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# The thematic relationship of Laurence Sterne to David Herbert Lawrence

Frederick Thornett Hardy

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THE THEMATIC RELATIONSHIP OF  
LAURENCE STERNE TO  
DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE  
BY  
FREDERICK THORNETT HARDY, JR.

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND IN  
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

AUGUST 1970

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The Department of English and the Graduate School  
of the University of Richmond approve this thesis for the  
degree of Master of Arts.

Jack C. Mills

Al B. Brown

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## PREFACE

Before beginning the text of this thesis, I should like to recognise several people who were instrumental in producing this study. First is Dr. Jack C. Wills, the thesis director, whose instruction led to many of the basic premises of this work, and who was also extremely helpful in the organization of the thesis. Secondly, I should like to recognise Dr. Irby B. Brown, the second reader, for his contribution of time and instruction. Finally, I should like to thank Dr. Edward C. Pople, the Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Richmond, and Dr. William B. Guthrie, the Chairman of the Department of English for their aid and encouragement throughout my graduate education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Among the pioneer novelists of the eighteenth century, Laurence Sterne stands out as an unexplained curiosity. In many ways the most modern of the early novelists, he is regarded as the first stream-of-consciousness author, and thus the forerunner of the most significant school in today's fiction. Sterne constructed his original style from ideas derived from the seventeenth century philosopher, John Locke, in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding. A less obvious but equally defensible fact is that this philosophical work provided Sterne with a thematic as well as stylistic bridge into the twentieth century. The clearest illustration of this relationship is the case of David Herbert Lawrence, and it is the purpose of this thesis to analyze the thematic relationship between Sterne and this twentieth century author.

First a consistency in philosophical doctrine will be demonstrated, consisting mainly in the belief that mankind's unhappiness and his shortcomings are directly attributable to his overstimulation of the intellect and neglect of the physical and sensual aspects of life. His acceptance of synthetic substitutes for sensual rewards

and his conformity to artificial patterns is viewed by these authors as man's chief downfall. It will be shown that these principles are derived from a common philosophical source, and that these ideas, suggested only in passing by Locke, are given emphasis and force by Sterne and Lawrence, who present them through two different media: humor and romantic didacticism.

The continuity of the messages of Sterne and Lawrence will be further emphasised by the fact that the two authors employ similar imagery. The use of horse and "hobbyhorse" symbolism, abundant in both writers, will be shown as paradoxical in their various interpretations, but consistent in their application by these two authors as a contrast between the sensual and real, and the intellectual and artificial.

Finally, certain inconsistencies in the methods and messages of Sterne and Lawrence will be considered. Of primary importance will be Sterne's humorous treatment of subjects that Lawrence treats tragically. These superficial contradictions will be resolved partially within the context of the separate personalities of the authors, but primarily with regard to their conflicting literary backgrounds of classicism and romanticism. The synthesis of their messages reached in this study will then be evaluated.

## II. THE HERITAGE OF LOCKE

John Locke was the principal philosophical influence upon both Sterne and Lawrence, and both inherited from him a severe skepticism for those who dedicate their lives to the pursuit of the world of the intellect. This is not to say that they opposed "thinking", scholarship, or the search for truth. Indeed they were themselves extremely thoughtful men. What these men were reacting to was the submission to superficial intellectuality as an end in itself and as a suppressant to the physical realities of life. From the egotism of continental travels to the false hospitality of the drawing room, this life is depicted as artificial, frustrating, and unrewarding.

In his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke presented what he believed to be a realistic alternative to the evils of overzealous intellectuality. Here he delineated his theory of relationships in the mind, which attributes all mental processes to the systematic arrangement and compiling of sensual impulses. Sterne and Lawrence shared Locke's skepticism for the scholastic principle that any concept can be understood by the application of logical processes, without previous



acquaintance with the subject. They felt that man can successfully interpret and deal with life only if he retains contact with the physical world of the senses. Abstract intellectual substitutes were regarded as detriments which lead man away from natural relationships. The natural or spontaneous processes of life have been suppressed and replaced by intricate systems of restraints which man has imposed upon himself. Instead of progressing toward the rewards that are basic to man's nature and consistent with his abilities and inclinations, these men hopelessly pursue the elusive goals of the intellect.

The pedantic speculation of Walter Shandy and the pseudologic of Doctor Slop are prime examples of this form of escape in Tristram Shandy. The novels of Lawrence also present an endless parade of men of weak character, who shrink from the realities which confront them. The most grotesque example is Clifford Chatterley, who retreats into the abstract relationships of Wragby, and succumbs to the complex systems of the intellect.<sup>1</sup> Chatterley becomes so engulfed in his intellectual pursuits that he can no longer relate to the most basic of human functions. He neglects his physical health and even his physical desires, as is illustrated in the following conversation with his

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<sup>1</sup>Julian Moynahan, "Lady Chatterley's Lover; The Deed of Life," English Literary History, XXVI (March, 1959), 78.

wife, in which he suggests that she have a child by another man:

You and I are married, no matter what happens to us. We have the habit of each other. And the habit, to my way of thinking, is more vital than an occasional excitement. The long slow enduring thing . . . that's what we live by . . . not the occasional spasm of any sort. Little by little, living together, two people fall into a sort of union, they vibrate so intricately to one another. That's the real secret to marriage, not sex; at least not the simple function of sex. You and I are interwoven in a marriage. If we stick to this, we ought to be able to arrange this sex thing, as we arrange going to the dentist; since fate has given us a checkmate there.<sup>2</sup>

There is little essential difference in this and the sexual philosophy expounded by Walter Shandy.

That provision should be made for continuing the race of so great, so exalted and godlike a Being as man--I am far from changing--but philosophy speaks freely as everything; and therefore I will still think and do maintain it to be a pity, that it should be done by means of a passion which bends down the faculties, and turns all the wisdom, contemplations, and operations of the soul backwards--a passion my dear continued my father addressing my mother, which couples and equals wise men with fools, and makes us come out of the caverns and hiding places more like satyrs and four-footed beasts than men.<sup>3</sup>

In Lawrence's terms these men are living a life in death. Gerald Crich, of Women in Love, lives the life of industrial enterprise and becomes as mechanical as the machine he owns; Miriam of Sons and Lovers becomes so

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<sup>2</sup>D.H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover (New York, 1928), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen (New York, 1940), pp. 644-648.

preoccupied with her romantic imagination that she cannot accept a man sexually, and the Mambys of St. Mawr are so socially correct that they are utterly incapable of even an intellectual relationship with anyone.

Whether these characters are presented humorously, as in the case of Sterne, or pathetically, as in the case of Lawrence, their inadequacies arise from the same origin--the human ego. In trying to foster self-esteem and the esteem of others, they have sought unnatural goals and relationships, and forfeited the normal means of fulfillment. They have given themselves up to the worship of idols, created in the image and likeness of what they hoped to be, and are no longer able to act in their own behalf.

The basic cause behind the eccentric behavior of the characters of Sterne and Lawrence is the loss of proper relationships. Both authors attempt to show the way back to man's proper position in the universe, and his proper function with other parts of nature. Like Locke, Sterne was deeply concerned with the lack of access of one soul to another. This had driven Locke to construct a system for the analysis of ideas and language.<sup>4</sup> For Sterne it was the stimulus which led to the creation of two literary

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<sup>4</sup>John Traugott, "The Shandean Comic Vision of Locke," in Laurence Sterne, ed. by John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), pp. 131-132.

masterpieces--one filled with the most ludicrously grotesque distortions of human relationships imaginable, and the other purporting to be "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."<sup>5</sup>

Lawrence's concept of relationships is basically identical with that of Sterne. In his essay "Aristocracy," Lawrence states the theme that is central to all of his fiction: "Everything in the world is related to everything else. And every living thing is related to every other living thing."<sup>6</sup> Like Sterne and Locke, Lawrence was trying to reconstruct the ruins of communication between the individual and the rest of the universe. Both Sterne and Lawrence felt that this must begin with restoring communication between man and his fellow man, and both believed that this could best be done by means other than the medium of verbal language. Although there is a considerable area of intersection in their approaches to this problem, Sterne employed humor and sentiment as his primary means of communication, and Lawrence relied mainly on sexuality to bring people closer together. In both cases there is a

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<sup>5</sup>Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy (London, 1768), p. 156.

<sup>6</sup>D.H. Lawrence, "Aristocracy," Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays (Philadelphia, 1925), p. 223.

virile zest for the experience of life itself, and a longing for communication and relationship with all the universe. This sense of relationship is indicated in Sterne's private life by a letter--curiously modern in tone--written in reply to Ignatius Sancho, a Negro born in slavery, who requested that Sterne write something in behalf of the Negro's quest for freedom.

My dear Sancho,

There is a strange coincidence, Sancho, in the little events (as well as the great ones) of this world: for I had been writing a tender tale of sorrow for a friendless poor negro girl, and my eyes had scarce done smarting with it, when your letter of recommendation, in behalf of so many of her brethren and sisters, came to me--but why her brethren? or yours, Sancho! any more than mine? It is by the finest tints, and most insensible graduations, that nature decreed from the fairest face of St. James's, to the sootiest complexions of Africa:--at which of these tints is it, that the ties of blood are to cease? And how many shaded must we descend lower still in the scale, but mercy is to vanish with them? But 'tis no uncommon thing, my good Sancho, for one half of the world to use the other half of it like brutes, and then endeavor to make 'em so.--For my own part, I never look Westward, (when I am in a pensive mood at least) but I think of the burthens our brothers and sisters are there carrying, and could I ease their shoulders of one ounce of them, I declare I would set out this hour upon a pilgrimage to Mecca for their sake--which by the bye, Sancho, exceeds your walk of ten miles in about the same proportion, that a visit of humanity should one of mere form.--However, if you meant my Uncle Toby more he is your debtor.--If I can weave the tale I wrote into the work I am about--'tis at the service of the afflicted--and a much greater matter; for in serious truth, it casts a sad shade upon the world, that so great a part of it are, and have been so long bound in chains of darkness, and misery; and I cannot but both respect and felicitate you, that by so much laudable diligence you have broke the one--and that

by falling into the hands of so good and merciful a family, Providence has reserved you from the other.

And so good-hearted Sancho. Adieu! And believe me I will not forget your letter.--

Yours,

L. Sterne<sup>7</sup>

A corollary for the theory that all of nature is physically and spiritually related is the idea that the best way to conduct oneself successfully in life is to live naturally. Both Sterne and Lawrence believed that the spontaneous life, ruled by the forces which naturally direct man toward his fulfilling destiny, is the means by which he can find happiness. They felt that man's miserable state was caused by his turning away from the natural means of happiness and seeking fulfillment in pursuits not suited to his nature. Neither author advocated indiscriminate, animalistic, debauched quenching of passions. What they did propose was merely a recommitment to the basic instincts--a spontaneous approach to life, in place of the material and moral destinies which man in his presumption had set for himself.

The "natural life" is inherently opposite to the "intellectual life" which, for Sterne and Lawrence, was the most devastating of man's pursuits. No one concept,

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<sup>7</sup>Laurence Sterne, The Letters of Laurence Sterne to his Intimate Friends, IV. The Complete Life and Works of Laurence Sterne (New York, 1899), 120-121.

they felt, had done so much to destroy man's outlook on life, and thus to make him miserable. In this light, Sterne saw man's modern sense of value and perspective as distorted. In his sermon The Advantages of Christianity, Sterne laments the decadence of society and its values.

. . . tell a man of any other defect, that he wants learning, industry, or application,--he will hear your reproof with patience.--May you may go further: take him in a proper season, you may tax his morals, you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct,--passionate or revengeful in his nature,--loose in his principles; deliver it with the gentleness of a friend,--possibly he'll not only bear with you,--but if ingenious, he will thank you for your lecture, and promise a reformation;--but hint,--hint but a defect in his intellectuals,--touch but that sore place,--from that moment you are look'd upon as an enemy sent to torment him before his time, and in return may reckon his resentment and ill-will forever: so that in general you will find it safer to tell a man he is a knave than a fool . . .<sup>8</sup>

When not bridled by common sense, the desire to appear knowledgeable can produce grotesque results. Sterne was generally amused by the fallacy of learned pedantry as is shown in passages such as Kysarcius' discourse on the Duchess of Suffolk. With their tedious listing of authorities and contorted forcing of analogies, Sterne's scholastic "thinkers" miss the points that common sense and basic instinct would make immediately obvious.

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<sup>8</sup> Sterne, Life and Works, III. The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, 77-78.

Lawrence was even more reactionary than Sterne in this area. He deplored the haughty arrogance with which these ideas are often presented and forced upon the unwary recipient. He laments, "Knowledge has killed the sun and made it a ball of gas, with spots; Knowledge has killed the moon. . . . How are we to get back to Apollo and Demeter, Persephone, and the halls of Dis?"<sup>9</sup> He had great contempt for the scientists and religious philosophers who attempted to break down and categorize the mysteries of human experience. In his essay Etruscan Places, Lawrence Depicts the primitive predecessors of the Romans as superior in spirit to their more sophisticated conquerors. He felt that they knew the secret of fulfillment "in the palm of your hand-- or at the end of your nose," because they were sensually alive.<sup>10</sup> People who lost this vital closeness to life he saw as spiritually dead, and he had great contempt for their weakness. But he had even greater contempt for their tendency to impose their limits on others. These members of the living dead construct their intricate philosophical systems, and imposing scientific dogmas, all of which strangle the life from those who must submit to them, and stand as monuments to their creators' ineffectuality.

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D. H. Lawrence, Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, (London, 1931), pp. 86-87.

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Mary Freeman, D. H. Lawrence: A Basic Study of His Ideas (Gainesville, 1955), p. 210.



The psychological overtones of this learned eccentricity are somewhat obvious today, but it is surprising to find that a man of Sterne's era should apparently be so aware of them. In case after case, Sterne insinuates that the desire for intellectual intercourse becomes so passionate that it replaces sexual drive. The best example is Walter Shandy, almost certainly impotent at an early age, whose treatise on the demeaning act of sexual intercourse has already been mentioned. The sexual implications of intellectual passion is seen in the "Bed of Justice" scene, in which Walter Shandy is "pressing the point home" to Mrs. Shandy, who "cannot conceive" his message.<sup>11</sup>

Lawrence also believes that over-stimulation of the intellect diminishes man's sensitivity to the rewards and wonders offered in the great mystery of life. In Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lawrence outlines what he believes to be the proper relationships of man, and indicates how they have become estranged from modern life.

There are many ways of knowing, there are many sorts of knowlege. But the two ways of knowing, for man, are knowing in terms of apartness, which is mental, rational, and scientific, and knowing in terms of togetherness, which is religious and poetic.

But the relationship is threefold. First there is relationship to the living universe. Then comes

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<sup>11</sup>George Goodin, "The Comic as the Critique of Reason: Tristram Shandy," College English, XXIX (December, 1967), 221.

the relationship of man to woman. Then comes the relationship of man to man. Each is a blood relationship, not mere spirit or mind. We have abstracted the universe into matter and force, we have abstracted men and women into separate personalities--personalities being isolated units, incapable of togetherness--so that all great relationships are bodiless, dead.<sup>12</sup>

The overemphasis of the intellect, then, was cited as the primary cause of the distortion of proper relationships and ultimately almost all of man's sufferings. The sterility of the life in the intellect is perhaps the most prevalent result of the rejection of sensual relationships, but there are other more subtle mutations which these authors present all of which result from attempting to substitute "mind" for sensual biological processes which are inherent in man's genealogy. We have already mentioned briefly some characters who become so unnaturally pre-occupied with industry, religious dogma, or social graces that their lives become ritualistic. Lawrence saw war as still another example of institutionalized behavior set up by man's intellectual fallacies, which is contrary to his basic animal nature. He believed that military efforts doomed men to spiritual death by regimenting their lives to the extent that the basic elements of relationship--vulnerability and tenderness--are destroyed by subjecting individuals to larger, more impersonal campaigns.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Moynahan, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup>Moynahan, p. 83.

Anton Strebensky of The Rainbow, like Sterne's Uncle Toby, has surrendered the cares and rewards of dealing with life realistically, and has substituted the secure decorum of the military world. In both cases, there is more than a hint of impotence. Strebensky finds himself powerless in the face of sexual encounter, and Uncle Toby, when faced with the mere reference to sex, reacts by whistling the Lillabullero.

The occupation of war reflects most clearly the antagonistic quality which is latent in all unnatural preoccupations as a result of the necessity to defend them. Sterne considered "Spleen," an inclination toward personal animosity and inhumanity, to be the most detestable vice.<sup>14</sup> It may appear somewhat incongruous, therefore, that he represents Uncle Toby with sympathy since he is so closely identified with military science, but one must remember that he is the victim of its evils, not its instigator. And although Uncle Toby naively attempts to justify the military as an institution, his apology is hardly effective, and his general good nature by far transcends any shortcomings arising from his preoccupation.

In the writings of Sterne and Lawrence, it is clear that the presence of inhumanity in any form is normally

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<sup>14</sup>Walter Francis Wright, Sensibility In English Prose Fiction (Urbana, III., 1937), pp. 399-400.

alien to man's natural psyche. Sterne's estimate of human nature was diametrically opposed to the still-popular Hobbesian approach. In his sermon Vindication of Human Nature, he expounds his theory that man's innate impulses are benevolent, and that a man who is not unnaturally corrupted and turned away from his normal relationships will always lead a virtuous life.<sup>15</sup> Sterne's most concise statement of this popular eighteenth century philosophy is found in his sermon Philanthropy Recommended.

I think there needs no stronger argument to prove how universally deeply the seeds of virtue and compassion are planted in the heart of man, than in the pleasure we take in such representatives of it: and though some men have represented human nature in other colours (though to what end I know not), yet the matter of fact is so strong against them, that from the general propensity to pity the unfortunate, we express that sensation by the word, Humanity, as if it were inseparable from our nature. That it is not inseparable, I have allowed in the former parts of this discourse, from some reproachful instances of selfish tempers, which seem to take part in nothing beyond themselves; yet I am persuaded, and affirm, 'tis so great and noble a part of our nature, that a man must do great violence to himself, and suffer many a painful conflict, before he has brought himself to a different disposition.<sup>16</sup>

Sterne employed the medium of literature as a means to reorient man to his proper disposition. By the vehicle of

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<sup>15</sup>Gordon Hall Gerould, The Patterns of English and American Fiction (Boston, 1942), p. 110.

<sup>16</sup>Sterne, Sermons, pp. 48-49.

gentle satire and tender sentiment, he successfully unmasked pompous hypocrisy and the institutions it engendered.<sup>17</sup> Like Lawrence, he regarded the traditional concept of the progress of man with skepticism, viewing the concept as a deceptive premise contrived by man for his own gratification. Both authors believed that concentration on these grand designs stifle man's ability to reach fulfillment in his own life, and that the very act of living successfully and enjoying the fruits of human relationships was the highest destiny an individual could attain. They each had an intense zest for the pleasures of life, and sought them in their personal lives with almost frantic enthusiasm. Man's quest for happiness could be attained only by relinquishing the superhuman goals and ideas which man had vainly sought after, and by striving after the rewards that human nature makes available. This can be accomplished on an individual basis only. Lawrence called this revolutionary concept resurrection in the flesh. It is not an easy process, and it requires that the individual drop the barriers to natural relationship which he has constructed in his life. Vulnerability is a necessity. Sterne felt that the rewards of nature must be accepted upon nature's conditions, and that since we know

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<sup>17</sup>John Laird, Philosophical Incursions Into English Literature (Cambridge, 1946), pp. 76-77.

so little of people and things outside ourselves, it is necessary to accept them on the assumption that they are friendly. He reasons that it is better to risk frustration and embarrassment than to approach the world with the scowl of Smelfungus and Mundungus.<sup>18</sup> Experience should be sought after and received with enthusiasm.

For Sterne and Lawrence, experience is measured in terms of sensuality rather than in terms of time, which they considered not only arbitrary, but invalid in determining the value of experience. This principle originates with Locke, who said that emotions as well as Knowledge are the product of sensations.<sup>19</sup> The discrepancy between clock duration and sensual time is humorously illustrated by Sterne in a speech by Walter Shandy.

It is two hours and ten minutes--and no more--cried my father looking at his watch, since Dr. Slop and Obadiah arrived--and I know not how it happens, brother Toby--but to my imagination it seems an age.<sup>20</sup>

Sterne, like Lawrence, was revolutionary in regard to the importance of sensation, although to a lesser degree. In his modest attempt to move the world, he replaced the politics of church and state with the friendly persuasion

<sup>18</sup>William Bowman Piper, Laurence Sterne (New York, 1965), p. 829.

<sup>19</sup>Herbert Read, The Nature of Literature (New York, 1956), pp. 255-256.

<sup>20</sup>Sterne, Tristram Shandy, p. 188.

of humor and the plaintive call of sentiment.<sup>21</sup> It was his belief that man was obliged to cultivate these affections, which--far from degrading--elevates mankind spiritually. On occasions he even referred to this experience as religious.<sup>22</sup>

I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, 'Tis all barren--and so it is; and so is all the world to him who will not cultivate the fruits it offers. I declare, said I, clapping my hands cheerily together, that was I in a desert, I would find out wherewith in to call forth my affections--If I could not do better, I would fasten them upon some sweet myrtle, or seek some melancholy cyprus to connect myself to.<sup>23</sup>

Some critics would contend that Sterne's concept of relatedness is merely a means to an end, and that lechery is the main affection he refers to which make us "love the world better than we do."<sup>24</sup> Although this is certainly a very narrow statement, it is true that, like Lawrence, Sterne attributes great importance to sexuality as means of communication, and implies that it often plays a greater part in our lives than we are aware of.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>John Traugott, "Introduction" in Laurence Sterne, ed. by John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1968), p. 15.

<sup>22</sup>Sterne, Sermons, p. 326.

<sup>23</sup>Sterne, Sentimental Journey, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup>Robert Payne, "Shandy's Sterne," New York Times, LXIII (November 24, 1963), 120.

<sup>25</sup>Robert T. Alter, "Tristram Shandy and the Game of Love," The American Scholar, XXXVI (Spring, 1968), 316.

Lawrence believed that intellectual barriers were destroying the natural sexual relationships between men and women. By openly describing these physical responses, he hoped to make possible a less restricted approach to sex.<sup>26</sup> He stated this concept specifically in a letter to A. D. McLeod.

I think that the thing to do, is for men to draw closer to women, expose themselves to them, and be altered by them; and for women to accept and admit men. That is the start--by bringing themselves together, men and women--revealing themselves, gaining great blind knowledge, and suffering and joy, which it will take a further lapse of civilization to exploit and work out. Because the source of all living is the interchange and meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being.<sup>27</sup>

This idea is the basis of Lawrence's novel Lady Chatterley's Lover, in which Clifford Chatterley is presented as a man who is unable to enjoy sexual fulfillment and who attempts to replace it with intellectual substitutes. He is, of course, miserably unsuccessful. This novel is famous for its open treatment of sex which may be compared with Sterne's literary shock-therapy in which subtle psychological undertones are laid bare.

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<sup>26</sup> Harry T. Moore and Warren Roberts, D. H. Lawrence and His World (New York, 1966), pp. 40-41.

<sup>27</sup> Aldous Huxley, ed., The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, (New York, 1932), p. 198.



There is not a doubt that in their tireless search for sensual fulfillment, both Sterne and Lawrence were led to some unfortunate indiscretions in their personal lives, but it must be remembered that both authors accepted vulnerability as an inherent part of their creed. They presented life as an experience that is not always pleasant but which is certain to be ultimately rewarding if pursued correctly. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley* and Sterne's *Parson Yorick* are representations of the few who successfully shed the shackles of convention and live the natural life. Neither is perfect, to be sure, and both waver at times when their principles seem difficult or confining. But both ultimately remain true to their convictions and reap the rewards of a well-spent life. In Sentimental Journey, Sterne, as Yorick, states the extent of his commitment to nature as his guide.

If nature has so wove her web of kindness, that some threads of love and desire are entangled with the piece, must the whole web be rent in drawing them out?--Whip me such stoics, great governor of nature! said I to myself--wherever they providence place me on trial 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, not we ourselves.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Sterne, Sentimental Journey, p. 173.

### III. HORSES AND HOBBY-HORSES

The novels of Sterne and Lawrence are so permeated with animal imagery and, in particular, horse imagery, that no thematic study of these novelists could be complete without considering this aspect of their writing. The horse, as is generally the case in all animal imagery, projects the archetypal connotation of unspoiled nature. When presented in conjunction with the rider he represents the antagonistic conflict between unbridled virility and regimented sterility.

Both Sterne and Lawrence see irony in the fact that the forces of nature (symbolized by animals--specifically the horse) are often subjected and ridden by the anemic forces of art and artificiality (symbolized by the "smooth faced riders" or the "pseudo-handsome ghoul"). The only important difference is that Sterne presents this situation as ludicrous, and Lawrence sees it as bitterly tragic. This can best be seen by comparing essentially identical scenes by the two authors. In both cases a horse short by the carcass of a dead animal in the road. After attempting to force the animal past the carcass, the horse and rider both receive injury.

The bidet flew from one side of the road to the other, then back again--then this way--then that way, and in short every way but by the dead ass.--La Fleur insisted upon the thing--and the bidet threw him.

What's the matter, La Fleur, said I, with this bidet of thine?--Monsieur, said he, C'est un cheval le plus opiniatre du monde--Nay, if he is a conceited beast, he must go his own way, replied I,--so La Fleur --got off him, and giving him a good sound lash, the bidet took me at my word, and away he scamper'd back to Montriul.--Peste! said La Fleur.<sup>29</sup>

At that moment St. Mawr exploded again, shied sideways as if a bomb had gone off, and kept backing through the heather. "Fool!" cried Rico, hanging in the air. He pulled the horse over on top of him. Lou gave a loud, unnatural, horrible scream: she heard it herself, at the same time she heard the crash of the falling horse. Then she saw a pale gold belly, and hooves that worked and flashed in the air, and St. Mawr writhing, straining his head terrifically upwards, his great eyes starting from the naked lines of his nose. With his great neck arching cruelly from the ground, he was pulling frantically at the reins, which Rico still held tight.<sup>30</sup>

The term hobby-horse is so ambiguous and confusing in its various meanings and subtle implications, that any study of its specific use by an author is unavoidably speculative. Philologically, the word has pertained to such varied objects as a child's toy, a prostitute, or a character in a Morris dance. In addition there is the relationship to the

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<sup>29</sup> Sterne, Sentimental Journey, pp. 69-70.

<sup>30</sup> D. H. Lawrence, St. Mawr and the Man Who Died, (New York, 1925), p. 66.

word "horse" itself. Possibly all of these had some degree of influence on Sterne as he used the term, but in general it is probably best to consider the term "hobby-horse" in its popular sense during the eighteenth century. Like his contemporary Smollett, Sterne created characters whose actions were guided by ruling passions.<sup>31</sup> Although his major characters were given slightly more depth than those of Smollett, they were still basically of the humors school. The eccentric behavior of his characters--pseudo-scientific speculation in the case of Walter Shandy, or preoccupation with military science as the case of Uncle Toby--is attributed to their hobby horse, an uncontrollable drive which carries its willing rider beyond the brink of rational behavior.

The central point of all hobby-horsical activity in the novels of Sterne and Lawrence is the fact that this behavior is always considered not only abnormal, but unnatural. It has been suggested that hobby-horses are a vehicle for sublimated sexual activity employed as a substitute by those who are unable or, for some reason,

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<sup>31</sup>Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel, (New York, 1954), p. 44.

unwilling to engage in a real sexual relationship.<sup>32</sup> Here the full implication of the term's etymology becomes apparent, regarding the symbolic virility related to the work "horse," and the artificiality of its wooden representation.

The characters in Sterne and Lawrence bear this hypothesis out with such personages as Walter Shandy, Uncle Toby, Tristram Shandy, Dr. Slop, Clifford Chatterley, Rico Carrington, Anton Strebensky, and many others. All have at least a strong hint of impotence or celibacy about them. Whether this unnatural substitute for normal human activity can successfully fulfill the needs of these characters is questionable. There is very little evidence that anyone is completely satisfied by his hobby-horsical pursuits. Even in the case of Uncle Toby, probably the most enthusiastic and well-seated rider of hobby-horses, there is a half-hearted, somewhat wistful attempt at a more natural relationship with an unlikely candidate, the Widow Wadman.

In general, the characters of Sterne seem better adapted to riding their hobby-horses than the ashen-faced

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<sup>32</sup> Alter, p. 317.

Lawrentian rider, who sits frozen in the saddle, the horse--his bit in his teeth-galloping hopelessly out of control as the anguished author shouts pleadingly for him to jump. The characters of Shandy Hall seem to gallop with a reckless abandon, and although they may be thwarted by apparently trivial obstacles (door hinges, given names, etc.), they are often capable of leaping seemingly insurmountable barriers without breaking stride.<sup>33</sup>

For my hobby-horse, if you recollect a little, is no way a vicious beast; he has scarce one hair or linament of the ass about him--'Tis the sporting little filly-folly which carries you out for the present hour--a maggot, a butterfly, a picture, a fiddle-stick, an Uncle Toby's siege--or an anything which man makes a shift to get a stride on, to canter it away from the cares and sollicitudes of life--'Tis as useful a beast as is in the whole creation--nor do I really see how the world could do without it--<sup>34</sup>

The principle danger of the hobby-horse, as Sterne saw it, was the fact that it can take over a person's life, as he indicates in the conclusion to the quote above.

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<sup>33</sup>Walter Allan, The English Novel (New York, 1954), p. 425.

<sup>34</sup>Sterne, Tristram Shandy, p. 584.

--But for my father's ass--oh! mount him--mount him--mount him--(that's three times, is it not?)--mount him not:--'Tis a beast concupiscent--and foul befall the man who does not hinder him from kicking.<sup>35</sup>

By the same learned chain of reasoning, my father stood for all his opinions, he had spared no pains in picking them up, and the more they lay out of the common way, the better still was his title.--No mortal claimed them: they had cost him moreover as much labor in cooking and digesting as in the case above, so that they might well and truly be said to be of his own goods and chattles--Accordingly he held fast by 'em, both by teeth and claws, --would fly to whatever he could lay his hands on;--and in a word, would intrench and fortify them round with as many breastworks, as my Uncle Toby would a citadel.<sup>36</sup>

Lawrence takes the implications of unnatural hobby-horsical activity and carries it to its realistic conclusion. Here the ludicrous and sentimental aspect of the hobby-horse as presented by Sterne is replaced by stark naturalism and an atmosphere of decadence. In his famous story "The Rocking-Horse Winner," Lawrence makes an analogy between the hobby-horse--a substitute for reality, and the real horse - a symbol of the real, the physical, and the sensual. In

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<sup>35</sup> Sterne, Tristram Shandy, p. 584.

<sup>36</sup> Sterne, Tristram Shandy, p. 223.

this story, a mother's sexual frustration leads to a craving for money as a substitute, and this unnatural substitute is passed on to her son.<sup>37</sup> Once Paul is in the saddle, he loses control of his hobby-horse (in the usual Shandean tradition), but he is finally carried on a tortuous gallop to his death. The awesome beast which carries Paul and other Lawrentian characters to their doom bears little outward resemblance to Sterne's descendant of Rocinante.

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<sup>37</sup>W. D. Snodgrass, "The Rocking-Horse: The Symbol, The Pattern, The Way to Live," D. H. Lawrence: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Mark Spilka (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965), p. 117.



#### IV. DISCREPANCIES

In the foregoing chapters, emphasis has been placed on the coinciding philosophy of Sterne and Lawrence. It has been demonstrated that both authors devised a philosophy of sensual and instinctual awareness in reaction to what they felt to be an unnatural emphasis on the intellectual aspects of life. The similarity of the two philosophies which evolved separately from comparable stimuli has been emphasized by showing similar forms of imagery and archetypal patterns used in presenting these themes. Yet there are certain aspects of their work which seem too diametrically opposed--at least from the standpoint of a superficial glance--to be overlooked. Some attention has already been given to the fact that although both authors present characters who are dominated by unnatural preoccupations, these characters are presented in a very different light. The most convenient way to accommodate this inconsistency would be simply to attribute this to differences in the temperament and personality of the

authors. Indeed this may be a significant factor, but it seems unlikely that two persons who held such similar views in this specific field would vary so widely in their treatment of the subject. This and other inconsistencies between the authors will be discussed in this chapter, and other factors will be suggested which may help to explain and reconcile these paradoxes.

No aspect of the writings of Sterne has posed as many critical problems as his many lapses into sentimentality. In general, critics have found this tendency of the author embarrassingly difficult to assimilate into the otherwise organic structure of his writing. Perhaps the greatest problem involved is the decision as to whether the sentiment expressed by Sterne is, indeed, true, compassionate feeling or if the man was actually the "sniveling hypocrite" that many accused him of being. Usually the subject is merely glossed over as quickly as possible, for each side of the question possesses both imposing strengths and conspicuous flaws. It is obvious that Sterne's Sentimental Journey and Journal to Eliza, if not all of his works, were written during a period in which his emotions and sensibility were extremely receptive to stimulation. In addition, there are passages in his work (such as Uncle Toby's lament upon the wages of

a soldier's life), where sincerity could hardly be questioned. Yet there is the other side of Sterne, which is always lurking with the anticlimactic conclusion, double implication, or cynical innuendo to undercut the force of a tearful passage. It is this aspect of Sterne that leads critics to believe "that his tears came with suspicious ease, that a leer is often discernible beneath the droop of his mouth. . . ." <sup>38</sup> The easiest and unfortunately the most common explanation given is that Sterne was both sentimental and unsentimental. Of course, this statement is not only contradictory, but it reveals nothing about the author at all.

If one is to take sides in the issue of Sterne's sentiment, the scholar who is trying to draw an analogy with Lawrence would be inclined to say that Sterne is satirizing sentimentality. It is difficult to overlook a statement by Constance Chatterely (here a mouthpiece for Lawrence) on this very subject, which would tend to support that point of view.

What liars the poets and everybody were!  
 They made one think one wanted sentiment.  
 When what one really wanted was this  
 piercing, consuming, rather awful  
 sensuality.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Grant C. Knight, The Novel in English (New York, 1931), pp. 69-70.

<sup>39</sup> Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, p. 281

Sterne never made an explicit statement against sentimentality as Lawrence did, but he does obviously enjoy the game of undermining our standard emotions.<sup>40</sup> One of the best examples of Sterne's dubious pathos is his overflowing of feeling for a starling, which he eventually acquires and makes a gift of. In cases such as this, in which the sentiment, obviously consisting mainly of self-love, appears to ebb and flow, one cannot deny that satire is involved. The point which must be carefully considered is whether Sterne is satirizing sentiment, or merely the affectation of it. If one accepts the second conclusion, his pseudo-sensibility remains consistent not only with his real sentiment, but also with the general philosophy of Lawrence and the writers of Sterne's age--an age, which, unlike our own, regarded the man of feeling with great admiration.

Sterne's concept of sentiment is derived from Locke, who measured the value of experience in terms of its feeling-fullness.<sup>41</sup> It is also analogous to Lawrence's concept of relinquishment, in that both doctrines imply the discarding of psychological defenses which restrain man's natural

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<sup>40</sup>Ben Reid, "The Sad Hilarity of Laurence Sterne," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXII (Winter, 1956), 118.

<sup>41</sup>Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel (New York, 1953), p. 95.

impulses and affections. One of the most Lawrentian passages to be found in Sterne is Parson Yorick's previously mentioned discourse prompted by the melancholy notes of a captive starling. Having stoically accepted the prospect of imprisonment, his wall of defense is instantly shattered.

Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in tune to nature were they chanted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasoning upon the Bastille; and I heavily walk'd upstairs, unsaying every word I had said in going down them.<sup>42</sup>

The answer, then, is that Sterne is a true sentimentalist; and a strict sentimentalist in every sense of the word, as long as one regards sentiment as a natural, sensual impulse. This is consistent with Lawrence's principle that one must be open, vulnerable, and receptive to stimuli. Both authors deplore the affectation of sentiment, which is a strictly intellectual process, although it may deceive even the person who expresses it. When Sterne satirizes this, he is ridiculing people, not emotions. Finally, although Sterne may have occasionally lacked restraint in his true sensibility, he was never wanting sincerity.

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<sup>42</sup> Sterne, Sentimental Journey, p. 113.

Sterne's liberal use of humor has been discussed only in relation to his sentiment, but one must not lose sight of the fact that Sterne was, above all, a humorist, and that it is upon this aspect of his writing that his reputation primarily rests. It was in his discussion of Sterne that Coleridge gave his famous definition of humor as an equation of "the finite great with the finite little" in relation to the infinite. His style of humor descends from Cervantes with its delicate mixture of comedy and pathos, as well as his hyperbolic treatment of trivial subjects.<sup>43</sup> But Sterne is probably more directly related to Rabelais in his indiscriminate and unbridled application of humorous undercurrents to even the most solemn events. No subject is too serious for Sterne's laughter. It often appears that the subjects most pregnant with sanctimonious austerity are the very objects which Sterne cannot resist pricking with his humorous barb, and it is understandably difficult for many readers to reconcile the author of his sermon on "The House of Mourning" with the man who wrote Tristram Shandy. Stern's doctrine of humor was given unlikely expression by Walter Shandy. "Every thing in this world, said my father, is big with jest,--and has wit in it, and instruction too,--if we can but find it out."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Wilbur Cross, Life and Times of Laurence Sterne (New York, 1909), p. 521.

<sup>44</sup>Sterne, Tristram Shandy, p. 393.

Scholars generally agree that the humor of Sterne arises from the same origin as his sadness, and that the two affections are often intermingled and are almost never far apart. The author himself acknowledged this thin line of distinction in a letter to his intimate friend, David Garrick.

--I laugh till I cry, and in the same tender moments, cry 'till I Laugh. I Shandy it more than ever, and verily do believe, that by mere Shandism, sublimated by laughter-loving people, I fence as much against infirmities, as I do by the benefit of air and climate.<sup>45</sup>

Sterne's early life was never free from the threat of poverty, and his lifelong battle with tuberculosis kept him in almost perpetual pain, seldom allowing him to forget that death followed him constantly. This was complicated by his many amorous involvements. It has been suggested that although Sterne often joked about this matter, and may, in fact, have been corporeally faithful to his wife, he was painfully aware of his wife's suffering, and of the fact that his own domestic life was ruined.<sup>46</sup> The source of Sterne's personal sadness matters little. What is important is the hedonism which evolved allowing him to view life with a humorous optimism which radiated from his

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<sup>45</sup> Sterne, Letters, p. 224.

<sup>46</sup> Arie De Froe, Laurence Sterne and His Novels, Studies in the Light of Modern Psychology (Gronigen, 1925), pp. 228-229.

unshaken spirit.<sup>47</sup> The philosophy employed by Sterne must not be confused with Stoicism. Although the effect is superficially similar, the process is diametrically opposite. Instead of effecting a detachment from himself, Sterne detaches himself from the hostile aspects of the world, and (like Lawrence) reverts into himself. Several years before his death, he wrote "We must bring three parts in four of humor with us. In short, we must be happy within, and then few things about us will make much difference. This is my Shandean philosophy."<sup>48</sup>

This precept allowed Sterne to accept the imperfections of human existence. Like Lawrence, he was aware of his own human tendency to strive beyond the realm of human capability.<sup>49</sup> For Lawrence, the answer was a resurrection in the flesh. For Sterne, also, the triumph was strictly personal in nature. His answer--remember Coleridge's definition of humor--is that man is not a being to be taken seriously.<sup>50</sup> This is a conclusion that Lawrence could never be capable of accepting.

<sup>47</sup>De Foe, p. 229.

<sup>48</sup>Yoseloff, p. 227.

<sup>49</sup>Freeman, p. 209.

<sup>50</sup>John M. Stedmond, The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne (Toronto, 1967), p. 163.



Several questions immediately present themselves. Can these philosophies be regarded as unnatural hobby-horsical attempts to escape from the realities of life? Which, in truth, is more real, the individual or the universe to which he relates? If one accepts the latter, then he must rank these authors along with Walter Shandy and Clifford Chatterley as constructors of artificial intellectual systems. If one accepts the former answer, however, the conclusion is much more generous. In this case, Sterne and Lawrence may be regarded as reactionaries, each in his own way trying to bring man back into a closer awareness of himself. Sterne used the medium of humor; Lawrence employed personal revolution.

The essential point in understanding the different forms which these novelists take in their reaction to the same conflict is the recognition that both men were molded to some extent by their times. The fact that both were in some ways revolutionaries precludes picturing them as typical products of their age, but it can generally be said that Sterne was primarily a classicist, and Lawrence was basically a romanticist. As a rule the writings of Sterne tend to be more detached in vision and general in application than those of Lawrence which are expressive, particular in application, and intensely personal. There is, of course, considerable overlapping. Sterne has a strong tendency toward introspection, even though he prefers to do so through

the detachment of comedy. His subjective distrust of science is strongly in the romantic tradition which found its highest expression in Keats.<sup>51</sup> His doctrine of sensibility and benevolence is in the school of Rousseau, although not nearly so radical.<sup>52</sup> Lawrence, on the other hand, was not totally devoid of classical influence. His major concept of resurrection in the flesh can be described as an elaboration on the neo-classical maxim, know thyself.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Lawrence produced some humorous writing in an unsuccessful series of plays including Touch and Go, and The Widowing of Mrs. Halroyd, which comically treat situations roughly parallel to those in Women in Love and Sons and Lovers.<sup>54</sup> But these are minor points. Few novelists have been so closely identified with romantic school as Lawrence. His novels have always been considered poetic in temperament and

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<sup>51</sup>M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, (New York, 1953), p. 308.

<sup>52</sup>Read, p. 252.

<sup>53</sup>Snodgrass, p. 118.

<sup>54</sup>N. S. Pritchett, "Lawrence's Laughter," New Statesman (July 1, 1966), p. 18.

imagination, for they possess the generative, Wordsworthian quality of internal emotion made external.<sup>55</sup> He was incapable in his extremely personal approach to literature, of being both creative and prosaically calm as Sterne was in his mimetic-pragmatic inclination. Several critics have suggested that this, the most powerful force in Lawrence's fiction, is also the weakness around which it topples. For without proper directives (i.e. classical restraint and form) to guide the author artistically, the work tends to succumb to the weaker aspects of the author. The result is a work which can only be regarded as an incomplete extension of the author instead of an independent organic construction.<sup>56</sup> At times Lawrence's writings are characterized by hysterical overtones, which are usually detrimental to communication.

Sterne, like most classicists, is oriented more toward the reader than Lawrence, who tends toward romantic self-centrality in his writing. Although Sterne's prose style would hardly be considered conventional during his time, his general literary posture concerning the relationship of the artist, the work, and the audience, leans

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<sup>55</sup>J. A. Bromley, "The Challenge of D. H. Lawrence," The Hibbert Journal, LVII (April, 1960), 285.

<sup>56</sup>R. P. Blackmur, Language as a Gesture (New York, 1955), pp. 286-287.

strongly toward the formality of classicism. Like his contemporaries, he viewed things in terms of the infinite and the "great chain of being." In Tristram Shandy he tells a tragic story of the hopeless extinction of a family. The point should be emphasized that the circumstantial picture of human condition as presented in the novels of Sterne is as desolate as that of the most persecuted existentialist.<sup>57</sup> But Sterne presents the picture through comic vision and classical detachment.

A final discrepancy is that of religion. This is a very important point with regard to these particular authors, because the basic theme in their novels was the way to fulfillment. While Sterne was a clergyman in the Anglican church--and indeed not so far removed from traditional Anglican theology as one may suppose, Lawrence rejected Christian doctrine, believing that fulfillment is available in this life only. In presenting his religious ideas, Lawrence, like many romantic writers, often became Messianic to the point that his literary and artistic quality suffered.<sup>58</sup> As one might expect, his spiritual ideas were man-oriented. Lawrence's God was the vital Pan, god of the woods and nature. This is the god in

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<sup>57</sup> Kenneth Rexroth, "Tristram Shandy," Saturday Review, LI (January 20, 1968), 15.

<sup>58</sup> Moore, p. 39.

whose image Lawrence felt man was made, and whom man had betrayed for the ego-rewarding pursuits of the intellect. Man's intellectual quest, he felt, had become dominant over and subdued man's true spiritual purpose and function, and the ultimate fulfillment designed for life--to live as a man. He expounded this principle in a letter to Ernest Collings.

My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle. What do I care about knowledge? All I want is to answer the blood, direct without quibbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what-not. I conceive of man's body as a kind of flame, forever upright and yet flowing: and the intellect is just the light that is shed on the things around. And I am not so much concerned with the things around--which is really mind--but with the mystery of the flame forever flowing, coming God knows how from practically nowhere, and being itself whatever there is around it, that lights it up. We have gotten so ridiculously mindful that we have forgotten that we are ourselves anything--we think these are the only objects we shine upon. And there the poor flame goes on burning ignored, to produce this light. And instead of chosing the mystery in the fugitive, half-lighted things outside us, we ought to look at ourselves and say, "My God, I am myself!"<sup>59</sup>

Lawrence admired Christianity as an institution, because he felt it had been a force for love and benevolence in the world, but after World War I he felt that its

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<sup>59</sup>Huxley, p. 180.

effectiveness was lost, and that only its negative aspects remained.<sup>60</sup> Considerable evidence exists that Sterne may also have believed that the era of Christianity was near an end. In volume VII of Tristram Shandy there are references--all conspicuously close together, although they are mentioned only parenthetically--that the belief in Christ will not survive the next fifty years. One reference is found in Chapter IX and two in Chapter XIV. The distinction between Sterne and Lawrence is that the former foresaw the fall of Christianity as an institution, not a decline in the validity of its doctrine.

The Sermons of Mr. Yorick are the published version, in two installments, of selected sermons preached by Sterne in his role as a Yorkshire clergyman. The basic theme is the same as that of his novels and those of Lawrence: the belief that human nature, if not corrupted by unnatural influences, was basically virtuous. But Sterne, like many of his contemporaries, extended this idea beyond Lawrence, by assuming that the joys afforded by good works in this world are related to the perfect joys of the next.<sup>61</sup> Thus Sterne, the classicist,

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<sup>60</sup>Bromley, p. 284.

<sup>61</sup>Wright, p. 339.

rationalizes on religious principles the concept which Lawrence founded upon romantic and agnostic grounds--that man's primary earthly purpose is to enjoy the sensual pleasures that this world affords.

Sterne's sermons were very popular in their time, and are still admired as elegant compositions, but their theological content is slight, and there is little elaboration of Anglican dogma.<sup>62</sup> This had misled some to believe that Sterne, although sincere in his belief in Christian principles of morality, was repulsed by the hypocrisy and pomposity of organized religion to the point that he no longer believed in the literal teachings of his church. This is a gross overstatement. It may be true that he was not of the temperament to always enjoy the clerical life, and it may be added that he suffered some financial setbacks as a result of professional quarrels. But he was always faithful, if not enthusiastic, in his duties as a clergyman. And on the occasions in which he did speak on such controversial subjects as Catholicism, deism, and the Wesleyan movement, he was always unequivocally, and dogmatically Anglican in his approach.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Stedmond, p. 141.

<sup>63</sup>Laird, p. 91.

## V. EVALUATION

The purpose of the preceding chapter was to place the philosophies of Sterne and Lawrence in proper perspective. Although they did not agree in all areas, a basic consistency has been shown to exist in their beliefs.

Although this study has dealt with the philosophical aspects of their works, neither Sterne nor Lawrence was of a disposition that could sustain the complexities of purely abstract reasoning for a great period of time. This is evidenced by the success of their fictional work in comparison to their sermons and essays. Sterne has been described as a man whose intellect "was ludicrously weak in reasoning capacity, and in that poise of character that went with it."<sup>64</sup> Locke is considered the only philosopher whom he understood; all others were "charlatans who poured out words without meaning."<sup>65</sup> Both authors were suspicious of

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<sup>64</sup>  
Cross, pp. 518-519.

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Cross, p. 519.



great ideas and the men who expounded them. Neither formulated very original ideas; in both cases their ideas were primarily derivative from Locke. The primary contribution of Sterne and Lawrence is the fictional presentation of their philosophy which affords a working illustration of the principles that they adopted.

In the novels of Sterne, Parson Yorick is the dominating character. Although Walter Shancy may be the most amusing, Uncle Toby may carry the most sympathy, and Tristram may be awarded the title, it is to Yorick, an idealized self-portrait, that Sterne gives the thematic thrust. It is he who has the last word in Tristram Shandy, who delineates Sterne's philosophies in the Sermons, and who demonstrates the practicability of those philosophies in Sentimental Journey. In the latter role, he is analogous to Lawrence's Lady Chatterley. Both are presented as human beings with weaknesses and failings. Often they are guilty of offenses against the principles which they represent, but because they continue to meet life openly, they transcend these imperfections and attain the highest destiny of human nature.

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