

Understanding
Tristram Shandy

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Chapter 1

Sterne and the Critics

For over two hundred years there has been a genre, the novel, in English literature that has been just about everything to everybody. When Laurence Sterne started Tristram Shandy, he wanted to write a book that would live. The fact that today it still entertains some, upsets others, and is analysed in comparison with Camus records his success.¹

Tristram Shandy has taken its position among the great books in English literature. However, there is still no standard explanation or understanding of it. Anyone who reads it is entitled to his own opinion and criticism of it. This is one of the reasons that it is alive today. Also, this is one of the reasons why someone trying to understand it can be easily confused.

One of the basic criticisms of Sterne, and of Tristram Shandy in particular, is that he was a jester and nothing more; he was merely a special kind of comedian. This is too simple and incomplete: to make a sweeping generalization, then feel that the area has been sufficiently covered. Granted, Sterne's typographical tricks, his guessing game with dashes and asterisks, his omitted words and misnumbered pages are not as funny or amusing as are

other forms of comedy. It is inaccurate to limit Sterne to sight gags and word play and call it his comedy.

Tave, in his book The Amiable Humorist, set Sterne in the historical context of his day.² The seventeenth-century concept of humor was that it was something different, something that demanded satiric attack. The eighteenth century reversed this concept. Satire had measured a real against an ideal, and found that the real did not match up. Now the ideal was found in the varied aspects of the real. This included all the imperfections of the real. Sterne symbolized this in a marbled page.

The new view of what was funny was more interested in humor than in wit. Humor was more natural and more amiable. The writers of the eighteenth century became interested in the infinite qualities of humor, in its variety and incongruity. The new comic ideal was humanitarian and benevolent. They were interested in innocent good humor, good nature, and cheerfulness.³ The result was that they created Parson Adams, Sir Roger de Coverley, and the most lovable of all characters, my uncle Toby.

J.B. Priestly outlined the qualities a man must have to be a humorist.⁴ Each one describes Sterne. The humorist had to have insight into all the incongruities, pretenses, and inconsistencies in men. More than this, he had to have the essential, quick and warm feeling, the immediate

affection for everything that was lovable.

To say that Sterne is a jester, and nothing more, is to overlook this whole primary side of his character. He used and developed a "comedy of inadequacy," a "comedy of displacement," and a "comedy of frustration."⁵ Sterne took the great and set it on a level with the little. He took the little and set it next to the great. He did this, "because in the presence of infinity all are alike and equally nothing."⁶ Much of life depends on door hinges and window sashes.

Criticism is necessary, but a criticism of Sterne's humor is very difficult. As George Sampson summed it up, "But his few artistic sins can be forgiven for the sake of an insinuating, irresistible humour in which no English writer has excelled him."⁷

Another form of criticism said that Sterne was nothing more, basically, than a sly pornographer. He did not give proper respect to any of the serious things in life. He did have a comic art, but it was for low comedy. The factor that made this completely contemptible was that he was a priest. "We should like a priest to be more priestly."⁸

Jefferson, in his biography of Sterne, put it, "No reputation has suffered more than his from nineteenth-century moral prejudice and abstruseness."⁹ Too often criticism was based on Sterne and not on his work. The

first critics especially were influenced by his life. Today it is easier to accept many of the things that scandalized the Victorian age. Psychology has made it possible to accept as simple fact most of these aspects of the book and also of Sterne's personal life. Sterne's technique made it possible for the writer to present himself to the reader. This required naturalness and sophistication, which Sterne had. There still had to be a separation between the writer's life and his work.

The early critics limited themselves to criticising Sterne instead of his work. To a certain extent, some later critics have limited themselves by describing the book in terms of its predecessors and successors, and not in terms of itself. Walter Bagehot did not want the novel to develop new audiences and forms. "Much excellent and proper masculine conversation is wholly unfit for repetition to young girls: and just the same way books written - as was almost all old literature; for men only, or nearly only - seem coarse enough when contrasted with novels written by young ladies upon the subject and in the tone of the drawing room"¹⁰ To a certain extent, Sterne was fighting this very thing. He was mocking the novel of virility. He had mastered the use of innuendo. Often, after a bawdy passage, the question can be asked if the lewdness is on the page or in the reader's prudish

and unstable mind and inferences. These minds are sick in this case, but it is better to follow H.D. Traill's example and let the issue rest, "And no doubt the world of literary moralists will always be divided upon the question - one mainly of national temperament."¹¹ No subject is too serious or too trivial to be seen in the light of its incongruities.

A third form that criticism took focused attention on Sterne's illness and self-consciousness. The critics allowed Sterne's lively character and his priesthood to interfere with the appreciation of Tristram Shandy. One of Sterne's main objectives was the "rendering of realities without moral or formal preconceptions."¹² This is exactly what many critics would not allow him to do.

Sterne's life experiences did influence his novel. A writer can write only about the things he knows. In many ways, Tristram's flight from death in book seven was Sterne's, but Tristram is a character entirely separate from Sterne. Whether or not Sterne created Parson Yorick as an idealized vision of himself can be debated. Criticism should not rest on whether or not Tristram Shandy is a sophisticated, functioning work of Sterne's ego. This places too much of a burden and limit on the capabilities of fiction. Any work, in particular this one, should be studied by itself first of all. The primary concern

is whether it is good literature or not. Then the various influences on it can and should be studied. But this is done only after the quality of the book itself has been judged.

It is also ungrounded to say, as Bagehot did, that Sterne used this novel to attack his enemies.¹³ The only caricature he drew was Dr. Slop. Even this one had no place in the novel, and Sterne dropped him early. The whole tone of the book does not lend itself to satiric attack on individuals. That would require a premeditated decision, and it can be proven that Sterne was more a feeler than a thinker.

Sterne, the writer, had this novel too well planned to allow for mistakes. Under the cover of nonsense, indecency, and whim is a carefully planned and executed framework. The whole book is an elaborate evasion of what the title promises. Instead, it should be titled, "How the hero came into the world and how, owing to various mishaps pre-natal and post-natal, he came to be the unfortunate creature he is."¹⁴ Again, the novel itself should be read, enjoyed, and analysed, and then the outside influences on it should be considered.

Finally, a basic type of criticism says that Sterne is a sentimentalist involved with love and pathos. Also that his sentiment consisted of adolescent flirtatiousness

and Christian humanitarianism. The problem that these critics have is that a stock response will not work with Tristram Shandy.

Sterne had a deep feeling for life. He was involved in all the possibilities of life. This, in a large way, accounts for Sterne's sentiment and should help define it. Sentiment and sentimentality meant the same thing for Sterne. They were "an intense apprehension of life, an intense feeling for everything one can encompass."¹⁵ Sentiment is life itself. Sentiment meant being aware of all the delicate sensations and feelings that affect a person daily. It also meant responding to these slight stimuli in a positive way.

Sterne was writing humor, not wit. Wit is mainly intellectual rejection. Humor calls for a more complex intellectual attitude on the part of the reader. The reader must combine recognition and relation of the facts. He must combine laughter and tears. Some parts of the novel are merely pieces of humorous writing. They leave vast levels of different emotional responses open, all depending on the capability of the reader. On this topic, Watt said that "the emphasis was either on ready pity for the suffering of others, or on a rather conscious and cerebral relish for the 'tender and delicious' sentiments of love found in 'the best French romances'."¹⁶ When

Sterne refers to the sentiment in love, he is not just speaking of it as feeling and imagination. He is setting it against the merely physical and self-seeking aspects of sex.

Laughter and tears. The idea is that tragedy punishes the great passions which cause the disorders of the world. On the other hand, comedy exposes the little passions which cause the small disorders.¹⁷ In an article comparing Tristram Shandy to Oedipus Rex, many of the similarities help in understanding Sterne's use of sentiment.¹⁸ The comic and the tragic are both based on the idea of incompatibilities. They are naturally exclusive of each other. The result is a more intense incongruity when they are used together and each adds to the meaning of the other. Tristram Shandy is controlled by fate. This is man's destiny, which he is unable to control or understand. The end result of both the catharsis of tragedy and the laughter of comedy is the same. Both try to relieve the tensions of human existence.

The writers immediately preceeding Sterne used the novel for externalized expression. They achieved the result they wanted by using an open style. Sterne took the novel and turned it inward. He did not try to make sense out of experience's confusion. Instead he got an emotional, spiritual, and psychological picture of man.

This is the type of thing many modern writers are trying to do. Sterne did not so much change the novel as he did its emphasis. He changed the emphasis from man's rational operation to his emotional or sentimental operation. He described the comedy in men's minds.

Sterne had two abilities, or as Jefferson called them "sophistications," that are more appreciated today than ever before.¹⁹ Sterne could recognize the foibles and vanities as far as man's affections and sympathies went, and he was able, after recognizing them, to express them openly and freely.

Chapter 2

Sterne and the Reader

Tristram Shandy is more often read than understood. Most of the present editions come equipped with massive introductions that can confuse a reader who does not have the least idea who my uncle Toby is, let alone what he is. But it is important to understand the book. It is possible to read and enjoy Tristram Shandy; but, not to overwork the obvious, intellectual understanding adds to appreciation.

The first book prepares the reader.²⁰ In it, Sterne explains his basic methods. He explains why he wrote it and what he hoped that it would accomplish. If the reader can understand this first book, he is ready for the rest.

Sterne wrote to and for readers. He did not try to shock, confuse, or lose them. His purpose in writing was to entertain.

...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.

I humbly beg, Sir, that you will honour this book by taking it--(not under your Protection, ---it must protect itself, but) -- into the country with you; where if I am ever told, it has made you smile, or can conceive it has beguiled you of one moment's pain --- I shall think myself as happy as a minister; (p.2)²¹

He has limited his material to created and uncreated things. He did not want more material than could 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)

Sterne had in mind a special type of reader:

My way is ever to point out to the curious, different tracts of investigation, to come at the first springs of the events I tell;--not with a pedantic Fescue,--or in the decisive Manner of Tacitus, who outwits himself and his reader;--but with the officious humility of a heart devoted to the assistance merely of the inquisitive; ---to them I write---and by them I shall be read ---if any such reading as this could be supposed to hold out so long, to the very end of the world.(p50)

Sterne wanted an active, interested reader. Very early, the reader identifies himself with Tristram, the reporting observer. The reader takes on his state of mind. He moves about with Tristram through the unending data of experience.

The entire book is a conversation between the writer and the reader. It is a drama in which these two are the principal actors. The author poses as characters in the book, and the reader is constantly changing temperament, attitude, and sex. The reader is also a character. Sterne sets out to mock the idiosyncrasies of all the characters, including the reader.

...that I fear the reader, when I come to mention it to him, if he is the least of a cholerick temper, will immediately throw the book by; if mercurial, he will laugh most heartily at it;--and if he is of a grave and saturnine cast, he will, at first sight, absolutely condemn as fanciful and extravagant; (p. 38)

The reader must be willing to play the game, and to

play it according to Sterne's rules.

There are four main roles the reader must play.

As Madam, he takes his place alongside the other Shandy women.

...for all the Shandy Family were of an original character throughout;---I mean the males,--- the females had no character at all, (p. 49)

Their lack of character is their character. The women are not developed as individuals but as types. They represent set thought-patterns. They do not have to think out a solution to a problem. They already have the answer, and it is always the same answer. They do not think. Madam is this element in the reader. The more the reader brings with him, in terms of knowledge and experience, the better he is able to participate in and enjoy the fun. Sterne compliments the reader, and at the same time conceals a mock at his Madam qualities.

As the reader (for I hate your ifs) has a thorough knowledge of human nature, I need not say more to satisfy him; (p. 21)

Madam is ignorant. Especially in terms of sex: she does not appreciate it. This unfamiliarity leads to fear of the unknown. To fight against the fear, she attacks all the aspects of sex. She is the prudish reader, who is always watching for some slip so that she can attack the author.

---Nor is there any thing unnatural or extravagant in the supposition, that my dear Jenny may be my

friend.-----Friend!--My friend,--Surely, Madam, a friendship between the two sexes may subsist, and be supported without-----Fy! Mr. Shandy:--- Without any thing, Madam, but the tender and delicious sentiment, which ever mixes in friendship, where there is a difference of sex. (p. 38)

Sterne is trying to show that all the things of nature, when used correctly, are good and healthy. The normal person will see this and understand. He does have a "thorough knowledge of human nature." The Prude should be mocked.

Even though Madam is afraid, she is curious about sex like everyone else. In chapter four, where Tristram is dating the time of his conception, Madam tries to find out what my Father was doing, in bed, the other months. As usual, her naive questions are turned around, and made to fall short of their mark.

-----But pray, Sir, What way your father doing all December,---January, and February?----Why, Madam,--he was all that time afflicted with a Sciatica. (p. 7)

When Sterne calls Madam back onstage, it is usually to introduce some spice or to explain himself out of a corner. It takes very little to please Madam, and it takes very little to please the Madam in the reader.

And let me tell you, Madam, there is a great deal of very good chastity in the world, in behalf of which you could not say more for your life. (p. 14)

What Sterne is doing is trying to keep as many

possible readers as he can. He attacks, and then softens the blow. He surprises the reader, and then tries to make it seem not so surprising. If Madam is a hard Prude, he does warn ("Shut the door"p.6), though not very often. All in all, he is keeping faithful to one of the basic premises that he builds his work on.

Let that be as it may, as my purpose is to do exact justice to every creature brought upon the stage of this dramatic work, (p. 14)

The reader is one of these creatures. Sterne will mock him, but he will also do him justice.

Madam is also the poor reader. Sterne was in no hurry; so neither should the reader be. The motto on the title page indicates, along with the title, that a reader should not expect a series of adventures.²² Sterne looked at reality and saw that life does not proceed in nice, ordered parcels. Sterne understood that some people might read his book as they read Tom Jones. He brings Madam back on stage to illustrate the problem.

--How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter? I told you in it, That my mother was not a papist.---Papist! You told me no such thing, Sir, Madam, I beg leave to repeat it over again, That I told you as plain, as least, as words, by direct inference, could tell you such a thing.---Then, Sir, I must have miss'd a page.--No, Madam,---you have not miss'd a word.---Then I was asleep, Sir.----My pride, Madam, cannot allow you that refuge.---Then, I declare I know nothing at all about the matter.--That, Madam, is the very fault I lay to your charge; and as a punishment for it... (p. 43)

Caught in the act, no reader wants to be Madam in this area. Most readers consider themselves to be rather good, or at least passable, but Madam has flunked. Wisely, Sterne has sent her off. He can now discuss the problem of reading with the knowledgeable readers, who already know, and with the Madams, who would like to.

I have imposed this penance upon the lady, neither out of wantonness or cruelty, but from the best of motives; and therefore shall I make her no apology for it when she returns back: --'Tis to rebuke a vicious taste which has crept into thousands besides herself,---of reading straight forwards, more in quest of the adventures,...The mind should be accustomed to make wise reflections, (p.43)

They agree because they are wise. Sterne has told them so. No one identifies with Madam, but they will watch more closely in the future.

Finally Madam returns. She has done what she was told, but she still does not understand. She never will. Tristram Shandy is written for everyone, but can be understood fully by only a few. Others will try. They will enjoy it. But real appreciation is reserved for the person with true animal spirits, who knows the rules and wants to play the game. Sterne loves Madam and is glad that she is trying to follow along. She asks the questions that dear Sir is too proud and sophisticated to ask.

Pray, what was your father saying?---Nothing.
---Then, positively, there is nothing in the question, that I can see, either good or bad.
-----Then let me tell you, Sir, it was a very unseasonable question at least. (p. 4)

Sir is the analytical philosopher that exists in the reader. To him are directed detailed descriptions and explanations of ideas. Madam may get lost, but Sir may not stay until the end. Again, Sterne developed a character that exists in the reader but which no reader will admit to. Most readers consider themselves interested rather than picayune. Sterne can successfully mock Sir, but he must correct him in a different manner. Sir has also been reading "straight forward." Sterne can not treat him the same way as he did Madam. That would surely drive him away. After discussing Madam's reading problem with Sir, Sterne reminds him, in a gentle way, what his duties as a reader are also.

I wish the male-reader has not pass'd by many a one, as quaint and curious as this one, in which the female-reader has been detected. I wish it may have its effects;--and that all good people, both male and female, from her example, may be taught to think as well as read. (p. 44)

Sir uses reason to deal with life. Life is not always rational. A little reason is necessary. A lot of reason is useful. Too much reason kills the imagination. Sterne hopes that the reader will see and understand this by playing the role of Sir.

The reader recognizes Madam and Sir as characters that he plays. My Lord, your Worship is the third character.

By this, Sterne addresses the pompous reader who cannot lower himself to play the game, and the critic who is out to analyse and destroy the book. Flattery is the only means of contacting this character, so Sterne uses it liberally.

...when I see one born for great actions, and, what is still more for his honour, whose nature ever inclines him to good ones;---when I behold such a one, my Lord, like yourself, whose principles and conduct are as generous and noble as his blood, and whom, for that reason, a corrupt world cannot spare one moment; (p.11)

Sterne then describes the qualities of "their worships," the critics. Of course, implies Sterne, these are not the qualities of your worships.

...and in spite of all the gentlemen reviewers in Great-Britain, and of all that their worships shall undertake to write or say to the contrary, ---I am determined shall be the case.---I need not tell your worship, (p. 28)

But of course, an overly critical attitude can exist. They are the qualities that hold back a reader. They do not allow him to freely enter into the book. Using applied reverse psychology, Sterne gets the reader to set aside, if possible, these drawbacks. Sterne does not ask the reader to play this character often. As with Madam and Sir, Sterne is using your Worship as an aid. An aid to better understand his book, and so to enjoy it more. If the reader can play the three roles only when Sterne says to, then he can enjoy Tristram

Shandy.

It is easier to laugh at a joke that a friend tells than a stranger's joke. Sterne wants the reader to become a friend. Eventually the reader will become Eugenius or Jenny or my dear Friend. Like any friendship, this takes time and must develop gradually.

...besides, Sir, as you and I are in a manner perfect strangers to each other, it would not have been proper to have let you into too many circumstances relating to myself all at once.

...As you proceed further with me, the slight acquaintance which is now beginning betwixt us, will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is in fault, will terminate in friendship. (p. 8)

If the reader know this man, and develops a friendship toward him, the book becomes an entirely different work. It will no longer be a man talking about his relatives, but a person you know, talking about other people you know and are interested in. Sterne wants the readers' confidence.

Therefore, my dear friend and companion, if you should think me somewhat sparing of my narrative on my first setting out,--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 anything,--only keep your temper. (p. 8)

In spite of everything he does, Sterne realized that many Madams, Sirs, and Worships would remain.

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;
...for every ten jokes,--thou hast got a
hundred enemies; (p. 22)

Sterne wants many things from his readers, and in like manner he gives them many things. Most of all, he had confidence in his readers' good faith, common sense, trust, and good humor.

I cannot suspect it in the man whom I esteem,
that there is the least spur from spleen or
malevolence of intent in these sallies.----
I believe and know them to be truly honest and
sportive: (p. 22)

Sterne knows the value and limits of friendship. As a friend, he makes the reader laugh and cry, but he never abuses this friendship. He wants to please and entertain his friends. He is going to use his family, friends, and talent for the concealed. As Monk put it, "The reader who surrenders himself to Sterne is always aware that he is being played on like a musical instrument, but so subtle is the technique that he had the illusion of experiencing not art but life."²³

Chapter 3

Sterne and Digressions

Sterne's talent for the concealed is especially significant in his use of digressions, sometimes even as ends in themselves.

...I am of so nice and singular a humour, that if I thought you was able to form the least judgment or probable conjecture to yourself, of what was to come in the next page,---I would tear it out of my book. (p. 59)

Digressions form the most confusing aspect of Tristram Shandy. Sterne consciously used nonsense so that he could mock the biographical structure of the novel, as he knew it. He was also after the logic of the scientific writers and the whole attitude that the writer should make sense out of the nonsense of experience.

By his time, digressions had been firmly established in fiction by Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett. They had not used and developed them to the extent that Sterne would. He broke with the tradition of a simple, ordered, sequential narrative. Sterne understood and respected his readers too well to gratify their simple desires.

I know there are readers in the world, as well as many other good people in it, who are no readers at all,--who find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last, of every thing which concerns you...for in writing what I have set about I shall confine myself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived. (p.5)

Sterne has no intention of ever disclosing beforehand what will come next. But he does this to entice the reader. He wants to keep the reader following along. For instance, he announces at the end of chapter ten, that there will be a two-chapter digression following. He outlines it with no intention of following it. Chapter thirteen completes the digression. Sterne said that he would return to the midwife, the story line, after two chapters, and he does. He is not trying to emphasize the story line. He uses this to show that the story line is important, but so are digressions. He also tells the reader how digressions are started, and can not be overlooked.

It is so long since the reader of this rhapsodical work had been parted from the midwife, that it is high time to mention her again to him, merely to put him in mind that there is such a body still in the world, and whom, upon the best judgment I can form upon my own plan at present,--I am going to introduce to him for good and all: But as fresh matter may be started, and much unexpected business fall out betwixt the reader and myself, which may require immediate dispatch;---'twas right to take care that the poor woman should not be lost in the mean time; (p. 27)

The story line is never to be forgotten because it is important. But, at times, digressions will play a more important role. Often Sterne sees digressions as more important. In the incident just mentioned, he immediately starts on another digression. The midwife is never

fully explained in book one, but it does not matter. The reader already knows enough about her without a lot of details.

Sterne uses digressions as both ways of telling his story and as interesting side-lights in themselves.

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; --one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it; restore them to the writer;---- he steps forth like a bridegroom,--bids All hail; brings in variety, and forbids the appetite to fail. (p. 55)

Sterne makes no pretensions. He plans to use digressions as he sees fit. And it is when Sterne is most irrelevant and digressive that he is preparing for an event that he said would happen, or else he is at least revealing character in a concrete manner. The reader needs patience. Patience to forget the story line and go along with the digression. A digression can add to and increase the enjoyment merely from the fact that it introduces new related, or unrelated, circumstances.

It demands an imaginative writer to handle digressions well. And if a writer is imaginative, then he can not help but use digressions.

For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. He will have views and prospects to himself to himself perpetually soliciting his eye, which he can no more help

standing still to look at than he can fly; (p.28)

Sterne includes himself among the imaginative writers. He understands the power of digressions. He also understands himself. He realizes that he, more than most writers, is capable of writing excellent digressions. He accepts this as a given fact, and prepares the reader for the eventual outcome. His book will be full of digressions, and he, the writer, will have a most difficult time covering the matter he has set out to cover.

---for my own part, I declare I have been at it these six weeks, making all the speed I possibly could, and am not yet born;....

These unforeseen stoppages, which I own 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)

Sterne, by this, has given the reader another aid. Once the reader knows that Sterne is going to allow digressions to freely flow and occupy his book, it is useless to read "straight forward." As Lehman put it, "For Sterne, the world is contingency incarnate. Anything and everything may be upset by thoroughly but irrelevantly motivated chance."²⁴

The main problem with a digression is that it can hinder instead of help. The author, even Sterne, is telling a story. A digression can, and often does, cause

a stop in the story line; it can confuse. The reader expects a book to be intelligible. If an author is going to use digressions, he must first of all understand them. If he understands them, then he will use them correctly. Sterne uses digressions, but at the same time the story does not stop.

...from the beginning of this, you see, I have constructed the main work and the adventitious part 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; (p. 55)

Sterne is completely at ease in his kingdom of digressions. It may happen, and usually does, that at times the reader loses all sense of movement or direction. Something keeps the reader going. That something is the feeling that the author, in spite of all his wanderings, has him completely at his mercy.

When Sterne uses a digression, the story continues. And when he continues the story aspect, the digression does not stop. He has devised his book to use digressions correctly.

By this contrivance 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)

Sterne is even a bit smug about his talent in the area

of digression. He can afford to be. He knows what he is doing with the entire work, and he does it. Since digressions play such an important part in his work, Sterne does not want the reader to overlook the fact that they are there for a reason, and that they are well done.

...in all my digressions (one only excepted) there is a master-stroke of digressive skill, the merit of which has all along, I fear, been overlooked by my reader,---not for want of penetration in him,---but because 'tis an excellence seldom looked for, or expected indeed, in a digression; (p. 54)

Sterne does use digressions masterfully. Not only do they highlight events and add to the book, but they also reveal and develop characters. This last aspect will be discussed later. After a digression, Sterne does not return to the exact spot he left off. Opinions, not events, are important. Opinions are not limited in time to one particular event. One event can exemplify an opinion. But then, this is "by the bye," as Sterne put it; a phrase that possibly describes the entire book.

A basic reason why Sterne felt free to use digressions liberally was his belief in the association-of-ideas theory. The sagacious Locke is one of the more famous backers of this theory.²⁵ It is from him that Sterne picked up the idea.²⁶ The theory holds that to a great extent the mind is conditioned and controlled by past experiences. When one experience is remembered, other

ideas also accompany it into the conscious mind. These ideas are not necessarily related in content, only by association. Having entered the mind at the same time, they are both recalled at the same time.

Sterne used this to show how each individual mind is controlled by irrelevant associations of ideas. This leads to individual quirks. My father and especially my uncle Toby are totally controlled. A word or phrase said by either one immediately recalls an idea totally divergent for the other. This effects all the characters. The result is a complete lack of communication. They are never able to discuss the same topic at the same time. Sterne applies this theory to the very construction of his book. For example, he is trying to arrive at Tristram's birth. He decided that, to reach the birth, it was important to understand the marriage contract first. In chapter fourteen, he presents "a point necessary to be clear'd up, before we could proceed any further in this history." The word "history" leads him to a digression on writing history. Another example is Sterne's numerous inferences that he is going to give the reader "the great outlines of my uncle Toby's most whimsical character." He never does. Once he started to give it "when my aunt Dinah and the coachman came a-cross us, and led us a vagary some millions of miles." Naturally,

This leads him on to a digression on digressions.

Finally, Sterne realizes the danger involved with the association of ideas. As the characters cannot communicate, there is the possibility that the writer may not be able to communicate with the reader. This is the worst possible fate any writer can suffer. But if the reader will play the roles that Sterne has assigned him when prescribed, then there will be less chance of a problem. The reader who does not takes everything too seriously and runs the risk of becoming angry and impatient with the digressions, or he might try to argue with my Father's theories.

...but as a warning to the learned reader against the indiscrete reception of such guests, who, after free and undisturbed entrance, for some years, into our brains,---at length claim a kind of settlement there,----working sometimes like yeast;--but more generally after the manner of the gentle passion, beginning in jest,--but ending in downright earnest. (p. 41)

By using these techniques, Sterne dangles his point in front of the reader. But at the same time, he keeps the reader so entertained that he probably won't even see it.

Chapter 4

Sterne and Characters

The eighteenth century was a new era in man's thinking about man. The Enlightenment had given man a more individualistic and secular view of himself. The writers of this time started writing about man's natural goodness. "The eighteenth century is probably the first which wanted compliments paid to human nature."²⁷ Its literature supported this new view by creating characters who were innately good, and made the fictional man an individual like the new real man.

Sterne had the ability to create real characters, full of life and vitality. It is easier to laugh with and at a friend. A person is more relaxed in the company of a friend. Sterne wanted to make the novel just that. It was to be an experience of friendship between reader, writer, and the characters in the novel. It should be a joint effort. The readers are real. The writer was real. It was up to Sterne to make the characters real. Otherwise, he would not be able to say,

---thus my fellow laborors and associates in this great harvest of our learning, now ripening before our eyes; thus it is, by slow steps of casual increase, that our knowledge physical, metaphysical... (p. 49)

The main characters are my Father and my uncle Toby.

Sterne was interested in a few characters who had distinctly individual virtues. He was not going to use them as representatives or types. The others, including the writer and reader, are important but not nearly as interesting. Sterne has two primary means of creating, explaining, and developing his characters. The one is the use of digressions. The other is the use of hobby-horses.

A couple of times Sterne starts to give the "broad outline" of my uncle Toby's character. He never does, and he actually has no intention of doing it. He "wastes no time establishing by elaborate description the appearance of his persons and their surroundings. He boldly assumes them to be there, and at once begins philosophizing about them as if they were there."²⁸ Instead of telling the reader about him, Sterne makes it possible for the reader to watch and judge for himself. By seeing a character in action, the reader learns how a character will react in any given circumstance. The reader will more easily understand how a character thinks than if the author had simply told him. Also, it is a more interesting means of revealing character than description alone. My uncle Toby is easily embarrassed by sex and by anything that has to do with sex. He was naive and uniformed.

---for unless it was with his sister-in-law, my father's wife and my mother,---my uncle Toby scarce exchanged three words with the sex in as many years; (p. 51)

My uncle Toby, the professional soldier, must have spent some very interesting days living in barracks. But he is the way he is. He is the very opposite of the stereotyped soldier, as my Father is of a merchant - because most people do not fit the conventional molds. Sterne is mocking realism, especially in fiction, and one of his methods is through characters. The real is more absurd than anything imagined. It is always around, but rarely looked at. Sterne is looking at reality with an imagination that is aided by eyes that perceive correctly. It is also an imagination that is filled with love for reality. He is trying to help others accept what they see.

Besides showing a character in action, digressions serve another function in character development. They supply the reader with background information. Background can be done by starting with the earliest events and presenting them chronologically. This historical approach would necessitate adding unnecessary facts. It is an artificial approach. The events did not originally happen in an ordered fashion. They just happened, and then afterwards the order was seen.

By Sterne's method the reader gradually meets the character. Eventually, when one of the characters thinks, or talks, or acts in the present, the reader knows and understands a particular past.

Parson Yorick is introduced early in the book. A few things are known about him. He is trying to help a woman become a midwife, and he has a broken-down horse. Facts, but irrelevant facts. To better understand Yorick, and to better understand his importance in the whole book, Sterne takes time out to fill the reader in a little more.

But to know by what means this came to pass, ---and to make that knowledge of use to you, I insist upon it that you read the two following chapters, which contain such a sketch of his life and conversation, and will carry its moral along with it.---When this is done, if nothing stops us in our way, we will go on with the midwife. (p. 18)

Sterne has introduced the digression and explained its place and importance in the novel. After reading the next two chapters, the reader knows why Yorick rides a broken-down horse and why he is trying to get a local midwife, not just that he is. Background created the frame of reference necessary in understanding a character's formation and development. Digressions are an interesting and successful means for doing this.

By exposing a character a little bit at a time, Sterne creates an interest in the reader to know more about

the character. Sterne keeps promising to explain my uncle Toby's character. Every time he starts, he hits a digression.

To avoid all and every one of these errors, in giving my uncle Toby's character, I am determined to draw it by no mechanical help whatever;...I will draw my uncle Toby's character from his Hobby-horse...If I was not morally sure that the reader must be out of all patience for my uncle Toby's character,---I would here previously have convinced him, that there is no instrument so fit to draw such a thing with as that which I have pitch'd upon. (p. 57)

The hobby-horse plays a very important part in the novel. The thing that makes a character interesting is the thing that makes him different from the others. The hobby-horse on which a man rides is his differences, his flights of fancy. They are the very things that make him an individual and an interesting person. It is only natural that in writing a novel like Tristram Shandy the author would select characters who ride fine hobby-horses.

The hobby-horse can also be described as a man's ruling passion. It is the thing that helps him both work and relax. The problem is that the more a man rides his hobby-horse, and nothing else, the more he is ridden by it.

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,...By long

journies 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. (p. 57)

My Father and my uncle Toby have reached this final stage with their hobby-horses. Each is completely filled with his own special fantasy. Because they are so filled, Sterne can describe each man's hobby-horse and by that means describe the man.

My Father is a speculative philosopher. Out of sorts as it is for a turkey merchant, he mounts his hobby-horse of logical argument. On this fine fixation, he would twist and turn every argument to fit his own desire. His hobby-horse made him "an excellent natural philosopher, and much given to close reasoning upon the smallest matters." The absurd thing is that he has developed a complex reasoning system, and yet the things he works it on are so unimportant. As a result, his system is irrelevant. My Father is merely projecting himself into a type of void. My Father's ideas are well ordered, and so was his life. He reasoned on the smallest matters, and he set in order the smallest matters. His penchant for logic let him do everything in an ordered and systematized fashion. Everything!

My father...was, I believe, one of the most regular men in every thing he did, whether 'twas matter of business, or matter of amusement, that ever lived. As a small specimen of this extreme exactness of his, to which he was in truth a slave,--he had made it a rule for many years of his life,---on the first Sunday night of every month throughout the whole year,---as certain as ever the Sunday night came,---to wind up a large houseclock which we had standing upon the back-stairs head, with his own hands:---And being somewhere between fifty and sixty years of age, at the time I have been speaking of,---he likewise gradually brought some other little family concerns to the same period, (p. 6)

Because my Father did run his life on such a structured basis, Tristram was able to date not only the night that he was conceived, but also the very hour that his parents were having intercourse.

A man who lives a structured life has reasoned everything so that he knows what it is and where it fits into his structure. Once reasoned out, there is no need for him to change his opinion on a subject. My Father had categorized his life. He had used his logic to reach his opinion, and if he changed it, his logic would have to have been wrong. This is one error that no philosopher likes to make. When philosophy becomes a man's hobby-horse, and he applies logic to every little thing, then any opinion contrary to his becomes a personal attack. My Father was a good man, but at certain times and in certain situations even a logical man becomes illogical.

My father was a gentleman of many virtues,
--but he had a strong spice of that in his
temper which might, or might not, add to the
number.--'Tis known by the name of per-
severance in a good cause,--and of obstinacy
in a bad one: (p. 33)

Once my Father had decided on something, the case was closed. There was no further concern about it. This attitude eventually would lead to a number of problems. These would not be ordinary problems because most of my Father's ideas were not ordinary. His hobby-horse kept him riding among the most illogical notions. It also made him pursue them with the greatest speed, and then drop them with the same velocity.

To work with them in the best manner he could, was what my father was, however, perpetually forced upon;----for he had a thousand little sceptical notions of the comick kind to defend,-----most of which notions, I verily believe, at first enter'd upon the footing of mere whims, (p. 40)

Mrs. Shandy was not as logical. She is barely present in this first book, as in the rest of the work, but the reader does get a glimpse of one of her strong characteristics. She knew exactly what she wanted, and she was as stubborn as was my Father. The example Sterne gives has important consequences. My Mother had violated a clause in the marriage contract. As a result, she had to "lye-in" in the country. By the time she was three days pregnant, she had already decided that she would have the old, woman-midwife. This was the opposite

of what my father wanted, but he was determined that the marriage contract should be enforced. Both had reached their decision riding upon their private hobby-horse. Both were right. Yet, both were wrong.

For all these reasons, private and publick, put to together,---my father was for having the man-midwife by all means,---my mother by no means. 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. (p. 37)

Their hobby-horses kept them from communicating with each other. It kept them from finding the best solution. The only person really affected by this was Tristram.

Sterne never really explains Tristram, but he does not have to. By knowing the people around him, who^o made and developed him, the reader can pretty well guess how he turned out. Besides a few physical inflictions, Tristram was influenced by his logical father, stubborn mother, and his uncle Toby.

My uncle Toby is one of the fools that follow in the line of Rabelais' Panurge and Shakespeare's Falstaff. The fool is the only consistent character in life. He is consistently foolish. The wise man is sometimes one and sometimes the other. The fool finds wisdom in folly. My uncle Toby could well be the~~the~~most kind and lovable fool in fiction. He played a very important role

in Tristram's life. It was his clause in the marriage contract that caused the fight between Tristram's parents and caused him to be born at home. It was my uncle Toby who told Tristram of his early and pre-existent days. And it was my uncle Toby's personality that greatly affected Tristram.

His humour was of that particular species, which does honour to our atmosphere; and I should have made no scruple of ranking him amongst one of the first-rate productions of it, had not there appeared too many strong lines in it of a family-likeness, which shewed that he derived the singularity of his temper more from blood, than either wind or water, (p. 49)

A fine man, my uncle Toby was. He was excessively emotional, and so was Tristram. But if they had not been so, they would not have been funny or lovable. The very things that make Toby lovable make his absurd. Among his attributes, one of the highest was his sense of modesty.

My uncle Toby Shandy, Madam, was a gentleman, who, with the virtues which usually constitute the character of a man of honour and rectitude, ---possessed one in a very eminent degree, which is seldom or never put into the catalogue; and that was a most extream and unparalleled'd modesty of nature; (p. 50)

Sterne enters the problem of whether my uncle Toby's modesty was natural or the result of a wound he suffered in a battle. Of the two possible explanations, the first one, that he was modest from the example of females, can probably be discounted. He rarely talked to women.

The second, his wound, the reader never knows for sure. Sterne uses the idea in book nine for one of the funniest double entendres in literature.

My Father loved logic. My uncle Toby simply did not enjoy logic and did not want to argue.

My uncle Toby would never offer to answer this by any kind of argument, than that of whistling half a dozen bars of Lillabullero.
----You must know it was the usual channel thro' which his passions got vent, when any thing shocked or surprised him;---but especially when any thing which he deem'd very absurd, was offer'd. (p. 52)

My uncle Toby's attitude toward academic learning and discussion was the complete opposite of my Father's. They were unable to communicate with each other. My father would become angry, and my uncle Toby would just sit and whistle, which would make my Father more angry. Or as Sterne put it:

This contrariety of humours betwixt my father and my uncle was the source of many a fraternal squabble. (p. 52)

My uncle Toby was in a world of his own. He heard what he wanted to hear, and he understood what he wanted to understand. It is not a malicious kind of rejection, but as Jefferson put it, "Sterne is nowhere greater than in his power to convey a sense of Uncle Toby's absorption in his own private world, of its remoteness and of the completeness of the spell."²⁹

Words and ideas they were unable to communicate. But they were able to communicate the love they had for each other. It is this love element that Sterne adds that keeps their arguments from becoming petty fights. It keeps them believable.

Each man's hobby-horse is uniquely his own. Others should recognize it and understand it. There is no need to fight against another man's hobby-horse. There is no good reason for one to try and change others to meet his standards.

...and so long as a man rides his Hobby-Horse peaceably and quietly along the King's highway, and neither compels you or me to get up behind him,---pray, Sir, what have either you or I to do with it? (p. 10)

The problem is that my Father does not always live by this maxim. Tristram sees and understands it because all his life he saw his father trying to have everyone climb onto logic, and ride the road of hair splitting. This results in a never-ending conflict between the brothers Shandy. The one would not get up. The other would not get down.

Sterne looked at hobby-horses and at everything in the same way. He wanted to present the facts and the incidents. He did not judge whether these things were good or bad. He was trying to help the reader see everything in context and in its proper perspective. Sterne

had shown that logical communication between my Father and my uncle Toby, and many others, was impossible. Even though they cannot, there is no reason why they may not still love each other. So Sterne seeks sympathy instead. He wants the reader to realize this also. The reader is blindly devoted to his own hobby-horse. So he is as worthy of sympathy and being laughed at as are the characters.

Let that be as it may, as my purpose is to do exact justice to every creature brought upon the stage of this dramatic work. (p. 14)

Like the great humorists Cervantes and Shakespeare before him, Sterne does not describe his characters solely in terms of their ruling passion. Ultimately, reality makes a person get off his hobby-horse. Comedy comes from the little idiosyncrasies of a person. Sterne uses the heart and the other qualities of the total personality. This makes characters real people, believable people, instead of just eccentrics. Sterne's characters are intensely real, but very improbable. This is another part of Sterne's total joke. He is mocking realism in characterization.

Chapter 5

Sterne and Time

Time is a determining factor in Tristram Shandy. Sterne uses it not merely to measure the motion of events. It is not just a static element but a vibrant influence. His characters do not live in the present with a reference to the past. Instead they live in a present that is made by the past and is always showing the influences of the past. As an influence, it can be controlled. Sterne wanted to do two things by writing this book. One was to amuse himself and the reader. The other was to mock realism, especially in fiction. Both of these he accomplished by two means. The one was characters and the other was time. He turned every literary and philosophical rule for his own use. This left him the greatest possible freedom to manipulate elements, like time, to create a certain effect for a particular moment.

Sterne uses three distinctly different types of time. The least important, and least interesting, is chronological time. The book dates various events important in the lives of the characters.³⁰ The only importance this holds for this essay is the fact that a chronological order does exist. Much criticism of Sterne, and disregard for Tristram Shandy, is based on a misunderstanding.

Because the order of chronology is not presented sequentially, some have felt that all order was absent. Sterne uses chronological order to give the book some semblance of being an historical document. He established a real context for unreal occurrences.

The second use of time is the writer's clock time. Sterne uses the time at which he is writing the book to bring the reader into his study.

---that observation is my own;--and struck out by me this very rainy day, March 26, 1759, and betwixt the hours of nine and ten in the morning. (p. 49)

Sterne does this to emphasise the familiarity and friendship between reader and writer. The reader can now see the writer at work. He can also see some of the problems the writer faced. Sterne was frustrated by not being able to keep up with himself. It took him longer to relate an incident than the incident itself took.

---In short, there is no end of it;---for my own part, I declare I have been at it these six weeks, making all the speed I possibly could, and am not yet born:--I have just been able, and that's all, to tell you when it happen'd, but not how;--so that you see the thing is yet far from being accomplished. (p. 29)

This is the problem that any writer faces, especially if he is trying to relate reality in fiction. It is the gap that exists between the real and the relating of the real. Sterne used this to show, among other things,

how time should not be used in fiction. He saw that time must play a relative role in fiction. Even authors of realistic novels are limited by this.

Sterne takes the reader into his study, and himself into the reader's study. In chapter 20, he stops the reader and makes her start over. He is sitting there, watching the reader work. He is trying to establish a direct relation between the time it takes events in the novel to occur and the time it takes the reader to experience them. He transfers the Shandian world's time to the reader's. Sterne realized the relativity of time. He saw how the past could be present in the mind of a character. So he goes inside the conscious mind of a character and takes the reader with him. Now he is in a position to manipulate clock time as he sees fit. Whether he slows it down or speeds it up depends upon the experience at hand. The length of the episode depends on how fast the ideas occur. An example of this is the fact that my Father and my uncle Toby have been sitting in the front room for quite a few digressions. The reader has been gathering background information, but what have my Father and my uncle Toby been doing?

---I wonder what's all that noise, and running backwards and forwards for, about the stairs, quoth my father, addressing himself, after an hour and a half's silence, to my uncle Toby, (p.48)

Sterne does not try for a minute-to-minute correlation. The basic idea is enough. He sees his characters as existing in time, and not just the duration of the clock. He sees activity instead of action. Sterne will slow down the story progression to create the illusion of time spent. Chapter 20, with the section in French, is a time consuming device. It helps make the "hour and a half" pass in the reader's time and mind.

Sterne uses these three devices for time to take all emphasis off the time in which events actually occurred. It is this indirect approach that gives humor a value and a serious aspect. As Cazamian wrote, "The feeling of relativity is the soul of humour."³¹ Sterne stressed the time during which he was writing and the time the reader spent reading the book. This places all the emphasis on the moment-by-moment communication and working together of the author and the reader.

Conclusion

Tristram Shandy is alive. It is interesting. The tension between a disordered surface and a well-ordered structure has kept it alive. It is a comedy up to a certain point: the point where the rules of comedy limit Sterne. When he reaches that stage, "he turns the whole business into a Circus."³²

What Sterne gives is a humorous picture of a very original family and household. Everything is presented in the frame of reference of relativity and nonsense and the associational power of the brain. Tristram is the son of a woman who cannot understand implications and of a man who tries to make reality fit his theories. Tristram has a genius for implication, saw that reality was its own hypothesis, and loved nature with the love of one mind conditioned by its own particular experience. As Powys so well stated, "Tristram Shandy is fuller of paradoxes and inconsistencies than any book ever written. If it were not so it would be of little use to our weary, uneasy, and indignantly spasmodic generation."³³

One final item. Any critic who sets any kind of system on Tristram Shandy plays the role of Tristram's father. He falls into another of Sterne's traps.

Tristram Shandy should be read, appreciated, and understood. But first and last and everywhere in

between, it should be enjoyed.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Ernest H. Lockridge, "A View of the Sentimental Absurd: Sterne and Camus," Sewanee Review, LXXII (1964), 652-667.

² Stuart M. Tave, The Amiable Humorist: A study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century. pp. 148-151, 171-177, passim.

³ Stuart M. Tave, "Corbyn Harris: Falstaff Humor and Comic Theory in the Eighteenth Century," M P, L (1952), 102.

⁴ J.B. Priestly, "Three Novelists" in English Humour, 1929, p. 130.

⁵ A.R. Towers, "Sterne's Cock and Bull Story." E L H, XXIV. (1957), p. 14.

⁶ Tave, Amiable, p. 175.

⁷ George Sampson, Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, p. 510.

⁸ Sampson, p. 510.

⁹ D.W. Jefferson, Laurence Sterne, 1954, p. 7.

¹⁰ Walter Bagehot, Literary Studies, Vol. 2, 1950, p. 106

¹¹ H.D. Traill, Sterne, (English Men of Letters Vol. 7), 1902, p. 147.

¹² B.H. Lehman, "Of Time, Personality, and the Author. A Study of Tristram Shandy: Comedy" in Studies

in the Comic (University of California in English,
Vol. III, No 2, 1941), p. 239.

13 Bagehot, p. 110.

14 Jefferson, p. 16.

15 Lockridge, p. 666.

16 Ian Watt, Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy,
Gentleman, 1965, p. XVII.

17 Tave, MCP, p. 105.

18 Stanley G. Eskin, "Tristram Shandy and Oedipus
Rex: Reflections on Comedy and Tragedy," C E, XXIV
(1963), pp. 271-277.

19 Jefferson, p. 28.

20 See appendix I for a summary review of book one.

21 All page references are to the Ian Watt edition,
1965.

22 "It is not things themselves that disturb men,
but their judgments about these things."

23 Samuel Monk, Life and Opinions of Tristram
Shandy, Gent., 1965. p. XIX.

24 Lehman, p. 237.

25 John Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding,
(1690), Bk II, Ch 33, Sect. 9: "Whenever two or more
impressions chance to enter the mind simultaneously
they will thereafter always keep in company, and the one
no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but
its associate appears with it."

26 Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel: A Panorama, 1960, p. 126.

27 Watt, p. XV.

28 John C. Powys, Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent., 1950, p. 13.

29 Jefferson, p. 23.

30 For a complete chronology see: Theodore Baird, "The Time-Scheme in Tristram Shandy and a source," P M L A, LI (1936), pp. 803-820.

31 Louis Cazamain, A History of English Literature, 1948, p. 884.

32 Powys, p. 13.

33 Powys, p. 21.

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APPENDIX I

Charles Parish. "A table of Contents for Tristram Shandy,"
C E XXII (1960), 143-150.

BOOK 1

(1) The author reflects upon the sad circumstances of his conception. (2) The author bemoans the vitiated homunculus and animal spirits. (3) How the preceding has been told to the author by his Uncle Toby. (4) Formal statement of the above for the benefit of readers who "find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last." (5) The author says he was born November 5, 1718. (6) The author prepares the reader for his donning the "fools-cap." (7) The installation of the midwife by the parson's wife. (8) A statement on hobby-horses, plus a Dedication. (9) Remarks on the preceding Dedication, its virginity and its value. (10) Fruitless return to the midwife; the story of Yorick's fine horses. (11) Yorick the jester and Yorick the parson. (12) Yorick's humor, its consequences, and his sad death (1748). (13) Second fruitless return to the midwife. (14) Difficulties of an author; despair at ever catching up: "I have been at it these six weeks, and am not yet born." (15) Mrs. Shandy's marriage settlement; her right to lie-in in

London. (16) False-alarm and the return from London.
 (17) Consolation for Walter Shandy: Lying-in in the
 country. (18) Anticipations of Walter Shandy on his
 wife's lying-in in the country; his measures against
 careless delivery. (19) Walter Shandy on names good
 and evil; his unconquerable aversion for "Tristram."
 (20) The author on careless readers; "Les Docteurs de
 Sorbonne" on baptism. (21) First chapter on Tristram's
 birth; Uncle Toby knocks out his ashes, and says "I
 think-"; Uncle Toby's modesty ^{con}cerning Aunt Dinah.
 (22) The author's statement on his work: "In a word,
 my work is digressive, and it is progressive too,---
 and at the same time." (23) Reasons for drawing Uncle
 Toby's character from his hobby-horse. (24) The fact
 that Uncle Toby had a strange hobby-horse. (25) Uncle
 Toby's wound; the ease gained through telling about it.
 The author says that the reader cannot guess what he is
 about to say.

