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STERNE'S SYSTEM OF IMITATION

I continued to reason how much further one could proceed with this reflection and multiplication of what is imitated: that is to say, whether one could not only duplicate, but triplicate and quadruplicate it, and go as far as one liked, finally, as it were one imitator imitating another imitator, and so on and so on . . . (Alessandro Piccolomini)

Ever since John Ferrier compiled a regular institute of Sterne's borrowings the novelist's reputation has been divided between praise for his spontaneity and originality on the one hand, and an awed respect for the extent and subtlety of his thefts on the other. Sterne makes no bones about exhibiting these two sides of his literary character and seems to see no need to reconcile them: he is both the man who cautiously burned more wit than he published and the 'inconsiderate Soul . . . who never yet knew what it was to speak or write one premeditated word';[1] the man who in *Tristram Shandy* cleverly plagiarizes Robert Burton's attack on plagiarism and the one who, in the same novel, declares that he begins 'with writing the first sentence — and trusting to Almighty God for the second'.[2] Like Tristram Shandy, Sterne seems to alternate between discretion and carelessness, between government of and by the pen, expressed as the difference between writing fasting and writing full (p. 436). These days it is usual to concentrate on his originality, his contempt for rules, his debunking of 'conventions', his readiness to experiment with the novel-form, in short his modernism. By contrast, those critics who have studied the texts and methods he used to supplement his originality have tended to conclude that he had an old-fashioned taste for literature and wit and that what is odd about him is what is out of date.[3] In this essay I want to strike a balance between these two views by considering Sterne's way of writing as fairly typical of his time and by showing that his most spontaneous and irregular production, *The Journal to Eliza*, obeys the same laws as his more finished work.[4]

Although in his politics Sterne was a Whig, and invented in 'uncle Toby' a hero who has little in common with the Tory satirists on the subject of the War of the Spanish Succession, in his writing he parodies the chiliastic visions of true-blue Moderns with as much vigour as Swift. Those who really believe that the arts and sciences are advancing towards their acme of perfection or who believe that wit and judgement will create between them an ultimate 'effusion of light' (*TS*, pp. 64, 198) are mocked with paradoxes and with the facts of their own unredeemed nature. Sterne's view, like Fielding's, is that life is not going to change very much and that any attempt to transcend its imperfections and ambiguities, like Walter Shandy's systems or the Man of the Hill's delight in the nectar of infinity, is ridiculous. The 'world' of *Tristram Shandy* is an Augustan one where 'incorporated minds', in Johnson's phrase, try to find some tolerable room on the isthmus of a middle state,

[1] See *Letters of Laurence Sterne*, edited by Lewis Perry Curtis (Oxford, 1935), pp. 77, 117 (hereafter *Letters* with page references in text).
[2] *Tristram Shandy*, edited by James A. Work (New York, 1940), pp. 342–43, 540 (hereafter *TS* with page references in text).
[3] See, for instance, D. W. Jefferson, '*Tristram Shandy* and the Tradition of Learned Wit', *Essays in Criticism*, 1 (1951), 225–48.
[4] I have found the following articles useful in compiling this one: C. J. Rawson, 'Two Notes on Sterne', *N & Q*, 202, NS 4 (1957), 255–56; J. M. Stedmond, 'Genre and *Tristram Shandy*', *PQ*, 38 (1959), 37–51, and 'Sterne as a Plagiarist', *ES*, 41 (1960), 308–12; Gardner D. Stout, 'Some Borrowings in Sterne from Rabelais and Cervantes', *ELN*, 3 (1965), 111–17.

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a place where trifles have their importance and where 'small heroes' try to cope with destinies they never forged. That there is no amelioration of the human condition other than the light in which we choose to regard its discomforts and puzzles is the theme of most of Sterne's jokes. In the dedication he writes to a fellow-sufferer, Sterne offers laughter as a fence against infirmities, not as a cure of them. In many respects 'Shandeism' is like the practical scepticism of *Rasselas*, *Tom Jones*, and *Humphry Clinker* in its determination to expect from life only what life will afford.

With an outlook similar to his Tory contemporaries it is not surprising that Sterne should share many of their literary tenets. He is not burlesquing Pope's rule:

> A perfect Judge will *read* each work of Wit
> With the same Spirit that its Author *writ*

when he asks 'madam' to tame her curiosity or when he invites the reader to imagine, and even write, his or own part of the narrative. In allowing the reader a dialectical share of the written product he is asking for that sagacity which Fielding frequently demands from his reader (especially in his tender scenes), comprising sufficient experience, humanity, and sympathy to make the *poco meno* as detailed and believable as the *poco più*. Sterne is as opposed as Swift to that passive curiosity (so close to prurience in his opinion and Fielding's) which makes a beast of the 'lazy grunting Reader'.[1] Ideally author and reader occupy a common ground on which what is already known fruitfully intersects with what is written and read: 'What oft was thought but ne'er so well exprest'. Sterne's version of this precept is given in a letter to an American admirer where he says that the reader's ideas are 'call'd forth by what he reads, and the vibrations within, so entirely correspond with those excited, 'tis like reading *himself* and not the *book*' (*Letters*, p. 411). It is a case of finding Pope's 'something' which 'gives us back the Image of our Mind'.

In neo-Classical literary theory the author experiences an analogous intersection between his own ideas and a text, whether it is the Book of Human Nature which Fielding transcribes in writing *Tom Jones* and which Johnson told Boswell diligently to read, or whether it is an actual text modelled on that great original. In the end the best literature and the Book of Human Nature are the same: Scaliger finds Virgil and Nature to be identical, while Virgil finds in Homer the same identity between what is and what is written. Classical literature forms a kind of institute of all human experience, hence Swift's horror at Bentley's officious attempts to lessen its authority and his mockery of the Moderns' assumption that contemporary experience will add to the stock. The dunce-narrator of *A Tale of a Tub* faces an embarrassing shortage of 'new Matter' when he writes his book because he has not understood, in the words of the *Spectator*,

> that Wit and fine Writing doth not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving things that are known an agreeable Turn. It is impossible for us who live in the later Ages of the World, to make Observations in Criticism, Morality, or in any Art or Science, which have not been touched upon by others. We have little else left us, but to represent the Common Sense of Mankind in more strong, more beautiful, or more uncommon Lights. (No. 253)

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, edited by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1958), p. 203.

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Joseph Warton, a critic skilled in tracing the genealogies of stories and ideas, concludes with Voltaire that 'All is imitation . . . Boiardo has imitated Pulci, Ariosto has imitated Boiardo. The geniuses, apparently most original, borrow from each other'.[1] For his own part Sterne gestures freely at his models, noting the critical distances between himself, Swift, and Rabelais and drawing attention to what is 'cervantic' in his sense of humour, not forgetting at the same time to emphasize 'the air and originality' of his book (*Letters*, pp. 76–77). The nature of the originality and the imitation will become clearer by looking at *Tristram Shandy* and some of the books that have contributed to it.

Walter Shandy's career illustrates the problems a man of erudition faces when he has an ambition to be original. Although it is his axiom that 'an ounce of a man's own wit, was worth a tun of other peoples' and his belief that a man may pick up an opinion 'as a man in a state of nature picks up an apple' (*TS*, pp. 147, 221) and show an inalienable a right to it, it is nevertheless the case that all his systems are cobbled together out of other men's books. No matter how exempt from the stream of vulgar ideas or the common road of thinking Walter thinks he is, and no matter how oddly he assembles his theories and applies them, it is evident from Chambers's *Cyclopaedia*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and Obadiah Walker's *Of Education* that his ideas once dwelt in other heads. He makes this point himself when he praises Ernulphus's anathema as a digest and institute of all possible modes of swearing and defies anyone 'to swear *out* of it' (*TS*, p. 183). Not that Ernulphus is original on this account: he merely provides the meeting point between all prior and all subsequent knowledge of oath-making (as Slawkenbergius does in the field of noses) to show that there is nothing new under the sun and that all is imitation. Walter's 'singular and ingenious' hypothesis is no more than a theory of imitation that his son, with some minor provisos, espouses too. Even Tristram's most original inventions, the digressive-progressive system of writing and the life-writing paradox, are not as original as he claims they are: Longinus praises Thucydides's management of digressions so that 'at length after a long Ramble, he very pertinently but unexpectedly returns to his Subject, and raises the Surprize and Admiration of all';[2] and Montaigne and Cervantes discuss the puzzles that arise when a life is being lived as well as written, not to mention Walter's frustrations with the *Tristrapaedia*.[3] Parodically Tristram concedes the point when, amidst his father's energetic quotation of his grief for Bobby's death, he traces the course of

[1] Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 2 vols (London, 1782), II, 54.

[2] Dionysius Longinus, *On the Sublime* (London, 1739), p. 60. Reprinted in the translations of Nicholas Boileau-Despréaux and William Smith by Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints (New York, 1975), hereafter *OS* with page references in text.

[3] Of his adding to but not correcting subsequent editions Montaigne says, 'From thence however there will easily happen some transposition of Chronology; my Stories taking place according to their patness, and not always according to their Age'; and he goes on to draw the famous distinction between 'I now, and I anon': *Essays of Michael Seigneur de Montaigne*, translated by Charles Cotton, 3 vols (London, 1711), III, 247 (hereafter, *Essays*). This seems very akin to Tristram's splitting himself up into two lives: 'I perceive I shall lead a fine life out of it out of this self-same life of mine', p. 286). When Don Quixote discovers that the first part of his adventures is already written and published he marvels that 'there was such a history extant, while yet the blood of those enemies he had cut off, had scarce done reeking on the blade of his sword', and he asks Samson Carrasco if 'the author promises a second part?' (*Don Quixote*, translated by Peter le Motteux, Everyman edition, 2 vols (London, 1906; reprinted 1972), II, 19–20). This confrontation with his own experience as text begins all the life-literature paradoxes of the second part, culminating in the meeting with Don Alvaro Tarfe, a character from Avellaneda's spurious sequel (page references are to *DQ* hereafter).

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Eleazer's sentiment from the Ganges to Yorkshire and comically refines upon Sir William Temple's theory of the geography of imitation.[1] And when he declares that he intercepts 'many a thought which heaven intended for another man' (*TS*, p. 540) he outlines a potential community of ideas which is achieved whenever his interceptions are made, as they often are, at the level of libraries rather than the middle air.

At its most utilitarian Sterne's borrowing on his hero's behalf is merely a way of finding convenient sources of recondite information with which to ornament a theme like love, education, or death. So Burton's partition on Love-Melancholy is used heavily during the Amours, just as Walker is used extensively for the *Tristrapaedia*. As an act of vanity borrowing can be the means to claiming prestigious friends: Rabelais, Montaigne, Cervantes, Locke, Shakespeare. But whatever Sterne's first motives are in borrowing, he often develops secondary ones which make the discovery of a theft his triumph and not the detective's or which give an added allusive strength to a professed imitation. Consistent with his intention not to exert a false authority over the reader's imagination Tristram advises us to 'Read, read, read, read, my unlearned reader! read' (*TS*, p. 226); and it is only by reading that we will appreciate his plagiarism of Burton's attack on plagiarism, or be aware of the careful distinctions being drawn between sense and nonsense in Walter's definition of a good tutor, or find the sequel to his interrupted definition of 'analogy' (*TS*, pp. 414–15).[2] Likewise it is by reading that we can piece together the clues about his intentions or opinions that Sterne is dropping for our benefit. Slop's arrival is keyed to a couple of allusions to *The Dunciad* ('majesty of mud' and 'obstetric hand') that, combined with the simile of Hamlet's ghost, suggest a Smedley-cum-Douglas-cum-apparition emerging dirtily from below with just the sort of exaggerated theatricality that marks the dunces' performances in Pope's satire. Sterne has also wrapped this sequence in three allusions to Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (*TS*, pp. 100, 105, 122) which refer to the line of beauty and to the greater or less amount of detail needed in the composition of a figure, 'the insensible more or less'; and they form a pictorial bridge between Slop's sesquipedality of belly and the natural grace of Trim's sermon-reading.[3] More than that they were consciously intended by Sterne 'mutually [to] illustrate [Hogarth's] System & mine', a system of careful alternation between tact and circumstantiality that he had already called 'the happiness of the Cervantic humour' (*Letters*, pp. 99, 77) and which Pope had praised as 'the *true Sublime* of *Don Quixote* . . . the perfection of the Mock-Epick'.[4] Clearly Sterne was using and thinking of his Cervantic-Hogarthian system in two different but related ways, as a satirical weapon of deflation and as a humorous tool of enlargement. The one is signalled by his allusion to *The Dunciad*, where exaggeration is reductively mock-epic, and the other by his allusions to Hogarth, where exaggeration serves to highlight and cherish the comedy of average human behaviour. That the sermon Trim reads is

[1] 'Of Learning', noted by James A. Work, 'The Indebtedness of *Tristram Shandy* to certain English Authors, 1670–1740', unpublished dissertation (University of Harvard, 1934), p. 135.

[2] Compare Obadiah Walker, *Of Education* (Oxford, 1673; reprinted Scolar Press, 1970), pp. 46–47, 78–79. The definition is taken from Chambers's entry 'Analogy'.

[3] Compare William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty* (London, 1753; reprinted Scolar Press, 1971), pp. 62, 66, 135.

[4] 'Postscript to the *Odyssey*', *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, edited by John Butt and others, 11 vols (London, 1939–69), x, 388.

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Sterne's own, printed at York in 1750, and that Slop's overthrow is a version of the one Montaigne describes in his essay 'Use makes Perfectness' serves to show that Sterne's faculty for allusive imitation is almost boundless.

Sometimes a borrowing is made in order to mock the author borrowed from. Sterne's respect for Locke did not exclude witty revenge being taken on the philosopher for his attacks on figurative language, and this is done mostly at the expense of Locke's occasional metaphors. When he calls the name of complex ideas 'as it were the knot that ties them fast together' and stresses the importance of that knot in keeping the parts of the idea united, he allows Sterne the opportunity of making the name the very opposite of a neat bond.[1] Although Obadiah's knots are 'good, honest, devilish, right, hard knots, made *bona fide*' (*TS*, p. 168) they are untied into all sorts of puns: 'knots' of speed, 'knot' as noose, 'knot' as life's obstacle, marriage 'knot', and even the umbilical 'knot' which Slop will have to tie when he has undone the other ones. Depending on names rather than on the natural associations of the mind is shown to be a risky business. Contrariwise Locke's idea of a dictionary, where the meaning of 'words standing for things' might be fixed by 'little draughts and prints made of them' (III, 11, 25), is borrowed by Tristram as a metaphor for facial expressions: 'There are some trains of certain ideas which leave prints of themselves about our eyes and eye-brows . . . we see, spell, and put them together without a dictionary' (*TS*, pp. 346–47).

The associative habit of mind that Sterne defends from Locke's nominalism is closely related to the borrowing habit. A true imitator does much more than simply spatchcock other texts into his own, or dutifully give a foreign idea an 'agreeable turn': other men's thoughts are not a supplement to his own but the very means by which his own thought takes place. His commonplace-book and his memory are to all intents and purposes identical and every passing idea in his head, which will inevitably have a literary reference if not a literary origin, instantly assembles associated literary ideas around it. This is what Walter is doing in his oration on death, taming his grief by fettering it in the sentiments of ancient and neoteric stoics between which his mind moves with an almost natural associative agility. Just as fluidly Tristram's mind can shift from one borrowed sentiment to another as if they were decreeing the development of his thought and the pressure of his feelings. A sentiment from Montaigne leads naturally into one from Rabelais, and a quotation from Rabelais leads to an oath fetched not from Ernulphus but from *Don Quixote*.[2] The process is like Trim's knowledge of the fifth commandment, which is reached by going through the previous four: Tristram finds what he believes and feels very often by travelling through texts, *reading* himself in them and writing down the result. It is a sort of travelling commonly found in the eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century comic novel: Parson Adams,

[1] *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by A. Campbell Fraser, 2 vols (Oxford, 1894), II, 50 (III, 5. 10).

[2] *TS*, p. 367. Compare the paragraph with Montaigne's distrust of his judgement: 'Whoever shall call to memory how many, and how many times he has been mistaken in his own Judgment, is he not a great Fool if he does not ever after suspect it' (*Essays*, III, 403); and with Rabelais who maintains things 'even unto the fire *exclusive*' (*Gargantua and Pantagruel*, translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter le Motteux, Everyman edition, 2 vols (London, 1929; reprinted 1966), I, 138 (Prologue, *Pantagruel*). The quotation of Tickletoby's disaster and the advice to the reader which it introduces (*TS*, p. 266) is confirmed with an oath 'by St Paraleipomenon', formerly a knight with a Shandean hatchment in *Don Quixote*, II, 254: 'Sir Paralipomenon, Knight of the Three Stars'.

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Charlotte Lennox's Arabella, Catherine Morland, and Edward Waverley all try to find a path through life by books; yet the burlesque or pedantic elements of this imitative heroism are greatly outweighed by the freshness and vigour of minds that are formed by literary experiences or sharpened by literary expectation. This is a paradox that Sterne is well aware of and his favourite sources, as well as his characters, reveal his deep interest in the phenomenon of bookish naivety which accompanies true sincerity, and imitation which manifests an original integrity.

Montaigne and Burton are the two contemplative models, as it were, and Don Quixote the active one. Between them they represent the two sides of imitation: responding to literature as pure experience on the one hand, and converting experience into literary analogue on the other. All three confront the business of imitation in the spirit of classical criticism. When he decides to imitate the mad antics of Beltenebros, Quixote justifies his decision according to the rule of imitation that is observed in painting and 'in all other arts and sciences that serve for the ornament of well-regulated commonwealths'. Choosing to season his imitation with one or two of Orlando's frenzied actions, he carefully determines on those 'most essential and worthy imitation' (I, 181–82). Montaigne and Burton both make the point that borrowing is no theft provided the imitation measures up to the source (as Quixote's certainly does): Burton calls it 'assimilating what he has swallowed', and Montaigne says it would be indigestion to do otherwise.[1] They stress how different the borrowed thing becomes in its new setting, 'theirs . . . and yet mine', says Burton, and Montaigne: 'a Work that shall be absolutely his own'; while Quixote declares the singular perfection of his imitation consists in running 'mad without a cause, without the least constraint or necessity' (*DQ*, I, 183). Their originality lies in the manner of doing it, 'the composition and method', and Montaigne warns his reader to regard not 'the Matter I write, but my Method in writing. . . . For I make others say for me, what, either for want of Language, or want of Sense, I cannot myself well express' (*Essays*, II, 115). What seems to be a considered and highly self-conscious procedure of imitation is transformed into an extraordinarily intimate exhibition by means of the method of assimilation. 'I expose myself entire', Montaigne confesses, and Burton says, 'I have laid myself open (I know it) in this treatise, turned mine inside outward' (*Essays*, II, 72; *AM*, I, 27). In his Beltenebrising Quixote reveals parts so private, 'such rarities, that Sancho even made haste to turn his horse's head, that he might no longer see them' (*DQ*, I, 194).

Of the three methods of imitation Burton's shows most vividly how an odd individual can inhabit a book world and use its contents to reveal himself. His experience does not extend beyond the shelves of his college's well-stocked library, all his travelling is done by map, but because his theme is melancholy, a *disorder* afflicting the whole world as well as himself, he can never find an appropriate or standard response to the information of books. Although texts are exclusively his source for estimations of reality they offer him neither order nor a coherent body of symptoms. So Burton is constantly expatiating, 'ranging in and out', his moods constantly shifting between despair and optimism, anger and helpless laughter, all stimulated by the books he is endlessly traversing. His sentences have a loose

[1] *Anatomy of Melancholy* (*AM* in subsequent references), Everyman edition, 3 vols (London, 1932; reprinted 1961), I, 25; Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 200.

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subordinate structure designed for the instant incorporation of diverse material and they present a constant temptation to elaborate ideas and heighten moods: the word 'sermon' (*AM*, I, 35), or the simple proposition 'I am contented with my fortunes' (II, 188), tend to spawn examples, synonyms, modifications, and quotations in such profusion that Burton often leaps the gap and begins to impersonate his subject. The proposition 'He loves her, she hates him' is gone into so thoroughly that Burton is transformed into the forlorn 'he': 'I give her all attendance, all observance, I pray and entreat' (III, 231). When he cannot stop his words or the feeling they are intensifying he commits what he calls 'overshooting', as in 'Democritus Junior to the Reader' where he becomes Democritus in earnest in spite of the reader. He moves towards his emotional declaration by quotation and allusion (Erasmus, Horace, Martial, Terence) then suddenly realizing what he has done he retreats in the same manner, by way of Tasso, Tacitus, Bacon, saying finally 'in Medea's words I will crave pardon' (I, 122–23). Literature is the means both to promoting and excusing his decision to write satire, it is the vehicle for feelings of temerity and shame that Burton partly experiences and partly performs. It contributes to the larger performance in which he writes about melancholy in a melancholy manner, exhibiting in his treatise all the contradictions and irregularities that belong to the disease. Burton's real melancholy is both excited and controlled by books and his imitations of them, just as Quixote's imitation of Beltenebros is both the effect and the representation of madness. In both cases the otherwise unframeable contexture of a peculiar self finds an addition to its experience and a method of self-expression by an act of imitation.

In his essay 'Upon Some Verses of Virgil' Montaigne addresses himself to the subject of eroticism in life and literature, old as he is, in order to discover the true principle of excitement. He does not find it in Martial's over-naked verse, but in Lucretius and Virgil, whose 'words of flesh and bone' are the result of seeing 'farther and more clearly into things' and finding in them a 'Sense [which] illuminates and produces the Words' (*Essays*, III, 120–21). Discretion and obliquity are the keys to good love-poetry, an artful modesty of language in which 'words signifie more than they express'. This is what makes Virgil's Venus more beautifully alive than the original, and it is the same obliquity which makes the practice as well as the literature of love truly exciting. This is 'naturalized art', bringing actions and words as close to their objects as possible, and it is Montaigne's too: his 'Torrent of Babble' is exactly his, and yet not his; his 'apish imitating Quality' (III, 124) has ensured that what seems carelessness is really the obliquity and discretion he has learned from the poets and from Plutarch. He has warmed his old blood with their words of flesh and bone, and used his own to 'represent my self to the Life'. They are the words that make the book consubstantial with its author, known in him and he in it; and the representation of himself in such a book discovers experiences he would never have had, as giving ear to whimsies 'because I am to Record them' and studying books not to make his book but because 'I had made it' (II, 509–10).

When Sterne invests Tristram with his knowledge of Montaigne's *Essays*, the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and *Don Quixote* he gives him room to experiment with all aspects of imitation: the discovery of life in literature, literature in life; the conversion of what is read into what is acted, the translation of what is lived into what is read. The Shandy family are chiefly concerned to convert literature into action, like

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Quixote: Toby's bowling green is analogous to the infant Tristram in so far as they are both used to realize texts upon (the *Flanders Gazette* and the fruits of Walter's study). Disasters occur when the text is removed (the Treaty of Utrecht), or when the realization goes wrong and ceases to conform to the model, or when something happens for which there is no textual authority (the circumcision until it is redeemed by the advent of a book). But when things go wrong literature comes unconsciously into the minds of those who think they are bereft of it. In his Apologetical Oration Toby quotes consciously from Yorick's sermon a sentiment borrowed from Burton, having already unconsciously borrowed from the same source himself (*TS*, pp. 461–62; *AM*, I, 57, 60). When Walter lifts himself off the bed to exclaim against his ill luck and to offer himself some consolation, he starts quoting the beginning of Yorick's sermon 'Trust in God' (*TS*, p. 277).[1] Similarly when he apologizes to Toby for having been rude about his hobbyhorse he insensibly uses Cassius's words to Brutus: 'Forgive, I pray thee, this rash humour which my mother gave me' (*TS*, p. 115),[2] prompting Tristram to make the comparison explicit in the next chapter but one. When Trim makes his speech on death equipped with no deeper reading than his muster-roll, he nevertheless manages to quote from the same essay of Montaigne's that Walter is using (*TS*, p. 365).[3] It is as if the mind, faced with painful or unexpected circumstances, naturally forms a sentiment out of them and makes an accidental discovery of life's literary qualities; or at least it is as if Tristram wishes us to think so. Certainly in his own case he is moved, rather than simply inclined, to find an authority for his feelings when they reach a higher pitch by overshooting in Burton's or Cid Hamet Benengeli's words. Whether a character is being natural or studied, an imitation and therefore something of a performance takes place: texts control the emotions, as in Walter's discourse on death, and release them, as in Trim's. Either way imitation guarantees a mode of expression for sentiments that otherwise might have none, so that in the heat of anger or the coolness of consideration oaths are made (as Montaigne says his are) by imitation and according to Ernulphian necessity. The imitative component in hobbyhorses is what makes them such apt instruments for character-drawing because it exhibits what the character wishes to present of himself (the 'personate actor' in Burton's phrase (*AM*, I, 15)) and it also is the means of turning his inside outward. Nature as art and art as nature meet at the point of imitation: Quixote promises himself real pain in his impersonation of Beltenebros ('the blows which I must give myself on the head, ought to be real, substantial, sound ones, without any trick, or mental reservation' (*DQ*, I, 187)), while the real pain Walter feels at the attacks on his son's virility forces him to turn at once to books for solace and utterance.

Tristram organizes his narrative according to a system of double imitation; that is, he borrows both the structure and the matter of his situations, sometimes from different sources. Walter's letter of instructions to Toby, for instance, is based on Quixote's to Sancho but consists of advice out of Burton. Toby's oration is *like* Quixote's defences of arms against learning but is also pieced out with the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, in the same way that Walter's quotation of Yorick forms a scene that

[1] Compare *The Sermons of Mr Yorick*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1927), II, 147.

[2] Compare *Julius Caesar*, IV. 3. 119: 'When that rash humour which my mother gave me | Makes me forgetful'.

[3] Compare 'To Study Philosophy, is to learn to die', *Essays*, I, 89, 90.

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recalls Quixote's complaint after he has been trampled by the bulls (*DQ*, II, 383). The arrangement can be even more complex, as during the reading of Ernulphus when Tristram makes a Burtonian oath and a Benengelian wager to affirm the Cervantic contrast between Slop's reading and Toby's whistling. This is like Yorick's death, which in its situation is like Quixote's (a beating followed by the loss of illusions and then life), but which is accomplished in Sancho's words and recorded in Shakespeare's. At its most subtle the technique can exactly reproduce the effects of the original: Trim's unconscious imitation of Montaigne imitates Sancho's unconscious imitation of Plutarch (*TS*, p. 365; compare *DQ*, II, 440), and Sancho's speech is imitated again by Tristram when he wants to say something about sleep that is entirely natural and therefore better than 'the dissertations squeez'd out of the heads of the learned' (*TS*, p. 290). It is a clever irony and illustrates, as all these examples do, the inescapability of imitation.

Turning his own life into literature through the medium of literature Tristram unites the methods of Burton and Montaigne. As well as a fund of erudition Burton offers him the warmth and suddenness of imitative practice, and it is his overshootings that he concentrates on. The Lady Baussière rides on to the rhythm of Burton's callous rich man; Tristram pulls himself back from the brink of a vision of carnal bliss with the words Burton uses to extricate himself from nuns' and widows' melancholy;[1] and on his own account Tristram will overshoot himself into a warm contempt for rules (*TS*, p. 281) or into a devil of a chapter where the readers are advised to look to themselves (p. 350). And sometimes the habit of saying too much will suit the form of a Benengelian apostrophe, where Tristram will launch himself towards the object of his feelings, as Burton so often does, by inhabiting his text and speaking in it; and sometimes he will ring the changes on a word like 'cant' or 'nose' as Burton does on 'sermon' or 'mad'. It is in Burton's manner that Tristram makes his most poignant declaration: he is 'sick! sick! sick! sick!' (*TS*, p. 481) as scholars' labours are 'mad, mad, mad' (*AM*, I, 47). Montaigne, on the other hand, does not supply a model of imitative emotion, rather he shows what sorts of unions can take place between the mind and its object after that emotion has been raised. Constantly studying his relation to experience he ends up dreaming that he dreams, liking the 'deadest deaths' and finding a paradoxical completeness in writing a book that is its own subject, consubstantial with its sources and its author, because 'this Form is, in me, turn'd into Substance'.[2] When Tristram is fully aware of his life and book as the same thing his imitations have the 'ambitious subtilty' of Montaigne's associations: attacking plagiarism by plagiarizing Burton's equally plagiarized attack has the reflexive density of his borrowing Montaigne on the subject of borrowing (*TS*, p. 316) or his invocation of Benengeli's invocation (*TS*, p. 628; compare *DQ*, II, 285). His mind is so attuned to the business of imitation that there is no difference between writing and action, and he produces the very thing he is imitating.

That the emotions must be stimulated in the reading, assimilation, and production of literature is, of course, a sentimental axiom widely embraced by Sterne's contemporaries, but only he has investigated its implications for imitation far enough to find an appropriate critical theory. The process begins with his

[1] Compare *TS*, p. 346: *AM*, II, 36; *TS*, p. 495: *AM*, I, 417.
[2] See *Essays*, I, 95; III, 125, 317, 397.

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contempt for anything that is written in a straight line, emerging from the head as a cold unmetaphorical, 'sententious parade of wisdom'. Prose which separates itself from its subject, 'tall opake words, one before another, in a right line, betwixt your own and your readers' conception' (*TS*, p. 200), will smother any fire in the person using it and utterly inhibit any vibratory response from the audience. In their sermons Sterne and Yorick have avoided preaching that is designed merely 'to shew the extent of our reading, or the subtleties of our wit — to parade it in the eyes of the vulgar with the beggarly accounts of a little learning, tinsel'd over with a few words which glitter, but convey little light and less warmth' (*TS*, p. 317). Sterne's earliest attempt to discuss the difference between this bad sort of imitation and warmer performances of flesh and bone is in his *Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais* where, in two short chapters, a sympathetic churchman called Longinus Rabelaicus ('one of the greatest Critick's in the western World, and as Rabelaic a Fellow as ever piss'd') is proposing to write a 'Kerukopaedia' or system and institute of sermon-making; meanwhile in the next room Homenas (the dwarfish borrower of *Tristram Shandy*) is making his sermon by transcribing some of Samuel Clarke's choice paragraphs and thoughts 'all of a Row'.[1] Homenas's tears of shame at being discovered in his theft completely refrigerate his borrowed sublimity; on the other hand Longinus Rabelaicus's scheme, for all its pedantic sound, is an art to combine the making and the giving of sermons, 'a Way to do this to some *Tune*', suggesting the harmony of Tristram's fiddler 'whose talents lie in making what he fiddles to be felt, who . . . puts the most hidden springs of my heart into motion' (*TS*, p. 372). At the same time it is a plan to do for sermons what Ernulphus does for oaths, to create a pool of all possible sentiments so that no one can preach out of it.

In his important sermon 'Search the Scriptures' Sterne turns again to the difference between language that is essentially moving and that which is coldly elegant and nice, and once again he mentions Longinus's name. Using translation as a standard he undertakes to defend the scriptural or oriental sublime against critics (and Addison was one) whose delicacy prevents them from seeing its beauties. He begins by making the distinction Yorick makes in *Tristram Shandy* between eloquence which consists in 'an over-curious and artificial arrangement of figures, tinsel'd over with a gaudy embellishment of words, which glitter, but convey little or no light to the understanding' and the language of the heart, in this case the biblical eloquence, which consists 'more in the greatness of the things themselves, than in the words or expressions'.[2] In translation the classical sublime suffers because it lies in the expression, whereas the lofty ideas of the scriptural sublime survive the 'most simple and literal translations . . . and break forth with as much force and vehemence as in the original'. Longinus's praise of the sublime in Genesis is instanced, and he is paid a version of the compliment paid to Longinus Rabelaicus: 'the best critic the eastern world ever produced'. Sterne joins a debate here that had much to contribute towards the development of the English sublime in 'The Age of Sensibility',[3] and it seems likely that some of his illustrations were

[1] See Melvyn New, 'Sterne's Rabelaisian Fragment: A Text from the Holograph Manuscript', *PMLA*, 87 (1972), 1083–92 (p. 1088).
[2] *Sermons*, II, 229–30.
[3] See Northrop Frye, 'Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility', *ELH*, 23 (1956), 144–52, where he discusses the influence of the translated Bible on the work of Smart, McPherson, and Blake.

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prompted by reading Longinus in William Smith's translation. Not only does he take some of Longinus's examples of the classical sublime to show how poorly they translate (Neptune shaking the earth and the description of Pallas's horses), he also shares Smith's enthusiasm for the scriptural sublime, particularly the description of the war-horse in *Job*, and no doubt read the discussion of that passage in the *Guardian*, 86, to which Smith alludes (*OS*, p. 171, n. 3). The distinction which the *Guardian* critic, Smith, and Sterne all enforce is of course Longinus's. In the famous seventh section of *On the Sublime* (pp. 14–15) he recommends that poetry and prose be carefully scrutinized to see 'whether it be not only Appearance':

> We must divest it of all superficial Pomp and Garnish. If it cannot stand this Trial, without doubt it is only swell'd and puff'd up, and it will be more for our Honour to contemn than to admire it . . . Whatever pierces no deeper than the Ears can never be the true Sublime. That on the contrary is grand and lofty, which the more we consider, the greater Ideas we conceive of it; whose Force we cannot possibly withstand; which immediately sinks deep, and makes such Impressions on the Mind as cannot be easily worn out or effaced.

It is the same distinction Tristram and Yorick use to mock the French, whose sublime consists in mere words ('*more* in the *word*; and *less* in the *thing*')[1] and who believe that 'talking of love, is making it' (*TS*, p. 634). On the other hand, when the expression is a function of a real idea operating on the whole man (Trim's dropping of the hat, Slawkenbergius's 'lambent pupilability of slow, low, dry chat', or uncle Toby's *Lillabulero*), it 'leaves something more inexpressible upon the fancy, than words can either convey — or sometimes get rid of' (*TS*, p. 361). When words are used, they must be endowed with the expressive power of action or gesture and exert sufficient force to ensure a feeling response in the audience. This is the rhetorical and moral basis of Sterne's sermons and novels, for empty expression is not only bad in itself, it is also used to hide imperfections of the heart.

Sterne's use of the translation-test in establishing the superiority of the scriptural sublime points out one of the ways that Longinus contributes to his system of imitation. As a preacher Sterne felt it his duty to be the energetic medium between the force of scriptural language and the hearts of his congregation, so his 'dramatic' sermons are translations of the primitive and sublime ideas of the holy text into expressions that are made as forceful and immediate as possible by concrete language and a variety of rhetorical devices. The sermons are not simply elaborations or explanations of the text but enactments or imitations of the divine original, the fruits of a mind 'naturally elevated by the true Sublime, and so sensibly affected with its lively Strokes, that it swells in Transport and inward Pride, as if what was only heard had been the Product of its own Invention' (*OS*, p. 14). Sterne was proud of his sermons in this way, despite their being filled with a good stock of Latitudinarian texts as well, because they testified to a necessary sympathetic power in him which he could transfer to his parishioners or, to use his own coinage of Longinus, having 'read' his own heart in the Bible text, his audience might then read theirs in his. In his novels Sterne arranges a variety of literal and figurative translations, from Slawkenbergius's last tale to those prints and etchings in the countenance, all of which require that sixth sense of the heart to interpret rightly. In *A Sentimental Journey* he fully develops the metaphor of translation to include all language, whether of the face, the body, the tongue, or an actual text, and this universal

[1] *A Sentimental Journey*, edited by Gardner D. Stout, Jr (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 159.

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language provides the 'volumes' of material that Yorick translates into his two volumes of book. But there is a technique of translation in *Tristram Shandy* that is related directly to the one he developed for his sermons, and that is to take a text not from the Bible but from proverbial wisdom like 'All is not gain that is got into the purse' or 'Nothing in this world is made to last for ever' or 'It is with LOVE as with CUCKOLDOM' (*TS*, pp. 216, 560, 540). No doubt Sterne shared Quixote's opinion that proverbs are a non-systematic fund of truth, 'all so many sentences and maxims drawn from experience, the universal mother of sciences' (*DQ*, I, 138), and he has Tristram dramatize them in the same way that his sermons dramatize a scriptural text. The text for Trim's speech on death ('Are we not here now — and gone in a moment?') is, as Tristram says, 'one of your self-evident truths' (*TS*, p. 362), but when it is re-animated by Trim's rhetorical use of his hat 'nothing could have expressed the sentiment of mortality ... like it'. Toby's gentleness, rendered in rather ornamental proverbial form by his nephew as having 'scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly' (*TS*, p. 113), is illustrated in a dramatic realization of the proverb as Toby catches, apostrophizes, and liberates an actual fly.

There is a strong 'Rabelaic' element in these restorations of proverbial truth to the human activity from which it derives. In almost every case the body participates with the tongue to give the borrowed text the force of an original sentiment, as often in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* Panurge will use body language to redeem words and ideas from abstraction. Toby's literal and metaphorical kindness to flies exactly resembles those situations where Panurge enacts the proverb that applies to him by eating his corn while it is green, having a flea in his ear, or sitting between two stools.[1] Whatever truth has been lost from the proverb by timeless repetition is renewed by an active or dramatic imitation which makes words once more conversant about *things*. Indeed this sort of rhetoric, or translation, tends to dissolve the difference between text and example, word and thing, so that Trim, dramatically applying his body to the reading of Yorick's already dramatic sermon, becomes so moved that he cannot distinguish between what is descriptive and what is real. There are Cervantine analogues for this state of affairs, for example Quixote's mistaking the representation of *Gayferos and Melisandra* for the real thing, but Sterne is concerned to stress the value of the sympathy that accomplishes these translations of the active meaning of a text into gesture, speech, and ultimately another text. He is also discovering, with or through Rabelais, a version of the comic sublime that has its origin in scripture. When Panurge prophesies victory over the Dipsodes by breaking a staff over two wineglasses, and when Tristram, in his Rabelaisian Preface, takes Pantagruel's advice about finding wisdom in ordinary things and comes to the crux of his argument by pointing to his cane chair, they are using a primitive figurative language called by Warburton, in his discussion of biblical examples of it, 'the voice of the sign'.[2] It is not a case of supplanting words with gestures but of finding the complemental force of both that makes words, bodies, and things speak. This tendency carries both authors towards a kind of punning (also found in the Bible) that establishes an identity of action and naming:

[1] *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, I, 265, 278; II, 355 (*Pantagruel*, Chs 2, 7; *Cinquième Livre*, Ch. 44).

[2] See William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated*, 2 vols (London, 1837), II, 34-47. He gives examples from Jeremiah 35 and Ezekiel 31.

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it is constantly to be found in Rabelais's etymologies of names and in his puns on *wine* ('Notez, amis, que de vin divin on devient'; *Cinquième Livre*, Ch. 45) where the deed and its verbal or liturgical signification become one; and Tristram is doing the same thing when he 'drops' remarks and drops *Remarks* (*TS*, p. 529). The same identity is established by Trim's hat which does more than represent the sentiment of mortality: 'It fell dead', and in doing so it returns the self-evidence of the truism to the much more powerful self-evidence of the voice of the sign.[1]

Sterne's choice of the name 'Longinus Rabelaicus' indicates that he was aware of the potential connexion between the two before he thought of writing his first novel: in Smith's edition of Longinus he found the theory of eloquence that deals with things rather than words copiously illustrated, and in Rabelais he found it put into comic practice. But Longinus offers even more. When Tristram overshoots into a warm disregard for rules, and dispenses with the critical cant about chapters in the same phrase his Epistemon uses to cast doubt on the value of a Kerukopaedia ('a story of a roasted horse'), he adds, 'O! but to understand this . . you must read Longinus' (*TS*, p. 282). In Longinus's treatise we can find a rule for almost every one of Tristram's irregularities, and in this particular case Tristram, who is already imitating the performed warmth of Burton, is claiming a portion of the praise Longinus awards to Demosthenes when he says, 'With him Order seems always disordered, and Disorder carries with it a surprizing Regularity' (*OS*, p. 56). Not only does Longinus stress the importance of imitation ('Let this, my Friend, be our Ambition; be this the fix'd and lasting Scope of all our Labours' (*OS*, p. 36)), he also discusses in great detail the art of seeming impulsiveness, the 'brave Irregularities' that result from the deployment of rhetorical figures that are 'then most dextrously applied' when they 'cannot be discerned' (*OS*, p. 51). The use of sudden silence, circumstantiality, apostrophe, digression, and impersonation exhibits that 'pliant Activity' of minds able to mark and transmit the flux and reflux of emotion so that 'they alter their Thoughts, their Language, and their manner of Expression a thousand times' (*OS*, p. 58). The figures of *asyndeton* and *hyperbaton* are the ones Tristram is using when he seems oddest of all: his dashes, exclamations, and especially his 'transposing Words or Thoughts out of their natural and grammatical Order' (*OS*, p. 57), which he carries to the point of transposing whole chapters, are his brave irregularities committed with Longinus's authority. These two figures also provide him with an official explanation of what Burton and Montaigne are doing. Montaigne is a past master in the art of giving 'his Audience a kind of Anxiety, as if he had lost his Subject, and forgot what he was about' and then unexpectedly returning to his subject (*OS*, p. 60), while Burton is equally skilled at digressing with a warmth that 'carries your Imagination along with him in this Excursion' by elaborating an image and often dramatizing it (*OS*, p. 64). What seems to be Tristram's odd originality is an art of performed feeling that has its rules in Longinus and its models in Montaigne's *Essays* and the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and which contributes to his comic sublime of enacted language. It is the imitation of naturalized art, one that avoids the extreme of sheer disorder on the one hand and of cold correctness on the other.

[1] Northrop Frye's discussion (cited above) of the 'primitive' or 'barbaric' metaphor that establishes identity rather than likeness bears a good deal on this one.

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Longinus teaches Sterne another lesson, not by precept but by example. Boileau spoke for many eighteenth-century critics when he said of the seventh section of *On the Sublime* that 'this is a very fine Description of the Sublime, and finer still, because it is very Sublime itself' (*OS*, p. 115, n. 2). It was a compliment Addison sought to pay Pope's Longinian exercise, the *Essay on Criticism*, and which Warburton re-tuned in his high estimation of the *Essay on Man*;[1] and it is a compliment Sterne deserves too. Tristram's use of hyperbaton is often characterized by the production of the very thing he is talking about: writing about a digression he makes one (*TS*, p. 618) and talking about gaps in his narrative he falls into one (p. 462). These comic sublimities arise from his decision never to separate the words he uses from the objects and feelings they name, so that they dwell *in* more than *about* their point of reference and, as the *Guardian* critic puts it, 'flow from an inward principle' in the thing described. It is the same sublimity that is brought to those imitations of Burton, Montaigne, and Benengeli which contrive to be what they are also about, and they show that the best parts of Sterne's commonplace-book were not filled with well-worn sentiments that might be given an agreeable turn but with examples of irregularity that have the self-evident quality of 'voices of the sign' or words of flesh and bone. These are the texts translated so directly and yet subtly from real experience of things or of other texts that they can be retranslated into *Tristram Shandy* with no loss of force. Tristram's imitations necessarily involve the expression as well as the sentiment because both his originality and his finest plagiarism depend on his seeing no difference between a live idea and its most appropriate form. With all the appearance of spontaneity lines are drawn and things 'come out of themselves' because Tristram is master of the art of turning fortune and his library into nature and of perceiving in the result, with a Longinian eye, that it could not have been otherwise and that others have done it before him.

If *Tristram Shandy* were to be regarded as an institute or system of life-writing practice then it would partly explain why Sterne found that he could not live out of it. When his work burst upon the London literary scene he responded to the acclaim in the character of Tristram and, later, of Yorick. Having invented a character who translates his life into a book by 'reading' his experiences and his texts and then transcribing them into his own, Sterne adopted the foible of Tristram's family by turning the book into his own life and talking Shandean nonsense with the best. Not quite in the sense that Warburton uses the disparaging phrase, Sterne was 'making himself' (*Letters*, p. 96) by imitating his imitations and fashioning a social style out of Tristram's asyndeton and hyperbaton. There can have been no sweeter triumph than his introduction to the Comte de Bissy when he 'found him reading Tristram' (*Letters*, p. 151), an exquisite confusion that he re-translated into 'The Passport. Versailles' in *A Sentimental Journey*. Really there is no contradiction between the imitative sincerity of Tristram, enacted in words on the page, and Sterne's, which 'cut no figure, *but in the doing*' (*Letters*, p. 157): both exhibit 'that careless irregularity of a good and easy heart' (*Letters*, p. 117) that is formed on the principles of naturalized art. Sterne was able to explore Montaigne's paradox, of being known in his book and his book in him, while functioning like Quixote of the second part in being constantly aware of himself as a literary

[1] *Spectator*, 253; *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq*, edited by W. Warburton, third edition, 9 vols (London, 1753), III, 50–51, note.

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fact and as a real person, *and* in being pestered with false sequels to himself. As a result his next novel illustrates the theme of literature and life meeting in a rather different way from *Tristram Shandy*, where literature is seen as a fund of forms and ideas that life takes to express itself with. Although literature and life bump into one another in Shandean ways in *A Sentimental Journey*, there is a constitutive as well as an expressive function to some of the incorporated texts. A paraphrase of Genesis about hands creates the circumstances of manual intimacy with Mme de L***, which in turn creates a metaphor of travelling by hand that is realized later in 'The Fille de Chambre. Paris', when real hands meet once again over a text (Crebillon's two volumes of *Les Egarmens du Coeur et de l'Esprit*) whose title predicts the consequence of the meeting and whose story contains a scene in which the hero and his beloved exchange sentiments over a book.[1] In these related sequences texts are promoting the action and controlling its outcome as well as expressing the feelings of the participants; they are determining the course of the story by providing the occasions of feelings and the nature of their sequels. No doubt Sterne was trying to render some of the effects of the considerable alterations his first novel had produced in his own life.

While writing this novel Sterne was also writing his *Journal to Eliza*, and he compared the two manuscripts to the two front wheels of his chariot: 'I cannot go on without them' (*Letters*, p. 364). What they have in common, and what distinguishes them quite markedly from *Tristram Shandy*, is a division between the body and the soul, action and sentiment, that is never properly bridged. At the upper level are sentimental feelings, often expressed in scriptural language, which are ethereal and disembodied; while at the lower level physical embarrassments take place that mock the spiritual aspirations. For example Yorick's physical ascent of Mt Taurira is outstripped by the spiritual rarefactions of 'Maria', 'The Supper', and 'The Grace', only to be followed by the plunging bathos of 'The Case of Delicacy'. In the *Journal to Eliza* Yorick is forced to interrupt the poignancies of a heart 'unsupported by aught but its own tenderness' to report that his doctors suspect him of having the pox. There are many more witty attempts to adjust these two levels in *A Sentimental Journey* than in the *Journal*; but what is interesting about the latter is that each level has its own imitative strategy that competes with the other.

When Eliza Draper sailed away to India aboard the *Earl of Chatham* Sterne built a dream-world out of literary artifice. The *Journal* is described as an English translation of a French manuscript containing the correspondence of two people represented 'under the fictitious Names of Yorick & Draper' (*Letters*, p. 322). Very soon it is translated once more into the pages of its companion text, and the future editor of *A Sentimental Journey* is instructed how to write the footnote on 'Eliza'. In every respect this is a literary relationship conducted in pen and ink and vying with other famous literary love affairs such as those of Swift and Stella, Scarron and Maintenon, Waller and Saccharissa (*Letters*, p. 319). All the way from Lord Bathurst's table in London to the ghostly Cordelia's ruins at Byland, Yorick is introducing Eliza's name to literary company and literary archetypes, and she

[1] *The Wanderings of the Heart and Mind or Memoirs of Mr de Meilcour*, translated by Michael Clancy (London, 1751), p. 155. The bashful Meilcour manages to make conversation with Hortensia about the book she is reading, 'the history of an unfortunate lover'.

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contributes her part by penning letters that exalt the art of writing 'to a science' (*Letters*, p. 320). In this world, where 'there wants only the *Dramatis Personae* for the performance' (*Letters*, p. 364), Yorick identifies himself as 'a Dreamer of Dreams in the Scripture Language' (*Letters*, p. 366) and keys his highest moods to biblical phrases. Spiritual melancholy is linked to *King Lear* and especially to *Hamlet*: 'Alas! poor Yorick! — remember thee! Pale Ghost — remember thee — whilst Memory holds a seat in this distracted World — Remember thee, — Yes, from the Table of her Memory, shall just Eliza wipe away all trivial men — & leave a throne for Yorick' (*Letters*, p. 346). By sentimental magic the jester is turned into the king's ghost and Eliza is turned into Hamlet, and this twice-dead Yorick finds a romantic and equally ghostly confidante in the dead Cordelia. Again and again Yorick refers to himself as a ghost or a spirit, 'an etherial Substance' and a 'gawsy Constitution' that lives scarcely conscious of its existence and that looks forward only to the purest mental pleasures from meeting the object of its love once more. Having retreated to reflection and books, Yorick feeds his mind and discards his body with fictions and performances that have nothing to do with action and which are tricked out in a false sublime drawn from Shakespeare and the Bible. Bathos is supplied from only one source, *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne's own book intrudes to name or characterize disasters that will not be sentimentalized. The symptoms of the pox arriving inopportunely to mock 'Yorick's Spirit' are an embarrassment so comically disastrous that 'Shandy's Nose — his name — his Sash-Window are fools to it' hence it would 'make no bad anecdote in T. Shandy's Life' (*Letters*, pp. 329–30). The same force of Shandean prophecy is at work in the sequel, for the mercury treatment he is prescribed is taken from the authoritative work of Tristram's old enemy Kunastrokius (otherwise Dr Mead) and Yorick is obliged to submit to it 'as my Uncle Tody did, in drinking Water . . . *Merely for quietness sake*' (*Letters*, p. 347). Similarly, when some of his nights are made restless by visions and hot blood that are less than sentimental, he believes they have been forecast by that 'Prophetic Spirit wch dictated the Acc^{t} of Corp^{l} Trim's uneasy night when the fair Beguin ran in his head' (*Letters*, p. 326). The book has decreed what Yorick would prefer not to experience, accordingly he turns the prospect of his wife's imminent visit into Shandean business and prose: 'A Book to write — a Wife to receive & make Treaties with — an estate to sell — a Parish to superintend' (*Letters*, p. 376), aptly enough imitating Tristram's chapter of *things*. Mrs Sterne is no widow Wadman but she represents the carnal antithesis to the shadowy Eliza since she is after nothing but cash and is suffering from 'a weakness on her bowels ever since her paralitic Stroke' (*Letters*, p. 363). She will cause Yorick to sigh as many 'Hey ho's' as Toby did after the Treaty of Utrecht, and a Shandean finger points the moral (itself very Shandean) of these trials and discomforts: '☛ — Every thing for the best!' (*Letters*, p. 347).

Longinus's metaphor for bad amplification, the multiplication of words that is unaccompanied by sublime meaning, is the separation 'as it were of the Soul from the Body' (*OS*, p. 32) and it is as if Yorick has realized it in his *Journal to Eliza*: his upper half is sublimating itself amongst literary fragments and allusions while his lower one is collapsing into Shandean predictions. That there seems to be no point of equilibrium is made comically plain in Stere's letter to 'Hannah' in which he promises to 'give up the Business of sentimental writing — & write to the Body' if his *Journey* does not make her cry as much as it has made him laugh (*Letters*,

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p. 401). Curiously Yorick uses the same metaphor as Longinus to describe the reason for writing the *Journal*, Eliza's departure: ''Twas the Separation of Soul & Body — & equal to nothing but what passes on that tremendous Moment' (*Letters*, p. 374). As a metaphor of his dissociated state made out of the literal separation that will take place at his death, it suggests both why the strategy of the sentimental sublime will fail and the reasons he had in using it. It is as if Yorick has planned to antedate his death by dying metaphorically into pure spirit, retaining his consciousness at the expense of everything else and converting all evidence of a real death yet to come into metaphors and tokens of one that has already occurred. His haemorrhages flow from a lover's bleeding heart and stain handkerchiefs which then become earnests of the absolute fidelity for which, as a ghost and a spectre, he waits to be rewarded. With all anchorage in things and bodies deliberately forsaken the sentiment cannot help but attenuate and get lost in professions that have nothing but scraps of Shakespeare to perform with. Shandean bathos arrives with the reminder that there is still some real life left and also a real death yet to die, in fact it re-establishes the comic association of sex and death that is so common in *Tristram Shandy*. When Tristram breaks a blood vessel over Jenny he wryly acknowledges the dangers of going down to the centre as he goes off to get himself treated, whereas Yorick tries to evade them by making gruesome symbolism out of the disaster and turning himself into 'Death alive', as Richard Griffith called him.

The *Journal to Eliza* ends with the contest between Shandean imitations and sentimental ones unresolved, but in two last letters Sterne presents it once more. To Mrs Montagu he declares gallantly that he will laugh at disasters like Cervantes and Scarron and die in a joke. To Mrs James he writes a melancholy valediction acknowledging that his spirits are fled and asking pardon for his Shandean follies; yet at the same time Shandean imitation almost insensibly takes over as he recommends, Le Fever-like, his only child to the protection of an uncle Toby in the shape of Mr James. That is his last imitation and in it he fulfils the promise he made to Hall-Stevenson: 'I shall leave you all at last by translation, and not by fair death' (*Letters*, p. 186).

JONATHAN LAMB

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

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