapter 34, Tristram refers the reader back to Chapter 31 by repeating a passage. All this cross-referencing helps to tie Tristram's narrative together as a logical progression. Four direct links, such as "as you will read", also occur at the end of Chapters 4, 5, 22, and 33.

The epigraphs prefacing Volumes V and VI deal with the facetiousness of their contents, a concern echoed in certain of Tristram's authorial discourses in these volumes (cf. V, 15; VI, 1, 17, 33, & 40). Humour rather than satire does appear to be the object of Volumes V and VI.

Volume VII

With the exception of two chapters in the authorial present (Chapters 26 and 28) and the interpolated story of the abbess of Andouilllets with its own independent time-scheme, Volume VII follows Tristram about France, in an actual parallel of Sterne's journey to Paris and then
Toulouse in 1762, and a parody of the attitudes and difficulties of travellers on a fashionable "Grand Tour" of Europe. The volume begins with a conversation with Tristram's friend and advisor, Eugenius, on the approach of personified Death, which leads Tristram to go abroad to seek better health. The narrative follows Tristram's journey to Calais, Boulogne, Montreuil, Abbeville, Paris, Auxerre, and Lyons by post-chaise, by boat to Avignon, and ends abruptly on the plains of Languedoc in southern France. The vignette of the macaroon-eating ass parallels that of Le Fever in Volume VI, and the abbess of Andouillet's story parallels those of Slawkenbergius on noses and the whiskers in Volumes IV and V respectively.

Chapter 27 introduces an earlier trip Tristram took with the Shandy family; as he explains: "in my grand tour through Europe...my father (not caring to trust me with any one) attended me himself, with my uncle Toby, and Trim, and Obadiah, and indeed most of the family, except my mother, who was taken up with a project of knitting my father a pair of large worsted breeches" (pp. 390-391).

Chapter 28 continues the connection by proposing a triple time-scheme for Volume VII: Tristram's authorial time, the time of his Grand Tour, and the time of his journey from Death. However, except for these two chapters, and Chapter 43, to be related "without digression or parenthesis" and which leads into Uncle Toby's "amours" with the phrase
"I begun thus--", Volume VII is only a part of Tristram's story, if viewed as an 18th century biographical narrative, in that it deals with events in Tristram's life. The major reason is its deviation from the major pattern of the rest of the novel -- the relation of the events of Tristram's life at second-hand. Volume VII relates Tristram's experiences as they are occurring, when he is an adult, although he claims to be "rhapsodizing" them on the Garonne after he undergoes them. The main difference between Volume VII and Volumes I to VI and VIII-IX, then, is a closer relation of events, intermixed with Tristram's adult observations on first-hand experience. The material of this volume is certainly "the main subject itself", which, as the title says, is The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.

Many chapters are connected progressively by a phrase or sentence about the following chapter's contents, as are Chapters 4-5, 14-15, 26-27, 28-29, 30-31; or by the open dash (Chapters 19-20, 21-22, 22-23, 24-25, 31-32, 41-42, & 43 to Volume VIII). In the link between Chapters 5-6, a colon is used, to introduce a 50-page quotation from Rapin, which is not forthcoming in Chapter 6, presumably because of the author's consideration for his readers. Volume VII, on the whole, then, presents no problems to either reader or author in its unity, and in the two authorial discourses, such problems are lightly treated and then dismissed.
Volume VIII continues Uncle Toby's "amours", giving the background to Widow Wadman's infatuation with Uncle Toby, several instances of its manifestation in her "attacks" on him at the bowling-green, and the precipitation of the "amours" to the point of Toby visiting Widow Wadman to propose to her. Trim's tale of the Beguine provided a parallel to "the amours", upon which are supposedly based Trim and Uncle Toby's advances towards Bridget and Widow Wadman. Also, the Widow Wadman's resemblances to the Beguine in method (for example, at the sentry-box) are rather marked.

The first 15 chapters, in introducing "the amours," double back and forth between comment and event; Chapters 1 to 3 are written in the authorial present and deal with the difficulty of keeping upon a straight line in tracing the events to come (cf. VI, 40), a problem well illustrated by these chapters themselves. Chapter 5, in giving oblique background to Chapter 6, sees Tristram in authorial discourse, and Chapter 7 retreats into it also, following a self-apostrophe to Tristram at the end of Chapter 6, which introduces the problem of innuendo which Chapter 7 deals with. Chapter 11 generates a metaphor that Chapter 13 must comment on briefly. But with the first detailed description of Widow Wadman's attacks (metaphorically introduced in Chapter 14), the authorial voice dismisses
the innuendoes of Uncle Toby's condition or the nuances of Widow Wadman's infatuation, and proceeds with the events of "the amours."

Besides the commentary by Tristram in the earlier part of the chapter, which is in the authorial present, there is one reference to a conversation between Uncle Toby, Walter and Dr. Slop on the night of Tristram's birth in Chapter 15, and there is Trim's story about the amorous Beguine, from Chapter 20-22, which took place in 1693. The rest of the incidents occur in 1701 and 1713-1714. Thus, the volume as a whole follows Volume VI in its focus on Uncle Toby. There are notably few linkages of phrase or punctuation between chapters in Volume VIII, as it depends on continuity of subject and event to give it unity.

Volume IX:

In Volume IX, Toby and Trim visit the Widow Wadman and Bridget, though delayed on the way by Trim's story about his brother Tom, and Toby proposes, but Widow Wadman's natural curiosity about the effect of his wound on his virility presents a problem. The volume ends with "the amours" unresolved, and in a pun about virility. In the course of the volume, Tristram interrupts his story in Chapter 8, with a discussion in the authorial present on the passing of time (with a coda-like confirmation supplied by the one line of Chapter 9); and in Chapters 12
to 15, where he puts in "a good quantity of heterogenous matter...to keep us that just balance betwixt wisdom and folly, without which a book would not hold together a single year" (p. 472) and to produce a "good frisky digression." Included in this section is commentary on good writing and how to achieve it, as well as on the chapters he has promised to give. Tristram discourses on debt and economy in Chapter 17, and then leaves Chapters 18 and 19 blank, skipping Trim and Uncle Toby's entry into the house in order to write about the principal misunderstanding between Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman (Toby mistakes curiosity about the effect of his wound for solicitude about where he got it), although he restores the missing texts six chapters later). Later in the volume, Tristram laments his ill health in Chapter 24, and inserts an Invocation which runs into the sentimental account of Maria of Moulins, and then he proceeds to Chapter 25 which adds comments on the missing chapters and a defence of leaving them blank. This technique repeats that of VI, 38, where a blank page is left for the description of Widow Wadman, and the other typographical or printing aberrations such as the black and marbled pages that jog the reader's mental "elbow." There is also a constant awareness of his own bad health as well as of the irregularities of his subject and its treatment, evident in Tristram's authorial comment in Volume IX.
There are only four direct connections in Volume IX, between Chapters 1-2, 14-15, 15-16, and 32-33. There are two typographical connections: an open dash between Chapters 14-15, and a series of asterisks indicating "undescribable" (indelicate) action between Chapters 28-29.

In Chapter 4, Trim waves his stick to express the idea of liberty, and Tristram duly records its movement. The other chapters in Volume IX pass from anecdotes to a new subject or speaker, in the same way that most chapters in Volumes I-VIII are connected. The epigraph prefacing Volume IX, another plea for a fair consideration of his facetiousness, repeats the sentiments of the epigraph to Volumes V and VI.

Conclusion

The carefully employed structural techniques of Tristram Shandy parallel and sometimes parody those of more conventional first-person narrations. Sterne uses the principle of contrast in characterization as well as plot development, and achieves, besides a lively degree of reader interest, a sustained ironic tone. This irony can become an all-pervasive facetiousness if one accepts everything that Tristram, the eccentric narrator, would have us believe. Another conventional technique, parodied through the extent to which Tristram takes it, is explanation of background. The completion of an action or
speech is frequently delayed by Tristram on the pretext of supplying information. This continual upsetting of conventional chronology and causality is the most distinctive original feature of the novel. But the chaos that such a completely anarchical principle could lend itself to, is prevented by the tightly associative structure of the narrative.

The intermixture of event and commentary and especially the ironic tone that pervades the description of the former, makes it difficult, in this first-person narration, to separate the episodes from their narrator, even though they are, with the exception of Tristram's maintained colloquy with his readers and remarks to Jenny or Eugenius or his critics, sufficiently removed in time to render their treatment a seemingly random selection of memories. But the connections between chapters give these "memories" a definite contributory relationship in terms of the novel's unity. The remembrance of one incident and its verbalization in the process of narration requires that certain other incidents be supplied, in order to give the first incident its proper proportion and the reader a sense of perspective parallel to Tristram's own.

Tristram says in I, 22, that: "Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine;—they are the life, the soul of reading;—take them out of this book for instance,—you might as well take the book along with them" (p. 55), and their
inclusion: "brings in variety; and forbids the appetite to fail" (p. 55). What Tristram refers to in his novel as digressions are often authorial discourses on either events concerned with the Shandys or the art of writing a novel, or interpolated stories. Although the stories have a limited exemplary value, the discourses are as important to the novel as Uncle Toby's mock "wars" and the fireside conversations, for they introduce a highly self-conscious point of view that offers possibilities for humour different from the adroit manipulation of event and speech, action and reaction, by Tristram, in the more objective parts of the novel -- those dealing with Shandy Hall, and representing the "external reality" of Tristram Shandy in contrast to the "internal reality" and the impression of personality that are conveyed by Tristram's continuous narration.

Tristram Shandy thus works successfully as a first-person novel, because of its carefully patterned balance of events and opinion. On comparing Sterne's novel (in Cyril Connolly's words) to "the youthful occupation of seeing how slowly one can ride a bicycle without falling off," Ian Watt comments that although Sterne "may sometimes go too slowly, he has perfect balance." And it is this perfect balance, and the impression, as a result, of an intelligent artificer behind its creation, that is the final impression of Tristram Shandy.
CHAPTER IV

FOOTNOTES


3. Cf. I, 4, 6, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22 & 25; II, 2, 4, 8, & 11.


5. Fluchère, pp. 68-72.


7. Cf. Chapters 1-2, 2-3, 5-6, 6-7, 7-8.


11. Volumes I and II were published December 24, 1759, with a second edition on April 3, 1760; Volumes III and IV on January 28, 1761; and Volumes V and VI on December 21, 1761.

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

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APPENDIX I

To Mrs. F---

---and pray what occasion, (either real or ideal,) have You Madam, to write a Letter from Bath to Town, to enquire whether (the) Tristram Shandy is a married Man or no?-- and You may ask in Your turn, if you please, What occasion has Tristram Shandy gentleman to sit down and answer it? for the first, dear Lady (for we are begining to be a little acquainted) You must answer to your own conscience --as I shall the 2d, to mine; for from an honest attention to my internal workings in that part where the Conscience of a gallant man resides, I perceive plainly, that such fair advances from so fair a Princesse--(freer & freer still) are not to be withstood by one of Tristram Shandy's make and complexions--Why my dear Creature (--we shall soon be got to the very clima of familiarity)---If T. Shandy had but one single spark of galant(r)ly-fire in any one apartment of his whole Tenement, so kind a tap at the dore would have (lighted) call'd it (up) all forth to have (seen) enquired What gentle Dame it was that stood without--good God! is it You Mrs. F---! what a fire have You lighted up! tis enough to set the whole house in a flame "If Tristram Shandy was a single Man" --(o dear!)--"from the Attacks of Jack Dick and Peter I am quite secure-- (this by the by Madam, requires proof)--But my dear Tristram! If thou wast a single Man--bless me, Mad'm, this is downright wishing for I swear it is in the optative Mood & no other--well! but my dear T. Shandy wast thou a single Man, I should not know what to say--& may I be Tristram'd to death, if I should know what to do--do You know my dear Angle (for you may feel I am creeping still closer to you and before I get to the end of my letter I forsee the freedome betwixt us will be kept within no decent bounds)--do You know I say to what a devil of a shadow of a tantalizing Helpmate you must have fallen a victime on that supposition--why my most adorable!except that I am tolerably strait made, and near six feet high, and that my Nose, (whatever as an historian I say to the contrary), is an inch at least longer than most of my neighbours--except that--That I am a two footed animal without one Lineament of Hair of the beast upon me, totally spiritualized out of all form for conubial purposes--let me whisper, I am now 44,—and shall this time twelve-month be 45--That I am moreover of a thin
...dry, hectic, unperspirable habit of Body—so sublimated
and rarified in all my parts That a Lady of yr (penetration) Wit would not give a brass farthing for a dozen such:
next May when I am at my best, You shall try me—tho' I tell
You before hand I have not an ounce & a half of carnality
about me—& what is that for so long a Journey?

In such a Land of scarcity, I well know, That Wit
profiteth nothing—all I have to say is, That as I shd
have little else to give, what I had, should be most
plenteously shed upon you.—but then, the devil an' all
is, You are a Wit Yrself, and tho' there might be abundance
of peace so long as the Moom endured—Yet when that luscious
period was run out, I fear we shd never agree one day to an
end; there would be such Satyre & sarcasm (&)— scoffing &
flouting—rallying & reparteeing of it, (&)—thrusting &
parrying in one dark corner or another, There wd be nothing
but mischief—–but then—as we shd be two people of excel-
lent Sense, we shd make up matters as fast as they went
wrong—What tender reconciliations!—O by heaven! it would
be a Land of promise—–milk & Honey!

—Honey! aye there's the rub—
—I once got a surfiet of it
I have the honour
 to be with the utmost
 regard!

Madm Yr most
obedyt humble Servt
T. SHANDY.
APPENDIX. 2

Vol. I

Toby's Anecdote

Dedication

Black Pages

Marriage Settlement

Jenny

Vol. II

Time of Errand

Sermon

Advertisement

Vol. III

Noses

Apostrophe

Bridge

Grandfather & Grandmother

INNUENDO ABOUT NOSES

Vol. IV

Slawkenbergius' Tale

Francis

Eccles. Consult

Chestnut

Vol. V

Innuendo

Whiskers

(\(A.P. = \text{Authorial Present}\))