THE HOBBY-HORSE: A STUDY OF THE RELEVANCE OF THE HOBBY-HORSE TO BOTH CHARACTER AND HUMOUR IN LAURENCE STERNE'S NOVEL, THE LIFE AND OPINIONS OF TRISTRAM SHANDY, GENTLEMAN.

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is entirely concerned with a study of Laurence Sterne's use of the hobby-horse in his novel, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. For Tristram-Sterne, the hobby-horse is more than a "humour" and more than Pope's doctrine of the Ruling Passion. It is, as Tristram-Sterne says, a way of delineating the human personality and that delineation is, for the most part, a comic one. The hobby-horse, therefore, supplies Tristram-Sterne with a method of characterization and a source of that jesting Shandean humour, for which the novel is justly celebrated.

Although the hobby-horse becomes something unique to Tristram-Sterne, he is indebted to several traditions for its origin. The mediaeval conception of the humours began the conception as a serious attempt to describe man in physiological terms. But as the study of medicine progressed during the first half of the eighteenth century, disproving the theory of the humours, what was once scientific truth became a rich source for satire, as the plays of Ben Jonson and the poetry of Alexander Pope reveal. Borrowing from this tradition of parody, Tristram-Sterne modified again the concept of the humours, producing in its place the hobby-horse. With it, Tristram-Sterne presented

a view of man that, although satirical, is markedly free of invective because his aim was not to ridicule, but to understand.

To understand, in Shandean terms, is to sympathize. Walter and Toby, the chief riders, are, in a sense, ridiculous. Toby's military lore becomes frenzied in its own private gallop, while Walter's hypothesizing leads him to value abstract speculation above all else, even when his theories and his life do not fit. Yet, neither of the Shandys is any more the ridiculous than the rest of humanity. If the hobby-horse is symbolic of absurdity, it is only because the world is absurd. The question is, how does one cope with absurdity?

Tristram-Sterne does not provide an easy answer. Unlike Hobbes or Shaftesbury or Locke, he does not provide a systematic philosophy, offering neither reason nor passion as the sole guide to life, as some of his contemporaries were wont to do. Instead, he offers a surprisingly full account of the minor tragedies that afflict every man. The most significant of these tragedies is that of the discrepancy between man's attempt to control his own life and the constantly impinging force of fortune; at its worst, it is vicious, at best, whimsical. The incidents in the novel reveal man's helplessness in his confrontation between himself and his environment. So much intervenes. Perhaps an inflexible ego refuses to match his experience

with his theory; perhaps a hobby-horse becomes dangerously close to excluding all of the world; or perhaps two hobby-horses collide, temporarily shattering the mutual satisfaction of intimate, family ties.

There is no panacea in the novel. Instead, Tristram-Sterne offers the hand of humour to all who are willing to accept it. Humour, like a universal solvent, dissolves the animosity of colliding hobby-horses and reconciles man to his absurd world.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine Laurence Sterne's view of characterization in his much discussed novel, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. Considerably more than a study of character is implied in the question of characterization, however, so that other characteristics of his depiction of personality must be considered. It is not sufficient to study just character alone, because any author-narrator's point of view about human personality at least suggests something else, some broader statement concerning his own world-view. My concern here is, however, with the character of what I have deliberately called the author-narrator. At present, not enough is known about the life of Sterne to allow anything but pedestrian connections between him and his narrator, Tristram Shandy. Yet I cannot altogether dismiss that connection. To avoid, therefore, the problem area of the connection between autobiography and art I will use "Tristram-Sterne".

Tristram-Sterne builds his characters in two ways: first, the hobby-horse, or ruling passion, stimulates activity in the lives of his characters, and the subsequent collision of various hobby-horses in turn stimulates conflict; and second, the conflict between the characters

is itself resolved by means of a feeling, instinctive and passionate benevolence, which all of the Shandys possess. Having made the commitment to both the hobby-horse and benevolence as interacting agents, however, I must also discuss what the hobby-horse and its correspondent benevolence means to the consciousness of Tristram-Sterne, for consciousness is Tristram-Sterne's own hobby-horse. He tries to explain it to himself through the art of the novel, and through demanding, not inviting, the reader's participation. The end effect of this demand is that the reader's consciousness and Tristram-Sterne's collide pleasantly. Tristram-Sterne offers art as experience both to himself, as an "explanation" of his own mind, and to the reader, as vicarious experience.

The hobby-horse is not merely a novelistic view of Pope's Ruling Passion. Tristram-Sterne certainly borrows conventions, but he shapes them to his own end. What happens to the Ruling Passion in Tristram Shandy? First, it becomes Tristram-Sterne's unique presentation of what might be called a philosophy of feeling. Emotion, however, in Tristram Shandy as in life itself, tends to become excessive, and that excess is tempered by the rational, analytical mind of the narrator. An aesthetically pleasing integration of the passional and the rational as modes of consciousness is effected, therefore, through the narrator's control over the proceedings. That control, moreover, is

exercised to balance the extremes of personality into a cohesive whole. Yet, all of this is by way of critical implication, because Tristram-Sterne is wary of committing himself to a moral judgement on the question of the priorities of existence. He does, however, hold to certain value judgements: he regards man as a creature of mystery whose existence cannot be accounted for in terms of dualistic, one-sided arguments, despite the opinions of Hobbes, Locke or Shaftesbury. He tries to view man as a composite of many elements, recognizing no Cartesian disjunction between mind and soul, nor permitting the mind to overwhelm the body. Finally, he suggests the humour of the hobby-horse to offset the marginalities of existence.

Toby feels, Walter reasons, and Tristram-Sterne does both. Yet the dichotomy is not that clear, for in pursuing their hobby-horses, Toby and Walter both think and feel. Toby, the follower of instinctive passion, reasons his way through a significantly large body of military lore; Walter, the supposed follower of reason, expresses himself best by snapping his pipe stem in a pique at Toby's continually pointless interruptions. Through all of this Shandean life, Tristram-Sterne guides his characters and his readers through what seems to be a maze of existence, allowing neither the extremities of reason and passion, nor the imbalance of body and mind to usurp his integrated view of personality. Of course, Tristram-Sterne has the

final say in this comedy of errors, and it is that, despite the system-makers, each man has the inviolable right to his own absurdity. This last comment is the real significance of the hobby-horse, and each man has his steed; the hobby-horse is, therefore, a universal principle, performing the dual function of depicting personality and informing comedy in the Shandean universe: the world of Tristram-Sterne, of you, and of me.

These are the general terms to which this study holds. The particulars of the argument, my hobby-horse, are divided into four hobby-horsical chapters, each of which considers respectively the concept of the hobby-horse for Sterne and some of his precursors, since Tristram-Sterne is, to a certain extent, working out of a tradition here; the second chapter discusses the hobby-horse of Tristram-Sterne, which is his attempt to reveal through art the workings of his own consciousness; chapter three presents the hobby-horsical activities of Walter and Toby as they attempt to gallop their own separate ways; chapter four studies the way in which hobby-horses collide and the peculiar treatment reserved for the healing of wounded pads, a manner of healing that combines reason, passion and benevolence into a satire generally free from invective and a comedic stance that is gentle but tough. The conclusion, finally, discusses the two key value judgements to which Tristram-Sterne holds: he believes, first of all,

that despite men's infinite capacity for disagreement, the possibility of a sympathetic reconciliation does exist; second, he believes that laughter is the synthesizing life-force that holds men together.

CHAPTER I

O THE HOBBY-HORSE!

For Tristram-Sterne, passion is synonymous with the principle of the hobby-horse. The justification for such a view is found both in the novel and in Sterne's personal letters. For example, in his letter to Dr. [name unknown] Sterne sets out a brief but succinct reason for his use of the hobby-horse as the basis of both a personal philosophy and a particular view of character:

> . . . reason and common sense tell me, that if the characters of past ages and men are able to be drawn at all, they are to be drawn like themselves: that is with their excellencies, and with their foibles--and it is as much a piece of justice to the world and to virtue too, to do the one, as the other. --The ruleing passion et les egaremens du coeur, are the very things which mark . . ., and . . . distinguish a man's character; in which I would as soon leave out a man's head as his hobby-horse--[1]

Sterne's view is an accurate one, but few critics consider it seriously. There seems to be a strong tendency to associate a comic characterization with an outlandish and untrue one. If one has comic characters, one necessarily lacks verisimilitude--so such an argument goes. While Sterne's critics may grant him the ability to produce excellent characterizations, they generally do so in a few vaguely approbationary words, after which they concentrate their

attention elsewhere.

When he was not being condemned as "scabby", Sterne received merit from his contemporary critics for his humanitarian whimsicality. His sexual innuendoes were passed aside; no one considered that perhaps the hobby-horse had significance as an enlightening point of view about human behaviour; Sterne became Uncle Toby, a harmless old eccentric who pleased, if one overlooked the double entendres, but could hardly lay claim to instructing:

> Oh rare Tristram Shandy! --Thou very sensible--humourous--pathetick--humane--unaccountable! --What shall we call thee? --Rabelais, Cervantes, What? . . . If thou publishest fifty volumes, all abounding with the profitable and pleasant like these, we will venture to say thou wilt be read and admir'd.[2]

This pattern still stands: modern critics also lend an appreciatory nod towards Sterne's characterization and then canter off on their own critical hobby-horses. John Traugott sees Tristram Shandy as a particular kind of preachment concerning the theme of communication and explains that the "Shandean 'humours' are not mere eccentricities, but the very condition of communication in this world."[3] E.M. Forster considers it as a piece of fantasy in which "muddle" is god.[4] W.B.C. Watkins congratulates the invalid Sterne for being "primarily concerned with the instinctive and emotional reactions of his fellow-men" as an antidote to melancholy and self-pity.[5] While these critics do provide interesting insights into the novel, many readers

come away from Tristram Shandy feeling not so much that they have enjoyed a piece of fantasy, attended a discourse on communication, or on defenses against the spleen, but that they have, above all, met some people. The problem is how does Sterne make his characters live and how do they live?

The first difficulty is that of Sterne's view of the hobby-horse or passional instinct compared to that of certain other writers whose work features something like the hobby-horse. Tristram-Sterne's concern with man's passionate life does not spring full-blown from a vacuum, but his use of the hobby-horse is unique. No attempt will be made here to present fully the reason-passion argument which permeates 18th Century literature. Suffice it to say that Hobbes' view of man as a selfish, aggrandizing creature stimulated counter-arguments from Shaftesbury, who saw man's nature as inherently benevolent, to Locke, who sees man's role as being essentially one of sharing in a peaceful co-existence, whilst, at the same time, founding prescriptive law on the basis of personal possession. In many ways, Hobbes provided the 18th Century with one hundred years of interesting but essentially futile argument. To cover all of this ground would require several theses; besides that, this work has been done already. The intention here is simply to point out how Sterne, using the hobby-horse as a general philosophical position

from which his idea of character emanates, stands in relation to two representative "humourists": Ben Jonson and Alexander Pope.

The connection between Jonson and Sterne was recognized first by James A. Work:

> Sterne conceived his characters according to the doctrine of ruling passions, the eighteenth century's equivalent of what Jonson had termed the doctrine of humours. A "humourous" character was one whose mind was biased by a peculiar humour or passion (Sterne uses the terms interchangeably) which coloured his vision and perverted his judgment of every aspect of life.[6]

Work's statement, while providing a traditional background for the hobby-horse principle, needs certain qualifications, because the humour characters of Jonson and the hobby-horsical ones of Sterne are not conceived in exactly the same way: the difference is more significant than the similarity. Jonson's "humour" characters are what would be called "fixations" in today's psychological jargon. The initial conception behind these characters is that of the well known medieval theory of humours. In its medical usage, the word described the four fluids which had to be kept in a certain balance before either mental or physical health could be attained. An excess of any one of the humours, such as phlegm or choler, caused physical illness. Moreover, medieval physicians found it easy to transfer the physical aspect of such illnesses

to the mind. By Sterne's time, and in the writings of Jonson, Pope and the Scriblerians, this medieval conception of physiology and psychology had become a fruitful source of satire, especially in its applications concerning mental sickness; hence, the phenomena in Jonson's plays, of "fixation" characters. Jonson himself sums up their predilections in his prefatory material to Every Man Out of His Humour. Some "persons" have an eccentric way of viewing the world. Asper is "eager and constant in re-proof;" Macilente is one

> who, wanting that place in the world's account which he thinks his merit is capable of, falls into such an envious apoplexy, with which his judgment is so dazzled and distasted, that he grows violently impatient of any opposite happiness in another. . . .

Sordido is "one that never pray'd but for a lean dearth, and ever wept a fat harvest." Other characters have a certain fixation with things or persons. Deliro is "a fellow sincerely besotted on his own wife, and so wrapt with a conceit of her perfections, that he simply holds himself unworthy of her;" Fungoso "follows the fashion afar off, like a spy;" while Sogliardo is "so enamoured of the name of a gentleman, that he will have it, though he buys it."[7] Of these two types, borrowing Forster's distinction, the fixated characters tend to be flat, the eccentric, round. The flat characters, those whose fixations are external, are what Jonson calls "gulls",

and he manoeuvers them into situations in which their gullibility may be satirized. The others, those with eccentric points of view, sometimes "round" out as their basic eccentricity becomes manifested in various ways. Carlo Buffone's buffoonery develops into satiric, social commentary, unreliable servility, practical jokery, and ribald raillery. His buffoonery provides a base for his rounded development, much as Alceste's misanthropy does in Le Misanthrope. But the reader is not intended to sympathize with either of the two kinds of character (they cannot, of course, always be rigidly separated). Jonson seems to view the humours of his characters as violent aberrations of sense and reason, revolting because of their excess. No humour character escapes the whetted edge of Jonson's sharp, satiric knife; even those who seem to be the most innocent, such as Deliro, who was "sincerely besotted on his own wife," are always to be laughed at with scorn. With Sterne, however, the ruling passion is not a perversion of character, but basic to it and that is the primary difference between his use of the ruling passion and that of his precursors.

By the time the theory of the humours reached 18th Century literature, they were given an entirely different treatment. On the one hand, they became, as in the writings of the Scriblerians, a weapon of satiric intent. Part of the concept of the humours survived satire, however, and

was shaped into what Pope described as the doctrine of the Ruling Passion. In his Moral Essays, Pope states the way in which the Ruling Passion is a significant means of determining character:

> Search then the RULING PASSION: There alone,
> The Wild are constant, and the Cunning known;
> The Fool consistent, and the False sincere;
> Priests, Princes, Women, no dissemblers here,
> This clue once found, unravels all the rest.[8]

Pope's use of this doctrine is in the sense of a moral judgment. Pope posits man on the middle link of the Chain of Being, somewhere between the brutish and the spiritual:

> He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
> In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;
> In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer,
> Born to die, and reas'ning but to err;
> Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
> Whether he thinks too little, or too much.[9]

Pope's view of man is not as simple as it might appear. His continual use of a poised zeugma comparing two extremes seems to suggest an authorial presence that can accommodate only "either-or" categories. But part of his intent in the Essay on Man is to accommodate as much of the Chain of Being as he can; hence, the argumentative mode of poetry, shaping itself by comparing incomparable extremes. The difficulties inherent in attempting to consider all of man's impulses under a common head, however, leads to an all-encompassing view that can only be stated essentially in terms of the paradox. All of man's passions and impulses become, for Pope, the Ruling Passion:

> On diff'rent senses diff'rent objects strike;
> Hence diff'rent Passions more or less inflame,
> As strong or weak, the organs of the frame;
> And hence one master Passion in the breast,
> Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.[10]

Passions are really nothing but distasteful expressions of self-love. They create chaos within the spirit, transforming the spiritual into the brutish, and order into chaos. The refining agent is reason:

> Reason still use, to Reason still attend:
> Attention, habit, and experience gains,
> Each strengthens reason, and Self-love restrains.[11]

The passions are not to be avoided. Pope's argument is for a balance between the extremes of sterile rationality and surging passion. If this balance is not struck, if passion does "rule", society suffers, because the individual becomes opposed to the dictates of society. His assertion of the self, the "I", counters and opposes the golden mean of society and the individual moving forward as one force united. The Ruling Passion then becomes an act of perversity, challenging order with chaos. Once the Ruling Passion has been tempered with reason, self-love becomes social love. The individual must find regeneration in society, and to do that he must reconcile self and social love. All of it sounds so sweetly reasonable. But Pope gives it away now and again, as he does in the Epistle to Cobham. Again Pope presents the Ruling Passion, but this time, his depiction is brilliantly sardonic. Of the seven miserable caricatures presented in the Epistle, each one hopelessly

seized by his own Ruling Passion, the character of Helluo, the glutton, illustrates the grotesqueness of the other six:

> A salmon's belly, Helluo, was thy fate,
> The doctor call'd, declares all help too late.
> Mercy! cries Helluo, mercy on my soul!
> Is there no hope? Alas! --then bring the jowl.[12]

For Pope, the Ruling Passion becomes a means of moral judgment, and Pope was bettered only by Swift in the art of snide comment. Because of this combination of moral judgment and snide comment, Pope's idea of the Ruling Passion and Sterne's cannot be equated. Though they both see the concept as a way of determining character, their respective uses of it are quite different, and that difference is precisely between the novelist's sense of comedy and the poet's sense of morality. Henri Fluchère makes the point well:

> It [the Ruling Passion] is a phrase of Pope's, which . . . [is] according to him a key to the study of character, which can elucidate all the strange things in men's behaviour. . . . But Pope's object was much rather to make a moral judgment than to indulge in a "psychological analysis", for the determinism entailed by the idea of the 'ruling passion' a serious infringment of the sovereignity of reason, can affect the individual's social behaviour.[13]

For Tristram-Sterne, the hobby-horse, the Ruling Passion and, in a parodic sense, the humours, all contain one and the same meaning. Sterne did not have Pope's faith in reason as the balancing end of human personality, or Locke's

limited faith in reason as a way of knowing. Throughout the novel, Tristram-Sterne looks to passion, the hobby-horse, as a means to a peculiar and necessary kind of knowledge. It is a graceful manner, gentle yet firm, of coping with absurdity.

Several points should be clear by now. Whereas Jonson, Pope and Sterne's supposed mentor, John Locke, argue for reason and rationality, Tristram-Sterne argues for passion. Moreover, passion in Tristram Shandy is equated to the principle of the hobby-horse, which viewpoint Tristram-Sterne regards as the key to character. The role of the hobby-horse in human existence is to combat, as well as anything can, the marginalities of existence: chance is the key disrupter of a planned life; the disruption of life very often leads to a human environment characterized, more often than not, by absurdity; absurdity is the condition from which men desperately strive to escape. Sterne's people do not. They accept such absurdity and live with it. The fundamental difference between Sterne's hobby-horse precursors and Sterne himself is also the element which allows the Shandys to retain their sanity while living in an absurd environment--passion.

The temptation for the reader is to dismiss the Shandys and their respective hobby-horses as mere eccentrics. He may regard Toby, for example, as an entirely laughable figure, not realizing that perhaps Toby's life-

style is no more absurd than the reader's. Having rejected Toby as a reflection on his own life, the reader may easily dismiss the hobby-horse principle as a non-universal. In that view, the hobby-horse becomes either a quirk of personality, not meriting serious consideration and restricted to a few strange personalities, or a literary device restricted to a few writers whose essential aim is light comedy. The reason behind this line of thought is simply that people tend to sympathize with what is considered to be rational, useful and well-ordered. Wellbred, for example, in Every Man in His Humour, represents the reasonable world, inviting the audience to join in his laughter at the expense of the "humourous" characters. With Wellbred as their mentor, the audience joins in hooting the eccentrics. Even those who would say, often in disgust, "the world is absurd," are likely to be talking of the world "out there," which does not include themselves. People take pride in their capacity to be rational: "Come let us reason together." They resent the passionate impulse which leads to their own hobby-horse reason.

Because of this habit of thought, produced as Locke might say by "custom", some readers find it difficult to accept Tristram-Sterne when he both says and shows that every man is in some way basically absurd, that he has his own hobby-horse which he is reluctant to give up. But as Tristram-Sterne defines it, there is no escaping the

hobby-horse:

> But every man to his own taste. --Did not Dr. Kunastrokius, that great man, at his leisure hours, take the greatest delight imaginable in combing of asses tails, and plucking the dead hairs out with his teeth, though he had tweezers always in his pocket? Nay, if you come to that, Sir, have not the wisest men in all ages, not excepting Solomon himself, --have they not had their HOBBY-HORSES; --their running horses, --their coins and their cockle-shells, their drums and their trumpets, their fiddles, their pallets, --their maggots and their butterflies? --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?[14]

For Tristram-Sterne, the hobby-horse is a universal principle from which no one escapes. He has included everybody and anybody as having been participants in "riding" their own subjective "horses". Above all else the hobby-horse is a subjective stance, the most succinctly expressive characteristic of personality, because, like all instinctive passions, it is an unarguable approach to life.

Tristram-Sterne devotes all of the eighth chapter of Volume 1 to further Shandean "explication" of the universality of hobby-horse riding, this time including himself among the hobby-horsical people of the world:

> --De gustibus non est disputandum; --that is, there is no disputing against HOBBY-HORSES; and, for my part, I seldom do; nor could I with any sort of grace, had I been

> an enemy to them at the bottom; for happening, at certain intervals and changes of the Moon, to be both fiddler and painter, according as the fly stings: --Be it known to you, that I keep a couple of pads myself, upon which, in their turns, (nor do I care who knows it) I frequently ride out and take the air; . . . .(p. 10)

Having admitted that he too is mounted, Tristram goes on to say that so is the rest of the world, even such "tall personages as hereafter follow; --such, for instance, as my Lord A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,K,L,M,N,O,P,Q, and so on, all of a row, mounted upon their several horses" (p. 11). Everybody is mounted now, all under the encompassing banner of the hobby-horse, which, by now, Tristram-Sterne has made synonymous with taste, as well as passion, so that about hobby-horses there can be no dispute.

The best commentator on the hobby-horse is Tristram-Sterne; as narrator, he provides the reader with reasonably full statements of his own purpose in using the hobby-horse as a base for characterization.

In the last two chapters of the first volume of Tristram Shandy, Tristram presents a good Shandean argument for his use of the hobby-horse as a technique of characterization:

> If the fixture of Momus's glass, in the human breast, according to the proposed emendations of that arch-critick, had taken place, --first, This foolish consequence would certainly have followed, --That the very wisest and the very gravest of us all, in one coin or other, must have paid window-money every day of our lives.

> And, secondly, That had the said glass been set up, nothing more would have been wanting, in order to have taken a man's character, but to have taken a chair and gone softly, and look'd in, --view'd the soul stark naked; --observ'd all her motions. . . .
>
> But this, as I said above, is not the case of the inhabitants of this earth; --our minds shine not through the body, but are wrapt up here in a dark covering of uncrystalized flesh and blood; so that if we would come to the specifick characters of them, we must go some other way to work. (pp. 55-56)

Before explaining what way he is going to pursue the subject of character, Tristram first rejects several other possibilities, the first of which is rumour:

> Some, for instance, draw all their characters with wind instruments. --Virgil takes notice of that way in the affair of Dido and Aeneas; --but it is as fallacious as the breath of fame; --and, moreover, bespeaks a narrow genius. (p. 56)

Perhaps, by giving it a good, hearty twist, the above passage could be construed as a glance at such a novel as Pamela, in which every character is presented by what she says about them.

The next rejected method is less obscure than "wind instruments":

> There are others again, who will draw a man's character from no other helps in the world, but merely from his evacuations; --but this often gives a very incorrect outline, --unless, indeed, you take a sketch of his repletions too; and by correcting one drawing from the other, compound one good figure out of them both.

> I should have no objection to this method, but that I think it must smell too strong of the lamp, --and be render'd still more operose, by forcing you to have an eye to the rest of his Non-Naturals. (pp. 56-57)

The most obvious thing about this passage is, of course, Tristram's famous act of equivocation: which of the various non-naturals does he mean? He once protested that Tristram Shandy was not pornographic, and as a test case, cited Swift's Tale of a Tub. But in Tristram Shandy, his wish is that his novel will become as famous as Swift's work. Besides that, part of Tristram's own character is fixed by Walter's "evacuations". Tristram-Sterne, however, does not have that "excremental vision" which Norman O. Brown attributes to Swift, and this is probably in part what the narrator is rejecting.

The "Non-Naturals" are, themselves, according to James A. Work:

> A term formerly used by physicians to indicate the six things which because they do not enter into the composition of the body are not "natural" yet which are essential to animal life and health and which by accident or abuse often cause disease: air, meat and drink, excretion and retention, sleep and waking, motion and rest, and the affections of the mind.[15]

Tristram-Sterne does not specify which of the "Non-Naturals" he means to indicate by the term "evacuations", but since he is dealing with character perhaps it can be assumed that he is alluding to "motion and rest" and such of the

"affections of the mind" as evidence themselves in speech. If the narrator's objection can be interpreted as an objection to characterizing a man by what he says and does, it is easy to see that he is not engaged simply in a parody of the novelist's concern for depicting character, but is addressing himself to the problem that has long plagued writers: how does a writer reveal character?

Tristram-Sterne is not simply concerned with unmasking hypocrites, his satire is not loaded with invective, and the only man to suffer, in the novel, is Dr. Slop. The narrator's prime concern is with the idea that words and actions are signs which cannot be depended upon to reliably indicate the state of one person's mind to another. The best illustration of precisely this difficulty is Phutatorius' encounter with the hot chestnut, in which intense concentration on the subject of the proper content of a sermon is the surface appearance, masking a quite different reality:

> There was not a soul busied in all these various reasonings upon the monosyllable which Phutatorius uttered, [Zounds!] --who did not take this for granted, proceeding upon it as from an axiom, namely, that Phutatorius's mind was intent upon the subject of debate which was arising between Didius and Yorick; and indeed as he looked first towards the one, and then towards the other, with the air of a man listening to what was going forwards, --who would not have thought the same. (p. 241)

There was no one who would not have thought the same since

there was no one present who knew that the man's "repletions" included a hot chestnut lodged in the unspeakable opening of his breeches.

Although sometimes, as in the example of Phutatorius, an understanding of the repletions of the person who is speaking or acting will make the matter clear, often it will not, and the reader must also know the repletions of the person who is observing the action. To rightly understand Toby's composure and Widow Wadman's blush when Toby, in speaking of his wound, says "You shall see the very place, Madam," the reader must know that Toby is speaking geographically and that his repletions include maps and diagrams, while Widow Wadman is thinking anatomically, and that her repletions are phallic visions.

After further rejections of various other principles, Tristram-Sterne finally arrives at his mode of characterization:

> A man and his HOBBY-HORSE, tho' I cannot say that they act and re-act exactly after the same manner in which the soul and body do upon each other: Yet doubtless there is a communication between them of some kind, and my opinion rather is, that there is something in it more of the manner of electrified bodies, --and that by means of the heated parts of the rider, which come immediately into contact with the back of the HOBBY-HORSE. --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. (pp. 57-58)

Tristram-Sterne's reason for depending so much on the hobby-horse as a means of characterization is that for him a man's hobby-horse is the best expression of his individuality. For Pope and Jonson the ruling passion is also characteristic of every man, but it is a deviation from some ideal standard of man, and for Tristram-Sterne, the essence of humanity is not a reasonable ideal, but the peculiar activities of the individual. The hobby-horse a man chooses and the way he rides it are determined by his individuality; as well, the quality of his individuality is made clear by his hobby-horse. This is not to say that the hobby-horse is Momus's glass. The reader cannot look through the hobby-horse into the soul; rather, the reader begins to understand the man's character when he begins, if only imaginatively, to share his point of view, as he watches the hobby-horse in action.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]Laurence Sterne, Letters of Laurence Sterne, ed. Lewis P. Curtis (Oxford, 1935), p. 88.

[2]Wilbur L. Cross, The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne, 3d ed. (New Haven, 1929), p. 205.

[3]John Traugott, Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954), p. 114.

[4]E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Penguin Books ed., 1962), p. 116.

[5]W.B.C. Watkins, Perilous Balance: The Tragic Genius of Swift, Jonson and Sterne (Princeton, 1939), p. 118.

[6]Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. James A. Work (New York, 1940), p. lii.

[7]Ben Jonson, Complete Plays (Everyman's Library ed., nodo), I, 59-60.

[8]Alexander Pope, The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt (London, 1963), p. 555.

[9]Ibid., p. 516.

[10]Ibid., p. 520.

[11]Ibid., p. 518.

[12]Ibid., p. 558.

[13]Henri Fluchere, Laurence Sterne, From Tristram to Yorick: An Interpretation of Tristram Shandy, trans. Barbara Bray (London, 1965), p. 284.

[14]Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. Ian Watt (Boston, 1965), p. 10. This edition is used throughout this thesis, unless otherwise specified; all further quotations will be cited in parentheses immediately following the quotation.

[15]Sterne, Tristram Shandy, (Odyssey Press edition), p. 76n.

CHAPTER II

THE HOBBY-HORSE OF TRISTRAM-STERNE

The first of the hobby-horses to be considered is Tristram's, because his vision of life and his critical, creative intelligence organize, interpret and construct the Shandean world. Tristram-Sterne defines his hobby-horse in several ways: it is music, painting, the novel itself and "anything, which a man makes a shift to get a stride on, to canter it away from the cares and solicitudes of life--..." (p. 450). The reader, however, should not be misled into thinking that "anything" will suffice. If Tristram-Sterne is suggesting the necessity of a safety valve, he himself uses a very special kind of safety valve. "Anything" for Tristram-Sterne is quite specific: his horse is the attempt to define his own self-consciousness through art, the medium here being, of course, the novel. The novel as art form is the means by which Tristram-Sterne attempts to record the various elements which unite to compose that experience peculiar to the life of Tristram-Sterne. Because death is so near to him, Tristram-Sterne uses his art as a special means of capturing life; art, life and death, therefore, form an inextricable pattern of events leading to a definition of the narrator's self-

consciousness. Before he leaves the world, however, he must first be born into it.

Tristram's main problem is just getting born. It is easy to overlook this simple point: Tristram Shandy does not begin with Tristram-Sterne's birth, but with his conception. He is not only a conscious narrator, but also a conscientious one who will try to account for all of his life, even from its "ab ovo" start, so that the conception of the novel and the conception of Tristram-Sterne proceed somewhat apace. The prelude to that birth is sex. For anyone else, that might well be a mundane point, but for Tristram-Sterne it is fraught with significance, because of the shadow of impotence which casts its reflection throughout the novel. Walter, papa bull to the Shandy herd, is interrupted at the moment of sexual climax, causing the animal spirits, the microcosm of the adult, to disperse and scatter, leaving the seed of a narrator host to "a thousand weaknesses both of body and mind, which no skill of the physician or the philosopher could ever afterwards have set thoroughly to rights" (p. 5). The accidents surrounding the younger Tristram's life almost always involve a sexual misadventure. His conception has been marred by a father to whom the sexual act is more of an intellectual concern than a physical expression. Mrs. Shandy is just plain bored with it all, watching the hands of the clock pass by as she lies passively on her back,

jarred out of her boredom if the least object happens to be out of place: "Pray, my dear . . . have you not forgot to wind up the clock?" (p. 4).

He comes into the world battered and bruised, nipped on the "nose" by the clumsy forceps of Dr. Slop; he is misnamed, thereby ruling out any possibility of success, since, as Walter thinks, "Tristram" promises nothing in the nature of things. None of his family helps matters at all. Walter fails, not only in his faulty conception, but also in his thwarted attempt to find a north-west passage to learning. Uncle Toby, however innocently, removes that famous window sash, nearly causing Tristram's "nose" to be crushed. The maid, Susannah, forgets "Trismegistus", remembering only the first syllable of that wonderfully auspicious debut that was to be young Tristram's guarantee of a successful life. Finally, death has claimed his older brother Bobby, leaving the elder Tristram, the narrator, the only surviving member of his family. As William Bowman Piper says, "in him his beloved family is dying out."[1] Tristram is the last and the only remaining son of the Shandys and Uncle Toby remained celibate throughout his life.

Sex, therefore, presents Tristram with unfulfilled expectations, as it does his father. Birth rewards him with bodily weakness and, near the end of his life, death rewards him by extinguishing his family and by pursuing

him throughout the novel as if Tristram himself were the last link in the chain of familial extinction. Before he dies, however, Tristram-Sterne tries to do what the will of his hobby-horse directs him to: he must explain himself to himself. All of that requires time and time is his greatest enemy. One cannot co-operate with time; one cannot control it; except, that is, by writing a novel, by making one's history a matter of public record. It is not simply a question of immortality through art, but of capturing present time. Tristram-Sterne's method of doing just that is to make all time--the past, the present and the future--into one pervasive and far-reaching present tense. Reality, in terms of the narrator's attempt to beat death at its own game, is the present tense.

In his presentation of time, Tristram-Sterne, as many critics have recognized, explicitly acknowledges his debt to John Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.[2] With the notable exception of John Traugott's book, however, most critics have erred in assessing Locke's influence.[3] First, it is not Locke's associational theory which influenced Tristram-Sterne, but Locke's section on the Idea of Duration And its Simple Modes--what is usually referred to as his "train of ideas." All that Sterne did receive here, in fact, was the bare suggestion of the subjectivity of time in the mind:

> For whilst we are thinking, or whilst we receive successively several ideas in our minds, we know that we do exist; and so we call the existence of ourselves, or anything else, commensurate to the succession of any ideas in our minds, the duration of ourselves, or any such other thing coexistent with our thinking.[4]

I agree that the germ of Tristram-Sterne's essentially subjective use of time is buried in the above passage. But the narrator moves far from Locke's statement; hence, it is the difference between Locke's implied subjectivity of time and the more fully developed use of that phenomenon in the novel that is important, not the similarity.

A much better borrowing from Locke's Essay is contained in his chapter, Of Identity and Diversity, wherein Locke says outright that "Consciousness makes personal Identity."[5] Moreover, a further statement of Locke's on this connection between time, consciousness and personality, sums up, I think, the action and effect of time in Tristram Shandy:

> This [the distinction between man, animal and machine] also shows wherein the identity of the same man consists; viz. in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body.[6]

By simply substituting "moments of familial experience" for "particles of matter," the reader is on the track of the connection between time and personality in the novel.

Given that Tristram-Sterne is a product of the Shandy

family, that he is its last member, and that the only way in which he can make concrete his own existence is to recall as much of the past as he can, then the memory of race and family becomes a significant part of the narrator's consciousness. As Benjamin H. Lehman says, "Tristram remembers in order that he may know."[7] What Tristram-Sterne remembers is itself largely imaginary. At first, he attempts to supply a rationale for his source of knowledge, telling the reader that he received his information from Uncle Toby just before Toby's death. Later in the novel, however, he suspends all such pretenses at establishing mechanical reality, by revealing anecdotes which could not come from Uncle Toby. If the reader remembers Tristram-Sterne's injunction to let him tell his story his own way, he then can realize the extent to which Tristram-Sterne is a conscious, skilled and rational narrator. When Tristram-Sterne says that he is not going to follow any man's rules in writing his history, he is not mocking; the occasional pretenses which he makes toward establishing a sense of reality in the novel are pretenses:

> All of it is presented in a frame of reference of the completest relativity and the completest nonsense, the logical non sequiturs of the associational faculty. Of all, perhaps the most astonishing . . . is . . . Tristram who is the genius of implication and had the intuition to find that reality was its own hypothesis, that if you kept expanding the hypothesis to fit the facts you presently had no hypothesis at all. . . .[8]

Hypotheses are all very well for the philosopher, but for a man hounded by death, all that really matters is the sensation of living. Like his creation, Sterne himself spent his last seven years in France mostly on the run, trying to heal his infected body. Tristram, too, suffers from a vile cough that threatens to take his own life. He has, consequently, to prevent the presence of death from overtaking the living consciousness of his mind and the physical frame of his weak body. Time, somehow, some way must be controlled. The past, if it is just the past, reeks of decay; the future presents only death. The solution then is an all pervading present which will encompass both the past and the future.

Because he is on the verge of death, Tristram-Sterne becomes acutely aware of what I call the rottenness of the past. It is not Keats' nostalgic past of Grecian urns, but a carcass that illuminates the juxtaposition of the animate and the dead:

> . . . he who measures thee, Janatone, must do it now--thou carriest the principles of change within thy frame; and considering the chances of a transitory life, I would not answer for thee a moment; e'er twice twelve months are pass'd and gone, thou mayest grow out like a pumkin, and lose thy shapes--or, thou mayest go off like a flower, and lose thy beauty. (pp. 373-74)

Despite his deep-seated awareness of the life-death antithesis, Tristram-Sterne refuses to allow death's pre-

sence to become a total concern. There is too much to be told, too much to do:

> I will not argue the matter: Time wastes too fast: every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity Life follows my pen; the days and hours of it, more precious, my dear Jenny! than the rubies about thy neck, are flying over our heads like light clouds of a windy day, never to return more--everything presses on--whilst thou art twisting that lock,--see! it grows grey; and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, and every absence which follows it, are preludes to that eternal separation which we are shortly to make. (p. 469)

By making time exist in the present of his own consciousness, however, Tristram-Sterne gives to time an expansiveness that, imaginatively, circumvents the usual boundaries of sequential time. Tristram-Sterne often speaks of the flow of time as if it were so large and imminent in itself that it provides a continual and continuous source of determining one's own sense of existence; he calls it "this vast empire of time and all its abysses. . . ." (p. 432). The present becomes the focal point for all modes of time and the past is shown, not as a memorable decay, but as a living present:

> --Now this is the most puzzled skein of all--for in this last chapter, as far at least as it has help'd me through Auxerre, I have been getting forwards in two different journies together, and with the same dash of the pen--for I have got entirely out of Auxerre in this journey which I am writing now, and I am got half way out of Auxerre in that which I shall write hereafter. (p. 393)

Time, then, becomes localized in the present tense in which the artistry of Tristram-Sterne captures the concrete moment--one of those "constantly fleeting particles of matter," as Locke describes it. The best example of Tristram-Sterne's vital sense of the present is also the one that exemplifies the amalgam of time and death in the author's mind: the relentless pursuit of present time, in Volume VII.

The Volume begins with a contrapuntal voicing of Tristram-Sterne's reason for pinning life down to art, "provided the vile cough which then tormented me . . . would but give me leave--. . ."(p. 365). The voice of death is heard often throughout the book, even personified in its own voice: "'--Did ever so grave a personage get into so vile a scrape?' quoth Death" (p. 365). The narrator's resolution is, "had I not better, Eugenius, fly for my life?" (p. 365). And fly he does; the whole Volume is permeated with the sense of life at full force: "Hollo! Ho!--the whole world's asleep!--bring out the horses--grease the wheels--tie on the mail--and drive a nail into that moulding--I'll not lose a moment--" (p. 376). The predominately active, concrete verbs, the exclamation marks and the hectic dashes, all these announce a rhetoric of life against death for the narrator "who must be cut short in the midst of my days, and taste no more of 'em than what I borrow from my imagination--" (p. 377). For

Tristram-Sterne, time, as he constantly says, moves far too quickly. The only way in which time may be stopped is by creating one's own reality through the novel as art and arresting the precise moments of life. This is why the narrator may claim his work as being both digressive and progressive; this is why questions such as whether Tristram Shandy is a finished novel are irrelevant. The ordering principle in the novel resides in the mind of Tristram-Sterne, for whom "there is no forward-moving line or architectonic plot from which to digress."[9]

In the end, it is not Tristram-Sterne's admittedly brilliant handling of time that is so impressive; it is the pointed, vital sense of energetic life that captures the attention. Throughout Volume VII and the rest of the novel, Tristram-Sterne weaves in the motifs of life and death, making the flight from death into a drama of life. His nervous vitality, the product of his furtive imagination, juggles all of the novel's themes into a liberating life force, throwing hobby-horses into collision, shaping past history into an artistic rendition of an imagined present, equivocating his way through scatology and trying to revive a sexuality that has lost its potency by calling on the aid of various of his women, Janatone, Jenny and Maria. In a world where absurdity reigns supreme, the only solidity is art; the artist makes his own order out of disorder by attempting to render his own immediate

sense of experienced consciousness into a concrete form. It does not matter that Tristram-Sterne fails; he knows he must:

> I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month, and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume--and no farther than to my first day's life--'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it--on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back--was every day of my life to be as busy a day as this--And why not? . . . And for what reason should they be cut short? as at this rate I should just live 364 times faster than I should write . . . (p. 214)

The very act of making life into art bestows on the artist "a fine life of it out of this self-same life of mine." Moreover, a significant part of that "life of mine" reflects the various roles in which Tristram-Sterne casts himself (p. 215). Time is of the essence to Tristram-Sterne as a significant means of revealing his consciousness and that revelation is both satiric and humourous.

Tristram-Sterne is a child of the Shandean environment, sharing in Toby's instinctive response to life and in Walter's rational one. He is simultaneously a clown, a satirist and a Shandy. He is, as Lehman puts it, "the son in the flesh of a woman who cannot understand an implication and a man who tortures all reality to fit a hypothesis."[10] Unlike Walter's, however, Tristram-Sterne's

"tristapaedia" serves as a base for comedy and satire, rather than a scholastic net in which to snare the world. His own background as a student included considerable of the Schoolmen's background in logic and rhetoric; that mode of learning and the pedantic mind of a rationalistic father result in an older Tristram whose mind is filled with that learned lumber from which Locke tried to free the world. Consequently, Tristram-Sterne strikes the reader as a bundle of intellectual activity who is part and parcel of the Shandean universe. He is, first of all, part of its planless environment: "I have been the continual sport of what the world calls Fortune" (p. 8). The first accidents in his trinity of misfortune (botched conception, flattened nose, and mistaken baptism) result in a singular personality who, as Walter observes, will neither think nor act like any man's child (p. 5). Walter and son Tristram do share certain traits: each has a propensity for intellectual oddities, for the whimsical trivia gathered from strange sources and all of it floating in the memory. Rufus D. Putney describes both the similarities and differences of the father and the son well:

> His [Tristram-Sterne's] representation of Walter's strange opinions is half-serious, half-playful, for he half believes himself that they explain the idiosyncrasies he enjoys. Besides, he has hypotheses of his own, though like everything else about Tristram when compared to his father, they are diminutive and trifling. Knots, swear-

> ing, plackets, button-holes, chamber-maids, chamber-pots, and chapters are the sorts of things he theorizes about. Finally, Walter had the zeal or anger (two names for the same quality) to make him a satirist. Uncle Toby's benevolence had eradicated the harshness from Tristram, who thus sums up the difference between himself and his father. . . .[11]

Putney, however, misses one of the key differences between Walter's learning and Tristram's. Knowledge for Walter is a panacea; for Tristram it is a means to mockery, a satiric turn that eventually questions how much anyone can really know. Tristram's learned borrowings are not, after all, merely a testimony to that rich and variegated past that is well described by D.W. Jefferson as the tradition of learned wit.[12] Tristram-Sterne is in both camps at once. He is a part of the tradition, as his abundant borrowing shows and he is also critical of that tradition's views of physiology, medicine and a host of other subjects, because Tristram-Sterne is an anti-systematizer who refutes any relationship with the mechanical: "Now, of all things in the world, I understand the least of mechanism" (p. 346). Mechanism comprehends not only the world of machinery--his reference here is to clocks--but also those who would, like Walter, attempt to circumscribe the limits of man's behaviour, ringing it around with mechanical theories describing man as automaton, or posing convenient dualities with which to encompass all the activities of man: "wit and judgement in this world

never go together; inasmuch as they are two operations differing from each other as wide as east is from west. --So, says Locke--so are farting and hickuping, say I" (p. 143). For Tristram-Sterne, dualities of mind and body and head and heart exist only in the minds of scholars whose learning emphasizes, as does Walter's, the discrepancy between learned lore and practical experience. Hobbes, for example, may well conclude that man is viciously egocentric; but Walter lends Toby one hundred pounds so that "my uncle" may further indulge a hobby-horse Walter detests. Shaftesbury, on the other hand, may conclude that man is essentially benevolent, but Toby's wound is a testimony to man's viciousness. Neither philosopher is right; neither is wrong. But the damage they do is in attempting to solve the mystery of human behaviour, a mystery which Tristram-Sterne finds it necessary to uphold, unless one is willing to admit that man is only a series of electronically inspired neurons:

> But mark, madam, we live amongst riddles and mysteries--the most obvious things, which come in our way, have dark sides, which the quickest sight cannot penetrate into; and even the clearest and most exalted understandings amongst us find ourselves puzzled and at a loss in almost every cranny of nature's works. . . . (p. 219)

This is not to say that certain essentials of humour, paradox and contradiction, for example, do not exist in the narrator's mind. Slawkenbergius' Tale presents itself

as a paradox in learning: it is a tale told by a satirist, full of mockery and equivocation, signifying that the rationalist's utopia is a figment of excessive erudition. Tristram-Sterne uses the paradox of sex ("noses") confounding erudition (the philosophers of Strasburg) precisely and humourously to illustrate the hollowness of the mind-body debate. The Strasburgers, despite being deeply learned, are shallow read in the understanding of the sexual impulse lying behind their equivocations about "noses", their size, their depth and their penetrating power.

The mockery is not so much at the systematic thought of what Whitehead called "unbridled rationalism,"[13] but at the system's having taken control of the man in it: ". . . is a man to follow rules--or rules to follow him?" (p. 211). It would be extreme to say that Tristram-Sterne is an anti-rationalist. Such an argument would belie the fact that the narrator is himself immersed in both the scholastic system of thought, which is precisely why he can parody it, and the tradition of Burton, Swift and Pope, as well as the fustian lore of medicine and physiology deriving from Medieval tradition. He is also immersed in Locke, even when he is using his supposed mentor with intended irony. Tristram-Sterne's mind is loaded with the useful and the useless lumber of tradition but his literary invention recreates this traditional

material, shaping it into something original. That vast tradition then supplied Tristram-Sterne with an already existing satirical view, a line of thought that would appear to begin in Hobbes's preface to the Leviathan, which used satire as a weapon to battle the windmills of scholastic thought. Tristram-Sterne is, however, not all satirist. He is primarily a humourist, his satirical outlook being but one element of his character.

From the satirical tradition of learned wit, Tristram-Sterne learned the art of satire and the direction in which to aim it. I noted that part of his satirical view suggested dualities, but for satiric purposes. The dualities themselves, moreover, are a vital part of Tristram-Sterne the humourist, informing his capacity to move from the serious to the flippant, from romantic love to bawdy and from the serious to the comic. This comedy of polarities does not contrast in order to delineate either of the existing poles, but to shatter both, as the episode of Phutatorius illustrates, in which Phutatorius, intent on the theological abstractions involved in the changing of Tristram's name, discovers a hot chestnut suddenly lodged in his groin. Reality enters by way of a hot chestnut to bring the airy erudition of theological subtlety down to concrete realism. The same kind of disjunction between erudition and simple reality infects the Shandys. Walter Shandy becomes a victim to his parlour door because of this disparity:

"Never did the parlour-door open--but his philosophy or his principles fell a victim to it;--three drops of oyl with a feather and a smart stroke of a hammer, had saved his honour for ever" (p. 150). During moments like these, the Shandean world appears to be turned topsy-turvy. But it really is not, if the reader can understand that trivia, including the domestic variety of dry hinges, has its place.

Like the professional fool of tradition, Tristram-Sterne carries with him a full stock of bagatelles. Trivia, however, does not possess him; he possesses trivia. The difference is significant, because the job of the clown is, as Tristram-Sterne expresses it, "to keep up that just balance betwixt wisdom and folly. . ." (p. 472). As Tristram-Sterne tells us, even Walter had, like his son, once possessed a balance between wisdom and folly, His notions had entered his mind "upon the footing of mere whims, and of a vive la bagatelle" (p. 40); but like many another rationalist who does not understand that his own fine chain of reasoning may be of itself the lowest of trivia, Walter had tried to create perfect systems for explaining the world. He had lost his bagatelle, losing with it the proper balance between wisdom and folly. He becomes, therefore, a victim to trivia, losing out to the rhetoric of a squeaky hinge. Because he ends by being possessed with trivia, he no longer has the ability to maintain the

balance between folly and wisdom. His whole life stance displays, moreover, the disproportions resulting from the loss of that balance.

The penalties of sex and birth visited on the infant Tristram-Sterne create an inner awareness of his body, crippled as it is by two significant accidents: Walter's incomplete conception causes the animal spirits to scatter, and the untimely falling of the window-sash creates the suspicion of sterility (physiologically, Tristram-Sterne's unfortunate accident turns out to be nothing more than an unexpected circumcision; like Toby, however, the narrator never seems to establish any kind of sexual relationship with any of his apparently platonic mistresses). The consequences attending his conception and his birth have some significant results in the elder Tristram-Sterne, the first of which is his strong awareness of the body and the passions.

As I have already suggested, it is an oversimplification to see Tristram-Sterne as all anti-rationalist. He is in as much debt to the system he parodies as he is out of its intellectual current. From the Schoolmen and the rigours of Aristotelian logic and rhetoric he learned how an amateur, or as our age of specialists might sneeringly say, a dilletante, could work from a trivial hypothesis to a grand generalization about the nature of the cosmos. That he is satirical of abstruse speculations seems quite

clear. He shares that interest with Locke, the supposed brains behind the novel. But as John Traugott has shown, Tristram-Sterne disagrees with Locke as often as not. I have already given the quotation showing just how sarcastic Tristram-Sterne can be when he is peeved with Locke: ". . . as far apart as farting and hickuping say I."[38] Moreover, one of his major disagreements with Locke is in the rational-passional antithesis which split the eighteenth century. For many a philosopher and critic, it was, as one wag said, either no mind, never matter or no matter, never mind. For Tristram-Sterne, the passions, especially as they stimulate the body, are a necessary, healthy side of personality.

In a certain sense, Locke is Descartes revisited; this side of Locke is most evident in his "Idea of Personal Identity":

> Self is that conscious thinking thing, --whatever substance made up of, (whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not)--which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness expands.[14]

This definition of self is, of course, a paraphrase of Je pense, donc je suis and, as far as it goes, Tristram-Sterne would agree with it. But throughout the Essay, Locke dismisses the passions, as if they were distasteful. He does have one section dealing with the passions (Chap-

ter XX), but his account is simply another piece of Hobbesian behaviourism, hoist by its own circular definitions. For the most part, Locke avoids the passions as if they were the plague; at this point, Tristram-Sterne would choose to quarrel with Locke's gelded philosophy.

In Tristram Shandy, the passions are often the stimuli for the narrator's presentation of the conjunction between mind and body. None of the Shandys, for example, can converse without the aid of their bodily language and the more passions rise, the more the body shares in expostulation:

> --You shall see the very place, Madam; said my uncle Toby. Mrs. Wadman blush'd --look'd towards the door--turn'd pale --blush'd slightly again--recovered her natural colour--blush'd worse than ever; which for the sake of the unlearned reader, I translate thus--
>
> 'L--d! I cannot look at it--
> What would the world say if I look'd at it?
> I should drop down, if I look'd at it--
> I wish I could look at it--
> There can be no sin in looking at it.
> --I will look at it.' (p. 479)

The body serves also as a comic counter to death; Tristram-Sterne has the fool's traditional capacity to offset all of life's exigencies by softening the oppression of misery and death with a counter-balancing sense of the presence of comedy, even in what most would regard as only domestic tragedy. Bobby's death, for example, might have occasioned grief, even melodrama, in a Richardson novel. In Tristram Shandy, however, death becomes one more reason for estab-

lishing humour on the throne, complete with cap and bells, as symbolized in Trim's hat:

> --'Are we not here now;'--continued the corporal, 'and are we not'--(dropping his hat plumb upon the ground--and pausing, before he pronounced the word)--'gone! in a moment?' The descent of the hat was as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded into the crown of it. --Nothing could have expressed the sentiment of mortality, of which it was the type and fore-runner, like it,--his hand seemed to vanish from under it,--it fell dead,--the corporal's eye fix'd upon it, as upon a corps,--and Susannah burst into a flood of tears. (p. 274)

Tristram-Sterne's general injunction at the end of this passage advises the reader to "meditate". One critic who probably has this kind of incident in mind and who did plenty of sound meditating on both Sterne in particular and humour in general was Coleridge. He has an excellent observation about this favourite habit of the conjunction of the trivial and the profound which is at the core of much of Tristram-Sterne's humour and at the very base of the Shandean existence as well. Coleridge, significantly, describes what he considers to be the one ingredient common to all humour:

> . . . a certain reference to the general and the universal by which the finite great is brought into identity with the little, or the little with the finite great, so as to make both nothing in comparison with the infinite. The little is made great, and the great little, in order to destroy both. . . .[15]

Thus Trim's hat mocks death and the overture to this opera

is a comic one.

Unlike Jonathan Swift, the body holds no threat for Tristram-Sterne. In the Shandean world, there are no deformed struldbruggs, no pock-marked chamber-maids and no Yahoos defined in terms of their excrement. The body serves Tristram-Sterne well as a source of characterization and as a vehicle for humour, because he has a genuine respect and affection for it, as he tells the reader in defining Shandeism:

> --True Shandeism, think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely thro' its channels, and makes the wheel of life run long and cheerfully round. (p. 255)

The reader should not be misled into thinking that the above passage provides one more in a plentiful series of satiric jabs at the quackery of seventeenth and eighteenth century medicine and physiology. I doubt that there is any mockery here whatsoever. It is, instead, Tristram-Sterne's quintessential statement of the effect of comedy as a life-force and comedy as life-force is one of the keys to the character of Tristram-Sterne.

I began this chapter by stressing the extent to which the presence of death stimulated the consciousness of Tristram-Sterne. Much more so than Locke, that vile cough is responsible for the narrator's unique conception of

time. If the past reeks of decay and the future promises extinction, there is no choice but to create and to live in a continuous present. If the idea of a continuous present is a mere figment of the imagination, so much the better; for, as Tristram-Sterne says, he will create out of his imagination the immortality latent in art. It is only tautological to argue that such immortality is not real. The artist creates his own reality. But for all that, Tristram-Sterne is not a spider, spinning the web of life out of his own entrails.

The irony of the satirist's position within a given tradition is that he must partake or have partaken of the knowledge he lampoons. This is exactly Tristram-Sterne's ironic location. He has one foot in the den of the Schoolmen and the other planted in the den of the anti-Schoolmen, like Locke. In fact, he goes even further than that, challenging, through satire, the tenets of that most eminent of debunkers, John Locke.

Moreover, Tristram-Sterne is a sick man; consequently the body, not just his, but the body in general, becomes of paramount importance. But he is also a well man, mentally, capable of seeing through those who would suggest that the body, in some weird manner, maintains a separate existence from the head. Because of the blows dealt to him by the mutual disasters of sex and birth, because of imminent death and because of a highly suspicious omission

of the role of the body in human affairs by one of his favourite philosophers, Tristram-Sterne resurrects the body as a life-force. In doing so, he draws out of himself the comedy which is the product of an energetic vision.

Comedy as a life-force counters death by implying that death itself is simply another piece of trivia. As Coleridge's statement indicates, the comedy inherent in a falling hat can reduce the gloom of death, so that the littleness of what would appear to be an entirely ineffectual defense, premised in the dropping of hats, the creaking of hinges and the fall of window sashes, nicely cancels out what appears to be the omnipotence of universals, like death. Moreover, the life force has long lines, existing as it does in a seemingly continuous present that is richly informed by the past.

Though he says little directly about himself, except for the vagaries and misfortunes of his infancy, Tristram-Sterne does disclose certain characteristics.

He is part traditionalist, part satirist, and mainly a humourist. He is a sick man, but one who had the good sense to parlay illness into a comedic point of view which, better than anything else could, discovers its own life-force in a satiric, mocking, bodily, passional and humourous stance, against which death becomes frozen like a rude caricature of its former awesome self.

Behind all of it is, of course, the shrewd, rational

and creative mind of Tristram-Sterne who realized that the responsibility for shaping the materials of his own mind into art rested upon his ability to contrive. Contriving means, of course, writing the novel, shaping its events and maintaining an explicit control over all that happens. More than this, however, contriving means the attempt to describe himself to himself, for the strongest impulse driving on his creative energy is his compulsive need to examine the contents of his own mind. The depiction of self-consciousness then is the driving force behind the novel and this need itself is pushed on by the omnipotent presence of death. The act of creating his own self-consciousness suggests a potent energy, the antithesis to death, and the end of that creation is art. Tristram-Sterne then has it both ways: while writing the novel, he is all energy, all vivacity; after his death, he leaves his own personal history, incomplete as it is, as a record of his self-consciousness. The incompleteness too carries implications about life: in the end, the incompleteness really questions how much anyone can really know of themselves, and of others. Personal identity, so far as Tristram-Sterne is concerned, can never be fully known, but the search for it does contain the promise of a meaningful life; the quest, therefore, for personal identity creates artistic energy, because such a quest can never be fulfilled.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

[1]William Bowman Piper, Laurence Sterne in Twayne's English Authors Series, ed. Sylvia E. Bowman (New York, 1965), p. 26.

[2]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. A.C. Fraser (New York, 1959).

[3]John Traugott, Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954).

[4]Locke, Essay, I, p. 239.

[5]Ibid., p. 450.

[6]Ibid., p. 444.

[7]Benjamin H. Lehman, "Of Time, Personality and the Author," in Laurence Sterne: Twentieth Century Views, ed. John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), p. 26.

[8]Lehman, "Of Time, Personality and the Author," p. 33.

[9]A.A. Mendilow, "The Revolt of Sterne", in Laurence Sterne: Twentieth Century Views, ed. John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), p. 97.

[10]Lehman, "Of Time, Personality and the Author," p. 33.

[11]Rufus D. Putney, "Laurence Sterne, Apostle of Laughter," in Eighteenth Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. James L. Clifford (New York, 1959), pp. 279-80.

[12]D.W. Jefferson, "Tristram Shandy and the Tradition of Learned Wit," in Laurence Sterne: Twentieth Century Views, pp. 148-67.

[13]Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York, 1964), p. 41.

[14]Locke, Essay, I, p. 459.

[15]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On the Distinctions of the Witty, the Droll, the Odd, and the Humourous; The Nature and Constituents of Humour;--Rabelais--Swift--Sterne,"in The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 1, ed., Henry Nelson Coleridge (London, 1836), 136.

CHAPTER III

HOBBY-HORSES IN ACTION

One of the many oddities of Tristram Shandy is that, while most critics have called the novel weird, strange and chaotic, a close study of the way in which the respective hobby-horses of Walter and Toby operate indicates lucid and rational thought. Because this point has been largely unobserved, critics tend to place their emphasis in the wrong direction. It is not the actions of Walter and Toby that are odd, it is men's opinions about those actions. The relevant question about the Shandean hobby-horse is, why: that is, what function does it serve and how did it get there anyway. Since Walter and Toby are the main characters in the novel, a study of the development and progress of their hobby-horses should disclose the function of the hobby-horse as well as its rationale.

Tristram describes clearly the progress of Toby's monomania, from its beginnings in London to its sometimes frenzied gallop to that life-saving bowling-green in Yorkshire. The foundations for Toby's "pad" are laid at the seige of Namur where he is struck in the groin by a malevolent cannon-ball. The result of the wound is that Toby is confined for four years, "part of it to his bed, and all

of it to his room" (p. 59). Like the good brother he is, Walter offers Toby the privacy of his home to recuperate. As well, to dispel Toby's loneliness and the boredom of a lengthy convalescence, he begins what later becomes a prime concern of Toby's, by assuring him that he will have plenty of company:

> . . . he [Walter] would never suffer a friend or an acquaintance to step into the house on any occasion, but he would take him by the hand, and lead him upstairs to see his brother Toby, and chat an hour by his bed side. (p. 59)

But, like much of the action in Tristram Shandy, no one can account for the possible implications of even the simplest and friendliest of gestures: the inter-action between friends, visits, wound, groin and Namur all combine to develop Toby's passion. Walter had intended only to help, not realizing the dependency latent in Toby's confinement. For Toby, the visitors not only dispel boredom, but also provide a sedative because "the history of a soldier's wound beguiles the pain of it" (p. 59); for their part, the visitors, out of kindness, aid and abet Toby's one claim to the unusual:

> . . . in their daily calls upon him . . . they would frequently turn the discourse to that subject,--and from that subject the discourse would generally roll on to the siege itself. (p. 59)

So many visitors does Toby have and so often must he re-tell his story that the associational links of wound, groin and

Namur all gradually fuse into one idea: the wound and Namur become freely interchangeable in Toby's mind. This link is the beginning of Toby's ruling passion. As yet, however, that link is not sufficiently established to permit the growth of Toby's later obsession with the discipline of military science. Before this strengthening can occur, Toby needs the experience of "some unforeseen perplexities, which, for three months together, retarded his cure greatly . . ." (p. 59). Readers familiar with Toby's character will not be surprised at the nature of the interruption which temporarily causes Toby's hobby-horse to shy.

The "perplexities" which Toby encounters are verbal. At a most crucial moment in his career, words fail Toby, and he becomes in danger of illustrating Hobbes's definition of memory as decaying sense. Toby's inability to clearly articulate his story arises from a need for a different kind of association to string out the links of the story. Only to a certain point is Toby capable of a lucid account: the description of the first attack before St. Nicholas' gate. Past that point, Toby is floating in a verbal vacuum:

> . . . the many perplexities he was in, arose out of the almost insurmountable difficulties he found in telling his story intelligibly, and giving such clear ideas of the differences and distinctions between the scarp and counterscarp,--the glacis and the covered way,--the half-moon and ravelin,--as to make his company fully comprehend where and what he was about. (p. 63)

By this time, the story has come to serve Toby in several important ways: the activity of his mind compensates for the passivity of his body; the telling of the story serves as a medium of exchange between him and his guests, giving Toby a measure of modest fame; finally, this action recollected in tranquility merges the past and the present, giving Toby a concrete sense of his own experience. The gap in the story represents a serious problem for Toby, and Walter inadvertently aggravates the difficulty, because "my father's kindness to him was continually dragging up fresh friends and fresh inquirers" (p. 64). The result of an increasing number of friends and a decreasing lucidity is that Toby becomes "sadly bewilder'd"; consequently, because of mental anxiety, Toby degenerates physically. As Tristram says, Uncle Toby might well have died had he not devised a suitable device.

The device is Toby's map of the fortifications at Namur. The conceptual problem is solved by primitively literal means. The simplicity works, however, for Toby's confidence is redeemed after he is secure in knowing that "he could stick a pin upon the identical spot of ground where he was standing in when the stone struck him" (p. 64). During a period of four months, and by arduous practice, Toby becomes eloquent at pin-sticking; after only two months' work, Toby earns "passable perspicuity," and later, at the end of four months, confirmed in his expertise,

Toby becomes "right eloquent upon it" (p. 68).

After having transformed his lack of conceptualization into a literal symbol, and after having moved from that point back into thought and ease of communication, Toby's once weakened connection between his groin and Namur becomes so fixed in his mind that he has now established a solid foundation for his monomania: ". . . in the end, it [the map] prov'd the happy means, as you will read, of procuring my Uncle Toby his HOBBY-HORSE" (p. 65). The map, as Tristram says, becomes the vehicle through which Toby secures his monomania, and with the security of knowledge regained, Toby's health improves; no longer is he plagued with those "exacerbations of his wound" which had arisen out of his frustrated efforts to add dimension to his past experience, so that the present might become more livable. The mastery of the story and a healthy recovery seem within easy reach.

But the Shandean existence is never static. Change and its attendant chaos seem to be the host and hostess of Shandy Hall. No sooner does Toby think that he has mastered his shadowy past, than a new problem arises: having perfected his oringinal story, how does he enlarge upon it? As any scholar knows, Toby has no choice but to go further afield, in a frantic scramble for sources. Soon, by dint of hard study, he is able to "give his visitors as distinct a history of each of their attacks, as of that

of the gate of St. Nicholas, where he had the honour to receive his wound" (p.68). Precisely at this point, Toby has arrived at the beginning of the development of his obsession with military science and history. Toby himself has become a wandering scholar, expanding his knowledge in ever-widening circles of fustian military lore.

Now firmly mounted, Toby moves "deeper into the art" making further rational discoveries based on a further extension of knowledge:

> . . . before the first year of his confinement had well gone round, there was scarce a fortified town in Italy or Flanders, of which, by one means or other, he had not procured a plan, reading over as he got them, and carefully collating therewith the histories of their sieges, their demolitions, their improvements and new works, all of which he could read with that intense application and delight, that he would forget himself, his wound, his confinement, his dinner. (p. 68)

After having discovered the pattern in which he will gain his knowledge, Toby responds to his work just as any other scholar would do; he begins to amass a great variety of books by Italian, Dutch and French writers, all relating to engineering, mathematics, architecture and soldiery, the whole of which adds to his lore of military science. Toby's academic adventure is carried on in an orderly, rational manner; he refers to useful sources, in fact, some of the best in their fields. But Toby's hobby-horse has begun to re-shape itself. Toby's comical pursuit

of knowledge has itself become a ruling passion and is now carried on for its own sake; the original motive of a healthful recovery is quite forgotten: what was once but a memory in desperate need of extension gave way to a map of Namur, and that in turn gives way to a library comprising the well-known works of famous engineers and mathematicians as well as "almost as many more books of military architecture, as Don Quixote was found to have of chivalry, when the curate and the barber invaded his library" (p. 68).

By the time his study of projectiles defeats him, Toby has gained a large enough body of hobby-horsical knowledge to permit himself to pursue "the practical part of fortification" (p. 70). The result of this new concern is a transformation in the nature of Toby's monomania which, once having expressed itself in reading and private study, now becomes an externalized vision of Toby's consciousness. In its earlier stage, Toby had found success in expressing his ruling passion on the top of his desk; there, by the aid of maps and compasses, he had staged his mock battles. But Toby's concern is expanding in terms of both time and space. Where once he had confined his mind to a limited time context, the battle of Namur, Toby now finds, after intense study, that he can range over centuries of learned lore; where once a simple desk had sufficed as space, the expansion of time requires an attendant expansion in space. His battle manoeuvres become more complex

and he runs out of room. Trim, the garrulous aide-de-camp, suggests that, by transferring the scene of the battle to a larger one out doors, Toby will be able to expand his activities. Toby agrees to do so, and his monomania enters a new phase, spilling over onto the bowling green. No sooner does Toby initiate his plan on the bowling green, than the fortifications grow apace. One piece of equipment suggest another; that, yet another still, until Walter's backyard comes to resemble a miniature Disneyland.

In the beginning of their new activity, Toby and Trim build a skeleton replica of the fortifications of a town. This suffices until the second year of the campaign, when Toby thinks that he can "afford the expence of four handsome draw-bridges," to which he adds at the end of the year "a couple of gates with portcullises" (p. 339). The passing of time creates the need for more equipment, and Toby now adds a sentry box, a church, and a complete model of a town. Hobby-horses are not completely removed from the world, however, and the next change in Toby's plan is very nearly a disastrous one. The war in Europe ends and Toby's gentle war must end too. As Tristram says: "his horse rather flung him--and somewhat viciously, which made my uncle Toby take it ten times more unkindly" (p. 352).

Tristram exaggerates the extent to which Toby is flung by his hobby-horse, since its language has permeated Toby's

consciousness to such an extent that it constantly reveals itself, by way of metaphor, in his courtship of Widow Wadman.

Toby's association with Widow Wadman began in 1701 when, at the end of his battle with ballistics, he and Trim retire to the country. Lacking shelter, he billets himself with Widow Wadman who promptly falls in love with Uncle Toby. He, however, is in love with his hobby-horse; consequently, Widow Wadman must wait while Toby and Trim demolish Dunkirk. After some twelve years have passed by, the physical part of Toby's hobby-horse runs out of oats, as the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, concludes the War of the Austrian Succession. After that, another war breaks out: Toby goes courting.

The courting process involves the reader in a fundamental paradox of humour, especially as it appears in Tristram Shandy. Throughout the pursuit of his hobby-horse, Toby has met with various frustrations, all of which he has solved, because until his meeting with Widow Wadman, his hobby-horse has remained isolated from the sexual activities with which it will be confused as Toby's courtship proceeds. The initiation into the rites of love sees Toby caught in cross-purposes which reveal the seriousness of Tristram's laughter. For the hobby-horse is, in a sense, a substitute existence.

Toby is in control of his hobby-horse, and he exer-

cises that control in something like the same fashion a man would use to govern his mistress; Toby confuses forts and mistresses and in doing so his latent metaphors, emanating from his military knowledge, run at cross-purposes to the innuendoes contained in these same metaphors as they apply to women and sexuality.

Toby professes no knowledge of women: "To think, said my father, of a man living to your age, brother, and knowing so little about women! --I know nothing at all about them,--replied my uncle Toby" (p. 77). But at least subconsciously, Toby does know women; he is ignorant of women only at a conscious level. In one of his many admonishments of Toby, Walter complains that Toby should at least "know so much as the right end of a woman from the wrong" (p. 77). As it turns out, Toby really does:

> --Right end, --quoth my uncle Toby, muttering the two words low to himself, and fixing his two eyes insensibly as he muttered them, upon a small crevice, form'd by a bad joint in the chimney-piece.--Right end of a woman!--I declare, quoth my uncle, I know no more which it is, than the man in the moon; --and if I was to think, continued my uncle Toby, (keeping his eye still fix'd upon the bad joint) this month together, I am sure I should not be able to find it out. (p. 78)

The usual critical waffling at this point attempts to get around Toby's failure to separate women and armies, by suggesting that it is Toby's modesty that prevents a union between him and Widow Wadman. Tristram, a tough-minded comedian at times, knows better, and he has already supplied

enough critical evidence to suggest that Toby's failure here is another of those exercises in cross-purposes which make life essentially absurd.

Hobby-horses work for and against man. Toby's horse is siege craft and forts, and the stimulus for it is precisely the same thing that occasions so much frustration for Toby when he tries to court Widow Wadman--a wound in the groin. The wound haunts Toby's mind:

> . . . he got it, Madam, by a blow.--A blow!--Yes, Madam, it was owing to a blow from a stone, broke off by a ball from the parapet of a horn-work at the siege of Namur, which struck full upon my uncle Toby's groin.--Which way could that effect it? The story of that, Madam, is long and interesting. . . . (p. 51)

But the story begins before Toby's courting of Widow Wadman, and it is essentially a story of syntax. The way in which Toby and Tristram describe Toby's activities presents an interesting reversal of values. War is generally considered as masculine, but for Toby, it is, if not feminine, at least equivocal. As Trim begins to discuss the whole project of model forts, he suggests to Toby that the perfect site would be the bowling green at the bottom of the kitchen-garden. Toby's reaction to Trim's suggestion is a reaction to the image of the secluded bowling green itself, and it causes Toby to blush. At this point, it might seem far-fetched to say that this reaction is in any way sexual, but Tristram adds the sexual overtones:

"Never did lover post down to a belov'd mistress with more heat and expectation, than my uncle Toby did, to enjoy this self-same thing in private" (p. 75). Moreover, "the idea of not being seen, did not a little contribute to the idea of pleasure preconceived in my uncle Toby's mind" (p. 75). This same latent sexuality is carried over into the various discussions about the courtship, and is directly connected to military terminology. Tristram, for example, plays one of many teasing games of equivocation with "Dear Reader" in trying to determine what Toby would call female genitals. It is one of those "complete the word" sentences which often shakes up "Madam": "'My sister, mayhap,' quoth my uncle Toby, 'does not choose to let a man come so near her ****." What word would Toby choose? "Cover'd-way" (p. 76). Because, as Tristram points out, "as fortifications ran so much in my uncle Toby's head, that if he had been left to have added one word to the sentence,--that word was it" (p. 77).

Significantly, the idea of military campaigns carries over to the courtship of Widow Wadman. Tristram, in fact, describes the "assault" in those terms: "Indeed in my uncle Toby's case there was a strange and unaccountable concurrence of circumstances which insensibly drew him in, to lay siege to that fair and strong citadel" (p. 154). But the purpose to which this particular battle is directed contains, at its climax, little to attract Toby:

> After a series of attacks and repulses in a course of nine months on my uncle Toby's quarter. . . . My uncle Toby, honest man! found it necessary to draw off his forces, and raise the siege somewhat indignantly. (pp. 154-155)

The magic figure, for Tristram Shandy, of "nine months" produces, not fruitful birth, but an indignant withdrawal. Toby is the one to "draw off," not Widow Wadman, for this battle reverses the roles of the attacker and the attacked. Women, unlike forts, refuse to be controlled, and this lack of ability to control finds Toby at the mercy of a passionate Widow who raises embarrassing questions about his physical ability to consummate the affair. Toby's answer is to back off. The only way Toby can sustain himself throughout the sexual comedy of errors is by maintaining implicitly the analogy between making war and making love. Metaphor becomes Toby's temporary salvation, but this very connection is also his undoing, for this is the connection which Widow Wadman inadvertently strikes upon.

After Toby has told Trim of his "love" for the aggressive Widow, Trim, a successful ladies' man himself, suggests that a bold, frontal attack will be the best way to conquer the Widow. Toby is not convinced:

> --we'll march up boldly, as if 'twas to the face of a bastion; and whilst your honour engages Mrs. Wadman in the parlour, to the right--I'll attack Mrs. Bridget in the kitchen, to the left; and having seiz'd that pass, I'll answer for it, said the corporal, snapping his fingers over his head--that the day is our own.

> I wish I may but manage it right; said my uncle Toby--but I declare, corporal I had rather march up to the very edge of a trench--A woman is quite a different thing--said the corporal. --I suppose so, quoth my uncle Toby. (p. 449)

One of the chief ironies resident in Toby's hobby-horse is that much of its descriptive language lends itself perfectly to sexual innuendo. For Toby, whose life was, after all, put in jeopardy by words, the problems inherent in the language of his hobby-horse can lead to nothing but ambiguity. Toby, in this equivocal sense is marching up "to the very edge of a trench," in the same way that Trim will seize "that pass." Toby is experiencing the collision of resident sexual ambiguities inherent in the very language of his hobby-horse: a "cover'd way," but not as sheltered as Toby would like it to be. Hence, his seemingly innocent "I suppose so" is not simply the standard patter of uncertainty, but a felt confusion over an all too easily affected transferring of military metaphors to sexual metaphors, and the whole of this emanating from the wound in the groin which he received at Namur.

The meeting ends in a confusion of metaphors, prompted by the Widow Wadman's having unwittingly seized on the very crux of Toby's problem. She knows, of course, that Toby is rumoured to be impotent. She has, furthermore, gone through the sexually chaste experience of a husband whose performance had been cramped by sciatica. She is,

therefore, naturally curious as to the nature and extent of Toby's wound. But like many passionately waiting women, she has enough experience to play the game by time-honoured roles which require discretion; consequently she circles "round about by Namur to get at my uncle Toby's groin" (p. 489). As Tristram says, Widow Wadman had expected Toby to "lay his forefinger upon the place" (p. 489). At this point, the insinuation of Widow Wadman is simply too much to bear, and Toby falls back on the original impetus of his hobby-horse:

> . . . my uncle Toby having got his wound before the gate of St. Nicolas, in one of the traverses of the trench, opposite to the salient angle of the demi-bastion of St. Roch; he could at any time stick a pin upon the identical spot of ground where he was standing when the stone struck him: this struck instantly upon my uncle Toby's sensorium--and with it, struck his large map of the town and citadel of Namur and its environs, which he had purchased and pasted down upon a board by the Corporal's aid, during his long illness--it had lain with other military lumber in the garret ever since, and accordingly the corporal was detached into the garret to fetch it. (p. 489)

The rest of the novel carries on the same metaphorical ambiguity. Toby and Trim retire, so that Toby can add up "all Mrs. Wadman's perfections, one by one. . ."(p. 492). Toby, all this while, is convinced that Widow Wadman's solicitations were excited by "the compassionate turn and singular humanity of her character" (p. 493). But Trim, becoming exasperated at Toby's land-locked metaphors,

devastates Toby once and for all: ". . . the groin, your honour knows, is upon the very curtin of the place" (p. 493). The implications of Widow Wadman's tender solicitations become all too clear now, as Toby allows the sexual ramifications of Trim's metaphors to sink in: "My uncle Toby gave a long whistle--but in a note which could scarce be heard across the table" (p. 493).

What began as the simple story of the growth of a man's hobby-horse, extends into the very essence of life, sexuality. Then the hobby-horse becomes a mode of ambiguity, as one man's hobby-horse becomes the vehicle for every one else's interpretation: Trim's, Toby's, Tristram's, Widow Wadman's, and most certainly the reader's. The result is that the original function of the hobby-horse has shifted to a good example of the kind of cross-purposed life that is the very nub of the Shandean existence. No one is free from it, neither Tristram himself, nor Walter. For Toby, the hobby-horse has completed its circle, but not before a good deal of inner conflict between himself and Widow Wadman has been exercised by a return to the original hobby-horse, the de-sexualized one of mock battles. Confrontation awaits everyone in Tristram Shandy, however, and the lives of the Shandys bear living witness to the daily comedy of confrontation that exists at all levels of humanity. Not even retired business men escape, as Walter eminently shows us.

Walter's hobby-horse is reason. He has a theory for everything which is why he explains nothing. He is, moreover, a particular kind of reasoning man, relying, for the most part, on the art of the syllogism to explain not only his own life to himself, but also to explain to others the quality of their own lives. But chance, the intervention of crossed motives, skewers Walter's syllogisms.

Critics have argued that Locke's Essay Concerning the Human Understanding influenced Sterne's method of characterization. Although I do not think that Sterne agreed with many of Locke's ideas, I suspect that Walter would be a prime example of the way in which Locke may have influenced Sterne; Locke's argument against syllogism probably provided Tristram-Sterne with the basis for sketching Walter's hobby-horse. Walter, consequently, could benefit from Locke's comments on the various fallacies abounding in syllogistic reasoning which Locke describes:

> If we will observe the actings of our own minds, we shall find that we reason best and clearest, when we only observe the connexion of the proof, without reducing our thoughts to any rule of syllogism. And therefore we may take notice, that there are many men that reason exceedingly clearly and rightly, who know not how to make a syllogism.[1]

Syllogistic reasoning is needless, and, because of its academic associations with the Schoolmen (of whom Walter is a type), Locke deliberately picks the unacademic, homely example of a country woman, who reasons "exceeding-

ly clearly," but who does not know "how to make a syllogism":

> Tell a country gentlewoman that the wind is southwest and the weather lowering, and like to rain, and she will easily understand it is not safe for her to go abroad thin clad in such a day, after a fever: she clearly sees the probable connection of all these, viz. southwest wind, and clouds, rain, wetting, taking cold, relapse, and danger of death, without tying them together in those artificial and cumbersome fetters of several syllogisms, that clog and hinder the mind, which proceeds from one part to another quicker and clearer without them: and the probability which she easily perceives in things thus in their native state would be quite lost, if this argument were managed learnedly and purposed in mode and figure.[2]

The incapacity to deal with problems of an every-day nature, however, is the least of the ills attributed to the syllogism. For Locke, that kind of reasoning serves as a prelude to ignorance:

> . . . those scholastic forms of discourse are not less liable to fallacies than the plainer ways of argumentation; and for this I appeal to common observation, which has always found these artificial methods of reasoning more adopted to catch and entangle the mind, than to instruct and inform the understanding.[3]

Had Locke been acquainted with Walter Shandy, he could not have given a better description of the state of Walter's mind in its reliance on artificial methods of reasoning which "catch and entangle the mind." Tristram too sounds his own warnings about Walter's mind and its

rambling grasp after "facts" to support his various hypotheses, and in doing so, reminds the reader that, although Walter's penchant is theorizing, that same theorizing serves also as his hobby-horse:

> . . . 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 and of a vive la Bagatelle; and as such he would make merry with them for half an hour or so, and having sharpen'd his wit upon 'em, dismiss them till another day.
>
> I mention this, not only as a matter of hypothesis or conjecture upon the progress and establishment of my father's many odd opinions,--but as a warning to the learned reader against the indiscreet reception of such guests, who, after a free and undisturbed enterance, 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. (pp. 40-41)

Walter has two pet theories: that names hold a powerful social influence on the bearer, and that long noses, like happily chosen names, mean a long, fruitful life.

Tristram himself is quite wary about the origin of the Walter's theory of noses; he says: "I would sooner undertake to explain the hardest problem in Geometry, than to pretend to account for it" (p. 38). Walter, however, supplies some clues as to the origin of his bias. He claims that there is "a strange kind of magick bias" which is "irresistibly impress'd upon our characters and conduct" (p. 38) through the use of "good or bad" names.

Walter has unconsciously accepted the idea that the connotations surrounding certain names influence the course of a man's life. Once having accepted this bias, name and connoted quality become indivisible in Walter's mind, and he begins to extend this connection throughout his own system of private connotations, making all names good, bad, or neutral. At this point, names merge into concepts of good and evil, having now the power to focus good or evil on the bearer. Walter's hypothesis does have some justification for it in social experience, but basically he has confused the social effect of misnomers with the idea that the goodness or badness is innate in the name itself: he identifies a social phenomenon with the power he feels is resident in names themselves to produce this phenomenon: "your BILLY, Sir!--would you, for the world, have called him JUDAS?" (p. 39). Walter's "odd opinion" is a result of his penchant for philosophic reasoning. Once having established his "effect", the fortunes of being misnamed, he proceeds to his "cause", the power innate in the name itself. This transference of a social effect to a verbal cause creates Walter's thesis on the intrinsic influence of names. As Tristram says of Walter's rules of speculative reason:

> . . . he was systematical, and, like all systematick reasoners, he would move both heaven and earth, and twist and torture everything in nature, to support his hypothesis. (p. 41)

Walter is attempting to coax the world into seeing things his way, but he is always being contradicted by facts. Regardless of how he feels about personal names, regardless of the amount of truth in his theory of names, Tristram is Tristram, and that is a fact. The constant disparity between the reality of a given event, Tristram's name, and the illusion of theory--"Trismegistus" means happiness, "Tristram" means trouble--is created by Walter's inability to appreciate the difference between the word as private symbol and the word as denotated thing. He does not take to heart Locke's warning that so long as words contain private meanings, general comprehension cannot be had.

Walter's second opinion is that concerning noses. To Walter, long noses, like well-chosen names, mean a fortunate life; short noses signify misfortune. This time, Tristram is explicit about the origin of Walter's opinion:

> Defend me, gracious heavens! from those persecuting spirits who make no allowance for these workings within us. --Never,--O never may I lay down in their tents, who cannot relax the engine, and feel pity for the force of education, and the prevalence of opinions long derived from ancestors!
>
> For three generations at least, this tenet in favour of long noses had gradually been taking root in our family. --TRADITION was all along on its side, and INTEREST was every half year stepping in to strengthen it; so that the whimsicality of my father's brain was far from having the whole honour of this, as it had of almost all his other strange notions. --For in a great measure he might be said

> to have suck'd this in, with his mother's milk. He did his part however. --If education planted the mistake, (in case it was one) my father watered it and ripened it to perfection. (p. 164)

As John Traugott points out, however, "noses" too contain the puzzle of equivocation.[4] Walter may wish the word "noses" to be taken to mean just a nose and exactly a nose, but "noses" are just another of the confusions which chance visits on the Shandys. As Tristram says, "Slawkenbergius . . . was a rich treasury of inexhaustible knowledge to my father" (p. 180). Tristram, in telling the Tale, equivocates between noses and male sexual organs, so that the story poses, however ambiguously, a relationship between long and short organs of reproduction as well as of noses. Part of the implication about short noses is sexual failure. Sexual failure, in turn, implies impotency, and at that point, Walter, via Slawkenbergius is right back to one of the major concerns of the Shandy household: Slawkenbergius is, after all, Walter's original source for his doctrine of noses. Moreover, the mention of "noses" returns the scene back to one of Tristram's birth mishaps, which, in turn, leads to Walter's theory of how a child should come into the world. That theory leads to the flattening of Tristram's nose by the forceps of Dr. Slop.

Walter has definite ideas on how a child should be brought into the world; the evolution of this opinion,

Tristram describes at length:

> My father set out upon the strength of these two following axioms:
>
> First, That an ounce of a man's own wit, was worth a tun of other people's; and,
>
> Secondly, (Which, by the bye, was the ground-work of the first axiom,--tho' it comes last)--That every man's wit must come from every man's own soul,--and no other body's. (p. 111)

The language here indicates the kind of mental activity involved. After his old habit of syllogistic reasoning, Walter places together two axioms in a geometrically reasoned manner, attempting to coalesce Euclid and Aristotle into a "philosophic" view of the importance of going one's own way. But Walter's language does not clarify anything; it merely presents him with his first unsolvable problem, as he attempts to discover that portion of the body wherein the soul is located. Again, Walter attempts to set up his own personal system of cause and effect. But his reasoning process forces him into ever-widening circles of confusion. First, Walter rejects Descartes' theory that the soul is fixed "upon the top of the pineal gland; which, as he philosophised, form'd a cushion for her about the size of a marrow pea." Before this conclusion, of course, Toby has told the story of the officer who, in battle, "had one part of his brain shot away by a musket-ball," and "another part of it taken out after by a French surgeon,"

but who, nevertheless, "recovered, and did his duty very well without it" (p. 111). Walter, logically, has no other recourse but to reject Descartes' suggestion, and the rejection, as expected, takes the form of a syllogism:

> If death, said my father, reasoning with himself, is nothing but the separation of the soul from the body;--and if it is true that people can walk about and do their business without brains,--then certes the soul does not inhabit there. Q.E.D. (p. 111)

Drawing upon other authorities and compressing that knowledge into an informative background through the combined processes of abstract reasoning and syllogism, Walter eventually accepts the already established opinion that the soul is located "in, or near the cerebellum,--or rather somewhere about the medulla oblongata" (p. 112). Furthermore, Walter has read and studied that authority on obstetrics, Adrianus Smelvgot, from whom he learns that the pressures exerted on a child's head during labour are very great; consequently, "in FORTY-NINE instances out of FIFTY, the said head was compressed and moulded into the shape of an oblong conical piece of dough" (p. 113). Naturally then he is worried about the possible effects of such pressure on the fine "net-work and tender texture of the cerebellum!"

> . . . great was his apprehension, when he further understood, that this force acting upon the very vertex of the head, not only injured the brain itself or cerebrum,--but

> that it necessarily squeez'd and propell'd the cerebrum towards the cerebellum, which was the immediate seat of the understanding. (p. 113)

Walter is collecting evidence that will lead him to a logical, but wrong conclusion. He persists in his attempt to shape the world into a malleable formula wherein the art of prediction becomes simply a matter of Q.E.D. But it is all bungling, pedantic and pretentious, because Walter cannot accept simplicity. If it is not complicated, it is no good. If it cannot be demonstrated, it does not exist. "I think, therefore I am," becomes a fetish, the results of which are disastrous for Tristram.

Nevertheless, Walter stumbles on, pursuing his hypothesis to the end:

> But when my father read on, and was let into the secret, that when a child was turn'd topsy-turvy, . . . and was extracted by the feet;--that instead of the cerebrum being propell'd towards the cerebellum, the cerebellum, on the contrary, was propell'd simply towards the cerebrum where it could do no manner of hurt. . . . (pp. 113-114)

Walter's opinion about a child's proper entry into the world has reached the first stage of its development. The child should definitely not be allowed to enter head first. Much more reasoning of a like nature ensues, for, as Tristram says:

> It is in the nature of an hypothesis, when once a man has conceived it, that it assimilates everything to itself as

> proper nourishment; and, from the first moment of your begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by everything you see, hear, read, or understand. (p. 114)

This is a good description of what happens to Walter along his self-paved road of knowledge, for this is the way in which Walter's once partially developed premise grows stronger. It does so in two ways. First, it grows through abstract speculation, and within a short time "there was scarce a phaenomenon of stupidity or of genius, which he could not readily solve by it" (p. 114). His new found "discipline" accounts for, among other discoveries, "the eldest son being the greatest blockhead in the family" and it "wonderfully explain'd and accounted for the acumen of the Asiatick genius" (p. 114). The second part of the development of Walter's opinion grows through further study eventually bringing it to full fruition:

> . . . what a blaze of light did the accounts of the Caesarian section, and of the towering geniuses who had come safe into the world by it, cast upon this hypothesis? (p. 114)

Walter has now arrived at his goal: the only way that children should come into the world is "side-way, Sir." The consequence of Walter's scholarly pursuit is his decision that, above all others and especially the experienced and highly successful mid-wife, the services of ham-handed Dr. Slop and his formidable forceps are preferred, much to the detriment of Tristram. As with all other aspects of his life, Walter is continually at odds with his existence,

and nowhere is that made more obvious in the novel than in Walter's attempts to communicate with his wife.

Walter has more sides to him than his hobby-horsical one. From another point of view, he is a sort of Victorian head of the family. He is unquestionably head of his household, poised domineeringly over the prostrate, limp body of his wife. He is also the local squire, having the responsibility of collecting the local tithes, summoning the Parson to his table, and having control over the Shandean "shaggy dog," the parish bull. Moreover, he is a fretful man, strong-minded and passionate, calling often on God to aid his sometimes vocal, but just as often physical arguments. Despite all of this, Walter is ineffectual. This is not to suggest that Walter does not mean well. The main motivation behind the Tristapaedia is to help Tristram; further, the Tristapaedia itself becomes a kind of huge footnote shaping Tristram's destiny. Walter has special hopes for his son, and behind each hope lies a vast fund of ratiocination, all of it destroyed by his chaste view of sex.

Walter's notion of love is amply demonstrated in his approval of the family bull, who performs with a grave face. Walter has reduced his sexual interest to a mechanical motion performed at a set time. The boredom of mechanical sex has its own vengeance, however, as Mrs. Shandy demonstrates by her untimely question. The interruption causes

Walter's carefully nurtured juices to disperse and Tristram is off to a feeble start. The theory of noses and the proper birth procedure leads to Tristram's maiming, and the impotence suggested by the symbolism of noses haunts Tristram throughout the novel. The theory of names runs afoul of Tristram's near death after his leaving the womb. Tristram has to be christened immediately after his birth, because he turns black in the course of suffering a fit. The consequent confusion of names leaves yet another dark cloud over Tristram's future. Walter had deliberately selected "Trismegistus", a name implying wisdom, to offset the crushing of Tristram's nose and the dispersion of the animal spirits at conception. But chance, in the form of a forgetful chambermaid and a bumbling curate, has it otherwise, and "Trismegistus" becomes "Tristram", a name that could produce "nothing in rerum natura, but what was extreamly mean and pitiful. . ." (p. 42). The gulf between the world of theory and the world of experience is nowhere better illustrated than in this comedy of confusion and error existing between Walter and his wife.

Walter's wife stands tacitly opposed to Walter's theories. It is hard to imagine Mrs. Shandy opposed to anything, but her opposition is seen in her very compliance with Walter's demands. For Walter, the world revolves on the word as it makes its impact in argumentation. It is argumentation that inspires Walter into his frequent

and passionate pleas for understanding through sweet reason. The best that can be said for Mrs. Shandy is that she is good-natured; Walter cannot move her, she agrees with all that Walter has to say, despite his continually shifting point of view, designed to break down her compliance. This apathy results in a far more heated kind of contradiction, than the verbal variety:

> This [compliance] was an eternal source of misery to my father, and broke the neck, at the first setting out, or more good dialogues between them, than could have done the most petulant contradiction. (p. 471)

But as the history of Walter's hobby-horse makes clear, the man cannot really make a verbal connection with anyone. As John Traugott has observed, the failure to communicate is epidemic in the Shandy household. That failure, however, is even more basic than has been suggested, involving, as it does, not only the verbal but also the sexual world.

To Walter's mind, sex is an abomination, a dirty trick perpetuated by the Devil, to keep man on all fours. Nobody reasons about sex, they just do it, and since most men will do almost anything for a little sex, there is an end on reasoning. Sex is not subject to human reason; consequently, like other realms of messy human experience, Walter hates it; he calls its instinct "ass":

> It pleased my father well; it was not only a laconick way of expressing--but of libelling, at the same time, the desires

> and appetites of the lower part of us; so that for many years of my father's life, 'twas his constant mode of expression--he never used the word passions once--but ass always instead of them. . . . (pp. 449-450)

Walter, of course, has no use for passion, even when some of his own most eloquent "statements" are in his snapping of his pipe stem, and his biting of pin-cushions in two. At these moments, Walter lives because he is physically vital. Apart from these moments of bodily honesty, Walter represents an archetype of what might well be the outcome of Western civilization: a stunted sort of reasoning mind that seeks to censor the passions and the body. Consequently, especially when it is connected with that most bodily of functions, sexual love, Walter cannot say "passions"; he must say "ass". As Walter says, he gets no pleasure from the act: "not a jot" (p. 88).

He has, furthermore, as a part of his scholastic routine, compiled a lengthy list of anti-aphrodisiacs. Part of Walter's aid to Toby, as the latter "pursues" Widow Wadman (though it would be more accurate to say the Widow pursued Toby) is a list of these remedies for curbing the sexual appetite: Toby is to bleed himself below the ears, to abstain from the flesh of goats, peacocks, cranes, and coots; he is to drink chastity-inducing coolants such as hanea, and, to fully secure Toby's groin from its severest test, Toby is to impregnate his breeches with

camphor.

The reason for Walter's anti-sexual attitude is not hard to find. Walter is a failure at it himself. He has not been able to convince Mrs. Shandy that sex is fun, and Walter is not a man to be frustrated, which is why he always is. It is not at all difficult to understand how Mrs. Shandy got so bored with it all. Like the parish bull, Walter does the job with much gravity and deliberation precisely once every first Sunday of the month. For Walter, gravity and deliberation are the necessary conditions because, as Toby says, Walter propagates "out of principle" (p. 88). It is hard to tell whether Mrs. Shandy's inappropriate question disturbed Walter's physical or his mental concentration. Probably both; the reaction, however is Walter at his very best, because it is Walter at his most human: "Good G--! cried my father, . . . Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?" (p. 4).

Despite even this limited love-making, Walter is apt to forget his chore. On one instance, Walter and his wife are standing outside of Yorick's church, watching the congregation pass by. Mrs. Shandy has to remind Walter that it is the first Sunday in the month. Walter is affected: "The first Lord of the Treasury thinking of ways and means, could not have returned home, with a more embarrassed look" (p. 471). Obviously Walter is not able to impress his

wife sexually; however, he cannot do it intellectually either:

> Cursed luck!--said he to himself. . . .
> --cursed luck! said he, biting his lips as he shut the door,--for a man to be master of one of the finest chains of reasoning in nature,--and have a wife at the same time with such a head-piece, that he cannot hang up a single inference within side of it, to save his soul from destruction. (pp. 110-111)

This quotation emphasizes the topsy-turvy Shandy world. Walter's finest moments are those when he is in a passionate uproar, because no one can understand his reasoning process. Everyone can understand the outbursts, however, because that is the way Walter achieves his most vital moments. In this latter respect of topsy-turviness, Walter and his bull become somewhat analogous. Both he and the bull go at their task "with a grave face" (p. 496); both he and the bull snort and stomp. The impression is, on the surface, that of aggressive masculinity, but the bull, age-old symbol of vitality, proves to be sterile and Walter symbolically suffers from the same disproportion. Had Walter's theories been true, he would have been an intellectual giant, but because his reasoning runs directly counter to experience, Walter cannot free his body from the prison of his mind, except in his moments of dire frustration.

The hobby-horses of Walter and Toby work approximately in the same way: both involve an essentially scholastic approach, gathered in a lucid and rational manner from

a full reading of extant sources. Yet the end result of their hobby-horses is different. What I have tried to observe implicitly is that, though a man is free to choose his own hobby-horse, that choice involves some serious problems, because not all hobby-horses work as well for their riders as do some others. Toby's, for example, serves him more usefully than Walter's. By way of conclusion, I should like to make this point explicit.

All of Toby's manoeuvres seem straightforward, rational and purposeful. He does not offend the utilitarian point of view, until the reader asks what the end of all this activity is. To the grave-faced, the answer will be that there is no purpose, that this is all mere frivolity: a bagatelle devoid of significance. The point of Toby's hobby-horsical activity is in its apparent uselessness.

First of all, Toby's horse helps him to define concretely a view of the personal image he reflects in Shandy Hall. He has a continuous link between the past and the present, because his hobby-horse rides a shifting path between these two time contexts. No matter how far into his researches he may go, the past focal point is Namur. The future also becomes implicit in Toby's hobby-horse in that Toby's ever-enlarging present world of make-believe, amplified by his researches and stratagems, suggests Toby's future course of action: the tail and the head of Toby's hobby-horse are joined.

Toby's future is not secure, however; no one in the Shandean household has that dubious privilege. External events impinge on Toby's horse to such an extent that Toby's life is as marginal as any of the Shandys': when the war ends overseas, so does the physical part of Toby's hobby-horse. It is another of those collisions between chance and plan. But the major difference between Toby and the rationalist, the mind-monger, is that Toby's hobby-horse softens the blows of a whimsical and omnipotent decision-making. Toby creates his own universe and lives, for the most part, within it. When trouble threatens, either in the form of Walter, Widow Wadman, or an uncontrollable event, Toby shuts the gate, barring an imposed reality, filling the momentary gap between the world of illusion and the world of reality, by presenting his own unique argument--Lillabulero. As Walter knows only too well, there is no disputing such an argument.

In this way and only in this way can Toby fight on equal terms with the rest of the world: how else could he fend off Walter and the Widow? Nor is Toby particularly crippled by his hobby-horse. He does return to the physical world of nature, healed and eager to pursue his studies. As Henri Fluchere says:

> But it is natural that his [Toby's] innocence should run the greatest risks, because he is the most defenceless of all in the objective world that surrounds him, and, through his magnificent naivety, the most vulnerable.[5]

What might have been a failure, becomes, paradoxically a success: Toby succeeds in mounting his own integrity through his hobby-horse. The reader knows, without being told so, that when Trim's annoyed explanation of Widow Wadman's intent bursts in on Toby's consciousness, Toby will return to his hobby-horse, pursuing his own absurdity, as he has the inviolable right to do.

Walter, however, seems destined to continue his arguments against the physical side of existence. What hurts Walter so much is the mean spectacle, as he sees it, of man on all fours, as it were, copulating like a brute, taking away from the nobler portrait of the scholar in his den, inventing theories of love. Walter fails to grasp the relatively simple point that man has it both ways.

Finally, this comedic spectacle of rational Walter versus the rest of the world, like a diminutive Don Quixote, suggests again the comedy of confrontation; and very often, Toby supplies the windmill as their respective hobby-horses collide.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

[1]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. A.C. Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), Vol. I, 389.

[2]Ibid., II, 392.

[3]Ibid., II, 399.

[4]John Traugott, Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954) p. 55.

[5]Henri Fluchere, Laurence Sterne, From Tristram to Yorick: An Interpretation of Tristram Shandy, trans. Barbara Bray (London, 1965), p. 233.

CHAPTER IV

HOBBY-HORSES IN COLLISION

The hobby-horse functions not only in the realm of private experience, but it also shapes the quality of the relationships between other people. When two people confront each other, their respective hobby-horses collide and the ensuing collision produces conflict. But Tristram-Sterne is prepared for such battles. He reduces the impact by poising his own brand of benevolence between the private and public worlds of the hobby-horse, between inner sanctum and outer conflict. This delicate balance, in turn, provides Tristram-Sterne with a satiric view that is largely free of invective and a comedic stance which then can reconcile absurdities without becoming fatuously optimistic.

Both Walter and Toby are in the habit of associating all other parts of their lives with their hobby-horsical views. Toby's hobby-horse represents a comic love affair with military pursuits; for Walter, it is the attempt to fix the vagaries of chance, to superimpose his own line of cause and effect onto an irrepressible chain of circumstances which owe nothing whatsoever to any predictable regularity. A significant part of this irregularity is the constant frontal collision of words in the Shandy

household, creating ripples of confusion amongst the various "pads". The usual pattern of these quarrels is that of Walter attempting to propound his "philosophy" and Toby interjecting before Walter has made his point, because "my Uncle" has fixed on a word Walter has used. Then either Walter or Toby interject again, one or the other having been stimulated to do so by some word he has dropped. All of it depends on the private associations any one particular word holds for any one of the Shandys.

Two brief examples will suffice to indicate the nature of the arguments which temporarily shatter the Shandy household; not that the arguments are unimportant, but that they are obvious to any reader. The interest in this chapter is not so much the quarrels themselves, but the way in which they are reconciled and the implications for Tristram-Sterne's sense of satire and comedy resulting from his appeasing of wounded pads.

Most of Tristram-Sterne's familial comedy occurs in the humourous and argumentative relationship existing between Walter and Toby. The eruptions usually take place at night as the brothers sit peacefully together, smoking a pipeful and listening, at least presumably, to each other's opinions on philosophy or sieges. "Presumably", however, because one of Walter's chief annoyances is Toby's mask of polite and intent listening. Toby looks as if he is hanging on every precious syllable Walter utters. But

his interruptions disclose to Walter that "my Uncle" hears only what he wants to hear. Walter realizes that he has been talking to himself:

> 'Tis a pity, cried my father one winter's night . . . that truth, brother Toby, should shut herself up in such impregnable fastnesses, and be so obstinate as not to surrender herself sometimes up upon the closest siege. (p. 178)

Uncle Toby's patience now pays off. Pricking up his ears at the word "siege", he is about to wander off the subject of Slawkenbergius and re-locate himself at Namur. Walter, however, is aware of Toby's single-mindedness and immediately tries to "keep clear of some dangers . . . apprehended from it."

> 'Tis a pity, said my father, that truth can only be on one side, brother Toby, --considering what ingenuity these learned men have all shewn in their solutions of noses.--Can noses be dissolved? replied my uncle Toby. (p. 178)

It is all too much for Walter. He flies into a grand passion, strides around the room, bites Mrs. Shandy's pincushion in two, chokes on the bran and needs a full five minutes and thirty-five seconds to recover. Toby, meanwhile, placidly whistles his self-soothing Lillabulero.

In yet another episode of fractured communications, Walter finds himself interrupted again at a most crucial moment (the birth of Tristram) by Toby's instinctive reaction to his own pet words. This time, Walter gives vent to his anger in words, wishing "the whole science of

fortification . . . at the devil;--it has been the death of thousands,--and it will be mine" (p. 86). Toby's response to this insult aimed directly at his hobby-horse is simplicity itself:

> . . . [he] look'd up into my father's face, with a countenance spread over with so much good nature;--so placid;--so fraternal . . . it penetrated my father to his heart: He rose up hastily from his chair, and seizing hold of both my uncle Toby's hands as he spoke:--brother Toby, said he,--I beg thy pardon;--forgive, I pray thee, this rash humour which my mother gave me . . . 'tis ungenerous . . . to hurt any man;--a brother worse;--but to hurt a brother of such gentle manners,--so unprovoking,--and so unresenting; . . . 'tis base. (pp. 87-88)

This kind of action-reaction formula is typical of the way in which the Brothers Shandy resolve their problems, if it can be called a resolution, that is.

It is almost as difficult to talk of a resolution in Tristram Shandy as it is in that magnificent twentieth century novel of "learned wit," Joyce's Ulysses. Tristram-Sterne does not, like Joyce's supposedly omniscient narrator, offer a resolution in the sense of events shaping themselves toward some finality. Walter, Toby and the grave-faced bull are left to dwell in their difficulties, just as Leopold, Stephen and Molly are left to puzzle out their own future. Occasionally, however, Tristram-Sterne gives his reader a respite from Chaos, allowing him to share in a concrete moment of total agreement between the brothers Shandy. Tristram Shandy is not simply chaos;

a genuine feeling of benevolence breaks through the confusion, splicing together the constantly short-circuited communications within the Shandy household. Artistically, however, this seemingly standard form of benevolence provides a difficult problem for the critic: is not this benevolence nothing more or less than a fatuously optimistic view of human behaviour? The most often criticized feature of Tristram-Sterne's art is that of a plentiful supply of patently false tears. But this view of sentimentality within the novel overlooks the essentially tough-minded comedic stance of the narrator; Tristram-Sterne's world is not just a pallid display of tears. His comic vision contains a full recognition of man's capacity for both insular egocentricity and sympathetic benevolence. It is not a question of one or the other, but of both conditions informing personality. "Benevolence" and sentimentality" are both important words for Tristram Shandy, but they must be understood in their proper context, which is, not simply the first half of the eighteenth century, but, more importantly, the novel itself. The use which Tristram-Sterne makes of these similar conceptions is important to his sense of satire and comedy; moreover, the conceptions have a distinct connection to the principle of the hobby-horse.

Tristram-Sterne is not only a man for all seasons, he is a man of his own season, situated intellectually

in that universal quarrel between Thomas Hobbes and the rest of the eighteenth century: is man essentially egocentric and is his egocentricity exclusively an evil force? Moreover, within that broad, philosophical tradition, Tristram-Sterne acts as a synthesizer, believing that neither Hobbesian egocentricity, nor Shaftesburyan benevolence comprise the sum total of human personality. As Tristram-Sterne sees it, it is not at all necessary that either of the two poles should dominate, but that they may and can be balanced.

In 1651, Thomas Hobbes published his Leviathan, in which he set forth his theory of human behaviour, describing man as a harmfully egocentric creature.[1] Hobbes abstracted the qualities of man in a civilized state and projected these same characteristics into a hypothetical state of nature, devoid of law and order. Man, in Hobbes's mythical state, became free to do whatever he wished, whenever he wished to do it. Unlike Mandeville's later and satiric reconciliation between the private world of egocentric experience and the public world of human contact (private vices become public virtues), the world of Hobbes's state of nature, ruled as it is by selfishness, became "poor, nasty, brutish and short." Because it was devoid of authoritarian law, Hobbes's inferno became a state of perpetual warfare amongst isolated and competitive egos, the spoils of which went to the strongest. Hobbes was convinced of

two things: man's uncontrolled egotism leads only to destructiveness; he needs, therefore, the strong, ruling hand of the state to curb such egocentricity, forcing it into self-discipline. Such early Darwinism appalled many educated men of the eighteenth century and no one more so than Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury. He described Hobbes's theory as "a strange constitution! in which . . . the interest of the private nature is directly opposite to that of the common one."[2] In his "Essay on Freedom of Wit and Humour," he attacked Hobbes again, this time removing his gloves, complaining that Hobbes had overturned every moral and religious principle, rendering "men as much wolves as was possible to one another."[3]

Shaftesbury presented a counter argument in his Characteristics of Men, Manners, Times, etc., wherein he argued that man is essentially moved by benevolent feelings. He described men's actions as being stimulated by the force of three ruling affections: the natural affections (these comprise love, sympathy and good-will); the self-affections (the love of life for its own sake joined with the desire to emulate other people); and finally, what Shaftesbury calls the unnatural affections; "such as are neither of these, [leading either to private or public good] . . . and which therefore may be justly styled unnatural affections."[4] Unlike Hobbes's theory, where

man turns inward, Shaftesbury's view presents man as a gregarious animal, seeking the pleasure of society. The fear of alienation becomes one of man's constant dreads. Later in this theory, Shaftesbury eliminates two of the three groups of affections. The unnatural affections, he says, are incompatible with the social nature of man, while the self affections are subsumed under the natural affections. It is in the interest of man to be good towards his neighbours, towards his society, for involvement with society, a necessity for gregarious human nature, brings happiness; since all men are seeking happiness, they become stimulated to virtuous conduct by the force of the natural affections: "The natural affections (such as are founded on love, good-will, complacency and a sympathy with the kind or species, generosity, pity . . .) which lead to the good of the public."[5]

These two polar views of human behaviour provide the intellectual background out of which came the response of Tristram-Sterne. But the novelist has it over the philosophers in that he can admit egocentricity and benevolence as composite, balanced parts of personality. Besides that, egocentricity need not be simply destructive, as Hobbes thinks it is, nor must benevolence dwindle to maudlin sentimentality, the seeds of which view lay embedded in Shaftesbury's viewpoint. Tristram-Sterne synthesizes these polarities, so that man is both a private and a public

being, comprising a head and a heart and a body and a mind. As Tristram-Sterne might have said, the hobby-horses of Hobbes and Shaftesbury are disconnected between the head and the tail. But the hobby-horsical view of Tristram-Sterne recognizes the close connection between head and tail, for the egocentricity of the horse is tempered by the benevolence arising from the collision of wounded "pads".

By the time that Tristram Shandy first appeared in 1759, an ironic philosophical situation had developed. Out of the mechanistic philosophies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with their emphasis on man as a rational, mind-conscious being, there arose the cult of feeling. This conflict between man as a rational animal and man as a passional creature dates back earlier than 1759, as R.S. Crane points out in his essay, "A Geneology of the 'Man of Feeling.'" Crane's main argument suggests this beginning:

> . . . the key to the popular triumph of 'sentimentalism' towards 1750 is to be sought not so much in the teachings of the individual lay moralists after 1700, as in the combined influence of numerous Anglican divines of Latitudinarian tradition who, from the Restoration onward into the eighteenth century had preached to the congregations and, through their books, to the larger public, essentially the same ethics of benevolence, good-nature and tender, sentimental feelings.[6]

Furthermore, a contemporary of Tristram-Sterne, David Hume, was also attempting to destroy the supremacy of

reason during this period. Hume identified reason with a "calm passion," by which one may take a distant view of the object at hand. And in his Treatise on Human Nature, Hume says that "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[7] The emphasis throughout the period is on a continual shifting from reason to feeling. It is as if the period had never been able to accommodate a view of man that saw head, heart and body as organically and intrinsically related parts. Tristram-Sterne does not accept categorical thinking; for him, poles merge into meaning. As the last chapter indicated, both Walter and Toby can operate at a rational and conscious level of thought, even though Walter's reasoning chain contains some odd links, and even though Toby is as much a man of instinct as of reason.

In attempting to tell his own story, Tristram-Sterne introduces Uncle Toby in several places during the early part of the novel, providing, as he does so, direct commentary on his uncle's character:

> 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 unparallel'd modesty of nature. (p. 50)

Uncle Toby's innocence and virtue are put across with Tristram-

Sterne's typically equivocating humour; he immediately places Toby's virtues in a dubious light. Unlike a Shaftesbury, for whom innateness is essential, Tristram-Sterne will not commit himself to asserting that Toby's virtues are indeed his essential nature; hence, he expresses his doubt as to "Whether this modesty of his [Toby's] was natural or acquir'd" (p. 50). The reader familiar with the background of Tristram Shandy immediately senses this intrusion into Locke's territory. Consequently, what with Shaftesburyan moral senses and Lockean innate ideas flying through the air, such a reader might expect a development of this philosophical argument in terms of Toby's character. But Tristram-Sterne does not think that the argument is worth carrying on, for he dismisses the whole thing with a novelistic shrug: "Which ever way my Uncle Toby came by it, 'twas nevertheless modesty in the truest sense of it" (p. 50). But as he later indicates, in a still further equivocation, Tristram-Sterne shows that he is sceptical of any all-encompassing theory, by linking the virtues of Toby's modesty to his misfortune resulting from war--real war, not the mock battles played by Toby and Trim. Toby's modesty, according to Tristram-Sterne, "was owing to a blow from a stone, broke off by a ball from the parapet of a horn-work at the siege of Namur, which struck my uncle Toby's groin" (p. 51). Now Toby's modesty has been linked to war and to the possibility of sexual impotence,

unproven throughout the rest of the novel, but still strongly suggested. The entire incident is, of course, vital to Tristram-Sterne's presentation of Toby's character, because the wound itself gives rise to Toby's hobby-horse. More than that, however, is the effect of Tristram-Sterne's presentation. What started out to be a declaration of familial modesty shifted to a consideration of the "natural", or innate, as opposed to the "acquired". But that potential argument was disregarded and, finally, the reader is given the close connection between the modesty of Toby and the wound to his groin. By this time, the narrator's tough-minded view of human existence has pushed Shaftesbury into the background. And that view is a tough one; Cross is not right in saying that Sterne is purely funny: he is mainly so, but his sense of comedy is underpinned by a sense of despair. Tristram-Sterne emphasizes not just the comic necessity for Toby's hobby-horse, he also points out Toby's difficulties: the wound received at Namur, the struggle to affirm personal identity and his sexual failure, his hobby-horse having displaced his sexual drive. When these events are isolated from the novel, they are not funny; within the novel, however, they produce more humour than pathos. Tristram-Sterne has a remarkable capacity to juxtapose humour with a solemn event and no small part of his ability to derive humour from these seemingly paradoxical points of view lies in his address

to the reader, inviting him to share in the odd events abounding in the Shandy household.

Again, Toby's wound supplies the narrator with a powerful ally in engaging the reader's sympathy. As the novel unfolds, Tristram-Sterne emphasizes the relevance of Toby's hobby-horse to his character. As well, Toby's horse is directly allied to the humour produced by Toby's comical gathering of military lore, the humour resulting from the collision of hobby-horses and Toby's very real gropings with life. The sensitive reader can hardly let the opportunity pass by without comparing his own problems to Toby's, arriving at a point of sympathetic recognition, and at this point Shaftesbury's view becomes relevant in assessing the reader's reaction. I stressed the essential sociability implicit in Shaftesbury's belief that benevolence required an imaginative extension of one's sympathies and Tristram-Sterne invites the same kind of response from the reader, as he describes Toby's woes. Rather than extending his satiric view into invective, Tristram-Sterne invites his reader to project himself outwards to fully engage the hobby-horse and, as he does so, he allows his own hobby-horse to begin its unique gallop. Tristram Shandy does not present a combat wherein the reader and the narrator take sides against the characters; instead of invective, the field becomes full of prancing hobby-horses and the relationship between the reader and the Shandys

involves far more of what Adam Smith described as the transferrence of sympathies, than it does of sneering satire:

> . . . we enter, as it were, into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree is not altogether unlike them.[8]

This condition, wherein mind and body combine in a sympathetic recognition of another's troubles, describes not only the consciousness of the reader but also of the characters at a certain point in the collision of their hobby-horses. Walter, for example, just after his anger at Toby's interruptions, exemplifies this same sympathetic point of view. The interlude between anger and reconciliation becomes filled with the insight of sympathetic recognition, tempering Walter's anger and his hobby-horse and reconciling him and Toby. The condition itself, moreover, as Adam Smith says, requires that mind and body coalesce.

The manifestations of the hobby-horse are more than a means to the sympathetic; Tristram-Sterne is too shrewd an observer ever to accept that the human race has such easy access to love. He recognizes that the hobby-horse can contain the means to isolation, to a misanthropic attempt to bury any notion of communication and sociability. Part of hobby-horsicalness is the attempt to keep one's own hobby-horse uppermost in the herd of hobby-horses crowding

the world, because, in an imperfect world, illusions are necessary, even though the choice of what illusions one holds to may be for ill or for good. The hobby-horse can only act as a shield against the harsh realities of foiled sexual encounters, scattered sperms, perverted philosophy, brothers who ruin pet theories, and wives who cannot account for a single inference, by committing the rider to a considerable degree of egocentricity. To isolate, one must exclude. Introversion, therefore, becomes the life stance, as rider and hobby-horse shut out the rest of the world. Tristram-Sterne has no illusions about either the necessity or the danger of illusion; he has, in fact, foreshadowed a similar point of view expressed by Freud in his Civilization and its Discontents.[9]

Freud argues that civilization, by its repressing of man's instincts, produces a life of misery and pain. Men, therefore, try to lessen the pain by seeking healing remedies such as a powerful diversion of interests and various substitute gratifications, all of which lessen anxiety. To Freud, all experience is centred in the self. In a modified sense, Freud's viewpoint describes part of the action of the hobby-horse: as a means of escape, the hobby-horse leads to self-centredness; in pursuing their respective "pads", therefore, both Walter and Toby ignore the presence and opinions of others. Tristram-Sterne describes his hobby-horse in similar terms; it is

"anything, which a man makes a shift to get a stride on, to canter it away from the cares and solicitudes of life" (p. 450). But Tristram-Sterne is not content to leave his hobby-horse stuck in the mud of total subjectivity; Uncle Toby is the solution.

Uncle Toby communicates best by sympathy as he rides his horse; consequently, the sympathy which he projects and the intrinsic egocentricity of the hobby-horse he rides suggest a meeting place for both the Shaftesburyan mode of benevolence and the Hobbesian mode of egocentricity. Toby is himself filled to overflowing with benevolent feelings, always in danger of becoming a parody on the man of feeling. But the reader is aware that, despite the novel's humourous point of view, Toby is the unfortunate victim of war, incapacitated at several levels by his wound. The equivocation of the narrator, as he continues to sketch in Toby's character, comes as a result of the blend of humour and pathos, an integral part of Tristram-Sterne's humour. Because Tristram-Sterne feels that his Uncle is too engrossed in his pursuit of knowledge, he warns Toby of "the troubles which the pursuit of this bewitching phantom, KNOWLEDGE, will bring upon thee" (p. 69). The pathos emanates from the knowledge that, because of his war wound, Toby does have very real problems in attempting to discover his identity; the humour comes from the narrator's deliberately overblown rhetoric:

"O my uncle! fly--fly--fly from it as from a serpent. Is it fit, good-natur'd man! thou should'st sit up, with the wound upon thy groin, whole nights baking thy blood with hectic watchings?" (p. 69). At this stage in the development of Toby's hobby-horse, he is becoming a Casaubon figure, caught up in the intricate "mazes of this labyrinth," knowledge (p. 69). Toby's activities are completely selfish as he isolates the outer world of Shaftesburyian sociability, engaging his consciousness in an attempt to resurrect his body. He appears to be well on the way toward an archetypical representation of the man so caught up in his private world that he is careless of the public world, relying, like the spider, on the strength of his own ego to provide the stimulus for further living. Yet this is where Tristram-Sterne's "rhetoric of wit," as John Traugott calls it, becomes a mediating point between the poles of isolation and gregariousness. Uncle Toby becomes neither a parodied man of feeling nor a paradigm of egocentricity because of Tristram-Sterne's judicious blend of pathos and humour. The narrator projects to the reader an obsessive character whose obsessiveness is not allowed to become weighty and revolting, as it would have done with Jonson, Swift or Pope, but is made inviting and worthy of consideration, because of the essentially humourous stance Tristram-Sterne gives to Uncle Toby. Except for the characterization of Dr. Slop, the

result, as Cross tells us, of a personal vendetta, Tristram-Sterne allows humour to take the place of invective in his satiric presentations. The reference to "Knowledge", however, is not only in jest, for, in the back of his mind, Tristram-Sterne has Walter's hobby-horse in view.

Tristram-Sterne describes his father with that same gently satiric tone of a man who may not necessarily condone, but can quite understand the devious paths a man's hobby-horse may lead him to; Walter is an "excellent natural philosopher, and much given to close reasoning upon the smallest matters" (p. 5). As the reader comes to know Walter a little better, he understands the full connotations surrounding these words. There is little that is "natural" about Walter's philosophy, but he is most certainly concerned with small matters. This introduction to Walter's character serves as a fitting prelude to the disclosure of Walter's odd opinions and those thousand sceptical notions he tries to defend. Defend them he must, for that is Walter's way of seeking the consolation of clarity in what he regards as an inordinately stubborn world, where nothing stays put, regardless of how well the problem was reasoned out beforehand. Walter, like Toby, seeks his consolation in the pursuit of his rationalizing hobby-horse of theories and philosophies. When Tristram is "doom'd, by marriage articles to have my nose squeez'd . . . flat to my face" (p. 32), Walter

consoles himself by theorizing about the "choice and imposition of Christian names, on which he thought a great deal more depended than what superficial minds were capable of conceiving" (p. 38). When a window sash falls on Tristram's "nose", in one of the oddest of circumcision rites, Walter resorts to De Legibus Hebraeorum Ritualis. Unlike Toby, all of Walter's wounds are mental. His continual fight is against the omnipresent element of frustration which surrounds his every venture and is the result of a continually cross-purposed life. Unfortunately for Walter, the reality that he experiences refuses to be subdued by the theories that encumber his experience. When he desires that his son be called Trismegistus, he happens, by accident, to be called Tristram, a name promising nothing in the nature of things. When Walter becomes aware of the greatness implicit in a large nose, Tristram's is flattened. Most of the events in the novel can be seen through this principle of frustration as the norm of life. The opening scene, for example, in which the animal spirits are "scattered and dispersed" (p. 4) serves as a kind of paradigm for the rest of the comedy that is to follow of beginnings that are never finished and of knowledge that tries to defy experience. More often than not, Walter is at the centre of these blunted endings.

Walter's only defense against all of this whimsicality is to pursue his hobby-horse. His theories are the means

by which he turns inward in order to cope with his outer uncontrollable environment, filled as it is with creatures that deny their own nature, the symbol for which is the Shandys' lady-like bull. Because he cannot accept the unpredictability of flux, he uses his own egocentric view of the nature of things to fix the flow of chance and circumstance. But even Walter is not purely a rationalist, although he comes closer to it than anyone else in the novel. He is capable of a feeling, passional connection between people, even though he spends a good deal of his life pretending that he is all mind and nothing else. The fly incident dramatizes this quality of passional feeling both in Walter and in Toby.

The preparation for the fly incident begins, however, earlier than the incident itself and is vital to the final presentation; in it, Tristram-Sterne sets the emotional tone of Toby's encounter with the fly, during Mrs. Shandy's labour pains.

Dr. Slop's arrival begins another of those diverse associations which supply much of the novel's punning humour. Walter's mention of the word "curtains" plunges Toby into a lecture on fortifications. Walter has been dismounted and Toby is now cantering off on his own trail. But at this point Toby's usually sympathetic character is called in question: submerged as he is in the egocentricity of his hobby-horse, Toby becomes quite oblivious to the

sufferings of Mrs. Shandy's labour. Walter, the last one the reader would expect to notice, brings Toby's exclusiveness sharply into focus:

> . . . so full is your head of these confounded works, that tho' my wife is in this moment in the pains of labour,--and you hear her cry out,--yet nothing will serve you but to carry of the man-midwife . . . I wish the whole science of fortification, with all its inventors, at the Devil. (p. 86)

Here, the egocentricity of Walter and Toby collide. Tristram-Sterne's satire, once again free of invective, is aimed at both of them.

Though he strikes the reader, for the most part, as a sympathetic character, Toby's egocentricity can get the better of his benevolence, as it does here. But Walter's plea for sympathy is suspect. First, Walter has been interrupted once again, in the midst of his vacuous philosophizing, so that part of his plea is simply motivated by vexation, because Toby's hobby-horse has chased Walter's out of the ring. Secondly, given Walter's low opinion of his wife, the reader can hardly take Walter's plea as being quite unselfish. Toby comes off, in this exchange, as the finer person of the two. There is no denying Toby's carelessness here; Mrs. Shandy deserves sympathetic attention and against this background of intense labour pains, Toby might have behaved more sympathetically. But the presentation of Uncle Toby soon after this incident is such that the reader's sympathies fall on Toby's side,

not Walter's, who is resented for having mistreated his brother. Tristram-Sterne strengthens this sympathy towards Toby by describing him, immediately after Walter's outburst, as "a man patient of injuries . . ." who "felt this insult of my father's as feelingly as a man could do; --but he was of a peaceful, placid nature, -- no jarring element in it, --all was mix'd up so kindly within him" (p. 86).

Tristram-Sterne's final appraisal here of Toby's character serves as a fitting introduction to the fly incident, wherein a resolution between the brothers Shandy occurs, illustrating that Walter too can extend himself into a sympathetic recognition of a man's worth, that egocentricity and benevolence can co-exist in one man's character, and that the real bond between men is a passional one.

Tristram-Sterne begins his resolution in a manner not uncommon to his finely balanced sense of humour; he often plays with melodrama before he arrives at his more important resolutions. If life is taken too seriously, the result is likely to be melodrama and Tristram-Sterne is well aware of man's tendency to coax melodrama out of his own life. By allowing melodrama to run its course, however, Tristram-Sterne can exploit it three ways: first, it serves as a vehicle for the narrator's satiric sense of comedy--Toby and Walter do become silly at times by allow-

ing their respective senses of egocentricity and benevolence to become extreme and the result of that imbalance is Tristram-Sterne's parody of Toby as the man of feeling and of Walter as the mechanical man; second, by ridding the atmosphere of melodrama, the resolution between the brothers can be presented as a genuine display of affection, juxtaposed as it is against the counterfeit and comical conceit of melodrama; third, it allows Tristram-Sterne to integrate egocentricity and benevolence by means of the passional bond existing between Toby and Walter.

The setting for the fly episode is a first rate comedy. Uncle Toby will not kill a fly that has pestered him all through dinner. The incident itself is light enough to pass by as a sub-minor disturbance. But Uncle Toby's propensity for melodrama, an extension of his overflowing benevolence, will not let the moment pass without a little soap opera rhetoric, the fly becomes Toby's soul mate: "I'll not hurt thee . . . I'll not hurt a hair of thy head;--Go . . . go poor Devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee?--This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me" (p. 86). As if the disproportion between the event and Toby's reaction to it were not enough, Tristram-Sterne lards Toby's speech with "thee's" and "thou's", creating a comic show of intimacy between Toby and his soul-mate, the fly. The comic melodrama ceases with Toby's final declaration that "This world is wide

enough to hold both thee and me" (p. 86), for Toby's unique gift is an infinite capacity for accepting people just as they are. This characteristic was probably in Hazlitt's mind when he said that Toby was "one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature."[10] Tristram-Sterne confesses himself that Toby's "lesson of universal goodwill . . . has never since been worn out of my mind" and thinks that it accounts for much of his own philanthropy (p. 87).

But it is not only Uncle Toby whose sympathy is reflected during the fly episode. Walter has been portrayed as having insulted his brother who has ridden his hobbyhorse with no regard for Mrs. Shandy's labour pains. Now, however, Tristram presents his father in a light different from his usual "subacid" temperament. Tristram-Sterne does say that Mr. Shandy, despite his temper, can be "frank and generous in his nature" and in his behaviour toward other people, particularly "Uncle Toby whom he truly loved . . . he would feel more pain, ten times told . . . than what he ever gave" (p. 87). Because of his affectionate, passional bond with Toby, Walter's vexation at Toby's carelessness erupts. But the subacid attitude he displays on this occasion "penetrates him to the heart"; he seeks forgiveness from Toby, admitting that "'tis ungenerous to hurt any man; . . . but to hurt a brother of such gentle manners . . . 'tis base" (p. 87). The only

response Walter can make at these passional conclusions is in escaping out of his hobby-horse, however temporarily. Walter's "pad" does not work nearly as well for him as Toby's does for Toby. Unlike Toby's instinctive propensity for living life on essentially passionate and sensual terms, Walter's horse often leads to a mechanistic view of life. This is the reason that the reader sees Walter's moments of passion only when an emotion, usually of anger, sometimes of affection, stirs him out of the pseudo-philosophical life in which his emotions are nearly always trapped. Walter's hobby-horse is not a true one, in the sense that, rather than being intimately connected to his whole being, it is a super-added characteristic, continually preventing the passionate man within the mechanical frame from stepping out. Toby and his "pad" are inseparable; his horse is a genuine one, both complementing and supplementing his life style. When Walter does step out of his hobby-horsical character during those moments of crisis created by the collision of hobby-horses, he merges with Toby in a moment of sympathetic and passional recognition. At that moment, Tristram-Sterne can then present his own synthesized view, pointing out with art, not philosophy, that it is impossible to define man from a position of polarized views, be they Hobbesian or Shaftesburyan.

Yet another kind of synthesis, implicit in the act of reconciliation, is that of Tristram-Sterne's artistic

harmonizing of the mind and the body. This is not to argue that the narrator sees the body as holding a more important place in the totally functioning man. In the past, critics have argued that Tristram Shandy is a novelistic treatment of the man of feeling versus the man of thought. I do not, however, see much dualities in the novel; furthermore, the former dualistic argument overlooks some basic points about the novel.

The main and formative source in Tristram Shandy is the mind of the narrator, Tristram-Sterne. The novel is, primarily, his autobiography and he remains the structural key to his "odd" history; moreover, Tristram-Sterne's mind is, in good part, a rationally organized one. Precisely because his novel's structure is not formed along the lines of the more rigid chronological patterns of Clarissa or Robinson Crusoe, Tristram-Sterne's attempt to present some kind of order within the seeming disorder must be more subtly rational than either De Foe's or Richardson's. A significant part of the novel's structure lies in words and their correspondent evocations amongst the Shandys, so that one of the cardinal structures within the novel is an artlessly artful association of ideas (not necessarily Lockean). Given the kind of subtle organization, self-evident in the building and maintaining of such a structure, the critic can hardly deny the presence of a rational and creative consciousness on the part

of Tristram-Sterne: "my work is digressive, and it is progressive too,--and at the same time" (p. 54). If the narrator himself appears to concentrate much of his action on bodily, passional activities, he does so because of an implicit self-awareness that the primary search in philosophical matters has been directed toward the attempt to discover the workings of the mind, without taking into consideration the importance of the body. The mind may direct language, but in Tristram Shandy, the body is often the stimulus.

Because he regards the body and its essentially passional stimulus as a vital life force, Tristram-Sterne deliberately selects two components of physical expression as an aid to characterization. Gesture and tone of voice supply the narrator with the opportunity to link mind and body in a cohesive, passionate response. Tristram-Sterne, the best commentator on his art, tells us so in his explanation of what happens when two hobby-horses try to gallop in a ring intended for one: "nothing should prove my father's mettle so much, or make his passions go off so like gunpowder, as the unexpected strokes his science met with from the quaint simplicity of my uncle Toby's questions" (p. 179). Walter's expression of passion is usually a bodily one, a response based, in large part, on gesture and tone of voice, allowing him to break out of his role of the rationalist.

For Walter, therefore, the collision of hobby-horses means an escape out of his usually solemn, serious emotional state into the world of passionate response. Toby remains benign through it all, appearing to know his brother well enough to anticipate the passional conclusion to one of their hobby-horsical bouts; he therefore simply outwaits Walter. Toby's passion serves his hobby-horse and his horse serves his passion, as I have already argued; but, for Walter, his hobby-horse of hypothesizing must be dropped before he is able to release his passions. The vehicle through which release comes about is the collision of hobby-horses: "A man's body and his mind, with the utmost reverence to both I speak it, are exactly like a jerkin, and a jerkin's lining;--rumple the one--you rumple the other. . ." (p. 120). The result of such rumpling is the expression of character through the physical energy of the body's wisdom:

> My father thrust back his chair,--rose up,--put on his hat,--took four long strides to the door,--jerked it open, --thrust his head half way out,--shut the door again,--took no notice of the bad hinge,--returned to the table,-- pluck'd my mother's thread-paper out of Slawkenbergius's book,--went hastily to his bureau,--walk'd slowly back, twisting my mother's thread-paper about his thumb,--unbutton'd his waistcoat,-- threw my mother's thread-paper into the fire,--bit her sattin pin-cushion in two, fill'd his mouth with bran,--confounded it. . . . (p. 178)

Walter utters only two words here; the rest of the "talking"

is done by his body. It is entirely through his body's ability to give his passions rich expression that Walter really comes alive. There is, in the above passage, more vital activity than in his theories, emphasizing that Walter is a physical man, even though he seems to be supremely unaware of the fact. His unawareness of the wisdom of the body represents a philosophy that has gone astray, because it is fit only for eunuchs.

Tone of voice is another way in which Tristram-Sterne presents his view of the bodily passions, as in the following passage, wherein the Widow Wadman, by inadvertently hitting upon just the right vocal expressiveness, causes the blood to rise in Toby's "modest" cheeks:

> A fiddlestick! quoth she.
>
> Now there are such an infinitude of notes, tunes, cants, chants, airs, looks, and accents with which the word fiddle-stick may be pronounced in all such causes as this, every one of 'em impressing a sense and meaning as different from the other, as dirt from cleanliness--That Casuists (for it is an affair of conscience on that score) reckon up no less than fourteen thousand in which you may do either right or wrong.
>
> Mrs. Wadman hit upon the fiddlestick, which summoned up all my uncle Toby's modest blood into his cheeks. (p. 487)

Again, the collision of hobby-horses provides the stimulus for the release of passionate response. Toby's "modesty", deriving as it does from his hobby-horse (the wound in the groin at Namur), collides with Widow Wadman's hobby-

horse, her attempt to find a bed-partner. For Tristram-Sterne, the body and the passions are vital forces within the framework of a man's total being and are not separated from reason or mind but co-exist with it:

> There are some trains of certain ideas which leave prints of themselves about our eyes and eye-brows; and there is a consciousness of it, somewhere about the heart, which serves but to make these etchings the stronger--we see, spell, and put them together without a dictionary. (p. 262)

There is, therefore, no way of denying the intricate complex relationship between mind and body. It is mere tautology to argue that the one is the informer of the other: reason does not get astride of passion; nor does passion, upon reason. Tristram-Sterne implicitly acknowledges the imbalance in the thought of the eighteenth century, but, rather than philosophizing his way to a balance, he uses his art to demonstrate that any attempt to break down man's complexity into convenient dualities is patently false. The body is as important as the mind:

> True Shandeism, think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely thro' its channels, and makes the wheel of life run long and chearfully round. (p. 254)

I have argued so far that Tristram-Sterne's comic vision of life derives partly from his attempt to synthesize various characteristics of the human personality, the counter

to which view had already been provided, as a part of the eighteenth century's climate of opinion, by the polar views of Hobbes and Shaftesbury. The meeting place for these various extremes lies in the passionate and sympathetic bond existing between men who are willing to accept each other's hobby-horses. But because it is primarily an emotional reaction, and because Tristram-Sterne's vision is a tough-minded one, he sees that, given half a chance, people can be inordinately sentimental, especially when their own personal problems are in question. Consequently, the emotional prelude to the reconciliation of wounded "pads" is very often melodramatic. His use of melodrama, however, is as another tool of his comedic art, allowing him to pass from counterfeit to genuine emotion. Melodrama serves him, moreover, as a means of hauling the reader into the very life-body of the novel. The reader, cantering away on his own horse, may find the melodrama to his liking, in which case Tristram-Sterne catches the reader in his satiric web, for the conclusion to one of the narrator's melodramas is very often a satirical remark, questioning the validity of the sentiment that has gone before, both in the episode and, by implication, in the reader's mind. Consequently, yet another part of Tristram-Sterne's humour comes from his satiric recognition of the world's propensity toward melodrama, including that of the narrator himself.

Tristram-Sterne's sentimentality then is neither the twentieth century's understanding of the word, which connotes for us a Peyton Place world, full of cheap emotionalism, nor is it precisely the eighteenth century's use of the word, a reasonable definition of which is offered by Louis Bredvold:

> . . . it implied an exquisite sensitiveness to the beautiful and the good, a sensitiveness which often induced melancholy and a brooding sense of sorrow, but which for that very reason, as well as others, was cherished as the veritable source of all that is generous and noble in conduct and sentiment.[11]

If that is all that could be said of Tristram Shandy, it would hardly merit anyone's attention. But the novel is much more than a Mackenzie production, precisely because of Tristram-Sterne's ability to balance the extremes of egocentricity and benevolence with a fine, comic view of an absurd world, even when he is himself partly tainted with the same tendency to melodramatize the sensitivity of his own nerve endings. He is, however, fully aware of that tendency, and in the Maria episode, Tristram-Sterne counters melodrama with satire, while revealing his own questioning of benevolence and self-interest.

The Maria episode celebrates two rites present in the mind of Tristram-Sterne: death and joy. The meeting of Maria occurs during his travels to France, the travels he took to escape his vile cough and its attendant implications of death. For Tristram-Sterne, death is a real

presence, not just a promised entry into a man-made heaven. Throughout the novel, death is personified as a grim-faced reality always hovering too near in the background. Of the several ways he has of escaping death, the most important one is that of writing the novel: the attempt to render artistically his own consciousness as concretely as he can. Part of that imaginative attempt is the fleeing to France. Closer to the surface of his mind, however, is the joy of "my uncle Toby's amours running all the way in my head" (p. 483). At this point, Toby's love life still holds out some promise, and in this mood of quiet exultation at the thought of at least one Shandy succeeding in love, he hears the notes of Maria's pipes. The music of his own joy, the kindliest harmony infusing his very nerve-endings, and the sweet, gentle notes of Maria's pipe coalesce through an imaginative osmosis into heightened joy. At that moment, when Tristram-Sterne's emotional state cannot stand any more stimulus, the postilion explains Maria's sad story. Ophelia-like, Maria has become insane because of an intriguing curate who had refused to allow the reading of her Banns. The pathos of the story, genuine enough in itself, Maria's musicianship, and Toby's amours all pile in on an overheated imagination, creating a veritable "Sensorium of the world." Tristram-Sterne is wallowing in sentiment: ". . . if ever I felt the full force of an honest heart-ache, it was the moment

I saw her" (p. 484).

Tristram-Sterne, however, who can and does manipulate his own emotions, realizes that his own sentimental view is becoming bogged down in syrup; consequently, he provides his own satiric counter-point to offset his melodramatic melody, relying on the age-old implications of the goat, mythical image of sexual promiscuity. Ironically, this is the symbol with which Tristram-Sterne had provided Maria from the outset and it serves not only to comfort the mad Maria, but also to serve as a warning to the reader, by suggesting to him his own latent sexual feelings, undercutting whatever enjoyment he might have had from the previous melodrama. The emotion shared by Tristram-Sterne and the reader is not quite Platonic. The narrator finds himself "sitting betwixt her [Maria] and her goat," after which he "relapsed from his enthusiasm" (p. 484). Maria adds part of the satiric touch herself, as she glances from Tristram-Sterne to the goat and back to Tristram-Sterne again. The satire is completed by Tristram-Sterne himself with his loaded question, "What resemblance do you find?" (p. 484).

For Walter, love, as for most other things, exists in either/or categories:

> The first [category of love], which is the golden chain let down from heaven, excites to love heroic, which comprehends in it, and excites to the desire of philosophy and truth--the second, excites to desire, simply. (p. 452)

But Tristram-Sterne's balanced judgement recognizes that the significant elements in a man's life do not exist as clearly enunciated dualities. Man often has his "nose" in mind, if not in hand, so that love cannot be only a sentimental gesture of benevolent feelings; it must also comprise the egocentricity residing in man's pride of groin. If a man cannot escape from the exclusive nature of categorical thinking, he is doomed to passing the rest of his life in high melodrama, creating for ~~himslef~~ himself, unconsciously, a life stance that is all self-parody. If Tristram-Sterne's satiric vision had included invective, neither Walter nor Toby would have been spared as victims of self-parody, the humour of which would have produced a Jonsonian "humour" character. But Tristram-Sterne's satire does not become an extreme, moral judgment which permits the reader to ~~indluge~~ indulge holier-than-thou sentiments. The reader himself is as much drawn into the web of comedy as are the Shandys themselves, because Tristram-Sterne acts as a clown-mediator between the book and the reader, avoiding the silliness of false sentiment by giving a clowning interpretation of his family's, his own, and his reader's eagerness to leap into melodrama.

Tristram-Sterne's sense of comedy, then, does not break down into a subject, the novel, and an object, the reader, but blurs distinctions between subject-object relationships. Professor Wimsatt is partly on the scent

of Tristram-Sterne in his recent definition of this relationship: "Comedy. . . combines the accent of laughter and the accent of sympathy in a union of the laugher and his audience with the targets of laughter."[12] But Tristram-Sterne, here "the laugher," makes "the audience," the reader, as much a part of his "target" as any of the Shandys. If the reader is to take Tristram Shandy as a serious, however comic, statement about the follies of living, he must allow himself to become engaged in all of the hobby-horsical matters which permeate the narrator's, Toby's and Walter's life. Once again, all are engaged in the pursuit of hobby-horses, and that pursuit requires a coming out of the self, permitting the ego to be overcome by a passional, instinctive bond of love between men, as mind, body and soul unite. Moreover, a significantly large part of his humour may be traced directly to his view of man's hobby-horsical behaviour.

Coleridge wrote what is probably the shortest essay in existence on Tristram-Sterne's sense of humour. Its briefness, however, does not prevent it from being still among the very best of such essays, despite the fact that it consists almost entirely of statements about wit and humour in general.

According to Coleridge's definitions, Tristram-Sterne is both witty and humourous. Coleridge's description of the operation of wit is that wit arises from seeing the

familiar within the unfamiliar, and the manner in which similarity appears in dissimilarity is that of "presenting thoughts or images in an unusual connection with each other, for the purpose of exciting pleasure by the surprise."[13] Tristram-Sterne's fine stroke of artistry has this same basic method at its source. He hit upon a principle of identity which he could use and re-use. Again and again Tristram-Sterne excites pleasurable laughter by showing the collision of hobby-horses, not only those of Walter and Toby, but also the reader's various hobby-horsical predilections as well. The best realization of the principle enunciated by Coleridge is contained in Tristram-Sterne's treatment of the hobby-horsical collisions between the brothers Shandy. Perhaps the quintessential collision is the one occupying all of the third chapter of the fourth volume. Walter, the man who believes that the life of a family is nothing to an hypothesis, and who believes that the trinity which has the most influence over a man's good or ill fortune consists of his conception, his name and his nose, has thrown himself diagonally across his bed in the depths of despair because his newborn son's nose has been crushed beyond repair. Toby is sitting at Walter's bedside, his chin on the cross of his crutch, a benevolent, concerned look on his face:

> Did ever man, brother Toby, cried my father, raising himself up upon his elbow, and turning himself round to the

> opposite side of the bed where my uncle Toby was sitting in his old fringed chair, with his chin resting upon his crutch--did ever a poor unfortunate man, brother Toby, cried my father, receive so many lashes?--The most I ever saw given, quoth my uncle Toby, (ringing the bell at the bed's head for Trim) was to a grenadier, I think in Makay's regiment.
>
> --Had my uncle Toby shot a bullet thro' my father's heart, he could not have fallen down with his nose upon the quilt more suddenly.
>
> Bless me! said my uncle Toby.

Coleridge also advances his idea of how wit turns into humour:

> I think Aristotle has already excellently defined the laughable . . . as consisting of or depending on, what is out of its proper time and place, yet without danger or pain. . . .
>
> No combination of thoughts, words, or images will of itself constitute humour, unless some peculiarity of individual temperament and character be indicated thereby, as the cause of the same.[14]

Tristram Shandy obviously fulfills this last requirement. The novel is full of "peculiarity of individual temperament;" when Tristram-Sterne is not characterizing himself or his reader in his digressions, his characterizations of the Shandy family and its servants often characterize the narrator as well. This humour-producing jostling of all these various hobby-horsical characters is free of danger and pain, because of the spirit of sympathetic and passional recognition of each man's hobby-horse. Each of

the Shandys realizes and accepts each other's hobby-horsicality. Tristram laughs at the reader, and the reader (provided he is not too befetished with the bobs and trinkets of criticism) laughs at Tristram; they both laugh together. Toby whistles Lillabulero to his brother's Shandean hypotheses, and Walter constantly makes his "subacid" comments about Toby's military proceedings. Nevertheless, Walter can still lend Toby a hundred pounds towards the improvement of his fortified bowling green and Toby can draw out of Walter not just anger at crossed "pads" but also a passional resolution of all differences. The hobby-horsical response, the collision of hobby-horses, and the fact of universal hobby-horsicality holds no threat for those who do not expect men to be perfect and who can, therefore, accept with laughter the absurdities with which they clothe themselves. As Coleridge says, in his very best statement on humour: "There always is in a genuine humour an acknowledgement of the hollowness and farce of the world, and its disproportion to the godlike within us."[15]

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

[1]Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. Herbert W. Schneider (New York, 1958).

[2]Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc., ed. John M. Robertson (Gloucester, Mass., 1963), I, 282.

[3]Ibid., I, 61.

[4]Ibid., I, 282.

[5]Ibid., I, 282.

[6]R.S. Crane, A Geneology of the 'Man of Feeling,' ELH, (1934), I, 206.

[7]David Hume, Treatise on Human Nature, ed. Selby-Begge (London, 1896), II, iii, 3, p. 417. To Hume, the passions included such "calm passions" as benevolence.

[8]Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, ed. D. Stewart (London, 1887), p. 4.

[9]Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (London, 1930).

[10]William Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Poets and the English Comic Writers, ed. William Carew Hazlitt (London, 1912), p. 164.

[11]Louis Bredvold, The Literature of the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century: 1660-1798, General Editor, Hardin Craig, (New York, 1962), p. 89.

[12]William K. Wimsatt, "The Criticism of Comedy," English Institute Essays, 1954, p. 13.

[13]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On the Distinctions of the Witty, the Droll, the Odd, and the Humourous; The Nature and Constituents of Humour;--Rabelais--Swift--Sterne," in The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (London, 1836), I, 131.

[14]*Ibid.*, I, 132-34.

[15]*Ibid.*, I, 135.

CONCLUSION

The best commentator on his art is the artist and so it is with Tristram-Sterne. His own comments best explain the novel's consistent inconsistency.

According to Tristram-Sterne, everyone is in someway hobby-horsical and every man's hobby-horse significantly reflects the character of the rider. The hobby-horse is the medium through which the rider views the world. For the politician, it is his "plank"; for the athlete, it is his press clippings and for the scholar, it is his thesis. The world is, in fact, a kind of all-encompassing hobby-horse whose main task is to unleash a diabolically whimsical chain of unpredictable cause and effect, presided over by the determining presence of Fate, Fortune, Chance or whatever mask one chooses to select for that entity that stands directly between man and his environment. The consoling element is the hobby-horse.

Astride his pad, a man may, as Tristram-Sterne says, canter away from the troubles of the world. It seems an easy formula. Simply discover the hobby-horse that best suits the person and forget the world and all its ills. Yet, in the Shandean world, hobby-horses have the nasty habit of running into the simple realities of life head first. Regardless of the power of learning to so engage a man that he becomes a partial recluse, his son's birth is surrounded

by the various calamities which fortune visits on everyone. The hobby-horse is not then a means of total escape as, of course, nothing ever can be, but it does offer a certain solidity by providing a means of defining part of one's sense of existence. To the question "Who am I?" Toby may answer that he is a professional soldier, but one who never kills; to that same question, Walter may answer "a scholar!", despite the discrepancy between his learning and his life. Though they have their purpose, hobby-horses are not just handy escapes.

The hobby-horse can be risky. Toby certainly does get considerable mileage out of his horse. It helps him to recover his health, it permits him to pass the solitary hours of recuperation in an interesting, absorbing way. Finally, it adds zest to what otherwise might have been a life based on the boredom of too many hours to fill and nothing with which to fill them. There is, however, a sense in which Toby's horse unseats him. When a man allows a pursuit to become so pervasive that he can allow no other object or person to impinge on his own view of life, he is in danger of becoming ludicrous. This is a problem faced both by Walter and Toby.

At times, Toby's horse leads to downright insularity: he ignores Mrs. Shandy's discomfort, despite Tristram-Sterne's view of Toby as a frank, generous man. He cannot penetrate the area of human sexuality, not because he is

impotent, but because his land-locked metaphors permit little to penetrate his military consciousness. Walter too exhibits an unreal sense of practical living. His learning displaces the immediate demands of just plain living. When his son's injury is announced, Walter does not seek medical help, nor does he reach for the medicine cabinet; instead, he reaches for his copy of Hebrew circumcision rites. In the process, both become somewhat ludicrous.

But ludicrousness is a relative state of things after all. It is not simply that Toby and Walter are ludicrous, but that the whole world is so. Consequently, the best defense against a constantly impinging irrationality is to be irrational, despite the obvious dangers involved in such a formula.

Overriding all of the irrationality, however, is the possibility of maintaining a sympathetic connection with one's fellow man. Toby and Walter do precisely this in those scattered moments of reconciliation between the two which punctuate the novel from time to time. During these moments, life becomes bearable, because of an essentially passional resolution that can exist between men. Passion too, however, can become extreme.

If Walter is too rational, in the sense that he seems totally unaware of his own body, Toby suffers from the other extreme: his cup of emotions overflows to such an extent

that his passionate nature becomes mere melodrama and, therefore, counterfeit. Tristram-Sterne shares in this facet of personality as well. Like Toby, he has the same tendency to lose his sense of proportion between the object of his sentiment and his reaction to it. Unlike Toby, however, he can recognize that instinct in himself, creating goats to set his emotional keel on a more even course. But the portrait of man in the novel does not resolve itself quite as simply as being only a rational-passional antithesis: Walter, Toby and Tristram share in both elements. Toby can order knowledge every bit as well as Walter. Walter can react passionately, dropping his hobby-horse of rationality, and Tristram too has it both ways, rationally ordering his story, yet allowing the passions to flow as well. He can do so, because of the self-critical eye of the satirist and the humanity of the humourist.

Tristram-Sterne does not allow any point of view to remain static. Unguarded benevolence can become fatuous melodrama and unbridled rationalism can lead to a mechanical view of the world that explains nothing. Tristram-Sterne as satirist is not vituperative. For the most part, his satire is tempered by the novel's overriding sense of comedy. Yet, as a satirist, he must maintain his scepticism in the face of system-builders who would choose to remove all of the mystery of life, replacing it with a mechanical and causal explanation of everything.

What finally softens the various blows of existence is Tristram-Sterne's sense of comedy. That sense, however, in underpinned by a very tough view of life. He does not present a comedic utopia; nor does his satire particularly aim to correct. He is, rather, accounting for the world as it is and that world is, as he recognizes, a painful one. In it, the word becomes a source of confusion, not clarity, thereby casting grave doubts as to man's ability to understand himself. Sex and birth -- these lead not to the satisfaction of sexual climax, nor to the self-satisfaction of producing one's own kind. Instead, Tristram-Sterne emphacizes the boredom of sexual coupling and the miseries of birth. What Tristram-Sterne does offer is a tough and realistic vision of the world as a place of misery.

For the most part, however, Tristram-Sterne's view of life revolves very much around the word "relativity". He does not argue the difference between kind, but between degree. I do not suggest that he has, in fact, written an existential novel of nihilism. Two mollifying factors do exist. The first is man's capacity to drop his defences long enough to achieve -- and it is an achievement -- a moment of sympathetic reconciliation. The second factor is comedy.

Comedy becomes a source of strength. For Tristram-Sterne, it is his way of coping with death and with the absurdities of an irrational world. For Walter and Toby,

it is the means by which the reader can recognize the ludicrousness of his own life, circumventing ridicule by offering comedy in its place. Laughter, surely the primary reaction to Tristram Shandy, discloses a sense of proportion, of balance, that is vital to the acceptance of an existence that, in its major significances, can never be ordered. Laughter, finally, promises the redemption of life by creating energy and vitality in the laugher, replacing the maudlin pity of tears, idle tears. Laughter is a synthesizing life-force and that recognition is Tristram-Sterne's final resolution. If a world can laugh good naturedly at folly, then it can accomodate as many hobby-horses as it pleases, provided that no man is injured, as he rides down the King's highway.

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