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"A tolerable straight line" : non-linear narrative in Tristram Shandy

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“A TOLERABLE STRAIGHT LINE”: NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE IN TRISTRAM SHANDY

by

DANIEL LAMAR HOCUTT

Master of Arts in English

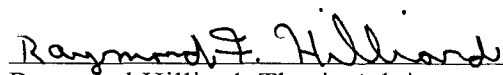
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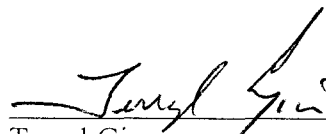
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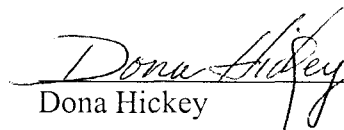
Raymond F. Hilliard, Ph.D., Thesis Director

The non-linear narrative of Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy demands attentive readers. Written under the influence of John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, the novel satirizes Lockean "associationism" and illustrates language's inability to express ideas accurately. In the novel, words seldom convey characters' intended meanings, yet Tristram uses language effectively to narrate "self" to his readers. Rather than having his mind's workings conform to the linear nature of traditional discourse, Tristram communicates associatively to intelligent, involved readers without imposing linearity. In this study I examine scholars' work to determine Tristram's position on Locke's ideas and use Seymour Chatman's narrative model to study the emerging narrative self by applying his concepts of FABULA (story) and SJUZET (discourse). I review Tristram's self-expression by focusing on techniques of non-linear narration and conclude by examining hypermedia as an alternative model for narrating consciousness that emphasizes the reader, comparing hypermedia's reader to Tristram Shandy's narrator.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


Raymond Hilliard, Thesis Advisor


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“A TOLERABLE STRAIGHT LINE”:
NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE IN TRISTRAM SHANDY

By

DANIEL L. HOCUTT

B.A., University of Richmond, 1992

A Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	
“...TRACING EVERY THING IN IT...AB OVO”	1
CHAPTER 1. LOCKE AND TRISTRAM	
“[T]HE GREAT LOCKE...WAS...BUBBLED HERE”	8
CHAPTER 2. TRISTRAM AND DISCOURSE	
“I HAVE BROUGHT MYSELF INTO SUCH A SITUATION...”	25
CHAPTER 3. NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE	
“THEY WILL BE WORSE TWISTED STILL”	39
CHAPTER 4. FROM <u>TRISTRAM SHANDY</u> TO HYPertext AND BACK	
“...IMMEDIATELY TURN BACK...”	57
CONCLUSION	
“WHAT IS THIS STORY ALL ABOUT?”	69
WORKS CITED	72

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: VOLUMES I – IV	4
FIGURE 2: VOLUME V	5
FIGURE 3: THE BLACK PAGE	51
FIGURE 4: THE MARBLED PAGE (OBVERSE)	52
FIGURE 5: THE MARBLED PAGE (REVERSE)	52
FIGURE 6: TRIM'S FLOURISH	53

INTRODUCTION

“...TRACING EVERY THING IN IT...AB OVO”

Locke would be proud. I begin this study by defining its simple and complex ideas. The title already indicates that the phrase “non-linear narrative” will dot the landscape regularly. Tristram Shandy the narrator, not to be confused with Tristram the character, will speak often in this study. I will refer to and sometimes quote Tristram, Toby Shandy, Walter Shandy, Trim, Widow Waldman, Mrs. Shandy, and Susannah as characters. John Locke’s concept of the “association of ideas,” or “associationism,” will make numerous appearances, as will such terms as “signifier,” “language,” and “words.” By beginning with definitions, I mimic Tristram’s narrative convention of commencing “ab Ovo” (as Tristram suggests he might – or might not). As I hope to prove in this study, Tristram is worthy of imitation.

That Laurence Sterne published Tristram Shandy between 1759 and 1769 is historical and biographical fact. In this study, however, I will seldom refer to the actual writer. Rather, I will refer specifically to the “implied author,” a term Seymour Chatman defines variously in Coming to Terms as “‘text implication’ or ‘text instance’ or ‘text design’ or even simply ‘text intent’...the text itself in its inventional aspect” (86). The implied author, “Laurence Sterne” (in quotations to differentiate from the actual person), invests the narrator with the narrative. In this case the narrator is Tristram Shandy, fictional character and agent of the implied author. Enough has been written about how closely Tristram Shandy reflects the life and opinions of the biographical Laurence Sterne; in this study I will limit my remarks to Tristram Shandy as he exists within the

text. When I compare the opinions of Tristram Shandy to the philosophy of John Locke, I consider Tristram as the novel's storyteller and primary philosopher (or philosophizer) who accepts some aspects of Locke's philosophy but rejects others. In comparing and contrasting the two philosophers—Shandy as fictional narrator and character, Locke as author of An Essay Concerning Human Understanding—I will refer to Tristram as implied author's agent, as creator and narrator of the novel's philosophical position.

Locke provides an entire lexicon of terms that need definition. He introduces the world to the concept of “simple ideas,” those ideas in the human mind that refer specifically to unique sensory perceptions of and reflections upon the external universe (II.2.119).¹ By “complex ideas” Locke means combinations of simple ideas, combinations of simple and complex ideas, or abstractions of ideas from their correlates in external reality (II.12.163). Locke designates words as external reflections of internal ideas, and he strives to maintain a “one-to-one,” or nearly “one-to-one,” relationship between word and idea. Specifically, Locke wants simple ideas to be directly signified by specific words, although he recognizes the arbitrary nature of the relationship between word and idea (III.2.405). He sees language in its most perfect form as a “utilitarian device for sending clear ideas and avoiding confusion” (Peters 391).² However, Locke recognizes that people misuse and abuse language and words, and that words themselves can be imperfect communicators of simple ideas (Book III Chapter 9 is entitled “Of the

¹ All references to Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding include book number, chapter number, and page number, and are taken from Peter Nidditch's 1975 edition.

² “That is, communication is pictured as consisting in the conveyance of thoughts from the mind of the speaker to the mind of the hearer. It is thus the task of language to make possible the conveyance of our private thoughts to others” (Taylor 103).

Imperfection of Words,” while Book III Chapter 10 is called “Of the Abuse of Words”). Locke uses the term “signifier” interchangeably with “word” to designate the representative quality of language.³

Tristram relies heavily upon Locke’s “association of ideas,” alternatively termed “associationism” by later critics, for many humorous moments in his narrative. Locke defines associationism in Book III of the *Essay*:

...[T]here is another Connexion of Ideas wholly owing to Chance or Custom; Ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in Mens [sic] Minds, that ’tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it; and if they are more than two that are thus united, the whole gang always inseparably shew themselves together (III.33.395).

Locke refers to this irrational association of ideas as “opposition to Reason” and therefore as madness: a solipsistic refusal or inability to view individual ideas logically and rationally. Although Locke appreciates the fact that most people demonstrate a tendency to associate ideas—“Men of fair Minds,” he writes, “are frequently guilty of it”—he suggests that anyone whose world-view is dominated by such associations lacks reason and is therefore mad (III.33.394).

Also lurking in the background of this study is Locke’s belief in the importance of memory and reflection. Locke considers the ability to reflect upon ideas successively as that which provides people a sense of time’s continuity and, therefore, a sense of

³ Note that Locke’s “signifier” and “simple idea” indicate the bipartite nature of Saussure’s “sign” with a unique and arbitrarily related “signifier” (sound image) and “signified” (concept; mental image) (Eagleton 84). Locke, however, uses “signifier” to represent both Saussurean “signifier” and “sign” simultaneously. He does not differentiate between linguistic entity and sound image. Locke’s “signifier” does not suggest the tripartite nature of Peirce’s “thought-sign”: sign to some thought, sign for some object, and sign in some respect or quality (Houser and Kloesel 38).

existence in the temporal world. He writes, “For whilst we are thinking, or whilst we receive successively several IDEAS in our Minds, we know that we do exist; and so we call the Existence, or the Continuation of the Existence of our selves [sic], or any thing else, Commensurate to the succession of any IDEA in our Minds, the DURATION of our selves, or any such other thing co-existing with our Thinking” (II.14.182). Tristram’s work is called The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (emphasis mine); the novel contains Tristram’s retrospective reflections on different times in his life and in the lives of other characters. Keeping in mind the influence Locke had on many authors of the mid- and late-eighteenth century, we may take Tristram’s remembered “life and opinions” as an attempt to relate his temporal existence to readers.

The term “non-linear narrative” appears frequently in this study. I focus on “non-linear” first. Perhaps the best start toward defining this term as it relates to Sterne’s narrative comes from Tristram Shandy itself. Tristram draws lines that are anything but straight to represent the narrative path he takes in Volumes I through V (VI.40.453).⁴

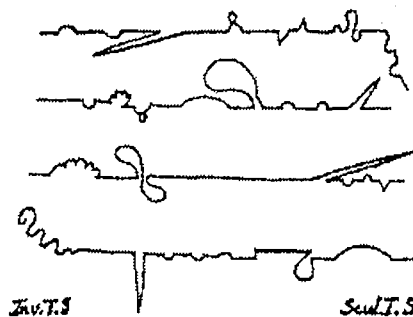


Figure 1: Volumes I – IV

⁴ All references to Tristram Shandy include volume number, chapter number, and page number, and are taken from Graham Petrie’s 1967 edition. All figures courtesy of Masuaru Uchida’s “Tristram Shandy Online.”

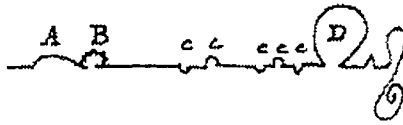


Figure 2: Volume V

I hesitate to call them “lines,” for these depictions are truly non-linear. By “non-linear” I refer to non-sequentially organized time, space, or plot that subverts or otherwise distorts anticipated order. The statement that “the shortest distance between two points is a straight line” may be true, but Tristram seldom takes that path. Instead we as readers face digressions on various subjects, incomplete story beginnings and endings, and even dropped topics. We may consider some of the jumps from subject to subject to be “illogical,” yet most have at least an elliptical logic of their own, typically referring to associated experiential memories recalled by the narrator. Deciding whether Tristram’s five “lines” represent his narrative logic well remains a task I leave to my readers, just as Tristram left the task to his readers.

For the definition of “narrative” I turn to Seymour Chatman. Although he is best known for Story and Discourse (1978), I prefer his definition of narrative in Coming to Terms (1990). Chatman writes that Narrative is “an invention, by an implied author, of events and characters and objects (the story) and of a modus (the discourse) by which these are communicated” (119).⁵ The unique quality of narrative is its existence within two different times and spaces, a double “chrono-logic.” Specifically, Chatman refers to “story time and space” and “discourse time and space” to differentiate the two chrono-

⁵ I capitalize “Narrative” because of the convention Chatman establishes in Coming to Terms: “I capitalize the word when I refer to the class of text-types and use lower case to stand for individual examples of these types” (7).

logics. To discourse time and space belongs the narrator, while to story time and space belong the characters, objects, and events. By “non-linear narrative” I mean a story told by a narrator in various semi-related discourse spaces and times which, in turn, create multiple and various story spaces and times for the characters, objects, and events of a narrative. The narrator of discourse time and space is Tristram Shandy, who also appears as a character in story time and space. Unless specifically indicated, “Tristram Shandy” refers to the narrator in discourse space and time, not to the character in story space and time.

I have organized this study as follows. In Chapter 1 I examine the relationship between Tristram the narrator’s philosophical stances and Locke’s ideas in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. After examining the work of scholars who have tackled the problem before me, I suggest that no single interpretation fully spells out the complex relationship between the two. Furthermore, although Tristram incorporates Locke’s ideas humorously, ironically, and with affection for the author and his “history-book...of what passes in a man’s own mind” (II.2.107), Locke’s influence on the novel does not provide an adequate means of accounting for Tristram’s use of non-linear narrative form. In Chapter 2 I examine Tristram in discourse time and space as he narrates the novel’s story time and space. Specifically, I apply Chatman’s model of Narrative to the novel and uncover the specific irony of Tristram’s narrative. The irony is that the implied author recognizes and agrees with Locke’s understanding of language as an imperfect way to communicate ideas between individuals, yet uses non-linear narrative—the sometimes dissonant, discordant, polyphonic, and always quirky language

of Tristram Shandy—to effectively communicate Tristram’s self, along with the “selves” of other characters. Remarkably, the non-linear pattern of Tristram’s narration, perfectly suitable for expressing the self and not directly related to Locke, nevertheless draws heavily upon associationism.

In Chapter 3 I continue to examine in detail the narrative characteristics of Tristram Shandy. I identify specific instances in which the non-linear mode of Tristram’s narrative opens the doors to the essence of his character. Some of these examples I will take from the world of story, others from the world of discourse. Finally, in Chapter 4, I apply Chatman’s narrative theory, along with the benefits of relating self in non-linear narrative, to current hypertext theory. As an alternative and non-linear mode of communication, hypertext (I deal primarily with hypermedia in the World Wide Web) and hypertext theory provide insight into Tristram Shandy’s structure and into the potential of non-linear narrative for future readers. I conclude by suggesting the requisite vigorous character of any reader of non-linear narrative, for only an audience “curious and inquisitive” (Sterne I.4.38) will find in non-linearity so accurate a reflection of character.

1. LOCKE AND TRISTRAM

“[T]HE GREAT LOCKE...WAS...BUBBLED HERE”

No study of Tristram Shandy can begin without addressing the novel’s relationship to Locke’s An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. The relationship is more complex than early critics acknowledged or later scholars have thought.⁶ Tristram writes frequently of Locke in the novel, but his many and varied references to the philosopher and to the Essay shed little light on the complex relationship between the two works. Of specific interest in this study are references to Locke that may influence or affect the form of Tristram’s non-linear narrative. The controlling question in this examination is, “How, if at all, did Tristram’s understanding and interpretation of Locke’s Essay contribute to the non-linear narrative style he uses in the novel?”

Before examining the critics who have explored this relationship, let us begin by looking at some of the more direct references Tristram makes to Locke or Lockean ideas. The most immediate and obvious relationship between Tristram and Locke emerges in Tristram’s interpretation of Locke’s “association of ideas.” We find the first reference to the specific term “association of ideas” in Volume I, Chapter 4:

⁶ I encourage future scholars to perform a thorough study of this incredibly complex and extensive relationship.

It [Tristram's conception] was attended with but one misfortune, which, in a great measure, fell upon myself, and the effects of which I fear I shall carry with me to my grave; namely, that from an **unhappy association of ideas** which have no connection in nature, it so fell out at length, that my poor mother could never hear the said clock wound up,---but the thoughts of some other things unavoidably popped into her head—& VICE VERSA: ---which strange combination of ideas the sage Locke, who certainly understood the nature of these things better than most men, affirms to have produced more wry actions than all other sources of prejudice whatsoever (39, emphasis mine).⁷

Tristram's woeful anecdote refers to his parents' conversation about winding the clock that occurred in the midst of sexual intercourse. This COITUS INTERRUPTUS, Tristram suggests, caused his animal spirits to become fatigued by their journey within the "Homunculus" and therefore caused some defect in his own physical and emotional make-up. Although Tristram makes no explicit claim as to the specific attributes of that defect, the quoted passage above implies that he himself has a tendency to make "unnatural" connections. This provides one explanation for the nature and origin of Tristram's non-linear narrative. He writes this narrative as he thinks; since his mind associates ideas unnaturally, his thoughts become related in non-linear (and non-rational) patterns.

Locke considered such associations of ideas as unhealthy, a fact that Tristram as agent of the implied author would have known.⁸ Locke writes in Book II of the dangers inherent in associating ideas, likening such mental activity to madness:

⁷ Throughout this study I use SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS in quotations to represent italicized text in the original.

⁸ I fear muddling the lines between actual author, implied author, and narrator as agent of implied author. In this instance, the actual author would have read Locke. So, however, would have an implied "Sterne," as few intelligent readers or authors in the middle to late eighteenth century would have neglected reading the *Essay*.

I shall be pardon'd for calling it so harsh a name as MADNESS, when it is considered, that opposition to Reason deserves that name, and it is really Madness; and there is scarce a man so free from it, but that if he should always on all occasions argue or do as in some cases he constantly does, would not be thought fitter for BEDLAM, than Civil Conversation (II.33.395).

More importantly for Tristram, Locke considers the madness of associating ideas as antithetical to reason, and the person who chronically associates ideas as fit for Bedlam. To adherents of Locke's theories on knowledge and thought, Tristram's non-linear narrative, if considered an expression of Locke's associationism, would be accused of reflecting a tendency toward madness. Yet this seems precisely the direction in which Tristram wishes to nudge his readers.

Other specific references to Locke or Lockean ideas appear throughout the novel. Tristram refers to Locke's Essay as a history book of the mind (II.2.107), a characterization that prompted early commentators to consider Tristram Shandy itself as a history book of Tristram's mind. Just one page later Tristram states that "'Twas not by ideas,—by heaven! his [Toby's] life was put in jeopardy by words" (11.2.108). This passage implies Locke's belief that ideas cannot be communicated because they are not adequately defined or understood. Yet Toby's siege of the Widow Wadman fails, not because ideas fail him, but because words fail. In the Author's Preface (deep into Volume III), Tristram invokes Locke, who said that judgment and wit were polar opposites—a view with which Tristram often disagrees, and about which in this passage he states, "So, says Locke [are wit and judgment polar opposites],—so are farting and hickuping, say I" (III.20.203). While numerous other direct and indirect references to

Locke and Lockean ideas occur in the text, these will suffice to indicate the extent of Locke's influence on the novel.

After uncovering several of the more direct references Tristram makes to Locke or Lockean ideas, we can see Tristram's use of Locke as ironic and critical, and this before examining what the critics have to say on the subject. To begin, Lodwick Hartley, in his book Laurence Sterne and the Twentieth Century, provides a useful summary of criticism that explores the complex relationship between the Essay and Tristram Shandy. Most mid-twentieth-century mainstream criticism focused on Tristram's narrative strategy as a reflection of Locke's associationism. As Hartley writes,

Sterne's own statement that he was writing not the usual kind of "history" found in antecedent and contemporary fiction but "a history-book of what passes in a man's own mind," together with his frequent allusions to Lockean psychology, has made the relationship of Locke and Sterne of persistent interest—though the earliest readers of the novelist, as Professor Howes has observed, curiously chose not to notice it. The statement of Cross that Tristram Shandy is "organized throughout on Locke's doctrine of the Association of Ideas" has long served as a standard assumption, supported by Professor Kenneth MacLean's important study of the Lockean influence on English literature in 1936⁹ and John Laird's conclusion in 1946¹⁰ that Shandean philosophy was "an elaborate application of Locke's methods," accurately applied and sometimes even improved upon. To the observation of Cross that Tristram Shandy was Locke's essay "in novelized form," MacLean had added that Locke had given Sterne "an entirely new principle of literary composition" (23-4).

More recent twentieth-century criticism has rejected such "monolithic" treatment of Locke, suggesting that Tristram's attitude toward the Essay may be more complex than previously indicated. Viewed in the light of Locke's associationism, Tristram's

⁹ MacLean's John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth Century, reissued 1962.

¹⁰ Laird's Philosophical Incursions into English Literature

digressions and seemingly random (read Locke's "irrational, illogical, mad") movements from topic to topic paint an unflattering portrait of Tristram and of his author, implied or real. To postulate that Tristram Shandy deliberately (and without irony) applies Locke's methods is to paint a portrait of Tristram as irrational and mad. To Locke, irrationality taken to an extreme (as we could certainly characterize Tristram's non-linear narrative) leads to solipsistic self-absorption, a condition which, when coupled with the arbitrary relationship of words to simple ideas, entails an inability to communicate beyond oneself. Yet Sterne's novel communicates to its readers successfully, in that Tristram manages to vivify and depict rich and sympathetic portraits of individuals who, despite their solipsistic hobby-horses, live contentedly in exterior worlds that only seldom understand them. In Locke's terminology, Tristram's use of non-linear narrative would render him solipsistic, mad, and unable to communicate using words.

Hartley further suggests in this chapter ("Tristram Shandy and the Critics") that to see Sterne as translating Locke's essay "in novelized form" is not the key to understanding Tristram's narrative (29). This opinion, voiced by many critics, has allowed modern scholars to suggest alternative readings of the relationship between the Essay and Tristram Shandy. Yet the apparent similarities between Lockean associationism or language theory and Tristram's narrative strategy sustain multiple and divergent readings and rereadings of the novel and of the Essay. In order to thoroughly defend a narrative theory that builds upon this affinity, these readings and rereadings require careful examination.

Although Hartley does not focus attention on the novel as a means for communicating self, Laird sees in Tristram Shandy an alternative form of communication at work. Although Laird clearly considers the novel a literary rendering of Locke's essay, he also focuses on common human sympathy as a means of communicating when language fails: "[Sterne] showed a sympathy that was warm, exquisite and frail. That, if anything, was his philosophy" (79). It is this ability to communicate what is in one's mind that differentiates Tristram's narrative philosophy from Locke's language philosophy, reflecting the complex or ambivalent attitude the novel demonstrates toward the essay. Tristram's implied "theory" of communication (revealed through non-linear narrative) departs from Locke's language theory and initiates the irony of this reading.

Locke's language theory was pessimistic at best, insisting that humans must work at precise meanings in order to communicate with one another. In Book III of the Essay, he argues that words are invented to signify ideas. He recognizes the arbitrary relationship of the word, or signifier, to the idea it represents or expresses. He also recognizes the highly individualized nature of language (a system of words), for words express ideas that occur and exist in an individual's mind. Locke acknowledges the difficulty of expressing precisely that which exists in the mind of a speaker, and he recognizes the "imperfection" of words in two areas: "recording our own Thoughts ... [and] communicating...our Thoughts to others" (III.9.476). Specifically, Locke identifies the conditions in which language fails to communicate. "The chief End of Language in Communication being to be understood, Words serve not well for that end, neither in civil, nor in philosophical Discourse, when any Word does not excite in the

Hearer, the same Idea which it stands for in the Mind of the Speaker” (III.9.476-7). An idea, according to Locke, should mean the same, or nearly the same, to all communicators and listeners. For this to occur, he suggests that precise definitions of ideas be shared using the simplest of ideas expressed by the most exact linguistic representation possible (Book III, Chapter 11). Of course, representation entails communication problems, but he considers the nature of the idea to be the root of this communication problem and suggests that the solution may be found in exactly defining and representing ideas between communicators. For Locke, obstacles to this elusive “one-to-one” correspondence between word and idea include using wit (e.g., punning, intending a word to mean more than one thing), allowing poorly conceived simple ideas to inhabit one’s thoughts, and associating ideas whereby ideas and their signifiers can be related without any natural (read “logical”) connection. Tristram’s non-linear narrative often hinges on such humorous DOUBLES ENTENDRES (“noses” and “whiskers” immediately come to mind) and follows associated words wherever they take him, even into Phutatorius’s chestnut-heated codpiece.

The connection between Lockean associationism and language theory provided later twentieth-century critics with new ammunition in determining the novel’s relationship to the *Essay*.¹¹ Laird’s focus on the novel’s “philosophy of sympathy” provided critics a foothold into the novel’s sentimentalism, particularly as practiced by Uncle Toby and Trim. Helene Moglen, in “Laurence Sterne and the Contemporary

¹¹ The precise connection is this: language exists to signify ideas. If a word is used to signify more than one idea, or an idea can be signified by multiple words, then language fails in its communicative function. Associating ideas means associating words, which also renders communication through language hopeless.

Vision,” suggests that the novel presents sentimentalism and sympathy (an emphasis on emotion) in order to illustrate shortcomings in Locke’s Essay. According to Moglen, Locke skirted the problem of subjectivity in gaining access to external reality by suggesting that simple ideas enter our minds from nature “in a natural way” produced “by the Wisdom and Will of our Maker” (60). She argues that Sterne accepted Locke’s paradox of a radical, relativist empiricism countered by divine inspiration. According to Moglen, Sterne embraced epistemological subjectivism and created the Shandys, who “all live in private worlds of their own eccentric perceptual creation” (60). As an example, she asserts that Tristram accepts Locke’s need to define words in order to demonstrate the confusion that “can result from one’s use of the most straightforward names” (61) such as noses, whiskers, placket-holes, spigots, bridges, and trenches. Even the strictest reliance on Locke’s requirements for using words as signifiers fails to enable meaningful communication.

After reviewing language’s failure to communicate even the simplest ideas, Moglen postulates that a “theory of empathy” makes possible meaningful and ethical human relationships and communication that transcend the limits of language (67). She concludes that Tristram Shandy fits in with contemporary “modern” works because of its sense of relativity, and its acceptance of absurdity, of the futility of human reason, of the inadequacies of language, and of the hopelessness of aspiration (73). Moglen’s ideas address the characters’ ability to communicate empathetically with one another within story time and space, but not Tristram’s ability to convey their developing communicative abilities to us as readers from his narrative world of discourse. Although

she addresses the novel's position in relation to Locke's Essay, she makes no specific effort to explain Tristram's ability, despite the obvious limitations of language, to communicate so successfully in words these characters to us as readers.

Arthur Cash, in "The Lockean Psychology of Tristram Shandy," follows another track altogether. He argues that Tristram Shandy is not based on Lockean associationism, but on Lockean empiricism, the need to experience in order to obtain knowledge. Cash believes that the novel relies on "a modern interpretation of the novel as an organic structure emanating from the mind of the narrator, Tristram" and uses Lockean associationism for strictly comic effect (125). Indeed, many of the novel's incidents provide the reader an opportunity to laugh at the author, at the narrator, at the characters, at other readers, and even at the conventions of writing novels. Cash calls Tristram Shandy "the first stream of consciousness novel," referring to the stream of Tristram's consciousness narrated throughout the novel. Rather than Lockean associationism, Cash relies on primitive Lockean psychology "fundamental to his epistemology" to explain the structure of the novel (126). The Lockean psychology to which Cash refers concerns Locke's conception of knowledge as ascertained empirically. He refers to a "psychology of the train of ideas," a roughly associational notion of the "constant flux of ideas which cannot be arrested" (131). Cash suggests that Sterne structured the novel upon this train of ideas in which one idea leads to another in a process of suggestion and similarity. It is this narrative method that Tristram himself calls "digressive." Cash concludes his 1955 article with the following statement:

Although Locke's associationism served Sterne well as a subsidiary comic device, it is not the organizing principle of Tristram Shandy. Rather, the organic stream of consciousness narrative was engendered in the atmosphere of Locke's empiricism; and the psychology of the train of ideas which accompanies that empiricism accounts for the mind of Tristram and the "digressive method" (135).

By eliminating Lockean association of ideas as a structural influence on the novel, Cash probably propelled criticism of the novel further into the current age. Cash addresses the "digressive method" of narrative as an essentially associational process based on Locke's understanding of the workings of the mind. He makes no attempt to explain why Tristram chooses the "digressive" method—he simply explains how Sterne must, in Cash's view, have conceived of his narrative strategy. That Cash became very influential in further examination of the relationship between the novel and the Essay is no exaggeration, but his argument leaves unrevealed the exact nature of Locke's influence on Tristram's choice of narrative strategy.

In many ways Howard Anderson builds upon Cash's ideas. Limiting his argument to Tristram Shandy's use of associationism and wit (a combination of Locke's theories concerning ideas and language), Anderson proposes that Tristram uses an alternative (and still non-rational) associationism to narrate the novel. Anderson argues that Tristram relies heavily on Lockean associationism for humor in the novel, painting ridiculous portraits of characters who border on a kind of Lockean madness. "Toby and Walter, still more the learned lawyers and theologians, embody something very close to the isolated madness [inherent in associational thinking] which appalls Locke" (34). The associationism through which Tristram narrates the novel, however, is one which we as readers recognize as non-rational yet somehow manage to understand. Lockean

associationism leads to unintelligible madness; Shandean associationism (read “non-linear narration”) provides insight into characters’ minds. So the association of clock and sex which Tristram ruefully describes in narrating his conception provides a humorous jab at Locke, while the non-linear associational irrationality of Tristram’s overall narrative strategy allows a deeper revelation of self and character. Although these points certainly come closer to explaining the relationship of Tristram’s non-linear narrative to Locke’s essay, they rely on a much older pattern of association (similarity of experiences in different times and contexts): “[Tristram] takes pains to lead us to recognize the common characteristics of experiences diverse in time and in content, common characteristics which lead to their association in a man’s mind” (29). This association by similarity provides an adequate model for the novel, but does not explain why Tristram chooses to highlight non-linear associated similarities over a more linear narrative approach. Whether we use Locke’s or Anderson’s associational pattern to describe Tristram’s narrative approach, we still do not know why he would choose non-linear narrative over linear discourse. And we still end up asking this question: How does Tristram overcome the inadequacy of language as explained by Locke and make his associations understandable?

Chinmoy Banerjee, in “Tristram Shandy and the Association of Ideas,” rejects the belief that studying Locke will explain “the creative associations of Tristram in terms of which the book is organized [or] the spontaneous associations of Walter, Toby, and Susannah, which provide the basis of humorous characterization” (698). He proposes that associationist psychology of Sterne’s day, rather than Lockean associationism, be

used to explain Tristram's narrative strategy. That he ignores Locke's influence on the novel suggests the significance of Banerjee's departure from the ideas of Cross, Laird, and MacLean. So far does he depart from more traditional Lockean readings of the novel that he states, "Tristram would be a Lockean man, but he is, with his own regrets, a Humean Shandy" (701). After making this departure, Banerjee uses Alexander Gerard's Essay on Genius (written several years after Sterne's death), a "handbook of associational aesthetics," as a commentary on Sterne. Leaving aside for a moment Banerjee's choice to ignore Tristram's several direct references to Locke, his concept of a psychology of associationism suggests a need to determine the precise nature of Tristram's non-linear narrative and to explain why he chose such a strategy. While contributing little to the question of how Tristram relates to Locke, Banerjee's quest for reasons behind Tristram's narrative choice provides a noteworthy departure from previous critics' work.

Further investigation of the relationship between Tristram's non-linear narrative and Locke's essay lead us inevitably to examine the work of Ernest Tuveson in "Locke and Sterne." In this essay Tuveson provides a rereading of Locke's Essay that attempts to determine the precise nature of the relationship between it and Tristram Shandy. First, Tuveson suggests that Locke's Essay contains "loose ends and ambiguities" which probably appealed to the author's awareness of the loose ends of human nature (87). He argues further that the novel embodies Lockean associationism precisely as Locke defined it, not as a psychological system of modern theory (as proposed and indicated by Cash, Anderson, and Banerjee). He suggests that Locke's associationism should not be

used as a model for the structure of the novel; rather, moving closer to the idea that Tristram narrates a “stream of consciousness” narrative, Tuveson advocates seeing Tristram Shandy as a “natural” way of understanding one’s personality—by writing in the “course of human experience” (104). Tuveson concludes by suggesting that Locke’s real influence on the novel is that his radical empiricism cleared the way for alternative conceptions of self and reality. The specific feature of Tuveson’s reading that proves problematic is his insistence upon Tristram’s writing in the “course of human experience.” Although Tristram reports on his own human experiences and those of others, he is unable to write in the course of human experience as a present-tense, current phenomenon.¹² His non-linear narrative is retrospective, not “current,” as Tuveson implies. On the other hand, Tuveson acknowledges Locke as a less direct influence on the novel and opens the door to a more modern understanding of the influence Locke’s Essay had on the novel.

Peter Briggs, in “Locke’s Essay and Tristram Shandy,” postulates that Tristram uses Locke’s ideas in creative ways, but that Locke’s essay exerts no direct influence on Tristram Shandy’s author. He argues for a narrative independence that does not rely on philosophical models. Writing of both Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey, Briggs explains what he calls “Shandean freedom”:

¹² Note the desire to consider Tristram Shandy a “stream of consciousness” novel – Tuveson simply uses a different phrase with the same meaning.

Shandean freedom is of a wholly different sort. While Sterne did not denounce rational consideration of circumstance unconditionally, he consistently satirized particular attempts to encompass circumstances by reasonable means.... Perhaps man might be better served by consenting to unreason and inconsistency. Sterne in effect used his fictions to propose alternative kinds of “understanding,” ones which work by intuition, sentiment, celebration, facetiousness and whimsy, fantasy, and a wry celebration of incongruity (504).

Briggs admits that evidence of the Essay's influence can be found in hundreds of instances throughout the novel. Yet he concludes that Tristram's guiding purpose in narrating the novel is to “step willfully aside from some very traditional notions of literary coherence,” to offer no conclusions but “coherent ‘options’ for interpretation” (518). This appeal to subjectivity is, indeed, appealing, yet lacks a critical eye toward understanding the very root of Tristram's narrative strategy.

Let us consider two further opinions before I close this chapter with my own conclusions. Duke Maskell, in a forward-thinking article (“Locke and Sterne, or Can Philosophy Influence Literature?”), ultimately denies Locke's ability to influence the author of Tristram Shandy. Although Maskell's view is controversial, he submits that philosophy can and does express itself in philosophical discourse, and that it does not need literature as a means of expressing its ideas. He finds the tendency to discuss “the presence of philosophic ideas in literature” insensitive to literature and philosophy alike. Although he ignores the question of how philosophical associationism entered into Sterne's novel in the first place, Maskell makes a compelling argument that Locke's influence in the novel is as a “like” mode of literary discourse. He concludes his essay emphatically:

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That Locke did influence Sterne there can be no doubt, but this influence wasn't philosophical. He influenced Sterne because he himself wrote good vigorous prose and because the Essay and Tristram Shandy have roots in common forms of expression. He influenced him as Rabelais, Cervantes, Burton, Montaigne, Erasmus, Bacon, Swift did, as one writer, of whatever kind, does influence another when they draw from a common fund of forms, conventions, styles. Locke's influence on Sterne is not philosophical, but rhetorical (39).

I disagree with Maskell's conclusion. Locke's Essay provided Tristram (as agent of the implied author) with considerable material. Much of the novel's satire relies upon readers recognizing Tristram's technique as an imitation of Locke's rhetorical style. Yet Locke's philosophy also provided Tristram with humorous material. Locke's associationism, for example, drives the communication failures experienced by nearly all of the characters at some point in the novel. This influence is not rhetorical, but philosophical. Although I disagree with Maskell, I cannot help applauding his effort to rattle common conceptions of Locke's influence on the novel.

Finally, I conclude with a single quotation from a critic who, while skirting the main issue, has summed up this entire chapter. W. G. Day writes in a short note, "With few exceptions, when borrowings are made from Locke there is an effective alteration or addition made to the original wording. The effect is not a constant one; Sterne's attitude toward Locke's writing appears to have been equivocal" (76).

I presented this critical tracing of twentieth-century interpretations of the influence Locke's Essay had on Sterne's novel to demonstrate the often inconsistent and inadequate treatment of the question. Critics have attempted to explain the nature of Tristram's unique narrative strategy by relating his non-linear tendencies to associationism of some kind. Earlier in this century critics tried to portray Tristram as a

mimicker of Locke. Later critics drew upon different associational models, different readings of Locke, and variations of the two to determine the precise nature of Tristram's non-linear narrative. I believe that all have failed to some extent, for they do not directly address the single-most significant question—not what strategy Tristram chose, but why he chose a particular non-linear strategy.

Yet before I pass judgment on all such studies of the relationship between Locke's Essay and Tristram Shandy, let me summarize a few who have come close to suggesting why Tristram chose to narrate in a non-linear form. Tuveson and Cash, who postulate that Tristram Shandy is the first "stream of consciousness" narrative,¹³ provide a partial answer—Tristram narrates the novel as he does because that is the way people express themselves. The novel is a realistic portrayal of "how men use words," according to Michael Rosenblum: "The mysterious 'reality' of Walter and Toby is bound up with Sterne's representation of their speech...the full range of oral and written messages which Walter and Toby send and receive" (488). The linguistic model Tristram uses to express the mind is based on associations, which lead the narrative through a continuous, albeit twisting and turning, train of thoughts. Of course, the limitation inherent in this conception of Tristram's narrative as "stream of consciousness" is that it ignores Tristram's position in time and space while writing the novel. Stream of consciousness requires a consciousness to narrate itself in the process of experiencing life, while Tristram's narrative expresses his character in a retrospective stance. Yet these critics do

¹³ See pages 16 and 20 (above, respectively) for Cash and Tuveson's words.

provide insight into Tristram's reason for choosing a non-linear method—to express consciousness.

That Tristram uses some kind of associational strategy to construct his narrative seems a given, although the specific proof of that will appear in Chapter 2. That Locke influenced the novel's author also seems a given, considering Tristram's numerous references to Locke throughout the narrative. But any attempt to use Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding as a point of departure for determining *why* Tristram chose his particular non-linear structure will fail. The answer to this chapter's controlling question, "How, if at all, did Tristram's understanding and interpretation of Locke's Essay contribute to the non-linear narrative style he uses in this novel?" is a resounding, "It did not – at least, not directly." The extent to which Locke contributed to the narrative style lies in examining Tristram himself, not in studying the Essay's relationship to the novel's ideas.

2. TRISTRAM AND DISCOURSE

“I HAVE BROUGHT MYSELF INTO SUCH A SITUATION...”

Why does Tristram Shandy choose to narrate the novel in non-linear form? The key to the non-linear narrative is in his emerging persona as narrator. Tristram’s narrative style is associational, but not in Locke’s sense, not in Anderson’s sense, nor in any other sense encountered up to this point. The story told is the narrator’s lived experience as he remembers it. It is non-linear because the narrator’s acute self-knowledge or self-awareness in the world of discourse triggers relational (associational, not logical or linear) memories which he recounts in the world of story. Story time and space are essentially linear, but discourse time and space are radically altered by Tristram’s associational memories. Tristram the narrator presents lived life as he recalls it. Associational memories control the pattern of the narrative, not words or ideas “unnaturally” or irrationally connected.

To continue I must clarify the diachronic nature of this novel. Victor Erlich credits Russian formalists with differentiating between “FABULA” and “SJUZET”¹⁴ to elucidate the two “chrono-logics” of narrative (240). Chatman interprets these terms as “story” and “discourse.” In essence, FABULA (story) represents a narrative’s internal move through time, the sequence of events that constitute the plot, the narrated events. In the case of Tristram Shandy, the story is that of the characters, Toby, Tristram, Walter, Mrs. Shandy, Susannah, Trim, Dr. Slop, Yorick, and others who act in a time that has

¹⁴ I have seen this term spelled at least three ways: SJUCHET, SJUZET, and SYUCHET. I have chosen Spacks’s spelling as the shortest of the three.

passed. SJUZET (discourse) represents an external move through time, the duration of the novel's sequences, the story as distorted or otherwise affected by the process of telling (Chatman 1991, 9, Thomas 44). In the case of Tristram Shandy, the discourse is that of Tristram, narrator, reviewing and reliving the associational past in some remote location in France or England and writing his experiences as his life and opinions. Note that Tristram Shandy as character and Tristram Shandy as narrator are two different individuals. As we discuss the nature of and rationale behind Tristram's non-linear narrative, it is in the discourse (SJUZET) that we are centrally interested. Chatman refers to "story time and space" and "discourse time and space," or "story world" and "discourse world." I will use his terminology when referring to one or the other.

In order for discourse time and space to exist, Tristram Shandy as narrator must emerge as a round, full character whose life and opinions we follow. According to Patricia Meyer Spacks, the narrative form of Tristram Shandy simultaneously demonstrates what narrative can and cannot do: "It shows how language creates the meaning Tristram denies it, how story declares identity, though the teller barely believes in his own continuing existence. It shows the inevitability and the power of form" (128). Herein lies the irony or complexity of the novel's relationship to Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. On one hand, the novel includes story time and space, in which doctrines from Locke's Essay are reflected, and discourse time and space, in which Locke's ideas are held up for critical scrutiny. On the other hand, in discourse space Tristram Shandy uses the very devices to express himself that Locke views as causing communication failures—puns, random associated memories, and non-

linear (and therefore unnatural and irrational) narrative. In story time and space, Mrs. Shandy betrays Lockean madness when she associates the sound of the winding of the clock with sexual relations. Toby Shandy and his sidekick Trim believe that words are too broadly defined and therefore determine to represent their ideas with concrete, miniature models. Walter Shandy has studied Locke extensively, yet practices precisely what Locke condemns, the operations of formal logic in the place of experiential empiricism, “usually unnecessary and often misleading” (Tuveson 104). When Obadiah informs the kitchen of Bobby’s death, Susannah’s inability to envision anything but her mistress’s green satin nightgown demonstrates the initial onset of Locke’s associationism. Words fail to communicate ideas from individual to individual because there is more than one meaning attached to each: thus, for example, Toby and Trim envision a drawbridge while Walter and Dr. Slop speak of a nose bridge, and Phutatorius’s “Zounds” represents both his curse of pain and his negative feelings toward Yorick. Yet in discourse time and space, associated memories which lead the narrative through seemingly unrelated countries, events, circumstances, and stories paint for the reader a round and accurate portrait of Tristram Shandy the narrator.

It is this world of discourse—the world of associated memories, blank, black, and marbled pages, arabesques and squiggly narrative lines, and harangued readers—that I wish to examine in detail. For only when the world of discourse has been plumbed can we answer the question, “Why did Tristram choose to recount his life and opinions as non-linear narrative?” To answer this question, I turn to study the life of Tristram Shandy, narrator and character, as portrayed in Sterne’s novel.

According to Spacks, Tristram's existence in discourse time and space "imitates the action of impotence" (134). Fear of impotence, physically (for Tristram as character) and creatively (for Tristram as narrator and character), drives Tristram to write. An urgent need to become characterizes the narrative. Tristram's discursive tale, particularly Volume VII, represents his flight from ultimate obliteration before establishing a legacy. After all, Tristram narrates this novel (which he hopes will become a "classic") to explain his origins to generations of readers. Story time and space, in which he tells of his father's and uncle's difficulties with sex and procreation, highlight Tristram's anxiety about impotence and death, but discourse time and space illustrate the urgency of the problem—we readers are led all over France for an entire volume as a means of escaping death. While the flight itself follows a relatively linear path, its existence in the context of other volumes makes it one of the most prolonged digressions of the novel. Most of Volume VII occurs in discourse time and space, with brief references to story time and space and to Tristram's "current" unusual condition—he is physically present in three places at one time.

Spacks also asserts that Tristram as narrator unveils the inaccuracy of the direct and the necessity and value of the indirect, what she terms "the beautiful oblique." Tristram's non-linear narrative pattern is simply a series of indirect and often incomplete explanations of events. "The problems of writing history...duplicate those of life," observes Spacks: as life provides incomplete, inaccurate, indirect, and often frustratingly illogical meanings, so Tristram's written history weaves a non-linear, non-rational web of stories, persons, and places (Spacks 149). This tendency toward indirect narration

mirrors life more faithfully than a direct or chronological history, and expresses the character of Tristram in the discourse. Claiming to imitate life, Tristram insists that life offers no patterns to imitate (157).

Reflecting its Lockean roots in empiricism, the late eighteenth century might be considered an “age of experience” (Bogel 56). Tristram’s sense of substantiality, of his very existence as a narrator, depends on his ability to relate lived experience—not only his own, but the lived experiences of others—to his readers. As a corollary of its emphasis on experience, the late eighteenth century also manifested an “almost unparalleled concern with the everyday workings of the mind, of a self-scrutiny so intense as frequently to issue in an effort of self-creation, and of a narrative stance that in Boswell, in Rousseau, and in Sterne’s Tristram considered nothing autobiographical alien to it” (48).¹⁵ Bogel suggests that a perception of insubstantiality caused authors like Johnson and Sterne to engage in a quest for substantiality—Johnson defined it as “The state of real existence”—through experience (45). Tristram unquestionably senses his own insubstantiality. Writing his life and opinions in such vivid detail, working so hard to avoid death in order to continue writing, expressing deep concern about sexual impotence (see Spacks above), Tristram betrays a profound sense of insubstantiality. By reviewing and relating his lived experience, however, he creates a substantial experiential self which he shares with his readers. This lived experience, Zimmerman cautions us, is not “recovered presence,” but recalled (and sometimes reported) experience. Tristram’s

¹⁵ Referring more to Sterne’s *Sermons* than to *Tristram Shandy*, Marco Loverso writes, “Sterne places a great deal of emphasis on the individual’s duty to examine himself and to be aware of his own inner motivations” (139). Tristram’s narrated self-examination, and his examination of others, seem integral to the narrative method he chooses.

narrative, his “history-book of the human mind,” sometimes demonstrates his pessimistic opinion of the prospect of recovering presence through verbal or alternative forms of representation. Tristram’s narrative, if it has a “moral,” suggests that “the [attempted] process of representation [through recovered presence] takes on a life of its own, alienated from what it is intended to convey” (Zimmerman 117). Rather than representing recovered presence, Tristram’s non-linear narrative expresses experience in order to create and communicate a substantial experiential self.

Tristram’s presentation of his character sometimes takes precedence over the novel’s sequence of events. In light of that fact, Tristram Shandy has been called an anti-book by Gerald Weales (“Tristram Shandy’s Anti-Book”). The basis of Weales’s argument is that traditional sequential plot, a primary ingredient of most novels, is secondary in Sterne’s text to plumbing the depth of this narrator’s character. Each “irrelevance” (non-linear plunge into remembered experience) is relevant, not to the novel’s plot, but to the narrator-hero (47). But the novel has a plot, albeit one that is frequently interrupted and sometimes misplaced. Peter Brooks, contending that “plot” is a necessary ingredient of narrative, defines it as the principle of interconnectedness and intention within a text. Tristram’s non-linear narrative demonstrates an associational “logic of narrative discourse” which becomes “the organizing dynamic of a specific mode of human understanding” (5, 7). The sequence of Tristram Shandy is irrevocably tied to the character of narrator Tristram, for he controls the narrative. Discourse actuates story; Tristram in discourse vivifies all characters in story time and space. The novel’s sequence combines discourse and story, while Tristram’s narrative actuates the sequence

of story time and space. Brooks suggests that “narrative stories depend on meanings delayed, partially filled-in, stretched out” (21). Each irrelevance to which Weales refers acts to further the novel’s plot, or what Brooks refers to as the “plotting”: we as readers trying to determine meanings and shape constructed over and through time (35). A plot’s shape and meaning “are the product of the listening as of the telling” (236). Through Brooks’s account of plot’s function we can see all parts of Sterne’s plot working in concert: the narrator, the non-linear narrative structure, and the reader working out meaning and shape.

Wayne Booth also indicates that Tristram’s success in expressing his narrator self comes partially from his relationship with his readers. To Booth, it is the reader’s friendship with and knowledge of the narrator that makes Tristram’s self-presentation so successful (237). Tristram’s character in story time and space is pitiful and hard-pressed on all sides at all times. But his narrator self in discourse time and space is accessible, vulnerable, friendly, cajoling, and altogether a pleasant character with whom to spend one’s reading time. Booth ultimately finds Tristram’s honest attempt to render his inner reality doomed to failure. He suggests, however, that though the complex truth is beyond our grasp, we as readers appreciate the effort as a noble one (232). Booth recognizes the fully “round” character of Tristram, but fails to consider that it is Tristram’s persona as narrator which he reveals to the reader, not simply his self as character in the novel. This distinction between story Tristram and discourse Tristram is vital: we are handed an incomplete portrait of Tristram the character, but we are provided a complete and successfully-communicated narrator through his non-linear narrative style.

The calculated effect of Tristram's narrative on the reader is an important component of his narrative method, one which Booth and others have rightly recognized. Betty Rizzo suggests that Tristram insists on readers leaving behind their expectation of simple linear chronological narrative—he takes the reader where his whims lead. The relationship between reader and narrator is more complex than this, however, in part because of Tristram's frequent references to male and female readers—"Sir" and "Madam"—within the text. Alan McKillop likens Tristram's narrative technique to a game in which he invites readers (readers within the text and readers outside the text alike) to participate, rather than to re-create and follow some rational plan which the reader expects from the plot of a novel (191).¹⁶ Part of this game involves language, which in the story world of the novel interposes itself between persons and thwarts meaningful communication (206). Leland Warren, recalling Tristram's comparison of writing to a conversation, calls the narrative game "a conversation about the failure of conversation" with the reader (63). In this game, Tristram uses a non-linear associational thought process as a means of pulling the general out of the particular, of creating an external world from his internal experience. Like Locke, Tristram views the world in terms of experience, which epitomizes reality. Unlike Locke, however, Tristram utilizes the association of lived external experience—memories—as the means by which to express his internal world (McKillop 196).

¹⁶ In one sense this seems little more than a convenient way of avoiding the question of Tristram's quasi-rational narrative strategy. Yet the idea of a reader-participation game provides an excellent metaphor for Tristram's style. Spacks refers to this game as "play" in which Tristram declares his power, under his control temporarily, to master that which humans cannot master—death (146).

The readers' reactions to the text—at least, the reactions of “Sir” and “Madam”—influence Tristram's narrative method. Elizabeth Harries suggests that Tristram designs the novel's fragments and digressions so as to elicit a mixed response from the reader, playing on the reader's sympathy by forcing a continual oscillation between the comic and the pathetic (259). She postulates an aesthetic of the unfinished (“non-finito”) which leads to an aesthetic of participation. The reader, caught in the flux between comedy and pathos, readily sympathizing with the very human characters, must actively engage the text in order to follow its twists and turns. Such active participation in the text, and the sympathy that active involvement generates, draws the reader closer to understanding Tristram's characters and their foibles. This explains Tristram's fondness for digression and incompleteness (260). It also helps explain Tristram's use of blank pages, empty chapters, and black and marbled pages. That words do not communicate as well as we would like Tristram readily admits, but he successfully uses words to communicate his own character and the characters of others for over six hundred pages. The use of non-verbal communication frequently encourages the reader to complete the thought, the picture, the chapter. As stated earlier, the reader is invited to play an intrinsic part in this narrative, and keeping the reader actively conversing with the narrator takes manifold creative efforts.

The question of Tristram's freedom as a narrator has sparked sporadic critical debate. In the novel's story time and space, Tristram the character is free to make no decisions. From his earliest conception, and even before that, his fate is sealed. Only in discourse time and space as narrator does Tristram have an opportunity to exercise

freedom. Harries suggests that the random chapters and eccentric divisions counter readers' rigid literary expectations while celebrating the artistic value of chance and the natural, revealing a narrator free to create at will (261). Spacks opines that Tristram's imagination allows him to dominate the uncontrollable facts that cannot be controlled in real life (134). Frank Kermode, in The Sense of an Ending, suggests that the creation of fictions, the use of one's imaginative powers—in this case, at the hand of the implied author and his narrative agent—"is a function of man's inescapable freedom" (135). Kermode refers to the history of the novel as "the history of forms rejected and modified" (129). Tristram's freedom to choose his own narrative methods demonstrates both his emerging identity as a character and the significance of choosing non-linear form as narrative strategy. Given the freedom to choose any mode, Tristram chooses non-linear narrative.

Earl Wasserman's book The Subtler Language elaborates on Tristram's decision to narrate non-linearly. As Bogel suggests, Tristram's perceived insubstantiality leads him to represent experiential reality in order to gain a feeling of substantiality. Tristram chooses to relate his life and opinions—experiential reality—through associational narrative. Wasserman suggests a reason for Tristram's having chosen an associational rather than logical or rational pattern of narration. The eighteenth century witnessed the complete and utter "disintegration of cosmic orders" that had characterized the Middle Ages and Renaissance. This disintegration prompted everyone to ride his or her own hobby-horse, as it were. In the written arts, particularly in poetry and the newly emerging novel, the disintegration expressed itself in a struggle for meaningful form. A symptom

of this literary collapse of form, according to Wasserman, was people's perception of words' failure to perform their duty. Tristram Shandy illustrates this struggle for meaningful form in Tristram's erratic, formless lines in Volume VI tracking the novel's course (169-70). To succeed in this struggle, Tristram provides the novel its own structural system of order, calling upon associationism (though not necessarily Lockean) as an organizing myth (Wasserman 173). Associational systems of order, abstracted from patterns of normal discourse and based on Lockean experiential empiricism, provided the eighteenth century's "greatest sense of meaningful order." But it was a fragmented and frequently interrupted order related to individual experience, a reality akin to discursive, rambling language (184). Wasserman concludes with a statement about poetry after Tristram Shandy that certainly applies to the novel as well:

No longer can a poem be conceived of as a reflection or imitation of an autonomous order outside of itself. The creation of a poem is also the creation of the cosmic wholeness that gives meaning to the poem, and each poet must independently make his own world-picture, his own language within language (186).

Tristram chooses discursive language—non-linear narrative—as a linguistic and narratological pattern that matches his experiential associationism. Non-linear narrative becomes Tristram-narrator's "language within language" in discourse time and space.

Tristram's narrative strategy emerges from several tensions. These different tensions that engender the narrative's non-linear form may be symptoms of a greater tension at work within late eighteenth-century literature, particularly in Tristram Shandy. The emerging Romantic movement, according to Marshall Brown, displays itself in late eighteenth-century preromantic authors such as Sterne in their "unfulfilled ambitions."

Because the Romantic movement eludes definition, Brown chooses to define “preromanticism” not in terms of the Romantic movement itself, but as a period of flux in which ambitions remained unfulfilled (7). In Tristram Shandy’s case, and in Laurence Sterne’s case, the concept of unfulfilled ambition emerges frequently in fleeing death or in worrying over the temporal disparity between lived life and narrated life. The “flux,” the indefinite character, of this period creates an overwhelming tension for Sterne and for his narrator, Tristram. This general tension reveals itself in narrative, perhaps engendering several more specific tensions.

As a retrospective first-person narrator in discourse time and space, Tristram knows his past and present but does not know how they will affect his future (Cohn 145). He hopes the novel (and therefore his narrated and narrator character) will become as widely-read as Pilgrim’s Progress even as he sardonically dreads that it will become a “book for a parlour-window” (I.4.38). This tension between known and unknown suggests a deliberate selection of what will and will not appear in the novel. Since the novel appeared in almost annual installments over a period of nearly ten years, each published volume represented a hope that the narrative would be a beneficial and successful tribute to future volumes and to Tristram’s continued development. For Tristram, who follows an associational pattern in presenting his retrospective, the intense struggle to include only material which would have a favorable impact on the narrator’s future means a non-linear narrative with multiple interruptions, plot direction-changes, and fragments. It also means, according to Brown, that Sterne works to “overturn” story in this narrative. So that the novel will be widely read (perhaps as a kind of narrative

“freak-show”), Sterne deliberately breaks the boundaries and rules of traditional storytelling (294-5). Tristram acts as Sterne’s agent in overturning the story, unable to predict the future but hoping to accomplish a radical departure from “the norm.”

A second narrative tension at work is that between the goal of Narrative and the realistic accomplishment of this particular narrative. A first-person autobiographical narrator such as Tristram attempts to narrate experience with the immediacy of living it, without any retrospective stance. Yet the reality of his attempt is a retrospective narrative slant on his experiences (Cohn 156). That retrospective slant creates the non-linearity of the narrative. Tristram relates, not what happened in the order of its happening, but what happened as he recalls it through the film of associative memory. Brown argues that the temporal dimension of human consciousness is the focus of Tristram’s narrative (268). Human consciousness attempts to stop and take stock of its lived experience, but its constant movement through time does not allow for such stock-taking. Tristram writes through the tension of retrospective stasis and temporal movement. This is the reason for discussing discourse time and space as differentiated from story space and time. Tristram in the world of discourse is a narrating, not an experiencing, self. He relates his experiences, but only in moments of intense retrospection, not in the middle of the experience itself (Cohn 171).¹⁷

A third tension involves Tristram’s conception of a mind. In expressing his own thoughts, Tristram “displays a mind by pretending that minds are so beset by vagaries

¹⁷ Tristram’s narrating self is a precursor to Wordsworth’s Romantic poet, writing feelings recollected in a moment of tranquillity. Although this particular aspect of Tristram’s creative consciousness is not treated in Brown’s Preromanticism, Tristram might be considered an early Romantic narrator, at least in terms of his retrospective stance.

that their likenesses can never be caught” (Weales 47). Tristram wants to tell his story, but he avoids doing so directly in order to demonstrate the mind’s elusive quality. As Brown observes of Tristram’s narrative, “Going straight to the point will get you nowhere” (265). In attempting to express his own mind, Tristram recognizes that the narrative “straight line” shuts readers out, interrupts the “natural” flow of thoughts, or poorly imitates the mind’s actual workings. Consciousness is “jagged and roundabout,” governed by association, not linearity (266). In the end, the elusive quality of Tristram’s mind becomes its defining characteristic—Tristram’s fiction narrates his mind.

What conclusions can we draw concerning the narrator Tristram in discourse time and space? First, Tristram’s non-linear narrative is the product of a self-aware narrator expressing his self to his readers. Second, Tristram chooses non-linear narrative as a means of expressing what Cohn terms a “mnemonic thought-sequence”—associational experience told from a retrospective stance. Third, language sometimes acts as a barrier to Tristram’s narrative, yet he manages to communicate the self by taking advantage of discursive language to create his own language within the world of the novel. The Shandys and other characters in the world of story display a solipsistic isolation, what John Sitter terms “literary loneliness.” Often unable to communicate with words, they escape their solipsism through human sympathy. Tristram avoids the solipsistic isolation that characterizes most of the characters in story time and space by establishing a rapport with his readers, involving them emotionally in what they read, expressing substantiality through non-linear narrative. The specific way Tristram uses non-linear narrative to establish this rapport is the subject of Chapter 3.

3. NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE

“THEY WILL BE WORSE TWISTED STILL.”

After gauging the narrative structure’s relationship to Locke’s Essay and examining Tristram’s character, suggesting possible reasons he chose to narrate the novel in a non-linear fashion, I should demonstrate the effectiveness of non-linear narrative in expressing Tristram’s character. This chapter will endeavor to answer the question, “How does non-linear narrative succeed in expressing Tristram’s character in ways that linear narrative could not?”

Before examining the novel more closely, I wish to revisit the particular features of Tristram’s non-linear narrative. Tristram expresses his own consciousness through the narrative by presenting a portrait of his associational thought process. The narrative takes on a mimetic form in that it attempts to express the workings of Tristram’s retrospective consciousness. A useful metaphor for expressing the specific nature of Tristram’s non-linear narrative is Charles Peirce’s concept of a “thought-sign,” a theory of signification which includes a specifically associational aspect. Locke’s simplistic theory of signification did not provide for the possibility of various sign arrangements. He wanted to see a “one-to-one” relationship between word and idea with no confusion about the connection between the two. Peirce’s thought-sign allows for tripartite signification: “a sign to some thought which interprets it ... a sign for some object which, in that thought, is equivalent ... [and] ... a sign, in some respect or quality, which brings it into connection with its object” (Houser and Kloesel 38). Most significant in relation to Tristram’s non-linear narrative, Peirce suggests that thought-signs follow their “own laws

of association,” sometimes dying out, sometimes continuing through several later thoughts, sometimes returning to an original train of thought (39). Peirce’s description of this thought-sign process of signification closely reflects Tristram’s non-linear narration. As if to answer a question posed by Terry Givens, “How can a temporally successive medium be adequate to the challenge of recovering the simultaneity of lived experience?” (130), Tristram’s narration in discourse time and space reflects Peirce’s account of how thought-signs achieve signification.¹⁸ The arbitrary nature of signs, and the uniquely individualized experiences and mental processes that produce signification, demonstrate how non-linear narrative communicates character and self so well to the audience. Just as signs receive signification arbitrarily through individualized mediation, so Tristram “signifies” his narrative by illustrating his own thought-sign signification process for his readers. Just as thought signs sometimes “die out” in incomplete or incoherent trains of signification, sometimes continue through several later thoughts, and sometimes return to an original train of thought, so Tristram’s narrated process halts, gets interrupted, and (sometimes) eventually returns to an original plot event. This process of signifying one’s retrospective thought process through narrative requires the reader’s ability to follow the halting, stammering, interrupted, and continuing narrative method. The reader’s involvement in the narrative plays a key role in revealing Tristram’s character.

The first advantage that non-linear narrative has in expressing character is, according to Spacks, its ability accurately to convey mnemonic thought sequences, or

¹⁸ The question as phrased refers to Lessing’s struggle to confront “the problem of mimesis as it applies to literature” (Givens 130). Precisely the same question in the same context confronts the reader of Tristram Shandy who, like me, asserts that Tristram mimetically narrates self throughout the novel.

retrospective associational experiential reality. Although Locke's particular version of "the association of ideas" becomes the butt of jokes in the novel rather than a serious problem to be avoided, the phenomenon of association, in this instance narrated retrospection, is an important aspect of the non-linear narrative. Linear narrative expresses a chronological history with logical steps in time. Tristram recognizes the more associational characteristic of remembered experiences, a signification process rather than a chronological history. While Tristram's mnemonic thought process may occur in a relatively straightforward manner (in the world of story), the experiences recollected and presented appear in the order in which his thought process associates them (in the world of discourse), not in the actual chronological order in which they occurred. Ultimately, an awareness of the associational characteristics of narrated remembered experience makes it possible to differentiate between story time and space and discourse time and space. The advantage this manner of narrating has over a more chronological method is its similarity to "actual" workings of the mind. For the reader, a non-linear narrative resonates more accurately with her or his own thought processes, a welcome familiarity in an untraditional novel.

Too numerous to calculate are the instances in which Tristram relates his mnemonic thought process. I will only highlight two cases as representative instances in which his thought process reflects his internal discursive reality. In Volume I, Chapters 7 and 8, Tristram explains how the parson (whose name we do not yet know) paid for the "ordinary's license" himself to allow the midwife to continue her practice. To demonstrate the legality and official nature of the transaction, he concludes a paragraph

with legal terms: “the good woman was fully invested in the real and corporal possession of her office, together with all its RIGHTS, MEMBERS, AND APPURTENANCES WHATSOEVER.”¹⁹ The next paragraph enters into an explanation of the exact nature of the legal language which he used, tracing it back to a “FORMULA of Didius his own devising.” This satirical reference to a Yorkshire lawyer’s (Dr. Francis Topham’s) fancies in applied law reminds Tristram of Dr. Kunastrokius’s (Dr. Richard Mead, a London physician’s) practice, in leisure hours, of taking “the greatest delight imaginable in combing of asses’ tails, and plucking the dead hairs out with his teeth. . . .” In its turn, this unusual habit (obviously a satirical jab at the physician) causes Tristram to rhapsodize upon hobby-horses, against which he says “there is no disputing” (43). This engenders a lengthy, page-long discussion of certain Lords and Personages and their hobby-horses, a discussion which later gives rise to a short dedication of the work to “My Lord.” Not until Chapter 10 does Tristram again pick up the story of the midwife’s license. This represents a brief “digression” in which the principal episode, regarding the midwife’s license, is picked up only after Tristram’s retrospective thought process is allowed to run its course. Only the novel’s non-linear method of narrating could allow so “accurate” a reflection of the narrator’s mind to be conveyed to the reader.

Perhaps the best-known instance of Tristram’s mnemonic thought process occurs in Volume VII during his flight from Death. The narrator Tristram recognizes his current physical position as well as his character’s dual physical position (at different recollected periods of his life) at the same time, thus illustrating himself as present in three separate

¹⁹ Although beyond the scope of this study, this is one of many instances in which Tristram uses register

locations. Such simultaneity of presence in both time and space more accurately reflects self than sequentially linear narratives of time and space by illustrating the polyphonic, simultaneous nature of lived experience. To express self is to express lived experience. As stated earlier, lived experience is associational, non-linear, logical only in the sense of elliptical, associated trains of thought. In the instant of recognizing himself in three different places at three different times, Tristram captures the essence of his multiple, complex, and multifaceted life experiences. This non-linear narrative moment provides ample evidence that linear “historical” narrative could not express Tristram’s persona as well as non-linear narrative. Tristram writes in Chapter 28:

There is a but a certain degree of perfection in every thing; and by pushing at something beyond that, I have brought myself into such a situation, as no traveller ever stood before me; for I am this moment walking across the market-place of Auxerre with my father and my uncle Toby, in our way back from dinner—and I am this moment also entering Lyons with my post-chaise broke into a thousand pieces—and I am moreover this moment in a handsome pavillion built by Pringello, upon the banks of the Garonne, which Mons. Sligniac has lent me, and where I now sit rhapsodizing all these affairs (492).

This diachronic narrative event requires explanation. The main plot event which Tristram narrates in this chapter is Tristram the character’s flight from death, during which he passes through Auxerre on his way to Lyons, where his post-chaise breaks down. Having arrived in Lyons after passing quickly through several cities, including Auxerre, Tristram the narrator halts his flight from death in order to recall an earlier trip to Auxerre, about which city he reports “I could go on forever” (VII.27.488). This earlier trip occurred during his grand tour through Europe with Toby, Walter, and Trim. The

main story, his flight from Death, and the digression, his grand tour stop in Auxerre, both cause Tristram to realize that, in his narrative, he has articulated three separate selves in three separate places: two in story time and place, and his narrator-self in discourse time and space. This episode demonstrates the ability of this non-linear narrative, based on an associational mnemonic thought process, to articulate the inner workings of a complex mind like Tristram's. Tristram employs a narrative strategy capable of expressing the full range of cumulative remembered conscious experience rather than a single moment of consciousness. And he shares this episode with a startling lack of irony or satire, shifting from the mocking tone of the previous chapter's tour of Auxerre's tombs to a more sincere tone of incredulity. He alters the tone of the short chapter to such an extent that, at the end of the chapter, he must collect himself in order to continue his journey. The reader recognizes the unique quality of this self-conscious retrospective, perhaps recalls some such similar recollection in his or her own experience, and participates with Tristram in this unusual narrative moment. Our participation as readers in this narrative moment adds a fourth dimension to the episode, for we sit with Tristram "rhapsodizing all these affairs" (VII.28.492), participating in his simultaneity while considering our own moments of recognized polyphonic presence in time and space.

The emphasis upon the reader points to a second way in which Tristram's non-linear narrative succeeds in communicating a self. With its digressions, diversions, abrupt transitions, fragments, and apostrophes to the reader, Tristram's narrative strategy challenges and involves the reader in Tristram's narrative. Pat Rogers suggests that Tristram chooses the non-linear narrative form to achieve surprise on the part of the

reader: “His own modifications to novel form, improvements in the sense of newfangled inversions of traditional methods, employed the crooked line, not in gentle mimicry of waves, but to achieve surprise, sudden reversal, anticlimax, and other rhetorical effects” (99). This “zigzaggery” (as Rogers terms it) actively involves readers in following the narrative. Surprised by the narrative’s reversals, anticlimactic episodes, and discontinued but later reconstituted stories, the reader continually finds his or her expectations of the narrative’s direction thwarted. This subversive characteristic of the non-linear narrative enforces a level of reader participation (if the reader does not actively participate, she or he will not follow the various detours the narrative takes) in the narrative that linear narrative, through its sequential plotting, struggles to achieve.

Tristram addresses his readers frequently and often includes their imagined responses to his addresses. These intrusive asides to his readers and their responses interrupt the narrative by briefly leaving the world of story and entering the world of discourse in which narrator and reader together ponder the narrative. This move from story time and space to discourse time and space and back again is a unique feature of Tristram’s self-conscious narrative style, of the non-linear narrative method. These asides draw reader and narrator into a discourse world of their own in which questions can be asked about the narrative’s direction. As an example, at the end of the first chapter of Volume I, Tristram reports his father’s question to his mother: “DID EVER WOMAN, SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD, INTERRUPT A MAN WITH SUCH A SILLY QUESTION?” The male reader then interrupts Tristram, asking, “Pray, what was your father saying?” To which Tristram replies, “Nothing.” The next chapter begins with the

male reader commenting in return, “---Then, positively, there is nothing in the question, that I can see, either good or bad.” At this point Tristram explains to the reader the undesirable effects this interruption had on the love-making, intimating future troubles for Tristram the character. Through Tristram’s “conversation” with this male reader we as readers understand that the interruption during Tristram’s conception “scattered and dispersed the animal spirits” and this caused “TRISTRAM’S MISFORTUNES [TO BEGIN] NINE MONTHS BEFORE EVER HE CAME INTO THE WORLD” (36-7). A similar moment occurs in Chapter 20 of Volume I, this time involving a female reader. Tristram is shocked that the reader has not grasped that his mother was not a Papist. After arguing about why she did not grasp this fact, Tristram sends her back to re-read the previous chapter in order to find the answer. When she reports that she cannot find the appropriate reference, Tristram triumphantly points out the rather obscure passage: “Then, Madam, be pleased to ponder well the last line but one of the chapter, where I take it upon me to say, ‘It was necessary I should be born before I was christened.’ Had my mother, Madam, been a Papist, that consequence did not follow” (83). This instructive moment provides Tristram an opportunity to criticize a general “vicious taste...in quest of adventures” as opposed to a slower, more methodical reading of the words as they appear on the page. By leaving the world of story for a moment and allowing his readers to question the narrative or solidify their grasp of the narrative’s direction, Tristram interrupts the narrative flow. Although linear narrative might allow readers an opportunity to consult their narrator, Tristram’s decision to leave the world of story and consult his readers in the world of discourse suggests the vital importance of the non-linear nature of this narrative. In this sense,

Tristram capitalizes on the diachronic nature of narrative to express the polyphonic character of his non-linear narrative.²⁰

These interruptions of the plot, intended to bring the reader “up to speed,” are not the only methods Tristram uses to involve readers. Tristram sets the standard early for the kind of readers he hopes will read his narrative: “’tis writ only for the curious and inquisitive.” Furthermore, he admits that the extremely particular nature of his narrative is designed “for readers in the world, as well as many other good people in it, who are no readers at all,—who find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last, of everything that concerns you” (I.4.37-8). Tristram shapes his narrative for his readers, and provides the particular interruptions and asides for their benefit, in order to let them into the whole secret from first to last. The “whole secret” is Tristram’s life and opinions, his life experience as he reflects on it and exuberantly lays it out.

But we know that Tristram cannot always be taken at his word. In one sense the peculiar intent of his narrative allows him to explain himself thoroughly to the reader; at the same time, the peculiar intent of his narrative sometimes places the reader “in the dark,” leaving some part of the narrative or plot to the reader’s imagination. Tristram wants to involve the reader in his narrative in order to create a stronger bond between author/creator and reader/partner. Tristram terms his writing a conversation with the reader:

²⁰ Is it possible that Sterne recognized the diachronic nature of narrative nearly one hundred fifty years before the Russian formalists?

Writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all;----so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in turn, as well as yourself.

For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own (II.11.127).

Tristram wants the reader involved in his narrative to such an extent that the reader half-creates the conversation. He wishes to carry on an imaginary conversation with his readers much as Tristram tends to carry on imaginary conversations with his mule.²¹ The passage above also suggests that Tristram includes nothing indecorous in his narrative, that it is the reader who imagines any ribaldry in the text. And so, as Tristram tells Slawkenbergius's tale of Julia and Diego, he assures us that a "nose" means nothing more than a "nose"—a fact we as readers cannot accept and so imagine the dual nose/phallus meaning. Of course, we realize that Tristram readily embraces salaciousness, but it is Tristram's desire to include the reader in his narrative, to make the reader a part of the creative process, that distinguishes the narrative. The reader must half create other aspects of the narrative as well. Certainly Tristram's invitation to sketch the Widow Wadman suggests a desire that the reader become directly involved in inventing the narrative: "Sit down, Sir, 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—please but your own fancy in it" (VI.38.450). And all of the asterisks he uses to replace unacceptable words and phrases invite the reader to decipher their meanings and "fill in the blanks."

The non-linear nature of the narrative invites us to join the conversation by providing transitions from thought to thought and from memory to memory, by picturing characters, and by finding our own DOUBLES ENTENDRES in the narrative.

Tristram recognizes that the distinctive non-linear structure of his narrative provides challenges for the reader, and that it entails the danger that the reader will not follow, or will misinterpret, the narrative.

[F]or in good truth, when a man is telling a story in the strange way I do mine, he is obliged continually to be going backwards and forwards to keep all tight together in the reader's fancy—which, for my own part, if I did not take heed to do more than at first, there is so much unfix'd and equivocal matter starting up, with so many breaks and gaps in it,—and so little service do the stars afford, which, nevertheless, I hang up in some of the darkest passages, knowing that the world is apt to lose its way, with all the lights the sun itself at noon-day can give it—and now, you see, I am lost myself!---- (VI.33.444).

In this passage Tristram both recognizes the danger and absolves himself of any responsibility for helping the reader. Paying lip service to the need to straighten paths for the reader, Tristram weaves such a convoluted bit of prose that even he loses himself. Tristram expects the reader to “follow the stars” and connect the non-linear paths his narrative takes. His conversation with the reader, in which he expects the reader to use her or his imagination to complete much of the narrative, becomes Wasserman's “language within language.” Tristram allows the reader to half-create the narrative's world-picture, which provides the reader a uniquely personal glimpse into Tristram's consciousness at work. Had Tristram not chosen a non-linear narrative pattern, the novel would contain few digressions, diversions, partially-told anecdotes, asides, and

²¹ See Volume VII Chapter 32 for an example.

apostrophes. The non-linearity of this narrative can be found in the narrator's discursive retrospective consciousness working to substantiate self. In doing so, Tristram skips from scene to scene, from time to time and place to place, from discourse world to story world and back again. The reader must follow the narrative closely and often complete gaps that the narrative's non-linear method leaves unfilled. Had Tristram chosen a more linear approach, the reader's role in half-creating the narrative would be considerably reduced, a reduction which might arguably sever the close (and sometimes confrontational) relationship between Tristram and reader.

A third unique feature of Tristram's non-linear narrative is its inclusion of various non-verbal descriptions which provide avenues for reader sympathy. Non-verbal descriptions are not integral components of any non-linear narrative. However, Tristram includes these non-verbal descriptions as asides that break the story-world sequence of his narrative. A more linear narrative would not tolerate the obstruction of verbal flow by such non-verbal depiction of characters and events. The most obvious of these non-verbal descriptions include the black page in Volume I (see Figure 3 on page 51), the marbled page in Volume III (see Figures 4 and 5 on page 52), the visual depictions of the narrative's path in Volume VI (see Figures 1 and 2 on page 5), and Trim's stick-flourish in Volume IX (see Figure 6 on page 53). The black page depicts Yorick's death and burial, with no other commentary than appears in Volume III: "opinions, transactions, and truths which still lie mystically hid under the dark veil of the black [page]" (III.36.232).

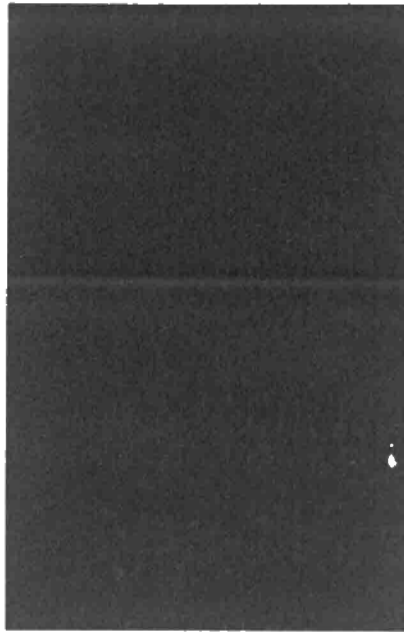


Figure 3: The Black Page

While Tristram certainly enjoys the shrouded mystery of the page with no words, it provides an avenue outside the plot for the reader to reflect on death in the abstract as well as on Yorick's actual death. That one of the work's main premises is Tristram's escape from death in order to write the novel provides the reader further motive to reflect on the black page as an emblem of that which the narrator constantly strives to escape. Finally, the black page allows readers to ponder their own mortality and to consider other individual reactions to death and thoughts of death. While Shakespeare writes various sonnets on aging and the death process, Tristram includes the black page. It is difficult to determine which evokes the more sympathetic response.

The marbled page ("motley image of my work"), with its random spotting of light and dark shades, provides an excellent metaphor for Tristram's narrative style.

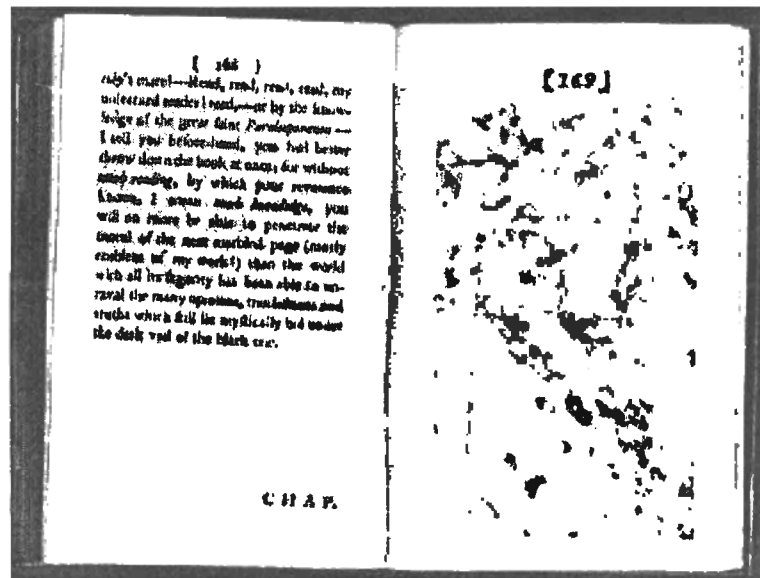


Figure 4: The Marbled Page (obverse)

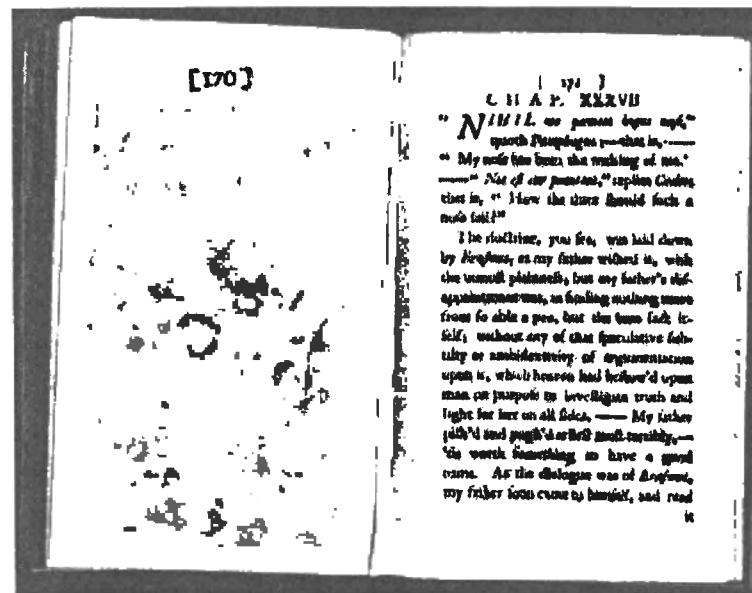


Figure 5: The Marbled Page (reverse)

It also allows the reader an opportunity to reflect on the curious nature of the narrative. Rather than attempting to explain in rational, linear language his conception of his own work, Tristram relies on an image to convey it. The image works to involve the reader in

a way that linear, rational discourse might work much harder to achieve. The same principle explains Trim's expression of the freedom inherent in bachelorhood through a flourish of his stick in Volume IX or the images of Tristram's work represented by "squiggly" lines in Volume VI.

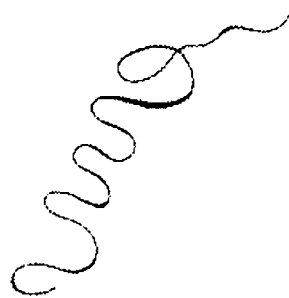


Figure 6: Trim's Flourish

These non-verbal figurations of the non-linear narrative provide Tristram an opportunity to express himself more directly than with words and to provide an avenue for greater understanding on the part of the reader.

Before I am accused of taking Tristram's several non-verbal devices too seriously, I would like to focus on the humor they evoke. Tristram includes these devices to shock and surprise us readers, to "overturn" the story (in Brown's words). Although we may contemplate our own mortality while pondering the black page, we most likely chuckle at the novelty and move on to the rest of the volume. The same is true of the marbled page, the blank page, and the other non-verbal devices. Regardless of whether we take these figures seriously or humorously, Tristram forces us readers actively to consider and evaluate his actions. Why would Tristram include this figure? Why not simply describe the Widow Wadman? Like Tristram carrying on both sides of the conversation with a

mule by imagining himself in the mule's position, we carry on a conversation with Tristram, asking him questions and imagining ourselves answering for him. If we have learned anything at all from Tristram's depicted consciousness throughout the narrative, we may begin to answer some of these questions for him—not with authority, but with active sympathetic imagination.

The novel contains other examples of non-verbal descriptions that interrupt the narrative and provide Tristram the beginning of an aside. He provides non-verbal cues which enhance understanding among characters, and which also provide a means for the reader to empathize with the novel's characters. Most notable of these cues is Trim's dropped hat, which expresses the inevitability of death to the kitchen staff. Although the gesture itself fits into the linear plot, it causes Tristram to react and enter into a digression on people's heavy (and sometimes uncontrollable) reliance upon emotions and fancy rather than rational discourse. Tristram works hard to describe Trim and his various forms of body language, revealing Trim's foppishness while demonstrating that an appeal to the senses or emotions may communicate an idea better than an appeal to the reason or intellect. This example of Trim's hat falling to the ground, Trim's exquisite posture when reading Yorick's sermon, his flourish of the stick to express the freedom of bachelors—all of these demonstrate to readers the importance of sympathy (pathos) in communication between individuals.

Finally, Tristram's use of non-linear narrative allows and encourages language to express dual meanings, permitting the reader to understand more about the narrative and the narrator than a single linear plot could provide. That Tristram understands the

limitations of language has already been examined in light of Locke's concern over the misuse of words. Wit, in Locke's terms, opposes judgment and garbles communication, illuminating similarities in ideas that Locke believes should be distinctly separated in order to allow words to reflect simple ideas clearly and singularly (II.11.156). Tristram uses wit extensively to create DOUBLES ENTENDRES with simple words like "nose," "whiskers," and "placket-holes." Thus, as noted earlier, Slawkenbergius's tale of noses becomes a tale on a more bawdy subject; but the important fact is that both meanings of the word "nose" exist at the same time. This is another type of non-linearity, one that William Freedman terms "simultaneity" or "polyphony." Throughout the novel Tristram speaks of noses, by which he claims to mean nothing more than noses, but by which we also understand him to mean male sexuality. Thus, when Dr. Slop's forceps crush Tristram's nose, we understand this as both a literal event and as a figurative event representing damage to Tristram's "male-ness." Simply in order to demonstrate the shaky social convention that assigns meaning to words, Tristram enters into a brief digression on whiskers, explaining how whiskers came to refer to much more than just whiskers (V.1.340-344). By encouraging, in fact daring, us readers to "read" more into the word than a socially-accepted, denotative meaning, Tristram invites multiple readings of the vocabulary. By encouraging multiple interpretations, Tristram provides more for the reader to comprehend than the literal words on the page. This invites the reader to participate actively in the narrative, to join Tristram in satirically undermining society's arbitrary process of language signification.

My argument has been that non-linear narrative provides a remarkably suitable means of expressing self through words. I would not suggest that linear narrative could not provide similar insight into the working mind of an individual. I do maintain, however, that the novel's non-linear narrative self-consciously engages the reader more actively and effectively than most linear narratives. Actively involving the reader in the narrative means a stronger bond between Tristram and the reader. Tristram exists through no other means than the narrative; in a very real sense, the narrative is Tristram. By engaging the reader in Tristram's mnemonic thought-process, non-linear narrative successfully expresses the narrator's self by engaging the reader in an active conversation with Tristram.

4. FROM TRISTRAM SHANDY TO HYPERTEXT AND BACK

“...IMMEDIATELY TURN BACK....”

The jump from Tristram Shandy to modern hypertext is not an obvious one, although the structure of Sterne’s novel is well-suited to hypertext translation. Several students have endeavored to translate a portion of the novel into hypertext simply to prove its eligibility for hypertextual translation.²² However, I make the effort because the proliferate World Wide Web has made discussions of hypertext an academic reality. Although in this chapter I intend only a brief foray into hypertext as a mode of expression, I hope it will provoke further study of the narrative possibilities hypertext provides.

The non-linear nature of hypertext provides a natural bond between it and Tristram’s narrative. Katherine Hayles unwittingly identifies the specific character of this natural bond: “The essential idea behind hypertext is simple: thinking is associational rather than linear, and therefore reading and writing should also be associational, the better to reflect how consciousness actually operates” (Hayles).²³ Authors are currently experimenting with hypertext and hypermedia (shifting the emphasis from text only to text, graphics, and sound) as a creative narrative form in which the reader makes more of the decisions about the course and direction of the narrative than the traditional implied

²² Most notable among these are Swarthmore College’s “Tristram Shandy on Hypertext” maintained by Keith Earley at <http://www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/~kearley/index.html> and Guilford College’s “Tristram Shandy” created and maintained by John Cocking at http://www.guilford.edu/web_class_96/ppages/john/tristram/start.htm.

²³ In this and all references to online sources, I am using Janice Walker’s “Columbia Online Style: MLA-Style Citations of Electronic Sources” as endorsed by the Alliance for Computers and Writing (<http://www.cas.usf.edu/english/walker/mla.html>).

author or narrator.²⁴ And academic scholars are just beginning to take the challenge of writing academic discourse—traditionally an extraordinarily linear and logical, author-controlled form—in hypermedia.²⁵ Here an important distinction can be made about two different types of hypermedia: exploratory and constructive. In exploratory hypermedia, the reader discovers and explores connections previously created by the author or creator. In constructive hypermedia, the reader takes a more active role in changing or adding to a work, creating new connections as deemed necessary or applicable. Constructive hypermedia has become the predominant mode of scholarly interest, including such projects as Hypertext Hotel²⁶ or Hyperizons. The success or failure of the hypermedia experiment has not been proven in its fledgling status, and only “time will tell the tale.” Perhaps the natural correspondence between reader-directed prose and the theories of reader-response will provide new life for the oft-abused “reader-response” school.

The connection I wish to make between hypertext and Tristram Shandy, however, relies on non-linear narrative as a successful means of expressing a narrative self. I hope to have supported adequately my argument that non-linear narrative does, in fact, provide an unusually successful strategy for communicating a narrative self, particularly in the instance of Tristram Shandy. I believe, however, that the same can be said of the non-linear nature of hypermedia—that hypermedia can be considered a tool for communicating a narrative presence, or self, to the reader.

²⁴ Michael Shumate’s Hyperizons is an excellent forum for such theory and practice (<http://www.duke.edu/~mshumate/hyperfic.html>).

²⁵ See Brent’s “Rhetorics of the Web” for an example (<http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/2.1/features/brent/bridge.html>).

²⁶ Hypertext Hotel: <http://duke.cs.brown.edu:8888/>

By design, hypermedia relegates the role of author/creator to secondary status. Whether fictional, documentary, informational, or commercial, hypermedia features the reader function. Once a clear format has been established for the hypermedia, creator and author fade into the background in favor of the interactive reader, who follows links defined by the creator or creates her or his own links from section to section. Granted, faulty links can cause problems and create an environment in which the reader cannot navigate a text properly. Once this occurs, the author/creator returns to the forefront of the text as a cause of the problem. In properly designed and operational hypermedia, however, the author function is subsumed by the reader function.

My focus, however, does not include the author, except as an implied author, and then only as a secondary feature of the hypermedia. I maintain that hypermedia as a non-linear mode of discourse empowers the reader to narrate the text. Applying Seymour Chatman's narrative theory to hypermedia reveals the strong possibility that reader-function becomes narrative-function in hypermedia.

Returning to Chatman's definition of Narrative as narrated text with a doubly temporal logic, let us apply these criteria to hypermedia. In Coming to Terms, Chatman suggests that a narrator need not be a person to term a "text" a Narrative. "In the broad sense...Narrative is the text-type distinguished from others by a 'chrono-logic'—a logic of event sequence, performed by characters, in a setting" (114). Because modern novels, as well as dramas and films, "tend to be shown rather than told," Chatman prefers to consider the narrator as a presenter of narrative statement who "may not be a someone but a something. The agent of presentation need not be human to merit the name

‘narrator’” (116). The immediate implication of this statement for hypertext theory I originally assumed to be that the computer can narrate a text. Indeed, I suppose this true in some few instances, but the computer can neither “show” nor “tell” anything as a diachronic event. The narrator must be an agent of an implied author, no matter the form taken by that narrator.

However, since the narrator can have such broad defining characteristics, Chatman validates the possibility that the reader of hypertext or hypermedia can become the narrative agent of the implied author, “showing” or “telling” a “text” to himself or herself. Keeping in mind Chatman’s definition of implied author as “‘text implication or ‘text instance’ or ‘text design’ or even simply ‘text intent,’” let us examine hypermedia as a potential narrative—no matter the text-type of the actual content material on the computer monitor.

The “text intent” of hypermedia is to provide links from one piece of information to another, associated piece of information. We may refer to the implied author of hypermedia as the design and intent of these links. Because these links are interactive, they require an agent to activate them. Chatman refers to the narrator as an agent of the implied author; the agent of hypermedia’s implied author is the reader, activating and following the links provided. Perhaps another way of discussing the implied author is as originator of the several or many potential paths through the text. Again, the agent of those paths, the navigator of those links, is the reader. The reader navigates, or narrates, the implied author’s links.

In order for narration to occur, a Narrative must exist; otherwise a text is nothing more than Argument or Description (Chatman 1991, 1). For a Narrative to exist, a narrator must “tell” or “show” a story with double “chrono-logic.” As the reader “browses” hypermedia—that is, as the reader follows links and acts as an agent of the implied author—I suggest that she or he creates a diachronic system. In the world of discourse (SJUZET), the narrator/reader follows links in the hypermedia to other portions of the hypermedia, narrating a unique “story.” The “story” exists in the world of story (FABULA) and consists of the material browsed and encountered. In other words, the act of browsing, of moving from one link to another, imposes an “external” movement through time (SJUZET – discourse time and space) on the act, while the material browsed imposes an “internal” movement through time or through a sequence of events (FABULA – story time and space) which the narrator narrates to himself or herself.

A reader of hypertext narrates a series of links from topic to topic, or section to section, or site to site, or page to page. The act of navigating the links, of choosing which links to follow and which to ignore, is the narrator acting as agent of the implied author(s), the creator(s) of the links. The act of narrating occurs in the external time of the narrator, in the world of discourse. The material browsed, which might include several different biographical sketches of Sterne, a hypertext version of Volume I of Tristram Shandy, online essays on Shandy-esque topics, or creative lines of poetry or prose by several different artists, would represent the internal sequence of events or topics in the world of story. The “text,” in this case, would be everything browsed from one list of search results, ending with initiation of a new search or typing of a new URL

in the Address dialogue box of her browser. Of course, this scenario could also occur within a single site, and would remain narrative regardless of the kind of information browsed—CNN’s news headlines, the text of Moby-Dick, pictures of someone’s baby on a personal site. As long as the reader/narrator follows the links presented on the different pages he or she encounters, the “session” remains a narrative.

Returning to the distinction between constructive and exploratory hypermedia, the narrative function of constructive hypermedia seems very clear. The reader works as co-author and narrator in constructive hypermedia by creating new content and making new connections between material. The reader narrates the hypermedia by acting as narrator. However, I contend that exploratory hypermedia also contains a narrative function. As a user navigates an exploratory hypermedia, she or he chooses links to follow. I suggest that this act of choosing activates a narrative function in the reader by which he or she narrates the hypermedia to himself or herself. As Katherine Hayles observes in her online essay “Dinosaur or Postmodern Mutant: Narrative in the Age of Information”:

“Applied to narrative, hypertext implies a structure that has no preset order that all readers follow. Instead, the text comes into existence as a narrative only in conjunction with the reader’s choices about which links to follow.”

Perhaps a real-world example will clarify the narrative function of exploratory hypermedia. Suppose that a student were to search the World Wide Web for information on Tristram Shandy. The student would begin the search by accessing a search engine or index and initiating a search for the phrase or terms “‘Tristram’ and ‘Shandy.’” The search results would be listed as links, perhaps with a short summary of each site’s

contents. The student would then select and follow one of those links, accessing a “page” that includes several links. Those links might “point” to a short biographical sketch of the site’s creator, to a brief biography of Laurence Sterne, to a portrait gallery of the author, to a hypertext version of Volume I of the novel, and to a list of links to other related Laurence Sterne or Tristram Shandy sites. The student would follow those links which she thought might contain relevant information for her research topic, perhaps skipping some and following others. Following links might lead the student into another site, which would again present him with multiple links. After exhausting this series of links, the student might return to the search page and conduct a different, more specific search. I would argue that, from search to search, this Web session be considered a narrative. This is an example of an exploratory hypermedia functioning as narrative through the choices made by the reader.

A broad example of constructive hypertext functioning as narrative through the creative agency of the reader would be hypertext fiction, such as that published by Eastgate Systems, in Hyperizons, or in Hypertext Hotel. In Hypertext Hotel, for example, a reader can enter the Web site and choose to follow a specific topic or title from a series of links. As the reader continues through the hypertext fiction, she or he can choose to continue navigating through deeper and deeper levels of specificity, or can re-emerge to follow a different topic altogether. In the deeper levels of the fiction, the reader can choose to respond to the content of the page by adding his or her own creative work. The reader can also link one page of work to another, creating connections that did not exist before between disparate works. This active, constructive form of hypermedia

clearly demonstrates the reader's narrative function in hypermedia. Both exploratory hypermedia, which populates the majority of the Internet, and constructive hypermedia, a relatively recent online development based on non-Internet hypertexts, can work as narratives.

This application of Chatman's narrative theory to hypertext makes an interesting connection between a novel like Tristram Shandy and hypertext by suggesting that both work as diachronic narrative forms. I believe, however, that understanding hypertext as diachronic narrative may offer insight into rereadings of Tristram Shandy. I want to focus attention on the role of the reader in hypertext and apply the same understanding of the reader's role to the novel.

Hayles states that “[hyper]text comes into existence as narrative only in conjunction with the reader's choices about which links to activate.” The reader becomes the narrator of a hypertext, creating the diachronic discourse and story inherent in all forms of Narrative. The reader/narrator's act of reading or browsing a hypertext forms the narrative, for “hypertext fiction [is] a forming process, not a static, end product” (Guyer).²⁷ Since hypertext fiction is a forming process, hypertext is a function of the reader. In a similar manner, reading Tristram Shandy might be considered a forming process, rather than a static end-product, and partially a function of the reader. The act of reading Tristram's narrative allows Tristram to narrate his non-linear tale, and the act of reading Tristram's narrative also allows the reader to join the narrator in collaborative

²⁷ I reiterate that the nature of the World Wide Web turns any hypermedia “session” into a fictional space in which the reader/narrator creates the story world which she or he inhabits as reader and participant. Although Guyer refers specifically to hypertext fiction (like that found on Michael Shumate's Hyperizons site), I believe that all hypertext, when narrated by the reader, becomes a fiction.

narration. As stated earlier in this study, portions of the book—particularly the non-verbal sections—provide the reader an opportunity to join in narrating the story. Even if *Tristram* provides these opportunities only to satirize traditionally narrated tales, the fact remains that readers play an important role in creating the narrative. A highly involved reader of *Tristram Shandy* might even be able to create his or her own “links” through non-verbal portions of the narrative. Consider the blank page on which *Tristram* encourages us to draw Widow Wadman. Even the most jaded reader will create some mental image to stand for the Widow, simply to provide features for an otherwise undescribed character. The most active and literal-minded reader might very well take *Tristram* at his word and draw something on the page.

Both types of readers, and the average reader as well, participate in narrating the tale. Whether *Tristram* intends that we laugh at his unconventional style or actively participate in narrating the tale, we as readers involve ourselves in linking the narrative together. We link an image of the Widow Wadman to the character herself, we link “bou-” and “-ger” to get the mules moving and to commit a venial sin, we link the many asterisks to the words or sentiments to which they refer, and we link *Tristram*’s non-linear “zigzagery” to itself in order to understand and appreciate the character of *Tristram*. What Howard Becker says of hypertext may apply to a certain degree to *Tristram Shandy*: “Readers...now make their own books out of the materials the author has prepared, becoming in a real sense co-authors of the work.... The interpreter helps to create the work’s character.”

Before continuing, I want to clarify that I do not consider the non-linear character of hypertext to be the same as the non-linear character of the novel. As Becker observes, “In conventional (what we should now, as will become clear, call ‘linear’) texts, such as books or articles, each unit is connected to at most two other units, the one that precedes it and the one that follows it, the page, paragraph, or word before and the page, paragraph, or word after.” Becker would argue, and I would concede, that in format a printed book must be linear in that it must be approached from first to last in order to make sense of it. However, the contents of a book like Tristram Shandy may be non-linear, in that the narrator may not follow a linear pattern of narration. Tristram Shandy is an unusual example of printed book because of its non-linear narrative structure, providing a more viable means for applying hypertext theory to a reading of Sterne’s novel. Certainly the novel does not deserve the harsh criticism which the editors of Hyperactive webzine levy upon print fiction: “Due to the changing order of narrative elements, interactive narratives challenge readers to reconsider their expectations and interpretations in a more radical way than the linearity of the print medium does” (“Burning Down the House”). In this configuration of “interactive narratives” and “print medium,” I would choose to describe Tristram Shandy as the former because it is interactive and does challenge readers. Although the novel is “printed,” it shares several similarities to hypertext narrative.

When Seymour Chatman suggested that diegetic (“told”) narrative and mimetic (“shown”) narrative be called by the same name, thereby making more numerous and varied the possible theoretical forms of the narrator, he opened the way for all

hypermedia to be considered as narrative. And interpreting hypermedia as a narrative form opens the way for Description and Argument (two text-types which Chatman differentiates from Narrative) to be considered as Narrative through the agency of a reader/narrator browsing the text. Chatman considers text to be communication that temporally controls its reception by an audience regardless of its format (film and drama are “texts” by this definition). By defining the term “text” broadly enough to include film and drama, Chatman provides the support needed to consider a hypermedia session as a text, including the multimedia aspects of the World Wide Web. It is therefore possible to narrate a non-verbal hypermedia using icons, images-maps, even full-motion video and sound. And considering hypermedia as Narrative provides us as reader/narrators an opportunity to illustrate (at least to ourselves) a text in real-time. That is, rather than “rhapsodizing” on the past as Tristram does, the reader/narrator could simultaneously experience and report the experience, could narrate experience with the immediacy of living it, without the retrospective stance (Cohn 156). It is for this that Cohn suggests a first-person autobiographical narrator strives, but can never achieve.

The hypermedia narrative, whether confined to one site or including ten or twenty different sites, is distinctly non-linear. The focus of this study of Tristram Shandy is on the distinctly successful ability of non-linear discourse to express character. I suggest that hypertext, as a non-linear narrative form, successfully reflects a narrator/reader’s character. As narrators/readers follow their specific interests, they define themselves through linked choices. Reading a hypertext is an act of making decisions; it is in the making of narrative decisions that the reader becomes narrator and that hypertext

becomes diachronic Narrative. Through hypertext as narrative, the narrator and reader come to understand one another fully, to achieve Tristram's DIEM PRAECLARUM: "As you proceed further with me, the slight acquaintance which is now beginning betwixt us, will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is in fault, will terminate in friendship" (I.6.41). The goal of Tristram's non-linear narrative is to express himself to his readers; I postulate that non-linear hypertext as narrative can achieve the same.

CONCLUSION

“WHAT IS THIS STORY ALL ABOUT?”

I hope the reader will not respond to the question above as did Yorick, “A Cock and a Bull,” although if one added the last bit of the sentence, “And one of the best of its kind, I ever heard,” I would be mollified. Like Tristram, I worry that parts of my narrative may have slipped away from me and the reader. Yet I hope to have accomplished several aims in this study.

In Chapter 1 I hope to have demonstrated that the long and fruitful history of studies examining the relationship between An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and Tristram Shandy does not fully explain the rationale for Tristram’s non-linear narrative mode. Locke’s work gives the reader many useful tools for examining Tristram’s non-linear narrative, principal among which are theories of language and associationism. While it is certainly questionable that the novel’s form incarnates the philosophical essay in literary form, Locke obviously had a strong influence on the novel’s author and on Tristram’s world-view. The relationship between Locke and Tristram is varied and equivocal; the inconsistent nature of the relationship itself probably sheds more light on the distinctive qualities of Tristram’s narrative than any other Lockean feature.

In Chapter 2 I hope to have successfully applied narrative theory in story and discourse (specifically the arguments of Spacks, Cohn, and Chatman) to Tristram Shandy in order to determine the precise nature of the non-linear narrative, specifically focusing upon the title character’s expression of self as narrator. In the world of discourse time

and space, Tristram relates his mnemonic thought sequences, his associational experiential memories, in order to express himself. He uses non-linear discourse as an alternative, and highly flexible, form of verbal (and sometimes non-verbal) communication. Locke's theories, particularly of language and association, prove helpful in specifying the nature of non-linear narrative.

In Chapter 3 I endeavored to illustrate how well Tristram's non-linear narrative form expressed his character to the reader. The non-linear narrative provides Tristram a unique opportunity to express his mnemonic thought-sequence as lived experience rather than as historical account. It also involves the reader in a way that a "linear" historical account could not, challenging the reader to understand the leaps and ultimately involving the reader in Wasserman's "language within language." The non-linear narrative provides Tristram with non-verbal avenues for playing on and engaging the sympathy (pathos) of the reader, and allows non-rational communication between narrator and reader to occur. Finally, the non-linear narrative form allows and encourages Tristram to represent linguistic duality, a form of non-linear discourse itself, which frequently results in humorous *DOUBLES ENTENDRES* and allows reader and author to meet on the plain of wit (much to Locke's chagrin).

Finally, in Chapter 4, hoping to have initiated a new interest in hypertext as narrative, I sketched out a means for formally and theoretically discussing this emerging and vastly popular means of communication in academic discourse. The non-linear features of both hypermedia and Sterne's novel automatically and naturally relate the two, but the ability to express a narrative self to a reader is the more obscure similarity I

hope to have illuminated. Reading Chatman into hypertext does not seem so prodigious a leap, considering his insistence on film and drama as text. By no means have I exhausted this area of study; I leave further research to others (or to myself as an advanced research topic).

From Locke through Chatman and Spacks and Cohn (and many others besides) to hypertext we get to Tristram, a varied and complex character indeed. Tristram chooses non-linear discourse as the most transparent and natural means of expressing himself to his reader, of developing a friendship and his DIEM PRAECLARUM. I, for one, am the more enlightened for joining his narrative games. Reading Tristram Shandy is difficult, but rewarding in the end. I hope the same may be said of this study.

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BIOGRAPHY

Daniel Lamar Hocutt (born 6 March 1970) lived in Helena, Montana until age ten, when he moved with his family to Birmingham, Alabama. After two and a half years in Birmingham, he and his family moved to Israel, where he lived for five years while attending the Walworth Barbour American International School in Israel (AIS) in Kfar Shmaryahu. He graduated from AIS in 1988 as salutatorian. Returning to the United States, Daniel attended the University of Richmond and graduated summa cum laude in 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Secondary Education. After teaching English at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake, Virginia, he and his wife returned to Richmond where he has completed his Master of Arts in English. Most recently, Daniel has been named Director of the Governor's School for Humanities and Visual and Performing Arts at the University of Richmond, a Virginia Department of Education-sponsored residential program for gifted high school students.