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"Tristram Shandy" and the Editors:

A Question of Reading Perspective

(TITLE)

BY

Karen L. Whisler

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in English

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1990

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ABSTRACT

Laurence Sterne's The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman is a highly idiosyncratic text filled with inside jokes, witticisms, word play, and satirical allusions. A modern reader is usually exposed to the novel in a critical edition that uses an introduction, footnotes, and appendices to clarify obscure passages. However, these editorial statements can complicate the reading process. Two questions have been central to the study of this novel: Who is the narrator? and Is the novel complete? Examination of the six available critical editions of Tristram Shandy based on these two questions reveals different readings of the novel due to editorial decisions and editorial techniques.

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CONTENTS

Tristram Shandy and the Editors: A Question of Reading Perspective 1

Endnotes 44

Appendix: Arrangement of the Editorial Contributions 46

Works Consulted 48

Tristram Shandy and the Editors:

A Question of Reading Perspective

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, by Laurence Sterne, is a highly idiosyncratic text. Written between 1760 and 1767, the novel examines the life of one Tristram Shandy, English country gentleman. Sterne plays with time, space, and language as he involves the reader with Tristram, his family, and their personal problems. The text is replete with inside jokes, witticisms, word play, and satirical allusions to daily life in eighteenth century England and to Sterne's personal life. Many modern readers, far removed from Sterne's time and place, would lose a great deal of the richness and unique flavor of the novel were it not for dedicated scholars who have produced critical editions of Tristram Shandy. Through the use of introductions, footnotes, and appendices, editors clarify and illuminate the obscure. As Louis T. Milic remarks, "A modern edition of the book is chock-full of footnotes explaining the multifarious and sometimes obscure names, the foreign terms, the plays on words, the learned allusions, the familiar, dialectal and even slangy language of the eighteenth century and the extensive passages in Latin and French" (241). Prior to 1940, editions of Tristram

Shandy generally consisted of reprints of the text with brief introductions describing the author's life. In contrast, seven modern editions, published since 1940, exhibit a critical or scholarly approach, containing extensive material contributed by the editors in the form of lengthy introductions, additional footnotes and/or appendices. Editors and dates are James Aiken Work, 1940; Alan D. McKillop, 1962; Ian Watt, 1965; Graham Petrie, 1967; Howard Anderson, 1980; Ian Campbell Ross, 1983; and Melvyn New, 1978-1984.[1]

How do editorial emendations function in a text? Are they strictly informative? Shari Benstock believes that "footnotes . . . like introductions or critical prefaces, appendices or afterwords, . . . are inherently marginal, not incorporated into the text, but appended to it" (204). Though editorial materials are physically placed at the margins of a text, do they function marginally? Benstock modifies the term "marginal" by continuing:

> As annotations, they are innately referential as well, reflecting on the text, engaged in a dialog with it, and often performing an interpretive and critical act on it, while also addressing a larger, extratextual world in an effort to relate this text to to other texts, to negotiate the middle ground between this author and other authors, between this author and the reader. (204)

Editors, while engaged in reflecting on a text, interpreting, criticizing, negotiating between reader and author and text, are, in fact, creating their own texts. If one thinks of a text as a play created by the author and staged in the reader's mind through the act of reading, then the editor functions like a director, using spotlights, set design, stage props, and instructions to the actor/reader to high-

light, color, or interpret the author's creation. Two levels of reading already exist--the author's and the reader's. The editor's reading interposes a third level between the author's reading and the reader's.

Tzvetan Todorov claims "Nothing is more commonplace than the reading experience, and yet nothing is more unknown. Reading is such a matter of course that, at first glance, it seems there is nothing to say about it" (67). Reader response theory provides a useful framework for examining the phenomenon of reading and, more directly, assessing the role of editorial emendations in the reading process. Wolfgang Iser defines the act of reading as "a dynamic interaction between text and reader" (107). By triggering a reader's comprehension, a text can set a train of thought in motion, _but it cannot control the reader's response_. For Iser, "it is that very lack of control that forms the basis of the creative side of reading" (108). Steven Cohan explains Iser's theory as follows: "Blanks and negations draw the reader into the virtual world encoded within the text, because the discordances they generate appeal to his imagination to smooth the sudden ruptures or to fill the unexpected gaps. The reader himself provides the missing connections . . . " (10). I believe editorial contributions can complicate the multileveled reading process by providing bridges for gaps in the text, guiding the reader into paths chosen by the editor. Editors attempt to create controls. Melvyn New, editor of the latest edition of _Tristram Shandy_, acknowl-

edges the possibility of editorial manipulation in critical introductions:

> Reviewers of the first two volumes of The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne, the Text of Tristram Shandy (1978) were momentarily puzzled or amused by the appearance of the 'Introduction to the text' on page 811 of the second volume. In general, it seems to have been taken as a Shandean gesture. . . . Although I was not unaware of this aspect of having my introduction follow the text, my intention was rather more serious: I wanted to say something about the editor's role in the process of reading--to suggest, paradoxically enough, not the editor's unimportance but his importance. The modern stress on editorial objectivity has tended to suggest that textual introductions are neutral, non-persuasive entities, and that their placement before a text does not raise the questions of critical mediation that have bedeviled modern literary study. It is a dangerous and deceptive suggestion. (3:1)

New realizes an editor's power over a text: the power to recreate a text through his own reading of an author's text and the power to transmit that recreation to future readers through editorial commentary. Introductions, for example, predispose specific readings. Editors chart a course for the reader by describing and explaining scenes, characters, and themes to be encountered, telling the reader what to expect and how to react when he "finds" these elements in a text.

Footnotes, too, have an impact on the reading of a text. Shari Benstock's article "At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text" provides a minor, yet critical demonstration of an editor's power to influence the reading process through footnotes. Sterne himself used fictional footnotes in Tristram Shandy to

provide commentary on the text and introduce pseudo-scholarly materials such as the Romish Rituals of Baptism. Benstock describes Sterne's use of fictional footnotes to undercut the narrative voice of Tristram Shandy in the novel:

> The notes here--much like those in scholarly texts--are merely another means of reminding us of the textuality of the work. When the young narrator tells us, "I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume," the explanation provided by the note is "[i.e., according to the original editions.]" . . .
>
> The result is a double reminder of the textuality of this narrative, which exists both in the version before our eyes (we can check to see that we are, indeed, almost into the middle of the fourth volume) and in an "original" edition, which presumably differs slightly from the one we are now reading. (208)

The note "[i.e., according to the original editions]," however, is not Laurence Sterne's note. Benstock uses a 1962 Fawcett edition of Tristram Shandy as her source.[2] A comparison of Sterne's notes in the Fawcett edition to those in Work, Watt, Petrie, Ross, Anderson, and New reveals that this note probably emanated from the editor of the Fawcett text, James K. Robinson, not Sterne. In contrast to the Fawcett edition, the six critical editions carefully label or set apart Sterne's notes in an attempt to avoid confusion. Of the six, four have no note at this point in the text. Work, however, supplies a note: "When volumes one and two of Shandy had been composed" (285). Watt, too, has a note reading: "I.e., when the first two volumes of Tristram Shandy appeared" (214). Their notes are limited to a commentary on the passage of time; Tristram is one year older but has

progressed only to the middle of the fourth volume. Their notes do not indicate that there are two versions of the text. Benstock is misled on two levels. First, the Fawcett edition's ambiguous placement of the note confuses its authorship and authority. Then, the ambiguous language contributes to a misreading of the note and the passage to which it refers. Closer examination of the Fawcett edition reveals that similar notes appear four times, each enclosed in brackets and beginning with "i.e." They are the only ones in the text not authored by Sterne and the only notes using the brackets and the "i.e." Therefore, these must be the editor's signal for the extra-textual origin of the notes. But this technique is clearly not sufficient to prevent confusion. As Benstock herself later notes, "we realize that the voice of the notes is not stable, not always consistent . . . " (208). Editors bring additional voices to the text. In this case, the ambiguous handling of the note causes confusion. However, even if such editorial voices are clearly labeled, they still introduce ambiguity through their very presence in the text.

It is not only through introductions and footnotes that editors can influence the reading of a text. The choice of copy-text can have a great effect on the reading a text receives. Modern editors base their choice of copy-text on principles originated by W. W. Gregg and F. Bowers. According to G. E. Bentley, Jr.'s _Editing Eighteenth Century Novels_,

> Two of the most basic tenets of belief are that, in attempting to recreate the author's intentions as meticulously as possible in the absence of the manuscript copy prepared for the compositor, the editor should follow the first edition for "accidentals" affecting mere form such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, and reproduce the last edition corrected by the author for "substantives" of wording affecting content. (5)

Setting aside the thorny question of authorial intentions, these two tenets seem logical.[3] The six editors generally adhere to them. They differ slightly, however, in their approach. When Sterne was unable to interest a London printer in his work, he had the first two volumes printed near his home in York. Watt, Ross, and New believe that Sterne worked closely with the York printer, Anne Ward, in producing the first printing. New states that "we have substantial evidence that Sterne supervised the first editions of volumes I and II in York, and that on subsequent occasions he came to London to oversee the printing of other volumes of the first edition; we have little evidence that his interest in the text extended any further . . ." (2:832). As a result, Watt, Ross, and New chose the first York edition of volumes one and two and then the first London editions for volumes three through nine as their copy-text. In contrast, Work, Petrie, and Anderson chose the first London edition of each volume. Work defends his choice as "the latest edition of each volume which Sterne himself is known to have seen through the presses, and therefore, the only edition which can safely be called authoratative" (lxxv). This difference in scholarly opinion is not readily discernable in the texts. However, one interesting anomaly emerges. In

volume nine, a volume where all the editors were working from the same original, James Work reproduces a typographical error which has a bearing on the meaning of the entire text. Tristram is explaining Toby's wound:[4]

> With regard to my Uncle Toby's fitness for the marriage state, nothing was ever better: she [nature] had formed him of the best and kindliest clay . . . she had moreover considered the other causes for which matrimony was ordained-------
>
> And accordingly * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
> *
> *
> *
>
> The donation was not defended by my Uncle Toby's wound. (626; emphasis mine)

Subsequent editions correct this (based on the first edition of 1767) to read, "The donation was not defeated by my Uncle Toby's wound." Arthur Cash interprets the error:

> Tristram's pronouncement is often misunderstood because many editions of the novel, including James Work's . . . repeat an old typo in that passage . . . which suggests the opposite of what Sterne had originally said. (Cash, The Later Years 258)

Mark Sinfield reaches the same conclusion in his article "Uncle Toby's Potency: Some Critical and Authorial Confusion in Tristram Shandy." No one explains how or when the error first appeared in the text, but somewhere, sometime, an editor or typesetter, by accident or design, complicated the entire meaning of the passage, directly affecting the reading of Uncle Toby's character and his courtship of the Widow Wadman.

The editor's choice of copy-text, his introduction, and annotations all provide contexts for control, whether calculated or

inadvertent. Readers react to this material and incorporate it into their reading of the novel. Such materials may emanate from an editor's interpretation of character, theme, or structure. It is useful to focus on specific questions in order to guage the effect of editorial interpretation on the reading process. In the case of Sterne's text, two questions have emerged as central issues: Who is the narrator in Tristram Shandy? and, Is the work complete?

The identification of the narrative voice in Tristram Shandy is especially important because the book is essentially one long conversation:

> Writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but another name for conversation. . . . (108)

Laurence Sterne is often identified as the primary speaker or voice in the text, superseding both Tristram and Yorick. There is historical evidence supporting this view. Sterne, who once said, "I wrote, not to be fed, but to be famous," referred to himself as "Tristram" and encouraged others to do so (Cash, The Later Years 1). Boswell describes Sterne in London: "In Ranelagh's delightful round / Squire Tristram oft is flaunting found" (Cash, The Later Years 19). Sterne even published his own sermons under the pseudonym of "Yorick." The novel itself also seems to support this view because of its very personal style. Futher, many critics have found correlations between Sterne's private life and incidents in the book. Overton James concludes in his study The Relation of Tristram Shandy to the Life of Sterne, "although the work is fiction, it ultimately reveals, and

cannot be separated from, the life of Sterne" (164). Many others, including Henri Fluchère, Lodwick Hartley, Arthur Cash, and Alan Howes have found Sterne and Tristram to be hopelessly entangled.

On the other hand, Wayne C. Booth, in a review of Ernest Dilworth's The Unsentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne, argues:

> . . . Forget about Sterne, at least until the works have been read for what they are. Tristram Shandy begins to be comprehensible as a whole only when one accepts, without reservations related to Sterne's biography, that it is essentially a kind of "dramatic" comedy and the key to the drama is not Sterne but Tristram, not Sterne's life but the "life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent." It is, in short, the story of a man writing a book, and the man is not Laurence Sterne. (281)

Booth is joined in his request by Edwin Muir, John Preston, and A. R. Towers. They all argue for an autonomous Tristram.

A comparison of editorial statements related to Tristram, Sterne, and other selected characters reveals each editor's approach to the question of the narrator in Tristram Shandy and the extent to which each editor transmits his reading to the reader. The techniques each editor uses to convey information also affect the reading process. Material placed in an introduction acts as a pre-reading, preparing the reader to read the text in a specific way. Footnotes enter directly into the text, explaining or clarifying characters or situations to the reader as he encounters them. Endnotes may exert less influence because they come after the text. This is especially true if there are no signals in the text to indicate the presence of an endnote. Work, Watt, Petrie, Anderson, Ross, and New influence in

different ways, each creating a different reading experience or text for the reader.

James Aiken Work, the earliest critical editor, identifies Laurence Sterne as the sole narrative voice in the text. In his introduction, Work explicitly links the characters Yorick and Tristram to Sterne:

> Parson Yorick is, of course, a sublimated, idealized Sterne--Sterne as he wished himself known to the world, but however effective as a bit of special pleading of the author, he is too self-consciously drawn for perfect credibility as a character. Tristram, who flits ubiquitously through the pages of the book as another adumbration of the author, of whose personality he is a projection and for whom he is a convenient mouthpiece, has, as a consequence, much in common with poor Yorick. (lviii)

Work identifies Tristram and Yorick as bifurcations of the author's personality, not autonomous characters. According to Work, Yorick embodies the idealized Sterne and has a similar physical appearance. Tristram exhibits Sterne's ill-health, sensuality, and general enjoyment of life (lviii). The introduction precedes the text, becoming a "pre-reading" for the reader. The reader has not even begun the novel nor met the characters, but already he has been told exactly who they are and their relationship to the author. If the reader skips the introduction, going directly to the text, Work provides an early footnote in the text to identify Parson Yorick as Sterne and lead the reader to the description of Yorick and Tristram in the introduction:

> From its first publication, the following account of the parson was generally understood "to be the character of the author, as he chuses it should be exhibited." See the introduction, p. lviii. (17)

In the novel Yorick emerges as totally unworldly, having no sense of discretion or parsonlike decorum. He cannot pass up a quick witty quip or bon mot. He is constantly making enemies as his innocently meant barbs strike home. Eventually, he becomes the target of a smear campaign engineered by persons whose pride or vanity has been injured by his quick wit. Unable to counter his detractors, Yorick dies of a broken heart. In his introduction, Work relates a similar incident in Sterne's life. Sterne's uncle and mentor, Jacques Sterne, first supported Sterne's career, then quarreled with Sterne and turned against him. Work reports two versions of the affair: first, that a quarrel developed because Sterne refused to continue writing political tracts for his uncle; second, that "local gossip" implied that the men became estranged because Sterne had impregnated his uncle's favorite mistress. Whatever the reason, the elder Sterne promulgated and disseminated a rumor that Sterne's mother and sister were put in a poor house due to Sterne's neglect. This rumor, and the loss of his uncle's backing, caused Sterne many problems and considerable embarrassment, paralleling Yorick's difficulties. Sterne, of course, did not literally die of embarrassment, but he certainly felt the blow and never really escaped the taint. Work also reports Lord Byron's later sneer "that dog Sterne, who preferred whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother" (xxvi). There is a specific note in the

text leading to the story of Sterne's relationship with his uncle: "See the introduction, pp. xvi-xxvii" (30).

Work strengthens his identification of Tristram as "another adumbration of the author" by equating Tristram's asthma with Sterne's chronic tuberculosis and pairing other aspects of their personalities. The introduction states:

> In Tristram he revealed much concerning his ill-health and distresses, his clothing, complexion, and voice, his skill as a fiddler and painter, his carelessness, impulsiveness, and good nature, and his sentimentalism, amorousness, and love of activity. (lviii)

By closely linking Tristram's asthma to Sterne's illness, Tristram's flight from death in Volume VII becomes Sterne's real-life journey to France:

> But the novelist had come to London in weakened health . . . so, after putting his affairs in order in case he should die abroad, he set off early in January, 1762, on his famous race with that "long-striding scoundrel of a scare-sinner," Death. . . . (xxxiv)

Work carries Sterne into the description of the trip by supplying footnotes. For example, while Tristram is in Avignon, he comments: "as there is nothing to see in Avignon . . . " (533). Work provides a note:

> See p. 30, n. 2. "Nothing to see" may be one of Sterne's characteristic slaps at Catholicism, for the sight for which Avignon has been famous since the fourteenth century is its great papal palace. (533)

The reference to page 30 leads to a note which refers the reader to the introduction "see the introduction, pp. xxvi-xxvii" (30). In the introduction, actually beginning on page xxv, Work describes Sterne's

strong prejudice against the Catholic Church. At one time, Sterne helped his uncle root out all "Jacobites and Catholics, real or imagined" (xxv). One of the "real or imagined" Catholics hounded by the Sternes was Dr. John Burton, an obstetrician, later caricatured as Dr. Slop, the man-midwife in the novel. Work writes that Sterne continued to "pour forth conventional invective until residence in France and Italy revealed to him that Catholics could, after all, be both humane and happy" (xxvi). Tristram's simple phrase "nothing to see in Avignon" has become an emblem for Sterne's history of anti-Catholicism.

Toward the end of his journey, Tristram is "in a handsome pavillion [sic] built by Pringello, upon the banks of the Garonne, which Mons. Sligniac has lent me, and where I now sit rhapsodizing all these affairs" (516). Work provides a footnote citing "Mons. Sligniac" as "presumably Sterne's landlord at Toulouse" (516). Work consistently uses footnotes to identify characters in the text with the real life friends, enemies, or acquaintances of Sterne. This draws Sterne into the text, undercutting Tristram's independent narrative voice. The characters and their relationships to Tristram and the text are replaced by historical personages and their relationships to Sterne. A long footnote, for example, identifies "Didius" as Dr. Francis Topham:

> Didius, who appears at intervals throughout the book as "the great lawyer," is a satirical representation of Dr. Francis Topham, an able Yorkshire lawyer who, over years of pushing and intriguing in which he was frequently opposed by Sterne, had obtained for himself a majority of the legal offices connected with the Diocese of York, and who had been the object of Sterne's ridicule in A Political Romance. (See the introduction, p. xxvii.) In the name, Sterne may have extended an allusion to Julianus Severus Didius who in A.D. 193 purchased the Roman Empire from the praetorian guards, to the indignation of the people whose subsequent revolt forced the senate to condemn and execute him. (12-13)

The reference to the introduction leads to a complete discussion of the publication and success of the satirical pamphlet, A Political Romance, which Work believes encouraged Sterne to take up a literary career.

Work also gives careful treatment of the actual historical content in the novel--the siege of Namur and the military campaigns recreated by Toby on the bowling green. Each new military term or reference to a battle is dutifully footnoted without an explicit reference to Sterne. However, in his introduction, Work clearly states that Sterne's boyhood memories are the source of the novel's military content:

> And to the artist who was later to depict with quiet authority the campaigns and reminiscences of my Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, a childhood spent in friendly intimacy with men who fought in Flanders under William and Marlborough was singularly fortunate. (xv)

In linking all of Toby's and Trim's military adventures to Sterne's boyhood memories, Work blunts the individual personalities of the characters. He makes them seem mere shadows or puppets. The diminution of these characters is similar to Work's approach to other

characters in the novel. Work uses his introduction and footnotes to consistently mute Tristram's narrative voice. Tristram, Yorick, and Sterne are blurred into one voice--Sterne's. Tristram is only Sterne's "mouthpiece," attacking Sterne's enemies, praising his friends, reciting boyhood barracks memories, and embodying Sterne's battles with tuberculosis. The identifications of Didius as Topham, Burton as Slop, and other such explanations override the fictional personalities of the characters, limiting the novel to a historical frame, subordinating symbolic and thematic concerns. In Work's edition, the unique features of the novel and its main characters are all traced to roots in the Shandyish, crack-brained Laurence Sterne, the parson who wrote "to be famous" (Cash, The Later Years 1).

Writing in the 1960s, Watt and Petrie present a different perspective. Their editions allow Tristram some narrative autonomy by distancing the historical Sterne from the text. For the reader, the real shift in the identification of the narrator in Watt and Petrie is evident in the way they structure their identifications. Watt follows Work's practice of using intertextual footnotes, and his identification of the narrator is similar to Work's. Watt's introduction states:

> Tristram Shandy is a portrait of Laurence Sterne in many different ways. Most obviously, although the events of Tristram's life are certainly not those of Sterne's, Tristram's character, or at least his temperament, is a humorously self-deprecating version of Sterne's own sense of being dogged by every sort of ill-fortune. In addition, many of Tristram's allusions to times and persons, and the whole travel narrative in Book VII, refer directly to Sterne's own life. (xi-xii)

and further,

> . . . the whole fictional narrative which is supposed to precede from the voice of Tristram, is, inevitably and very recognizably, the comprehensive expression of the distinctive interests and attitudes of Sterne's own personality. (xii)

Unlike Work, though, Watt generally plays down Sterne's ill-health, mentioning it only in passing in his introduction:

> His last years were marked by increasing ill-health . . . the "vile asthma"--probably tuberculosis--of which he speaks both in Tristram Shandy and his letters, became so bad that in 1762 he had to seek the warmer climate of the south of France. (x)

Because Watt does not equate Sterne's ill-health with Tristram's, Tristram's flight from death does not become Sterne's. However, Watt does have a footnote at the beginning of Book VII stating: "Book VII has very little to do with the rest of Tristram Shandy, being in fact, largely based on Laurence Sterne's voyage from Calais to Toulouse . . . " (364). Watt tells the reader how the travel narrative originated, but he does not give it the emotional impact of a connection to Sterne's own failing health in the same way Work did.

Also, Watt does not bring out Sterne's anti-Catholicism. Concerning Tristram's "nothing to see at Avignon," Watt's note reads: "purposely overlooking the famous Palace of the Popes" (407). Watt's footnote identifying Dr. Slop as "probably a caricature of Dr. John Burton" also mentions that "Sterne disliked his Roman Catholicism" but makes more of the common opinion of the day that held obstetricians and surgeons "in little esteem" (80). Watt does not discuss any aspect of Sterne's anti-Catholicism in his introduction.

In the case of Parson Yorick, Watt states in the introduction: "Sterne also gives a more direct (though partial and flattering) portrait of himself and his career in Parson Yorick, with whom he also publicly identified himself . . . " (xii). Watt discusses Sterne's quarrel with his Uncle Jacques, but does not mention the scandalous gossip concerning the elder Sterne's mistress. He merely reports that Jacques had helped Sterne in the early part of his career, but then they quarreled over political differences (ix). Watt does not connect either passage to Parson Yorick in the text.

Watt's footnotes identifying characters are more equivocal than Work's notes, usually containing a "perhaps" or "probably," as in this footnote identifying Didius:

> The historical Didius bought the Roman Empire from the Praetorian Guards in 193 A.D., after the death of the Emperor Pertinax; perhaps Sterne is making a satirical allusion to Dr. Francis Topham (see Introduction). (10)

Watt's footnote is similar to Work's, but the emphasis has shifted. Watt gives the historical reading of Didius first, then suggests _perhaps_ Sterne is referring to Topham. The instruction to "see Introduction" lacks a page number, making it more difficult for the reader to comply. If persistent, the reader finds in the introduction Watt's description of the origin of Sterne's publication _A Political Romance_ and Dr. Topham's involvement as the object of Sterne's ridicule in that pamphlet (ix-x). No mention is made of Topham's appearance in _Tristram Shandy_. By confining this information to the introduction, Watt takes one step away from totally undercutting

Tristram's narrative voice in the novel. The introduction is still a "pre-reading" that enjoins the reader to accept certain conventions or beliefs about the text, but once into the text itself, the reader is less constrained.

In addition to an introduction and footnotes, Watt provides separate chronologies and appendices describing the historical events that occur in the novel. These are unique, giving verisimilitude to Uncle Toby's historical context. In the appendix on the war in Flanders, Watt states, "the particular war in which Uncle Toby took part, known as the War of the Grand Alliance or the War of the League of Augsburg, lasted from 1689 to 1697" (499). This contrasts with Work, who dismisses Uncle Toby's war experiences as Sterne's childhood memories. Work's focus on Sterne's personality overshadows the broader historical content of the novel. Watt underplays the personalities, but brings out the historical framework in the novel, allowing Tristram, Toby, and Trim and their bowling green battles their own historical substance.

Graham Petrie goes one step further than Watt in allowing Tristram narrative autonomy. He does this by pushing his footnotes to the end of the text, making them endnotes, out of the reader's sight. They are doubly concealed by the fact that Petrie does not use superscript numbers or any other device to indicate to the reader that a specific note exists. The endnotes are numbered by page and line numbers only. Therefore, the unprompted reader must initiate the

contact between the editor and the text and could easily ignore the endnotes entirely.

Petrie's edition does have an introduction. Interestingly, this introduction was written by Christopher Ricks. Therefore, this edition has two editorial voices located on opposite ends of the text. They exhibit almost no difference in their approaches to the question of the narrative voice in the novel and their statements are less assertive than Work or Watt. In the introduction Ricks states: "In Tristram Shandy we hear Sterne's voice behind Tristram's . . . " (14). In an endnote Petrie states:

> . . . although Sterne himself must not be confused with the fictional Tristram, he put many of his own interests into the character. . . . (617)

On the question of Sterne's ill-health and its connection to the novel, Ricks writes in his introduction, "ill-health was to dog him [Sterne], and to produce some of the most courageously humorous passages in Tristram Shandy" (9). The passages are not specifically identified. In the endnotes, Petrie describes the title page motto from Book VII, the "flight from death" as: "the quotation from Pliny [which] means: 'For this is no digression from it, but the thing itself'--clearly an attempt to forestall criticism that the account of Tristram's travels are irrelevant" (651). Book VII, then, no longer contains Sterne's travels, but Tristram's.

In identifying Parson Yorick, Ricks' introduction acknowledges that Yorick is "a veiled self-portrait, mocking, but not self-lacerating" (9). Ricks does not comment on Sterne's quarrel with

Jacques, nor does he mention Sterne's anti-Catholic sentiments. If the reader turns to the endnotes, he finds Petrie's comments:

> The character of Parson Yorick is an idealized portrait of Sterne himself, and shares with Tristram the expression of many of the author's beliefs and opinions. . . . (617)

Petrie continues:

> This description need not be taken too literally as a portrait of Sterne himself and his behavior, though many of the features of the characterization are accurate enough. (617-618)

In referring to Yorick's death, Petrie says:

> This refers to Sterne's quarrel some time after 1745 with his uncle, Dr. Jacques Sterne, the prebendary of York Minster. The quarrel seems to have resulted from a difference of political opinion, and the uncle retaliated by spreading slanders about his nephew's treatment of his widowed mother and sister, which successfully discredited his character in the district. (618)

Petrie's blind endnote sums up the quarrel Sterne had with his uncle, but does not repeat the scandalous gossip concerning Jacques' mistress. The note does not completely undermine the fictional Yorick because it is less damaging. Leaving out Jacques' mistress makes the quarrel more innocuous--everyone quarrels about politics. Jacques' mean-spirited slanders seem more like the undeserved abuse heaped on Yorick. Sterne appears nearly blameless, his character closer to Yorick's. It is possible for a reader to identify Sterne <u>with</u> Yorick's innocence rather than undercutting that innocence by relating unsubstantiated gossip relating to Sterne.

On Sterne's anti-Catholicism, Petrie, in referring to Dr. Slop in the endnotes writes:

> . . . this is a caricature of Dr. John Burton. . . . Sterne shared at the time his uncle's prejudice against the Church of Rome, though his later visits to Catholic France and Italy modified this considerably. (626)

Petrie does connect Sterne's anti-Catholicism to Dr. Slop, but mitigates the identification by noting that Sterne changed his feeling once he was exposed to life in Catholic countries.

Petrie's endnote treatment of Didius serves as a model for his handling of characters usually associated with Sterne:

> Didius: this character is based on Dr. Francis Topham, a Yorkshire lawyer who had fallen foul of Sterne by his constant intriguing for legal offices connected with the Diocese of York. . . . (617)

Petrie tucks these identifications away in the endnotes. They are not contained in the introduction. The endnotes also contain simple explanations of the various military terms and historical references to battles, etc., that appear in the novel. Petrie does not attempt the fuller treatment of the historical content of the novel that Watt provides.

In Petrie's edition, the reader is given a "veiled" connection between Yorick and Sterne, a connection that "need not be taken too literally." The introduction does not connect Sterne's travels to Tristram's "flight from death" nor does it mention his quarrel with his uncle or his anti-Catholicism. These comments are also "veiled" by their placement in Petrie's blind endnotes. Tristram "should not be confused" with Sterne, and Didius is "based on" Topham, not *is*

Topham. The reader is left some room to accept that Tristram, Yorick, and others may express more than their relationship to Sterne, even though he is their creator.

There has been a shift in perspective. Work explicitly defines Laurence Sterne as the sole narrative voice in the text and uses the footnotes and introduction to his edition to strengthen that identification. Watt and Petrie are more equivocal. The language of the introductions and notes and their placement of editorial comments, generally away from the text itself, help to open up the text for the reader. This trend continues in the texts edited by Anderson, Ross, and New.

Howard Anderson produced the Norton edition of Tristram Shandy in 1980. As is normal with Norton editions, Anderson appends a selection of critical essays that a reader may use to interpret the text. Anderson's appendices include excerpts from Sterne's letters and selected reviews and critical essays stretching from Sterne's day to the twentieth century. It does seem curious that, although Anderson's edition was copyrighted in 1980, the latest critical essay included is dated 1971. Anderson does not comment on the criteria used to select the criticism included.

What does Anderson say about the narrator in the text? His introduction is quite short, barely three pages long, and contains only one comment on the narrator:

> It is finally to Tristram himself, that the reader owes the humorous and humiliating process of self-revelation that is at the core of our experience with this novel. (vii)

Anderson postulates that Tristram Shandy has endured as a novel because it leads the reader to discover "the infinite ways in which conventional ideas of all sorts have handcuffed our minds and imaginations" (vii).

Anderson does place his footnotes in the body of the text and they do contain materials that have a bearing on the question of the voice of the narrator. Concerning Tristram's asthma, caught "scating against the wind," Anderson notes:

> Sterne himself was much troubled by tuberculosis while writing Tristram Shandy. (6)

Anderson's note does not make Tristram's illness synonymous with Sterne's; instead, they seem fellow sufferers.

On Tristram's flight from death, Anderson comments:

> "For this is not a digression (or excursion) but it is itself the work." From the Letters of Pliny the Younger. This volume, even more than any of the others sails off in an unexpected direction, drawing its matter from Sterne's own trip to France in 1762. (335)

Anderson's footnote acknowledges that Tristram's journey draws its "matter" from Sterne's trip, but does not equate the two journeys as one and the same. In a further example, Anderson footnotes Tristram's comment on Avignon as: "The anti-papist Tristram ignores the great Palace of the Popes for which Avignon is famous" (374). It is now Tristram who is anti-Catholic, not Sterne, reinforcing the idea that this is Tristram's trip and Tristram's life, not Sterne's.

As for Yorick, Anderson's footnote comments:

> All that is left of Yorick in Shakespeare's Hamlet is his skull and the Prince's memory of his good humor. Sterne's wit combined with his black clothes and tubercular frame to identify him with Yorick (as well as Tristram) in social and literary circles. . . . (16)

Anderson's only identification of the characters in relation to Sterne is limited to Sterne's physical appearance and his reception in social and literary circles. Sterne is being identified with the characters rather than the characters being identified as Sterne. Anderson makes no mention of Jacques Sterne nor does he discuss the quarrel between the Sternes as a source for Yorick's story.

The other identifications, Dr. Slop and Didius, are presented in footnotes:

> Dr. Slop caricatures John Burton, a talented but controversial physician of York, whose politics and religion (he was Roman Catholic) infuriated Sterne. . . . (74)

As for Didius and his "whim-whams":

> Sterne regularly makes fun of the language overused by various professions--here a common legal formula. Didius, one of several pedantic lawyers who move in and out of Tristram Shandy's world, is commonly taken for a satiric version of Dr. Francis Topham, a frequent opponent of Sterne's in York. . . . (8)

Anderson distances himself from the identification of Topham by using the phrase "is commonly taken for." This implies that Anderson is merely repeating the identification, not endorsing it. These two notes do undercut the characters' fictional identity by tying them closely to Sterne. This contrasts with his treatment of Tristram and Yorick and Tristram's flight from death. But Anderson's

identifications, taken in the context of his entire edition, are less intrusive than Work's. They are in footnotes, in the text, but they do not carry the force of Work's nor do they direct the reader to a lengthy introduction that explicitly relates incidents in Sterne's life to incidents in the novel.

As for the historical content in the novel, Anderson footnotes the battles and military language, but does not link them to Sterne. On the whole, Anderson's edition allows Tristram narrative autonomy, relegating Sterne to the margins of the text, both physically and editorially.

Ian Campbell Ross continues the trend toward narrative autonomy for Tristram. In his 1983 edition of the novel, Ross moves his annotations to the end of the text but uses superscript numbers in the text to signal the presence of a note. Moving the notes to the end of the text lessens their impact on the reading of the text, but the superscript numbers in the text undercut the effect to some extent.

In his introduction, Ross describes Tristram:

> Tristram himself is an early example of a figure now familiar in fiction--the hero as writer. . . . As a writer, Tristram's problems are much like Sterne's. . . . Nowhere in the novel is Sterne's voice absent for long. But Tristram is not Sterne. (xvi, xvii)

Tristram, not Sterne, is the hero/narrator of the Ross edition. Sterne is acknowledged as a "voice," but a muted voice, a voice that is not often, but sometimes, "absent." Ross further distances Sterne from the text in his treatment of Tristram's asthma:

> The tubercular cough that racks Tristram throughout the telling of his tale reminds hero and reader alike of his mortality, and in Volume VII Death comes to Tristram's door. Tristram, characteristically, will have none of it and resolves instead to fly. . . . (xxii)

Work turns Tristram's flight from Death into Sterne's journey to France, but Ross firmly focuses the trip on Tristram and opens the door to reader participation by reminding "hero and reader alike of his mortality." The reader can join Tristram in his panic-stricken, but purposeful flight from death and dance with him in the joyous life-affirming peasant dance that ends his journey.

Ross mentions Yorick only in passing. In his introduction, he writes:

> Death is never absent for long in Tristram Shandy. We learn, in the course of Tristram's narrative of the deaths of Yorick, Bobby Shandy, Mrs. Shandy, Le Fever, and even Uncle Toby. (<u>Tristram Shandy</u>'s stage seems, finally, as littered as <u>Hamlet</u>'s.) From the black page in volume I, marking the death of Yorick, we are aware of the importance of death as a theme of Sterne's book. (xxii)

Yorick is no longer an alter ego for Sterne, but a harbinger of a more universal theme--man's mortality. Ross does not mention Sterne's Uncle Jacques, nor does he relate Sterne to Yorick in any way. Yorick stands alone in the text.

Ross does identify Didius and Dr. Slop with Topham and Burton. These identifications are carried in the endnotes, but readers are directed to them. The note for Didius reads:

> In Didius, Sterne intended a loose, but immediately recognizable satirical portrait of Dr. Francis Topham, one of his opponents in York ecclesiastical politics and a leading church lawyer. (542)

The note is conventional and not a change from previous editors. Ross allows the portrait to be "loose," but he does not extend the identification to "several pedantic lawyers" as Watt did. In his identification of Dr. Slop, Ross offers an intriguing note:

> Dr. Slop is a caricature of the York man-midwife and suspected Jacobite, Dr. John Burton, whom Sterne disliked for largely political reasons. Burton was not a distinguished obstetrician, but neither was he the "little squat, uncourtly figure" Sterne depicts, nor even, despite his alleged Jacobitism, a Roman Catholic. (553)

Work, Watt, Petrie, and Anderson all stated that Burton was a Roman Catholic. They all cite, to a greater or lesser extent, Sterne's anti-Catholic prejudice as the foundation for the scathing ridicule heaped on the character, Dr. Slop. In Ross, the reader confronts a non-Catholic Burton and no mention of Sterne's anti-Catholic bias. Ross removes this foundation for the character, leaving the reader free to build an image of Dr. Slop based on his own experience.

Ross gives simple definitions for all the military jargon in the text. He does not attempt the fuller treatment given to the military and historical content of the novel by Watt, nor does he tie his treatment to Sterne as Work does. The noncommittal treatment of the historical and military content of the novel is typical of Ross's editorial style. Ross offers the reader minimal editorial interpretation, distancing Sterne from the text and generally leaving the reader free to create his own reading.

Melvyn and Joan New began their massive edition of Tristram Shandy in 1978. W. G. Day and Richard A. Davies joined in the effort

and eventually three volumes were completed in 1984.[5] New places the introduction to the text and appendices at the end of volume two, following the text. All notes are contained in volume three. These are blind endnotes, that is, there are no markers in the text to indicate that any notes exist. The notes themselves are numbered by page and line number only. New does divide the notes by volume number, which helps readers keep track of their location in the notes. New's introduction generally discusses editorial decisions, not the text itself. For biographical material on Laurence Sterne, New refers readers to Arthur H. Cash's biography. New writes:

> We have also tried to elucidate Tristram Shandy by means of events and experiences of Sterne's life. While every work of art invites this foolhardy enterprise, few are more inviting than Tristram, the author of which often signed himself "Tristram," and in the course of which not one but two characters (at least) vie for identification with him. (3:10)

New continues:

> I do suspect our notes will better please those who are suspicious of the relationship between biography and the literary work than those who welcome it in all its multiple and complex possibilities. This seems, however, less the result of any predilection on our part than, once again, the difference between elucidation and interpretation. (3:10)

New acknowledges Sterne's strong personal writing style without allowing that style to limit his edition's possibilities. Sterne's personality is present in the text, but biographical details cannot account for every line in the novel. Therefore, New carefully balances the difference between elucidation and interpretation. Biographical details are interesting and possibly illuminating, but

cannot become the only guide for discussing or understanding the author's creation. New's notes are exhaustive--552 pages long. The notes are extremely explicit, dealing thoroughly with every point. New provides an index to authors cited in the notes, but no bibliography:

> We have been flexible enough to ensure that almost every major essay on Tristram Shandy (and a considerable number of minor ones, as well) is cited at least once in the notes, but our notes are hardly substitutes for reading these essays. . . . (3:9)

The text of the notes includes comments such as: "Both Tristram and Yorick share with Sterne the common characteristic of a pulmonary ailment" (3:66). There are quotes from Sterne's letters concerning his illness: "Indeed I am very ill, having broke a vessel in my lungs . . . " (3:503). New repeats Work's note concerning Avignon:

> "'Nothing to see' may be one of Sterne's characteristic slaps at Catholicism, for the sight for which Avignon has been famous since the fourteenth century is its great papal palace." It should be noted, however, that Piganoil, Nouveau Voyage, I: 284-85, and Nugent Grand Tour, II:185, both dismiss the place in a sentence or two. . . . (3:492)

New, in repeating Work's note, begins to connect Sterne to the text. But, the implicit anti-Catholicism is undercut by New's addition to the note that other authors, presumably not anti-Catholic, also dismiss the papal palace. Most importantly, New's notes are not in the text, so the reader must initiate any connection between the notes and the novel.

As for Yorick, New notes:

> Sterne's narrative of Yorick's career has usually been considered an idealized autobiographical account especially of his relationship with his uncle Jacques Sterne. . . . (3:74)

Another note on Yorick states:

> Sterne exploits with considerable brilliance the complexities of Shakespeare's jester--memento mori as a voice for his own work . . . which may well have directed him to the idea of Yorick as an alter ego. Sterne published sermons in 1760 and again in 1766 under the name of Mr. Yorick. (3:66)

Yorick is not Sterne, but an idealized version of Sterne, and in a larger context, a memento mori or reminder of man's mortality.

The other identifications, Didius and Dr. Slop, bear witness to New's non-biographical stance. The note on Dr. Slop reads:

> . . . While Sterne certainly uses the opportunity to pillory his old adversary (see Cash, Early and Middle Years, pp. 91-92 [etc.]) he is also alluding more generally to the eighteenth-century debate between midwives and men-midwives. . . . (3:85)

New does not mention Burton's religion or Sterne's anti-Catholicism. New's note on Didius states:

> Cash, Early and Middle Years, offers a suggestion as to why Didius was immediately recognized as Dr. Francis Topham (1713-70), a leading York lawyer. . . . (3:56)

The note continues:

> Sterne later expressed regret for pillorying Topham in the Romance (Letters, p. 147), but did not mention his more general satire here and at greater length in vols. III and IV, perhaps because Didius had become for him a generalized representative of the legal profession, and not specifically Topham. (3:57)

New acknowledges that these characters can be linked to Sterne, but extends that identification to the larger concepts involved, i.e., the debate on midwifery and a generalized characterization of the legal profession. And, again, these identifications are removed from the text in blind endnotes.

One of the many appendices supplied by New deals with the military content of the novel. New's appendix is a glossary of military terms and is not as detailed as Watt's. New is careful to include all available information on the text, but he places that information after the text, leaving readers the option of creating their own readings independent of New's. Readers may pick and choose the information they wish to incorporate into the text from the material provided by the editor. As New states:

> The interpretation of _Tristram Shandy_ remains the work of every reader, who must, among the other tasks of intellectual quest and satisfaction, measure his efforts against those readers before him. (3:7)

An individual reader would normally confront only one edition of _Tristram Shandy_, not six, and thus experience only one editor's version of the narrator. James Aiken Work presents Sterne as the sole narrative voice in the novel. Since Work, each successive editor of _Tristram Shandy_ allows the fictional Tristram more narrative autonomy. It seems as if once the critics had a firm grasp of the biographical details of Sterne's life and had related those details to the text, they found them unsatisfying or incomplete and began searching for more universal themes and meanings. Perhaps, with

William C. Dowling, we can credit New Criticism with saving eighteenth-century studies for the classroom (523). Dowling contends that the dense historical content of eighteenth-century novels is daunting to students, disinclining them to pursue the subject. New Criticism offers a way to teach the novels without the encumbrance of historical detail. The focus shifts to universal themes in the novels, leaving historical interpretation on the sideline. Watt, Petrie, Anderson, Ross, and New, covering a time span of more than twenty years, reflect the ascendency of this New Critical thinking, with Tristram slowly emerging from Sterne's shadow. In contrast to Work, Ian Watt begins the separation of Tristram and Sterne by being more equivocal in his annotations. Tristram becomes an "expression of the distinctive interests and attitudes of Sterne's own personality," but Watt does not go much beyond that (xii). Tristram is an "expression" of Sterne, not the overshadowed figure Work presents. Graham Petrie continues the separation: "Sterne himself must not be confused with the fictional Tristram . . . " (617). Petrie allows Tristram to stand clear of any "confusion" with the author, Sterne. Howard Anderson advances further: "It is finally to Tristram himself, that the reader owes the humorous and humiliating process of self-revelation . . . " (vii). Tristram now stands at the center of his own novel. Ian Campbell Ross identifies Tristram as: " . . . the hero as writer" (xvi). Ross gives Tristram the position of author and hero of the text, relegating Sterne to the background. Melvyn New divorces his editorial material from the text, allowing the reader

optional control of the text. New does not formulate a position on the question of the narrator, allowing readers to formulate their own opinion. New's edition is influenced by more recent critical approaches. New's statement that each reader must "measure his efforts against those readers before him" would seem to indicate an acceptance of the importance of historical research. New, however, refuses to be limited to history. The massive edition of Tristram Shandy includes a great deal of historical detail without burdening the text of the novel with that weight. It is there, if the reader seeks it out, but the text can stand alone. The reader must be allowed to confront the text and narrator without any limits imposed by an editor. Work denies this freedom. In his effort to clarify the text, Work focuses the reader on Sterne, excluding any other approach. The successive editions react to that closure by submerging Sterne and elevating Tristram to the center of critical focus. Each approach has an effect on the reader, closing out some of the reader's options. To accept Sterne as narrator limits a reader's access to universal themes in the novel. Accepting Tristram as sole hero/narrator excludes unique aspects of Sterne's personality that can enliven and elucidate the text. A middle course, such as New's, allows the reader the autonomy to make the narrator truly live through the act of reading.

Is the novel complete? The question takes on added significance in light of the discussion of Tristram's voice in the text. Wayne C. Booth's article "Did Sterne Complete Tristram

Shandy?" is the best known article on the question. Booth's basic argument is that Sterne substantially completed the book as he had planned it. Booth also asserts that Sterne was growing tired of the project. Booth's verdict is supported by Louis T. Milic in his article "Information Theory and Style of Tristram Shandy." Milic compares various literary devices such as Sterne's use of asterisks and determines that "the mine of invention was exhausting itself" (244). Marcia Allentuck, however, counters their arguments in her article "In Defense of an Unfinished Tristram Shandy. . . ." She argues that the novel has no end, that it conforms to the eighteenth-century aesthetic theory of the "non-finito," an artistic concept exemplified by Rodin's statues. They are purposely left unfinished. For Allentuck: "The glory of Tristram Shandy is that it is unfinished" (153).

Predictably, the editors answer this question in different ways. James Aiken Work states unequivocally: "Sterne did not live to continue the book" (647). This is the last statement on the last page of Work's edition. Ian Watt covers the question in his introduction:

> As a novel, Tristram Shandy is, obviously, incomplete; but by Sterne's standards the question of completeness is irrelevant: his narrative texture has harmony and consistency; and his basic premises always included the possibility of infinite digression and expansion. (xxxiv)

Watt, in skirting the issue, does not insist on any specific reading. Graham Petrie also essentially skirts the issue. He buries the issue in a discussion of Sterne's writing style:

> Trim unravels the web of Toby's amours, and it is this unravelling itself which unravels the whole novel and brings it--a few pages later--to an end. (24)

Petrie implies finality, but does not explicitly claim it. Howard Anderson does not discuss the question, but he includes Wayne C. Booth's article "Did Sterne Complete Tristram Shandy?" in his appendix of criticism. Anderson implicitly supports the Booth position by presenting only Booth's point of view in his text. Ian Campbell Ross refers to "the final installment" or "threads which, if frequently left dangling by Tristram, are always picked up by Sterne to be woven finally into a finished pattern. We discover that the paths Tristram takes, though they may seem diversions, do in the end lead us to Sterne's destination" (xiv, xix). Ross's cumulative opinion seems to support the notion that the work is finished. There is a destination, an ending point to the novel. Melvyn New does not discuss the question specifically, but does cite Booth at various stages of his notes. Yet, in his final footnote he states:

> It seems a particularly characteristic gesture that Sterne would end his work with a bawdy revivification of a proverbial expression. (3:552)

This would seem to affirm a completed work. It is useful to review each editors' approach to the question. Work states his opinion right in the text, introducing a note of dissatisfaction. The novel is unfinished and never will be finished because the author died. He firmly denies the reader any possibility of closure. The other editors address the question in various indirect forms, usually supporting the position that the work is complete. By dealing with

the question indirectly, even though they support closure, the later editors allow readers to make their own decisions. A reader might even remain unaware that the question exists.

Each critical text produces a different "reading" of the novel. The questions of the narrative voice and the completeness of the text provide measures for the critical/editorial voice in each edition. Work's text is almost completely closed. When asked "Who is the narrator?" Work answers "Laurence Sterne." When asked "Is the novel complete?" Work answers "Sterne did not live to continue the book." If, as Iser states "what is concealed spurs the reader to action," Work leaves nothing to the reader's imagination (168). Everything in the text is grounded in the historical Sterne. In contrast, Watt, Petrie, Anderson, Ross, and New each open the text a little more, allowing readers more freedom to read from their own perspectives. For Iser, the reader should reconstitute the text, bridge the gaps. The text requires the reader to fill in the blanks, to participate in creating characters and stories in the text. Editorial statements interfere in the reading process by filling in some of the gaps, directing the reader to adopt the editor's version or reading of the text.

One of the great ironies in The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman is that we really hear very little about the life of Tristram. Tristram tells us about his conception, birth, and breeching but very little else. Most of the novel is taken up with descriptions of events that occurred prior to Tristram's birth.

Tristram's approach to his life story seems similar to his description of the Widow Wadman. Tristram invites the reader to "call for pen and ink" and to "paint her to your own mind--as like your mistress as you can--as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you--'tis all one to me" (470). But, if the text has not given the reader some clues about her character, the reader is unable to comply and the Widow Wadman remains a blank, a non-character. So, Tristram tells the reader: "For never did thy eyes behold, or thy concupiscence covet anything in this world, more concupiscible than the Widow Wadman. . . . She was the perfect woman" (469, 546). These statements, combined with her dialogs with Toby, enable the reader to construct a personality for the Widow Wadman and project that personality into the text to fill the gaps left by Tristram.

As for Tristram himself, the reader must take the information supplied and construct a personality for the narrator/hero. Each new incident related by Tristram throws some light on his character, engaging the reader in the text and in the act of creating the character. When an editor restricts a given incident in light of his interpretation or reading of the text, the editor limits the reader's response by transferring his perspective to the reader. Beginning with James Aiken Work's edition in 1940 through Melvyn New's edition in 1984, we see editors becoming more conscious of their ability to influence the reading process and taking steps to ameliorate that influence in order to preserve Sterne's text for the reader to recreate for himself. The problem comes when even self-conscious

editors manage to influence the reader through editorial statements. On the question of the narrator, editorial opinion moved from a focus on Laurence Sterne to a focus on Tristram. Both extremes are problematical. To focus on Sterne as Work does causes the reader to collapse Yorick, Tristram, and Sterne into one character. This collapse mutes Tristram's narrative voice, limiting all of Tristram's human qualities to those of the long-dead Sterne. Other characters, like Didius and Dr. Slop, live only in relation to Sterne. Yorick is presented as some sort of plaster saint-like mask for the not-so-saint-like Sterne. Universal themes and larger-than-life personas become less possible when Yorick is unmistakably a portrait of Sterne "as he chuses it." When Tristram is said to be Sterne's mouthpiece, he is less believable as an emblem of the universal fear of death and man's courageous fight against the inevitable.

To focus on Tristram as sole narrator, to the exclusion of Sterne, eliminates the delightful and interesting dimension biographical connections can bring to the text. Laurence Sterne was unique and his character permeates the text. Acknowledging the characters' historical roots need not limit their universal attributes. Tristram should not be limited to being Sterne's mouthpiece, but a reader can benefit from understanding that Sterne and Tristram both suffered with tuberculosis. I read the text on a middle ground, using historical documentation to enlighten and clarify without dogmatically limiting my imagination.

I first encountered Tristram Shandy in the James Aiken Work edition. I was fascinated with Laurence Sterne and all the biographical underpinnings in the text. I could accept Tristram as an extension of Sterne's personality, acting for Sterne in the novel. But as my reading progressed and presented me with contradictory information through other editions of the text and critical articles, I became dissatisfied with the puppet-Tristram presented by Work.

My first apprehension of a new perspective on Sterne's text came when Work's note "Sterne did not live to continue the book" was challenged by the absence of such a note in the Howard Anderson edition of the novel (647). How could the novel be finished and unfinished? Was Work mistaken? What else was he wrong about? For me, the entire foundation of Work's edition was called into question. In each successive edition, evidence emerges that points to the conclusion that the novel is complete. Wayne C. Booth's article seemes to clinch it. Sterne had completed the novel and Work is wrong. My dilemma is to reconcile these opposing opinions. Marcia Allentuck provides another perspective for me to approach the various editions and articles, including her own, on this question. If, as she states, Tristram Shandy is purposefully unfinished, then Sterne could return to it any time he pleased. He could provide a logical, satisfying ending, but leave the door slightly ajar so that he could continue at a later date. Unfortunately, death intervened. Both Work and Booth are correct, but limited in their view; for me the truth lies somewhere between the two. Booth's structural analysis is

convincing. Tristram does catch up the main story lines and finishes with his "choicest morsel"--Uncle Toby's amours. As I read the novel, I reach a satisfactory conclusion. Any threads left dangling do not mar the structural integrity of the novel. In reality, no one is able to complete absolutely every task. Each day ends with some tasks unfinished, some stories incomplete, to be continued in the future. Tristram completes his major tasks and rests. If death had not intervened, who can say that Sterne might not have returned one day to pick up some of those unfinished stories and add new chapters to Tristram's saga.

Having read the novel first in Work's edition, I was exposed to a heavy dose of biography, and I liked it. But it affected my reading of the narrator. The more I read, the more I found Work's approach too limiting. I first felt constrained when he described Tristram's flight from death as Sterne's trip to France. I knew, like Tristram, Sterne's health was failing and he went to France searching for a climate that would relieve his suffering. However, Tristram's flight seemed more than a prosaic journey. Tristram's flight has allegorical overtones that are not supported by Work's footnotes. Work cites Sterne's anti-Catholic sentiments at Avignon and says that Sterne's landlord in Toulouse owned the pavilion in which Tristram rhapsodized about the journey. These explanations are unsatisfactory. They do not allow me to participate in the symbolic flight from death. As Tristram leads Death a merry chase, the reader vicariously experiences that flight and rejoices with Tristram as he frolics with the peasants

and dances an exuberant dance of life. I want to dance that dance, not merely read a dated travelogue.

I've built up an image of Tristram in my mind. When I think about Tristram, I am reminded of a more modern jester, Hawkeye Pierce, one of the characters in the television series M*A*S*H. Hawkeye and Tristram have many traits in common. They are irreverent, bawdy, boozing philanderers. Tristram has his jester's bells, while Hawkeye often wears a Groucho Marx moustache. Neither is easy to live with. Tristram bullies and rags his "Sirs and Madames," and Hawkeye is constantly attacking authority in the forms of Majors Houlihan and Burns. Despite their irascible natures, both Tristram and Hawkeye exhibit a rare humorous, human grace in the face of adversity. Surrounded by the horrors of war, Hawkeye attempts to preserve his sanity, his life, and the lives of others. Tristram struggles to preserve his sense of humor and humaneness in the face of cosmic misfortunes.

Tristram is a writer, and his frustrations with the writing process and his inability to tell us every incident in his life mirror the difficulty we all face in knowing one another. Parents, siblings, spouses, and best friends will always be somewhat mysterious and unknowable because no one can communicate the totality of experience, of "being," to another, no matter how hard one tries. Words will always fail us, as they fail Tristram, but we must persevere, as he does, or be content with cold, lonely silence.

Tristram sets out to tell us his life story, beginning "ab ovo." His conception is marred by an untimely question and Tristram is set on a path that leads to the crushing of his nose, unexpected circumcision, and, possibly, the end of his family line due to his failure to marry and father children. Tristram's troubles deal with the very essence of life--birth and death. Tristram is frustrated by his conception and birth, but, despite everything, symbolically triumphs over Death. Throughout all his disappointments and frustrations, he retains his sense of humor. He allows us to participate in the pain of life and learn the restorative powers of laughter. He teaches us to lead Death a merry chase, to rejoice in the race against time and to triumphantly join in the dance of life.

ENDNOTES

1. It is unfortunate that Alan McKillop's edition, published by Harper and Brothers, is out of print and unobtainable. In Laurence Sterne in the Twentieth Century, Hartley cites it as containing "valuable biographical, critical, and bibliographical notes...a carefully edited text" (84). Because a copy was not available to this writer, McKillop's edition is not included in this study. The remaining six editions are available and cited in the Dictionary of Literary Biography (39: 471-72) and in the 1989 Books in Print (5617), making them the texts most likely to be used in current classrooms. See appendix for an outline of the arrangement of these editions.

2. The Fawcett edition of Tristram Shandy is examined only in relation to the article by Shari Benstock. This was necessary because it is the edition she used to prepare her article. Indeed, it does not exhibit the critical or scholarly attributes of the six editions included in this study.

3. The problem of an author's intention has been thoroughly debated. Under the rubric of the "intentional fallacy" Wimsatt and Beardsley have proclaimed "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (3). In counterpoint Tanselle writes:

> Scholarly editors may disagree about many things, but they are in general agreement that their goal is to discover exactly what an author wrote and determine what form of his work he wished the public to have. (167)

These quotes make apparent two separate issues: "judgment" and "form." Rosemarie Maier argues that:

> This problem...is indeed a complex one, but it is extremely unlikely that the determination of a text to criticize is actually literary criticism; textual decisions...are actually pre-critical decisions. That is, the formalist critic...will concentrate his efforts at criticizing poems, and will see the decision about standard texts to be the more scholarly business of textual study. (145)

But what happens when these "pre-critical decisions" affect the reading of the text by becoming a pre-reading or pre-judgment that is passed on to the reader/critic? The choices editors make based on their readings of the author's "intent" are critical decisions that affect later readings of a text.

4. For the sake of clarity, all quotations from Sterne's text shall be taken from James Aiken Work's edition. Of course, all quotations from editorial additions shall be keyed to the text in which they appear.

5. Melvyn New acts as spokesman for the team, writing the introductory materials and generally supplying the editorial voice for the edition. Therefore, all references to the editors of this text will be given as "New."

APPENDIX

Arrangement of the Editorial Contributions

I. James Aiken Work (1940)--66 pp. of editorial materials

  A. Introduction in three parts

    1. Reception of Tristram Shandy
    2. Author of Tristram Shandy
    3. Tristram Shandy--structure, humor, didacticism, sensibility

  B. Selected bibliography--annotated
  C. Notes on the text
  D. Copious footnotes interspersed in the text

II. Ian Watt (1965)--54 pp. of editorial materials

  A. Introduction
  B. Chronology of Sterne's life
  C. Historical and fictional chronology of Tristram Shandy
  D. Select bibliography--not annotated
  E. On the text, the notes, and 18th century typographical usage; discussion of technical printing details
  F. Appendices

    1. The war in Flanders and the siege of Namur
    2. Glossary of military terms
    3. On the text--discussion of copy-text

  G. Copious footnotes--interspersed in text

III. Graham Petrie (1967)--73 pp. of editorial materials

  A. Preface
  B. Introduction by Christopher Ricks
  C. Bibliography--not annotated
  D. Note on the text
  E. Forty-three pages of endnotes

IV. Howard Anderson (1980)--Norton Critical Edition--201 pp. of editorial materials

  A. Preface
  B. Chronology of Sterne's life
  C. The author on the novel--excerpts from letters
  D. Criticism in three parts--contemporary responses, early 19th c. criticism, 20th c. studies

E. Bibliography--not annotated, but divided: biographical, general studies, theoretical studies [hard to read; citations all run together in paragraphs]
F. Copious footnotes interspersed in text

V. Ian Campbell Ross (1983)--Oxford edition--83 pp. of editorial materials

A. Introduction
B. Note on the text
C. Select bibliography--not annotated, but divided: editions, biographical, modern critical studies, modern critical works including substantive sections on Tristram Shandy [arranged in paragraphs]
D. Chronology of Laurence Sterne
E. Endnotes (54 pp.)

VI. Joan and Melvyn New (1978-84) 3 vols.--722 pp. of editorial materials

A. v.1 No editorial material
B. v.2 Beginning with p. 811--following the text

1. Acknowledgements
2. Introduction to the text (28 pp.)
3. Appendix 1--textual notes
4. Appendix 2--list of emendations
5. Appendix 3--word division
6. Appendix 4--historical collation
7. Appendix 5--bibliographical descriptions of first editions by Kenneth Monkman
8. Appendix 6--textual notes on "Memoire presente à Messieurs les Docteurs de Sorbonne"
9. Appendix 7--textual notes on the "Abuses of Conscience sermon"
10. Appendix 8--textual notes on "Ernulphus's Curse"
11. Appendix 9--textual notes on the 1780 edition of Tristram Shandy

C. vol.3

1. 552 pp. of endnotes--often cite critical works with complete citation
2. Appendix--glossary of terms of fortification
3. Selective index of authors cited in the notes

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