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NAME OF AUTHOR / NOM DE L'AUTEUR MARCO PIETRO LOVERSO

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NAME OF SUPERVISOR / NOM DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE J. S. McMASTER

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SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SEXUAL ALLUSION IN THE WORKS OF LAURENCE STERNE

by

MARCO PIETRO LOVERSO

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Self-knowledge and Sexual Allusion in the Works of Laurence Sterne" submitted by Marco Pietro LoVerso in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John McLeish
Supervisor

Alison Sharrock

A. J. Merrett

N. Hayle

External Examiner

Date December 8, 1975

DEDICATION

To my parents

ABSTRACT

In the present dissertation, Sterne's use of sexual allusion is seen as a reflection of the author's concern with the problems of self-knowledge.

Chapter I discusses The Sermons of Mr. Yorick with reference to Sterne's concept of self-knowledge. Sterne puts particular emphasis on the individual's responsibility to analyze himself and to know the inner motives for his actions. Sterne's faith in man's potential for knowing his self has much in common with John Locke's identification of the self with consciousness. Sterne also makes use of the traditional notion of the ruling passion to explain what he considered to be the main obstacle to self-knowledge and the main cause of self-delusion.

In Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey, this basic concern with self-knowledge is expressed through an amiable brand of humor. The ruling passion no longer exists but is replaced by the hobbyhorse; homiletic exposition is, for the most part, abandoned, and the author assumes the role of verbal jester. And one of the most important aspects of his wit as jester is his use of sexual allusion. The riding of hobbyhorses represents an obstacle to self-knowledge in so far as it is an activity which gives too much importance to private, self-induced pleasure. For

this reason, the hobbyhorsical consciousness is associated with imagery of onanism and impotence (Chapter II). The Sternean narrators fulfill the author's role as jester. Both Tristram (Chapter III) and Yorick of A Sentimental Journey (Chapter IV) are self-conscious narrators who are at times hobbyhorsical but who are also fully aware of their hobbyhorsical tendencies and of the complexities of human life. For this reason, they both play with verbal ambiguities, especially ambiguities of a sexual nature. These sexual ambiguities are a constant reminder to the reader that words can be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on one's consciousness. At the same time, the sexual allusions also point to the theme of human fallibility as a result of Sterne's reliance on the Yorick figure (Tristram, Yorick the parson, Yorick the narrator) in his fiction (Chapter V). Through the sexual wit of Yorick the skull/jester figure, we are reminded that man can be hobbyhorsical and that he is imperfect in his communications with others because of his humanity, because he is a mortal/sexual creature. But the skull/jester also serves to remind us that, if man is limited in a fallible state, he should not deny his mortal/sexual nature but should accept it as the essence of his human consciousness. To do so, from Sterne's point of view, is to move in the direction of self-knowledge.

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CHAPTER I

SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND THE LOCKEAN "SELF" IN THE SERMONS OF MR. YORICK

In speaking of Tristram Shandy, Henri Fluchère has pointed out that Tristram's purpose is to capture man's substance and meaning so as to define himself better.[1] This statement is quite true. Indeed, the definition of self is not a concern in only Tristram Shandy, but it is a problem which seems to lie at the heart of all of Sterne's writings. A Sentimental Journey, for instance, depicts Yorick in a series of episodes which force him to analyze his inner motivations and which therefore lead him to a clearer knowledge of himself.[2] And The Sermons of Mr. Yorick are mainly concerned with Christian responsibility to oneself and to others, problems which, in Sterne's eyes, pivot on the need for self-examination and self-knowledge. It is thus not only useful but absolutely essential in any analysis of Sterne and his art to understand, first of all, what Sterne meant by "self-knowledge," and, secondly, how this concept affected his literary interests and techniques.

To answer the first part of the problem, it shall be necessary to consider The Sermons of Mr. Yorick in some detail, for it is in those early writings that Sterne first

describes his notion of the self and of self-knowledge. As we shall see, Sterne seems to define the self as consciousness, much as Locke did. It is this sense of the human self as consciousness which lies at the heart of Sterne's concern both as a moralist and as an artist. In The Sermons, Sterne places a great deal of emphasis on the individual's duty to examine himself and to be aware of his own inner motivations. This same preoccupation manifests itself in Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey, most prominently through the creation of self-conscious narrators who attempt to increase the reader's awareness by continually playing with verbal ambiguities. Particularly noticeable is the use of the sexual motif as a basis for verbal ambiguity.

All of Sterne's characters are associated with sex in one way of another, and both Tristram and Yorick the narrator are prone to peppering their narratives with puns and salacious suggestions. This use of sexual material deserves individual attention, for it is one of Sterne's most common devices for suggesting the fallibility of language and the complexities of human life. The sexual motif represents a point of reference from which language can be interpreted. At the same time, the various Sternean hobbyhorses represent other points of reference. These different orientations from which language (and life) can be viewed are juxtaposed by Sterne so that the reader is never allowed to be satisfied with one single point of reference.

Instead, he is continually invited to read two or more meanings into words, even in situations which would not normally require a complex reading. The end result of this verbal game between the author and his reader is an increased awareness on the part of the reader of the limitations of language and of the limitations of the human condition itself. In other words, Sterne's game with language seems to be aimed at increasing his reader's consciousness of language and of himself. To this extent, the use of the sexual motif can be seen as a comic narrative device which has its roots in the author's concern with the problems of self-knowledge. Before analyzing the use of this narrative device, then, it shall be necessary to consider Sterne's definition of self-knowledge in his early writings.

Sterne's first description of the problems of self-knowledge appears in the sermon entitled "Self-Knowledge":

> To know one's self, one would think could be no very difficult lesson;--for who you'll say can well be truly ignorant of himself and the true disposition of his own heart? If a man thinks at all, he cannot be a stranger to what passes there--he must be conscious of his own thoughts and desires, he must remember his past pursuits, and the true springs and motives which in general have directed the actions of his life: he may hang out false colours and deceive the world, but how can a man deceive himself? That a man can--is evident, because he daily does so.[3] (IV, 53-54)

The emphasis here is on man's ability to know his inner self by knowing his own thoughts (the fact that Sterne uses the phrase "what passes <u>there</u>" to refer to the individual's

"own heart" suggests that Sterne is using the term "heart" as a synonym for mind). And, further down the page, Sterne notes that man often does not use "all the power which God has given him of turning his eyes inward upon himself, and taking notice of the chain of his own thoughts and desires" (IV, 54). The stress here is less on God and more on man's duty to exercise his God-given faculties. The same is true in the subsequent discussion of the obstacles to self-knowledge: "We are decided in judging of ourselves, just as we are in judging of other things, when our passions and inclinations are called in as counsellors, and we suffer ourselves to see and reason just so far and no farther than they give us leave" (IV, 55). Sterne later expands this courtroom metaphor in the sermon on "The Abuses of Conscience," but the essence of its meaning is plain here: reason is the sober judge who should analyze all of a man's actions and motives; the passions are the "counsellors" who litigate for "the remotest consideration of SELF" rather than for the interest of truth (IV, 55). Sterne states at the end of "Self-Knowledge" and again in the sermon on "Self-Examination" that salvation from self-deceit can be achieved, not by surrendering oneself to faith or prayer, but through the proper exercise of "reason, which God has put into us for the government and direction of our lives" (XIV, 225). Faith is implicitly present here, a faith that God has created a knowable universe and that man's reason is in tune with this creation and is therefore able to know

the universe and itself. Thus, Scripture is important because it is the "rule" of God, but reason is just as important because it has been created by God to be "the applier of this rule" (XIV, 237). The problem of self-knowledge, then, is reducible to Sterne's faith in a form of Christianity whose truths are accessible to those who exercise their God-given reason.

This belief in a reasonable Christianity suggests a similarity in Sterne's conception of the human mind and its function with John Locke's system of epistemology. In Locke's system, the mind receives "simple ideas" by observing either the world (by sensation) or its own operations (by reflection). The internal observer--the understanding--then goes on to construct out of these atoms of experience "complex ideas," "ideas of relations," and "general ideas."[4] Locke suggests that the understanding is comparable to a judge: the ideas are brought in to him "from without to their audience in the brain,--the mind's presence-room, as I may so call it."[5] The understanding then exercises its power by studying the continuum of experiences and reflecting on them, arriving at combinations, relations, and generalizations which reflect reality. In addition, the understanding has the power to refuse to "consider."[6] In this way, Locke brought the mind completely into the natural order while preserving the sense of the mind's own integrity, vitality, and self-awareness.

Locke's model of the mind is important because it

resulted in a revolutionary conception of truth. As a result of the emphasis on the understanding as observer and judge, Locke maintained that men know, not objective reality, but only their own experience. Accordingly, his definition of truth is limited to the functions of the individual mind: "Truth, then, seems to me, in the proper import of the word, to signify nothing but the joining or separation of Signs, as the Things signified by them do agree or disagree one with another."[7] This point of view is a dramatic departure from the traditional assumption that the object of all human study is eternal truth, of which the world we apprehend with our senses is but an imperfect representation. Locke maintained that we can never know the essence of substances, and that we can only have absolute knowledge of "those sensible ideas which we observe in them [substances]."[8] In short, man can know his ideas completely, but nothing beyond them. But this does not mean the exclusion of external reality. Like his contemporaries, Locke shared a belief in a harmonious universe. The mind was seen as part of that harmony and was therefore considered to be perfectly in tune with the cosmic order.[9] Therefore, the fact that man's experience of "secondary" qualities such as color and heat is so reliable, albeit subjective, proved that the human mind is governed by laws which are as knowable and unchangeable as the laws of cosmology.

Locke's concentration on internal reality as the only knowable reality proved to have an enormous effect on

literature, and particularly on the writings of Laurence Sterne. Once Locke established that truth is the joining or separating of signs, which represent ideas as impressions, then it became clear that in order to study truth one must study the mind. Human reality must, then, be found within, in the individual's sense and in the quality of his awareness of himself and of his world. Along with this, Locke's definition of personal identity revolutionized man's conception of his "self" and radically shifted the focus of literature from the outer world to the world of the mind. It was Locke's conception that

> 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 extends.[10]

The center of the concept of the "self," then, is the awareness of pleasure or pain, a state of mind rather than a single "self" as an essence. In this way, Locke rejects the traditional idea of the soul as a self-contained essence which inhabits the body in the way that Spenser's Alma lives in her castle.

Locke does not center the "self" in soul alone because there is "nothing in the nature of matter why the same individual spirit may not be united to different bodies."[11] And he does not find "self" in substance (man's body) because substance can be varied (by cutting off a hand, for instance) without change to personal identity.

Locke considers identity to be dependent on both body and mind. Consequently, he solved the problem by considering personal identity in terms of "person," which he defines as

> a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions; and by this every one is to himself that which he calls self . . . .[12]

From this it follows that personal identity is identical with "consciousness":

> For, since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes every one to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.[13]

Therefore, to use Ernest Tuveson's appraisal, "the ego . . . is the sum of the matrix and ideas which come to it during the course of a lifetime."[14] Like a river, it is in a constant state of flux. A hard core individual personality no longer exists but is replaced by a fluid identity to produce what J. W. Krutch has called the "dissolution of the ego."[15]

It is precisely this emphasis on man's ability to know his own thoughts and his ability to know both God and himself by knowing his own thoughts which aligns Sterne

with Locke. For example, Sterne insists that the individual must look into himself in order to discover God's message:

> How God did intend them [God-given talents],--may as well be known from an appeal to our own hearts, and the inscription you shall read there,--as from any chapter and verse I might cite upon the subject. Let us then for a moment, my dear auditors! turn our eyes that way, and consider the traces which even the most insensible man may have proof of, from what we may perceive springing up within him from some casual act of generosity; and though this is a pleasure which properly belongs to the good, yet let him try the experiment;--let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight arising in the mind from the conscience of a humane action. (XXIII, 34-35)

Such an appeal is very close to Locke's contention that reason--"the most excellent part of . . . [God's] workmanship," as he called it--should serve as man's guide to the eternal laws of God.[16] Locke maintained that reason must ultimately judge if a revelation is a revelation before man can accept it. In a similar manner, when Sterne describes the search for truth, he emphasizes the importance of both religion and morality, but his argument finally comes to rest on reason and the heart as the final judges of justice and truth:[17]

> So that if you form a just judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be misled in, namely, in what degree of real merit you stand, either as an honest man,--a useful citizen,--a faithful subject to your king,--or a good servant to your God--call in RELIGION and MORALITY.--Look--What is written in the law of God?--How readest thou?--Consult calm reason, and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth,--What say they?
>
> Let Conscience determine the matter upon these reports,--and then, if thy heart condemn thee not,--which is the case the Apostle supposes--the rule will be infallible . . . . (XXVII, 108-109)

The emphasis on the inner judgments of reason and the heart does not necessarily indicate a tendency to solipsism. Rather, it represents a realistic approach to man's possibilities. Revelation was accepted as a fact, but it provided man with only those truths which are beyond human grasp. The rest was up to man. As Sterne put it, "it pleases Heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in possession of its recompense" (XXII, 11). Man must therefore exercise his God-given reason and, in so doing, remain in contact with the reasonable truth and religion of God. Or, conversely, if man fails to use his reason, he will lose contact with God's truth and with religion:

> Religion, which lays so many restraints upon us, is a troublesome companion to those who will lay no restraints upon themselves . . . yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of pursuit pretty well over,--and reason and judgment have got possession of their empire--They seldom fail of bringing the lost sheep back to his fold. (XIX, 316-317)

This position is very significant with regard to Sterne's conception of the individual's moral and religious responsibilities.[18] At the end of "Advantages of Christianity," Sterne states that "religion ever implies a freedom of choice;" consequently, religion is "not intended to work upon men by force and natural necessity, but by moral persuasion, which sets good and evil before them" (XXVI, 92). Religious belief and moral choice are thus very clearly functions of reason and reason's ability to read correctly the divine will. Sterne even defines faith

as "a rational assent of the understanding, to truths which are established by indisputable authority" (XXXVIII, 284). This is very close to Locke's contention that "whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our own ideas, will always be certainer to us than those which are conveyed to us by traditional revelation."[19] Both Locke and Sterne place the responsibility on the individual to test the reasonableness of revealed truths for himself rather than commanding him to accept authority passively. "Knowing is seeing," states Locke in Of the Conduct of the Understanding. "Till we ourselves see it with our own eyes and perceive it by our own understandings, we are as much in the dark and as void of knowledge as before, let us believe any learned author as much as we will."[20] Sterne shares this belief in the individual understanding. The "moral persuasion" of which Sterne speaks is thus a glorification of man's internal powers; it is an appeal to reason and an actual act of faith in reason's ability to grasp eternal truths. But this is an internal procedure. And Sterne agrees with Locke's skepticism with regard to our ability to know substances in the external world, including other human beings (XLIV, 358). The constant misunderstandings which arise between the Shandys is a good illustration of this skepticism put to comic use. Locke argues that man can have real knowledge only of his own ideas. Similarly, Sterne maintains at the beginning of "The Abuses of Conscience Considered" that

certainty is limited to what passes in the mind:

> In other matters we may be deceived by false appearances; and, as the wise man complains, Hardly do we guess right at the things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us:--but here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herself:--is conscious of the web she has wove:--knows its texture and fineness, and the exact share which every passion has had in working upon the several designs, which virtue or vice has plann'd before her. (XXVII, 99-100)

This emphasis on internal reality encompasses both good and evil. Man can know God's truth by looking within himself. And, conversely, man can sin by failing to know himself. Sterne does not see the human struggle for salvation in terms of the individual versus some external power of the night. There are no devils as such in Sterne's world. Evil is internal, and it is to be found in each man in those aspects of his make-up which hinder reason--namely, the human passions. Thus, Sterne's sermons show a strong awareness of the presence of evil in human life, an awareness which is dramatized by the constant struggle within man between reason and the passions. As a person of faith, he sees man as a creature made in the image of God and as a son of God, but he is also quick to admit that man has been spoiled by the fall of Adam (VII, 113) and is therefore capable of evil (IX, 144). The sermon "Thirtieth of January" argues that we receive God's bounty, but we remain sinners (XXXII). The sermon entitled "Evil" illustrates St. Paul's statement that "the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (XXXIII, 195). And in "Advantages of Christianity to the World," Sterne insists

that Christianity is necessary for salvation, but he also ends by concluding that evil cannot be eliminated from this world: "If, after all, the Christian religion has not left a sufficient provision against the wickedness of the world,--the short and true answer is this, That there can be none" (XXVI, 91-92).

But if the world at large cannot be changed, the individual can, at least, improve himself by practising self-control and achieving self-knowledge. Many of the parables which Sterne chooses for his sermons are thus concerned with individuals who have fallen under the complete dominance of their passions, or, conversely, with Biblical exemplars of self-restraint and moderation. "The Character of Herod" deals with the former case. Sterne makes it clear that evil men must not be admired, but their stories can have a deterrent educational value:

> 'Tis however undeniable, that the lives of bad men are not without use,--and whenever such a one is drawn, not with a corrupt view to be admired,--but on purpose to be detested--it must excite such a horror against vice, as will strike indirectly the same good impression. (IX, 145-146).

In complex cases such as this one, Sterne prefers not to follow the common balance sheet way of judging men--"to sum up the good and the bad against each other" (IX, 147)--for it often leads to a "fallacious reckoning" (IX, 147) which can deceive. We can more readily arrive at a true judgment, he contends, if we discover the operative principle or "ruling passion" which lies at the heart of all

of a man's good and bad qualities:

> The way to this is--in all judgments of this kind, to distinguish, and carry in your eye, the principal and ruling passion which leads the character--and separate that from the other parts of it,--and then take notice, how far his other qualities, good and bad, are brought to serve and support that. For want of this distinction, we often think ourselves inconsistent creatures, when we are the farthest from it; and all the variety of shapes and contradictory appearances we put on are in truth but so many different attempts to gratify the same governing appetite. (IX, 147-148)

The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, of course, do not have a humorous intent, but we can detect here the germ of Sterne's humor in his fiction--the ruling passion as hobbyhorse.[21] In Herod's case the ruling passion is "ambition, an immoderate thirst, as well as jealousy, of power" (IX, 148). And the sermon shows how this one overpowering passion dominated all of Herod's actions, both good and bad. Herod was a Jew and yet he built temples and took part in idolatrous worship in order to ingratiate himself with Augustus and the great men of Rome. He was also "jealous in his nature, and suspicious of all the world" (IX, 149). And he was extremely cruel. He put the whole Sanhedrin to the sword because they threatened his power in Jerusalem. For the same reason, he had his two sons executed; and, of course, he was responsible for the massacre of the innocents in an attempt to kill Jesus. On the reverse side of the coin, he was a person of "great address--popular in his outward behaviour" (IX, 151). And he was generous and princelike in his entertainments and expenses. But this was no more than a show of generosity. Herod knew how to

buy the world, and he managed through this outward pomp to gain the favor of Augustus when he was summoned to Rome to answer for his crimes. Thus, even Herod's virtues proved "that he was a man of unbounded ambition, who stuck at nothing to gratify it" (IX, 152).

In "Felix's Behaviour Towards Paul, Examined," Sterne considers the specific problem of how a ruling passion distorts a man's judgment of his fellow man. As in all of the sermons, the argument is based on the basic faith that God has given man the necessary tools to find truth:

> His all-bountiful hand made . . . . [man's] judgment, like his heart, upright; and the instances of his sagacity, in other things, abundantly confirm it: we are led therefore in course to a supposition, that, in all inconsistent instances there is a secret bias, somehow or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aside from reason and truth. (XIX, 313)

Felix's "secret bias" is avarice, the inordinate love of money, which leads him to misjudge Paul so as to profit from the apostle's imprisonment:

> . . . so that notwithstanding the character of the apostle appeared (as it was) most spotless, and the faith he professed so very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave its consent,--yet, at the same time, the passions rebelled, and so strong an interest was formed thereby, against the first impressions in favour of the man and his cause, that both were dismissed . . . . (XIX, 305-306)

Sterne considers this the most dangerous type of ruling passion because it limits man's humanity by depriving him of his fellow feelings:

> The moment this sordid humour begins to govern--farewell to honest and natural affection! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!--how fast

> the obligations vanish!--he is now stripped of all feelings whatever . . . . (XIX, 309)

Sterne's language here suggests his faith in a benevo God who has made man in His image and endowed him with "honest and natural affection" for his fellow man. So basic and necessary for salvation is the ability to feel for others, the ability to follow one's God-given instincts, that Sterne prefers to be governed by any less serious passion rather than be tempted by one which would harden his heart:

> --Heaven! if I am to be tempted,--let it be by glory,--by ambition,--by some generous and manly vice:--if I must fall, let it be by some passion which thou hast planted in my nature, which shall not harden my heart, but leave me room at last to retreat and come back to thee! (XIX, 310)

Salvation is thus dependent on the individual's ability to deal with the "mysteries and riddles" (XIX, 312) of this world with an open mind and a sensitive heart. If man can analyze the world with an attitude of love, he will be imitating God, and his reason will be responsive to truth. For this reason Sterne argues that

> There is nothing generally in which our happiness and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourselves to the world,--and as we govern ourselves by such judgments, so we secure our peace and well-being in passing through it . . . . (XIX, 311-312)

This attitude is based on the belief that man is made "in the likeness of the greatest and best of Beings," and it leads Sterne to denounce satire as a destructive habit which can only see the bad side of mankind (VII, 114). In

fact, in "The Levite and His Concubine," satire is called a "talent of the devil" (XVIII, 299) which Sterne lists along with zeal, superficiality, and "asperity of censure" (XVIII, 296-297) as the main obstacles to a proper judgment of our fellow man. In place of this "bitterness," Sterne suggests that we use "saltness" to correct our brethren's foibles (XVIII, 299). And he reminds us that God made us merciful after his own image and gave us a religion which was meant "to heal the soreness of our natures, and sweeten our spirits, that we might live with such kind intercourse in this world, as will fit us to exist together in a better" (XVIII, 301).

Duty to oneself and duty to others are thus inseparable, for if we desire to be fit to exist together in kind intercourse we must first achieve the proper inner balance and serenity in ourselves. Sterne proclaims in the opening words of the sermon "Humility" that "the great business of man, is the regulation of his spirit; the possession of such a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary stages of it, afford us, what we shall be sure to stand in need of,--Rest unto our souls" (XXV, 59). This is achieved by practising "moderation and forebearance" (XII, 195), by setting bounds to our desires and remaining in "the middle of extremes" (XII, 224), and, in short, by keeping our passions in control. "Joseph's History Considered--Forgiveness of Injuries" retells the story of Joseph's

magnanimous forgiveness of his brothers after they have robbed him and left him for dead. The main moral of the story involves Christian charity, but Sterne also makes it clear that Joseph's charity was beneficial not only to others but also to his own peace of mind because "he never felt that fretful storm of passions, which hurry men on to acts of revenge, or suffered those pangs of horror which pursue it" (XII, 206).[22]

Likewise, "The Character of Shimei" depicts the most despicable type of character--"Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune" (XVI, 263). When David lost power and was forced to flee for his life, Shimei cursed him and cast dust at him. But when fortune changed and Absalom lost power and David returned, Shimei was the first to greet him. So common is this type of character that Sterne rather cynically prophesies that he will in the end subdue the world. Nevertheless, Sterne raises David's philosophical patience with Shimei as an example of self-control, for "if we conquer not the world--in the very attempts to do it, we shall at least conquer ourselves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts" (XVI, 268).

Man must therefore exercise self-control and refrain from dwelling on the sorrows of the external world. The only thing that matters is internal reality. "If there is an evil in this world," says Sterne in "History of Jacob Considered," "'tis sorrow and heaviness of heart.--The loss

of goods, of health, of coronets and mitres, are only evil, as they occasion sorrow; take that out the rest is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man" (XXII, 18). Proper inner balance and serenity, then, require that man exercise his reason and control the passions by imposing a "discipline, to check the insolence of unrestrained appetites, and call home the conscience" (XXXVII, 263).

This faith in self-knowledge, together with the other basic tenets of Sterne's moral philosophy, is most effectively presented in what Sterne seemed to consider his most significant homiletic statement, the sermon he inserted in Tristram Shandy, "The Abuses of Conscience Considered." The sermon begins with the affirmation that "if there is anything in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving upon the most indisputable evidence, it must be this very thing,--Whether he has a good Conscience, or no" (XXVII, 99). This belief is based on the more basic Lockean faith that man can will to have self-knowledge. Like Locke, Sterne concedes that in external matters "we may be deceived by false appearances" (XXVII, 99), but he contends that we certainly can know our inner selves and the motives of our actions because "the mind has all the evidence and facts within herself" (XXVII, 100).

The courtroom metaphor suggested in this line is significant. In "Philanthropy Recommended," Sterne refers to God as "the All-seeing Judge" (III, 50). It therefore

follows that reason, the God-given faculty which links man with God's law, should also be characterized as a judge:

> . . . your conscience is not a law;--no,--God and reason made the law, and has placed Conscience within you to determine,--not like an Asiatic Cadi, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions; but like a British judge in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,--but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written. (XXVII, 117)

Conscience is thus presented, much like Locke's conception of the understanding,[23] as an "arbitrator" (XIX, 314) who sees an individual's inner motives and who can judge these motives on the basis of God's eternal law. In other words, conscience consists of both self-knowledge and judgment:

> Conscience is nothing else but the knowledge which the mind has within itself of this [the true motives of our actions]; and the judgment, either of approbation or censure, which it unavoidably makes upon the successive actions of our lives. . . . (XXVII, 100)

Thus, as Arthur Hill Cash has pointed out, Sterne subscribes to the Platonist position and accepts the eternal moral law which God has imprinted in our souls as a priori knowledge. But he also believes that reason must judge each human act a posteriori.[24] Self-knowledge is thus a posteriori. It is not transcendent. It is based on empirical self-examination. And it must combat a human opposition--dominance by the passions. Consequently, man's struggle for self-knowledge takes place in the internal courtroom of reason, where "self-love" can "hang the least bias upon the judgment," where "little interests" can "rise up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions,

and encompass them about with clouds and thick darkness," where "favour and affection" can enter the sacred court, and where "wit" can "take a bribe in it" (XXVII, 101). In short, self-knowledge is possible only in those cases where "Passion never got into the judgment-seat, and pronounced sentence in the stead of Reason, which is supposed always to preside and determine upon the case" (XXVII, 101).

This basic preoccupation of Sterne's with the inner tension between self-knowledge and self-delusion defines his conception of the self in characteristically Lockean terms.[25] Both Locke and Sterne shared a belief in a harmonious universe which operates according to the laws of reason; and they both saw the mind as a vital and integral part of that reasonable harmony. Locke, and after him Sterne, conceived of the mind as an impartial arbitrator or judge that has the capacity to see the law of reason and to compare individual human actions to that law. Both writers identified certain mental weaknesses or aberrations as the obstacles to reason's ability to make impartial judgments. In book two of An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke isolates dull organs, slight impressions, and weak memory as some of the causes of "obscure ideas."[26] And in the fourth edition of the Essay, he added his famous discussion of that "sort of madness" to which he gave the name "association of ideas."[27] Locke considered this the "most dangerous" error in the world

"since, so far as it obtains, it hinders men from seeing and examining."[28] Similarly, Sterne's sermons continually remind his auditors of the importance of keeping the passions out of the judgment seat and of the necessity of exercising reason. For Sterne, as for Locke, the individual's basic responsibility is to see and examine, and specifically to see and examine himself with a judge's impartial eye:

> . . . [man] must call his own ways to remembrance, and search out his spirit,--search his actions with the same critical exactness and same piercing curiosity, we are wont to sit in judgment upon others;--varnishing nothing--and disguising nothing. (XIV, 236)

This statement is based on the characteristically Lockean notion that man cannot know the external world completely but that he can have true knowledge only of the ideas in his own mind. For example, Locke argues that the ideas of duration, time, and eternity are derived from man's inner observation of "a train of ideas which constantly succeed one another in his understanding."[29] Thus, the idea of time does not depend only on external reality and the arbitrary measures of external reality such as "minutes, hours, days, and years," for "there may be other parts of the universe, where they no more use these measures of ours, than in Japan they do our inches, feet, or miles . . . ."[30] For Locke, the only concern is the internal reality of the mind and the fact that the mind is capable of observing its own ideas and the succession of

these ideas. Man can know only his ideas, and he can know that he knows those ideas. In other words, the only knowable reality is self-knowledge, for "self" has been defined by Locke as awareness or "consciousness."[31] It is very significant in this regard that Sterne's final description of self-knowledge and of the means of achieving it in the sermon "Self-Knowledge" begins with the Lockean concept of the succession of ideas:

> We have a chain of thoughts, desires, engagements, and idleness, which perpetually return upon us in their proper time and order--let us, I beseech you, assign and set apart some small portion of the day for this purpose,--of retiring into ourselves, and searching into the dark corners and recesses of the heart, and taking notice of what is passing there. If a man can bring himself to do this task with a curious and impartial eye, he will quickly find the fruits of it will more than recompense his time and labour. He will see several irregularities and unsuspected passions within him which he never was aware of:--he will discover in his progress many secret turnings and windings in his heart to which he was a stranger, which now gradually open and disclose themselves to him upon a nearer view; in these labyrinths he will trace out such hidden springs and motives for many of his most applauded actions, as will make him rather sorry and ashamed of himself, than proud. (IV, 67-68)

By emphasizing the functions of reason as the seeing and judging of an internal reality and by putting primary importance on the individual's responsibility to know himself, Sterne in effect shows that he espouses the Lockean conception of "self" as "consciousness." But, as many of the sermons show, consciousness is often exposed to obstacles. The worst of these obstacles is the ruling passion; and when it is allowed to dominate a person, then the ruling passion and the self become almost indistinguish-

able. Herod and Felix, for example, are both men who have allowed a particular ruling passion to dominate them in much the same way as Pope describes in the Essay on Man.

Sterne's creation of the hobbyhorse in his fiction indicates his continuing interest in the theme of self-knowledge, for the hobbyhorsical consciousness is, to a large extent, a comic embodiment of the problems of self-knowledge. But, at the same time, the hobbyhorse also marks a departure from the concept of the ruling passion as it had been traditionally conceived from before the times of Ben Jonson through the Augustan age, and as Sterne himself seems to have conceived it when he wrote his sermons. The riders of hobbyhorses do not develop into characters such as Herod and Felix. However, although they are amiable individuals who are fully capable of altruism, the hobbyhorse riders do limit their self-knowledge by giving vent to their private pleasures.

It is this self-pleasing aspect of human nature which interested Sterne in his fiction. For the pursuit of private hobbyhorsical pleasure is comparable to the abandonment to one's ruling passion, with the difference that the Sternean hobbyhorses are a source of enjoyment to the reader at the same time that they serve to point to a human weakness. In short, Sterne's purpose in his fiction seems to be to allow his readers both to be conscious of and to accept human failings. For this reason, Sterne chose not the satiric but the comic mode. He does not employ a

Swiftian reductionism to illustrate the absurdity of man's contradictions. Rather, he paints his characters as endearing eccentrics who are to be admired because they possess strengths as well as weaknesses; and both strengths and weaknesses are basic to human nature and are central to human consciousness.

To see Sterne's art in this way helps to explain why he chose the sexual motif as such an important narrative device. For Sterne, the human self is equivalent to consciousness. And, as The Sermons suggest, it is man's duty as a man to know himself--in other words, to exercise his consciousness and therefore to experience his human self, his mortality. Sex is basic to the mortal state. Through it, life is created and perpetuated. It is an essential part of the birth-death cycle. Indeed, it is man's only biological means of combating death. (The artist, like Tristram, attempts to achieve immortality through his art.) Sex is also pleasurable; but the sexual experience must be continually repeated, for its pleasure is short-lived. In this way, sex is a reminder of man's temporal limitations and of the need to exercise human vitality, of the need, in other words, to experience one's human consciousness and thus strive for self-knowledge.

As shall become clearer in the chapters that follow, Sterne's use of the sexual motif is closely associated with the theme of self-knowledge. The jokes about conception and birth, the allusions to onanism and impotence, the

constant barrage of sexual innuendoes are all part of the author's emphasis on consciousness. Each time one of Sterne's narrators makes a pun or suggests a salacious intent, we are invited to see that there can be a sexual point of reference for language, a point of reference which exists together with one or more other points of reference. In this way, we are continually invited to ride a sexual hobbyhorse; and, at the same time, we are also made to see, by the very presence of several other hobbyhorses, that the sexual is only one of many possible points of reference. Paradoxically, then, our hobbyhorsical participation in Sterne's fiction serves to remind us of our own fallibility and of the limitations of language.

CHAPTER II

THE HOBBYHORSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SEXUAL MOTIF

The sermons define Sterne's conception of consciousness in terms of the constant tension between self-knowledge and self-delusion. This tension is the one central theme running throughout Sterne's writings. The sermons present the problem of consciousness in more or less theoretical fashion. But later in his career, Sterne made use of this internal tension as the central narrative principle for his fiction. The most evident example of this is Sterne's creation of the hobbyhorse.

The hobbyhorse metaphor is not original with Sterne. In fact, we can find a similar image in Locke's discussion of the dominance of reason by the passions in Of the Conduct of the Understanding:

> Did this state of mind remain always so, everyone would without scruple give it the name of perfect madness; and while it does last, at whatever intervals it returns, such a rotation of thoughts about the same object no more carries us forwards towards the attainment of knowledge than getting upon a mill whilst he jogs on in his circular tract would carry a man on a journey.[1]

All of Sterne's main characters are limited in their consciousness of the world and of themselves in the

manner when they ride their hobbyhorse, that is, when they surrender themselves to a single point of reference. Walter Shandy creates abstract intellectual systems. Toby Shandy and, to some extent, Trim live in a game world of military encounters. Tristram revels in his life and opinions. And Yorick in A Sentimental Journey is given to transports of feelings for their own sake. (Although it must be pointed out that both Tristram and Yorick, as self-conscious narrators, are always aware of the limitations of their own hobbyhorses.) From Walter's intellectual abstractions to Yorick's sentimentalism, the Sternean hobbyhorses cover a variety of points of reference. But they all have one thing in common--they are all rooted in self-enjoyment. Consequently, each hobbyhorse is pleasurable to its rider, but, at the same time, it is potentially dangerous because it gratifies a particular passion and consequently narrows one's perception of life. As Tristram puts it, "when a man gives himself up to the government of a ruling passion, or, in other words, when his Hobby-Horse grows head-strong--farewell cool reason and fair discretion!" (II.v.93).[2] The result is an individual whose consciousness is limited to the enjoyment of a single activity. Sterne indicates his hobbyhorsical limitation of the self by characterizing the hobbyhorse riders as individuals who are, to a certain extent, unproductive or who threaten productivity. It is for this reason that Sterne builds his comic structure on a metaphoric foundation which

incorporates the most serious obstacles to sexual productivity--namely, onanism and impotence. It is through this pervasive metaphoric level that Sterne's authorial presence is most strongly felt.

Critics of Sterne who have considered the sexual material in his fiction have usually taken a different tack. The most common interpretation is that Sterne employs sex as a symbol of a basic form of communication; and the sexual difficulties found in Tristram Shandy, difficulties such as impotence, are then representative of the basic problems of communication among individuals. Alan D. McKillop maintains that

> human ends are infinitely various, but we may say that in Shandy the ends are sexual satisfaction, the riding of hobbyhorses, and full expression of ideas and sentiments. All these entail endless perplexities and an infinity of unfinished business.[3]

And the business in the book is "unfinished" because, as James A. Work has pointed out, sexual impotence "hovers like a dubious halo over the head of every Shandy male, including the bull."[4] Following a similar line of thinking, Elizabeth Drew suggests that "the sexual tinge is so pervasive [in Tristram Shandy] because in a sense the whole book is about the paradoxical creativeness and helplessness of man, and obviously sex is a central symbol for that."[5] A. R. Towers discusses the sexual comedy of Tristram Shandy in terms of "inadequacy" (Tristram), "displacement" (Toby), and "frustration" (Walter), all of which are rooted in the Shandys' inability to communicate.[6] And Ronald Paulson

points out that, as words mean different things for each person in Tristram Shandy, they inevitably fall into sexual and other meanings and thus lead to literal or figurative emasculation of the characters.[7]

Other critics see more general thematic implications in the lack of sexual communication in Tristram Shandy. W. B. Piper reads Tristram Shandy as a story of the Shandy extinction and sees sexual impotence as the comic analogue of death.[8] David Daiches maintains that sex in Tristram Shandy reflects the absurdity of man and the comic sadness of the human situation.[9] Henri Fluchère interprets Sterne's "indecency" as part of the comic structure of the novel; its purpose is to lead the reader to accept sex.[10] And, similarly, J. M. Stedmond argues that Sterne's bawdy material is meant to stimulate a comic catharsis in the reader.[11]

The general consensus, then, that the sexual material is somehow related to the problems of communication suggests that this is Sterne's main concern. However, the inability to communicate is not so much a problem as it is a symptom or manifestation of a problem. And that problem is portrayed by Sterne in the form of the hobbyhorsical consciousness, that is to say, the individual's isolation in his private self. It is this isolation, which results from the individual's dedication to his hobbyhorse, that creates the problem of communication. As Joan Joffe Hall has pointed out, the "characterization by hobbyhorse

presupposes a solipsistic view of the universe; each rider is galloping along through his own private reality."[12] It is for this reason that the Shandys are characterized as eccentrics who are dedicated to the autoerotic pleasures of their hobbyhorses. It is this devotion to the private self which turns their consciousnesses inwards and which therefore renders them comically impotent and unable to communicate. Sterne's use of the sexual imagery is thus significant not only because it suggests man's absurd condition and the difficulties of communication, but more specifically because it illuminates in a humorous way the dangers which arise when the self is overly dedicated to a single point of reference. The use of the sexual metaphor is thus an important narrative technique which is meant to alert the reader to Sterne's ironic intent.

Sterne's choice of the hobbyhorse (rather than the ruling passion) metaphor to distinguish his characters indicates his comic purpose. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term hobbyhorse referred to a wanton, a prostitute.[13] As Partridge points out in Shakespeare's Bawdy, "a hobby-horse is a rocking horse: the sexual innuendo and pun are clear: horse, because it is ridden . . .; the 'rocking' element refers to female movement in coitu."[14] The sexual implications of the term are still extant today: D. H. Lawrence, for instance, uses this metaphor of autoeroticism in his short story "The Rocking-Horse Winner."[15] During Sterne's time, hobbyhorse

was also used as a verb which had the signification of to romp; to play the fool, especially in horse-play (circa 1630-1890). Hobbyhorse was also commonly used to refer to a horse.[16] And it is important for this discussion to point out now that horse has, since the seventeenth century, been used as a slang verb meaning to possess a woman.[17] The hobbyhorse metaphor would thus have had very strong sexual implications for Sterne's contemporaries. This consideration is essential in any attempt to understand Sterne's art, for all of Sterne's characters are engaged in one form of hobbyhorse riding or another, and Sterne is constantly referring to acts of riding, bestriding, mounting, galloping, trotting, etc. The Sternean novelistic world as a whole is associated with sexual activity, and often solitary and infertile sexual activity.

The autoerotic nature of the hobbyhorse rider is suggested in Tristram's description of the relationship between a man and his hobbyhorse:

> . . . 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 . . . . (I.xxiv.77)

This "communication" between the "electrified bodies" of the rider and his hobbyhorse is presented in sexual terms. Tristram even focuses on the genitalia as he points to "the

heated parts of the rider, which come immediately into contact with the back of the Hobby Horse." The last sentence, however, creates some confusion. The reference to "long journies and much friction" continues the sexual image, but the passage ends with the rider being filled full of "HOBBY-HORSICAL matter." The roles seem to have shifted; and the rider, who was originally applying his "heated parts" to "the back of the Hobby-Horse," now appears to have assumed the female role.[18] One does not want to read too much into this, but the reversal of roles certainly does suggest a sexual relationship in which the rider receives but does not give. And what he receives is basically himself, since the hobbyhorse represents an aspect of an individual's own essence. In other words, a man's relationship with his hobbyhorse is in actuality a relationship with himself. And to this extent it is autoerotic. Thus, as Robert Alter has pointed out, Sterne's use of the sexual metaphor and his emphasis on the "communication" between a rider and his hobbyhorse suggests an ironic intent:

> . . . for a man's "communication" with his own hobby-horse, his own private obsession, is precisely what prevents him from communicating with others because it exchanges the dialogue of self and other, for which the sexual relation serves as paradigm, for an onanistic monologue.[19]

The onanism metaphor thus suggests the basic nature of the hobbyhorsical consciousness--a dedication to the private self which tends to compromise one's consciousness

of what lies beyond one's self. Hence, when the hobbyhorse rider rides, he is incapable of communicating with anyone or anything which lies outside the area of his hobbyhorse. Toby's hobbyhorse, for instance, originates in Toby's inability to describe adequately to his bedside visitors the events which led to his wound. His frustrations ultimately result in his acceptance of Trim's plan to build fortifications in the country. Significantly, this is an antisocial move, for it does not aid Toby in describing his misfortune to anyone but only contributes to the "pleasure" which Toby can experience in "private":

> 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;--I say in private;--for it was sheltered from a house, as I told you, by a tall yew hedge, and was covered on the other three sides, from mortal sight, by rough holly and thickset flowering shrubs;--so that the idea of not being seen, did not a little contribute to the idea of pleasure pre-conceived in my uncle Toby's mind. (II.v.98-99)

This passage is rich in sexual implications. The reference to "a belov'd mistress" sets the tone by introducing the sexual motif. The term "heat" suggests sexual excitement. And the sexual level is maintained throughout the rest of the passage by repeated references to genitalia. The generic term thing can mean pudend or penis. Partridge lists several examples for both significations from Shakespeare's plays.[20] And Grose lists the term thingumbobs as designating testicles.[21] Thus, Toby's enjoyment of the "thing in private" reinforces the autoerotic theme. And

this sense of privacy is then associated with the bowling green, which is itself described in sexual terms. Of note are the references to "hedge," "covered," and "shrubs." The term hedge was associated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with prostitutes, as in the expression as common as the hedge.[22] Grose lists hedge-whore and defines it as "an itinerant harlot, who bilks the bagnios and bawdy-houses, by disposing of her favours on the wayside, under a hedge; a low beggarly prostitute."[23] The term cover refers to the sexual possession of a woman. This meaning is still alive today, but it dates back to the seventeenth century.[24] Of final note is the "idea of pleasure pre-conceived in my uncle Toby's mind." It is significant that this conception takes place inside Toby rather than in a "belov'd mistress." Toby enjoys his pleasure alone, "in private." Thus, the implications of heterosexual relations which arise from the terms "hedge" and "covered," together with the comparison with "a belov'd mistress," emphasize a contrast with the solitary quality of Toby's "pleasure."

Similarly, Walter's dedication to theories and systems is an emi ly private affair which is also particularly nonconducive to communication with others. His study of noses, for example, is described in language which suggests solitary sexual delights:

> To those who do not yet know of which gender Bruscambille is,--inasmuch as a prologue upon long noses might easily be done by either,--'twill be no objection against the simile,--to say, That when my father got home, he solaced himself with Bruscambille after the manner, in

> which, 'tis ten to one, your worship solaced yourself with your first mistress,--that is, from morning even unto night: which by the bye, how delightful soever it may prove to the inamorato,--is of little, or no entertainment at all, to by-standers.-- (III.xxxv.225)

The technique here is very similar to that used in the passage on Toby discussed above. Once more, a parallel is made and a distinction is drawn between enjoying oneself with a "mistress" and enjoying one's hobbyhorse. The sexual theme is introduced by the reference to Bruscambille's "gender." And the passage as a whole deals with "long noses," which in itself is a sexual joke. Nose is used as a synonym for penis in Shakespeare.[25] This signification must have continued to be used through the eighteenth century, for under nose Partridge lists the nineteenth-century expression "a long nose is a lady's liking," which refers to the belief that the size of the man's nose denotes a corresponding length in the sexual organs, just as the size of a woman's mouth is supposed to answer to that of her genitalia.[26] Also of note is the suggestion that "a prologue upon long noses might easily be done by either" sex. The term "done" is close to done-over, an expression dating back to the eighteenth century which signifies "possessed carnally (only of women)."[27] The statement that either sex can do the prologue upon long noses suggests a sexuality which is not necessarily heterosexual. "Solaced" seems to be a pun on solus, indicating that Tristram is describing a solitary sexuality. This idea is reinforced by the final suggestion

of the passage. The term stand can refer to erectio penis.[28] Thus, the image of two lovers disporting themselves while uncoupled "by-standers" watch on the sidelines emphasizes the autoerotic nature of Walter's hobbyhorse riding.

The use of the onanism metaphor suggests that the individual is concentrating too much on his private self. Such an isolation could lead to a consciousness which has little in common with other men's views of life. Walter is often guilty of falling into this error. We learn, for instance, "that every object before him presented a face and section of itself to his eye, altogether different from the plan and elevation of it seen by the rest of mankind" (V.xxiv.382). The cause of this unique vision seems to be of an epistemological nature. Walter does not rely on empirical observation of the experience he holds in common with other men to derive his theories. Rather, Walter follows the example of the Spider in Swift's The Battle of the Books in creating his solipsistic intellectual webs: "My father spun his [Tristra-poedia], every thread of it, out of his own brain,--or reeled and cross-twisted what all other spinners and spinsters had spun before him, that 'twas pretty near the same torture to him" (V.xvi.372-373). The sexual imagery in this passage is very suggestive. It is significant that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries spinster could mean a harlot.[29] And, of course, spinster also refers to an unmarried woman. The term thus

suggests a solitary state as well as sexuality and illicitness. Walter's spinning thread out of his own brain also seems to have sexual connotations. "Spin" is close to the expressions spin off and spin crooked, both of which refer to coition.[30] The juxtaposition of "spinners and spinsters" in this sentence takes us back to the onanism metaphor. The suggestion seems to be that Walter's theories are childless and unproductive because they are the products of a solitary rather than a heterosexual "spinning."

A similar suggestion is raised by Sterne's use of pipe smoking and whistling to characterize Toby. Smoking and pipe are terms which evoke sexual meanings. Pipe refers to the penis.[31] Grose also lists the expression whore-pipe to designate the penis.[32] And the verb to smoke meant to coit with a woman in the eighteenth century.[33] It is interesting that both of Toby's habits of smoking his pipe and whistling are associated with his modesty and his preference for solitary as opposed to heterosexual pleasure. It would appear that Toby's preference for these private oral activities is a substitute for heterosexual genital involvement.[34] Consider, for instance, Tristram's use of the conventions of logic to describe Toby's whistling. He calls whistling the "Argumentum Fistulatorium," and he associates it with the "Argumentum Baculinum" and the "Argumentum ad Crumenam." But he seems to distinguish these three forms of logical discourse from the sexually suggestive "Argumentum Tripodium, which is never used but

by the woman against the man;--and the Argumentum ad Rem, which, contrarywise, is made use of by the man only against the woman . . ." (I.xxi.71). The literal meanings of the Latin terms are suggestive of the sexual theme. Fistula means a tube, a pipe, a reed pipe, or a shepherd's pipe. And fistulator is one who plays upon the reed pipe. Baculum is a staff or a walking stick. And crumena is a leathern pouch for money, usually carried by a strap around the neck. Needless to say, Toby always prefers the Argumentum Fistulatorium to the Argumentum ad Rem, which suggests that he would rather play on "pipes" than contend with the female "thing." For example, when he and Trim march up to widow Wadman's door, Toby is much averse to the project, so that when Trim finally knocks on the door Toby reacts by whistling Lillabullero (IX.xvi.619). And when Trim illuminates Toby on the sexual nature of widow Wadman's "HUMANITY," that is to say, when Toby finds out that the good widow has been subjecting him to an Argumentum Tripodium, Toby reacts by giving "a long whistle--but in a note which could scarce be heard across the table" (IX.xxxi.643).

Whistling thus seems to denote a general preference for solitary pleasures. This becomes particularly evident in the incident in which Obadiah ties up Slop's obstetrical bag in a series of Gordian knots. The description of Obadiah riding his horse at an increasingly faster rate to overcome the noise of Slop's obstetrical instruments evokes

the themes of onanism and of hobbyhorse riding:

> The instruments, it seems, as tight as the bag was tied above, had so much room to play in it, towards the bottom, (the shape of the bag being conical) that Obadiah could not make a trot of it, but with such a terrible jingle, what with the tire-tête, forceps and squirt, as would have been enough, had Hymen been taking a jaunt that way, to have frightened him out of the country; but when Obadiah accelerated this motion, and from a plain trot assayed to prick his coachhorse into a full gallop--by heaven! Sir,--the jingle was incredible. (III.vii.165)

The language here is extremely sexual. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, to bag signified to beget or conceive.[35] It seems significant that Obadiah "ties up" and therefore closes the orifice of the "conical" bag. "Conical" is very probably a pun on cunny, which refers to pudendum muliebre,[36] just as the first syllable of "country" is a pun on the vulgar term for the female genitalia,[37] as in Hamlet's famous "country matters" remark to Ophelia. Also of note is the image of Hymen being "frightened out of the country," suggesting perhaps loss of virginity. All of these words suggest male-female sexuality, but many of the other innuendoes in the passage connote a movement away from the female sexual organs. "To play," for instance, is close to the expression to play off, which meant to masturbate in the eighteenth century.[38] This implication is strengthened by the terms "forceps," which are an extension of the hands, and "squirt," which describes ejaculation. And the passage ends with Obadiah applying his "prick" to his coach-horse, an act which evokes once more the themes of hobbyhorse riding and onanism.

Sterne makes sure that we are aware of the onanism theme by emphasizing Obadiah's desire to whistle. As Tristram puts it, Obadiah is frustrated by the "jingle" not because it reminds him of the sexual significance of the obstetrical instruments--"the turpitude of fornication, and the many other political ill consequences of this jingling, never once entered his brain" (III.vii.165)--but because "the poor fellow . . . was not able to hear himself whistle" (III.vii.165) and to ride his horse at the same time. The incident can thus be seen as a symbolic contest between heterosexuality and birth (represented by Slop's obstetrical instruments) and the solitary joys of autoeroticism (represented by Obadiah's horse and his desire to hear himself whistle). Obadiah spurs his horse on faster and faster so as to enjoy his self-created pleasure of whistling. When this fails, he immobilizes the obstetrical instruments with his hatband. One is reminded that the terms hat and old hat referred to the female pudend in the eighteenth century.[39] Symbolically speaking, then, once Obadiah has quieted the female element (represented by the "hatband" and the tied up "conical" bag), he is free to enjoy his own male element in private; and so he goes on to whistle and to "prick his coach-horse" as fast as he likes.

The smoking of pipes has associations similar to whistling in Tristram Shandy. As with whistling, smoking comes to represent the hobbyhorsical attachment to the

private self and the consequent preference for private pleasures. In this regard, Toby's hobbyhorse is similar to Walter's solitary web spinning. It is thus significant that Toby's pipe smoking is often associated with his sexual modesty and with his "private" enjoyment of his hobbyhorse. For example, after Trim and Bridget break Toby's bridge in what appears to have been an amorous embrace, Walter pokes fun at Toby's hobbyhorse by extolling the prodigious force of "the destructive machinery of corporal Trim" (III.xxiv.211). Toby says nothing to this but gives vent to his embarrassment by "redoubling the vehemence of smoaking his pipe" (III.xxiv.211).

This incident is somewhat akin to Obadiah's accelerating battle with the obstetrical instruments. In both cases the situation involves a struggle between a consciousness of heterosexuality versus a consciousness which is limited to one's self and one's own self-induced pleasure. The rider of hobbyhorses is inclined to the latter, and Sterne's ambiguous language seems to identify this tendency towards privacy with onanism. This becomes particularly evident in the manner in which Trim and Toby smoke Tom's Turkish pipes. They use the pipes to "fire" Toby's field pieces. "Fire" may involve a reference to the heat of sexual passion. It is also worth noting that in the eighteenth century the expression fire-ship indicated a venerally diseased whore.[40] Certainly some reference to sexual passion is being made, as is further suggested by

Sterne's use of to smoke, which definitely referred to coition, and pipe. It should also be pointed out that the term piece can mean a woman or a girl.[41] This sense dates back to the fourteenth century. Thus, when Toby "smokes" his "pipes" and "fires" his field "pieces," the language suggests a strong heterosexual involvement. But Toby is not enjoying a heterosexual pleasure. He is enjoying the private joys of his pipe. The contrast between his action and the sexual implications of Sterne's language emphasizes Toby's prediliction for solitary pleasure. Indeed, for a hobbyhorse rider, the riding of the hobbyhorse is the most pleasurable of experiences because it intensifies the private enjoyment of self. Thus, the double smoking of the pipes and the firing of the field pieces present an irresistible temptation. When Trim starts puffing, for instance, he cannot stop; and his pleasure increases to a pitch: "the pleasure of the puffs, as well as the puffing, had insensibly got hold of the corporal, and drawn him on from puff to puff, into the very height of the attack, by the time my uncle Toby joined him" (VI.xxvii.454). The autoerotic nature of this temptation becomes even more explicit in the titillating way in which Toby seems to tease himself to the point of salivating from desire and then finally retiring into his sentry-box with the pipe in his hand to enjoy himself in solitude:

> My uncle Toby took the ivory pipe out of the corporal's hand,--looked at it for half a minute, and returned it.

> In less than two minutes my uncle Toby took the pipe from the corporal again, and raised it half way to his mouth--then hastily gave it back a second time.
>
> The corporal redoubled the attack,--my uncle Toby smiled,--then looked grave,--then smiled for a moment,--then looked serious for a long time;--Give me hold of the ivory pipe, Trim, said my uncle Toby--my uncle Toby put it to his lips,--drew it back directly,--give a peep over the horn-beam hedge;--never did my uncle Toby's mouth water so much for a pipe in his life.--My uncle Toby retired into the sentry-box with the pipe in his hand.-- .
>
> --Dear uncle Toby! don't go into the sentry-box with the pipe,-- there's no trusting a man's self with such a thing in such a corner. (VI.xxviii.454-455)

The numerous sexual innuendoes in this passage suggest a contrast between Toby's oral activity and heterosexual genital activity. Of general note is the come and go movement suggested by Toby's alternating looks of gaiety and seriousness; and this movement is paralleled by the way in which he brings the pipe to his mouth and then draws it back. Significantly, this movement produces what we might call an oral ejaculation. In addition, the expression "horn-beam hedge" is blatantly sexual. Horn referred to the male member in the eighteenth century. This meaning led to such nineteenth and twentieth century expressions denoting sexual excitement as to have the horn and to feel horny.[42] And "hedge" may refer to whores and strumpets.[43] But Toby's relationship is not with women; it is with himself. Thus, he seeks solitude in the "sentry-box." Ironically, box has a sexual signification, as in Parolles' indecent comments in All's Well That Ends Well:

> To th' wars, my boy, to th' wars!
> He wears his honour in a box unseen,
> That hugs his kicky-wicky here at home,

> Spending his manly marrow in her arms,
> Which should sustain the bound and high curvet
> Of Mars's fiery steed.[44]

But Toby avoids women and he does not spend his "manly marrow" in anyone's arms; his honor is in a sentry-box, a solitary box.

The irony is continued in Tristram's final exhortation. At one level the language suggests that Toby is entering the female pudend (suggested by "box" and "corner")[45] with his "pipe," his "thing." But, in actuality, he is seeking isolation by literally smoking his pipe in a corner. Thus, Tristram's emphasis on "a man's self" is important, for it points to Toby's hobby-horsical tendency to close himself up within himself in autoerotic isolation.

Naturally enough, this autoerotic tendency is most effectively challenged by a woman; and the main thrust of the challenge takes place in the sentry-box, the very citadel of Toby's onanistic isolation. And it is interesting that widow Wadman effects her challenge by assuming an aggressive male role and by actually overcoming the various elements of Toby's hobbyhorse, behind which Toby was able to seek solitary refuge. She begins by entering as far as possible into Toby's sentry-box and placing a hand on his map. Next she contrives to take Toby's tobacco pipe out of his hand. The reason for this, Tristram explains, is that "as there was no arterial or vital heat in the end of the tobacco pipe, it could excite

no sentiment--it could neither give fire by pulsation--or receive it by sympathy--'twas nothing but smoak". (VIII. xvi.555). Ironically, to smoke meant to coit in Sterne's time, but here the term is being used to indicate the absence of sexual commerce. In short, the pipe is an inanimate substitute for the vital member through which sexual communication is possible. Once the pipe is removed, the battle is practically won, for it allows widow Wadman eventually to touch Toby's hand: "this at once opened a communication, large enough for any sentiment to pass or repass, which a person skill'd in the elementary and practical part of love-making, has occasion for--" (VIII.xvi.555). This "slight skirmishing," as Tristram calls it, is "at a distance from the main body" (VIII.xvi.555), but it does communicate the "vital heat." Widow Wadman then increases her chances of success by pressing her leg against Toby's calf so as to get the "vital heat" going from the opposite extreme as well. In military parlance, she thus manages to attack Toby "on both his wings" so that she now and then succeeds in putting "his centre into disorder" (VIII.xvi.556). This "disorder" denotes a certain success, but it is not a complete success. In fact, although Tristram describes the mementoes of widow Wadman's attacks in language which suggests sexuality, it is a sexuality which is associated with Popish enthusiasm and hermitical masochism:

> This seems an authenticated record of one of these

> attacks; for there are vestigia of the two punctures partly grown up, but still visible on the opposite corner of the map, which are unquestionably the very holes, through which it has been pricked up in the sentry-box--
>
> By all that is priestly! I value this precious relick, with it's stigmata and pricks, more than all the relicks of the Romish church--always excepting, when I am writing upon these matters, the pricks which enter'd the flesh of St. Radagunda in the desert, which in your road from FESS to CLUNY, the nuns of that name will shew you for love. (VIII.xvii.556-557)

This passage contains several references to both the female sexual organs ("punctures," "corner," "holes," "sentry-box," "stigmata") and the male member ("grown up," "pricked up," "pricks"). Also, the words "FESS" and "CLUNY" suggest the sexual theme. Fesse is French for buttock. And "CLUNY" sounds rather close to cunny. This reading seems more than justifiable given that nun meant a courtesan or a harlot in the eighteenth century.[46] And these particular "nuns" go by the name of "CLUNY" and spend their time showing "pricks" to visitors "for love."

As is often the case with Sterne, the use of such evocative language has more than a single purpose. On the one hand, the sexual word play pokes fun at the Catholic Church. But, at the same time, it concerns Toby. And the language seems to be playfully suggesting that Toby's desire to avoid widow Wadman and to enjoy himself in private involves a certain amount of hermit-like escapism.[47] Indeed, when Toby discovers the sexual nature of widow Wadman's "HUMANITY," he is so shocked that he resolves "never more to think of the sex,--or of aught

which belonged to it" (III.xxiv.208). His immediate reaction, then, is to reinforce his hobbyhorsical consciousness. Of note are Toby's gestures when Trim tells him of Widow Wadman's sexuality:

> My uncle Toby laid down his pipe as gently upon the fender, as if it had been spun from the unravellings of a spider's web--
> --Let us go to my brother Shandy's, said he.
> (IX.xxxi.643)

The spider's web recalls the image used to characterize Walter's onanistic cerebral creations (V.xv[illegible]). The juxtaposition of Toby's pipe with the spider's web, together with Toby's desire to "go to my brother Shandy's," suggest Toby's reaffirmation of the hobbyhorsical Shandy consciousness and its autoerotic pleasures. In fact, in the final chapters, Toby is once more sitting by the fire, smoking his pipe (IX.xxxii.644), and waiting eagerly to jump on his hobby-horse and provide the proper military epithet (IX.xxxiii.645) as Walter waxes hobbyhorsical on the disadvantages of man's sexuality.

It is also of note that Tristram's own method of narration is often associated with onanism. Tristram praises his ability to write a book which is digressive and progressive at the same time (I.xxii.73). As an author, Tristram is in the position of one who can follow his creative whim as the mood dictates. However, his use of sexual imagery also suggests his awareness of the dangers of overindulgence in such authorial freedom. Thus, although Tristram does not always try to justify his digressions, he

does associate them with the sexual metaphor. For instance, we are constantly being reminded of Tristram's function as a writer, a man who lives by the pen. Tristram states, in fact, that he is dominated by his "pen"--"it governs me,--I govern not it," he says at the beginning of "The Story of Le Fever" (VI.vi.416). Significantly, the term pen has been a slang word for penis since the sixteenth century.[48] That Sterne is playing with this meaning is clear from Tristram's description of his actions while writing:

> --And this moment that I last dipp'd my pen into my ink, I could not help taking notice what a cautious air of sad composure and solemnity there appear'd in my manner of doing it.--Lord! how different from the rash jerks, and hare-brain'd squirts thou art wont, Tristram! to transact it with in other humours,--dropping thy pen,--spurting thy ink about the table and thy books,--as if thy pen and thy ink, thy books and thy furniture cost thee nothing. (III.xxviii.215)

The onanism imagery here is fairly transparent. "Rash jerks" evokes the expression (extant in the eighteenth century) to jerk off, which means to masturbate.[49] "Squirts" refers to ejaculation. And "hare-brain'd" may involve an oblique reference to the pubic area through a pun on hair. "Dropping" may also be significant. In the nineteenth century, the expression dropping referred to a beating or thrashing (pugilistic or otherwise).[50] A similar signification must have existed in the eighteenth century, for Tristram's "dropping" of his "pen" results in another ejaculation, a "spurting" of his "ink." Also of particular relevance here is an expression dating back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to have no more ink in the pen,

which signifies to be temporarily impotent from exhaustion.[51]

The digressive-progressive method involves, as Tristram puts it, a "backwards and forwards" movement along the story line. This movement in itself suggests a sexual theme akin to that expressed by Tristram's "rash jerks, and hare-brain'd squirts." In fact, when Tristram self-consciously describes his hobbyhorse riding, he does so in very sexually evocative language:

> What a rate have I gone on at, curvetting and frisking it away, two up and two down for four volumes together, without looking once behind, or even on one side of me, to see whom I trod upon!--I'll tread upon no one,--quoth I to myself when I mounted--I'll take a good rattling gallop; but I'll not hurt the poorest jack-ass upon the road--So off I set--up one lane--down another, through this turn-pike--over that, as if the arch-jockey of jockeys had got behind me.
>
> Now ride at this rate with what good intention and resolution you may,--'tis a million to one you'll do some one a mischief, if not yourself--He's flung--he's off--he's lost his seat--he's down--he'll break his neck--see!--if he has not galloped full amongst the scaffolding of the undertaking critics!--he'll knock his brains out against some of their posts--he's bounced out!--look--he's now riding like a madcap full tilt through a whole crowd of painters, fiddlers, poets, biographers, physicians, lawyers, logicians, players, schoolmen, churchmen, statesmen, soldiers, casuists, connoisseurs, prelates, popes, and engineers--Don't fear, said I--I'll not hurt the poorest jack-ass upon the king's high-way--But your horse throws dirt; see you've splash'd a bishop--I hope in God, 'twas only Ernulphus, said I--But you have squirted full in the faces of Mess. Le Moyne, De Romigny, and De Marcilly, doctors of the Sorbonne--That was last year, replied I--But you have trod this moment upon a king.--Kings have bad times on't, said I, to be trod upon by such people as me.
>
> You have done it, replied my accuser.
>
> I deny it, quoth I, and so have got off, and here am I standing with my bridle in one hand, and with my cap in the other, to tell my story--And what is it? You shall hear in the next chapter. (IV.xx.298-299)

This passage is rich in sexual innuendo. The action which

is being described is the riding of a horse. It is of note that the term ride was an eighteenth-century expression for mounting a woman in copulation.[52] Also, as was noted earlier, the expression to horse means to possess a woman.[53] Many of the terms in this passage reinforce such a sexual reading. Tristram's riding movement--"two up and two down"--is sexually suggestive. Tread means to copulate with. It is close to the term treadle, which was used from about 1630 to 1890 to designate a whore.[54] Mount has a sexual meaning today. This meaning dates back at least to the sixteenth century. Like ride, it means to get upon in order to copulate with.[55] Less obvious is the expression "rattling gallop," which is probably a reference to rattle ballocks, an eighteenth-century term for the female pudend.[56] And "gallop" itself also suggests the excitement of a sexual ride. Jack referred to a male or to a male sweetheart.[57] Thus, the juxtaposition of "jack" and "ass" is particularly significant as a sexual image. Also important is the expression "turn-pike." Turn refers to the act of copulation. And various expressions are associated with it, such as to take a turn, to turn a woman up, to turn in Love's Lane.[58] This last expression seems particularly relevant here in view of Tristram's movement "up one lane--down another, through this turn-pike--over that. . . ." The term jock referred to the private parts of both men and women in Sterne's time. And as a verb it meant to coit.[59] Thus, Tristram's remark that the

"arch-jockey of jockeys had got behind me" suggests that he is assuming a female role. This would be in keeping with the kind of role reversal which can be noted in Tristram's hobbyhorse riding paragraph (I.xxiv.77). The suggestion that Tristram is reversing sexual roles (assuming both of the roles) reinforces the theme of onanism, for it implies a sexual relationship which is self-directed rather than other-directed.

This suggestion of onanism is continued in the second paragraph. There we find Tristram falling off his horse, an image which in itself suggests coitus interruptus. Also, "off," especially in this context, seems to be a reminder of eighteenth-century expressions such as to jerk off or to play off, both of which describe masturbation.[60] "Knock" can mean to copulate. This meaning dates back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, it also referred to the penis.[61] "Posts" may also be an obscene reference to the male erection. Then, in the list of professions, we can find sexual meanings in "fiddles" and "players." Fiddle in the eighteenth century meant to play about intimately and caress a woman.[62] And player is close to such eighteenth-century expressions as to play off. The last thing to be noted is that Tristram is accused of having "squirted full in the faces" of the doctors of the Sorbonne. This reference to ejaculation is a fitting finale to all of Tristram's riding and hobbyhorsing around.

Tristram's use of the onanism metaphor reminds us

of his double role as an author and a hobbyhorse rider. Tristram's sexual wit is enjoyable, and it invites active participation by the reader. At the same time, it also suggests the autoerotic nature of Tristram's playing. Of note is the passage in which Tristram practises on his fiddle:

> Ptr..r..r..ing--twing--twang--prut--trut--'tis a cursed bad fiddle.--Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or no?--trut..prut..--They should be fifths.--'Tis wickedly strung--tr...a.e.i.o.u.-twang.--The bridge is a mile too high, and the sound-post absolutely down,--else--trut . . prut--hark! 'tis not so bad a tone.--Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle, dum. There is nothing in playing before good judges,--but there's a man there--no--not him with the bundle under his arm--the grave man in black.--'Sdeath! not the gentleman with the sword on.--Sir, I had rather play a Caprichio to Calliope herself, than draw my bow across my fiddle before that very man; and yet, I'll stake my Cremona to a Jew's trump, which is the greatest musical odds that ever were laid, that I will this moment stop three hundred and fifty leagues out of tune upon my fiddle, without punishing one single nerve that belongs to him.--Twaddle diddle, tweddle diddle,--twiddle diddle,--twoddle diddle,--twuddle diddle,--prut-trut--krish--krash--krush.--I've undone you, Sir,--but you see he is no worse,--and was Apollo to take his fiddle after me, he can make him no better.
>
> Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle--hum--dum--drum.
>
> --Your worships and your reverences love musick--and God has made you all with good ears--and some of you play delightfully yourselves--trut-prut,--prut-trut.
>
> O! there is--whom I could sit and hear whole days,--whose talents lie in making what he fiddles to be felt,--who inspires me with his joys and hopes, and puts the most hidden springs of my heart into motion.--If you would borrow five guineas of me, Sir,--which is generally ten guineas more than I have to spare--or you, Messrs. Apothecary and Taylor, want your bills paying,--that's your time. (V.xv.371-372)

Most of the autoerotic elements of this passage have been discussed by Neil D. Isaacs in his essay "The Autoerotic Metaphor in Joyce, Sterne, Lawrence, Stevens, and

Whitman."[63] Surprisingly, however, Isaacs fails to explain adequately the central metaphor of the passage--the playing of the fiddle. Fiddle, as I have noted above, referred in the eighteenth century to the act of intimately caressing a woman. In this regard it is also significant that to strum meant to have carnal knowledge of a woman in Sterne's time.[64] This fact gives added weight to Isaac's assumption that Tristram's sound effects are a reminder of the sexual metaphor. The rest of the passage is adequately analyzed by Isaacs. Rather than paraphrasing his argument, I will quote what he has to say:

> Among the things to note here are the warming up, the questioning about his instrument, the descriptions "bad" and "wickedly strung," the references to size and position, the remarks about playing alone, especially to the effect that nobody can be upset by this kind of playing, the incidental phallic image of a man with a sword on, the working up to a climax, and the pride and satisfaction of achievement.
>
> Special notice should be taken of the words diddle, capriccio, and Jew's trump. As a verb, diddle means to cheat, to waste time, to sing without distinct utterance of words, and to move from side to side by jerks. The last meaning, historically the first meaning, has led to slang meanings for both copulation and masturbation, the latter perhaps in conjunction with the meaning to waste time. Partridge lists also an arbitrary variation on piddle. As a noun, diddle has meaning of the sound of the fiddle, early eighteenth-century slang for gin, and--according to Partridge among the schoolboys--the penis. The multiple use of the word in this passage calls multiple suggestions to mind, several of which are sexual, and, although actually recorded usages in those senses of the word postdate Sterne, the conclusion that some such suggestion was in present at the time is unavoidable.
>
> A capriccio is instrumental, usually whimsical piece of music, but the word also means a stroke of whimsey or a trick. One wonders why Sterne should choose to perform his trick for the epic muse rather than on the one hand Terpsichore or on the other hand

Erato. But a calliope is also an organ, and Sterne is again punning or funning with musical instruments.

A Jew's trump is a Jew's harp, but trump also means proboscis, so the wager is not one of great odds in terms of the value of musical instruments, but a bit of braggadoccio in terms of size (he says greatest), comparing a Jewish nose to a Shandean sexual organ.

The next one-line paragraph deals strictly with the business at hand--"Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle--hum--dum--drum"--as the crescendo reaches its peak. The following paragraph includes the abrupt diminuendo (the pun is irresistible) and some generalizing remarks including a pair of the most obvious signals in the episode: "Your worships and reverences love music--and God has made you all with good ears--and some of you play delightfully yourselves--trut-prut,--prut-trut."

The final paragraph deals with the euphoria of the aftermath of the experience. Including references to the nature of the experience and the great pleasure it affords the narrator, it concludes by saying that that's the best time to get something out of a man, a truth known eternally to women from Eve and Delilah to Mata Hari and Princess Grace . . . .[65]

Tristram's descriptions of his writing habits (III.xxviii), of his hobbyhorse (IV.xx), and of the playing of his fiddle are key passages in his book. All three passages emphasize his roles as a writer, a rider, and a player. The juxtaposition of these roles points to the paradoxes and inconsistencies of the private individual who attempts to make his private reality public. The main pitfall in this endeavor is the constant temptation to remain private and to enjoy one's privacy to the exclusion of public communication. The onanism metaphor thus represents the tension of the private consciousness. On the one hand, Tristram the hobbyhorse rider and player enjoys the inner ramblings of his mind. But, on the other hand, Tristram the artist and author also desires to make

his privacy public. Tristram in fact promises to go on a vegetable diet of "cold seed" (a sexual refrigerant) at the end of volume six so as to avoid the sort of digressions which he portrays in his plot lines (VI.xl.473). This is not a serious promise, but its main function seems to be to point once more to the sexual metaphor. For it is through this metaphor that Tristram succeeds in externalizing his private reality and thus placing it before the reader in an objective fashion.

The second important aspect of Sterne's metaphoric framework in Tristram Shandy involves impotence. The imagery of impotence is not as pervasive as that of onanism, but it is certainly present to a noticeable degree. Tristram himself admits on the occasion of his accidental circumcision that "nothing was well hung in our family" (V.xvii.376). The Shandys, including Tristram, are all prone to hobbyhorse riding, an activity which Sterne's sexually suggestive language associates with onanistic pleasures. From this association, it follows that onanistic pleasures in themselves can be unproductive (at least in the strictly physical sense of procreation). But, of course, the Shandys are not really unproductive. Tristram produces his "life and opinions." And the rest of the family is so strongly united by a bond of love and mutual understanding that communication both at the emotional and the intellectual levels does take place notwithstanding the obstacles of the Shandean hobbyhorses.[66] But, at the same time, the

imagery of impotence does exist in Tristram Shandy, and it does serve as a part of the comic irony which reminds the reader of the limitations of the hobbyhorsical consciousness.

Ironically, the worst offender is the pater familias--Walter Shandy. When he rides his hobbyhorse, Walter's consciousness is limited to the purely rational, the purely speculative, and the purely abstract. Like the projectors of the Academy of Lagado in Gulliver's Travels and Cornelius the father of Martinus Scriblerus, Walter often inhabits a cerebral world which is out of touch with human reality. Consequently, Walter's theories are forever being frustrated by the contingencies of the real world. And it is significant that most of his impotent theories are related either to the procreation of children or to the upbringing and education of children--two of the most basic of creative processes. For example, Tristram's begetting is ruined by Mrs. Shandy's association of ideas of copulation with the winding of the clock; Tristram's birth is marred by the accident to his nose; Walter's son is tragically christened Tristram instead of Trismegistus because Walter is so slow in putting on his breeches; and the Tristrapoedia, "my father's last stake," is rendered useless as each day passes because Walter becomes so involved in his ideas that he cannot keep up with Tristram's growth.

In fact, Sterne associates Walter's hobbyhorsical consciousness with abortion. Of note is the birth metaphor

which is used to describe Walter's thought processes during his discussion with Toby on (significantly enough) the right and wrong "end" of a woman. When Walter is interrupted by a knock on the door, it is almost as if his brain child were killed in its cerebral womb:

> Here a devil of a rap at the door snapp'd my father's definition (like his tobacco pipe) in two,--and, at the same time, crushed the head of as notable and curious a dissertation as ever was engendered in the womb of speculation . . . . (II.vii.102-103)

Pipe, it will be remembered, can refer to the penis. And so it is significant that Walter's broken pipe (which is closely associated with my father's "snapp'd" definition) results in an intellectual miscarriage.

The image of Walter's broken "pipe" is in keeping with his general antipathy to the human passions, including sexual passion. Walter in fact attempts to suppress the passions. Of note is his discussion with Toby and Slop on the subjects of sexual pleasure and procreation:

> --Brother Shandy, answer'd my uncle Toby, looking wistfully in his face,--you are much mistaken in this point;--for you do increase my pleasure very much, in begetting children for the Shandy family at your time of life.--But, by that, Sir, quoth Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy increases his own.--Not a jot, quoth my father.
>
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>
> My brother does it, quoth my uncle Toby, out of principle.--In a family-way, I suppose, quoth Dr. Slop.--Pshaw!--said my father,--'tis not worth talking of. (II.xii-xiii.115-116)

It is significant that Toby the innocent bachelor derives pleasure from Walter's "begetting children" while Walter claims that he does not derive any. The philosophical

Shandy even refuses to discuss the matter of his paternity.

To Walter's mind, sexual passion is characterized as an "ass," an expression he borrows from the hermit Hilarion (VIII.xxi.584). And man's sexuality is a regrettable necessity,

> . . . a passion which bends down the faculties, and turns all the wisdom, contemplations, and operations of the soul backwards--a passion . . . which couples and equals wise men with fools, and makes us come out of caverns and hiding-places . . . . (IX.xxxiii.645)

The sexual innuendoes in "come," "caverns," and "hiding-places" remind us of the physical level which Walter is trying to forget. Indeed, he rebels against love, disparages sex, and even ignores birth. Tristram tells us that Walter would never submit to love "like a Christian but would pish, and huff bounce, and kick, and play the Devil, and write the bitterest Philippick against the eye that ever man wrote" (VIII.xxvi.579). Walter seems to agree with Slop that it is "Virginity . . . which fills paradise" (VIII.xxxiii.588). And on the occasion of Tristram's birth, he temporarily forgets about his wife's groans of pain from upstairs as he becomes involved in Ernulphus' curse (III.x.168-169). In fact, Walter's oration following the news of Bobby's death suggests that he places death much higher on the scale of philosophical prestige than he does procreation (V.iii.355-356).

But notwithstanding his cerebral lucubrations, Walter is always "plagued and pester'd". (I.iv.8) by sex,

and he cannot avoid it. He is even compelled to begin the Tristrapoedia with a discussion of sexual intercourse. However, he is "between fifty and sixty years of age" (I.iv.8), and he seems to have little sexual drive. Consequently, it seems that he would rather have nothing to do with sex. In his own life he manages to get his "little concernments" (I.iv.8) out of the way by imposing the mathematical rigidity of clock time on his sex drive and by having sex with his wife and winding the house clock on the same night each month." Similarly, Walter tries to put a damper on Toby's sexual ardor by expounding his theories of love, which, according to Tristram, were meant "to crucify my uncle Toby's mind, almost as much as his amours themselves" (VI.xxxvi.468). Before the gentle captain encounters widow Wadman, for instance, Walter writes him a letter concerning "the nature of women, and of love-making to them" in which he recommends, not love-making at all, but the means to avoid it. Above all else, he suggests that Toby carry a pin, as the ancient Scythians did, with which to bleed himself below the ear in the event his passion should become particularly rampant and uncontrollable (VIII.xxxiv.592). (Ironically, pin was a slang term for penis in the eighteenth century.)[67] And, as a final check on Toby's potential lusts, Walter secretly contrives to have a camphorated cerecloth, a sexual refrigerant which prevents the formation of semen, sewn into Toby's breeches (VI.xxxvi.468-469). In a very real

way, then, Walter the abstracted philosopher tries to produce at least temporary impotence in his family.

Uncle Toby is a more sympathetic and less threatening character than Walter. But, lovable as he is, Toby represents a hobbyhorsical state of mind as well. Consequently, his limited consciousness is also associated with at least potential impotence and castration. We learn that the cause of Toby's "extream and unparallel'd modesty" with respect to women was a severe wound upon his groin which he suffered during the siege of Namur (I.xxi.66-67). And this very wound became the origin of Toby's hobbyhorse, for, as he found the use of language aggravating to his groin, he decided to communicate the fact of his accident as well as the stories of other military encounters through physical objects and signs. Toby's hobbyhorse and his wounded groin are thus closely related. And it is noteworthy as well that Toby is indirectly responsible for Tristram's painful circumcision, which was effected by a window sash falling upon Tristram's penis. The cause of this, we are told, was that Trim dismantled the sash windows because the pulleys and the lead were needed for the construction of certain parts of Toby's miniature town. Thus, at least in one instance, Toby's hobbyhorse is shown to be a threat to the continuation of the Shandy family line.

In comparing the two Shandy brothers, one notes that Toby is the less frustrated and the more content of

the two. Indeed, it is Toby rather than Walter who derives pleasure from Walter's "begetting children." The central reason for Toby's contentment is that, whereas Walter imposes his hobbyhorse on life by attempting to reconstruct human reality in terms of abstract systems, Toby remains within the amiable confines of his hobbyhorsical game world. Toby in effect chooses a life of innocence, a life which avoids sex, a life in which war is played rather than fought. Therefore, Toby's hobbyhorse is not as castrating as Walter's because it does not attempt to suppress sexuality in others; but it does nonetheless represent a hobbyhorsical state of mind which can, as Tristram's rather violent circumcision suggests, threaten the generative process. This is made clear throughout Tristram Shandy by Sterne's consistent use of sexual imagery to describe Toby's military hobbyhorse. At one level, the ironic juxtaposition of the science of war and killing with the themes of procreation and regeneration serves to underscore Toby's uninvolvement with sex. For example, when Trim compares the wooing of a woman to the act of laying siege to a town and the raising and lowering of breeches, Toby frankly states, "--I like the comparison . . . better than the thing i-self--" (IX.viii.609). And thing, it will be remembered, can serve as a general term for sexual organs.

In remaining innocent, Toby assumes the role of the Adamic man who has not yet been exposed to the mortal

fruits of sin, particularly sexuality. To this extent, his innocence is in a way related to impotence because he chooses not to exercise his [illegible]cy. For this reason, he is described, on the one hand, as a sort of babe in the woods when it comes to matters libidinous; but, at the same time, Sterne's language reminds us of the presence of sexuality:

> . . . so naked and defenceless did he stand before you, (when a siege was out of his head) that you might have stood behind any one of your serpentine walks, and shot my uncle Toby ten times in a day, through his liver, if nine times in a day, Madam, had not served your purpose. (VI.xxix.455-456).

It is ironic that the innocent Toby should be described here as standing "naked and defenceless," a choice of words which suggests a sexual erection. In the second phrase of the quotation, there is another reference to stand (in the past tense), which is followed by what seems to be a reminder of the temptation in the Garden of Eden ("serpentine walks"). This latter idea is very much in keeping with the story of Toby's amours. In fact, Tristram suggests that Madam shoot Toby "through his liver." The liver, of course, is the traditional seat of love and violent passion. And "shot my uncle Toby" may be an allusion to the eighteenth-century expression pay the shot, which signified to coit with a woman.[68]

The presence of these sexual innuendoes serves as a contrast to Toby's ignorance of women. As Walter is fond of pointing out, Toby "knew not . . . so much as the

right end of a Woman from the wrong" (IX.iii.602). In fact, Toby is associated with imagery of purity and innocence. The draw-bridges, gates, orgues, and the sentry-box of his miniature town have all been "painted white three times over" (VI.xxii.446). When widow Wadman attacks Toby in his sentry-box under the pretext of having a mote in her eye, he looks into her concupiscent orb "with as much innocency of heart, as ever child look'd into a raree-shew-box" (VIII.xxix.576). And when Toby is finally sitting next to widow Wadman in her house, Tristram takes up another metaphor from the world of games:

> . . . a child might have look'd into his hand--there was such a plainness and simplicity in his playing out what trumps he had--with such an unmistrusting ignorance of the ten-ace--and so naked and defenceless did he sit upon the same sopha with widow Wadman, that a generous heart would have wept to have won the game of him.
>
> Let us drop the metaphor. (IX.xxiii.627)

By reminding us that he has been indulging in "metaphor," Tristram alerts us that Toby's "game" with the widow has more than a single literal meaning. And it is of note that Tristram uses terms which have sexual connotations. Toby is child-like, but he is involved in a "game," a term which since the seventeenth century has had the slang signification of coition.[69] This meaning is reinforced by Toby's "naked and defenceless" posture. It is also of note that Toby, who knows not "the right end of a Woman from the wrong," has "an unmistrusting ignorance of the ten-ace." It is worth noting that both ace and ace of

spades referred to widow and to the female pudend in the nineteenth century.[70] Given the context of "ten-ace" and the implications of Toby's card "game," it is reasonable to assume that ace had a sexual meaning during Sterne's time as well; for it is clear that Toby's ignorance is an ignorance of woman's sexuality.

As an Adamic figure Toby has an archetypal significance, and he is indeed tempted by "a daughter of Eve," as Tristram calls widow Wadman (VIII.viii.546). However, although Tristram stresses that "Toby fell in love" (VI.xxxvii.469), the confrontation between Toby and widow Wadman does not really constitute a fall in the Biblical sense. Toby in fact does not give in to widow Wadman's temptation. Thus, he keeps his hobbyhorsical maidenhead intact, and, for this reason, Toby cannot communicate with widow Wadman:

> My uncle Toby, on his side, had presented himself every afternoon in his red and silver, and blue and gold alternately, and sustained an infinity of attacks in them, without knowing them to be attacks--and so had nothing to communicate-- (IX.xxx.641)

Consequently, when she asks him where he received his blow, he is unaware of her doubts about his sexual potency, and he with a "virgin modesty laid her finger upon the place" (IX.xxvi.638) on the map.

Trim, on the other hand, simply takes Bridget's hand and places it on his groin to show where Toby was wounded. Unlike his master, Trim has "much to communicate" (IX.xxx.641) because he has already fallen to the

temptations of women. Trim's description of the growth of his "love" for the fair Beguine clearly refers to a sexual experience. The Beguine's "rub-rub-rubbing" (VIII.xxii.574) of Trim's knee in ever-increasing strokes evokes the sexual motif. But it is not an onanistic experience, for, unlike Toby, Trim has a sexual partner with whom he is able to communicate.

The same is true of Trim's brother Tom. Tom's courtship of the sausage-making Jew's widow is described in language which suggests sexual commerce:

> As Tom perceived, an' please your honour, that he gained ground, and that all he had said upon the subject of sausages was kindly taken, he went on to help her a little in making them.--First, by taking hold of the ring of the sausage whilst she stroked the forced meat down with her hand--then by cutting the strings into proper lengths, and holding them in his hand, whilst she took them out one by one--then, by putting them across her mouth, that she might take them out as she wanted them--and so on from little to more, till at last he adventured to tie the sausage himself whilst she held the snout.-- (IX.vii.609)

Needless to say, sausages themselves and the process of making them are suggestive of the male genitalia and the titillating process leading to sexual excitement. Indeed, the widow "stroked the forced meat down with her hand." The term meat has referred to both the male and the female genitalia since the sixteenth century.[71] And "stroked," besides being an obvious description of a sexual movement, may be an allusion to the eighteenth-century expression take a stroke, which meant to coit.[72] Also, hold, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century, has had the

colloquial meaning of to conceive a child,[73] thus increasing the sexual suggestiveness of Tom's holding the "proper lengths" while the woman "took them out one by one." The "lengths" of string must be a reference to the male member; for "mouth" is a clear euphemism for the female genitalia, as in indicated by the existence of expressions such as mouth thankless (Scots, mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth century), mouth that cannot bite, and mouth that says no words about it (eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century), all of which refer to the female pudend.[74] The action increases in intensity; Tom takes on a more active role. And the paragraph ends with the widow holding (another sexual reference) "the snout.". Snout, of course, is a nose; and, as any wary reader of Sterne should know, a nose is not always just a nose.

The scene then goes on to end with a final euphemistic description of the sexual encounter:

> She made a feint however of defending herself, by snatching up a sausage:--Tom instantly laid hold of another--
> But seeing Tom's had more gristle in it--
> She signed the capitulation--and Tom sealed it; and there was an end of the matter. (IX.vii.609)

There may be a pun in "feint" and "defending" on the term fen, which in Sterne's time referred to a low harlot or a procuress.[75] Snatch, since the time of Robert Burton, has indicated a hasty or illicit or mercenary copulation.[76] Hence, the woman's "snatching up a sausage" is as explicit a sexual image as is possible. The term "laid" reinforces

the image. Also Partridge defines gristle as the male member, and dates this meaning at circa 1850.[77] But the nature of the sausage passage suggests that gristle must most certainly have carried a sexual meaning during Sterne's time. "Capitulation" may be a learned bawdy pun on the Latin caput, meaning head. Head referred to the prepuce before Sterne's time, and it could also imply maidenhead.[78] It is also worth noting that Partridge lists seal as a verb meaning to impregnate a woman and as a noun (in the plural) meaning testicles, "because they seal a sexual bargain."[79] Partridge dates both of these meanings at the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it is obvious that Sterne is using "seal" to signify a sexual consummation. Indeed, the final reference to "end of the matter" seems to indicate both the anatomical "end" and orgasm.

The strong sexual overtones of Trim's and Tom's courtships punctuate Toby's amours; both episodes are designed to bring into relief Toby's lack of involvement with women. Once Toby's campaigns come to an end and his amours begin, he assumes a passive role in keeping with his modesty and his child-like innocence. Thus, it is the woman, the experienced widow, who carries on the besieging during Toby's amours rather than the man. When Toby discovers that this aggressiveness in widow Wadman is due to her "HUMANITY," and when he realizes that her "HUMANITY" is an expression of her sexuality rather than of her compassion, then Toby does experience a fall of sorts.

But it is not an Adamic fall, for Toby resolves "never more to think of the sex,--or of aught which belonged to it" (III.xxiv.208). Rather, Toby's fall, if it can be called that, involves his affirmation of the hobbyhorsical consciousness. The passage which follows immediately on the story of Tom with the sausage-making widow is relevant here:

> All womankind, continued Trim, (commenting upon his story) from the highest to the lowest an' please your honour, love jokes; the difficulty is to know how they chuse to have them cut; and there is no knowing that, but by trying as we do with our artillery in the field, by raising or letting down their breeches, till we hit the mark.--
>
> --I like the comparison, said my uncle Toby, better than the thing itself--
>
> --Because your honour, quoth the Corporal, loves glory, more than pleasure.
>
> I hope, Trim, answered my uncle Toby, I love mankind more than either; and as the knowledge of arms tends so apparently to the good and quiet of the world--and particularly that branch of it which we have practised together in our bowling-green, has no object but to shorten the strides of AMBITION, and intrench the lives and fortunes of the few, from the plunderings of the many--whenever that drum beats in our ears, I trust, Corporal, we shall neither of us want so much humanity and fellow-feeling as to face about and march. (IX.viii.609-610)

There is a noticeable shift in style in this passage from Trim's sexual language to Toby's serious affirmation of his ideal. Trim resides at the sexual level. For him, artillery is both military and sexual; and breeches can cover a gunner or the female genitalia. Toby understands this double meaning. In fact, he likes the comparison, presumably because it is a military comparison. But Toby does not like the "thing itself." On the one hand, "thing"

can have a sexual meaning. But, at the same time, "thing" also refers to the other half of the "comparison"--the military meaning. Toby does not use his sexual "thing," nor does he use a military "thing." He is willing to sacrifice both pleasure and glory because, as he puts it, "I love mankind more than either." In short, Toby decides not to participate in sex or to seek glory in war. As his wounded groin indicates, Toby has suffered both as a sexual being and as a soldier, and he now prefers to live a life which is dedicated more to "humanity and fellow-feeling" than to battle. And, of course, both sex and war involve battles. As Tom's affair with the sausage-making widow indicates, the sexual encounter is a violent one. Indeed, Toby himself meets the widow Wadman on a military setting, and her attacks are described in military terms. But once it becomes clear to Toby that her "HUMANITY" is not compassion but sexuality, then he retreats to his non-violent hobbyhorse and gives up the pleasures of the sexual battle.

Sterne's use of sexual imagery in describing the Shandys is illuminating, particularly since this imagery never seems to have the weight of outright condemnation. Indeed, as Sterne says in the sermon "The Levite and His Concubine," "saltness" is to be preferred over satire if we wish to correct our brethren's foibles (Sermons, XVIII, 299). The imagery of onanism and impotence certainly does suggest certain shortcomings in the hobbyhorsical

Shandys. Walter is too cerebral and Toby does disassociate himself from parts of the human struggle. But the sexual imagery tends to stress the humor as much as it stresses the weaknesses of the hobbyhorsical consciousness. The imagery does suggest that Walter's ideas are impotent, and in this way the absurdity of his ideas is rendered comical and enjoyable. But Walter is not impotent as a human being. He does father two sons, and he does communicate in his own way a strong feeling of human compassion. Similarly, Sterne's language suggests that Toby is an innocent. But he is an innocent by choice, and he is not at all impotent. He acts as a veritable father figure to young Le Fever, for instance; and this episode and the fly episode are examples of Toby's strong humanizing influence on his nephew Tristram. Thus, the sexual material does not constitute an authorial condemnation of the hobbyhorsical consciousness. However, it does serve as a comic reminder of the problems which are inherent in a consciousness which limits itself to a private game world.

Richard A. Lanham's recent study Tristram Shandy: The Games of Pleasure presents a useful discussion of the game element in Tristram Shandy.[80] Lanham focuses on the Hobby, which he defines as a commitment to self and to pleasure.[81] And he sees the Shandys as unrepentant hobbyhorse riders who do not seek wisdom or communication but only the autoerotic pleasures of playing their games. But Lanham's thesis stops at this point. He does not take

into account the ironic quality of Sterne's sexual metaphor. Rather, he takes it at its surface level, and he maintains that Sterne sees joy in solipsism.[82] As a result, Lanham is led to conclude in his final chapter that Tristram Shandy diminishes the seriousness of the self.[83] In one sense this is true. The hobbyhorsical consciousness, "Freud's tireless seeker after pleasure,"[84] as Lanham calls it, is certainly not a philosophical self. It is dedicated to pleasure, and Lanham's study analyzes this self impressively. However, we seriously misread Sterne if we take this non-serious self as the final standard in Tristram Shandy. Quite the contrary, Sterne's use of sexual imagery suggests that the hobbyhorsical consciousness is enjoyable, but it also has its limitations. Walter is endearing because he can be a loving brother and father and at the same time pursue absurd theories. And Toby is lovable because he chooses an innocence of a thoroughly delightful kind in order to dedicate himself to humanity and fellow feeling. We are made to feel affection for them both, but at the same time we are reminded that we feel affection because they are human and loving and because they are flawed. It is the latter point--the flaw, the potential impotence, the tendency towards onanistic pleasures--which is emphasized by the sexual imagery. The purpose of this imagery, then, is to increase the reader's awareness and to suggest the need for a vision (a consciousness) of the Shandy world which can see both the positive and the

negative aspects of the hobbyhorsical consciousness. It is for this reason that Tristram the narrator is also part of Sterne's ironic sexual framework. Like the other Shandys, Tristram is sympathetic and entertaining, but he is also self-consciously hobbyhorsical; he is inclined to cultivate his private self. Thus, he is also characterized in terms of sexual imagery. As with the other Shandys, this persistent sexual metaphor creates an objective distance between the reader and Tristram's life and opinions. By this method, Sterne discourages us from praising too highly the joys of solipsism and at the same time invites us to see and enjoy the complexities and contradictions of mortal actions and words.

CHAPTER III

TRISTRAM THE NARRATOR: SELF-AWARENESS AND THE SEXUAL MOTIF

Sterne's use of the sexual motif brings into relief the problems of communication which result when the individual limits himself to a totally private consciousness. These problems of communication are further complicated by the ambiguity of language itself. As Locke points out, perfect communication can only occur when a given word has an identical signification for both of the persons who are using that word.[1] But this is not always possible. Language is replete with nuances and multiple meanings, and it is open to personal interpretations. Thus, as the various encounters between the hobbyhorsical Shandys demonstrate, the understanding of words is strongly affected by one's private consciousness. Toby, for example, rides a military hobbyhorse, and verbal signals such as "fortify," "breech," "train," and "bridge" always carry a military connotation for him even if they are mentioned in a non-military context. Similarly, Walter's mind is inclined to follow the exact patterns of abstract systems such as the theory of geniture, the theory of breech birth, the theory of names, and the theory of noses. Thus, all

aspects of life from sex to education to death are associated in his mind with a particular theory or a classical precedent, and his use of language reflects this intellectual bias. The conjunction of the private consciousness and the ambiguity of language thus creates an unending series of obstacles to communication between individuals.

It is Tristram's purpose in the book to make his readers aware of these obstacles. And he achieves this end largely through the continual use of sexual innuendo. As a result of Tristram's sexual word play, the reader is perpetually invited to interpret Tristram's meaning sexually even in situations where the meaning is in reality non-sexual. This technique allows us to experience the hobbyhorsical frame of mind; and, at the same time, it makes us aware of the strong connotative powers of language.

Tristram introduces the themes of sex and human awareness in the opening paragraph of his book:

> I Wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing;--that not only the production of a rational Being was concern'd in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind;--and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost:--Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly,--I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me. (I.i.4)

The inference in this passage seems to be that when one acts

with complete awareness, then a happier and a more productive state of affairs will ensue. But when awareness is not present, then "muscular strength and virility" (I.ii.6)--that is, productivity--will suffer. Also, this more unproductive state is directly related to Walter's rather mechanical sexual habits and to the resultant "unhappy association of ideas" (I.iv.9) in Mrs. Shandy's mind. It seems relevant to note here that Locke considered the association of ideas which results wholly from "chance or custom" as the "most dangerous error" in the world since, as he states in the Essay, "so far as it obtains, it hinders men from seeing and examining."[2] Tristram's emphasis on intellectual awareness in his opening paragraph seems to be related to this Lockean notion of seeing and examining. His isolation of Locke's association of ideas theory as the first cause of his own misfortunes strengthens this impression. But what is most important about this passage is the humorous contrast between Tristram's emphasis on awareness and the fact that he is in actuality talking about sexual intercourse. The overall effect of this contrast is to create an objective distance between the reader and Tristram's argument. Paradoxically, then, the sexual element actually helps to increase the reader's awareness by providing him with an objective viewpoint of the discussion on awareness itself.

Sterne uses the sexual motif as a reminder of the consciousness theme throughout his book, particularly in

those passages where hobbyhorsical notions are being expressed. Of note is Tristram's history of the homunculus and his acknowledgement of the hobbyhorsical source of the story:

> To my uncle Mr. Toby Shandy do I stand indebted for the preceding anecdote, to whom my father, who was an excellent natural philosopher, and much given to close reasoning upon the smallest matters, had oft, and heavily, complain'd of the injury; but once more particularly, as my uncle Toby well remember'd, upon his observing a most unaccountable obliquity, (as he call'd it) in my manner of setting up my top, and justifying the principles upon which I had done it,--the old gentleman shook his head, and in a tone more expressive by half of sorrow than reproach,--he said his heart all along foreboded, and he saw it verified in this, and from a thousand other observations he had made upon me, That I should neither think nor act like any other man's child:--But alas! continued he, shaking his head a second time, and wiping away a tear which was trickling down his cheeks, My Tristram's misfortunes began nine months before ever he came into the world.
>
> --My mother, who was sitting by, look'd up,--but she knew no more than her backside what my father meant,--but my uncle Mr. Toby Shandy, who had been often informed of the affair,--understood him very well. (I, 4-5:6-7)

As this passage follows directly on the story of the homunculus, the reader is prepared to expect more sexual jokes. Of particular interest is the reference to Tristram's setting up of his top. This, of course, is a children's game, but, at the same time, the expression may refer to a sexual game as well. To top in Shakespeare's time meant to coit.[3] The term continued to have sexual connotations in following centuries. Partridge lists top-divers (current from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century), which is defined as a lover of women, one who has loved old-hat in his time.[4] The sexual innuendo in "top" suggests an

obscene meaning in Tristram's "obliquity" as well. It is of note that in the first sentence Tristram stands indebted for the homunculus anecdote (a story about a spermatozoan). Also, the reference to Walter as a "natural philosopher" is suggestive. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, natural referred to a mistress or a harlot.[5] This sexual theme is further reinforced by Walter's reference to Tristram's misfortunes, which "began nine months before ever he came into the world," and then by the parting reference to Mrs. Shandy's "backside."

Tristram's use of such sexually evocative language serves to warn the reader that the matter under discussion is of a hobbyhorsical nature. The theory of the homunculus derives (at least as far as the Shandy family is concerned) from Walter's systems-oriented mind, as does the theory concerning Tristram's geniture. And the ambiguity of Tristram's language helps to put these theories in an ironic light. The same technique can be noticed in passages where Tristram himself begins to wax hobbyhorsical, specifically in those passages where Tristram emulates his father and tries to blame his misfortunes on forces external to himself. Early in the book, for instance, Tristram defines himself as the sport of fortune:

> . . . I have been the continual sport of what the world calls fortune: and though I will not wrong her by saying, She has ever made me feel the weight of any great or signal evil;--yet with all the good temper in the world, I affirm it of her, that in every stage of my life, and at every turn and corner where she could get fairly at me, the ungracious Duchess has pelted

me with a set of as pitiful misadventures and cross accidents as ever small Hero sustained. (I.v.10)

The playfully combative relationship which Tristram enjoys (or suffers) with the Duchess Fortune places his complaint in a humorous light. And this tone is reinforced by a variety of sexual double-entendres. Probably the most obvious of these jokes to the eighteenth-century mind would have been in the word "turn." In the seventeenth century, the expression turn-up referred to a whore, from whence derived to take a turn or to turn a woman up, meaning to copulate.[6] Also, the term cross signified to bestride a horse in Sterne's time, and later in the century (circa 1790, according to Partridge) it gained the added signification of having intercourse with a woman.[7] It is difficult to say if this latter meaning was also current in Sterne's time, but Sterne's continual word play with hobbyhorse riding would suggest that for Sterne all activities related to the riding of horses can have sexual implications. It is documented that in the eighteenth century duchess signified "a woman enjoyed with her pattens on, or by a man in boots."[8] Also of note is the pun on the term for the female pudend in the first syllable of "continual." In addition, there are a number of words in the passage which often appear with sexual meanings in Shakespeare and with which Sterne, judging from the salacious quality of his own style, seems to have been familiar. Sport is often used with the meaning of amorous sport or wanton play.[9]

Fortune could refer to a happy love-making. This meaning seems to derive from the French expression bonne fortune, which meant a love bout.[10] Wrong could mean to get a woman with child outside wedlock or to rape a married woman.[11] Weight was used bawdily to suggest the weight of a man while lying on a woman.[12] And corner referred to the pudend, as in Othello's speech:

> I had rather be a toad
> And live upon the vapour of a dungeon
> Than keep a corner in the thing I love
> For others' uses.[13]

That Tristram intends to evoke this sexual meaning is suggested by the image of female Fortune attempting to "get fairly at" Tristram at "every turn and corner."

Tristram's descriptions of his various misfortunes are similarly associated with the sexual theme. For example, the accident to Tristram's nose, including the long digression of "Slawkenbergius's Tale," depends on the double meaning of nose as nose and as penis. This is particularly significant when Tristram discusses the causes and effects of the incident. The sexual innuendo helps to remind us that Tristram's hobbyhorsical justification for his damaged nose and for his subsequent misfortunes is something of a cock and bull story:

> But I was begot and born to misfortunes . . . . The fact was this, before I was born, my mother having carried my father up to town much against the grain,--he peremptorily insisted upon the clause;--so that I was doom'd, by marriage articles, to have my nose squeez'd as flat to my face, as if the destinies had actually spun me without one.
>
> How this event came about,--and what a train of

> vexatious disappointments, in one stage or other of my life, have pursued me from the mere loss, or rather compression, of this one single member,--shall be laid before the reader all in due time. (I.xv.41)

"Spun" may be a reference to the sixteenth and seventeenth-century expression to spin crooked spindles, which was said of a woman in the act of committing adultery.[14] A sexual meaning is certainly intended, for Tristram refers to his nose as a "member" and comments that he was "spun without one." Also, his use of "laid" reinforces the sexual connotations of the passage and further increases the irony which undercuts Tristram's self-justifi[illegible]

Tris[illegible] indeed dominated by the belief that he "was begot and born to misfortunes" and that these misfortunes can be traced back to his unfortunate conception and particularly to the accident to his nose at birth. In fact, all of Tristram's book up to the beginning of Toby's amours (VI.xx) is related to this latter accident. It is Tristram's hobbyhorsical purpose to prove that his mother's marriage settlement was the direct cause of his crushed nose and of his other misadventures. Thus, he has to describe everything which leads up to the accident and which results from the accident. Therefore, he describes the midwife and the parson's wife (I.vii), Yorick (I.x-xii), Mrs. Shandy's marriage settlement (I.xv), Walter's theories about lying-in (I.xviii) and names (I.xix), Tristram's ideas about baptism (I.xx), the night of Tristram's birth

(I.xxi), Toby (I.xxi-II.vi), Obadiah and Dr. Slop (II.ix), Dr. Slop's instruments (II.xi), speed and Stevinus (II.xii), the sermon upon conscience (II.xv-xvii), the knots and Ernulphus's curse (II.xviii-III.xiii), Tristram's birth (III.xiii), a discussion on fingers, forceps, and duration, followed by the preface (III.xiv-xx), and Tristram's birth and accident (III.xxiii). The accident, in its turn, produces other events, which Tristram must also describe in a line of causality: Walter's opinions about noses (III.xxvii-xxxvii), "Slawkenbergius's Tale" (III.xxxvii-iv.i), Walter's theory about the name Trismegistus (IV.viii-xiii), Tristram's unfortunate christening (IV.xiv-xix), Walter's desire for an un-naming (IV.xxiii), and the Visitation Dinner (IV.xxvi-xxx).

Tristram's adherence to such a complex narrative line indicates a hobbyhorsical need to explain things in terms of causes and effects. But, at the same time, Tristram's narrative line is permeated with the sexual theme, which serves to make fun of such rigid thinking. Reference has already been made to Tristram's crushed "nose" and to "Slawkenbergius's Tale." Also important is Tristram's third accident--his unhappy christening. This misfortune in itself has a sexual connotation, for, as we learn later in the book, Tristram's name seems to derive from Aristotle's dictum, "Quod omne animal post coitum est triste" (V.xxxvi.397). Tristram makes fun of Walter's theory of names and pedantry in general by inserting the

story of Phutatorius's sexual accident with the hot chestnut. And it should be noted that the standard English term nuts signifying glans penis and the slang term nuts signifying testicles were both in use in the eighteenth century.[15]

Tristram's lask childhood misfortune--his circumcision--repeats the same themes that are present in the rest of Tristram's "disgracias." The window sash accident is the most openly sexual of Tristram's mishaps. Also, Tristram treats it apologetically and uses it as an excuse for his future troubles:

> --'Twas nothing,--I did not lose two drops of blood by it--'Twas not worth calling in a surgeon, had he lived next door to us--thousands suffer by choice, what I did by accident.--Doctor Slop made ten times more of it, than there was occasion:--some men rise, by the art of hanging great weights upon small wires,--and I am this day (August the 10th, 1761) paying part of the price of this man's reputation. (V.xvii.376)

Of particular note is the suggestion of a sexual joke in the expression "[illegible] men rise." This innuendo is reinforced by the reference to "hanging great weights upon small wires." It has already been pointed out that weight is often used with a sexual meaning in Shakespeare. And "small wires" most probably refers to the male genitalia. This suggestion is encouraged by the very nature of Tristram's accident with the window sash. Also significant in this regard is Tristram's use of ambiguous and sexually suggestive language when he describes the actual accident:

> I was five years old.--Susannah did not consider that

> nothing was well hung in our family,--so slap came the sash down like lightening upon us;--Nothing is left,--cried Susannah,--nothing is left--for me, but to run my country.-- (V.xvii.376)

The fact that none of the Shandys is "well hung" seems to pick up on the "small wires" theme. And this same idea is repeated by Susannah's ambiguous exclamation that "nothing is left." Also worth noting is the sexual pun in the first syllable of "country."

Tristram's use of sexually ambiguous language places his accident, and particularly his self-justifying attitude to his accident, in a humorous and ironic light. Thus, although on the one hand Tristram is indulging with hobbyhorsical delight in the retelling of his personal misadventures and of the justifications for those misadventures, he is also making the reader aware of the dangers of self-indulgence by creating an ironic distance through sexual innuendoes. In this way, Tristram is living up to his ideal of the proper author-reader relationship:

> Writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all;--so no author, who understands the just bounds of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and to leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.
>
> For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own. (II.xi.108-109)

Ironically, Tristram achieves this "conversation" through a form of manipulation, for his use of sexual

innuendo is, after all, a rhetorical device which elicits a particular type of response from his readers. One can agree to a point with critics such as Fluchère who maintain that Tristram's use of sexual material serves to make accomplices of us.[16] This is true to the extent that the reader's continual jumping to sexual conclusions does seem to parallel a hobbyhorsical frame of mind such as Toby's, which is continually jumping to military conclusions, or Walter's, which is continually jumping to classical or philosophical conclusions. However, Tristram's sexually ambiguous language does more than allow us to experience the hobbyhorsical frame of mind. It also creates an objective distance which allows the reader to see the dangers of hobbyhorsical overindulgence. This becomes evident in the reader's relationship to Tristram. Tristram, after all, is a monologuist who, like Trim, likes to hear himself talk. He cannot bear interruptions: ". . . there is nothing in this world I abominate worse," says Tristram, "than to be interrupted in a story . . ." (VII.i.479). And he is quite conscious of the advantage he has over his readers. It is only when he must run away from death in volume seven that he resists the temptation to go into a long digression, and he defers to the reader's weaker position: "But courage! gentle reader!--I scorn it [the story of Eustace de St. Pierre--a digression]--'tis enough to have thee in my power--but to make use of the advantage which the fortune of the pen has now gained over thee, would be too

much . . ." (VII.vi.480). (Again, one should note the sexual implications of Tristram's relationship with his readers--his "power" over us is due to the "fortune of the pen".) But Tristram often does indulge in digressions, particularly when they serve his purpose of explaining his misfortunes. Thus, Tristram is forever in the position of controlling his readers for his own purposes. And his use of sexual innuendoes is the only consistent device which serves to remind the reader of Tristram's hobbyhorsical game.

We are presented with very dramatic evidence of Tristram's manipulation and control of the reader towards the end of volume one when Tristram actually stops short and commands the female reader to reread the previous chapter because she has failed to see "That my mother was not a papist" (I.xx.56). Tristram's point that readers should transcend the simple quest for adventure and should learn "to think as well as read" (I.xx.57). Interestingly enough, Tristram stimulates the reader into thinking through the use of sexual language and themes. It is significant, for instance, that Tristram singles out the female reader and that he describes her reading habits in highly sexual terms:

> It is a terrible misfortune for this same book of mine, but more so to the Republick of Letters;--so that my own is quite swallowed up in the consideration of it,--that this self-same pruriency for fresh adventures in all things, has got so strongly into our habit and humours,- and so wholly intent are we upon satisfying the impatience of our concupiscence that way,--that nothing but the gross and more carnal parts of a composition will go down:--The subtle hints and sly

> yourself, of what was to come in the next page, I would tear it out of my book. (I.xxv.80)

This attitude seems to extend to Tristram's use of language as well. He claims to leave us free to interpret his language as we wish, but he actually manipulates us into very definite interpretations. At the beginning of his discussion on noses, for instance, Tristram claims that he has depended "all along, upon the cleanliness of my reader's imaginations" (III.xxxi.218). And he goes on to say that in all instances of interpretations, as for instance in the case of Toby staring at the crevice in the wall when considering the right and wrong "end" of a woman (II.vii.102), there is a "dirty and clean" (III.xxxi.218) way of seeing things. Thus, Tristram tries to overcome equivocation by simply defining "nose" as "a Nose, and nothing more, or less" (III.xxxi.218). But Tristram himself undercuts this ostensibly pure intent by loading his language with sexual innuendoes:

> He [Walter] would often declare in speaking his thoughts upon the subject [of noses], that he did not conceive how the greatest family in England could stand it out against an uninterrupted succession of six or seven short noses.--And for the contrary reason, he would generally add, That it must be one of the greatest problems in civil life, where the same number of long and jolly noses following one another in a direct line, did not raise and hoist it up into the best vacancies in the kingdom.--He would often boast that the Shandy family rank'd very high in king Harry the VIIIth's time, but owed its rise to no state engine,--he would say,--but to that only;--but that, like other families, he would add, it had felt the turn of the wheel, and had never recovered the blow of my great grandfather's nose.--It was an ace of clubs indeed, he would cry, shaking his head,--and as vile a one for an unfortunate family, as ever turn'd up.

trumps." (III.xxxiii.220-221)

Like Tristram Shandy himself, this passage begins with a reference to conception. There are also several allusions to the male erection ("stand it out," "long and jolly noses," "a direct line," "carry and hoist it," "rank'd very high," "its rise"). "Nose," of course, refers to the penis, as most likely does the expression "ace of clubs." And all these male elements naturally enough find their way into their female counterpart--"the best vacancies in the kingdom." This wealth of raising and entering is also reflected in the expressions "turn of the wheel" and "turn'd up trumps," both of which seem to be based on such seventeenth-century terms for coition as to turn a woman up.[19] If the reader has failed to take note of these verbal elbowings in the ribs, Tristram makes sure we reread the passage and seek its scabrous level by warning us not to do so and by continuing his salacious innuendoes:

> --Fair and softly, gentle reader!--where is thy fancy carrying thee?--If there is truth in man, by my great grandfather's nose, I mean the external organ of smelling, or that part of man which stands prominent in his face,--and which painters say, in good jolly noses and well-proportioned faces, should comprehend a full third,--that is, measuring downwards from the setting on of the hair.--
> --What a life of it has an author, at this pass! (III.xxxiii.221)

Tristram's reference to "stands," "good jolly noses," and the suggestion of the pubic hair in the penultimate sentence all belie his ostensibly pure intent. The reader is not allowed to forget that words can have

more than one meaning. The scabrous level is there most definitely, and it is up to us to decide if this level pertains to the subject at hand or not. The reader is thus faced with the responsibility of interpreting language according to its context. The crucial prerequisite to this act of judgment is that the reader be conscious of the various levels and ambiguities of language. To make this patently clear, Tristram sometimes oversteps the limits of the innuendo, and he confronts us with much more blatantly provocative language. Three chapters later, for instance, Tristram is about to discuss Erasmus's writing on "the various uses and seasonable applications of long noses," and he once more warns the female reader not to make obscene interpretations. But this time the language is very openly sexual, and it actually depicts the female reader in coital combat with the devil:

> Now don't let Satan, my dear girl, in this chapter take advantage of any one spot of rising-ground to get astride of your imagination, if you can any ways help it; or if he is so nimble as to slip on,--let me beg of you, like an unback'd filly, to frisk it, to squirt it, to jump it, to rear it, to bound it,--and to kick it, with long kicks and short kicks, till like Tickletoby's mare, you break a strap or a crupper, and throw his worship into the dirt.--You need not kill him.-- (III.xxxvi.226)

The expressions "rising-ground," "get astride," and "to slip on" suggest the genital area and a sexual connection. The "unback'd filly's" movements, which Tristram describes in a rhythmic series of italicized terms borrowed from Rabelais,[20] describe the natural continuation of this

sexual connection. The image is strengthened even more by the reference to "Tickletoby," which is a cant term for penis.[21] Apparently, then, "Tickletoby's mare" is the female pudendum. And one might also note the final phrase--"You need not kill him"--which may be an extension of the traditional conceit which identifies orgasm with dying.[22] Such innuendoes continue in the chapters that follow. In chapter thirty-seven, for example, it is pointed out that "a long nose is not without its domestic conveniences also, for that in a case of distress,--and for want of a pair of bellows, it will do excellently well ad excitandum focum (to stir up the fire.)" (III.xxxvii.229). Walter scratches one of Erasmus's last three words to change the meaning, and, as Work points out, he must have altered the phrase to read either ad excitandum ficum or ad excitandum locum.[23] The former would best suit my argument as it is the most explicit, but actually all of the Latin phrases are sexually suggestive.

Following this barrage of innuendoes, the reader simply cannot deny the sexual meaning of the term nose. This is particularly interesting since the reader knows for a fact that Tristram's narrative about short and long noses deals with noses and not with genitalia. When Tristram tells us, for example, that he suffered many "whips and short turns" (III.xxxviii.230) because of the shortness of his nose, we immediately jump to the sexual conclusion as a result of our knowledge of the

eighteenth-century meanings of nose and turn, and we can snicker at the double meaning of Tristram's confession.[24] But we know from a later chapter that it is Tristram's nose and only his nose which has been crushed "as flat as a pancake to his face" (III.xxvii.214).

Similarly, the whole of "Slawkenbergius's Tale" (which Tristram seems to address to the female reader--III.xlii.242) builds much of its humorous effect on the double meaning of nose. But again the actual facts of the story deal with a nose, and only a nose. The various interpretations given to the nose are not based on objective facts but exist only in the minds of those who observe it. Once the stranger leaves Strasburg, various persons conduct lectures on the stranger's nose from differing points of view. And the citizens of Strasburg choose among these lecturers "as faith and credulity marshal'd them" so that "every Strasburger had the intelligence he wanted" (IV. "Slawkenbergius's Tale." 257). Even the learned Strasburgers interpret the nose in accordance to their preconceptions. As Slawkenbergius puts it, "they concerned themselves not with facts--they reasoned--" (IV.257). The doctors discuss "wens and oedematous swellings" (IV.257) and nutrition (IV.258). The logicians study the word nose (IV.259). The practitioners of civil law consider the legal status of the nose and whether or not it is a true or a false nose (IV.259-260). This leads to a debate by the ecclesiastic court on the reality of the nose and the authenticity of

the Promontory of Noses (IV.260). Meanwhile, the Catholic and Lutheran universities have been discussing Martin Luther's damnation. Their debate leads them to the topic of God's powers, and they leave the whole issue of the nose behind (IV.260-263).

"Slawkenbergius's Tale" is thus constructed as a parable dealing with preconceptions and "opinions," much as the whole of Tristram Shandy is. One might even paraphrase Epictetus's motto to volume one and apply it to "Slawkenbergius's Tale": It is not noses but opinions concerning noses, which disturb men. Tristram makes this point particularly strong to the reader by coercing us into maintaining our own "opinion" about the nose--a sexual opinion. This opinion is based on our knowledge of the ambiguous meaning of the term nose, so that we embark on the story with a strong preconception about the meaning of nose. And, of course, this preconception is reinforced by Tristram's continuing use of sexual innuendoes. For one thing, the stranger's nose is of particular interest as a sensual object to the women. The trumpeter's wife, for instance, swears that she will touch it with her finger before she sleeps (IV.247). The innkeeper's wife makes a similar promise (IV.251). And the various women in religious orders are kept awake all night by the nose. Of note are the abbess of Quedlingberg[25] and her four great dignitaries who had come to Strasburg "to consult the university upon a case of conscience relating to their

placket holes" (IV.253). The term placket referred to a woman as sex and to the female pudend in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[26] The word hole renders this reference obscenely (and humorously) redundant. This sexual joke is followed by a description of the nose's night of mischief with the five nuns:

> The courteous stranger's nose had got perched upon the top of the pineal gland of her brain, and made such rousing work in the fancies of the four great dignitaries of her chapter, they could not get a wink of sleep the whole night thro' for it--there was no keeping a limb still amongst them--in short, they got up like so many ghosts. (IV.253-254)

There then follows a list of the various severer religious ladies who spent the night "tumbling and tossing, and tossing and tumbling" (IV.254) from the effects of the nose. Significantly, after this description of nocturnal unrest, we are told that the dean of Strasburg and his helpers "assembled in the morning to consider the case of butter'd buns" (IV.254-255), which is a cant term for women who have frequent sexual intercourse.[27] This metaphor is continued in the next sentence, where we are told that because of the confusion the bakers "had all forgot to lay their leaven" [my italics]; as a result, "there were no butter'd buns to be had for breakfast in all Strasburg" (IV.255).

In the next paragraph, the metaphor changes, but the sexual implications remain equally obvious:

> If the stranger's nose took this liberty of thrusting itself thus into the dishes of religious orders, Etc. what a carnival did his nose make of it, in those of

> the laity!--'tis more than my pen, worn to the stump as it is, has power to describe; tho' I acknowledge . . . that there is many a good simile now subsisting in the world which might give my countrymen some idea of it; but at the close of such a folio as this, wrote for their sakes, and in which I have spent the greatest part of my life--tho' I own to them the simile is in being, yet would it not be unreasonable in them to expect I should have either time or inclination to search for it? (IV.255)

The slang term pen can refer to the male member. The fact that it is "worn to the stump" is in keeping with the reference to spending and with Tristram's own abbreviated "nose." This diminution in size is only the natural result of the "thrusting" into the "dishes of religious orders" and into those of the "laity" (a pun, of course). And while pointing out puns, one should never forget that ubiquitous term "country" and its salacious first syllable.

Slawkenbergius then goes on to describe the general fervor which the nose excited in the Strasburgers:

> . . . every soul, good and bad--rich and poor--learned and unlearned--doctor and student--mistress and maid--gentle and simple--nun's flesh and woman's flesh in Strasburg spent their time in hearing tidings about it--every eye in Strasburg languished to see it--every finger--every thumb in Strasburg burned to touch it. (IV.255-256)

It is of note that the prose in this passage moves from the more spiritual and male element--"soul," "learned," "doctor,"--to the carnal and female element--"mistress," "nun's flesh," "woman's flesh," "spent." This movement is paralleled by the shift from "eye" and "languished" to "finger," "thumb," "burned," and "touch."

To all this sexual innuendo Slawkenbergius also adds the figure of the stranger himself. Everyone has a different opinion about him, but they agree

> that the stranger himself was one of the most perfect paragons of beauty--the finest made man!--the most genteel!--the most generous of his purse--the most courteous in his carriage that had ever entered the gates of Strasburg--that as he rode, with his scymetar slung loosely to his wrist, thro' the streets--and walked with so sweet an air of careless modesty, and so manly withal--as would have put the heart in jeopardy (had his nose not stood in his way) of every virgin who had cast her eyes upon him. (IV.256)

Besides learning of the stranger's beauty as a man, we are also told that he is "generous of his purse." The term purse referred to the female pudend in the eighteenth century.[28] Thus, it is thematically significant that in the next phrase he is described entering the gates of Strasburg. And he enters while riding a horse, another sexual image which Sterne repeatedly uses in Tristram Shandy. The "scymetar slung loosely" seems phallic, and it parallels the image of the nose which stood in his way "of every virgin . . . ." It is therefore not surprising that the nose should repel virgins. Diego, after all, is something of a walking phallic symbol. Besides his prominent nose, he bedecks himself in "crimson-satin breeches with a silver-fringed . . . cod-piece" (IV.249). There is nothing very subtle about that sexual flag. And, in addition, he always engages the world with his "naked scymetar" (IV.247) in hand so as to defend his nose. This seems highly symbolic. Indeed, Diego travels alone and he

suffers from unrequited love. It is thus an easy task for the reader attuned to Sterne's sexual wit to interpret the scimitar sans scabbard as a symbol for Diego sans Julia.[29] One does not want to push this point too far, but Sterne invites it. Even Julia's language is replete with double meanings which support this interpretation:

> "Whether my suspicions of your nose were justly excited or not--'tis not now to inquire--it is enough I have not had firmness to put them to further tryal.
>
> "How could I know so little of myself when I sent my Duena to forbid your coming more under my lattice? (IV.268)

And once one has gone this far, one cannot ignore the sexual implications of Diego's plaintive ode:

> Harsh and untuneful are the notes of love.
> Unless my Julia strikes the key,
> Her hand alone can touch the part,
> Whose dulcet movement charms the heart,
> And governs all the man with sympathetic sway.
> (IV.269)

After so much talk about excitement, "firmness," touching noses, and coming under lattices, it becomes an irresistible temptation to place hidden meanings on Julia's hand touching "the part," its "dulcet movement," and its "sympathetic sway."

This rich use of sexual innuendo seems to have a dual purpose. First of all, it is a source of fun for both author and reader, and as such it invites a more complete and concentrated reader involvement. One tends to pay more attention to matters libidinous than to most other things, particularly if the material is presented in such a way that we are allowed to make the salacious connection

in our own minds. To this extent Tristram is correct in saying that he keeps the reader's imagination as busy as his own (II.xi.109). Once Tristram gains control of the reader by engaging him in playful flights of fancy, the way is open for his second purpose--to create in the reader a strong awareness of the ambiguities of language. This awareness is heightened by the fact that the reader is also made very conscious of this game which Tristram has been playing with him by the disparity which exists between objective reality and subjective reaction in Tristram's narration. As Tristram suggests, a nose is a nose. It is Tristram's nose which is crushed at birth, not his penis. When his penis does suffer an accident, he lets us know about it. Similarly, it is Diego's nose which is long and needs to be defended in "Slawkenbergius's Tale" and not any other part of his anatomy. However, these objective facts are changed by the minds of men, and the nature of the change depends on the preconceptions in each mind which ingests the facts. Thus, when the Strasburgers dream about Diego's nose, each one dreams about a different nose:

> . . . queen Mab, like an elf as she was, had taken the stranger's nose, and without reduction of its bulk, had that night been at the pains of slitting and dividing it into as many noses of different cuts and fashions, as there were heads in Strasburg to hold them. (IV.253)

The emphasis here, as in Mercutio's speech on which both the idea and the sexual jokes of this passage are fashioned,[30] is on the individuality and subjectivity of

what passes in men's minds. The uniqueness of each man's experience and mental make-up changes each objective reality into a particular subjective reality.

The hobbyhorse is a comic exaggeration of this subjectivity carried to its extreme. However, the reader's sexual hobbyhorse is kept in check to an extent because Tristram is forever reminding us that we live in a world of objects. Thus, although we are allowed to play with puns and innuendoes, we are also made aware of the world outside of our selves. Tristram states in the chapter on whiskers, for instance, the "noses are noses, and whiskers are whiskers; (let the world say what it will to the contrary) . . ." (V.i.343-344). And yet "The Fragment" on whiskers makes the same point as "Slawkenbergius's Tale," namely, that there is a difference between things as they exist in themselves and as they exist in people's minds. In "The Fragment," La Fosseuse serves the same function as Slawkenbergius does in his tale.[31] Just as Slawkenbergius exposes us to a series of sexual innuendoes, she pronounces the word <u>whiskers</u> on several occasions "with an accent which always implied something of a mystery" (V.i.345). This plants such a seed of doubt in the minds of the queen of Navarre and the persons at court that the word eventually becomes indecent and unfit for use. This occurs, not because of any objective change in whiskers themselves, but, as the curate d'Estella points out, because of a sexual association of ideas:

> Does not all the world know, said the curate d'Estella at the conclusion of his work, that heroes ran the same laborsome courses in most parts of Europe, which Whiskers have now done in the kingdom of Navarre, --The evil indeed spread no further then, -- but have not beds and bolsters, and night-caps and chamber-pots stood upon the brink of destruction ever since? Are not trouse, and placket holes, and pump-handles--and spigots and faucets, in danger still, from the same association?--Chastity, by nature the gentlest of all affections,--give it but it's head--'tis like a romping and a roaring lion. (V.i.347-348)

The emphasis on "association" stresses the role of the individual mind in the interpretation of words. Also, this passage serves to make the reader conscious of the association which has led him to give words in other parts of the narrative a sexual significance. But, of course, this is Tristram's doing. It is he who makes us aware of the sexual level of language specifically and of the ambiguous nature of language in general. In this way, Tristram produces a double effect on his readers. He manipulates us into a definite thought pattern by coercing us into sexual interpretations, and he then makes us conscious of what he has done. The best illustration of Tristram's success in achieving this double effect is the blank page which Tristram provides us to paint the widow Wadman as we wish. Tristram does not attempt to describe widow Wadman. But he does give a very powerful hint: "never did thy eyes behold, or thy concupiscence covet any thing in this world, more concupiscible than widow Wadman" (VI.xxxvii.469). This suggestion is enough to excite the reader into a mental image of what he considers to be the

ideal of feminine pulchritude. But there is no objective Widow Wadman in Tristram's story. She is a blank page, and the image we have of her is almost completely of our own making. I say "almost" because the image we do create depends on Tristram's suggestion of her "commonplaceable" nature. Although we seem to be free to imagine Widow Wadman as we wish, our freedom has nonetheless been channeled in a very definite and limited direction. Thus, the blank page comes to represent not so much our mental freedom as our dependence on our preconceptions. Given set associations of ideas, our minds will follow those associations even if we are aware of their existence.

The problem of communication thus depends on two factors: the ambiguity of language and the preconceptions or "opinions" of men. Because language is so multifaceted, it presents us with a variety of possible meanings, or, to put it in Shandean terms, with a variety of "handles." At this point the subjective reality of each individual becomes the determining factor. For our choice of "handles" depends on our particular consciousness. For instance, Toby's choice is determined by his military consciousness, and Walter's by his dedication to cerebral systems. The hobbyhorse thus serves as a humorous example of the strong limitations to which our minds are subject when we unconsciously allow rigid mental patterns to dominate our thoughts. Surrender to such limited thinking can be detrimental to growth and development. The use of the

sexual metaphor is useful in this regard because sex is itself such a basic symbol for growth and productivity. In fact, Tristram's mother is actually threatened by the Shandean misconstructions of words and by the "hot bed theories" which have influenced his character. Ironically enough, this threat to growth manifests itself in a series of accidents which have sexual connotations. And these accidents form part of the perverse sexual wit in Tristram Shandy. Tristram's consistent game with sexual innuendoes is a technique which serves to break the barriers of a one-dimensional hobbyhorsical use of language. In this way, the very ambiguities of Tristram's language help to liberate the reader from a too narrow approach to communication by making us aware of the complex meanings of words.

CHAPTER IV

THE SENTIMENTAL TRAVELLER: SELF-AWARENESS AND THE SEXUAL MOTIF

Yorick of A Sentimental Journey, like Tristram, is both a self-conscious narrator and a hobbyhorse rider. He is born, much as Tristram is, between the pleasures of his private consciousness and his awareness of the inconsistencies and limitations of that consciousness. As a sentimental traveller, he is bent on conducting "a quiet journey of the heart in pursuit of NATURE, and those affections which arise out of her, which make us love each other--and the world, better than we do."[1] But, on the other hand, he is fully aware that his own human nature poses obstacles to this pursuit. Specifically, he sees that his ostensibly pure and altruistic feelings for others are often mixed with more selfish motivations, and, more often than not, that these motivations are of a sexual nature.[2] In brief, Yorick is an individual who is subject to all the basic human drives but who self-consciously attempts to hide his drives behind a veil of innocence. Yorick's awareness of this contradiction between his actions and his motivations is the basis for the humor of A Sentimental Journey.[3] And this humor finds its expression

in two basic techniques. First, there is a disparity between much of what Yorick says and what he actually does. And, secondly, there is the continual use of sexual word play, which also serves to heighten reader awareness in much the same way that Tristram's playful ambiguities do in Tristram Shandy.

The central example of Yorick's awareness of an inconsistency between his words and his actions concerns his episode with the monk at the very beginning of his journey. Yorick's language is always noble and altruistic, as is evidenced by his statement in the first "Calais" chapter:

> When a man is at peace with man, how much lighter than a feather is the heaviest of metals in his hand! he pulls out his purse, and holding it airily and uncompress'd, looks round him, as if he sought for an object to share it with-- (68)

But when in the very next chapter Yorick's altruistic sentiments are put to the test by a monk asking for alms, Yorick acts as if his money were heavy as lead rather than light as a feather. He in fact admits that he is perfectly human, that his feelings are not consistent but change with "ebbs and flows," and that on this particular occasion he had simply "predetermined not to give him [the monk] a single sous" (70). Yorick in fact repeats this last point at the very end of the chapter, thus emphasizing his awareness of his own inner feelings and inconsistencies.

The sentimental traveller's second almsgiving experience also reflects his consciousness of his own

foibles. Yorick is encountered by a group of mendicants in front of his inn at Montriul. He feels obliged to help them, but he makes it clear that he is more concerned with appearances than with real charity. In fact, even his distribution of alms is based on appearance rather than need. He gives a sous to one "for his politesse," to another because he offers snuff to his companion, to a third because he is an old soldier, to a fourth because she "had a dislocated hip," and to a fifth because he calls Yorick "My Lord Anglois;" and, as Yorick says "the very sound was worth the money--so I gave my last sous for it" (133). At this point Yorick realizes that he has overlooked a "pauvre honteux," and so he gives him an unspecified sum because the man is crying silently and does not ask for money. All of these mendicants are probably equally poor because they are all begging together, but Yorick does not distribute what he has amongst them all but only gives to those who flatter him or who move him to pity more than the others.

Yorick's reaction in this scene indicates that he rides a sentimental hobbyhorse. He is often motivated by the desire to feel for the sake of feeling deep emotions; and when he gives in to this temptation, his feelings do not produce the kind of charity he propounds in chapter two. For example, with reference to dwarves, Yorick says, "I feel some little principles within me, which incline me to be merciful towards this poor blighted part of my

species" (177). However, when Yorick sees a dwarf suffering because a tall German is in front of him at the opera and is impeding the dwarf's vision, Yorick does nothing to help him (178-179). In short, Yorick's sense of charity has little to do with charitable action when he is being sentimental; rather, it is dependent on his need to see people as pitiable "objects" (68) who are somehow noble in their suffering. It is no doubt for this reason that Yorick enjoys telling sad stories with happy endings such as "The Patisser" and "The Sword" (209-214). These are stories which allow Yorick the chance to exercise his feelings; but they are actually tales which lack real human emotion because they function in a romantic realm where the good are always rewarded after a specified period of undeserved suffering. In brief, they are stories which promote feeling for its own sake (at the end of "The Sword" Yorick says of the Marquis, "O how I envied him his feelings!" [214]); but the stories do not inspire one to charitable action because they lead one to believe that good and noble individuals will eventually be rewarded by some external force such as a benevolent king (211) or by just simple good luck (213).

Related to charity is the ability to be sensitive to what goes on in the world. Yorick, of course, claims to have this sensitivity:

> --What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life by him who interests his heart in every thing, and who, having eyes to see,

> what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing he can fairly lay his hands on.-- (114)

Ironically, this statement follows Yorick's distribution of alms to the beggars. Yorick then goes on to criticize travellers such as Smelfungus and Mundungus (116-120), who are capable of seeing only the unpleasant side of the places they visit. The criticism is justified because such characters limit their vision of the world by wearing chauvinistic blinders. In opposition to this, Yorick claims that one must be open to everything, for even the most desolate of places has something to offer:

> . . . was I in a desart, I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections--If I could not do better, I would fasten them upon some sweet myrtle, or seek some melancholy cypress to connect myself to--I would court their shade, and greet them kindly for their protection--I would cut my name upon them, and swear they were the loveliest trees throughout the desert: if their leaves wither'd, I would teach myself to mourn; and when they rejoiced, I would rejoice along with them. (115-116)

When he makes this statement, Yorick seems to be limiting his consciousness, for, when he rides his sentimental hobbyhorse, he is only concerned with cultivating "affections" rather than with anything which might expand his knowledge. And, in fact, Yorick, in his role as narrator, exposes his own prejudices and biases which limit his search for knowledge. The first example of this is in the first sentence of the novel: "They order . . . this matter better in France." Yorick assumes that the French have a greater capacity for feeling than

the English, and he excludes his own countrymen from his quest. Thus, when he comes upon two Englishmen early in the novel, he does not try to get to know them. Rather, he leaves them with the excuse that "an English man does not travel to see English men" (85). On the other hand, he also exhibits an English chauvinism of the Smelfungus variety. When he is at the opera, he witnesses the scene involving the dwarf who cannot see because the tall German in front of him refuses to move. After the matter has been settled by a centinel who forces the German to sit behind the dwarf, the French officer next to Yorick points out that this would not have been permitted in England. Yorick responds in a better-than-thou manner: "In England, dear Sir, said I, we sit all at our ease" (179). And Yorick reveals the same kind of national chauvinism in his discussion with the Count de B****. Yorick criticizes the French by comparing them to coins which "by jingling and rubbing one against another for seventy years together in one body's pocket or another's . . . are become so much alike, you can scarce distinguish one shilling from another" (232). The English, on the other hand, are "like antient medals, kept more apart, and passing but few peoples hands, preserve the first sharpnesses which the fine hand of nature has given them . . ." (232).

Sterne further illustrates the disparity between Yorick's language and his comportment in the "Dead Ass" episode. Yorick is so moved by the poor German's lament

for his dead ass that he cites the episode as an example to be emulated: "Shame on the world! said I to myself--Did we love each other, as this poor soul but loved his ass--'twould be something--" (141). The ambiguity of loving one's "ass" renders this passage less than serious. And Yorick's vague moral--"'twould be something"--suggests that he really has nothing of note to say about his ludicrous suggestion. At any rate, the experience puts him in a contemplative mood, and he desires "grave and quiet movements" to complement his cogitations on love. But he is frustrated from savoring these thoughts for the postilion "gave an unfeeling lash" to his horses and set them "off clattering like a thousand devils" (142). This physical agitation runs so much against Yorick's feelings that it works him up "into a foolish passion" (143). At this point, Yorick is so disturbed that he would have appreciated "a good rattling gallop" to complement his inner turmoil. But the similarity of "rattling gallop" to the eighteenth-century expression rattle ballocks (female pudend) undercuts any seriousness Yorick might seem to have.[4] In fact, he is frustrated once more, for they come upon a hill and the postilion has to slow down. Yorick then tries to bring his mind back to the story of the German and his ass, but, as he says, he "could no more get into it again, than the postilion could into a trot" (143). And Yorick is left with no alternative but to fall asleep. Thus, as in the case of the mendicants scene at

Montriul, the sentimental traveller once more shows himself to be torn between his ideals and the more urgent demands of his mortal self. In fact, Yorick's use of the expression "get into it," which has since the eighteenth century alluded to coital intromission,[5] lowers the tenor of the passage to the sexual level. And the postilion's inability to get "into a trot" serves the same function by repeating the image of getting into and by adding the horse-riding-as-sexual-metaphor image.[6]

Yorick's comments about imprisonment and his actual action when confronted with imprisonment will serve as a final example of his conscious inability to reconcile words and deeds. He enters France without a passport and therefore illegally. This puts him in danger of imprisonment. But it is of note that when this unpleasant fact is brought to his attention, he tries to change the reality by playing with words:

> --And as for the Bastile! the terror is in the word--Make the most of it you can, said I to myself, the Bastile is but another word for a tower--and a tower is but another word for a house you can't get out of--Mercy on the gouty! for they are in it twice a year--but with nine livres a day, and pen and ink and paper and patience, albeit a man can't get out, he may do very well within--at least for a month or six weeks; at the end of which, if he is a harmless fellow his innocence appears, and he comes out a better and wiser man than he went in. (196)

Thus, Yorick uses each "word" as a stepping-stone which allows him to move from "Bastile" to "tower" to "house" and ultimately to the "innocence" which is rewarded in the same way that it is rewarded in the romantic worlds

of "The Prisoner" and "The Sword." In this way, Yorick can consider the Bastile as a mere product of "the sombre pencil" (197) rather than as a physical entity. And with great verbal ease he reconstructs the Bastile into something which is much less threatening than a prison:

> . . . 'Tis true, said I, correcting the proposition--the Bastile is not an evil to be despised--but strip it of its towers--fill up the fosse--unbarricade the doors--call it simply a confinement, and suppose 'tis some tyrant of a distemper--and not of a man which holds you in it--the evil half vanishes, and you bear the other half without complaint. (197)

Yorick's word game illustrates the relationship between language and deeds. He seems to be able to manipulate reality merely by changing words, but the illusory nature of this manipulation becomes clear when he is immediately confronted by a caged starling which he simply cannot liberate. The ineffectiveness of Yorick's action at this point emphasizes the distance between intentions pronounced in words and intentions brought to completion by action. This becomes particularly clear in Yorick's subsequent concern with imprisonment and in his failure to liberate the starling. Yorick uses the incident to inspire himself into a tearful fantasy of a lonely prison existence ("The Captive" [201-203]); and then after having worked himself into a suitable state of pity for the imaginary prisoner he has created, he decides to obtain a passport the next morning. Once he has satisfied his own feelings and personal fears in this way, he seems to forget the lesson of personal liberty which the starling

has taught him. And he never does set the bird free. In fact, Yorick takes the bird back to England and then gives it to Lord A, who gives it to Lord B, who gives it to Lord C, and so on. Yorick even refers to the starling as "my bird" (205). In brief, far from being a charitable liberator and defender of freedom, Yorick becomes merely part of an unbroken chain of owners and jailors who keep the starling in perpetual bondage. And he even bears the poor starling as the crest to his arms, most likely as a fitting reminder of his own inconsistencies.

In addition to using such contradictions between word and deed, Sterne also points to Yorick's continual self-analysis by coloring his narrative with sexually ambiguous language. Yorick's game with language in the Bastile scene indicates his desire to sterilize events or to render them less real than they really are. His juxtaposition of his own actions with his attempt at verbal metamorphosis serves to highlight his awareness of his own absurdity in trying to veil reality. Yorick engages in this self-aware game with himself throughout his narrative, and his self-awareness becomes particularly evident in his relations with women. He is constantly propounding the purity and innocence of his intentions; however, he is also fully aware that his motivations are strongly sexual. Like Tristram, then, Yorick is both sympathetic to and critical of his own hobbyhorse; and he places it in objective relief through the persistent

reminder of his own sexuality.

Yorick's conversation with the Count de B***** is a case in point. When the discussion hits upon the subject of women, the Count playfully suggests that "Monsieur l'Anglois" has come to France not so much to spy the nakedness of the land as to look upon the nakedness of the French women. At this point, Yorick is quick to point out to the reader that there is something within him "which cannot bear the shock of the least indecent insinuation," and he answers the Count with the following retort:

> Excuse me, Monsieur Le Count, said I--as for the nakedness of your land, if I saw it, I should cast my eyes over it with tears in them, and for that of your women (blushing at the idea He had excited in me) I am so evangelical in this, and have such a fellow-feeling for what ever is weak about them, that I would cover it with a garment, if I knew how to throw it on--But I could wish, continued I, to spy the nakedness of their hearts, and through the different disguises of customs, climates, and religion, find out what is good in them, to fashion my own by--and therefore am I come. (217-218)

Yorick seems to be making a valiant attempt to desexualize "nakedness"; however, his own blush indicates the impossibility of suppressing the sexual reality which has been "excited." And his language reflects his awareness of this problem. He immediately thinks about "what is weak" in women, and he desires to "cover" it by "throwing" a garment over it. Significantly, the term cover meant to possess a woman sexually in the eighteenth century.[7] And "throw" may be a reference to such phrases as to throw

down and to be thrown, both of which are used by Shakespeare to refer to sexual intercourse.[8] This sexual theme is continued by Yorick's interest in "What is good in" women and by his reference to coining.[9]

The next paragraph of Yorick's speech continues this use of sexual innuendo:

> It is for this reason, Monsieur le Comple, continued I, that I have not seen the Palais royal--nor the Luxembourg--nor the Façade of the Louvre--nor have attempted to swell the catalogues we have of pictures, statues, and churches;--I conceive every fair being as a temple, and would rather enter in, and see the original drawings and loose sketches hung up in it, than the transfiguration of Raphael itself. (218-219)

As in the Bastile speech, Yorick seems inclined to transform reality through language, in the present case through metaphor. However, he undercuts his hobbyhorsical masking of reality by playing with the sexual meanings of words. Of note is the term "drawings." In Shakespeare's time, "to draw" signified to expose one's sexual organ (of a man) by bringing it out, as if a sword from a scabbard. Also, the expression <u>draw up</u> was said of a woman in the act of receiving a man sexually.[10] It would appear that <u>draw</u> continued to have sexual implications in the eighteenth century, for in the nineteenth century we have the expression <u>to draw one's fireworks</u>, meaning to cool a man's ardour by lying with him.[11] More apparent to the modern reader are the sexual innuendoes in "conceives," "enter in," and "loose." Thus, when Yorick goes on to describe his travels as "a quiet journey of the heart in pursuit of

NATURE, and those affections which rise out of her, which make us love each other and the world, better than we do" (219), one is ready to notice the sexual, as well as the emotional, meaning in "rise out of her" and "love each other."

Like Tristram, Yorick uses this sexual word play consistently throughout his narrative to expose both his foibles and his awareness of these foibles. As he states early in the novel, "I write not to apologize for the weaknesses of my heart in this tour,--but to give an account of them" (90). And the sexual innuendoes bring these "weaknesses" to light most effectively. In his episode with Mme. de L***, for instance, Yorick confesses to certain "temptations" which reflect imperfections in himself. First of all, Yorick admits that he was so jealous that the monk had spoken ill of him to the lady. Yorick seems to be concerned for the defence of his character, but it becomes apparent that his main motivation is his strong physical attraction for the lady. This latter point is emphasized by his gestures. He manages very early in the encounter to take Mme. de L***'s hand, and he holds on to it throughout most of their conversation (and even during moments of silence). Also, the hand-holding couple is left alone for a considerable period of time while Dessein goes in search of the key to the remise door. Given the physical state of the parson and the lady, it is clear that Sterne is playing with the sexual symbolism inherent in

keys and keyholes. It is also worth noting that key could refer to the penis in the eighteenth century,[12] a meaning which gains added weight when we consider, first, the sentimental traveller's later conversation with the Count de B***** and, second, Yorick's statement that he wishes to "enter in" the temple (Delia's) he meets. In addition, Yorick seems to be very sensitive to Mme. de L***'s physical presence, and the ambiguity of his speech in describing her evokes the sexual theme: ". . . a studied frankness with which she gave me her hand, dressed, I thought, for a tête-à-tête and her usual supper; and as I led her on, I felt a pleasurable ductility about her, which opposed a calmness over all my spirits--" (92). The term has sexual overtones. In Shakespeare's time it meant dying in sexual intercourse;[13] and in the eighteenth century it was used as an adjective signifying concupiscent.[14] Also, the expression "felt a pleasurable ductility" suggests a sexual contact, which, naturally enough, is followed by a state of "calmness."

The strong physical attraction which exists between Yorick and Mme. de L*** is further emphasized by his frank confession that his impression of the lady is based more on "Fancy" than on facts. Indeed, Yorick characterizes "Fancy" in strongly sexual terms and in this way points to the nature of his attraction for Mme. de L***:

> I had not yet seen her face--'twas not material; for the drawing was instantly set about, and long before we had got to the door of the Remise, Fancy had

> finished the whole head, and pleased herself as much with its fitting her goddess, as if she had dived into the TIBER for it--but thou art a seduced, and a seducing slut; and albeit thou cheatest us seven times a day with thy pictures and images, yet with so many charms dost thou do it, and thou deckest out thy pictures in the shapes of so many angels of light, 'tis a shame to break with thee. (92)

The double meaning of this passage is particularly revealing. On one level, Yorick is concerned with the lady's appearance. But, at the same time, the fact that "Fancy" is a "seduced, and a seducing slut" points to a sexual meaning and to the sexual attraction between Yorick and Mme. de L***. This more scabrous level is first indicated by the term "drawing," which, as is indicated above, may refer to the unsheathing of the man's sexual weapon. "The whole head" involves a pun on hole.[14] And "head" may refer to maidenhead or to cuckoldom.[15] Also, given the nature of the "drawing," "head" may be a reference to an anatomical section of the drawn weapon. This interpretation seems to be in keeping with the ambiguous phrase "fitting her goddess." The act of copulation may be further alluded to in "dived into the TIBER," in so far as diver was used by Shakespeare in the sense of a man regarded as a diver into the pudend-pond of a woman.[16] This meaning must have survived through the eighteenth century, for in the nineteenth century the expression dive in the dark was used to refer to coition.[17] Also, the term charms indicated the female breasts in the eighteenth century.[18] Yorick's relationship with "Fancy" (and, by implication, his relationship with Mme. de L***) is thus very strongly defined as a sexual one. He is the

admiring man who is being tempted by the "seducing slut." The clean or non-sexual interpretation of his encounter with the lady, an interpretation which may be represented by the "pictures in the shapes of so many angels of light," is certainly present. However, it is an interpretation which is strongly outweighed by Yorick's consciousness of his sexual excitement.

Thus, although Yorick seems to be concerned with making assumptions about the lady's apparent melancholy and with expressing his "benevolence" for her, the sexual overtones of his language reflect his baser instincts. Later in the novel, for instance, Yorick seems to give in to his sentimental urges, and he claims that he would like

> . . . to see her [Mme. de L***] weep! and though I cannot dry up the fountain of her tears, what an exquisite sensation is there still left, in wiping away from off the cheeks of the first and fairest of women, as I'm sitting with my handkerchief in my hand in silence the whole night besides her. (146)

But it is impossible to take this too seriously. For notwithstanding Yorick's apparent sentimental effusion, the language once more evokes the sexual theme by suggesting that Yorick has spent the night with the lady by wiping her "cheeks," a term which referred to the posteriors in the eighteenth century.[19] It is also of note that the term fountain is used by Shakespeare to indicate the genital area;[20] and Mme. de L***'s "fountain" gushes from her "cheeks," a consideration which heightens the sexual suggestions in Yorick's experience of an "exquisite

sensation" while wiping the lady's "cheeks." In this way, the sexual symbolism involving the nocturnal emission of bodily fluids is reinforced by Yorick's use of sexual innuendo. And Yorick further ensures that we be conscious of the sexual nature of his desire for Mme. de L*** by introducing the La Fleur episode, which is highlighted by Yorick's use of the Frenchman's "little dirty pocket-book" (152) to compose a billet-doux to her.

Yorick's second encounter with a woman continues the sexual motifs which are established in the initial part of the novel. Once more, Yorick makes use of a central ambiguity which serves to suggest sexuality and thus places the sentimental traveller's words in an ironic light. In the case of Mme. de L***, "key" and the holding of hands functioned as the central sexual reminders. In the meeting with the French glove seller, Yorick develops the theme of hand-holding further by focusing on "the pulse" and the fitting of gloves. The emphasis on "the pulse" implies sexuality, not only by continuing the hand-holding image, but also by pointing to the theory of the humours and particularly to the notion that hot blood is indicative of sexual ardor.[21] Thus, when Yorick praises the grisette's good nature, his concern with the "temperature" and vitality of the woman's pulse indicates his more carnal inclinations:

> Any one may do a casual act of good nature, but a continuation of them shews it is a part of the temperature; and certainly, added I, if it is the same blood which comes from the heart, which descends to the extremes (touching her wrist) I am sure you must

> have one of the best pulses of any woman in the world--Feel it, said she, holding out her arm. So laying down my hat, I took hold of her fingers in one hand, and applied the two fore-fingers of my other to the artery-- . . . . (164)

Also of note in this passage is the concern with f g and fingering; and, given the slang signification of hat as female pudend, it is significant that we find Yorick "laying" it down. Thus, the tension in this passage is between acts of courtesy and sexual acts. On one level, Yorick is concerned with sociable and sentimental communication. He indicates his ideal in the first sentence of the chapter: "Hail ye small sweet courtesies of life, for smooth do ye make the road of it! like grace and beauty which beget inclinations to love at first sight; 'tis ye who open this door and let the stranger in" (161). But even in this apparently innocuous sentence, we can find a possible sexual joke in "beget" and in the last phrase. Indeed, although Yorick claims to be impressed by the lady's courtesy, he frankly admits that "she was the handsomest grisset, I think, I ever saw, which had much to do with the sense I had of her courtesy" (163). Also, when Yorick comments on the grisette's husband's non-jealous comportment, the sentimental traveller remarks that man was "made for social intercourse and gentle greetings" (167), a phrase which is particularly suggestive given the ambiguous nature of Yorick's earlier words about the grisette.

There is an interesting contrast being drawn in this scene between the power of gestures and the power of

words. Yorick seems to suggest that the former is more effective:

> There are certain combined looks of simple subtlety--where whim, and sense, and seriousness, and nonsense, are so blended, that all the languages of Babel set loose together could not express them--they are communicated and caught so instantaneously, that you can scarce say which party is the infecter. I leave it to your men of words to swell pages about it--it is enough in the present to say again, the gloves would not do; so folding our hands within our arms, we both loll'd upon the counter--it was narrow, and there was just room for the parcel to lay between us. (168)

"Loll'd" and "lay between us" suggest a dalliance in amorous sport. "Counter" contains a sexual pun in its first syllable. Significantly, it is a "narrow" counter and thus allows Yorick and the lady to come closer together. The sexual suggestiveness of the language is reinforced by the gestures of the two individuals. Indeed, both the words and the gestures are ambiguous in this pas and both serve to remind us of the complexity of human motives. Sterne's point seems to be that neither words nor gestures can be taken at a single level.

It is thus particularly significant that the next chapter, entitled "The Translation," presents Yorick's theory of sociable communication, which is based on man's ability to "translate" the "short hand" of gestures:

> There is not a secret so aiding to the progress of sociality, as to get master of this short hand, and be quick in rendering the several turns of looks and limbs, with all their inflections and delineations, into plain words. For my own part, by long habitude, I do it so mechanically, that when I walk the streets of London, I go translating all the way; and have more than once stood behind in the circle, where not

> three words have been said, and have brought off twenty different dialogues with me, which I could have fairly wrote down and sworn to. (171-172)

As in the instances already discussed, Yorick manifests a strong faith in his ability to "translate" gestures. But in the example which he cites, again an adventure with a woman, Yorick's ability to "translate" is once more associated with sexual ambiguity. As in all of his relationships with women, there is a great deal of physical contact between Yorick and the lady. But what is particularly suggestive in this instance is that the two individuals come into contact, step aside, and then come into contact again in a rather rhythmical fashion; Yorick blocks the woman's "passage"; and the whole incident culminates in a blush:

> I was going one evening to Martini's concert at Milan, and was just entering the door of the hall, when the Marquesina di F*** was coming out in a sort of a hurry--she was almost upon me before I saw her; so I gave a spring to one side to let her pass--She had done the same, and on the same side too; so we ran our heads together: she instantly got to the other side to get out: I was just as unfortunate as she had been; for I had sprung to that side, and opposed her passage again--We both flew together to the other side, and then back--and so on--it was ridiculous; we both blush'd intolerably . . . . (172)

After Yorick has let the Marquesina pass, he notices that she looked back twice and walked along side-ways. Yorick's first "translation" of this is that she is making room for people to pass. But he then decides that this is "a vile translation," and he concludes that "the Marquesina has a right to the best apology I can

make her: 'and that opening is left for me to do it in" (173). And, in fact he does take full advantage of the "opening" she leaves for him. They apologize to each other. And then, in language which is again suggestive of rhythmical movement, they establish a pleasurable "connection":

> . . . Upon my word, Madame, said I when I had handed her in, I made six different efforts to let you go out--And I made six efforts, replied she, to let you enter--I wish to heaven you would make a seventh, said I--With all my heart, said she, making room--Life is too short to be long about the forms of it--so I instantly stepp'd in; and she carried me home with her--And what became of the concert, St. Cecilia, who, I suppose, was at it, knows more than I.
>
> I will only add, the connection which arose out of that translation, gave me more pleasure than any one I had the honour to make in Italy. (173)

One should note here the emphasis on going in and going out, the woman carrying the man, and the "connection" which "arose" and gave Yorick much "pleasure." After this series of sexual innuendoes, one is led to "translate" the Marquesina di F***'s four letter name into an Anglo-Saxon word of the same length also beginning with the letter f.

Yorick the narrator is aware of the sexual implications of his own language. In fact, the remaining sexual material in volume one serves to emphasize the contrast between Yorick's ostensible naivety and his awareness of sexuality. In particular, Yorick as the sentimental traveller is made to see that sentiment need not always be associated with purity. First, Yorick

discovers that an abbé sitting behind two grisettes at the opera has been trying to do something naughty with his hands. Yorick's reaction is one of shock that sin and sentiment can both reside in the same person: "Good God! said I, turning pale with astonishment--is it possible, that a people so smit with sentiment should at the same time be so unclean, and so unlike themselves--Quelle grossierté!" (180). The French officer sitting next to Yorick tries to correct Yorick's reaction by pointing out that all nations have their refinements and "grossiertés":

> Le POUR, et le CONTRE se trouvent en chaque nation; there is a balance, said he, of good and bad every where; and nothing but the knowing it is so can emancipate one half of the world from the prepossessions which it holds against the other--that the advantage of travel, as it regarded the sçavoir vivre, was by seeing a great deal both of men and manners; it taught us mutual toleration; and mutual toleration, concluded he, making me a bow, taught us mutual love. (180-181)

Yorick realizes that he agrees with this, and he then goes on, seemingly as a result of this moral lesson, to say that he has learned to accept the French "grossiertés": ". . . I honestly confess, that many a thing gave me pain, and that I blush'd at many a word the first month--which I found inconsequent and perfectly innocent the second" (1 The key word here is "innocent." As we have seen, Yor appears to go through his experiences with women with a naive attitude about sex. His sentimental consciousne does not want to see the sexual level, but his own lang is full of sexual implications, indicating that he is not in fact limited to a sentimental consciousness and that he

is quite aware of his hobbyhorsical inclinations.

The French officer realizes that all people have their refinements and grossiertés. In other words, he accepts the inevitable presence of sexuality and sinfulness in all men, even abbés. But the sentimentalist in Yorick does not want to accept the impure aspects of life. Instead, he prefers to "translate" them, as it were, into something innocent and therefore something acceptable to the sentimental consciousness. Sterne illustrates this tendency with Yorick's final anecdote of volume one, the story of Madame de Rambouliet. Sterne's initial technique is to create a comic contrast between Yorick's high praise of the lady's correctness and purity and Madame de Rambouliet's rather vulgar candor:

> Of all women, Madame de Rambouliet is the most correct; and I never wish to see one of more virtues and purity of heart--In our return back, Madame de Rambouliet desired me to pull the cord--I ask'd her if she wanted any thing--Rien que pisser, said Madame de Rambouliet-- (182)

Yorick's reaction to this less than "correct" response is quite different from his reaction to the abbé's grossierté in the opera:

> Grieve not, gentle traveller, to let Madame de Rambouliet p-ss on--And, ye fair mystic nymphs! go each one pluck your rose, and scatter them in your path--for Madame de Rambouliet did no more--I handed Madame de Rambouliet out of the coach; and had I been the priest of the chaste CASTALIA, I could not have served at her fountain with a more respectful decorum. (182-183)

This passage is openly ironic. Yorick pretends to be ignoring the biological functions in women, and, at the

same time, he makes fun of himself for doing so. For example, he cannot bring himself to spell out the word piss; but this is a show of delicacy which is undercut by his willingness to spell "pisser." Similarly, his desire for innocence leads him to humorously transfer a bodily operation into a very pleasant bucolic scene. The women are no longer women but "fair mystic nymphs." And the simple act of urinating becomes, by an amazing stretch of the "innocent" imagination, a rose harvest on Mount Parnassus. However, in the eighteenth century, pluck a rose had the colloquial significations of to take a virginity and to ease oneself in the open air.[22] These slang meanings contrast with what at first might appear as a ludicrous ingenuousness. In this way, Yorick undercuts his own sentimental pretensions by juxtaposing a biological function on the one hand with priestly adoration and poetic inspiration from the gods on the other. Thus, the reader is made to see that the desire to see everything as "perfectly innocent" in effect causes one to distort reality. Yorick's hobbyhorsical side wants to elevate those aspects of life which his sentimental self considers unpleasant or impure above the human level. But, in effect, Yorick the narrator creates the comic image of an English minister respectfully performing his priestly functions before a urinating woman. This image is the complete opposite of what an "innocent" Yorick would have intended, and it serves to illustrate the dangers to which language

is subject when consciousness is limited. But Yorick's consciousness is not limited. As his use of sexual innuendo indicates, he is fully aware of his hobbyhorse, and he enjoys exposing it to his readers.

Yorick's inner tension between self-awareness and "innocent" sentimentalism continues in volume two of A Sentimental Journey. And, as in volume one, the very ambiguity of the narrator's language continues to suggest that Yorick is always aware of his sentimental leanings. For example, the initial incident with the fille de chambre indicates Yorick's desire to see the girl as part of an idyllic world: "--And what have you to do, my dear, said I, with The Wanderings of the Heart, who scarce know yet you have one? nor till love has first told you it, or some faithless shepherd has made it ache, can'st thou ever be sure it is so" (188). But the narrator does not allow the reader to become caught up in Arcadian visions. In the very next paragraph, the focus is shifted to the girl's "sattin purse," an expression which allows the author to suggest the more scabrous meaning of purse as female pudendum:

> The young girl listened with a submissive attention, holding her sattin purse by its ribband in her hand all the time--'Tis a very small one, said I, taking hold of the bottom of it--she held it towards me--and there is very little in it, my dear, said I, but be but as good as thou art handsome, and heaven will fill it: I had a parcel of crowns in my hand to pay for Shakespear; and as she had let go the purse intirely, I put a single one in; and tying up the ribband in a bow-knot, returned it to her. (188)

The presence of the sexual level in this passage is undeniable, particularly when we consider that Yorick's next meeting with the girl is an openly sexual one and takes place in the chapter entitled "The Temptation." In this latter encounter, Yorick finds that he can no longer make pretty speeches about idyllic innocence. Indeed, the girl almost becomes an aggressive temptress, and Yorick finds it difficult to resist her sexual attractions. At one point she even follows him to his desk, picks up the "pen" Yorick had cast down, and offers to hold the "ink" for him (235). Then, after she has put her hands in Yorick's and after they have mysteriously ended up on the bed, she shows him the "little purse" (236) which she has been making to hold Yorick's crown, thus reinforcing the sexual connotations which have existed in their relationship from the very beginning.

Sterne's use of this sexual innuendo illuminates the problem of distinguishing innocence and sinfulness. Yorick seems intent on preserving his innocence, but he is not really innocent at all. He is in fact quite subject to sex and sinfulness. This is indicated by the suggestiveness of his language and by the way in which he holds the purse for several minutes: "I held it ten minutes with the back of my hand resting upon her lap--looking sometimes at the purse, sometimes on one side of it" (236). Yorick's double contact with the purse and with the lap and his double vision of the purse and of what

lies to the side of it portray his dilemma. He almost seems to be weighing and comparing the relationship between the innocent and the sinful meanings of the purse. And his long pause suggests that he cannot escape the sexuality which the purse represents.

But this realization is important, for it allows Yorick the character to face reality more openly. As the fille de chambre draws her hand "across and across" Yorick's neck while she mends his stock, Yorick becomes more sexually excited. But he describes this excitement in a euphemistic phrase which denotes his awareness of the unsubstantial nature of his victory over his own sexuality: "I felt the laurels shake which fancy had wreath'd about my head" (236). Indeed, as the chapter ends, "fancy" is forgotten and Yorick finds himself in the middle of a real sexual temptation as the fille de chambre falls flat on her back on the bed. It is precisely at this moment that "The Conquest" takes place. It becomes clear in the final paragraph of the chapter that Yorick's "victory" is not of a sexual nature, for Yorick helps the girl up and leads her out of the room before allowing himself to kiss her on the cheek. This sexless gesture denotes Yorick's victory over his libido. But there is a more significant conquest in this chapter. Between the time that the girl is on her back and the time that Yorick helps her up, Yorick stares his sexuality in the face and openly accepts it. He criticizes those "whose clay-cold heads and lukewarm hearts

can at one down or mark your position" (217); and in so doing, he criticizes his own past attempts to cover up his sexuality. And Yorick also accepts the trials and dangers which belong to human life as God has created it. In his role as narrator, he describes this victory in retrospect:

> Whip me such stories, great governor of nature! said I to myself--Wherever thy providence shall place me for the trials of my virtue--whatever is my danger--whatever is my situation--let me feel the movements which rise out of it, and which belong to me as a man--and if I govern them as a good one--I will trust the issues to thy justice, for thou hast made us--and not we ourselves. (237-238)

This is a true conquest in the sense that Yorick achieves a new level of self-knowledge. He learns to acknowledge God's wisdom, and he accepts his passions as an essential part of his nature as a sinful being (note the ambiguous phrase, "feel the movements which rise out of it"). And it is significant that he achieves this awareness precisely at the moment when a sexual climax would have occurred had his been a sexual rather than a moral conquest. In this way, Yorick the narrator makes two important points: first, that self-knowledge could only occur after he had accepted his passions and, second, that his self-knowledge, like sexual climax, can be short-lived. The image of Sisyphus would not be inappropriate here--to be human involves constant struggle. Sterne's point seems to be that Yorick must continually exercise his humanity by actively practising self-analysis. It is for this reason that A Sentimental Journey is not

based on a linear plot, but is made up of a series of incidents (many of them sexual in nature) which serve to illustrate Yorick's continual self-analysis. And in all of these episodes, the sexual innuendo prevails as a continual reminder of the need for self-awareness.

In "The Case of Conscience," for instance, Yorick is openly tempted by his landlord to receive a girl in his room under the pretext of buying her wares. In effect, the girl is involved in prostitution, and Yorick is quite aware that the "dirty" (242) landlord is acting as her pimp. However, as the scene progresses, Yorick seems to become duped by the girl's "simple" manner, and he treats her very generously. Indeed, Yorick's language indicates his changing attitude towards her:

> The Grisset would shew me every thing--I was hard to please: she would not seem to see it; she open'd her little magazine, laid all her laces one after another before me--unfolded and folded them up again one by one with the most patient sweetness--I might buy--or not--she would let me have every thing at my own price--the poor creature seem'd anxious to get a penny; and laid herself out to win me, and not so much in a manner which seem'd artful, as in one I felt simple and caressing. [My italics.] (242)

But if the sentimental traveller appears to be allowing his sentimentalism to obscure his vision, Yorick the narrator reminds the reader through the sexual innuendoes I have italicized that the girl is attempting to seduce Yorick and that he is trying, albeit not completely successfully, to ignore the girl's illicit advances.

Yorick the character does in fact temporarily blind

himself in the novel. And, significantly enough, his period of moral blindness is associated with prostitution. But he does not fall victim to a prostitute; rather, he becomes a prostitute himself. This sin begins with his admiration for the mysterious beggar who is always successful in obtaining money from women on the street. Yorick aspires to learn the beggar's secret, for, as he says, "a secret . . . which so soon and so certainly soften'd the heart of every woman you came near, was a secret at least equal to the philosopher's stone: had I had both the Indies, I would have given up one to have been master of it" (245). Yorick almost sounds like Dr. Faustus here, and he is not long in waiting for illumination on the beggar's secret. In the chapter "The Act of Charity," Yorick comes upon two women who are standing with their backs against the wall in a long dark passage behind the <u>opera comique</u>. He reacts as a sentimental traveller and assumes that they are "vestal sisters, unsapped by caresses, unbroke in upon by tender salutations" (258), and he desires to make them happy. However, before he can do anything, the mysterious beggar arrive d asks them for money. They refuse at first; but after the beggar has plied them with sweet words and flattery, they become affected and they perform the "act of charity" which gives the chapter its ironic title and give him twice as much money as he desires.

There is no way of knowing, nor does it matter, if

the two women are indeed "vestal sisters" waiting for a hackney coach as Yorick says; it is important that the sentimental traveller should think them such. However, their situation in the dark passage, a situation somewhat reminiscent of prostitutes waiting for their customers, suggests that in their souls they are not as innocent as Yorick would like to believe. And, indeed, their eventual "act of charity" is in essence related to a form of prostitution. The only difference here is that the roles are reversed--the ladies are the customers and the beggar is the prostitute who takes money in exchange for satisfying their female vanity. Flattery is thus presented as a prostitution of the soul, a selling of superficial favors for material gain. The sentimental traveller does not seem to see this at first, but it is interesting that in praising flattery Yorick the narrator begins by showing how it facilitates contact with the heart and ends by pointing to its pecuniary rewards:

> Delicious essence! how refreshing art thou to nature! how strongly are all its powers and all its weaknesses on thy side! how sweetly dost thou mix with the blood, and help it through the most difficult and tortuous passages to the heart!
>
> The poor man, as he was not straighten'd for time, had given it here in a larger dose: 'tis certain he had a way of bringing it into less form, for the many sudden cases he had to do with in the streets; but how he contrived to correct, sweeten, concentre, and qualify it--I vex not my spirit with the inquiry--it is enough, the beggar gain'd two twelve-sous pieces--and they can best tell the rest, who have gain'd much greater matters by it. (260)

Indeed, Yorick does set out to gain "much better

matters by it." Through his acquaintance with the Count de B****, he is introduced to the people of rank in Paris. And, as he himself says in the language of money, "I had got master of my secret, just in time to turn these honours to some little account . . ." (261). And so he floats from one aristocratic dinner to another, flattering everyone and receiving high praise for it. It is only after three weeks of parroting "every man's opinion" (266) that he finally becomes conscious of the sinful business in which he is engaged:

> And at this price I could have eaten and drank and been merry all the days of my life at Paris; but 'twas a dishonest reckoning--I grew ashamed of it--it was the gain of a slave--every sentiment of honour revolted against it--the higher I got, the more was I forced upon my beggarly system--the better the Coterie--the more children of Art--I languish'd for those of Nature: and one night, after a most vile prostitution of myself to half a dozen different people, I grew sick--went to bed--order'd La Fleur to get me horses in the morning to set out for Italy. (266)

This incident shows Yorick the character at his lowest point in the novel. And it is of particular note for the present discussion that the narrator should choose a sexual metaphor (prostitution) to describe his social behavior.

It is also interesting that Yorick's "vile prostitution" does not involve only women as such. Throughout the novel, Yorick's ability to analyze his own behavior is suggested through sexual innuendo and through his sexual situations with women. While he follows his "beggarly system," he seems to have promiscuous relation-

ships with men and women at various levels of Parisian society. This "prostitution" is Yorick's most significant negative life experience in the novel, and it convinces him to pursue "Nature" rather than "Art." Indeed, after these Parisian experiences, we once more find Yorick becoming entangled in situations with women.

Yorick's first experience after the Paris section is with the woeful Maria. This episode is important, for it demonstrates that, notwithstanding his self-discovery in Paris, he is constantly tempted to ride his sentimental hobbyhorse. And Maria is an appropriate complement to a man of feeling. She is actually the bucolic ideal of the innocent and sad hyper-sensitive female heart that Yorick is continually seeking in his travels. She is young and beautiful. She is dressed in white and her hair hangs loose. About her neck is tied a ribbon with a pipe upon which she plays her service to the Virgin. She always keeps her little dog, appropriately named Sylvio, tied by a string to her girdle. She lives in the country with her recently widowed mother. And, to make her even more pitiable, she is partially demented as a result of her grief over the loss of her faithless lover. Thus she spends all of her time straying about the countryside in a melancholy state of semiconscious transport. In brief, she is the perfect object for Yorick's fatherly pity, and he seems to succumb to her with sentimental fervor.

But, as Sterne's authorial irony suggests, Yorick

does not surrender himself to sentimentalism. The reader is alerted to an ironic intent when the narrator likens himself to "the Knight of the Woeful Countenance, in quest of melancholy adventures" (270). "I know not how it is," Yorick goes on to say, "but I am never so perfectly conscious of the existence of a soul within me, as when I am entangled in them" (270). The image of Don Quixote suggests Sterne's method of viewing pretentiousness in a humorous vein. Even the use of the word "entangled" connotes a comic sentimental embroilment rather than a serious spiritual pursuit. And, perhaps most importantly, one should keep in mind that, if Yorick is a Don Quixote, then women such as Maria can assume in his eyes the role of Dulcinea. And, as Yorick's other encounters with women suggest, he is strongly inclined to idealize every woman he meets.

Maria, of course, lends herself most readily to this kind of romantic transformation. In fact, her description and her story evoke the world of the Arcadian gods of earth. Her rural life, her lover, her goat, the name of her dog, and her pipe, upon which she plays her service to the Virgin, all suggest the myth of Pan and Syrinx. But there is an important difference between this classical myth and Maria's story. In the myth, Syrinx is a faithful worshipper of the chaste Diana. Pan falls in love with her and chases her so as to possess her sexually. But when he reaches her, she, with the help of the

water-nymphs, is transformed and Pan finds himself embracing a tuft of reeds. He sighs, and his breath produces a plaintive melody in the reeds. This gives Pan the idea of making his Pandean pipes, which he calls Syrinx in honor of the nymph. And in this way, he is able to possess her at least through his music.

In Maria's story, on the other hand, the roles are reversed. It is not the nymph who disappears but the lover and the goat (Pan, of course, is half man and half goat). It is Maria who is concerned with possessing her lover; she keeps her dog (presumably named after her lover) constantly on a string to ensure his faithfulness. Thus, if we keep the Pan-Syrinx myth in mind, it appears that it is Maria who by implication assumes the sexually aggressive role. This sexual aspect of Maria's grief is hinted at again at the end of the second "Maria" chapter. Yorick asks Maria where she will dry her tear-steeped handkerchief:

> . . . I'll dry it in my bosom, said she--'twill do me good.
>
> And is your heart still so warm, Maria? said I.
>
> I touch'd upon the string on which hung all her sorrows--she look'd with wistful disorder for some time in my face; and then, without saying any thing, took her pipe, and play'd her service to the Virgin--The string I had touch'd ceased to vibrate--in a moment or two Maria returned to herself--let her pipe fall--and rose up. (273-274)

Significantly, Yorick sees Maria's bosom as the seat of her heart, seemingly ignoring the fact that it is also an aspect of her femininity. But, in fact, Yorick admits in the

next chapter that "she was feminine" (275). Thus, Maria's look of "wistful disorder" connotes a longing which is both emotional and sexual. For this reason, Maria takes up her pipe and plays her service to the Virgin, not in imitation of Syrinx's worship of Diana's chastity, but rather in imitation of Pan's lament. Like Pan, she is without her lover and thus without sexual fulfillment. Her Pandean pipe represents her need to fill the vacuum in a life without love and without sex. Pipe, it will be remembered, can refer to the penis.

Yorick is quite aware of Maria's sexuality. On the one hand, he prefers to see her as a chaste victim of love, as a poor suffering child for whom he can feel pity in true sentimental fashion. But, at the same time, he is also attracted to her femininity:

> Maria, tho' not tall, was nevertheless of the first order of fine forms--affliction had touch'd her looks with something that was scarce earthly--still she was feminine--and so much was there about her of all that the heart wishes, or the eye looks for in woman, that could the traces be ever worn out of her brain, and those of Eliza's out of mine, she should not only eat of my bread and drink of my own cup, but Maria should lay in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter. (275)

The narrator's emphasis in this passage is on physical attraction and sexual love. Maria is described as "tall"; she has a "fine form"; she is "feminine"; and she has everything that one would want in a "woman" (not a girl). Also, reference is made to Maria's past love, to Yorick's love for Eliza, and to Maria "laying" in Yorick's bosom. In brief, the entire passage has nothing to do with

fatherly love; but it ends, strangely enough, with the term "daughter." One wonders how Maria--this "feminine . . . woman"--could be a "daughter" to Yorick, particularly after she has lain in his bosom. And it is also odd that Maria and Yorick should need to forget their past loves before she can be a "daughter" to the sexually conscious curate.

Such verbal ambiguities undercut Yorick's ostensible sentimentalism. Indeed, even what at first appears to be the most emotional scene in the Maria episode is charged with sexual innuendoes:

> I sat down close by her; and Maria let me wipe them [her tears] away as they fell with my handkerchief.--I then steep'd it in my own--and then in hers--and then in mine--and then I wip'd hers again--and as I did it, I felt such undescribable emotions within me, as I am sure could not be accounted for from any combinations of matter and motion. (271)

The focus here is not so much on sadness but on a shared physical experience which involves a to and fro movement between the man and the woman and which also involves a mingling of bodily fluids. This to and fro activity results in "undescribable emotions." But the emphasis of the language is less on emotions and more on <u>motions</u>. Indeed, the paragraph ends with a reference to the physical ("matter") and to "motion." It is also of note that the activity being described involves a wiping of Yorick's and Maria's cheeks. One is reminded of Yorick's earlier words about Mme. de L***:

> . . . to see her weep! and though I cannot dry up the

> fountain of her tears, what an exquisite sensation is there still left, in wiping them from off the cheeks of the first and fairest of women, as I'm sitting with my handkerchief in my hand in silence the whole night besides her. (146)

As was noted earlier, the wiping of cheeks has definite sexual connotations. It would appear that Yorick achieves a form of sexual fulfillment without performing the actual sex act.

The narrator's language thus suggests that Yorick is able to view his own foibles objectively. In Paris, Yorick the character had run the temptation of living the superficial life of a social chameleon. But once he overcomes this temptation, he becomes aware once more of the totality of his feelings, some of which are sexual in nature. It is perhaps for this reason that, following his emotional, quasi-sexual relationship with Maria, he can exclaim, "I am positive I have a soul" (271). Indeed, it is after the Maria episode that Yorick the narrator interjects his "Dear sensibility" passage (277-279), in which, as some critics have already pointed out, the sentimental traveller seems to learn to look beyond himself and to achieve an awareness of himself as part of a Divine Plan.[23]

After overcoming his "vile prostitution" in Paris, Yorick decides to follow "Nature" rather than "Art." It is therefore logical that the "Dear sensibility" passage should be followed by Yorick's experience of the simple rural joys described in "The Supper" and "The Grace." But

it is interesting that Sterne does not allow his narrator to end the novel on this perhaps too idyllic note. After all, as the sexual innuendoes throughout his story suggest, Yorick is a man, and he has a man's consciousness and a man's imperfections. It is therefore appropriate that the novel should end with an episode which reveals the curate's humanity in all its inconsistencies.

Yorick's initial reaction to any situation is always charitable, and "the Case of Delicacy" is no exception. When he is presented with the problem of accomodating a lady and her maid in his rooms, he reacts altruistically: "I left not the lady a moment to make a conjecture about it--so instantly made a declaration I would do any thing in my power" (286). However, once it occurs to him that he might have to sacrifice his warm bed, he begins to cough and he stands on his rights as the first occupant of the room. His actions thus prove to be something less than charitable and quite inconsistent with his initial protestation. Indeed, Yorick acts rather selfishly. But so does the lady. In fact, it is interesting for this discussion of sexual material that they are both concerned with sleeping by the heat of the fire, and they consequently end up sleeping next to each other.

This last point indicates the sexual attraction which exists between Yorick and the lady. If there were no sexual attraction, there would hardly be any need to

draw up a "treaty of peace" which is meant to protect the lady's sexual rights. Given the nature of this treaty, it is clear that there is a pun intended with piece, an expression which in the eighteenth century meant, according to Grose, "a girl who is more or less active and skillful in the amorous congress."[24] This pun reinforces the notion that the lady is not only a sexual object but also a participant in sex who is more concerned with propriety than with the effects of sexual relations. In fact, she and Yorick draw up their "treaty of peace," but the provisions of the treaty establish a very insubstantial barrier to sexual contact. Indeed, their propinquity is so titillating that Yorick cannot hold himself and lets loose with "an ejaculation." And the lady's reaction to this "ejaculation" is strongly suggestive of sexual intercourse: "The lady would by no means give up her point, tho' she weakened her barrier by it; for in the warmth of the dispute, I could hear two or three corking pins fall out of the curtain to the ground" (290). In Shakespeare's time, point referred to the head of the penis.[25] And in the nineteenth century, pointer meant penis.[26] It is most likely that the word must have survived with the same meaning during the eighteenth century. The present situation invites such an interpretation. In fact, the lady refuses to "give up her point"; and, quite naturally, her "barrier" is weakened by holding on to the "point." Also quite naturally, the "dispute" is characterized by

"warmth." The narrator continues this sort of sexual innuendo to the very "end" of the chapter. When the maid hears her mistress and Yorick speaking, she steals close to the beds so that

> . . . she had got herself into the narrow passage which separated them, and had advanc'd so far up as to be in a line betwixt her mistress and me--
> So that when I stretch'd out my hand, I caught hold of the Fille de Chambre's
> END OF VOL. II (291)

It is particularly significant that Sterne ends volume two with Yorick's outstretched hand. The hand comes to symbolize, particularly after the affairs with Mme. de L*** and the Parisian glove seller, the tension in Yorick between his desire for innocence and his irrefutable sexuality. This final example makes the point quite clearly. Yorick states that he stretched out his hand "by way of asseveration" because he intended to add that he "would not have trespass'd against the remotest idea of decorum for the world", (290). In short, Yorick stretches out his hand for an innocent reason. However, the sexual suggestiveness of the description of the girl's movement "into the narrow passage" and the intentional ambiguity of the unpunctuated sentence which ends the chapter suggest that Yorick's hand might have caught hold of the fille de chambre's hand, or it might have come to rest on the sinful "end" of the woman, the "end" which he has been trying both to avoid and to obtain throughout his journey. This ambiguity suggests that Yorick, no matter how

innocent his professed intentions might be, realizes that he cannot really protect his hand from falling upon sexual and sinful parts, just as he cannot protect himself from falling into sexual and sinful situations, because he is a sexual and sinful being. Once Yorick leaves the isolation of the Shandy party in the novel, he is forced to deal with the world. His hand thus becomes symbolic of his contact with society, a contact which remains ambiguous because of the very complexity of his nature as a human being.

CHAPTER V

SEX, DEATH, AND HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS IN TRISTRAM SHANDY AND A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

The double meaning which we are invited to read into Yorick's ambiguous predicament at the end of A Sentimental Journey is typical of the kind of multi-level reading which Sterne requires of us throughout his fiction. In both Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey, Sterne uses the sexual innuendo as a reminder that language can be interpreted in various ways as a result of the variety of human points of view. But, at the same time, the sexual theme also suggests a basic similarity between all men. We may see things differently and fail to communicate effectively with one another, but this very failing is part of our mortality, just as sexuality is part of our mortality. The sexual motif points both to man's fallibility and to man's need to be conscious of that fallibility. In short, Sterne's use of the sexual theme suggests that human consciousness should involve an awareness of the limitations and the potentials of one's mortality. It is for this reason that Sterne places so much emphasis on the Yorick figure in his fiction, for the Yorick figure is both a reminder of death and a

self-conscious jester. As such, he is always aware of his mortality (which includes both death and sex); and this awareness becomes the motive force for his assertion of life through jest.

Yorick the preacher is associated with both sex and death in Tristram Shandy. He is first introduced into the story because it is his wife who installs the midwife in the parish. But we soon learn that Yorick had learned to cease buying new horses because they were continually being borrowed and run down by persons needing the services of the midwife from the other parish. After the loss of several horses, Yorick becomes convinced that this one act of charity is disabling him "from any other act of generosity in his parish" (I.x.21); therefore, he decides to ride his last horse "with all his aches and infirmities to the very end of the chapter" (I.x.22).

Sterne presents this decision in language which is rich in sexual overtones. Yorick's last horse is compared to Don Quixote's Rosinante, with the exception that Rosinante was not broken-winded and he "was undoubtedly a horse at all points" (I.x.18). "Points" may refer to penis, thus suggesting sexual potency.[1] Yorick's mount, on the other hand, is "a horse of chaste deportment," whose chastity, unlike Rosinante's, seems to derive from a "bodily defect" (I.x.18). This impotence is further explained by the description of how Yorick's horses were normally reduced during the frantic rides to get the

midwife: "his horse was either clapp'd, or spavin'd, or freaz'd;--or he was twitter-bon'd, or broken-winded, or something, in short, or other had befallen him which would let him carry no flesh . . ." (I.x.21). The sexual allusions here, particularly in the expressions "clapp'd" and "carry no flesh," connote sexual illness and impotence. Yorick's decision to cease buying new horses and to ride the last one "to the very end of the chapter" suggests Yorick's acceptance of impotence and physical degeneration as states which must be ministered to. In fact, it is in the area of sickness and death that Yorick sees his primary Christian duty:

> . . . what still weighed more with him than all other considerations put together, was this, that it confined all his charity into one particular channel, and where, as he fancied, it was the least wanted, namely, to the child-bearing and child-getting part of his parish; reserving nothing for the impotent,--nothing for the aged,--nothing for the many comfortless scenes he was hourly called forth to visit, where poverty, and sickness, and affliction dwelt together. (I.x.21)

Again, the language is sexual. The reference to "one particular channel" connotes the female sexual organ, a suggestion which is strengthened by the reference to the "child-bearing and child-getting part of the parish."

It is interesting that both Yorick and his horse should be associated with the sexual theme, for they are both such obvious reminders of death. Yorick's name links him with Hamlet's death's head. And the horse serves the purpose of a death's head as well. He is

described as "a meek-spirited jade of a broken-winded horse . . . [on which Yorick] could sit mechanically, and meditate as delightfully de vanitate mundi et fugâ saeculi, as with the advantage of a death's head before him . . ." (I.x.20). Sterne thus presents us with a comic apocalyptic picture of a Quixotic preacher (who reminds us of a Shakespearean jester's skull) sitting on a Cervantic skeletal horse and contemplating yet another skull. In this way, Yorick and his horse are associated with death, but they are also associated with sex and with a comic vision of death. Indeed, Yorick is more of a Cervantic than a Hamletian figure. He is a live jester rather than simply a memento mori.

It is significant that whereas Shakespeare's Yorick is introduced in act five of Hamlet as a symbol of mortality and a memory of past jesting, Sterne presents his Yorick at the beginning of his work as the witty antagonist of dishonesty and affected gravity. Thus, he is not a skull which evokes past memories. Rather, he exists throughout Tristram Shandy as a reminder not only of mortality but also of the need to jest. He is presented as a sort of witty Don Quixote, a man "utterly unpracticed in the world . . . [who] at the age of twenty-six, knew just about as well how to steer his course in it, as a romping, unsuspicious girl of thirteen . . .". (I.xi.26). But this naivety is not really involved with a fantasy world, as Don Quixote's is. It is, rather, the product of

a pure honesty which laughs at affectation. And, for this reason, Yorick declares "open war against . . . [gravity] as it appeared a cloak for ignorance, or for folly . . ." (I.xii.26).

Ironically, it is Yorick's honesty and naivety which lead to his death. He is a pure spirit in an imperfect world, and the world finally exhausts him. Eugenius, who is more practiced in the ways of the world, warns Yorick that his jests will eventually catch up with him, for the world does not know that Yorick ridicules his fellow men with "an honesty of mind, and a mere jocundity of humour" (I.xii.28). Indeed, the victims of Yorick's jests eventually seek retribution, they stop his preferment, and he dies of the many blows they inflict on his head (I.xii.31). But it is of note that Yorick's final words are "utter'd with something of a cervantick tone," and Eugenius perceives in his eyes a "faint picture of those flashes of his spirit, which (as Shakespear said of his ancestor) were wont to set the table in a roar!" (I.xii.31). It is important that this be kept in mind when we turn the page and we are faced with the words "Alas, poor YORICK!" and the two black pages (I.xii.32-34). Yorick appears to be dying of a broken heart (I.xii.30), and yet he meets death with a Cervantic tone and jester's smile. To the very end, then, Yorick remains true to the spirit which led him to his resolve to help the impotent, the sick, and the dying. Throughout his life his eyes remain fixed on man's

mortality and his imperfections; and his honesty and naivety laugh and poke fun at man's foibles with child-like abandon. At the moment of his death, his eyes remain forever fixed on that mortality and the injustices which his enemies heaped on him, and he manages for a final time to don the jester's cap and bells.

Yorick thus comes to represent a frame of mind which is of central importance in Tristram Shandy. He is a man who likes to meditate "delightfully de vanitate mundi et fugâ saeculi" (I.x.20); and we learn in volume six that his favorite sermon is the one written for Le Fever's funeral on the subject of mortality (VI.xi.428-429). Like all men, he is made to "suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"; but, given the choice of laughing or crying, he chooses the former. As Richard A. Lanham points out, Sterne's Yorick presents a comic alternative to Hamlet's dilemma:

> The soul of Hamlet's heroic response is a Stoical resignation before a universe where to act is to be mistaken: "The readiness is all . . . . . Let be." It is possible, I think, to see Tristram Shandy as reopening the discussion at this point. In the face of the dominance of chance, you do what Yorick does with the chestnut. You capitalize on it for your own purposes. You cannot thereby control your fate. ("Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.") But at least you can live pleasurably with it. You need not resign yourself to it. The comparison with Hamlet shows, it seems to me, the degree to which the novel's final stance is an active, not a passive one. The jester is not resigned but aggressive. "Let be" is the last thing he would say. He concerns himself not with a cosmic victory but a comic one: not a tragic wrestling with universal fate but a sharp and decisive effort at a self-aware domestic comfort.[2]

Yorick's willingness to be active is related to his ability to accept mortality. For Yorick's acceptance of mortality involves a recognition on his part of the fallen nature of man's life. Yorick does not attempt to transcend human existence with cerebral systems as Walter often does, nor does he seek refuge in a game world like Toby. But Yorick accepts mortality and its limitations, and, as a result, he accepts the responsibility of making the most of all situations. Consequently, Yorick is able to pick up Phutatorius's chestnut and eat it, thus turning a painful incident into something pleasurable and nourishing. And, more importantly still, the episode demonstrates Yorick's ability to accept responsibility for fallen nature and to accept the fact that fallen nature is part of his own nature. The chestnut incident thus becomes an expansion on Didius's definition of possession in a state of nature:

> . . . Whence comes this man's right to this apple? ex confesso, he will say,--things were in a state of nature.--The apple, as much Frank's apple, as John's. Pray, Mr. Shandy, what patent has he to shew for it? and how did it begin to be his? was it, when he set his heart upon it? or when he gather'd it? or when he chew'd it? or when he roasted it? or when he peel'd it? or when he brought it home? or when he digested?--or when he -- --? --. . For 'tis plain, Sir, if the first pick[illegible] up of the apple, made it not his,--that no subse[illegible]nt act could. (III.xxxiv.222)

As Sigurd Burkhardt pointed out, this apple is significant both as Newton's [illegible]e and as Adam and Eve's apple.[3] The apple, like all m[illegible]al objects, is subject to the law of gravity. And we, as heirs of Adam and Eve,

partake of our fallen heritage by picking up the apple and eating it. The chestnut incident is also suggestive of man's post-lapsarian state. Phutatorius is the copulator, and his wound points to the inflammatory nature of sexual passion. When Phutatorius's pain increases, it occurs to him "that possibly a Newt or an Asker, or some such detested reptile, had crept up, and was fastening his teeth . . ." (IV.xxvii.322). Significantly, it is this almost satanic image which evokes Phutatorius's exhortation of God's wounds, symbol of man's redemption:

> . . . he leapt incontinently up, uttering as he rose that interjection of surprise so much discanted upon, with the aposiopestick break after it, marked thus, Z--ds--which, though not strictly canonical; was still as little as any man could have said upon the occasion;--and which, by the bye, whether canonical or not, Phutatorius could no more help than he could the cause of it. (IV.xxvii.322)

Tristram's description here makes Phutatorius's reaction sound fatalistic. By contrast, Yorick makes an act of choice, and he picks up and eats Phutatorius's rejected chestnut "for no reason, but that he thought the chestnut not a jot worse for the adventure--and that he held a good chestnut worth stooping for" (IV.xxvii.322). This immediately raises the issue of possession and responsibility. Phutatorius interprets Yorick's action as a sign that Yorick "must have been the owner of the chestnut" (IV.xxvii.323) and that he must have been responsible for the jest. And Phutatorius holds this "opinion" (IV.xxvii.323) because of Yorick's past disapproval

of Phutatorius's treatise de Concubinis retinendis. Phutatorius's "opinion" thus impairs his vision of the true nature of possession and responsibility. As Didius suggests, in a state of nature the apple (or chestnut, or whatever) belongs to whomever picks it up. Phutatorius rejects the chestnut; he thus abnegates all rights to it, rendering it a free chestnut as it were. And Yorick is perfectly within his natural rights, and is indeed duty bound, to make productive use of it.

This last point raises the issue of the effects of one's actions. Phutatorius is not only a fallen man, but he is a hypocrite. He himself is responsible for his accident, for, as Tristram points out, his neglect in leaving his galligaskins unshut "had opened a door to this accident" (IV.xxvii.320). And yet he rejects responsibility for the chestnut and he tries to place the blame on Yorick. Similarly, Phutatorius does not accept responsibility for the inflammatory effects of his book. But, as the chestnut incident demonstrates, one cannot ignore such mortal realities as gravity and heat, just as one cannot ignore sexuality and the implications of language. When Phutatorius turns to Gastripheres and asks "what is best to take out the fire?" (IV.xxviii.324), the double meaning of the question suggests Phutatorius's moral blindness.[4] Phutatorius is concerned only with a literal fire, his wound, but he is unaware of the fire of sexual passion for which he is also responsible. This becomes evident in

Phutatorius's inability to grasp the irony of Eugenius's suggestion that he place a sheet of paper just off the press on the inflamed member. Yorick finds this highly apropos and delights in inventing sexual puns for the occasion: "The damp paper, quoth Yorick (who sat next to his friend Eugenius) though I know it has a refreshing coolness in it--yet I presume is no more than the vehicle--and that the oil and lamp-black with which the paper is so strongly impregnated [my italics], does the business" (IV.xxviii.325). Gastripheres also plays with sexual innuendoes: "Was it my case . . . as the main thing is the oil and lamp-black, I should spread them thick upon a rag, and clap it on directly" [my italics] (IV.xxviii.325). But Phutatorius does not respond to these sexual innuendoes. In fact, so total is his blindness that he suggests that a page from de Concubinis retinendis (specifically from "de re concubinaria"--on the thing pertaining to concubinage--IV.xxviii.326) be applied to his "fire" even though Yorick had warned him to avoid bawdy passages.

The contrast between Yorick and Phutatorius sheds much light on Sterne's notion of human consciousness in Tristram Shandy. Yorick is the standard.[5] He is the man who can face death and who can find joy in the limitations of mortality. And one of the main joys he experiences is language itself. As Yorick's puns demonstrate, words are highly complex. What is pain ("fire") for one person may be sexual passion and pleasure ("fire") to another. The

same point was made by Locke in the Essay--since men are imperfect and do not always attach exactly the same meaning to words, words can have different meanings for different men.[6] Or, as with puns and innuendoes, the same word can carry a variety of meanings simultaneously. In this way, the ambiguity of language is a manifestation of the complexity of mortal life. Yorick is a man who accepts his mortality; and, as a result, he, like Tristram and like the narrator of A Sentimental Journey, sees and enjoys the complexity of language. Consequently, Yorick is a jester, a man of wit, because he has a great awareness of the fallen nature of man and of man's language. And he feels compelled to poke fun at the hypocrisy and affectation of those who are untrue to their mortality. Human consciousness, as Sterne seems to see it, thus resides in an awareness of one's self, of one's limitations as a mortal human being, and of the implications of one's actions and words. Consciousness in this sense is basic to self-knowledge.

As we have seen, Sterne manifests the need for such an awareness through an unrelenting verbal wit, and specifically a sexual wit.[7] Yorick is a well-defined standard for this type of awareness. Interestingly enough, however, Yorick's presence is not pervasive in Tristram Shandy. After the two major appearances which I have discussed, Yorick appears a few times as an amiable foil to Toby and Trim's hobbyhorse. For example, when, after

Tristram's accidental circumcision Trim exclaims that he wished he had cut off the church spout instead of the sash-weights; Yorick declares, "You have cut off spouts enow" (V.xxiii.382). This brief comment reminds us of the need to curb hobbyhorsical zeal. Similarly, Yorick's citation of the Gymnast and Tripet story from Rabelais pokes fun at Walter's theories about circumcision (V.xxix-xxx.387-390). On a few occasions Yorick agrees with the Shandys; for example, he praises Walter's ability to see jest in the world (V.xxxii) and Toby's common-sense approach to love (VIII.xxxiii). We also learn that Yorick added musical notations to his sermons (VI.xi). And, besides a few other brief appearances, Yorick makes his last important entry in the very last sce the book where he utters his "a cock and a bull" joke, which serves as an abiding commentary on Tristram Shandy. Yorick is thus very important even though he is not always present to set the example for human consciousness throughout the book. But this does not invalidate his role as a standard, for the reader is continually reminded of this ideal by Tristram himself. Indeed, Tristram and Yorick are very similar in their roles as verbal jesters, and the chestnut incfdent can be seen as a paradigm for Tristram's continual attempt to treat language responsibly and with self-awareness.

Tristram's sexual wit is consistent throughout his book. But it has not been adequately explained how this

sexual wit is related to the subject of death. As we have seen, Yorick is a successful jester because he comes to terms with man's mortality and with everything which that mortality implies. Consequently, he accepts sexuality and he is able to use it with wit and therefore with productivity. Tristram himself is dedicated to this very idea, as his own preface on the subject of wit and judgment indicates (III.xx.192-203).[8] But, because he is both hobbyhorse rider and narrator, Tristram is a very complex figure. On the one hand, he is tempted to gratify his need for self-explanation by embarking on long and contorted digressions. But, at the same time, he is perfectly aware of his hobbyhorsical penchant and of the other limitations of his human nature--particularly the inevitability of death (which is associated with sexuality as part of the birth-death cycle) and the ambiguities of language (which are also associated with sex, presumably because language is a mortal invention, and sexuality is such a basic aspect of mortality). As a self-conscious narrator, Tristram delights in his human limitations because they are all that he has--they define his humanity. But they define his humanity as a mortal state. As a result, he sees his existence as both comic and tragic. The image of the Quixotic and Hamletian Yorick astride an impotent Cervantic nag is appropriate here. For Tristram is a Quixotic jester who is forever staring at an inescapable death's head. Indeed, the only way in which

Tristram can defeat death is by becoming a successful artist. It is thus his ideal to relate Toby's amours effectively and in this way transcend his misfortunes and his mortality:

> The thing I lament is, that things have crowded in so thick upon me, that I have not been able to get into that part of my work towards which, I have all the way, looked forwards, with so much earnest desire; and that is the campaigns, but especially the amours of my uncle Toby, the events of which are of so singular a nature, and so Cervantick a cast, that if I can so manage it, as to convey but the same impressions to every other brain, which the occurrences themselves excite in my own--I will answer for it the book shall make its way in the world, much better than its master has done before it--Oh Tristram! Tristram! can this but be once brought about--the credit, which will attend thee as an author, shall counterbalance the many evils which have befallen thee as a man--thou wilt feast upon the one--when thou hast lost all sense and remembrance of the other!--. (IV.xxxii.337)

Tristram is quite aware of the contradictions of human nature--the presence of death and the desire to avoid it; the joys of sex and the knowledge that sex is both vitality and mortality. It is for this reason that sex and death are so closely associated in the story of Tristram's flight from mortality. He would like to escape death. But when he attempts to do so, he is actually escaping life and he cannot commune with his fellow man. When he does not flee, he lives and he comes into contact with sexuality. But this contact raises another contradiction, for sex itself reminds him of mortality and sometimes frightens him into fleeing again. But throughout his flight, Tristram's constant use of sexual innuendo suggests that he is never out of touch with his humanity.

Indeed, his sexual jokes serve to remind us that he is always a Quixotic jester who is both frightened and amused by the Hamletian death mask.

Tristram's pervasive verbal wit characterizes him as a Yorick-like jester, for he, like Yorick, is also aware of his own mortality. And volume seven serves almost as a parable told by Tristram the artist and narrator to show how he as a man has come to face mortality and sex. It is thus revealing that Tristram's narrative in volume seven constantly associates sex with death. Tristram is first visited by death while he is telling what sounds like an obscene story: "I was that moment telling Eugenius a most tawdry one in my way, of a nun who fancied herself a shell-fish, and of a monk damn'd for eating a muscle, and was shewing him the grounds and justice of the procedure" (VII.i.479-480). According to Partridge, nun could signify a courtesan or a harlot in the eighteenth century, and nunnery could refer to a brothel.[9] This theme of prostitution is continued by "fish," which had the pre-eighteenth-century meaning of a girl or a woman viewed sexually, especially a prostitute.[10] The reference to a monk being damned for eating a muscle (the nun being a shell fish) suggests sexual commerce between the monk and the nun. After Death's visit, Tristram refers to him as "this son of a whore" (VII.i.480), thus continuing the sexual imagery and relating death to sex. Eugenius immediately puts Tristram's reaction in the correct Christian

framework: "You call him rightly . . . for by sin, we are told, he enter'd the world." But Tristram's response to this indicates that he would not consider the relation between sin and death: "I care not which way he enter'd, quoth I, provided he be not in such a hurry to take me out with him--for I have forty volumes to write, and forty thousand things to say and do . . ." (VII.i.480). But it is of note that Tristram does not really say or do very much when he is overly concerned with avoiding death. Unlike Yorick, who welcomes his broken-winded horse because it allows him to meditate "delightfully de vanitate mundi et fugâ saeculi," Tristram admits that he "wrote-galloping" (VII.iv.482). Hence, Tristram does not really see anything on his tour of France. He mechanically lists all the towns he passes, and he lists all the sections of Paris; but these are mere names without meaning, for Tristram has no experiences at each place and does not react to them. Tristram works on the principle that motion "is so much of life, and so much of joy--and that to stand still, or get on but slowly, is death and the devil--" (VII.xiii.493). This sounds commendable, but it soon becomes clear that the kind of motion that Tristram has in mind is a mere mechanical movement of the body without engaging the mind. Much of the time, in fact, he tries to sleep and to ignore what he passes (VII.xvi.496-497). He claims that "'tis the best principle in the world to travel speedily upon; for as few objects look very inviting in

that mood--you have little or nothing to stop you . . ." (VII.xvi.497). Thus, Tristram makes it quite clear that he feels that he does not have the time to stop and commune with people:

> --No;--I cannot stop a moment to give you the character of the people--their genius--their manners--their customs--their laws--their religion--their government--their manufactures--their commerce--their finances, with all the resources and hidden springs which sustain them: qualified as I may be, by spending three days and two nights amongst them, and during all that time, making these things the entire subject of my enquiries and reflections;
>
> Still--still I must away--the roads are paved--the posts are short--the days are long--'tis no more than noon--I shall be at Fontainbleau before the king--
> (VII.xix.502)

Tristram's flight from death is mechanical and self-defeating, for the speed at which he goes makes him sick (VII.ii.481) and uncomfortable (VII.xi.491). In fact, Tristram is about to give up speedy travelling at one point, for it has spoiled his digestion and "brought on a bilious diarrhaea" (VII.xix.502). But the fear of death changes his mind and he continues on his turbulent ride.

Tristram eventually does stop fleeing death, and he finds contentment in the Plains of Languedoc. But it is interesting that he achieves this peace of mind not from an actual confrontation with death itself, for death seems to stop its hunt. Rather, Tristram comes to recognize the limitations and joys of his own mortality as a result of his encounters with women and with his sexual drive. Sex thus comes to represent mortality itself--a state

which embodies flux and change but which is also a source of pleasure and joy. We are presented with a first indication of this theme in chapter seven:

> --BOULOGNE!--hah!--so we are all got together--debtors and sinners before heaven; a jolly set of us--but I can't stay and quaff it off with you--I'm pursued myself like a hundred devils, and shall be overtaken before I can well change horses:--for heaven's sake, make haste--'Tis for high treason, quoth a very little man, whispering as low as he could to a very tall man that stood next him--Or else for murder; quoth the tall man--Well thrown Size-ace! quoth I. No; quoth a third, the gentleman has been committing -- --.
>
> Ah! ma chere [sic] fille! said I, as she tripp'd by, from her matins--you look as rosy as the morning (for the sun was rising, and it made the compliment the more gracious)--No; it can't be that, quoth a fourth--(she made a curt'sy to me--I kiss'd my hand) 'tis debt; continued he: 'Tis certainly for debt; quoth a fifth; I would not pay that gentleman's debts, quoth Ace, for a thousand pounds; Nor would I, quoth Size, for six times the sum--Well thrown, Size-Ace, again! quoth I;--but I have no debt but the debt of NATURE, and I want but patience of her, and I will pay her every farthing I owe her--How can you be so hard-hearted, MADAM, to arrest a poor traveller going along without molestation to any one, upon his lawful occasions? do stop that death-looking, long-striding scoundrel of a scare-sinner, who is posting after me--he never would have followed me but for you--if it be but for a stage, or two, just to give me start of him, I beseech you, madam--do, dear lady--
>
> --Now, in troth, 'tis a great pity, quoth mine Irish host, that all this good courtship should be lost; for the young gentlewoman has been after going out of hearing of it all along--.
>
> --Simpleton! quoth I.
>
> --So you have nothing else in Boulogne worth seeing?
>
> --By Jasus! there is the finest SEMINARY for the HUMANITIES--.
>
> --There cannot be a finer; quoth I. (VII.vii.487-488)

Work has a footnote on the term "Size-ace": "Size: sice, six. The tall and short men, who are hazarding opinions, are designated by this gamester's term for a throw of two

dice which turns up a six and a one."[11] The repeated expression "Well thrown, Size Ace!" also has sexual implications. Partridge finds to throw down and to be thrown in Shakespeare as expressions denoting coition.[12] "Size" may be a reference to sexual size. And "Ace" may be a pun on ass. It is also worth noting in passing that in the nineteenth century ace was a variant of ace of spades and was used to designate the female pudend.[13] Given the context of Tristram's remarks, it seems probable that a similar sexual meaning existed during Sterne's time. The passage as a whole is rich in double meanings, and it is constructed so that one is forced to blend the meanings together. The unknown "debtors and sinners" begin by hazarding opinions on the reasons for Tristram's hastiness. The opinions they give are to be expected from men who are sinners and who therefore think in terms of sin. As they talk, Tristram addresses a young girl in a gracious manner. But his politesse suffers from its juxtaposition with the sinful gamesters' remarks. Tristram's salutation to the girl--"Ah! ma chere fille!"--comes immediately after the suggestion, in an unfinished sentence, that he "has been committing . . . ," thus raising the possibility that a sexual crime is being suggested. And the repetition of "Ace," "Size," and "Size-Ace" maintains the scabrous level foremost in our minds so that when Tristram mentions his "debt of NATURE" one is quick to identify it as a sexual debt. His desire to "pay her every

farthing I owe her" refers to an act of spending, possibly a sexual spending. And Tristram's next sentence encourages this interpretation, for it almost sounds as if Tristram is still courting the "chere fille." "Mine Irish host," in fact, interprets the speech in this more dirty way. Tristram denies it, suggesting that he has been talking to Nature all along. But the chapter ends with a reference to "the finest SEMINARY for the HUMANITIES," which seems to be a sexual joke based on a pun on semen. Thus, Tristram's final remark could be read as an indication that he still has the "chere fille" in mind.

The sexual innuendoes have a very specific purpose in this passage, for they create a level of ambiguity in Tristram's language. On the one hand, Tristram is blaming Nature for death--"he never would have followed me but for you." And at the same time, since Nature is confused through the sexual allusions with the "chere fille," Tristram is also isolating a specific part of Nature--sexuality--as the cause of death. Tristram does not openly suggest it here, but of course to die is a traditional expression for orgasm, so that this implied relation between sex and death is not new.

Interestingly enough, the Irish host (one of the "debtors and sinners") seems more sensitive to the multi-level implications of Tristram's language, for Tristram denies that he has been courting the "chere fille." However, in chapter nine Tristram shows that he is aware

of the relationship between sex and mortality. He is about to dismiss Montreuil as the place which "looks most pitifully," but he stops himself to note that "there is one thing however in it at present very handsome; and that is the innkeeper's daughter" (VII.ix.489). Her name is Janatone and she represents for Tristram the transience of life. And it is of note that the first thing he tells us about her is that she is a sexual being who knows how to display her sexuality. Tristram says that she "does the little coquetries very well," and he calls her "slut" for running over her coquetries as he looks at her: "Yes, yes--I see, you cunning gypsy!--'tis long, and taper--you need not pin it [Janatone's stocking] to your knee--and that 'tis your own--and fits you exactly" (VII.ix.490). The term pin is sexually suggestive. Also, one should note the use of the word "cunning," which sounds dangerously close to cunny. The emphasis on the stocking, the girl's knee, and the problem of fitting exactly maintains the sexual implications very alive.

This passage of sexual enticement is followed by an equally suggestive passage in which Tristram promises to "draw" Janatone:

> . . . may I never draw more, or rather may I draw like a draught-horse, by main strength all the days of my life,--if I do not draw her in all her proportions, and with as determin'd a pencil, as if I had her in the wettest drapery. (VII.ix.490)

The image of Janatone "in the wettest drapery" is very sensual. Also, pen is a slang term for penis. The

similarity, both linguistic and physical, between pencil and pen suggests that "pencil" is also being used as a sexual allusion. This possibility is strengthened by the use of the word "draw."[14] In fact, the act of drawing is here seen as a muscular action which seems to transform the "determin'd . . . pencil" into an aggressive male member which can possess Janatone in "wettest drapery." This highly sexual language is important, for it indicates that Tristram understands the nature of the woman and the nature of his relation to her. In short, he comprehends her mortality. And he makes this clear by contrasting her beauty with a stone church which does not change with time:

> . . . 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--nay, thou mayest go off like a hussy--and lose thyself.--I would not answer for my aunt Dinah, was she alive--'faith, scarce for her picture--were it but painted by Reynolds . . . . (VII.ix.490)

It seems that Sterne is here playing with the expression take measure (extant from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century), which meant to coit with, to marry.[15] The passage as a whole is interesting, for it moves from a change in appearance, to a loss of virginity, to aunt Dinah's death. The themes of sex and death are thus juxtaposed to suggest a connection between the two. Note also that the expression "go off like a hussy" is associated with losing one's self. Go off, from the seventeenth to

the twentieth century, has referred to the act of dying.[16] Thus, the juxtaposition with "hussy" reinforces the suggested relationship between sexuality and dying. Janatone's beauty and vitality attract Tristram sexually. And yet it is this very beauty and vitality which must eventually decay and die. And Tristram is aware of this. Indeed, the last sentence of the chapter suggests that Tristram is completely defeated by Janatone: "L-- help me! I could not count a single point: so had been piqued, and repiqued, and capotted to the devil" (VII.ix.491). "Point" may be a reference to the penis, suggesting that Tristram has suffered a sexual defeat. The proximity to sexual encounter necessarily brings him closer to dying, both literally and sexually, and so he begins another chapter and runs away: "All which being considered, and that Death moreover might be much nearer me than I imagined--I wish I was at Abbeville, quoth I, were it only to see how they card and spin--so off we set" (VII.x.491).[17]

Tristram's flight from Janatone parallels his flight from death. In actuality, it is the same flight, for Janatone obviously represents "the principles of change" and the inevitability of death. And in fleeing from this mortal (and therefore sexual) creature, Tristram flees from his own mortality and his own sexuality. To this extent, Tristram resembles his father and, like Walter, he tries to emulate supra-human philosophical systems:

I love the Pythagoreans (much more than ever I dare

> tell my dear Jenny) for their . . . "getting out of the body, in order to think well." No man thinks right whilst he is in it; blinded as he must be, with his congenial humours, and drawn differently aside, as the bishop and myself have been, with too lax or too tense a fibre--REASON is, half of it, SENSE; and the measure of heaven itself is but the measure of our present appetites and concoctions . . . . (VII.xiii.493-494)

This passage reflects the tension which Tristram is experiencing. On one level, he desires to get out of the body in order to think well. But, at the same time, he is perfectly aware of the body and of the influence of "sense" over "reason." It is this consciousness of the body which reminds Tristram of his mortality. But Tristram is not totally comfortable with that mortality. In the following chapter, for instance, he allows himself to improve on Lessius and to speculate on the decreasing number of souls in existence. This leads him to entertain with joy the scene of the pagan gods returning to rule the world: "Blessed Jupiter! and blessed every other heathen god and goddess! for now ye will all come into play again, and with Priapus at your tails--what jovial times!" (VII.xiv.495). Priapus is the god of male generative power, so that "Priapus at your tails" evokes an obvious sexual image. Significantly, it is at this point, when the thought of Priapus reminds Tristram of his sexuality, that the thought of mortality returns:

> . . . but where am I? and into what a delicious riot of things as I rushing? I--I who must be cut short in the midst of my days, and taste no more of 'em than what I borrow from my imagination--peace to thee, generous fool! and let me go on. (VII.xiv.495)

If Tristram were comfortable with his mortality, he would accept the image of "Priapus at your tails" as a source of joy. Instead, it is only a reminder of death for him. Thus, he rejects the creativity of Priapus and the celebration of life which the "delicious riot of things" seems to connote, and he embarks once more on his senseless flight.

Tristram does not stop running away from death until he arrives at the Plains of Languedoc. However, he never really denies mortality, and he continually returns to the sexual theme. Of note is the story of the Abbess of Andouillets and Margarita. The story itself represents Tristram's attempt to explain the significance of the two sexual words--bouger and fouter--which are necessary to get French post-horses moving. But Tristram is unable simply to write the words; he wishes to convey them to us in a "clean" fashion:

> . . . now as these words cost nothing, I long from my soul to tell the reader what they are; but here is the question--they must be told him plainly, and with the most distinct articulation, or it will answer no end--and yet to do it in that plain way--though their reverences may laugh at it in the bed-chamber--full well I wot, they will abuse it in the parlour: for which cause, I have been volving and revolving in my fancy some time, but to no purpose, by what clean device or facete contrivance I might so modulate them, that whilst I satisfy that ear which the reader chuses to lend me--I might not dissatisfy the other which he keeps to himself.
>
> --My ink burns my finger to try--and when I have--'twill have a worse consequence--it will burn (I fear) my paper.
>
> --No;--I dare not . . . (VII.xx.503)

Tristram's prose here is rather titillating and it reflects

his game with the reader. By pretending to be fastidious, he heightens our own awareness of the various levels of language. And, in addition, the story of the abbess and her novice analyzes in a humorous vein the problem of human consciousness in terms of sin, mortality, and language.

As Tristram's titillating introduction to the story suggests, language is problematical because it can appeal to the reader's "dirty" as well as to his "clean" ear. But, of course, the two words which Tristram wishes to convey to us are both dirty. His desire to present them through a "clean device" is therefore as hypocritical as the two nuns' attempt to split the words in half so as to avoid sin. As Burkhardt has pointed out, language is subject to the law of gravity just as man is because man is a fallen creature and he is incapable of perfect communication.[18] To fail to accept responsibility for the fallen nature of language--in other words, to fail to recognize the dirty and sinful aspects of language--is tantamount to rejecting responsibility for one's own mortality and sinfulness. Tristram is aware of this, for he decides not to use a "clean device" to convey the words, but he tells a parable which is rich in both sexual innuendo and religious imagery.

The abbess of Andoüillets and Margarita are the two hypocrites of the piece. They are concerned with maintaining their innocence in a world which is inherently fallen and

corrupt. Ironically, they and the world around them are depicted in highly sexual language. The word abbess itself was used in the eighteenth century to mean a bawd or a mistress of a brothel.[19] This of course casts a suggestive slur on all the nuns who live in the abbess's house. The word andouillets means little sausages in French. And the abbess and Margarita set out on their trip to the hot baths of Bourbon because both are suffering from very sexually suggestive ailments. The abbess herself is "in danger of an Anchylosis or stiff joint" (VII.xxi.504). And she tries a variety of cures. She makes "invocations to all the saints in heaven promiscuously," especially to the saints "who had ever had a stiff leg before her." She touches it with reliques, particularly "the thigh-bone of the man of Lystra, who has been impotent from his youth." She brings "in to her aid the secular arm, and anointing it with oil and hot fat of animals." And she treats it with other concoctions including "bonus Henricus," which sounds somewhat akin to the "stiff leg" mentioned above (VII.xxi.504). Similarly, Margarita is described as

> a novice of the convent of about seventeen, who had been troubled with a whitloe in her middle finger, by sticking it constantly into the abbess's cast poultices, etc.--had gained such an interest, that overlooking a sciatical old nun, who might have been set up for ever by the hot baths of Bourbon, Margarita, the little novice, was elected as the companion of the journey. (VII.xxi.505)

The obscene suggestion in the image of a "nun" sticking her middle finger into another "nun" is fairly

transparent. There may also be a less obvious sexual allusion in the last phrase of the passage. In the eighteenth century, the expression to see company signified "to live by harlotry . . . especially in a good way of business."[20] Tristram may be suggesting this meaning when he says that Margarita (a novice "nun") was "elected as the companion of the journey." In addition, the calesh in which the two nuns travel hardly evokes thoughts of sedate purity. It has a "green frize" and "shreds of yellow binding."[21] There are four dozen bells on the harness. And the muleteer's hat is dressed in "hot wine-lees" (VII.xxi.505), a description which is not insignificant when we remember that hat may refer to the female pudend. These touches of rustic realism and sexual innuendo do not seem to be in keeping with the spirit of the solemnity of the nuns and the whiteness of their uniforms, which according to Tristram is a "sweet emblem of innocence" (VII.xxi.505).

The gardener-muleteer also presents a contrast to the two supposedly innocent nuns. He is described as "a little, hearty, broad-set, good-natured, chattering, toping kind of a fellow, who troubled his head very little with the hows and whens of life . . ." (VII.xxi.506). He is associated with sexuality through his hat with its "hot wine-lees"; and there seems to be a sexual allusion in "toping," which may be a reminder of the eighteenth-century term top-diver (one who has loved

old-hat in his time).[22] He is a simple son of nature, a man who is more likely to give in to his appetites than to give them a second thought. Thus, when he is tempted to sneak into an inn for a drink, he quickly follows his baser nature:

> --The muleteer was a son of Adam. I need not say one word more. He gave the mules, each of 'em, a sound lash, and looking in the abbess's and Margarita's faces (as he did)--as much as to say, "here I am"--he gave a second good crack--as much as to say to his mules, "get on"--so slinking behind, he enter'd the little inn at the foot of the hill. (VII.xxi.506)

The choice of language here is revealing. The muleteer is "a son of Adam," and as such he is weak; he is a mere mortal who is subject to temptation and even more subject to surrendering himself to it. Thus, when Tristram changes the scene, he refers to the muleteer as "the happiest and most thoughtless of mortal men" (VII.xxi.507).

Likewise, the mules belong to the same sinful world. They are "creatures that take advantage of the world, inasmuch as their parents took it of them" (VII:xxi.507). Mules cannot reproduce. Perhaps this is what Tristram is referring to when he says that the mules' parents took advantage of them, in so far as the parents (a mis-match of horse and ass) determined the mules' infertility. But, at the same time, mules can and do copulate. Thus, they do take advantage of the world by seeking and finding pleasure for themselves. In brief, they hold the same relation to their progenitors as the muleteer does to Adam, and they live in the world with

their own selfish interests at heart. Thus, like the muleteer, the mules have no real interest in going up the hill. If the hill is symbolic of the road to sainthood or supra-terrestial existence, we can say that the mules are not motivated to climb in that direction. They and the muleteer are creatures of the world and they prefer to remain at the bottom of the hill. Significantly, the elder mule is referred to as "a shrewd crafty old devil" (VII.xxi.507). And when she decides to stop, she makes an obscene reference to her pudendum: "By my fig! . . . I'll go no further" (VII.xxi.507).[23] The mule is thus both a sexual being and a reminder of the devil and the temptations of the body.

At this point the actions of the two nuns stand in bold relief. They make various noises. Margarita even purses "her sweet lips" (subtle reminder of her suppressed sexuality) and tries to whistle, but all to no avail. The only response they get, Tristram tells us, is that "the old mule let a f---" (VII.xxii.508). If we remember that the old mule was also referred to as an "old devil," the scene serves to remind us both of the inescapable reality of corrupt animal nature and the futility of the nuns' attempts to influence it through half-hearted means. The muleteer would certainly have applied some well-placed strokes of his lash. In fact, the mules had gone halfway up the hill "by virtue of the muleteer's two last strokes" (VII.xxi.507). The sexual innuendo in the term "strokes"

suggests that the muleteer and the mules can communicate because they all dwell on the mundane level where the spirit is corrupt and the flesh is weak. But the nuns try to place themselves above this mortal level. They wish to reach the top of the hill, but they do not give the mule a couple of strokes. And so their actions are impotent.

It is ironic that the first thing which comes into the two hypocritical nuns' minds when they fail to budge the mules is that they will be ravished. And the irony is increased by Tristram's use of sexual innuendo:

> WE are ruin'd and undone, my child, said the abbess to Margarita--we shall be here all night--we shall be plunder'd--we shall be ravish'd--
>
> --We shall be ravish'd, said Margarita, as sure as a gun.
>
> Sancta Maria! cried the abbess (forgetting the O!)--why was I govern'd by this wicked stiff joint? why did I leave the convent of Andoüillets? and why didst thou not suffer thy servant to go unpolluted to her tomb?
>
> O my finger! my finger! cried the novice, catching fire at the word servant--why was I not content to put it here, or there, any where rather than be in this strait?
>
> --Strait! said the abbess.
>
> Strait--said the novice; for terrour had struck their understandings--the one knew not what she said--the other what she answer'd.
>
> O my virginity! virginity! cried the abbess.
>
> --inity!--inity! said the novice, sobbing.
>
> (VII.xxiii.508)

The word play here is suggestive of a sexual bout between the two women. They both ponder on being ravished. Then Margarita introduces the "gun" and the abbess forgets the "O!". The abbess responds with her "wicked stiff joint" and she anticipates going to her tomb not "unpolluted." Margarita then catches "fire," and her finger makes havoc

in the next paragraph, finally ending up "in this Strait." The "strait" excites the abbess. And the passage ends in a scene of uncontrollable outbursts about virginity, which seems, judging from the loss of syllables in the last line, to be ebbing away.

This scene prepares us for the same sort of verbal play in the last chapter of the story. Once more the use of language suggests a sexual communication. Significantly, it is the abbess (let us not forget the double meaning of the word) who suggests that a mortal sin can be avoided by "amicably halving it betwixt yourself and another person." The effect of [illegible] she contends, is that the sin "in course becomes diluted into no sin at all" (VII.xxv.509). The abbess maintains that there is no "turpitude" in pronouncing single syllables; so she suggests that they proceed as follows: "I will say bou, and thou shalt say ger; and then alternately, as there is no more sin in fou than in bou--Thou shalt say fou--and I will come in [my italics] (like fa, sol, la, re, me, ut, at our complines) with ter" (VII.xxv.509-510). The actual execution of this plan starts out slowly and increases in momentum as Margarita urges the abbess to go "qŭicker still," "quicker still," "quicker still" (VII.xxv.510). The sinful suggestion of this accelerating mutual motion is then reinforced by their final comments: "They do not understand us, cried Margarita--But the Devil does, said the abbess of Andoüillets" (Vii.xxv.510).

The ironic contrast between Tristram's very sexual language and the nuns' attempt to avoid the sexuality of language underlines their hypocrisy. At the same time, the imagery relating to Adam and the devil suggests a deeper meaning. The abbess and Margarita seem to be denying their Adamic heritage and their fallen nature. They try to avoid contact with the devil and with their own carnality. By implication, they seem to be denying the existence of their own bodies and of their mortality. But they of course cannot get out of their bodies, just as Tristram and the Pythagoreans cannot really get out of their bodies. And so the nuns come face to face (or, rather, face to tail) with the harsh reality of their animality and their mortality.

Tristram, on the other hand, does accept his own mortality. It is significant that we learn in the chapter immediately following the abbess and Margarita story that Tristram has been wearing his fool's cap. He addresses "Madam" again, and he pretends to try to get the story out of her mind. But, ironically, the method which he uses is to play with sexual language:

> --Pray reach me my fool's cap--I fear you sit upon it Madam--'tis under the cushion--I'll put it on--Bless me! you have had it upon your head this half hour.--There then let it stay, with a
>
> Fa-ra diddle di
> and a fa-ri diddle d
> and a high-dum--dye-dum
> fiddle - - - dumb - c.
>
> And now, Madam, we may venture, I hope, a little to go on. (VII.xxvi.511)

The location of Tristram's "fool's cap" is interesting. Tristram's suggestion that "Madam" is sitting upon the "cap" invites a sexual reading. And "head" can be interpreted sexually, as it is a reminder of cuckoldry and maidenhead. Also, both "diddle" and "fiddle" may have sexual meanings. As a verb, diddle meant to shake in the eighteenth century, whence derived the meaning to copulate with.[24] According to Partridge, fiddle could refer to the female pudend from about 1800. This meaning may not have been in use in Sterne's time. However, the verb to fiddle has had the meaning to play about intimately with, to caress familiarly, to wank since the seventeenth century.[25] There is little doubt that Sterne is playing with the sexual meanings of these terms. The playful attitude towards the "fool's cap" and "Madam" makes this a certainty.

Tristram's donning of the fool's cap to tell a story about hypocrisy and mortality plus his teasing game with "Madam" remind us that he is playing his role as jester in the tradition of parson Yorick. In the remainder of volume seven, Tristram slows down in his journey across France, and there are indications that he accepts the limitations of mortality. For one thing, Tristram demonstrates a greater interest in the educational aspects of the tour. He takes time to recount the story of the experiences of Auxerre during his grand tour with his family (VII.xxvii). He shows an interest in the clock at Lyons (VII.xxx), the

history of China in Chinese (VII.xxx), and the lovers' tomb (VII.xxxi). And he demonstrates a healthy attitude towards death. When his chaise dies, as it were, he sells it to a "vamping chaise-undertaker" and he praises his positive thinking in the matter: "And this is my usual method of book-keeping, at least with the disasters of life--making a penny of every one of 'em as they happen to me--" (VII.xxix.517).

Tristram also shows a continuing interest in sexual stories and sexual joking around. The story of Tristram, Walter, Toby, and Trim in Auxerre includes the anecdote of Maxima and Optat. The anecdote itself shows a playful attitude towards sex. Significantly, the theme of enjoyment is introduced by Walter, who "clapp'd both his hands upon his cod-piece" (VII.xxvii.514) when Toby's hobbyhorse is embarrassed. The presence of the cod-piece and the sexual pun in "clapp'd" set the tone for the innuendoes in the rest of the story. Maxima came to Ravenna to "touch the body-- --Of Saint MAXIMUS," suggests Walter jokingly. But actually it is Saint Germain. When Toby asks what she got by it, Walter again plays with the sexual level and suggests, "What does any woman get by it?" The Benedictine guide immediately answers "MARTYRDOME" and thus deflates Walter's joke. But when the Benedictine says that "St. Maxima has lain in this tomb for four hundred years, and two hundred before her canonization," Walter gets in another sexual pun by suggesting that "'tis

but a slow rise." Walter is finally victorious when he discovers that the man who "has got lain down" besides the beautiful Maxima is St. Optat, a bishop. The names of the two saints complement Walter's theory of Christian names and also enhance the sexual joke (VII.xxvii.514-515). As in the story of the abbess and Margarita, the sexual level serves to deflate the pretentious and the affectedly supra-human. In this case, the great saints Maxima and Optat are reduced to mere mortals who have genitalia and are as subject to carnal knowledge as anyone else.

Similarly, the story of Amandus and Amanda ridicules overinflated romantic love. The story deals with two long-lost lovers, who, on discovering each other, "fly into each others arms, and both drop down dead for joy" (VII.xxxi.521). There is an implied sexual joke here in the term to die. It is significant that Tristram seems to be identifying sex and death here and using these two related themes as a means of satirizing affected states of mind. Interestingly enough, Tristram eventually discovers that the tomb of the two lovers does not even exist, and it is at that point that he mounts a mule instead of his horse so that he can travel more slowly (VII.xl-xli).

It is also of note with relation to mules and other animals that Tristram introduces the incident in which he seems to come to terms with his own animal nature in this latter section of volume seven. It is in this part of his writings, immediately after he sells his chaise to

the "chaise-undertaker," that Tristram confesses that he suffered the worst of sexual embarrassments, "the most oppressive of its kind which could befall me as a man, proud, as he ought to be, of his manhood--" (VII.xxix.517). Tristram shows authentic honesty in being able to depict himself "with my garters in my hand, reflecting upon what had not pass'd" (VII.xxix.518).

This sort of honesty reflects Tristram's ability to expose his sexuality. This idea is humorously depicted in the scene involving Tristram's confrontation with the ass, a scene which has several parallels with the story of the abbess of Andoüillets and Margarita. Like them, Tristram is confronted with a stubborn animal who refuses to move; and, like them, Tristram is unable to communicate with the animal, notwithstanding his assertion that "with an ass, I can commune for ever" (VII.xxxii.523). Tristram makes sure we note the parallels with the abbess's story, for when his imaginary dialogue is interrupted by someone beating the ass (as the abbess's muleteer would have done) he remarks that the last word ("d--d") "was but half of it, pronounced, like the abbess of Andoüillets'--so there was no sin in it)" (VII.xxxii.524). The final parallel with the abbess's story comes at the end when the ass, in rushing past Tristram, tears Tristram's breeches with his pannier and thus exposes Tristram's manhood. This final incident also points to a contrast with the abbess of Andoüillets story; for, whereas the hypocritical nuns are

frustrated by two mules (sterile animals), Tristram the self-conscious narrator confronts an ass (the anatomical meaning of the word is inescapable) that forces him to expose his sexuality.

As in the abbess of Andouillets story, the themes of sex, animal nature, and self-aware honesty are juxtaposed (note that Tristram addresses the ass as "Honesty"--VII.xxxii.523). Tristram's inability to move the ass stems from his initial inability to see the ass for what it is--an ass (an animal and a sexual object)--and not a creature with whom he "can commune for ever" at an intellectual level. The only way one can communicate with an ass is with a "thundering bastinado" (VII.xxxii.524), or, in other words, an animal must be dealt with in animal terms. And this idea is placed in humorous relief by Tristram's torn breeches and his exposed animality. It is also of note that Walter uses the term ass to refer to his sexual passion (VII.xxxi.584). Indeed, Tristram calls Walter's ass "a beast concupiscent" (VII.xxxi.584) and warns his readers from mounting such an uncontrollable animal. Significantly, Walter's "ass" is associated with sexuality, but a sexuality of a dangerous and untameable nature. Tristram's confrontation with the ass, on the other hand, results in a greater awareness of man's animal nature (an awareness which includes sexuality but is not dominated by it).

In the chapters which follow, Tristram experiences

some human frustrations. He must deal with French taxes, which originally infuriate him; but he soon learns to make peace with the French (VII.xxxv.528). He then loses his remarks--"Sancho Pança, when he lost his ass's FURNITURE, did not exclaim more bitterly" (VII.xxxvi.529). But Tristram soon gets a grip on himself and he remembers that he left the remarks in his chaise. He returns to the chaise-vamper's on September 8, the day of the nativity of the Virgin. And he finds the remarks in the hair of a woman who is participating in maypoling activities (VII.xxxviii.531). This contrast between the Virgin and a fertility rite celebrating the phallus emphasizes once more the themes of sexuality and celebration of life.

After Tristram tries to see the tomb of the lovers, an action which may be interpreted as a sign that he can confront death, Tristram's travels slow down. He now rides a mule, and he descends onto the Plains of Languedoc. Unlike the abbess and the novice, Tristram is not trying to drive an unwilling mule up a hill. Rather, he is on the mule, and the two of them move together along a plain. By contrast to his earlier breakneck flight in which he had no time for the various sights of interest, Tristram now travels on a landscape which offers no sights but which nonetheless detains him at every step; for he is now in the mood to commune (as he could not do during his flight from death) with his fellow man:

> How far my pen has been fatigued like those of other

> travellers, in this journey of it, over so barren a track--the world must judge--but the traces of it, which are now all set o'vibrating together this moment, tell me 'tis the most fruitful and busy-period of my life; for as I had made no convention with my man with the gun as to time--by stopping and talking to every soul I met who was not in a full trot--joining all parties before me--waiting for every soul behind--hailing all those who were coming through cross roads--arresting all kinds of beggars, pilgrims, fiddlers, fryars--not passing by a woman in a mulberry-tree without commending her legs, and tempting her into conversation with a pinch of snuff--In short, by seizing every handle, of what size or shape soever, which chance held out to me in this journey--I turned my plain into a city--I was always in company, and with great variety too; and as my mule loved society as much as myself, and had some proposals always on his part to offer to every beast he met--I am confident we could have passed through Pall-Mall or St. James's-Street for a month together, with fewer adventures--and seen less of human nature. (VII.xliii.536)

The emphasis on "human nature" is significant. Tristram now consciously accepts his own human nature. His "fatigued" "pen" suggests that he has been exercising his sexuality (hence, his mortality). This suggestion is further reinforced by Tristram's "joining all parties before" him and waiting for those "behind" and then by his "hailing all those who were coming through cross roads." Coming, of course, can refer to ejaculation. And cross in the eighteenth century meant to bestride a horse, from which derived the signification of to have intercourse with a woman.[26] "Fiddlers" may also be an obscene innuendo.[27] It is of note that Tristram now willingly stops to dally with women by "tempting" them into conversation ("with a pinch . . ."), and he allows his mule to make its "proposals." And, in fact, the remainder of the chapter

records his open acceptance of sex and his decision to celebrate life. Interestingly enough, this is brought out by Tristram's encounter with his mule:

> --The sun was set--they had done their work: the nymphs had tied up their hair afresh--and the swains were preparing for a carousal.--My mule made a dead point--'Tis the fife and tabourin, said I--I'm frighten'd to death, quoth he--They are running at the ring of pleasure, said I, giving him a prick--By saint Boogar, and all the saints at the backside of the door of purgatory, said he--(making the same resolution with the abbesse of Andoüillets) I'll not go a step further--'Tis very well, sir, said I--I never will argue a point with one of your family, as long as I live; so leaping off his back, and kicking off one boot into this ditch, and t'other into that--I'll take a dance, said I--so stay you here. (VII.xliii.537)

Tristram applies "a prick" to the mule. And the animal makes two explicit references to sodomy ("saint Boogar" and "backside"). It is significant that this imagery of homosexuality is followed by the reference to the abbess of Andoüillets story, for that story also contains blatant suggestions of lesbianism. As well, both of these episodes involve a frustrating encounter between a person and a mule (a sterile animal). In the case of the abbess and the novice, all this sexual imagery serves to focus on the sterility and hypocrisy of the two nuns. In Tristram's case, the same sexual imagery is used. But Tristram seems to transcend the abbess's state of mind. Indeed, Tristram sees that the mule makes a "dead point"; and it is important to remember that point can refer to the penis.[28] Thus, when Tristram resolves never to argue "a point with one of your family, as long as I live," he is, in symbolical

terms, making a clear break with the sterility which the mule represents. And, in fact, he leaves the homosexual and sterile mule and dances with a girl who is described in imagery which suggests a lively filly who wishes to be ridden by a cavalier:

> A sun-burnt daughter of labour rose up from the groupe to meet me as I advanced towards them; her hair, which was a dark chestnut, approaching rather to a black, was tied up in a knot, all but a single tress.
>
> We want a cavalier, said she, holding out both her hands, as if to offer them--And a cavalier ye shall have; said I, taking hold of both of them. [My italics.] (VII.xliii.537)

As they dance, Tristram is continuously tormented by the "cursed slit" in the girl's petticoat. "The deuce take that slit!" exclaims Tristram at one point, suggesting that he has more than one kind of "slit" in mind. However, Tristram does not run away from the "slit," and he accepts the spirit of the girl's song--"VIVA LA JOIA! FIDON LAS TRISTESSA!" (VII.xliii.538). At the same time, he is also conscious of the sinfulness of the slit, sinful in the sense that it represents man's fallen state after Adam and Eve's sin, and it embodies mortality just as Janatone does. It is perhaps for this reason that he calls it a "cursed slit." Tristram thus remains torn in his attitude to sexuality--it is attractive and it is also a reminder of mortality. But it is significant that Tristram's negative feelings do not amount to rejection. Indeed, although he leaves the "daughter of Labour," he no longer rides a sterile mule, but he dances across France all the

way to Pringello's pavillion where he promises to write Toby's amours.

But Tristram does not begin to recount Toby's amours immediately. Volumes seven and eight are characterized by digressions just as the first six volumes are. Indeed, as the first chapter of volume eight indicates, Tristram's sense of mortality and of self manifests itself throughout his book through his emphasis on the activity of the mind rather than on the activities of plot:

> --BUT softly--for in these sportive plains, and under this genial sun where at this instant all flesh is running out piping, fiddling, and dancing to the vintage, and every step that's taken, the judgment is surprised by the imagination, I defy, notwithstanding all that has been said upon straight lines in sundry pages of my book--I defy the best cabbage planter that ever existed, whether he plants backwards or forwards, it makes little difference in the account (except that he will have more to answer for in the one case than in the other)--I defy him to go on coolly, critically, and canonically, planting his cabbages one by one, in straight lines, and stoical distances, especially if slits in petticoats are unsew'd up--without ever and anon straddling out, or sidling into some bastardly digression--In Freeze-land, Fog-land and some other lands I wot of--it may be done-- (VIII.i.539)

This passage is of note for its sensuous and sexual implications.[29] The first sentence depicts a vibrant sun-drenched scene which is dominated by "flesh," "piping," "fiddling," "dancing," and "the vintage." Among these terms, "flesh," "fiddling," and "piping" all carry sexual connotations. These innuendoes are followed by the description of the cabbage planter, which is itself a sexual joke based on the idea of planting seed (semen). Also, Partridge notes that to plant can signify to place

or set in position, whence comes the meaning to achieve, or to assist, sexual intromission.[30] In addition, cabbage was used to refer to the female pudend in the nineteenth century.[31] The wealth of sexual material in this passage suggests that cabbage must have had a sexual meaning during Sterne's time as well. This sexual innuendo is reinforced by the references to "straight lines," the act of planting "backwards or forwards," "slits in petticoats," "straddling out," and "sidling into." And the reference to "bastardly digression" suggests the progeny of all this "planting." This emphasis on sexuality and illegitimacy reinforces the connection between sex, mortality, and sin which is established in volume seven. The implication seems to be that Tristram as a mortal man is conscious of the thoughts which that mortality includes. Therefore, as a self-conscious narrator, he cannot help but relate the "bastardly digressions" which run through his mortal mind.

A Sentimental Journey is much less "digressive" than Tristram Shandy and it does not contain an explicit confrontation with death. However, the choice of Yorick as a self-conscious narrator who plays the role of verbal jester indicates that Sterne's method had not changed in any substantial way when he came to write his final work. Indeed, Yorick of A Sentimental Journey is to a large extent an amalgam of Tristram and Yorick from Tristram Shandy. Like Tristram, the sentimental Yorick is a hobbyhorse rider who is fully aware of his weaknesses and

who is intent on increasing the awareness of his audience. And, like Yorick of Tristram Shandy, the sentimental Yorick is both a Cervantic jester and a Hamletian death's head. In addition, the latter Yorick is a traveller who, like Tristram in volume seven, exercises his self-awareness and comes face to face with his own identity in a series of scenes which evoke the themes of death and sex--namely, the "Passport" chapters.

It is of note that Yorick's search for a passport is sparked by the starling episode. His inability to free the bird leads him to imagine the horrors of solitary confinement (202-203). This vision of the suffering which will eventually end in a solitary death spurs Yorick to seek out the Count de B**** so as to obtain a passport. Interestingly enough, Yorick's meeting with the Count is concerned both with death and with identity. The problem of identity is associated with consciousness and self-knowledge--something which Yorick struggles to increase throughout his travels. And it is important that on this particular occasion Yorick finds it easier to identify himself because he can point to his Shakespearean namesake:

> There is not a more perplexing affair in life to me, than to set about telling any one who I am--for there is scarce any body I cannot give a better account of than of myself; and I have often wish'd I could do it in a single word--and have an end of it. It was the only time and occasion in my life, I could accomplish this to any purpose--for Shakespear lying upon the table, and recollecting I was in his books, I took up Hamlet, and turning immediately to the grave-diggers scene in the fifth act, I lay'd my finger upon YORICK, and advancing the book to the Count,

> with my finger all the way over the name--Me, Yoici! said I.
>
> Now whether the idea of poor Yorick's skull was put out of the Count's mind, by the reality of my own, or by what magic he could drop a period of seven or eight hundred years, makes nothing in this account--'tis certain the French conceive better than they combine--I wonder at nothing in this world, and the less at this; inasmuch as one of the first of our own church, for whose candour and paternal sentiments I have the highest veneration, fell into the same mistake in the very same case.--"He could not bear, he said, to look into sermons wrote by the king of Denmark's jester."--(221-222)

The latter part of this passage is intended as a reprimand against those contemporaries of Sterne who objected to the appearance of Yorick's name on Sterne's sermons.[32] But, at the same time, the passage makes an important statement about Yorick's identity. He is a jester, a memento mori, and, Yorick insists, he is a live parson. The Count insists on keeping "poor Yorick's skull" in mind, thereby strengthening the association between Yorick and death. Yorick does not deny this association. Indeed, it is Yorick who identifies himself by pointing to the grave-diggers scene in Hamlet. And when the Count asks "Et Monsier est il Yorick?" Yorick answers, "Je le suis" (223). This scene suggests that Yorick does accept his association with death. But, as a self-conscious jester, Yorick does not limit himself to staring at death. He accepts his mortality, and thus he also values his ability to enjoy life. In fact, when the Count steps out of the room, Yorick takes up a copy of Much Ado About Nothing, and he praises the "sweet

pliability of man's spirit, that can at once surrender itself to illusions, which cheat expectation and sorrow of their weary moments?" (224-225). And when the Count returns, we are reminded again of Yorick's joyful attitude to life. The Count remarks, echoing the Duc de C***, that "un homme qui rit . . . ne sera jamais dangereuz" (226). And he delights in Yorick's jokes about the English court.

Sterne then provides a final reminder of Yorick's mortal consciousness by ending the "Passport" section with a sexual joke. Yorick has gained his passport, but the passport identifies him as "Mr. Yorick, the king's jester" (228). He pretends to be sorry for the figure he cut in the episode, but one wonders how seriously one can take "the king's jester." Indeed, the ambiguity of his language suggests that another jest is about to follow:

> But there is nothing unmixt in this world; and some of the gravest of our divines have carried it so far as to affirm, that enjoyment itself was attended even with a sigh--and that the greatest they knew of, terminated in a general way, in little better than a convulsion. (228)

It is clear that this "convulsion" is to be taken as a sexual one, for Yorick then goes on to tell the story of Bevoriskius, who had observed a "cock-sparrow" and his mate experiencing this "enjoyment" a full "three and twenty times and a half" while the learned man was trying to write his "genealogy" (228). Yorick then pretends to be embarrassed and he claims that this anecdote "is nothing to my travels--So I twice--Twice beg pardon for it" (229).

the first analysis of the ruling passions, which Sterne seemed to see as one of the most serious obstacles to consciousness. In these early writings, Sterne defined the essence of what was to become the center of his comic world--the hobbyhorse. But the medium of the Christian sermon by its very nature limited Sterne's Hamletian persona to the serious level. For this reason, it is understandable that Sterne's contemporaries should have reacted negatively to the association of homiletic writings with the king's jester.

Only in his comic fiction is Sterne able to develop fully the Yorick figure as both a serious and a comic character. Yorick the parson, Tristram, and Yorick the narrator are all self-conscious individuals who can see the serious threat of death but who can also manifest a serious assertion of life by playing and jesting. For it is through the jest, particularly the sexual innuendo, that the Yorick figure reminds us of the need to see the ambiguities of language which arise from the complexities of the human consciousness.

This consciousness, this awareness of our mortality, is Sterne's serio-comic end. It is important that Sterne characterized this consciousness in sexual terms; sex is as basic to our mortality as death is, and the sexual motif is a constant reminder of human fallibility. This helps to explain why all of the Yorick figures in Sterne's fiction rely so heavily on sexual innuendo. The double

meanings of their language create an ironic distance for the reader and invite us at the same time to recognize the mortal/sexual nature within ourselves. This confrontation, much like Tristram's confrontation with death and sex, is basic to human consciousness and self-knowledge as Sterne sees it.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1]Henri Fluchère, Laurence Sterne: From Tristram to Yorick: An Interpretation of Tristram Shandy (London, 1965), p. 283.

[2]See, for example, Gardner D. Stout's "Yorick's Sentimental Journey: A Comic 'Pilgrim's Progress' for the Man of Feeling," ELH, XXX (1963), 395-412.

[3]Laurence Sterne, The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, in The Complete Works and Life of Laurence Sterne, ed. Wilbur L. Cross, V (New York, 1904), Sermon IV, pp. 53-54. All subsequent citations from the Sermons will be taken from this edition; references will appear in parentheses.

[4]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford, 1894), Book II, Chapter xii, Section 1. All subsequent citations from the Essay will be taken from this edition.

[5]Locke, Essay, II.iii.1.

[6]Locke argues in Essay II.i.25 that in receiving impressions the understanding is passive. However, as Ernest Tuveson points out, the understanding can refuse to consider these impressions: "Locke and the 'Dissolution of the Ego'," Modern Philology, LII (Feb., 1955), 163. My discussion of Locke's concept of the "self" is deeply indebted to Tuveson's article.

[7]Locke, Essay, IV.v.2.

[8]Locke, Essay, III.vi.9.

[9]See Tuveson, p. 167.

[10]Locke, Essay, II.xxvii.17.

[11]Locke, Essay, II.xxvii.7.

[12]Locke, Essay, II.xxvii.11.

[13]Locke, Essay, II.xxvii.11.

[14]Tuveson, p. 168.

[15]Joseph Wood Krutch, "Modernism" in Modern Drama (New York, 1962), p. 84.

[16]Locke, Essay, IV.xviii.5.

[17]See "The Head and the Heart," TLS (April 9, 1949), 232. This essay refutes Ernest N. Dilworth's position that Sterne is a "thorough jester": The Unsentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne (New York, 1948), p. 9. The author of "The Head and the Heart" argues that reality for Sterne was not just reason or feeling but the opposition of both reason and feelings: "The humorous and poignant consequences of this conflict, and the pleasures of self-awareness, probably have a greater share in the enjoyment of Sterne than satirical amusement." This view is echoed by A. H. Cash in Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, Chapter V.

[18]Herbert Read presented the first modern defense of Sterne as a moralist in a 1927 TLS article (also in Collected Essays in Literary Criticism, 1938). In 1936, Kenneth MacLean argued that, like Locke, Sterne sees morality as knowable (John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth-Century). And a few years later, W. B. C. Watkins contended that Locke is the "real basis" for Sterne's religious belief (Perilous Balance, p. 117). More recently, A. H. Cash has also argued that the strongest influence on Sterne's moral thought was John Locke ("The Sermon in Tristram Shandy," ELH, XXXI [1964], 395).

[19]Locke, Essay, IV.xviii.4.

[20]Of the Conduct of the Understanding, ed. Francis W. Garforth (New York, 1966), p. 86.

[21]For a discussion of Sterne's treatment of the "ruling passion" as opposed to Pope's conception of the "ruling passion," see Fluchère, Laurence Sterne, pp. 282-287. Fluchère points out that, for Sterne, the "ruling passion" is "no longer a tempest that blew men's conduct dangerously off course" (p. 284), but rather "a gentle obstinacy on the part of the mind, disrupting the normal relations between things, and between things and human beings" (p. 285). This distinction holds true for Sterne's fiction, where we are presented with the comic hobbyhorse. But in the Sermons, Sterne's discussion of the "ruling passion" has much in common with Pope's description, "On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,/Reason the card, but passion is the gale" (Essay on Man, Epistle II, lines 107-108). See the discussion of Herod (Sermon IX) and Felix (Sermon XIX) which follows.

[22]The choice of words here--"storm of passions"--makes it clear that Sterne is presenting the "passions" in much the same way as Pope did in the Essay on Man.

[23]Locke, Essay, II.iii.1.

[24]Cash, "The Sermon in Tristram Shandy," p. 406.

[25]W. B. C. Watkins relates Sterne's narrative technique to Locke's contention that "consciousness makes personal Identity" (Perilous Balance, p. 132).

[26]Locke, Essay, II.xxix.3.

[27]Locke, Essay, II.xxxiii.

[28]Locke, Essay, II.xxxiii.18.

[29]Locke, Essay, II.xiv.3. For a discussion of Locke's "psychology of the train of ideas" and its influence on Sterne, see Cash, "The Lockean Psychology of Tristram Shandy," ELH, XXII (1955), 125-135.

[30]Locke, Essay, II.xiv.23.

[31]Locke, Essay, II.xxvii.11.

Chapter II

[1]Locke, Of the Conduct of the Understanding, p. 126.

[2]Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. James Aiken Work (New York, 1940), Vol. II, Chapter V, p. 93. All subsequent references to Tristram Shandy will include volume, chapter, and page numbers and will be taken from this edition.

[3]Alan Dugald McKillop, The Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence, Kansas, 1956), p. 206.

[4]James Aiken Work, ed., The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (New York, 1940), p. lx.

[5]Elizabeth Drew, The Novel: A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces (New York, 1963), p. 77.

[6]A. R. Towers, "Sterne's Cock and Bull Story," ELH, XXIV (1957), 12-29.

[7]Ronald Paulson, Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven, 1967), p. 260.

[8]William Bowman Piper, "Tristram Shandy's Tragi-comical Testimony," Criticism, III (1961), 184.

[9]David Daiches, A Critical History of English Literature (London, 1960), pp. 731-737.

[10]Fluchère, Laurence Sterne, p. 225.

[11]John M. Stedmond, The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne: Convention and Innovation in 'Tristram Shandy' and 'A Sentimental Journey' (Toronto, 1967), p. 108.

[12]Joan Joffe Hall, "The Hobbyhorsical World of Tristram Shandy," MLQ, XXIV (1963), 139.

[13]Eric Partridge, A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, 6th ed. (New York, 1967), p. 394.

[14]Eric Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy (London, 1947), p. 127. Samuel Johnson gives the non-bawdy usages of hobby:

> "a stick on which boys get astride and ride. A stupid fellow. A species of hawk. An Irish or Scottish horse; a pacing horse; a garran" (A Dictionary of the English Language [New York, 1967]).

[15]For a discussion of Lawrence's use of the rocking-horse image as a metaphor of autoeroticism, see W. D. Snodgrass, "A Rocking-Horse: The Symbol, the Pattern, the Way to Live," Hudson Review, XI (1958), 191-200. See also Neil D. Isaacs, "The Autoerotic Metaphor in Joyce, Sterne, Lawrence, Stevens, and Whitman," Literature and Psychology, XV, No. 2 (Spring 1960), 92-106.

[16]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 394.

[17]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 406. Samuel Johnson defines to horse as "to cover a mare" (A Dictionary of the English Language).

[18]It is interesting to note in this regard that in the seventeenth century the term toby referred to the buttocks and to the female pudend (Partridge, Dictionary, p. 892).

[19]Robert Alter, "Tristram Shandy and the Game of Love," American Scholar, XXVII (Spring 1968), 317.

[20]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 203.

[21]Francis Grose, A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, 3rd ed. (New York, 1963), p. 340.

[22]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 885.

[23]Grose, Classical Dictionary, p. 184.

[24]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 185.

[25]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 159.

[26]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 570

[27]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 233.

[28]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 194.

[29]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 810.

[30]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 810.

[31]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 165.

[32]Grose, Classical Dictionary, p. 370.

[33]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 789.

[34]This, of course, sounds very close to Freud's identification of the "oral" phase as the most primitive of the various phases of sexual development. But this phenomenon was discovered much before Freud. Freud himself points out that this stage of development has been long known of, and he refers to examples of Egyptian art representing even the divine Horus with a finger in his mouth. Given the characterization of Toby as a child-like innocent who prefers the oral activities of smoking his pipe and whistling above heterosexual activity, it is interesting to note Freud's comments on the autoerotic aspects of oral fixation:

> "In the act of sucking for its own sake the erotic component, also gratified in sucking for nutrition, makes itself independent, gives up the object in an external person, and replaces it by a part of the child's own person. The oral impulse becomes auto-erotic, as the anal and other erotogenic impulses are from the beginning. Further development has, to put it as concisely as possible, two aims: first, to renounce auto-eroticism, to give up again the object found in the child's own body in exchange again for an external one; and secondly, to combine the various objects of the separate impulses and replace them by one single one. This naturally can only be done if the single object is again itself complete, with a body like that of the subject; nor can it be accomplished without some part of the auto-erotic impulse-excitations being abandoned as useless."

(Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis [New York, 1924], Twenty-first Lecture, p. 338.)

[35]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 26.

[36]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 197.

[37]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 95.

[38]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 639.

[39]Partridge, Dictionary, pp. 378 and 584. For a general discussion of the pipe and whistle imagery as a characterizing technique, see Frederick P. Kroeger, "Uncle Toby's Pipe and Whistle," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XLVII (1962 [1961 meeting]), 669-685.

[40]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 277.

[41]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 626.

[42]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 405.

[43]See fn. 22.

[44]Act II, scene iii, lines 294-300. See Partridge, Bawdy, pp. 78 and 136.

[45]Corner means pudend, as in Othello's reference to Desdemona's infidelity: "I had rather be a toad/ . . . Than keep a corner in the thing I love/For others' uses" (III.iii.270-273). See Partridge, Bawdy, p. 94.

[46]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 574.

[47]As an aside, it seems apropos to cite a rather colorful eighteenth-century expression for masturbation: "to box the Jesuit and get cockroaches." Sterne may not be making explicit reference to this expression, but Partridge's comment on this saying seems relevant to the present discussion: "An unsavory pun on cock and a too true criticism of nautical and cloistered life" (Partridge, Dictionary, p. 87).

[48]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 616.

[49]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 436.

[50]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 243.

[51]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 616.

[52]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 697.

[53]See fn. 17.

[54]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 908.

[55]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 535.

[56]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 689.

[57]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 429.

[58]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 917.

[59]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 441.

[60]See fn. 49.

[61]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 460.

[62]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 272.

[63]See fn. 15.

[64]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 841.

[65]Isaacs, "The Autoerotic Metaphor," pp. 95-96.

[66]Fluchère makes the same point:
"'Their [the Shandys'] eccentricities never stop them from belonging to the feeling human family. That is why their intellectual aberrations, their whims, their manias, even their occasional intolerance, are made up for by the permanence of their emotional ties. Their portraits have the right to be hung among the creations of the traditional 'psychology' and in the gallery of 'originals'" (Laurence Sterne, p. 287).

[67]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 630.

[68]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 763.

[69]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 314.

[70]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 3.

[71]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 514.

[72]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 841.

[73]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 397.

[74]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 537.

[75]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 271.

[76]Burton quotes Philippus Beroaldus on the advantages of the single life:

"For a long time I lived a single life, I could not abide marriage, but as a rambler (to use his own words) I took a snatch where I could get it . . ." (Anatomy of Melancholy [New York, 1955], p. 814.

[77]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 356.

[78]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 126.

[79]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 741.

[80]Richard A. Lanham, Tristram Shandy: The Games of Pleasure (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1973).

[81]Lanham, p. 48.

[82]Lanham, p. 50.

[83]Lanham, p. 157.

[84]Lanham, p. 157.

Chapter III

[1]Locke, Essay, III.ii.4.

[2]Locke, Essay, II.xxxiii.18.

[3]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 206.

[4]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 899.

[5]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 553.

[6]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 917.

[7]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 193.

[8]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 245.

[9]For example, in speaking of Othello and Desdemona, Iago says "He hath not yet made wanton the night with her; and she is sport for Jove" (Othello, II.iii.16-17). For other Shakespearean uses of sport, see Partridge, Bawdy, p. 192.

[10]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 116.

[11]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 224.

[12]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 161.

[13]Othello, III.iii.270-273.

[14]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 810. Also, spinster referred to a harlot in the eighteenth century (Dictionary, p. 810).

[15]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 575.

[16]Fluchère points out that in parts of Tristram Shandy Sterne seeks "the complicity of the reader under the innocent appearance of reticence or innuendo that might pass unnoticed" (Laurence Sterne, p. 226).

[17]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 405.

[18]Grose, Classical Dictionary, p. 228.

[19]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 917.

[20]See Work, ed., Tristram Shandy, III.xxxvi.226, fn. 3.

[21]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 883.

[22]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 101.

[23]Work, ed., Tristram Shandy, III.xxxvii.229, fn. 3.

[24]Joan Joffe Hall suggests that Sterne makes us jump to conclusions to

> "instruct the reader, get him caught up so that Sterne, as moralist, may pull the response out from under the reader's feet and giggle, 'Aha, look where you've been caught peeping'". ("The Hobbyhorsical World of Tristram Shandy," MLQ, XXIV [1963], 136).

[25]The lady's title was itself a sexual joke in the eighteenth century. Grose defines abbess as "a bawd, the mistress of a brothel" (Classical Dictionary, p. 11).

[26]In Love's Labour's Lost, Cupid is referred to as "dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces" (III.i.186). For other Shakespearean uses of the term placket, see Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy, p. 166. See also Partridge, Dictionary, p. 637.

[27]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 115.

[28]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 670.

[29]Partridge defines the verb to draw as, "(of a man) to expose (his sexual organ) by bringing it out, as if sword from scabbard" (Bawdy, p. 104). It is very probable that, in depicting Diego as a long-nosed man with a scabbard-less scimitar, Sterne is playing with this sense of to draw.

[30]Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, I.iv.54-94.

[31]It might be noted in passing that La Fosseuse's name seems to involve a sexual joke based on the French word for hole (fosse).

Chapter IV

[1]Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick, ed. Gardner D. Stout, Jr. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 219. All subsequent citations from A Sentimental Journey are taken from this edition; page references will appear in parentheses.

[2]Yorick's ideal of pursuing "Nature" echoes the eighteenth-century notion of sentiment as it evolved from the Latitudinarians. According to this concept of sentiment, man is made in the image of a benevolent God. Hence, man is endowed with the ability to feel deeply; and he can increase his natural goodness through the benevolent intercourse with others and through the enjoyment of the pleasurable sensations which come from his benign creator. As the eighteenth century progressed, sentimentalism eventually lost its original religious meaning and became more associated with the cult of feeling emotions for their own sake. Indeed, Yorick's hobbyhorsical temptation is to pursue this latter form of sentimentalism, even though his verbal protestations evoke the former meaning of sentimentalism.

For discussions of the sources of eighteenth-century sentimentalism see: R. S. Crane, "Suggestions towards a Geneology of the 'Man of Feeling'," ELH, I (1935), 205-230. And, A. R. Humphreys, "'The Friend of Mankind' (1700-1760)--An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sensitivity," RES, XXIV (1948), 203-218.

Gardner D. Stout, Jr. discusses the Latitudinarian sources of sentimentalism as they apply to A Sentimental Journey in "Yorick's Sentimental Journey: A Comic 'Pilgrim's Progress' for the Man of Feeling," ELH, XXX (1963), 395-412.

[3]Critics have long been recognizing Yorick's awareness of his own inconsistencies, particularly since Ernest Nevin Dilworth's study The Unsentimental Journey

of Laurence Sterne, in which Dilworth argues the thesis that Sterne and his narrators are to be seen mainly as jesters. For example, Fluchère points out that Yorick is more interested in sensation than in the object which causes sensation; but, according to Fluchère, Yorick is self-critical of this tendency in himself (Laurence Sterne, pp. 392-393). A. H. Cash argues that Sterne sees man as a combination of benevolence and selfish sentiments and that Yorick learns to see the distinction between urbanity and humanity (Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, pp. 52-53). John Stedmond maintains that Yorick is aware of his hobbyhorse, and, through him, Sterne sympathetically exposes human limitations (The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne, p. 160). And Gardner D. Stout, Jr. claims that "Yorick's Journey can, I believe, be regarded as a 'parable' or 'fable' intended to illustrate the comic perplexities, and the possibility, of fulfilling the Eighteenth-Century moral imperative to Know thyself" ("Yorick's Sentimental Journey," p. 409).

[4]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 689.

[5]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 324.

[6]In Shakespeare's time, trot also referred to a common prostitute (Partridge, Bawdy, p. 209).

[7]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 185.

[8]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 204.

[9]To come meant to experience a sexual emission in Shakespeare's time (Bawdy, p. 89). Partridge lists the same meaning for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Dictionary, p. 171). There is little doubt that the expression must have had the same meaning during the eighteenth century.

[10]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 104.

[11]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 241.

[12]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 452.

[13]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 160.

[14]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 587.

[15]See Partridge, Bawdy, p. 126; and Dictionary, p. 382.

[16]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 103.

[17]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 225.

[18]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 141.

[19]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 144.

[20]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 117.

[21]See, for example, Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, pp. 128-129 and 659-664. Dr. Johnson defines hot as "lustful; lewd" (A Dictionary of the English Language).

[22]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 706.

[23]See Stout, "Yorick's Sentimental Journey." On the other hand, Cash, in Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments (p. 93), refutes this position.

[24]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 626. And Grose, Classical Dictionary, p. 260.

[25]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 169.

[26]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 644.

Chapter V

[1]See Chapter IV, fns. 25 and 26.

[2]Tristram Shandy: The Games of Pleasure, p. 141. Lanham then goes on to suggest that Toby's bowling green is "the Jester's solution to war and its honor." But Toby and the other hobbyhorse riders are not really jesters in the same way that Yorick is. In fact, as I show below, Yorick acts as a standard in Tristram Shandy, and as such he often operates as a foil to the hobbyhorsical Shandys. See fn. 5.

[3]"Tristram Shandy's Law of Gravity," ELH, XXVIII (1961), 87.

[4]Fire has traditionally been associated with sexual passion. For example, in Shakespeare's time, the term referred to sexual ardour (Partridge, Bawdy, p. 113); and from circa 1670-1850, the expression fire-ship referred to a venerally diseased whore (Dictionary, p. 277). Dr. Johnson defines fire as "anything provoking; anything that inflames the passions; the passion of love" (A Dictionary of the English Language).

[5]John Stedmond argues that Yorick is the closest thing to a norm against which to test the clown-hero's

world. Also, Don Quixote becomes a norm through Yorick. See The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne (Toronto, 1967), p. 69. In opposition to Stedmond, Melvyn New sees Sterne as a satirist, but he considers Yorick in a similar light to Stedmond. New sees Yorick as a moral standard--Yorick is humble, self-aware, a memento mori, and he rides a slow nag as opposed to the galloping hobbyhorses. See Laurence Sterne as Satirist (Gainesville, 1969), pp. 76-77.

[6]See Chapter III, fn. 1.

[7]See Robert Alter, "Tristram Shandy and the Game of Love," American Scholar, XXVI (Spring 1968), 316-323.

[8]Alter sees wit, especially sexual wit, as the most important way in which communication takes place in Tristram Shandy. See p. 318 ff.

[9]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 574.

[10]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 113.

[11]Tristram Shandy, p. 487, fn. 1.

[12]Partridge, Bawdy, p. 204.

[13]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 3.

[14]See Chapter III, fn. 29.

[15]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 514.

[16]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 336.

[17]"Spin" may also involve a sexual joke. See Chapter II, fns. 29 and 30.

[18]"Tristram Shandy's Law of Gravity," 85-87.

[19]Grose, Classical Dictionary, p. 11. See also Partridge, Dictionary, p. 1. We are also reminded that nun could signify a courtesan or a harlot in the eighteenth century. See fn. 9.

[20]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 174.

[21]The colors green and yellow were traditionally associated with a disease incident to unmarried women and which would today be called frustration. For example, in Twelfth Night we are told of a girl who

> ". . . pin'd in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sat like patience on a monument,

Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?"
(II.iv.114-118)

Robert Burton describes this disease in detail in his section on the "Symptoms of Maids', Nuns', and Widows' Melancholy" (Anatomy of Melancholy, pp. 353-357). Dr. Johnson defines green as "pale; sickly; from whence we call the maid's disease the green sickness, or chlorosis." And under yellowness he remarks that "it is used in Shakespeare for jealousy" (A Dictionary of the English Language).

[22]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 899.

[23]Under "fig," Partridge lists "fig of Spain," which is a contemptuous gesture made by thrusting the thumb forth from between the first two fingers; whence comes the expression not to care or give a fig for a person (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). Fig means the pudendum muliebre (nineteenth and twentieth centuries); the term is semantically connected with the gesture. Hence, it would follow that the term must have carried the sexual meaning during the eighteenth century. Note also the sexually allusive imprecation from Shakespeare's time, fig me! (Bawdy, p. 112). With regards to fig of Spain, it may be that Sterne had this gesture in mind when he has Tristram exclaim at Janatone, "That Nature should have told this creature a word about a statue's thumb!--" (VII.ix.490).

[24]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 219.

[25]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 272.

[26]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 193.

[27]See fn. 25.

[28]See Chapter IV, fn. 25.

[29]Alter discusses the significance of this cabbage-planting scene with regards to Sterne's narrative method: "Tristram Shandy and the Game of Love," p. 319.

[30]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 638.

[31]Partridge, Dictionary, p. 118.

[32]See Stout, ed., A Sentimental Journey, p. 222, footnote to lines 16-19.

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