

**THE SPIRIT OF MODERNITY IN  
LAURENCE STERNE'S  
TWO NOVELS *TRISTRAM SHANDY*  
AND A *SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY***

**A THESIS**

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ یُؤْتِیْهِ مَن یَّشَآءُ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ  
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(صدق اللّٰه العظیم)

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**Dedication**

**To my mother who gave  
me insight and helped me  
climb the mountain and  
whose presence keeps me  
climbing still .**

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## Chapter One:

### Introduction

#### 1.1. Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Fiction:

The fiction of the eighteenth century showed, among its other traits, that the author faced changes in the demands and prospects of his public in such a way that the essential concern of the time turned to external facts. The novelist had to reflect his own life and experience in the work. Daniel Defoe, for example, was fascinated in publishing his own views on matters currently in question concerning economic,

religious, educational, moral, and legal aspects of the eighteenth century society. He celebrated in his first novel, ***Robinson Crusoe*** (1719), “a unique fictional blending of the traditions of Puritan spiritual autobiography with an insistent scrutiny of the nature of man as a social creature...”.<sup>1</sup> As a Christian writer, his work is characterized by both an abundance of references to Christian faith and morality and conviction and its relevance to and influence on everyday life.

In his ***A Journal of the Plague Year*** (1722), Defoe presented incidents into a situation of which he had no direct experience, only through the narration of others. In ***Roxana***, as in ***Moll Flanders***, he puts the reader into a situation where the relation between the reader and the narrator is puzzling. Originally, Defoe was a journalist, and the art of circulating facts and ideas was demanded by the reading public of his time. Besides, his novels were written in a manner as to show stories in such a way as to make the readers' attention fixed primarily on the events that were full of a great number of details. Defoe wanted to satisfy the people's curiosity of his time about adventures and events. He also meant to report faithfully the minute details of everyday life and to inculcate a moral lesson: He wanted to be known as a novelist who wrote within the eighteenth century's formal realism. However, like Defoe, Richardson's novels also concentrate on formal realism but for didactic ends. The other title of his ***Pamela*** is ***Virtue Rewarded***. From this title the moral theme and his aim in teaching Puritanism can easily be detected. The novel is composed entirely of letters from Pamela and therefore gives a limited point of view. We never know how the seducer (Squire B) actually feels. Writing a novel in a form of letters is known as the epistolary technique. As with ***Pamela***, his second novel, ***Clarissa***, has the same central situation of

the resistance of a virginal young woman to an aristocratic seducer. Such novels make the reader feel the force and dominance of the author's moral commitments, and, thus, strike the modern reader as being outdated.

Henry Fielding, in his turn, wrote *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* as mock-epics. Such novels are written in the form of picaresque. They present only the surface of reality, in which the character is often a rogue or an anti-social person, who breaks the rules and makes disorder in society. However, it is held that the main defect of the epistolary and picaresque novels is that they are pretentious and fabricated according to the modern writers' and readers' standards. Thus, most of the novels and novelists of the eighteenth century did not go beyond being purely realist or humorous or moral in objectives. However, their roles and contributions in the rise of the English novel are surmounting. With the coming of Laurence Sterne to the scene, the English novel took another remarkable form and outstanding spirit to move it a step, or perhaps steps, forward in time to make it nearer to the twentieth-century conceptions of novel writing. In his discussion of Sterne's contribution to the English novel, Andrew Sanders points out that, "if Smollett's novels have had a peculiarly fruitful influence on the development of the eighteenth century novel, the impact of Sterne's liberation of narrative has been most fully appreciated in the twentieth century".<sup>2</sup> Critics agree that Sterne is the most influential innovative novelist of the eighteenth century, for his work broke the narrative form of the novel of his time. Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) was born in Ireland, but he was an Englishman, because he lived most of his life in England. Laurence's immediate background is less distinguished; his

father Roger Sterne was a soldier who made an unfortunate marriage in Flanders. Sterne's early years were spent in the barracks of his father's military posts in Ireland and in England. He was known for his oddity, and it was at Cambridge that he came under the spell of John Locke's philosophy, especially his book *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Locke had described a number of cases of involuntary association of ideas and suggested that it was a kind of madness. In fact, Locke's philosophy was a lifelong influence on him, which appeared in his writings, as it will be shown later in the chapters.

Sterne married Elizabeth Lumley, an heiress of moderate fortune from a good country family. She was a woman with whom he was at first sentimentally in love, but with whom he did not get on well in later years. However, his unhappy experiences with women influenced his writing: he was cynical with his female characters. Sterne's experiences at Cambridge are of great significance. There he spent much of his time with John Hall Stevenson, a lifelong friend. Hall Stevenson's "Crazy Castle", as it was called then, became the meeting place of a circle of wits, calling themselves the "Demoniacks". The members of this circle, including Sterne, engaged in mild revelry and enjoyed great pleasures. At Cambridge Sterne also suffered his first hemorrhage of the lungs, a warning of the disease that kept him in fragile health for the rest of his life. Between 1740 and 1750, he received some preferment in the clergy, but not as he had hoped for. He blamed his uncle for this failure, with whom he also had come to differ politically.

Sterne developed as a writer late in life. His first literary work was *A Political Romance*, later known as *The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*, which was a satire on rivalry for preferment within the



church. The work was deemed scandalous by church officials and had to be destroyed. Then, Sterne began writing *Tristram Shandy* in 1759. This work had won him a great literary fame. The whole literary world, with the exceptions of Samuel Johnson and Samuel Richardson, praised it. When his health began to deteriorate rapidly due to tuberculosis, he made a trip to Europe as an attempt to regain his health. The trip to France supplied him with materials for the rest of *Tristram Shandy* and for the writing of *A Sentimental Journey* (1767), his second novel, which seemed to have an enormous influence on the continent in the years after Sterne's death; it won him more serious praise from European writers like Goethe and Heine than he had ever received in England at that time. On a visit to England from India he met Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, who was a young woman and with whom he made the most serious of his sentimental relationships. When Mrs. Draper sailed for India, four months after they met, to rejoin her husband, they agreed to keep intimate journals during their separation. Thus, appeared Sterne's the *Journal to Eliza*, which was not published until 1904. Sterne died in London in 1768.<sup>3</sup>

Sterne was an eccentric and an unusually sensitive person, who felt defeated by life. Among his problems were ill health and the attacks on him for his bawdy work. He also had problems with his wife and daughter, who lived apart from him and bled him financially. Ironically, his response to the bitterness of life was humor in a unique way. He was held to be odd because he did not write the type of the novel that the public at that time expected. He simply revolted against the rigid and narrow sense of proportion imposed upon the novel at the time of his contemporaries. However, Sterne, like any other writer of the time, was influenced by a tradition before him represented first by

the philosophy of John Locke especially his well-known book, ***Essay Concerning Human Understanding*** (1690). This book was a critical inquiry into the workings of the human mind, that is to say, “the irrational nature of the association of ideas”.<sup>4</sup>

Sterne admired some novelists, like Rabelais, Cervantes, and Swift who influenced him; yet, what must be admitted here, is that his tone of writing was very different and more creative than his predecessors were. In an age when the objective presentation of reality have been carried to a high perfection and became a norm of writing, he diverted his own to another road, as James Vinson states:

Apart from Richardson, Sterne is the most notable of the novelists of sensibility ... In *Tristram Shandy* [1759-67] he attempted with extraordinary success two quite different things, to draw attention by a brilliant and endlessly resourceful parody to the arbitrariness of the novel's conventions, and to convey the strange inconsequentiality of human mind. His sensibility is really different from Richardson.<sup>5</sup>

Although his novels, ***Tristram Shandy*** and ***A Sentimental Journey*** were attacked for being formless and caricatures of novels, the clear fact is that, “Sterne played the fool with the structure of the novel for the sheer fun of playing the fool”.<sup>6</sup> The title of his first novel shows that Sterne has actually managed to present to the readers of the eighteenth century the type of the novel they were most interested in, ***The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman***. It was a novel about writing a novel that shared with Fielding's, ***The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*** (1743), and Bunyan's ***The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*** (1682), almost the same title. But what makes it different from its contemporaries is that “it cocks a snook at the

religious morality of Samuel Richardson, the careful plot-construction of Henry Fielding, and the violent adventures of Tobias Smollett”.<sup>7</sup> It has been claimed that no stranger book than this has ever been written. The result of this novel is a book with a very little plot and really great digressions. Sterne wrote four books before his hero, Tristram, even gets born at all: They are books that employ free associations, fantasy, and whimsical coincidences; “we must come forward to our own century before we can find anything that relates to it – *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, expressionist drama, absurd Humour”.<sup>8</sup>

Whether or not Sterne’s novels were liked by the readers of his time remains a controversial matter. What is certain is that they gain a lot of praise nowadays by modern readers, who are interested in reading such great novelists like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Therefore, Sterne’s novels survived the passing of time, because they are proved to be written two hundred years ahead of their time, in an age when they stand as a rich source of ideas and techniques for writers and readers interested in the possibilities of the modern novel writing.<sup>9</sup>

## **1.2. Some of Major Features of Twentieth-Century Fiction:**

No doubt, the modern period, that is, the period extending from about 1914 to the present, is characterized by many changes in the attitudes, forms, and techniques of fiction. This can be ascribed to many influences on the fiction of the twentieth century period, especially that of science and psychology.<sup>10</sup> As far as the procedure of

novel writing is concerned, the novelists adopted a more personal notion in their writing depending on their own sensibilities and intuitions rather than on public agreement. The most important theme of modern fiction is that of the conflict between the individual sensibility and the world outside, which is presented as being harsh or alien to the character. Jonathan Raban states:

The modern English and American novel has proliferated into a large number of private, subjective worlds. A random count of novels published since 1920 would, I think, reveal a disproportionately frequent use of first person and single character narration.<sup>11</sup>

This, of course, means that the novelist depends on the inner personality, whether that of others or their own, in drawing whatever experience in human affairs, and from their own intuitions, which required new technical approaches in order to convey and convince the readers of the validity of his own sense of experience.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, the modern novel became varied and wider in scope, for the main difference between the twentieth and the eighteenth century novels lies further in the treatment of time, characterization, and identity of the author. The novelists of the past paid no real attention to the duration of time in their novels. Time in its new conception and application is not looked at as a series of chronological and measured phases to be shown by the novelist in, say, logical or ordered sequence with “deliberate retrospect”, as M.H. Abrams puts it.<sup>13</sup> Time in this sense is conceived as a continuous flow that lies, and thus appears, not in the sharp description of a diary, as Defoe did, but in the consciousness of the individual. The concept of time in the modern fiction was influenced by psychology. George Woodcock in his “Introduction” to *20<sup>th</sup> Century Fiction* asserts this fact. After referring

to the influence of Sigmund Freud and Jung, he remarks that, “the emphasis on the timeless world of the consciousness by pioneer psychologists contributed a great deal to the new concept of fiction”.<sup>14</sup> In its form the modern narrative is likely to blend the processes of perception, memory, and action. Considering Virginia Woolf’s fiction, the minds of her characters are presented in such a way as to show them delineate with time:

It was a Sunday evening in October. ...Catherine Hilbery was pouring out tea. Perhaps a fifth of her mind was thus occupied, and the remaining parts leapt over the little barrier of day which interposed between Monday morning and this rather subdued moment, and played with the things one does voluntarily and normally in the daylight.<sup>15</sup>

This quotation holds not only the present time action, but also there is a sense of time past that is still in the memory of the character, showing itself in her consciousness. In her novels Virginia Woolf reveals series of events, whose relations to the sequence of time seem irregular if measured according to the mode of the traditional fiction, as David Daiches concludes:

The traditional handling of time sequence, in fact, seems to the novelist [Virginia Woolf] to be incidental, while the older novelists found it essential... it is not that Virginia Woolf is concerned with timeless entities, but rather that her insights into experience depend on making patterns within time that do not depend on chronology.<sup>16</sup>

Considering David Daiches’s speech, we realize the fact that Sterne has manipulated the notion of time in as much a new form as the modern sense of the form is concerned; an innovation which was considered at his time as strange and even laughable. Any view that

contains the individual world of Sterne's characters must be ironic, unless those vantagepoints coincide with the application of time in the modern novel. The technique that is undertaken to write such novels is called the self-conscious narrative, which most of the modern novelists use, and often play with narrative levels, in order to question the borderline between reality and fiction; and the distinction between the inner being of the character and outside reality. In this connection, Jonathan Raban is of opinion that:

One of the functions of the storyteller is to be everywhere at the same time, mindful of past history, conscious of the present and aware of the possibilities of the future. In his narrative all known or expected time can be brought to focus on the 'novelist's clock' is made to tell different times simultaneously.<sup>17</sup>

Again, the importance of the new awareness of the importance of the individual mind, that came to existence at this time influenced fiction to a great extent, and resulted in the significant concept recognizing that everyone has a unique perception of the world. This, in short, led to the emergence of the psychological novel in its revolutionary form. According to this awareness, "the novelists", Leon Edel says, "sought to retain and record the 'inwardness' of experience".<sup>18</sup> This new tendency on emphasizing the individual mind motivated the novelists to adopt a new technique as that of stream-of-consciousness to reflect through writing "a new view of the human mind".<sup>19</sup>

So many definitions, like Alan Friedman's in his book, *The Turn of the Novel*, have presented various discussions and points of view concerning this technique.<sup>20</sup> Though they came out with valid evaluations, they agree upon one point, that such a technique has become as important as any other theme in modern fiction, and that it

is this method that gives fiction its modern trait. Used in this way, the stream-of-consciousness technique denotes a way of rendering not one but different levels of consciousness as they flow from moment to moment throughout the lives of the characters. Commenting on the emergence and significance of this narrative technique, Paul West thinks that:

The stream of [Modern] novelists cannot escape consciousness. Either they ostentatiously ignore it or they introduce it under the auspices of some theory of 'identity'. It is there, like society: therefore all of us; and it is there in all additional way, for some novelists, because it is the stock-in-trade of the anti-hero...it was a discovery which has been renewed in significance by novelists who have lost faith in society and therefore also in the novel as social portraiture.<sup>21</sup>

What is significant in the quotation is that this technique is of importance to those novelists who no longer believe in the conventional mode of narrative for portraying reality. The above quotation also stresses that this method reflects the subjective rather than the objective. Accordingly, the novelist's indulgence in portraying character is heavily subjective and different from the objective rendering of external rigid reality. Virginia Woolf's fiction, for example, reveals among many things an ongoing concern with subjective exploration of the character and even incidents. For example, in her novel, *The Voyage Out*, she puts emphasis on characters' inner-self rather than on the expression of the outside world as might expected of its title as it was the case in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century writings. Consequently, little attention seems to be given to the formal realism of the novel, and, indeed, the plot becomes hardly of significance. Her individual technique that illuminates aspects of her characters'

personalities is revealed to the reader through their inner stream of thoughts. The usage of prose the modernists employed in writing their novels also differed from that used by the eighteenth-century novelists.

Dialogue, for example, echoed the accepted speech of the day in an eighteenth – century novel, and displayed the superficial movement of conversation. The vocabulary, the sentence-structure, the narrator’s commentary and description, the character’s dialogue could be written in a separate manner. While in a twentieth – century novel this mode seemed to over-lap and run together. Sterne had been able to do much more to determine this focus on the inner self and the idiosyncratic features of this new form, which thus came to have many affinities to Joyce and Virginia Woolf. George Watson in his book, ***The Literary Critics***, refers to this fact by saying, “The contemporary debate over Sterne’s novels was concerned with the propriety of a clergyman...Sterne’s technical innovation passed without comment until seized upon by Virginia Woolf in the 1920’s”.<sup>23</sup> Virginia Woolf herself admits this fact in her preface to her sixth novel ***Orlando*** [1928]. She mentions some novelists who stimulated the writing of the novel, and Sterne was the most prominent one, “no one can read or write, she justifies, “without being perpetually in the debt of Defoe, Sir Thomas Browne, Sterne... to mention the first that come to mind”.<sup>24</sup> James Joyce uses the stream- of-consciousness in his own way that his novels became the most extraordinary works in modern fiction. This extraordinariness is also due to his excellent use of words and images. The essence of his ***Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*** is only one character, Stephen Dedalus, and the whole action takes place in his own consciousness. Thus, his consciousness *became* the novel; while the other characters move like shadows in his mind. The



main focus of the novel is on the spiritual region of the main character. In her essay on the modern novels, Virginia Woolf states that, “in contrast to these whom we have called materialists Mr. Joyce is spiritual; concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes in myriad messages through the brain”.<sup>25</sup> It is appropriate to mention here another important factor that is also related to the individual consciousness in modern fiction.

The individual’s consciousness is complex; in the sense that it does not only consist of present ideas and perceptions, thoughts and reactions, but the past is always present in it. Memories of the past influence the individual’s present actions and reactions. The focus on the role and effect of the past in man’s consciousness was considered a technical innovation in fiction. The concept of memory stresses that the present is nothing but the sum up of the past; and that the true state of people can be exposed through digging deep into the human consciousness, without the need for a chronological sequence of time.

This exploration in depth into consciousness and memory enabled the novelists to write novels displaying a very short time in the heroes’ lives, as it is the case with Virginia Woolf’s, ***Mrs. Dalloway***, and Joyce’s ***Ulysses***. Of course, this step means that the novelists prefer to plunge into the minds of their characters in order to tell their (the characters’) stories, instead of providing external frameworks of long narrative. Explaining one of Marcel Proust novels, ***Remembrance of Things Past***, E.M Forster argues:

What really matters in the book is not events but the remembering of events. Many tragic events occur and many funny ones, but they take their final shape in the meditations of the narrator. The novel is called not ‘Things Past’, but the

‘Remembrance of Things Past’...It plays about with time.<sup>25</sup>

Forster also believes that Proust is not concerned with events and people. He was preoccupied primarily with the memories of these events that show themselves in people’s minds, “and that consequently his novel often has the quality of a daydream, in which the ordinary sequence of time gets interrupted and mixed up”.<sup>26</sup> He tried to unravel the mystery of time. He wanted to uncover and trace what is significant from the insignificant, transitory and trivial in life. His search for lost time is very much estimated: “Proust’s concerns about the passage of time speak to all of us: Where has it gone? How much is left? What shall we do with it? He focuses on how we live, and communicate a way of “living in time”.<sup>27</sup> It is also argued that Marcel Proust’s book has been renamed by some critics ***In Search of Lost Time***, for in addition to his concern with the past, he is preoccupied with another sense of time, that is the psychological time. The latter is non-measurable qualitative experience in which the present continuously augments the past without destroying it. Proust began to see “inner time” as a reality filled with our feelings and emotions, as different from “chronometric time”. Yet, Proust realized that we could not reach it because it is buried in our sub-conscious mind. “Time Past” is lost to us, but the sensations that experienced it are not.<sup>28</sup> Memory can bring back fragments from the past. This past lies inactive within the mind but ready to be recalled by the human consciousness. In other words, memory lies beyond the control of our consciousness, and can only be recollected by some unexpected physical sensation, perhaps unimportant in itself, such as

a faint scent, taste or sound. That sensation has in the past been associated with a number of impressions, and when by chance the sensation recurs years afterwards, all the impressions, associated with it, also rush back. This is a form of philosophy that combines past and present, and resembles to certain degree that of Sterne's in the process of his writing a novel.<sup>29</sup>

Modern fiction witnessed another influential movement that is called impressionism, which appeared about the middle of the nineteenth century. It was developed by the art of painting of French painters like Manet, Monet, Renoir, and many others, who emphasized in their paintings the importance of the impressions an object makes on the artist and people. The present appearance of that object by precise details seems to be of no importance to them. The movement had its counterpart in the novel and in literature as a whole. C. Hugh Holman defines Impressionism as:

A highly personal manner of writing in which the author presents characters or scenes or modes as they appear to his or her individual temperament at a precise moment and from a particular vantage point rather than as they are in actuality.... The object of the impressionist, then, is to present the material not as it is to the objective observer but as it is seen or felt to be by the impressionist or a character in a single passing moment.<sup>30</sup>

This shows that it is the personal and the subjective that are of significance to the author's work. He or she wants to show what is personal in the experience, which in its turn leads to the inner life of a given character. According to this sense the term impressionism, as J.A Cudden defines it, "has also been used to describe the novelist's

technique of concentrating on the inner life of the main character rather than on external reality".<sup>31</sup>

The objectivity with which life is to be represented in the long-accepted narrative conventions led certain early twentieth-century novelists to question its validity. They sought for a type of character who is involved in the story and himself is the narrator of the story standing at a different level from the novelist and recounting what he sees or hears. Hence, what the impressionists do is to try to distinguish between what the observer assumes he is observing and what he actually observes. As a result, the visible world becomes less definite and more fluid.<sup>32</sup> The German novelist Thomas Mann and Herman Hesse, moving from the details of the exterior world in their novels, sought the lightness and clarity of a style that was proclaimed as impressionistic. This technique went much deeper through English novelists like Ford Madox Ford and Joseph Conrad, whose approach to dialogue manifested a particular aspect of literary impressionism.

Ford and Conrad attempt to present speech as it is actually spoken, with many sides of meaning implied rather than stated. The result is considered by many readers as sometimes exasperating, but only as real-life conversation frequently is. Novelists who studied painting presented fiction in which there is a brilliant observation, similar to those painting in which a whole scene is suggested through carefully selected forms of colors. This replaced the careful delineation of, say, a whole face, or description of a whole room, for instance, that had been the way of the eighteenth century novelists. In some lines of dialogue the impressionist can convey as much as the eighteenth-century or the nineteenth-century novelists can do in as many pages. The interior monologue may be regarded as a modern development of

this technique. Through which the novelist shows the pre-articulatory thought, feeling, and sensuous perception, unordered into a rational sequence.

The interior monologue is written in a certain fictional works from a single point of view, in which the writer himself narrows down the stream of consciousness and places the reader at the centre of the character's thought, using effective words rather than images. It is then a method that the novelist uses to set down in words a record of the inner experience of the character. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson are considered the most prominent novelists who employed this interior monologue in a magnificent way. In fact, this device was started by the French novelist Eduard Dujardin's novel ***We'll to the Woods No More*** (1888), who was considered later as the originator of the interior monologue.<sup>33</sup>

### **1.3.The Concept of Realism in Fiction:**

In order to supply the reader with a convincing novel, the conventional eighteenth-century novelists had to select events that are familiar to the reader's mind. Their choice of subject matter is, thus, associated with the tendency of realism that characterized the novel at that time. They represented the actual or the external world. Accordingly, Daniel Defoe's novel ***Journal of the Plague Year*** is a true re-creation of the London plague of (1665) and more an ordered narrative than it appears. Its reality is a product of careful preparation and selection of real events. Ian Watt in his book, ***The Rise of the Novel***, states that:

The 'realism' of the novels of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding is closely associated with the fact that Moll Flanders is a thief, Pamela a hypocrite, and Tom Jones a fornicator ... If the novel were realistic merely because it saw life from the seamy side, it would only be an inverted romance ... The novel's realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it.<sup>34</sup>

Virginia Woolf finds that the realism that Defoe tried to portray in his fiction is not a convincing one. It is so because all that he describes in the outside world is narrow and limited to the external description:

The waves, the seamen, the sky, the ship – all are seen through these shrewd, middle-class, unimaginative eyes. There is no escaping him. Everything appears as it would appear to that naturally cautious, apprehensive, conventional, and solidly matter-of-fact intelligence.<sup>35</sup>

The point has been made clear by Ralph Fox in his book, ***The Novel and the People***:

There is a dualism in the writers of the eighteenth century, not only interesting but important. Defoe, Fielding and Smollett are concerned with a purely objective picture of the world. Their characters have little or no "inner-self", and these authors spend no time on analyses either of feeling or motive, for they are more concerned with describing "how" than "why"...Robinson Crusoe was a supreme affirmation of the individual, but he was an individual who lived entirely outside himself, the typical man of the new world in one sense, but not in another. It was left to Sterne...to discover that the individual alone was the world.<sup>36</sup>

It is always argued that fiction can never, by any means, be as close to life as life itself is. Novels, whether impressionistic or

surrealistic are regarded as the artist's creation. They give nothing more than what the artists themselves contrive. "The greatest realism", Marguerite Young believes, "is neither plain nor simple but the knowledge that it and the psychic are all mixed up in one illusive pattern. It's hard sometimes to differentiate between the two".<sup>37</sup> Novels, as they are composed of words, can not imitate reality. They can only imitate ways of thinking and speaking about reality, for "realism is conventional which, like all conventions, is never found embodied in a pure state; we always use it with a sense of approximation".<sup>38</sup> Fiction in its modern concept tries to find means by which to become truer to life in all its complexities. Pioneers, like Virginia Woolf, demanded that their fiction must not observe the conventions of plot-construction of early fiction. As a modernist writer, she complained against the Edwardian novelists. She claimed that, "they had not absorbed the lesson, and that their painstaking accumulation of realistic detail was therefore fatally compromised, deprived of authentic life".<sup>39</sup> She found the late Victorian and Edwardian novels inauthentic in clinging to reality. These novelists' modes were unacceptable by the modernists because they did not dig deep in the minds of the individuals.

What Virginia Woolf stressed in her realistic vision was "the subconscious world, the inner world of her characters, dreams, memories and experience run in a chain of thoughts".<sup>40</sup> The modernists exposed the two sides of life in their portraying of the conscious, the subconscious and the psychology of the characters' world, along with the description of the external world.

Hence, what they offer to the reader is an approximation to reality, a mixture of the external and the internal worlds of the characters.

According to this the modernists faced dangers and problems when they wrote their novels. Their enterprise was to give a fictional realism, and as it is based on the so-called stream-of-consciousness, the novels they wrote were plotless or random. But this shapelessness and randomness was claimed to be representative of the modern world with its triviality, sordidness, and absurdity. Donald W. Heiney believes that:

It is inside the human brain that the significant battles of life take place, and that mental conflicts have a subtlety, an intensity, and an importance far beyond what might be expected from mere external examination of human being.<sup>41</sup>

If it is conceived in this way, the idea becomes clear. There is a subconscious world in the individual that became the prevalent power emphasized by the modern authors. When they draw characters, they present them and life according to their reflections or responses to the external world. It becomes clear in the above discussion that in the twentieth century the modern English novel has probed more deeply into the human mind, which is a remarkable shift in the fiction of the period. It is a fact, then, that the modern novel witnessed so many changes in its form and technique that it became very distinctive from the traditional novels of the past. Hence, it is not expected, for instance, that a modern novelist, like Joyce, should write his novel in the manner and style of an eighteenth-century novelist, for this would be considered by all means as conventional or out of the present time writing, when the norm of fiction is rich of both subjectivity and of bold attempts to evoke images, sensations, and mental atmosphere - the large impact of psychology. The following chapters attempt to show



that the seed for this shift can be traced in the work of Laurence Sterne.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Sterne's biography is a collection from the sources listed in the bibliography.

<sup>2</sup>Britannica.Com.Inc. *The Novel in the Eighteenth Century* 23/4/2003, (Internet),p.1 of 4.

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Sanders ' *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup>., ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.318.

<sup>4</sup> George Sherburn and Donald F. Bond ' *The Restoration and Eighteenth Century: [1660-1789 ]*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p.1025.

<sup>5</sup>"Introduction", in James Vinson, ed., *The Novel to 1900* London: Macmillan, 1980), p.4.

<sup>6</sup>Ernest A. Baker, *The History of the English Literature: Intellectual Realism from Richardson to Sterne*, vol.iv (New York: OUP, 1970), p.252.

<sup>7</sup>*Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 21, (London, 1970), p.230.

<sup>8</sup>Robert Barnard, *A Short History of English Literature* (Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), p.79.

<sup>9</sup>For tracing the influences on the modern novel in England, see for example, Boris Ford, ed., *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, vol. 7, (London:Penguin Books, 1967), the section on “New Influences on Fiction”, from an essay by John Holloway, pp.58-61.

<sup>10</sup>See, M. H. Abrams, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, (W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), vol.ii, p.1732.

<sup>11</sup>Jonathan Raban, *The Technique of Modern Fiction*, (London: OUP, 1972), p.35.

<sup>12</sup>M. H. Abrams, p.1732

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.1733

<sup>14</sup>George Woodcock “Introduction”, in James Vinson, ed., *20<sup>th</sup> Century Fiction*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), p.3.

<sup>15</sup>Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day*, (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p.7.

<sup>16</sup>David Daiches, *Virginia Woolf*, (London: OUP, 1945), p.20.

<sup>17</sup>Jonathan Raban, p.57.

<sup>18</sup>Leon Edel , *The Psychological Novel*, (London: OUP, 1961), p.12.

<sup>19</sup>John Peck and Martin Coyle , *Literary Terms and Criticism*, (London: Macmillan, 1984), the chapter on 'The Novel', p.124.

<sup>20</sup>Alan Friedman , *The Turn of the Novel* , (London: OUP, 1970), pp.3-4.

<sup>21</sup>Paul West , *The Modern Novel* , vol. 1 (London: OUP, 1967), p.xii

<sup>22</sup>Andrew Mc Nellie, ed . *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vol.iii, (London, 1988), p.34.

<sup>23</sup>George Watson , *The Literary Critics*, (London: Penguin Books, 1965), p.73.

<sup>24</sup>As quoted by David Daiches , *Virginia Woolf*, p.94.

<sup>25</sup>E. M. Forster , *Two Cheers for Democracy*, (London: Macmillan, 1965), p.228.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.229 .

<sup>27</sup>Jannette Lowen , *Doing Time With Marcel Proust*, (Webmaster@SecularHumanism.org. 9/11/2002), (Internet), p.3 of 3.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>C. Hugh Holman *‘A Handbook to Literature*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: The Bobbs-Merrill, 1980), p.429.

<sup>31</sup>J. A. Cudden *‘A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (Penguin Books, 1979), p.326.

<sup>32</sup>adapted from an article entitled“ *‘Literature’*, the chapter on ‘Novel’, section “Impressionism”, (23/1/2003), (Internet), p.18 of 25.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.19

<sup>34</sup>Ian Watt *‘The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, (Penguin Books, 1977), p.11.

<sup>35</sup>Virginia Woolf *‘The Common Reader*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1948), p.56.

<sup>36</sup> Ralph Fox *‘The Novel and the People*, (London: OUP, 1948), p.59.

<sup>37</sup>Marguerite Young *‘Complex Life and Complex Letters*, (Center for Book Culture. Org. 7/11/2002), (Internet).

<sup>38</sup>David Lodge *‘The Modes of Modern Writing*, (London: OUP., 1979), p.25.

<sup>39</sup>Dhafira Abdullah Al-Azzawi , *Virginia Woolf's Contribution to the Development of the English Novel*, (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Baghdad, 1996), p.56.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p.57.

<sup>41</sup>Donald W. Heiney , *Contemporary Literature*, the section, "The Reaction to Realism", (New York: OUP., 1956), p. 159.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1. *Tristram Shandy* and The Workings of the Mind

Patricia Drechsel Tobin once wrote in her book *Time and the Novel* that "the first English novel to commit such narrative suicide – and thus, a great favorite of the rebellious sons of the modern era – was *Tristram Shandy*". <sup>1</sup>The full title of this novel is "*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*". It gives a hint at the nature of the book. Unlike the life and adventures of the characters in so many novels of his time, Sterne's work focuses in an original way on the picaro of the mind or the intellectual adventures of the central characters. We do not have out-of-door activities, but we have to journey through the central characters' minds and actions, as they shift from one phase to another. Accordingly, the novel does not offer a coherent plot structure in the usual sense. The novel is, among other things, a sort of satire on its own precursors.

The book opens with an account of the begetting of its hero, so it begins before the beginning. It takes the hero a long time to get born,

but the time is most filled in by an account of the conversations of his father and Uncle Toby. The most important structural device is that of association of ideas: instead of limiting himself to one subject, as most writers do, Sterne allows his character's minds to wander freely from one topic to another, as happens in a state of reverie. The result is a superficially chaotic book. Sterne's first book of ***Tristram Shandy*** appeared at a time when Fielding and Richardson had disappeared from the scene. The public was eager for novels, because those that appeared after Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett were, somehow, inferior in quality. When ***Tristram Shandy*** was published, many readers and critics did not consider it as a novel. The severest of them was Thackeray, because it mocked and parodied a great deal. But unexpectedly the tricks and mockery of this novel became celebrated for its selfsame oddity. Much of the dissatisfaction that readers and critics had shown with the novel was that it presented a hero (Tristram) who is not born until the third book. Some chapters are misplaced and chronology is ignored. Above all, the book is largely concerned with incidents that took place before the hero's birth. Although Cervantes and Rabelais stand as influences on the book, the study of John Locke, whose philosophy appears almost on every page, is considered as the most important of all.

Locke's ***Essay Concerning Human Understanding*** (1690), was a critical inquiry into the workings of the human mind. The essence of this theory is that human knowledge is derived from the sensations that our experience presents to us. Henri Fluchere states that:

... Locke's fundamental thesis is that careful examination of what goes on in our minds reveals that ideas ... are furnished by experience, and thus through the medium of the senses. All

knowledge, therefore, and all science derived from the relations we establish with the world by means of our senses.<sup>2</sup>

Sterne's novel was especially influenced by the two sections of Locke's Essay: "Of Duration and Its Simple Modes", which is a discussion of our sense of time as derived from the train of ideas that pass through our minds, and "Of the Association of Ideas". The latter is dedicated to discuss a subject concerning the principle of mental activity.<sup>3</sup>

If examined attentively, *Tristram Shandy* is the first novel to concentrate on the individual's mind. In this novel, we have a single consciousness open before us, and from this consciousness everything derived its form, such as narrative, diction, and syntax. The narrative is determined by Tristram's temperament, and not by any previously agreed upon principles of decorum. Therefore, our initial impression of the work is chaotic and disorderly, for there is the apparent lack of progression in an orderly manner.

Whatever the reader is getting, it is not what the title promises. In other words, there is no activity of rendering details about the life, fortunes or adventures of the hero himself; instead, the focus of attention is shifted to the endless series of episodes, conversations and digressions, in addition to the nature of his family and dealings within each character's inner-self. The lack of progression in the story, for instance, is caused by the abundance of digression, of which it is argued that no writer ever used it more often or more wantonly; yet "Sterne is completely at home and at ease amidst this seeming anarchy".<sup>4</sup>

In this novel, there are innumerable manifestations of Sterne's playfulness and delight in absurdity. Tristram is one of the most important of the processes of the novel. The first thing Sterne deals with is the question of sex, but "throughout the book he treats sex as both ridiculous and a little sad";<sup>5</sup> though he was attacked for his mingling sentimentality with sexual innuendo. It is true that it is only a manifestation of his artistic creativity and his own attitudes to such an aspect and to life as a whole. The novel opens with the story of Tristram's conception, in which Mrs. Shandy interrupts the sexual moment by asking her husband an irrelevant question about the winding of the family clock. The two activities are thus associated in Mrs. and Mr. Shandy's minds:

It was a very unseasonable question at least, ... because it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits, whose business it was to have escorted and gone hand-in-hand with the HOMUNCULUS, and conducted him safe to the place destined for his reception.<sup>6</sup>

The psychological implication of this announcement lies in the belief that the circumstances in which a child is conceived profoundly influence its eventual mind, body, and character. He laments his parents' carelessness, "had they duly consider'd how much depended on what they were then doing...I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world".<sup>7</sup> This, and many other sexual allusions, serves to emphasize the significance of the psychological implications of sex and its relation to life, but not to mock it, as was thought at that time. Sterne also fills his novel with manipulation about "law, science [particularly medicine], history, psychology, even psychiatry".<sup>8</sup> All of these intellectual fields are



presented as being absurd in their dealing with life, when the main characters, like Mr. Shandy, depend on them over and over again.

In so doing Sterne shows that man is absurd, and his absurdity emerges from his sexual behavior, and from his extreme reliance on abstract ideas. Sterne's jokes are part of the comic sadness of the human situation. In his attitudes to this theme and to the theme of time and human consciousness, he became somehow similar, in his spirit, to the spirit of the modern writers. For what he got from Locke "about human loneliness and the relativity of time was not what other men of his century learned from that philosopher".<sup>9</sup>

He writes for the first time in the history of the novel about a man who writes a book, and this man presents, for the reader's inspection, the people who have significance in his life. He tells all of their stories directly and indirectly. For some time this novel was taken for granted to be Sterne's own story, but the fact is that Sterne in this novel gave Tristram a mind that knows all of the happenings in the book, and that this mind is dependent from Sterne's mind. Tristram himself is the subject of his book, as Stephen is the subject of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and his inner-life and opinions are the material that interest him (Tristram) most. This kind of prose has little to do with the other characters' action, but it has a great effect on Tristram's own reflective, impressionistic mind. Pat Rogers, in his analysis of the novel, suggests that:

It is a style of impulse. Delay and acceleration, hiatus and repetition all figure strongly. It is not a prose for rendering a scene straight, but one beautifully calculated to register feelings, effects, impact.<sup>10</sup>

When he came to the novel, Sterne liberated himself from the old structure, plot, and the traditional eighteenth century methods of narration. He brought in *Tristram Shandy* something too new to the eighteenth-century novel to be considered part of it. Pat Rogers remarks that Sterne: “evinced no taste for modern English novel indeed, there is no sign that he knew even the existence of the ‘early masters’ of fiction”.<sup>11</sup> It is worthwhile to mention that, in the twentieth century, the novelists tended to remove the novelist from the novel. That is to say, to put a personage who exists at a different level from the characters. They also attempted to sink entirely in the character they presented. As such, everything is seen through the character’s eyes, and presented in his speech. “James,” Ian A. Gordon writes, “who formulated this new insistence on ‘point of view’ inside the novel, would have recoiled at some of the consequences which have ensued e.g. the presentation of the narrative through childish syntax or illiterate speech-forms”.<sup>12</sup>

In the middle of the 1960’s, another experimental technique appeared, which was called Metafiction or Metanarration or anti-novel. It is based on the fact that, in his novel, the author tries to draw the readers’ attention that he is writing a novel. Metafiction was later called as the Reflexive novel. It is so called, because the narration depends on what is known as the self-conscious narrator. This makes such novels closer to the autobiographical novel in which the author often intervene in the course of the events and comments on what is going on in the narration. It was Sterne who developed this technique when he gave a very rich personality to the voice of the narrator. This narrative voice knows everything in the novel, which attracts the reader.

Hence, it was not until the twentieth century that Sterne was recognized as a model for this technique. A modern example can be John Fowle's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). This novel has two alternative endings, which are consistent with the development of the plot. Its self-conscious nature offers a striking example of the contemporary novelist's preoccupation with such a technique. The modernists tried to extend the characters' speech to mix it with their processes of thought and feeling. So, the storyteller makes his narration long or he makes it short; he indulges in short cuts and digressions. He does this not through the perception of one character, but he is led to present feelings and thought of a group of characters through the stream-of-consciousness technique or interior monologue. Sterne's replacement of the syntax of speech with a verbal transcription of the movement of thought has opened the way to such a technique. This Sternean presentation of inner thought through the non-syntactic language of free association of ideas has been tackled in modern fiction. Tristram Shandy is a character who is in accordance with this notion. What Joyce presented in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, are two characters who take similar creative stands when they, in their own way, revisit the events of their youth in order to explore what has shaped them as humans and as writers.<sup>13</sup>

However, the difference between Sterne and Joyce, as Michael R. Allen believes, is that in Joyce's novel the narrator takes us into the school days of Stephen Dedalus, exploring the mind of a young man who desires to be a poet. While in Sterne's work the hero shows us his life and opinions through his own recollections. But examining their "fictional lives side by side reveals comparisons and contrasts that

richly illuminate the art of writing” in its modern sense. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, *Tristram Shandy*, when compared to the mature use of Joyce’s technique of consciousness, motives and epiphany, seemed rather chaotic and arbitrary or immature to his contemporaries.

## **2.2.The Concept of Time in *Tristram Shandy*.**

In *Tristram Shandy* the events that are widely separate in time accumulate into one another. Although there is no plot, there is a certain kind of organizing principle. This organizing principle lies within Tristram’s mind and consciousness, and not in some series of events that are chronologically ordered. Sterne’s plight, as it is the case with the modern novelists, was how to struggle to put his narrative, composed of past and present into an intelligible form. We can say that he could find a suitable way, though seen chaotic at its time, which is rediscovered to be praiseworthy and interesting. He daringly broke the tyranny of chronological narrative, his setting the entire book inside the mind of his narrator, Tristram.

Time in Sterne’s novel points toward a new order in fiction, “away from social resolutions, away from moral ordering, away from received assumptions of man and his society”. <sup>15</sup> His dissociation of time is the key to his newness, for with time he has broken up the narrative of the eighteenth century, depending on idiosyncrasies. This comes from his apparent whimsicality of presentation, which resulted from his rejection of simple narration of his time in an attempt to render the complexity of the actual state of the human mind as composed of memories, of the present, of the past, and of the future. It is commonly held that unlike

the traditional eighteenth century-novels the essential time within *Tristram Shandy* is inner or subjective. Sterne tried to present a description of how he saw life and wished to transmit it to the printed page as a novel. The result is magnificently modern. In chapter eight Walter Shandy explains the notion of time, saying:

... in our computations of time, we are so used to minutes, hours, weeks, and months – and of clocks, .... Now, whether we observe it or no, ... in every sound man's head, there is a regular succession of ideas of one sort or other, which follow each other in train.... Which follow and succeed one another in our minds at certain distances....<sup>16</sup>

Sterne's explanation of the relative feature of duration of time, though borrowed from Locke, is creative. The critic Peter Alexander illustrates that:

In his demonstration, Locke asserts that the notion of duration is derived from a consciousness of the 'constant and regular' succession of ideas in the mind. He then makes a distinction between this inner reality 'duration' and the abstract measure of it that we call 'time'. But nowhere in the fourteenth chapter of the *Essay* does Locke introduce the idea that the amount of duration perceived by the mind depends on the speed of its train of ideas.<sup>17</sup>

The relation, thus, which is established between Locke's essay and *Tristram Shandy* does not stand if both texts are closely examined. Whereas Locke asserts that there are certain bounds to the quickness and slowness of the succession of ideas, Sterne's view shows that the irregular varying speed of the train of ideas determines the amount of duration perceived by the mind, a notion that does not

agree so much with Locke's conception of the succession of ideas as being 'constant and regular'.<sup>18</sup>

Sterne's treatment of time surpassed Locke's theories and gave rise to the complex idea of time shift in the twentieth century. Time is not a single mode or a one-dimensional notion. It depends entirely on human consciousness. The outward events in Sterne's novel are of no real significance. They are important in shaping the consciousness of Tristram. What he did was to report the associational life as well as the physical life of Tristram Shandy.

Thus, his work seems to go back in time or as he calls it "digressions". Yet, this seemingly digressive work is also progressive, because as Benjamin H. Lehman puts it, "what is digressive under the aspect of clock time [the physical life] is progression under the aspect of being time (the associational life)".<sup>19</sup> In this novel there is no such a thing as plot or beginning, middle and end, a method most appeared in ***Tristram Shandy***, for this novel takes up its stand right away in opposition to current tradition. Sterne starts his novels with a sudden revelation of what goes on in the heroes' minds. He had his own method in starting his novels. Tristram says that, "if you should think me somewhat sparing of my narrative on my first setting out, - bear with me, - and let me tell my story my own way".<sup>20</sup>

Starting a novel suddenly and abruptly in the middle of a conversation or action brought a new phenomenon that was essentially the first challenge thrown to a literary convention. In short, Sterne's ***Tristram Shandy*** is conceived to be a fusion between thought and action. The main interest in Locke's essay is that life is lived in the mind. The old conception of the microcosm is important to

Sterne, “as it could have been to Donne; and Sterne may well be termed a metaphysical novelist. We hear his frequent echoes in those metaphysical writers of our own times, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce”.<sup>21</sup> Before Sterne, no English writer had attempted to write a novel out of the opinions and consciousness of a character. The center of interest is shifted from the attention of telling the story of a life in its superficial reality to the intellectual rendering of a character. Hence, it can be argued that Sterne is perhaps the first writer to introduce the psychological process in which the time-scheme depends primarily on human consciousness and his responses.

According to the microcosm vision, each living person in the novel is also a microcosm. And each person (microcosm) has his own time dimension, enclosed inside his mind and separate from others’. The life that is lived in this novel is mostly lived inside. Memory is an important factor in the novel. It is originated in the past but it is conceived in the present by the characters, especially Uncle Toby. While the narrator advances in time in his narration, he sometimes stops in the middle of a sentence and takes the readers to another place to bring before them any other character. This mode is called as the principle of simultaneousness;<sup>22</sup> while story time is not moving on during the suspension of the narration, the people in the story remain there available to be resumed again. They are only in a suspended activity. In other words, time is left a standstill and then is found again precisely where it was, and as it was.<sup>23</sup> After receiving his wound, Uncle Toby becomes motionless, his life and activities come to an end. He is seen living in the past, as if the motion of his life has stopped on that fatal day. His life turned to a closed world of memories.

As such, we see the characters in the novel act and speak as they do because Tristram records what he remembers in due course. The effect is to give a more realistic account of the world as perceived by man, and this is the effect of Proust. Proust insists that it “is not *The Remembrance of Things Past*, one immense digression into the mind’s life, while the physical hand suspend a madeline over a cup of tea? Just everything in the work goes on in the mind of Moi, the reporter, so in Sterne’s work everything goes on in the mind of Tristram”.<sup>24</sup> In addition to Proust, the employment of time by Sterne has been seen as similar to that of Mann, Woolf and Joyce. In a manner similar to modern novelists, Sterne creates Tristram by rooting him in the context of the past, a past that is portrayed as important as the present. R. F. Brissenden, in his book, ***Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade***, thinks that Sterne’s technique in this novel is historic and dramatic.<sup>25</sup> The reader is never allowed to forget that he is being told about the characters in the novel by someone who knows them, other than the author of the novel as it was the case in all previous works. The members of the Shandy Hall are distanced from us in time, they are remembered, “we hear their voices, we see them in action – we follow the odd cross-currents of Walter’s stream of thought, and catch the infection of Toby’s excitement and delight in his mimic battlefield”.<sup>26</sup> Both of them exist, as do the whole characters, as ‘remembered’ persons.

As Tristram sets out to tell his life and opinions, he and the other characters speak one thing that reminds them of another with which it has no apparent, logical connection; so they digress, because a memory comes to their minds. Here Sterne seems closer to Virginia Woolf’s technique of stream-of-consciousness. He shows, in effect, to



the reader how man does not think logically or orderly, and that one thought does not necessarily follow another in an ordered sequence. In short, when one thinks and remembers at the same time, this is what happens.<sup>27</sup> Hence, *Tristram Shandy* is not celebrated as a novel of actions. It is rather a book about opinions and reflections about man's actions. Brissenden asserts that every novelist who is more than a mere storyteller reporter must be to some extent a man of sentiment. He believes that James, Proust, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett could be described as sentimental novelists, for they are interested in the individuality of their characters, and they examine states of mind rather than simple action.<sup>28</sup> The things that Sterne introduces into his picture of life at Shandy Hall are often in themselves slight and trivial; but they are usually of great importance in the lives of the characters. The hinges of the door that Mr. Shandy always promises to repair remain so till the end of the novel. "It is not the squeaking hinge in itself which is important", Brissenden states, "but the effect which this trifle has on Walter's mind – just as the winding of the clock takes on an added significance because of the train of associations which it sets up in the mind of Mrs. Shandy".<sup>29</sup> In his awareness of things which are of trifling importance in the eyes of others may be the cause of misery or retrospection, and consequently, of a big book out of small reflections. *Tristram Shandy*, in this case, is a material that is, at once, a fragment and a whole, like the invention of Virginia Woolf, which shows that human imagination is a mixture of hope, fear, memory, past and present at a given moment. So, the treatment of time and reflections through human mind is arbitrary and not necessarily ordered. In such novels as *Tristram Shandy*:

Events unfold as they present themselves to  
Tristram's mind; the length of particular

episodes depends on the numbers of memories, feelings, and ideas a given action or conversation evokes. The smallest incidents may thus be whole chapters in the telling. The fluidity of Sterne's transitions from one subject to the next has encouraged comparisons of his method to stream-of-consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, Sterne's method shifts from the exterior to the interior, whereas the traditional 18<sup>th</sup> century method seems to concentrate on adventures and external incidents. The narrative of the twentieth century is just like this in its interweaving with psychological analysis and speculation to an extreme degree. As in Virginia Woolf's fiction, the psychological speculation and the analysis of the characters are focused on in one way or another. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Peter Walsh's mind works loosely from the present to the past within the frame of his psychology:

Remember my party, remember my party, said Peter Walsh as he stepped down the street, speaking to himself rhythmically ... oh these parties? He thought; Clarissa's parties ... And there he was, this fortunate man, himself reflected in the plate-glass window of motor-car .... All India lay behind him .... The way she said 'Here is my Elizabeth' that annoyed him. Why not 'Here's Elizabeth' simply? It was insincere.<sup>31</sup>

This rambling, reflective style in which the exploration of characters' states of mind is more important than the relation of chronology, is one of the most notable characteristics of the early twentieth century fiction. James Reeves believes that it was Laurence Sterne who originated this type of modern fiction.<sup>32</sup> This, no doubt, associates him with the twentieth-century writing. But Sterne's modernity also seems to include his preoccupation with the outstanding 20<sup>th</sup> century theme of alienation.

### **2.3. Alienation as a Modern Theme in *Tristram Shandy*:**

The point, then, which is in question in *Tristram Shandy*, is Tristram's effort to give a verbal form to a succession of states of consciousness, emotional and intellectual, as they are experienced by him in the past and at present. He writes the events of the past as they come to his mind at the present moment.

Nevertheless, what strikes the reader as being modern in the novel is the theme that focuses on the state of the inner-loneliness or isolation of the characters, and their lack of true human communication. These themes are reached at through Sterne's presentation of man as a physiological mechanism; i.e., he is entirely under the influence of his hobby: the pursuits that interest him to the point of obsession. There are many examples in the novels that denote to this theme. Walter's argument about Tristram's crushed nose at birth and how this casual accident will influence the psychological structure of the crushed-nosed personality for the rest of his life. Toby's wound, which he received in the groin at the time of the siege of Namur, affected him from inside and made him impotent and desperate. A world of frustration is thus presented through these and many other incidents.

In writing his life and opinions, Tristram, the narrator, tries in an indirect way to draw the readers' attention to the reasons why he has got his crushed or maimed nose. That is why his story begins *ab Ovo*

as he calls it, which means from the egg. He does not only begin his story with the beginning of his life, but he begins it even before the beginning, from his conception rather than his birth. He tries to justify his having a crushed nose when he goes back in his story to the marriage settlement between his parents. Mrs. Shandy could choose to bear her children in London, when she would find superior medical care. It also states that if she made the trip to London on any false alarm, the husband (Walter) could require her to stay in the country on the next occasion. This is another reason that caused his misfortune, for Mrs. Shandy, since she cannot have a famous doctor from London for her labor, insists on employing the midwife, Dr. Slop, to deliver the baby. But with his modern delivering tool crushes Tristram's nose. Tristram also introduces his father's theory of names as being another impact that foretells his wrongly baptized name. This also becomes an obsession for the narrator.

We can say that Sterne brought to the novel for the first time and to some degree of significance the kind of characters who are isolated and alienated into their own worlds, just like the true state of man in life. This can simply be traced through his manipulation of what he calls the 'hobby-horse' or the obsession. There is nothing inherently sinister about these hobby-horses; most people have them, but Sterne dramatized the way they can lead into a state of total self-absorption, when they become such a constant preoccupation that everything in the characters' world is narrowed to a single consuming idea.<sup>33</sup> The eighteenth-century authors and people thought that the effect of highly intellectualized thinking produced insanity.<sup>34</sup> Many authors avoided the dangers of solipsism.

Sterne, on the contrary, was not against this norm; he developed it. To him, solipsism reflected the normal human condition, for humans characteristically perceive the universe as self-absorbed individuals.<sup>35</sup> But unlike Locke, he thought that rational discourse was an unreliable means with which to achieve understanding or communication among solipsistic individuals. *Tristram Shandy* provides a group of such characters who attempt to meet and communicate with one another, but who continually fail to do what they wish. Brissenden describes this comedy saying:

The comedy of the Shandy brothers arises from the fact that it is their hobby-horse, the things they would most dearly love to explain to each other, which always obstruct their attempts to establish that intellectual rapport which they both desire.<sup>36</sup>

Both Toby and Walter have their own hobby-horses. They are seen as ridiculous, because their obsessions with a machine-like nature are constantly coming into conflict. Through them the novel demonstrates that communication between individuals, like in a modern novel, seldom occurs. The problems that excited Sterne's interest are philosophical problems, such as communication, meaning, identity and time, and his approach to them seems curiously modern. "He clearly belongs, in one aspect of his writing, with the perpetual avant-garde of literature, with Joyce, Beckett, Nabokov, Ionesco, Borges and the wilder guerrilla groups like concrete poets and Dadaists".<sup>37</sup>

Toby's ruling passion is for military terms, models of fortification and military tactics. He was a captain in the army, but he was wounded, and thus retired for four years to his bed at his brother's

house in London, where he was frequently called upon by sympathetic visitors. They usually wanted to hear the story of his injury, a fact that caused him some sort of psychological pain and panic. He always kept studying a map of Namur in a hard attempt to find as well as to clarify the exact spot where he was wounded. But he tries in vain to express himself to the inquisitive visitors. The study of maps and military treatises became an obsession. This can also be seen as a way to escape from his bitter reality. Uncle Toby becomes so absorbed in his hobby that he is never able to think of anything else for very long. Any word in a conversation that can be taken in a military sense is so understood by him. This makes communication between him and other people difficult, because of his inevitable failure to put his desires and psychological impulses into clear and expressive words. In modern fiction the theme of alienation can take different shapes. In some of George Orwell's novels we find certain characters prefer to isolate themselves from society. It is a kind of a compelling isolation, that is, the character feels himself compelled to stand out or aloof as an individual against some of the hardness and injustice of the world.

Such isolation can be healing for the character.<sup>38</sup> But in Orwell's novel, *Burmese Days* (1933), we have a character, Flory, that can be associated to a certain degree with Uncle Toby. Flory has a psychological conflict similar to Toby's. He is unable to express himself to his fellows or put his desire into words with his friend Elizabeth. His plight is physical, represented by a birthmark on his face. This mark distorts his face and generates a psychological complex inside making him unable to think himself a normal person, and thus he is forced to be isolated and helpless to bridge the gap

between him and other people. Uncle Toby almost has the same problem: his physical distortion weakens him psychologically.

His brother Walter's ruling passion is for abstract theories of names and noses. He is a man whose reactions to life are warped and determined by humor based on his obsession. He always tries to force experience into accord with his theories. His theories of names and noses are of great consequence to his hopes for his son's future. But Mr. Shandy's adherence to his principles constantly leads him into defeat and disappointment. In their conversation their hobbyhorses do make their communication difficult. They are men who perceived the world in an intensely subjective manner. Furthermore, Sterne's characters are life-like. If he "delights in odd behavior, he wants to know what lies behind it".<sup>39</sup> Uncle Toby tries to tell visitors precisely what has happened to him to justify his present miserable condition. He continually brings a map of Namur, then he consults his military books on military science:

When my uncle Toby got his map of Namur to his mind, he began immediately to apply himself, and with the utmost diligence, to the study of it, ... it behoved him to take the nicest care to make himself so far master of his subject, as to be able to talk upon it without emotion... he was enabled, by the help of some marginal documents...together with Gobesius's military architecture and pyroballology... to form his discourse with passable perspicuity, and before he was two full months gone,----he was right eloquent upon it.<sup>40</sup>

The psychological implications in the story of Uncle Toby and Widow Wadman bear another witness to this theme. As usual, Toby relates to Widow Wadman the cause and effect of his wound, in a

desperate attempt not to make her think that he is impotent from birth, but there is a real and important past accident that made him look so.

When he perceives that her (obsession) with his wound involves not merely a story and map but his own private body, we suddenly see a gap emerging when Toby skips the subject frustratingly. Widow Wadman is only interested in the *where* of Toby's wound, which prevents her from understanding his longed-for aim; and that is why her ruling passion creates an unbridged gap between them. The episode alludes to Toby's actual physical and psychological impotency. Sterne makes it clear that the despairing reflection on human isolation is apparent though the characters are talking to each other.

In another example, the difficulty the characters face in understanding and explaining themselves to one another appears in Toby's speech to Dr Slop:

'I wish, Dr Slop', quoth my Uncle Toby (repeating his wish for Dr Slop a second time...) ----, 'I wish, Dr Slop', quoth my Uncle Toby, 'You had seen what prodigious armies we had in Flanders'. My Uncle Toby's wish did Dr Slop a disservice...----Sir, it confounded him----and thereby putting his ideas first into confusion, and then to flight... Dr Slop did not understand the nature of this defense, he was puzzled with it....<sup>41</sup>

Dr. Slop, in his turn, could not understand the significance behind Toby's wish, because his ruling passion, or obsession, is in a different channel. Dr. Slop is interested in all that is scientific, particularly in the field of his specialty as a doctor (man-midwife). He always relates things to his own world. He uses words that contain terms borrowed from his job. The two brothers, and Dr Slop with them, though



continually are intimate and share the same affectation, they inhabit different mental spheres which collide sometimes. D. W. Jefferson, in this respect argues that:

More perhaps than any other novelist before Virginia Woolf, who may have learnt from him [Sterne], he succeeds in capturing the atmosphere that is created when two or three people, ostensibly in conversation together, are in fact thinking their own thoughts and maintaining a rather tenuous contact with each other.<sup>42</sup>

Walter Shandy uses a rational discourse to explain through his ruling passion the name Tristram. He tries to show the significance of noses and to overcome his depression at Tristram's crushed nose. Walter believes that a name has an important positive or negative influence on its owner's destiny – this is part of his theory that the outer appearances of man's body are associated with his personality. According to his theory of names, a great name like Trismegistus or Archimedes will lead its owner to greatness, while a name like Nyky or Simkin must infallibly lead to failure. If his son is to be christened Trismegistus, he may enter life happily, “ This Trismegistus continued my father... was the greatest (Toby) of all earthly beings - he was the greatest king-the greatest law-giver -the greatest philosopher-and the greatest priest...”.<sup>43</sup>

But the child has been mistakenly named Tristram. This name ranks very low in Mr. Shandy's system, and it is a name he detests. Mr. and Mrs. Shandy, though a husband and wife, are different beings; and thus, it is difficult for them to establish any communication between them. Mrs. Shandy supplies some of the finest comedy in the book by remaining indifferent to her husband's theoretical world. It is

one of the great vexations of Mr. Shandy's life that, however hard he tries, he fails to engage her in an argument. Mrs. Shandy is presented as a fool with whom her husband is unable to conduct a rational discourse. The novel opens with her silly question: "*Pray, my dear, ... have you not forgot to wind up the clock? \_ Good G – cried my father, ...Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?*"<sup>44</sup>, and when the novel ends, there is a story about Mr. Shandy's 'Bull' which he keeps for the service of the parish. Mrs. Shandy is listening to this story being argued by Toby, Obadiah and Dr Slop. But she seems to understand nothing of it, "L – d said my mother, what is all this story about?".<sup>45</sup> What Sterne managed in his manipulation of the hobbyhorse and the physical defects in man emerge from a psychological angle. Toby's physical wound in his groin left a deep mark and afflicted him from inside. As a result, all the characters in the novel are isolated from one another, simply because their obsessions do not coincide with each other.

When he is given the almost the central emphasis, Toby becomes, as Richard A. Lanham suggests, "the model for today's private man. The pleasure in private life has more and more drawn from a carefully controlled virtuosity, from one kind of hobby or another".<sup>46</sup> Like Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Sterne stresses the primacy of mental and subjective experience. Thus, as Lanham says, ***Tristram Shandy***, "is the novel of private life. Public events are few".<sup>47</sup> The characters' various obsessions alienate them and make each individual live a separate mental life that can never be shared with others.

## **2.4. Association of Ideas as the Framework of Stream- of- Consciousness:**

The Stream-of-consciousness of the modern fiction, as mentioned before, seems to be the result of what Sterne managed to do with the principle of the association of ideas. Sterne's transition from one subject to the next is done when everything presented in the novel assumes an audience. Tristram addresses the readers in order to make him or her understand or be aware of how to read his book. But though this principle is not as deep as the stream-of-consciousness, the fact remains that Sterne, without realizing or knowing, of course, brought a technique that made its outstanding mark in the fiction to come. Sternean principle of the association of ideas, like the stream-of-consciousness technique, seeks to record the random flow of thoughts, reactions and impressions through the character's mind, and both have the conscious as a stage for their currency. So, by definition, both methods try to get inside or within the mind. The result is that the characters in such novels lack a definite outline and rarely connect with things outside or external to themselves. The metaphor of 'the stream' is similar to the method of association. Ideas occur to the consciousness in an irrational and associational way, as they enter it in the stream of a character's thoughts.<sup>48</sup>

For instance, trying to take off his wig with his right hand Mr. Shandy stretches his left hand to pull a handkerchief from his right pocket at the same time as he is arguing with Uncle Toby:

...So when my Uncle Toby discovered the transverse zigzaggery of my father's approaches towards it, it instantly brought into his mind those he had done duty in...---- the idea of which drew off his attention so entirely from the subject in

debate, that he had got his right hand to the bell to bring up Trim, to go and fetch his map of Namur, and his compasses and sector along with it, to measure the returning angles of the traverses of that attack, - but particularly of that one, which he received his wound upon his groin.<sup>49</sup>

What the title of *Tristram Shandy* suggests is the life and opinions, but what the readers find in it are episodes that are full of endless associations of ideas from the present to the past and so on. In the same manner, the overall principle of Virginia Woolf's novels, *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, is the idea of a trip to a lighthouse, and a walk through London streets to a flower shop, yet there is tension in these works among the characters' isolated streams of consciousness. In *To the Lighthouse* the events flow with Mrs. Ramsay, who sits on the terrace reading a story to her son, James. The words of the story occupy part of her consciousness, but simultaneously she thinks of Mr. Charmichael and the rumor that he was addicted to drugs, and she thinks of the marriage of other two characters.

The shared principle and point of view of the stream-of-consciousness and the association of ideas is that the human mind is complex and chaotic, where the novelist tries to find or create an order and meaning in the confusion of experience.<sup>50</sup> The associational or whimsical association of ideas is, thus, irrational, and thus seems to be as intuitive as the modern stream-of-consciousness is. This vogue is also recognized as the source of Mrs. Shandy's inappropriate question about the clock, and it is the mainspring of Sterne's characterization of Uncle Toby, who associates any topic that arises with his military hobbyhorse. The eccentricity of sequence throughout the book is

frequently a result of this irrational connection the characters make and the misunderstandings that thus arise. Even Tristram is under the principle of the association of ideas. In his search for a truer registering of experience, Sterne anticipated just the twentieth-century dissatisfaction with sequential narration. The story of Trim's misadventure with the garden bridge, for instance, occurs to Tristram in connection with Toby's misunderstanding and association of ideas of Obadiah's mention of a bridge in the kitchen, and he debates with himself whether to bring it in here or later when he plans to tell us of Uncle Toby's courting the Widow Wadman.

Sterne's apparent whimsicality of presentation can be here seen not whimsy, but as a highly calculated rejection of simple narration in an attempt to render the complexity of the actual memories of man. In matters of sentiment, it was a revolutionary and far-reaching idea in Sterne's work. The waywardness of thought of Sterne is thus emphasized, especially the idea that the subjective successions of ideas reflect the mind in its hidden operations, underneath the appearance of reason.

### **2.5. The Linguistic Structure of *Tristram Shandy*:**

Sterne's modernity is also detected in his unique handling of language and syntax in his novel. Like his predecessors, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Montaigne, his use of words has special powers. But we have his inventory vocabulary, which is rich with colour and denotation in the modern sense. Language, as used by him, conveys a quality that approaches closer the quality of speech than mere ordered words and sentences. In their stream-of-consciousness novels, the modern novelists developed a language that borders on the quality of

speech. This is because the content of a character's consciousness is composed of ideas, thoughts, sensations, etc., and these must be conveyed in a language that is closer to speech than to the style of either essay or narrative.<sup>51</sup> The effect of Sterne's language has a richer reality than it appears to represent, or to be compared to the language of James Joyce. One of many examples of Sterne's language that reveals the nature of speech in his work, is in the episode of Dr. Slop as he is trying to untie the knots that Obadiah made in the strings of his bag:

Pox take the fellow! I shall never get the knots untied as long as I live.... Lend me your penknife---- I must e'en cut the knots at last - - - - - pugh! - - -Psha- - -Lord! I have cut my thumb.... Curse the fellow ----... I wish the scoundrel hanged---- I wish he was shot ----I wish all the devils in hell had him for a blockhead ----.<sup>52</sup>

An episode describing Tristram in a boat that is heading from London to Paris, describes the quality of speech clearly:

- When shall we get to land? Captain-they have hearts like stones – O, I am deadly sick! – Reach me that thing, boy – 'tis the most discomfiting sickness – I wish I was at the bottom – Madam! How is it with you? Undone! un – o! undone! Sir – what the first time? – No, 'tis the second, third, sixth.... sir, ----- hey-day ---- what a trampling overhead! Cabin boy! What's the matter?<sup>53</sup>

As long as Sterne's employment of language has the quality of speech that follows or coincides with the mode and rhythm of his instant recollections, then it ignores grammar. The internal pain, anger and other feelings are also mixed with one's stream utterances. His sentences are sometimes halting in narration and separate by dashes

and dots. Like Joyce, Sterne is an innovator in syntax. A closer examination suggests that he uses words and expressions that look meaningless, but at the same time reflect the effect of the sound of an object or the voice of a certain character. Moving in a chaise in a street, Tristram describes the sound of the chaise and its driver's whip: "CRACK, crack – crack, crack – crack, crack – so this is Paris! quoth I (continuing in the same mood ) – and this is Paris – humph Paris cried I, repeating the name the third time - ... ”<sup>54</sup>

In the same manner Joyce's auditory coinages in *Ulysses* bears the same form. "Bloom's cat mews", Hugh Kenner writes, "and Joyce writes out the sound: "Mrkgnao!" Davy Byrne yawns, "liiii-chaaaaaach". The paperfolding machine speaks in its own way: "sltt".<sup>55</sup> He also argues that the dictionary gives no help to an author or a reader who wants to register and get the meaning of such words and vocabulary. It is a divorce between the 'printing -case language', and the normal use of it in literature; it is the creation of human speech. It is a shift from the visual to the vocal and auditory manifestations of language.<sup>56</sup> Another example of Sterne's use of the shift from the visual to the vocal and auditory is the conversation between the muleteer and his daughter Margarita in chapter twenty two of volume seven:

Get on with you, said the abbess. ----Wh----ysh-ysh-yah- cried Margarita. Sh---a- shu-u-shu---u-sh—aw- shawed the abbess. Whu-v-w-whew-w-w-whuved Margarita, pursing up her sweet lips betwixt a hoot and a whistle. Thump-thump-obstreperated the abbess of Andouilletts with the end of her gold-headed cane... The old mule let a f----.<sup>57</sup>

If we consider further the nature of the abbess and Margarita's meaningless words as 'bou' and 'ger', we are suddenly drawn to sense the power of the absurd language of Samuel Beckett's work, such as, *Waiting for Godot*. Like Vladimir and Estragon, the abbess and his daughter Margarita are seen as such:

...Therefore, my dear daughter, continued the  
abbess of Andouilletes- I will say bou, and thou  
shalt say ger; and then alternately, as there is  
no more sin in fou than in bou-Thou shalt say  
fou-and I will come in...with ter ...  
Abbess, Bou.. bou.. bou..  
Margarita,----ger,... ger,.. ger.  
Margarita, Fou..fou..fou.  
Abbess,---- ter,.. ter,.. ter.<sup>58</sup>

As the above stated examples reveal, Sterne is trying to reproduce in this method, not only the movement of speech, but also the rhythm of the character's thinking. The characters are indulged in what can be described as interior monologues. These monologues "are often made up of a string of statements, clauses, phrases, single words, parentheses and exclamations, designed to transcribe the 'pre-grammatical' sequences of free association".<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, in the middle of the twentieth century, the Theatre of the Absurd appeared as a result of the destructive World Wars I and II. It represented the true state of modern man after these two wars. The Theatre of the Absurd pictured the absurdity of the human condition as it was found in reality and stressed the meaninglessness of man's search for meaning in life. The Absurdist, like Beckett, also stressed the futility of language and presented man in a tragic-comic way. This movement, thus, concentrated on man as an isolated being in an



indifferent society. Then again, like Samuel Beckett's characters, Sterne's Uncle Toby, Walter Shandy, Mrs. Shandy, Dr. Slope and Trim are frequently presented in grotesquely absurd episodes. They represent the comic-tragic condition of the individuals who desperately try to reach each other through futile conversations, and thus are caught into situations where they find themselves at loss and use absurd words and expressions.

Sterne's style is also held to be colloquial, i.e., he wrote, as he or the characters would talk. It is a modern use of an imitation of ordinary speech to suggest the way the individual character thinks, in which there is a slight irregularity of thought and lack of grammar,<sup>60</sup> so as to make it look spontaneous and natural. *Tristram Shandy* is also full of blank, black or marbled pages, typography and dashes. Marjorie Boulton in his book, *The Anatomy of the Novel*, concludes that, "in Sterne we find many technique used in later experimental novels, either well developed, or hinted at in passing".<sup>61</sup> Among them are typography and visual devices to establish the aspect of language as a medium for a visual communication, fancy use of capitals and italics, unusual punctuation, footnotes and non-alphabetical notation such as a few bars of music or drawing.

The visual devices are important in the novel. Sterne was interested in painting, and he was a painter. But his manipulation of such visual devices is more than mere interest in paintings and painters; rather it has a linguistic significance. The visual device focuses the reader's attention from imaginative engagement with the text to the book itself,<sup>62</sup> i.e. it enforces that the book has been written by the self-conscious narrator (Tristram), which in turn enhances Sterne's contribution to the modern norm of Metafiction.

When Corporal Trim flourishes his stick, for example, we are given not words but a twirling line on the page. Tristram represents his action visually rather than linguistically. This technique stands as another influential contribution to the twentieth-century novel because it gives it its pictorial trait.<sup>63</sup> Joyce, Boulton mentions, provides the most spectacular collection of such style and technique. Sterne also uses various semantic devices in his novel, such as puns, onomatopoeia, exploitation of ambiguities, word games, puzzles, foreign words, misspellings, and so on.

Technically, Laurence Sterne's innovative invention in the process of using language, as described above, is in parallel to the filmic technique in modern times. He presents chapters with different significance and length. They are written in accordance with how important the commentary is to the episode under narration. There are many characteristic episodes in the novel that look astonishingly cinematic or filmic. These episodes are sometimes halting in narration without bothering about grammatical norms. They would pick up incidents and when these incidents grow, the sentences linger with digressions, or they may disappear, and then are suddenly resumed and continued at the end of some paragraph or in a next chapter. In chapter twelve of volume one, for instance, Mr. Shandy asks Toby a question, which holds forth, and in chapter six of volume two, Mr. Shandy's question is resumed again and followed by Toby's answer.

As in this example, Sterne often presents incidents that are broken in the mid-course when some reflection arises to intervene between what is being presented and what consequences these incidents bring. In other words, when an incident calls for a commentary or a memory, the sentences break or dislocate. Thus, the

use of flashbacks and verbal images in certain episodes and scenes gives this novel a trait resembling to some extent the modern technique of film-making. Sterne through Tristram takes us from one scene to the next with vividness. This style created what seemed to the readers of the time as a kind of a formal disorder. But, to examine such disorderliness in the light of the technique of modern film-making or writing a novel, places ***Tristram Shandy*** in a position which is totally different from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century works in general. However, Sterne relies on a mixture of dramatic and narrative presentation

As in Joyce's ***Ulysses***, portions of dialogue are set out as if in a play. Sterne also uses the stage directions in this novel, especially in the use of lifting and dropping the curtain. In chapters nine and ten there are episodes that hold Toby and Mr. Shandy in the middle of the stairs, as they are awaiting Mrs. Shandy to give birth to Tristram:

What chapter of chances, said my father, turning himself about upon the first landing, as he and my Uncle Toby were going downstairs...; and for ought I know, as my father and my Uncle Toby are in talking humor, there may be as many chapters as steps... A sudden impulse comes across- drop the curtain, Shandy-I drop it- strike a line here across the paper, Tristram- I strike it... so there, friend you have got my father and my Uncle Toby off the stairs, and seen them to bed. - And how did you manage it? – you dropped a curtain at the stairs fort...<sup>64</sup>

The above quotation reveals the technique that Sterne uses in order to control the characters' moves: he may stop them in their tracks or movements in the middle of speech and action. He may make them

start to move again to finish what they started some pages earlier. Like in a cinematic scene he made his father and Uncle Toby seen downstairs without describing what had happened in the time that elapsed in their movement down the stairs. John Butt, discussing Sterne's style and technique, states:

Young readers to-day are apt to take to Sterne, easily with delight, sailing over the obstacles that impeded the approach of an older generation. They find him a fresh and modern voice... His quick changes and his fooleries do not tease them... his calculated discontinuity is a natural language to those who twiddle the knobs of the wireless and watch on the screen the changing angles of the camera... Sterne, in short, is more congenial to this generation than to their grand parents.<sup>65</sup>

Another method of Sterne's narration is a kind of narrative known as interactive narrative. Interactive narrative is based on the fact that literature, and novel in particular, involves direct participation of the reader, narrator and narration as a whole. The reader must understand whatever is written in the work, whether symbols or anything else and try to complete the meaning of that work. The writer must anticipate and welcome the reader's participation in creating his work. Thus, the writer must create a work that contains a world in which both writer and reader - and not just writer- can reside.<sup>66</sup>

Narrative, by definition, refers to the past. It is an account of events which have already taken place, even though the verb tense may be present. Interactive narrative deals with an event that is happening now. It is an account of an event in waiting. The reader finds himself trying to intervene and involve himself with the events. He does not know what will happen next, so he is always attracted to the

events in the story and thus the accounts of events become his experience. In other words, Sterne realizes that the prime medium of true understanding resides in the identity between the reader and the work he is reading. The film on the screen creates a similar effect. It is this direct observation of life's facts and characters' engagement with life that is held as the prime medium of understanding of any written work by the reader. Interactive narrative is closely linked to our reality in the way that our consciousness is constantly coping with memories, plans, thoughts, etc. It is undertaken in films. It shows that we move from one mental experience to the next. Sterne's digressive narrative serves as shots in films. Seen in this way, the digression from the main shot through other images and back to the main shot again is common in the cinema, and is basically employing the same methods of digressions in *Tristram Shandy*. This linear unit of cinema, which is a simple "A – B – A shot structure"<sup>67</sup>, as Sean Murphy calls it, has an enormous capacity for manipulation within the so-called interactive narrative in its modern form.

Thus, instead of a beginning, middle, and end, we have an extraordinary fluid narrative with a highly complex time-scheme; and instead of a focus on the action of Tristram's life, we get snapshots of his mind. Consequently, we can feel that the sequence of events is not ordered. If we consider Sterne's novel as shots, we may say that when the A shot disappears, the B shot appears, then after an appropriate period of narration, the A shot reappears once again, just to disappear when the B shot reappears, and so on. There are jumps from the present incidents under narration to an earlier time in the story; a momentary interrupted narrative line. The scattered lines of narrative might be taken as elements chaotic in their outward shape,

but as meaningful and astonishing when they collide and interweave with each other, for “the story just like the mind, must be constantly in flux”.<sup>68</sup> In the same manner, Sterne uses several markers in this novel that strike the reader as filmic.

These language markers can be objects, phrases or gestures that help the reader to keep his attention to the narrative. Such interrupted gestures are Toby’s gesture with his pipe that is resumed several chapters later, from Book one, chapter twenty one, to Book two, chapter six. The use of these markers, which denote a continuity of place, has a direct correlation in the cinema. In this respect, the scenario,<sup>69</sup> and Sterne’s digressive method are alike.

What makes the notion of interactive narrative in ***Tristram Shandy*** is the fact that Sterne always tends to address the reader as Mr., Mrs., Sir, and so on. He is actually inviting the reader to take part in what he is presenting in order to search for the meaning of this existence. ***Tristram Shandy***, like ***Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man***, shows that a literary art should invite the reader into its world of symbols, enabling him to recognize voices, people, places, events and things. As such, “the writer who looks within to look out, like Tristram, will create a rich literature that invites another participant to complete the creation”.<sup>70</sup>

**NOTES**





<sup>1</sup> Patricia Drechsel Tobin , ***Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative***, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Fluchere , ***Laurence Sterne: From Tristram to Yorick***, (London: OUP, 1965), p.49.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid .

<sup>4</sup> D.W. Jefferson , ***Laurence Sterne***, (London: Longmans Green, 1968), p.13.

<sup>5</sup> David Daiches , ***A Critical History of English Literature***, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989), p.734.

<sup>6</sup> Graham Petrie, ed , ***The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman***, (Penguin Books, 1967), p.36, chapter 11, Vol. 1. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.1

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Ricks“ ‘Introduction” to ***The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy***, p.16.

<sup>9</sup>David Daiches, p.735 .

<sup>10</sup>Pat Rogers , ***The Augustan Vision***, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), pp.89-90.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.290.

<sup>12</sup> Ian A Gordon , ***The Movement of English Prose*** , (London: Longmans), p. 167.

<sup>13</sup>Michael R. Allen“ ‘Avoiding Pathological Literature: writer, symbol and Audience in Sterne and Joyce”, *The Ampersand*, 2001, 8/9/2002, (Internet), p. 5 of 20.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid .

<sup>15</sup> Frederick R. Karl , ***A Reader’s Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century***, (London: Thomas and Hudson, 1975), p.210.

<sup>16</sup>Tristram Shandy, p.84.

<sup>17</sup>“A Source of Sterne’s Conception of Time”, a section from Peter Alexander, ed., **The Review of English Studies**, (London: Dawson and Sons, 1967), p.180.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.180.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin H. Lenham, “Of Time, Personality and the Author”, an essay in John Traugott, ed., **Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays**, (Printice-Hall: Englewood Cliff, 1968), p.26.

<sup>20</sup> **Tristram Shandy**, p.15

<sup>21</sup>Jean-Jacques Mayoux “Variations on the Time-Scheme”, in Howard Anderson, ed., **Tristram Shandy**, (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), p.572.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.574 .

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.476.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin H. Lenham, p.26.

<sup>25</sup> R. F. Brissenden . **Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade**, (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), p.198.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ian A. Gordon, pp.78-79 .

<sup>29</sup> Brissenden, p.195.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.196.

<sup>31</sup> Virginia Woolf . **Mrs. Dalloway**, (London: Granada Publishing, 1980), pp.44-45.

<sup>32</sup> James Reeves . **The Critical Sense**, (London: Heinemann, 1975), p.40.

<sup>33</sup> “*Tristram Shandy* (1999-2003)”, The Barrens & Noble Learning Network, (Internet), p. 3 of 4.

<sup>34</sup> Henry Fluchere, p.17.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel L. Hocutt, “*Music and Rhetoric in Tristram Shandy*”, (9 Dec., 1997, Internet), 11/12/2003, p.2 of 10.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>37</sup> Brissenden, p.191.

<sup>38</sup> Roy Stephens .***An Approach to Literature***, (Longmans, 1966), p.273.

<sup>39</sup> Brissenden, p.192.

<sup>40</sup> ***Tristram Shandy***, pp.108-109.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>42</sup> D. W. Jefferson, p.20.

<sup>43</sup> ***Tristram Shandy***, p.284.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp.35-36.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp.614-615.

<sup>46</sup> Richard A. Lanham .***Tristram Shandy: The Games of Pleasure***, (London: University of California Press, 1973), p.79.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.80.

<sup>48</sup> see, for example, William York Tindall .***Forces in Modern British Literature: 1865-1956*** . (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), pp. 187-203.

<sup>49</sup>***Tristram Shandy***, p.173.

<sup>50</sup> John Peck .***Literary Terms and Criticism***, pp.120-121.

<sup>51</sup> Leonard Lutwack, “ *Mixed and Uniform Prose Structure*”, in James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver, eds., ***Perspectives on Fiction***, (London: OUP., 1968), p.36

<sup>52</sup> ***Tristram Shandy***, pp.180-181.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.476.

<sup>55</sup> Hugh Kenner's essay, “ *James Joyce, Comedian of The Inventory*”, in James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver, p.49.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> ***Tristram Shandy***, p.484.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p.486.

<sup>59</sup> Ian A. Gordon, p.151.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Marjorie Boulton . ***The Anatomy of the Novel***, (London: Rotledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp.154, 155.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Ellam “From Sterne to Baldessari : *The Illustration of Tristram Shandy*, htm” (Internet), 27/2/2004, p.3 of 5.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> ***Tristram Shandy***, p.87.

<sup>65</sup> John Butt, ed . ***The Review of English Studies***, vol. I, (London: 1967), p.364.

<sup>66</sup> Michael R. Allen, p.6.

<sup>67</sup> Sean Murphy“ . *Interactive Narrative: Clashing into the Sea of Stories*”, (Internet, Dublin 2, August 1996), 24/10/2003, p.5 of 7.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Michael R. Allen.

## **Chapter Three**

***A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy:***

The Reflections of the Self

The last half of the eighteenth century in England is known as the dominant period of sensibility. Its peak started from about 1770 to 1790, and the term sensibility included almost every noble human quality. For instance, he who possessed the trait was distinguished from the rest of mankind by being more sensitive to life and capable of great pleasure and pain than others. It also held that man was innately good and human institutions of government, religion, manners, and society in general could corrupt and deflect him from his natural or innate tendency to noble thoughts or actions. This view prizes the natural and spontaneous attitudes to humanity for it “stresses man’s capacity for feeling and imagination, his individuality, hence his alienation from society”.<sup>1</sup>

In this sense, the sentimental novels of the age stress the characters’ heightened and highly emotional responses to events or actions. They stress the concept of emotionalism, i.e., they believe that human feelings can guide to truth.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the sentimental novels place feelings and emotions above reason as a medium of revelation of reality. The influence of *A Sentimental Journey* was prodigious. Many volumes have been written on this work in different countries, in France, in Germany, and in Italy. It was the first of those forces responsible for the vogue of sensibility in American fiction in the twentieth century<sup>3</sup>. It was also translated into many languages, and Sterne was, thus, held to be a figure of European importance, mainly because he was the author of this novel.

If in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne set out to write what was considered later as a new kind of novel, in *A Sentimental Journey* he intended to produce what Lodwick Harley calls a “ new kind of a travel book”.<sup>4</sup> Although it may be considered in the context of the travel

literature written before him, this novel, in particular, was more subjective and more creative in essence. As in *Tristram Shandy*, the personality of the narrator in this novel is not Sterne himself but Yorick, who stands at a different level. What is important here is that the last half of the eighteenth century was also known as an empirical age, an age which attempted to base its general truths on what it took to be the only useful source of knowledge, that is, experience and observation.

Sterne presented Yorick as both an empirical person and an observer in the novel. His observations are so important that they stress the new nature of Sterne's technique in exposing the vivid sensibility of Yorick and the interrelationship between particular experiences and the general truth. Yorick's sentimental experiences "gave him the chance to try his affections on all the levels of society, on counts and ladies, gentle folk and business people, soldiers and priests, servants and peasants, charlants and beggars".<sup>5</sup>

In addition, Sterne wished to write a travel book, and so showing some interrelated themes like the question of time and that it was demonstrated in the inside of the characters rather than the outside world, as it is the case with most of the twentieth-century novels. This is done through a kind of sentimental traveler with mental struggles, conveying not only the importance of sensibility but also the observant and reflective nature of the onlooker. In fact, the question of time in this book deserves some focus here. Early in *A Sentimental Journey*, what Yorick observes since he has arrived is conveyed in a new expression, which is never found in any work prior to Sterne:

Lord, said I, hearing the town-clock strike four,  
and recollecting that I had been little more than a

single hour in Calais. What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life, by him who interests his heart in everything, and who, having eyes to see what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyth on his way, misses nothing he can *fairly* lay his hands on.<sup>6</sup>

indeed, this seems to prefigure many of the twentieth-century novels. It emphasizes what Virginia Woolf calls for, in her essays and novels, about the possibility of writing a whole novel that takes no more than a single day of the characters' life. Even the allegorical use of the clock that strikes the hours, is heavily used by her for the purpose of providing an external order to counteract the disorder in the characters' consciousness. In addition, Sterne shares another point with Virginia Woolf. Both of them are concerned with human relationships and communications. It is, therefore, with people and not with objects that Yorick primarily concerns himself.

Like *Tristram Shandy, A Sentimental Journey* is also a complex book that needs a deep investigation. Yorick's journey, however, is not only a simple and aimless journey through France and its people. Indeed, It can be seen, as for instance, in the case of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a journey through the character's inner self, the exploration of the nature of the human psychology. Sterne shows, in effect, the importance of sensibility or sentiments in man as a guide to his actions, as if he is reasserting the fact that human psychology is ambiguous and entangled. To report its ambiguity means to ignore any description of the objective world. There is always the impact of temptation that affects man's psychology.



Essentially, the novel demonstrates how difficult it is for anyone to govern himself or his sentiments, and, hence motivating this illusion. In Paris, Yorick is always troubled with temptations of different kinds, like the temptation of avarice, shown in his reluctance to be generous with his money when he met the monk in the street. But the most significant of all is the delightful, tormenting and almost irresistible power of temptation offered to him by women. The temptation that Sterne demonstrates here assures that the sentimentality he uses is greatly different from Romanticism.

Yorick's fondness of and attraction to women in Paris are shown throughout the book, from his meeting with Mme de L\*\*\* in Calais, the grisette, the fille de chambre and Mme de Rambouillet in Paris; Maria at Moulins and the shopkeeper. However, his encounters with such group of women seem to be humorous and, in a sense, artificial. But if one tries to see how Yorick's attractions to the women work on his psychology, the point may become rather more complex than it appears. He claims that whenever he wanders in Paris, he always finds himself in love with some woman. This does not necessarily mean that he just falls in a casual love affair and nothing happens. Instead, he describes his encounters with them in detail, to the extent that the meaning of love he talks about acquires the widest of connotations. In fact, this is a manifestation of Sterne's interest in the exploration of the relationships between the sexes. The love that Sterne focuses on here can be described as "**eros**", which he seems to be projecting in the manner of D.H Lawrence before his time.

In *A Sentimental Journey*, Brissenden remarks that "Sterne gives a comic but sympathetic exposition of the follies and absurdities into which man can be betrayed through the inescapable association of his

sexuality and his sensibility”.<sup>7</sup> In other words, we can say that Sterne’s method resembles to a certain degree, the vogue of erotic love theme in modern erotic literature, especially through his double-entendre method when he presents episodes with double meanings. His theme is made significant when it is applied to the definition of erotic literature in its modern sense. Holman states:

The term erotic is generally considered not to include pornography, which employs sexual material as an end in itself. In erotic literature the sexual element is made a portion of the aesthetic, or moral aspect of the work; that is, it exists as a contributing part to some other objective than titillation or sexual arousal.<sup>8</sup>

Yorick’s erotic love for the different kinds of women is closely associated with the thematic and moral aspect of the novel. Sterne’s theme is largely founded on the relationship between the erotic and the moral connotations of the word “sentimental” or “sentiment”. Eroticism in the book is one of its most appealing themes. It is also one of its most complex and hidden notions. Albert J. Kuhn points out that “Sexuality in Sterne is neither sensual nor sentimental ... but is a refined realism of both. It is the nature of the sentimental traveler to dwell upon the psychological rather than the physiological nature of love, which the reader can imagine for himself as we are left to do at the end of the novel.

Indeed, the book is an account of what Yorick considers ironically as “weakness” of his heart. This weakness resulted from the refined and simultaneously extreme sentiments of the heart, whose contents are revealed through the thematic sense of touch.<sup>9</sup>

The pulsation of the arteries along my fingers pressing across hers told her what was passing within me: she looked down, silence of some moments followed. I fear, in this interval must have made some slight efforts towards a closer compression of her hand, from a subtle sensation I felt in the palm of my own – not as if she was going to withdraw hers but as if she thought about it ....<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the metaphor of the heart gains a great emphasis in the novel, because it is considered as the center of the human sentiments and feelings. This is significant, for the world and experience in the book, if regarded attentively, are not structured by reason, i.e., by the power to establish relationships of logical sense. The order of events in the novel are structured by the waywardness of the characters' feelings. The world of this novel is, thus, one in which actions and sentences bend to the pressure of feeling.<sup>11</sup>

As a result, Yorick's life is presented as a series of interruptions, since he wanders and responds to every stimulus, and since "sentiment allows no structuring of the sort reason demands".<sup>12</sup> In this sense, the world that Sterne pictures in ***A Sentimental Journey*** is as close to reality as the one that Virginia Woolf tries to manifest in her novels. For her and for D.H. Lawrence, the senses are the only effective way to conceive the objective world by man as a subjective being. She states:

The mind, exposed to the ordinary course of life, receives upon its surface a myriad impressions ... trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of

innumerable atoms, composing in their sum what might venture to call life itself; and to figure further as a semi-transparent envelope or luminous halo, surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.<sup>13</sup>

Yorick's sentimental journey shows this concept. He receives many different impressions from without, from a new surrounding. This "shower of innumerable atoms" is received through the senses but are conceived by the mind, which have a greater emphasis. In the chapter entitled "The Fille de Chambre", Yorick is put into a situation where he makes, in the manner of D.H Lawrence, the erotic theme through the sense of touch seems effective.

However, the sense of touch is a very important method in relation to this theme. It is almost the prevalent method one can notice in every modern American romance writers. Such writers present the hero and the heroine in a climatic scene when this theme becomes clear the moment a bodily contact or touch takes place. This bodily contact is often represented by touches of the hands. In a very recent novel called, *Prince Charming*, the novelist, Robin Wells, seems to be absorbed in showing theme many times in her novel:

She [Josephine] hesitantly took his [Cole's] outstretched hand. It was big and rough and warm, as warm as his chest and his fingers curled around her hand like a crusty French roll around butter, giving her an odd melting sensation in the pit of her stomach. She wasn't accustomed to physical contact. Surely that was why she was so rattled by this man's touch . . . .<sup>14</sup>

In the same manner, in the chapters entitled “The Temptation”, and “The Conquest”, Yorick gives a concise description of the affections of “love and desire”, and how they are mixed together in man:

The fair de chambre came close up to the bureau where I was looking for a card, took up first the pen I cast down, then offered to hold me the ink; she offer'd it so sweetly that I was going to accept it but I durst not. I have nothing, my dear, said I, to write upon. Write it, said she, simply upon anything. I was just going to cry out, then I will write, fair girl upon thy lips!

If I do, said I, I shall perish so I took her by the hand, and led her to the door, she turn'd about, and gave me both her hands, closed together, into mine. It was impossible not to compress them in that situation. I wished to let them go; and all the time I held them I kept arguing with myself against it and still held them on.<sup>15</sup>

Such episodes are crucial aspects of Sterne's novel. These affections and temptations are perhaps not so obvious to him, but they are not so to the modern readers, who are acquainted with modern psychology. That is to say, Sterne writes about these issues without being really aware of their validity in modern readers' lives later on.

The function of the erotic love which is revealed through the sense of touch can be associated to a certain degree, with D.H Lawrence's novels, *Sons and Lovers* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.<sup>16</sup> To this, Jean Jacques Mayoux remarks “what characterizes Sterne in these

relations is what was to scandalize D.H Lawrence: sex in the head".<sup>17</sup>.He also considers Sterne's "**The Journal to Eliza**", which is a volume of letters addressed to Eliza, with whom Sterne was passionately in love, as an example of "a general and obsessional erotomania developing from nonsatisfaction of desire".<sup>18</sup>

Lawrence's novels are mainly concerned with the two aspects of love: the physical love which is erotic and dramatically revealed through the bodily contact, and the spiritual or ideal love. In **Sons and Lovers**, the erotic love becomes clear by his skillful narrative, "then if she (Miriam) put her arm in his (Paul's), it caused him almost torture. His consciousness seemed to split. The place where she was touching him run hot with friction".<sup>19</sup>

Here, Miriam represents the spiritual aspect of love; and in the chapter entitled "Passion", Lawrence describes further Paul's increasing erotic attachment for another women called Clara, who presents everything that is physical in love:

As they sat in the tramcar, she leaned her heavy shoulder against him, and he took her hand. He felt himself coming around from the anaesthetic beginning to breathe. Her ear, half hidden among her blonde hair was near to him. The temptation to kiss it was almost too great. But there were other people on top of the car ... there were a sharp suspense about him. She bit her lip moodily. His hand was hard clenched over hers.<sup>20</sup>

Sterne's work also echoes the same beauty and simplicity of language of Lawrence's novels, which help to reveal the irrisistant demands of desire and the attempt to restrain them; or, as in the

former's case, to combine these demands with the innate spiritual craving, in order to induce a state of self-satisfaction, though this seems to be more deep in Lawrence's than in Sterne's case.

The two novels, then, apparently focus, among other things, on the blend of heightened eroticism and moral awareness. It is the conflict between the physical and spiritual love that forms the novel's thematic and structural progression. As one of his many experiences with the French women, Yorick is given a letter by Madame R's maid, telling him that he should meet her at Brussels. Madame R is one of the women he met early in the novel and with whom he found himself in (erotic) love. He yearns to see her, but suddenly the figure of Eliza, whom he left back in England, haunts him and causes him a conflict. His psyche is torn between the pressure to experience the sensual feeling with Mme R, and the pressure of the spiritual power represented by Eliza. Being in a foreign country heightened his animal instinct. But he remembers that about three months ago, he promised her that he would not forget her throughout his journey, thus, she acquires a spiritual significance:

Why should I dissemble the matter? I had sworn her eternal fidelity; she had a right to my whole heart; to divide my affections was to lessen them; to expose them, was to risk them: where there is risk there may be loss.... I will not go to Brussels, replied I, interrupting myself, but my imagination went on....<sup>21</sup>

Again, Sterne presents Yorick in a cleverly realistic way. Certainly fallible, but he is also throughout recognizable, and on the whole acceptable for the same reason, for he is a thoughtful man with

limitations. But this is not to say that Yorick's charm and fallibility are simple and clear. They are, on the contrary, complex and deceptive. Like any other human being in life, he is with sensual appetites besides being sentimental. His appearance does not tell what goes on in his mind, and this is the point that makes him as close to reality as any other character in modern fiction. Furthermore, Sterne creates Yorick to demonstrate him as having "carnal appetites and is prepared honestly to acknowledge if not always to indulge them".<sup>22</sup>

The novel appears to be concentrating on the physical life of the character. The point, then, in *A sentimental Journey*, is deeper than if it should be taken at its face value Sterne might present through Yorick the treatment of the conscious and sub-conscious impulses as they are revealed in man, a vogue that Sterne, we would daringly suggest, has founded before it could be treated and analyzed in depth by Freud. This does not necessarily mean that Sterne did it consciously, but he presented a character who was so a complex man that his journey in France and his experiences with the people suggest this. For him, the inner self is mysterious and deserves a deep focus. Freud dealt with the notion of the nature and function of sexuality and the concept of morality. He believes that the unconscious or subconscious is the most important element in the structure of the psyche; the other two parts are the preconscious and conscious. The unconscious for him is utterly selfish and ruthless in its blind desires to satisfy its pleasure. Its desires are mainly sexual and primitive. However, the conscious represents the moral sensibility of the individual that would regard any unconscious desires with rejection.<sup>23</sup> Thus, when the unconscious is dangerous and disruptive, set to seek



its own pleasure, the conscious, represented by cultural activity (civilization) or the outer world, acts as the power to restrain it, But the suppressed unconscious impulses do not completely disappear. The individual must cope with them, by becoming aware of them. Trying to bid the fille de chambre adieu, Yorick faces a psychological conflict between his desire and moral decency, or the discipline that emerges from his conscious awareness of his surrounding:

We set off afresh, and as she took her third step, the girl put her hand within my arm I was just bidding her but she did it of herself with that undeliberating simplicity ...She bid me adieu twice repeated it as often; and so cordial was the parting between us, that had it happened anywhere else, I'm not sure but I should have signed it with a kiss of charity ...But in Paris, as no one kiss each other but men, I did, what amounted to the same thing I bid God bless her.<sup>24</sup>

The conflict between the moral behavior and the human desire shows that Freud's notion and Sterne's method essentially reveal the tragic nature of life, "with man forever crucified between reality and desire".<sup>25</sup> In "The Pulse", Yorick walks in one of the streets in Paris, trying to get to the Opera Comique. He stops before a shop to ask how he can get there. Inside the shop, he finds a pretty Grisset sitting in a low chair. She shows him the way, but he forgets every time she repeats her instructions. For Yorick it is possible to forget everything "when a man is thinking more of a woman, than of her good advice".<sup>26</sup> The episode comes to an end with Yorick struggling against reality and his desire:

*Attendez* said she, laying her hand upon my arm to detain me ... I walked with her to the far side of the shop ... she sat down herself in her low chair, and I instantly sat myself down beside her .... Any one may do a casual act of good nature, but a continuation of them shows it is a part of the temperature; and certainly, added I, if it is the same blood which comes from the heart, which descends to the extremes [touching her wrist], I am sure you must have one of the best pulse of any woman in the world. Feel it, said she, holding out her arm ... I took hold of her finger in one hand, and applied the two fore fingers of my other to the artery ... Trust me, my dear Eugenius, I should have said, "there are worse occupations in this world than feeling a woman's pulse". But a Grisset's Yorick so much the better: for when my views are direct, Egenius, I care not if all the world saw me feel it.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of morality that Sterne shares with Freud consists in the fact that the conscious awareness of reality, which is represented

by the surroundings, has the power of restraining man from his unconscious desires. This is Freud's and Sterne's views of the insidious notion of the individual's morality. Freud views that conscious repression of unconscious desires is found as the base that "lays at the root of moral behavior".<sup>28</sup> This Freudian view, if applied to Yorick's encounters with women in ***A Sentimental Journey***, one can find that Sterne is dealing with what has become an aspect in modern psychology. However, D.H. Lawrence's conception about the unconscious differs from Freud's, and this difference makes another resemblance between him and Sterne. For D.H. Lawrence, the unconscious is not selfish or bad as Freud believes, but it is more important than the conscious.

Lawrence believes that, in the twentieth century, the modern society has gone astray, and that there is no possible way of returning to a new means to achieve spontaneous relatedness or communication between the individual and his external world. Since he is interested in the change inside the individual in modern life, he thinks that all relationships between man and his environment or his fellow men are dominated by the mechanical and materialistic demands of modern life. The only possible, but difficult, way is to live and communicate between men and women and the cosmos from the unconscious impulses of the psyche.<sup>29</sup> In a typical Lawrentian manner Yorick states:

....Nature has set up by her own unquestionable authority certain boundaries and fences to circumscribe the discontent of man: she has affected her purpose in the quietest and easiest manner, ... 'Tis true, we are endued with an

imperfect power of spreading our happiness sometimes beyond *her* limits, but 'tis so ordered, that, from the want of language, connections, customs and habits, we lie under so many impediments in communicating our sensations out of our own sphere, as often amount to total impossibility.<sup>30</sup>

Through Yorick, Sterne seems to affirm Lawrence's belief in the fact that the role and usefulness of the mind itself is not as effective as the senses. They stress the centrality of the senses to achieve a certain kind of contact through translating the unconscious impulses of others, like the sense of touch, into something sensational or sensual.

***A Sentimental Journey*** is also full of reflections, and thus, prefiguring the modern subjective novels. Samuel Beckett's trilogy and early novels are heavily based on reflections, as in ***Murphy*** (1938), ***Watt*** (1953), and his trilogy, ***Molloy***, ***Malone Dies*** and ***The Unnamable***<sup>31</sup>.

When Yorick's episode with the Grisset is interrupted by her husband's entering the shop, she immediately announces that "'T was nobody but her husband'"(p.57). The fact that her husband is "nobody", and his indifference to the situation, puts Yorick into a direct epiphany-like state of reflection about the nature of the shopkeeper and his wife, and how in London, Yorick reflects, they seem to be "one bone and flesh". This sudden reflection about a certain incident shows that Yorick always becomes aware of an aspect he did not think of before, but not until some little stimulating incident happens that triggers his mind to meditate on it, and relate it to a larger perspective. In this epiphany Yorick discovers some aspect about the French. It is

no wonder then, that in this novel, “the slightest incidents become rich in implication”.<sup>32</sup> Yorick also reflects on the whole legislative and executive powers of the shop, and finds that they are not in the husband’s hands, for he seldom comes there. He sits doing nothing in some dark and dismal room behind. Such epiphany-like states occur many times in the book, and give it its reflective nature.

In the chapter entitled “Namport”, Yorick comes across a man lamenting his dead ass. His lamentation makes Yorick think that it is an apostrophe to his dead child. Surprisingly he discovers that the man is crying over his dead ass. The man is so sorry that he is afraid that he caused its death, “I fear the weight of myself and my afflictions together have been too much for him . . . .”<sup>33</sup>. Again, this little scene motivates Yorick’s mind about humanity as a whole, “shame on the world said I to myself; did we love each other, as this poor soul but loved his ass, ’t would be something”. Yorick relates the little incident of the dead ass and the crying man to a universal fact where there is lack of passion and kindness among people and the importance of such human feelings in life.

The act of reflection in Sterne’s novel can be related, in one way or another, to the critical term “epiphany” that was given a wide currency by James Joyce, “who used it to designate an event in which the essential nature of something... a person, a situation, an object was suddenly perceived. It is thus an intuitive grasp of reality achieved in a quick flash of recognition in which something, usually simple and commonplace, is seen in a new light”.<sup>34</sup> In ***A Sentimental Journey*** the epiphany, in its somewhat immature sense, occurs in significant episodes in the novel. For instance, “The Wig” is one of the chapters

that almost start this vogue. Yorick goes to a barber to have his wig mended, but seeing him unable to do anything to it, he thought that it was either above or below the barber's art. As a solution, the barber suggested that Yorick can take a ready-made wig of his own recommendation:

But I think friend, said I, this buckle won't stand .You may immerge it, replied he, into the ocean, and it will stand. What a great scale is every thing upon in this city thought I .The utmost stretch of an English periwig maker's ideas could have gone no further than to have "dipped it into a pail of water ". What difference 'tis like time to eternity . . . All that can be said against the French sublime in this instance of it, is this: that the grandeur is *more* in the *word*; and less in the *thing* ?.No doubt the ocean fills the mind with vast ideas; but Paris being so far inland, it was not likely I should run post a hundred miles out of it, to try the experiment-----the Parisian barber meant nothing . . . In honest truth, and upon a more candid revision of the matter, the *French expression professes more than it performs* .<sup>35</sup>

Yorick's mind runs constantly from the small particular to its widest significant in a form of epiphany. His thought runs from the barber's use of the word 'ocean' to a general recognition of the nature of the French and the English. For example, he realizes that the French may be more eloquent than the English in matters of language and expressions. In the chapters "The Hotel at Paris" and "The Captive" the implied epiphany unfolds itself. As a matter of fact, Yorick sets out his journey without a passport at a time when England is at war with France. He faces the risk of imprisonment as a spy. When he is arrested and sent to the Bastille, he starts to reflect as well as to realize confinement in the prison. While he is reflecting in a soliloquy

upon the nature of the imprisonment, he is interrupted by a starling's cry complaining, "I can't get out":

I stood looking at the bird: and to every person who came through the passage, it ran fluttering to the side which they approach'd it, with the same lamentation of its captivity ... God help thee, I said, but I'll let thee out, cost what it will ... The bird flew to the place where I was attempting his deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis, pressed his breast against it, as if impatient. I fear, poor creature, said I, I cannot set thee at liberty. "No," said the starling, "I can't get out; I can't get out," said the starling. I vow I never my affections more tenderly awakened; or do I remember an incident in my life, where the dissipated spirits, to which my reason had been a bubble, were so suddenly call'd home. Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in tune to nature were they counted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasoning upon the Bastille; and I heavily walk'd upstairs, unsaying every word I had said in going down them.<sup>36</sup>

The sudden cry of the starling makes Yorick reconsider in a new flash of light the nature of liberty, and to value it more than he used to in the past. The story of the bird ends in a traumatic illusion of man's tendency to imprison himself through his failure to know the value of liberty; "Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, Slavery said I, still thou art a bitter draught and though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account" (p.77).

Virginia Woolf, in her study of this novel, remarks that Sterne's narrative is a concentration on the individual mind and psyche, to express its changing moods and answer its slightest whims and impulses, especially when small things look larger and effective

through Yorick's reflective mind.<sup>37</sup> As such, Sterne is so preoccupied with his method that he has nothing to say or describe beyond his subjective vision. There is no description, for instance, of churches or people as one may expect to find in the traditional eighteenth-century novels. Everything is interpreted and filtered through his own mind and through the sentiments of his own heart. This method is seen as a daringly innovation. Once more Virginia Woolf argues:

The cathedral had always been a vast building in any book of travels and the man a little figure, properly diminutive, by its side. But Sterne was quite capable of omitting the cathedral altogether and a girl with green satin purse might be much more important than Notre Dame. For there is, he seems to hint, no universal scale of values; a dead donkey may be more interesting than a cathedral; a dead donkey more instructive than a living philosopher. It is all a question of one's point of view.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, the central interest in the novel is not the narration of the events of the journey themselves, but their impacts upon the sensibility of the hero. It is natural for Yorick, as a sentimental traveler, to seize the essence of things not as he encounters with every day scenes in the open places. He should catch them in the insignificant things, which are somehow unnoticed by others. It is the art of catching the several unimportant turns of looks and rendering them into plain words, and "it is thus that Sterne transfers our interest from the outer to the inner".<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Walter Bagehot, in *Literary Studies*, finds out that ***A Sentimental Journey*** seems to come close to the modern impressionistic novels. In this novel, Sterne does not picture the true France of the old monarchy: it is exactly what an observant quick-eyed person might fancy that France to be. So, the picture "is not true to the



outward nature of real life, but it is true to the reflected image of that life in an imaginative and sensitive man".<sup>40</sup> Hence, Sterne undertook to write ,not of the coarse business of life ,which can be described in common sort of words. His writing aimed at catching the passing moods of human nature and of the impressions, which a sensitive man receives from the world without <sup>41</sup>.

All the twentieth-century impressionistic novels have this sentimental quality, for sensations and emotions constitute the impressionist's literary art. The impressionist's art appears more clearly in his indulgence in rendering the visible or visual world as it looks to his subjective eye, hence moving from the realist tradition, which concentrated on the exterior world, and shifting to picturing the world through fragmentary impressions.

Visual sensations are important to Sterne in this novel. Instead of describing things so that the casual observer may instantly recognize them, he simply renders impressions as this casual observer or onlooker (Yorick), and his reactions to the images that surround him receive them. So, He presents this series of concrete images as they naturally and instantly strike one after another upon the senses of the central character.

For instance, Yorick sits in a remise with a beautiful lady. He has not seen her face yet, because there is a drawing set between them. Mentally he tries to picture how she looks like. His impressions of her are done through his fanciful mind:

Fancy had finished the whole head, and pleased herself as much with its fitting her goddess, as if

she had dived into the TIBER for it .But thou art a seduced, and seducing slut; and albeit thou cheatest us seven times a day with thy pictures and images, yet with so many charms dost thou do it, and thou deckest out thy pictures in the shapes of many angels of light'tis a shame to break with thee. When we had got to the door of her remise, she withdrew her hand from across her forehead, and let me see the original.

It was a face of about six and twenty, of a clear transparent brown, simply set off without rouge or powder. It was not critically handsome, but there was in it, which, in the frame of mind I was in, attached me more to it . . . I fancied it wore the character of a widow'd look . . . .<sup>42</sup>

Yorick's picturing of the lady, in the above quotation, is based on and emerges from his own state of mind at the moment, and from the impressions just as they are created by the outer image of the beautiful lady. Sterne does not say that the lady looks like this and that by describing her exact features, like the colour of her hair. He does not say that she is dressed in a certain manner, or even intrude and mention that she is a widow. Instead, he makes the character's eyes receive the image before him and through this character he gives glimpses of impressions, as reflected by his mind. The narration, as a whole, is visualized and "we gather the meaning of what is going on exactly as we do in real life".<sup>43</sup>

In another episode, Yorick talks of the different kinds of travelers he met in the coach yard. He directly shifts to describe what goes on into the minds of two travelers to show their direct impressions they make of him and the lady as he kisses her hand in the open street, "Now the two travelers, who had spoke to me in the coach yard,

happened at that crisis to be passing by, and observing our communications naturally took into their heads that we must be man and wife...”.<sup>44</sup> Again, Sterne focuses on the two travelers’ [heads] in this episode as they manifest the reflected impressions of the image in front of them the moment it strikes upon their minds. In this respect, the chapter entitled “The Translation”, may be considered an important chapter in the book. What Sterne means by it is that while he was in Paris everything that happened and every insignificant gesture required a reflective mind to get to their meaning at the impressionistic level. At the opera comique Yorick is confronted with an old French officer who reads attentively a small pamphlet. As soon as Yorick sits down beside him, the old officer takes his spectacles off, he puts them into a case, returns them and the book into his pocket:

...I

half rose up, and made him a bow. Translate this into any civilized language in the world, the sense is this:”Here’s a poor stranger come into the box---he seems as if he knew nobody and is never likely, was he to be seven years in Paris, if every man he comes near keeps his spectacles upon his nose. T’ is shutting the door of conversation absolutely in his face, and use him worse than a German”. The French officer might as well said it all aloud: and if he had I should in course have put the bow I made him into French too, and told him “I was sensible of his attention, and return’d him a thousand thanks for it.”<sup>45</sup>

These are two kinds of pictures that are given not through conversation but portrayed mentally, through the characters’ interior monologues. This also leads to another important fact. Yorick’s and

other characters' impressions are heavily revealed through the language of gestures, where the looks and nods of the head tell more about what the character wants to communicate than a direct conversation. This style is used and developed further in Virginia Woolf's novel, ***TO the Lighthouse***. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay always contact with one another through such language, and they always make sense of a very slight look or gaze:

Their eyes met for a second; but they did not want to speak to each other. They had nothing to say, but something seemed, nevertheless to go from him to her...Don't interrupt me, he seemed to be saying, don't say anything; just sit there . . . But she was becoming conscious of her husband's looking at her. He was smiling at her, quizzically, as if he were ridiculing her gently for being asleep in broad daylight...He was silent, swinging the compass on his watch-chain to and fro, and thinking of Scott's novels and Balzac's novels. But through the crepuscular walls of their intimacy...she could feel his mind like a raised hand shadowing her mind; and he was beginning now that her thoughts took a turn he disliked – towards this 'pessimism' as he called it – to fidget, though he said nothing, raising his hand to his forehead, twisting a lock of hair, letting it fall down again . . . And what then? For she felt that he was still looking at her, but that his had changed. He wanted something---wanted the thing she always found it so difficult to give him; wanted her to tell him that she loved him . . . Getting up she stood at the window with the reddish brown stocking in her hands...For she knew that he had turned his head as she turned; he was watching her. She knew that he was thinking, You are more beautiful than ever . . . Will you not tell me just for once that you love me? He was thinking that...Then, knowing that he was watching her, instead of saying anything she turned, holding her stocking, and looked at him. And as she looked at him she began to smile, for though she

had not said a word, he knew, of course he knew, that she loved him.<sup>46</sup>

It is this silent language which characterizes Virginia Woolf's novels, as being representatives of the twentieth century fiction. It is her style which motivates this paramount affinity between her and Sterne.

Accordingly, both writers' encounters with the public around them are established via their undertaking of sensations; their worlds are structured of impressions and ideas, hence lacking the presence and purpose of rational argument. Instead of providing his readers with a coherent picture of the world, as it is the case if contemplated by the eye of omniscience, Sterne like Woolf gives us (in a modern sense) the impressions of sight, sound, contact, atmosphere, as they strike upon the character's mind.

In his work, the reader becomes as an onlooker who experiences impressions in the manner in which they show themselves. Fielding's method of narration is based on the objective realism, which submits a definite view of life to the understanding. This means that the reader recognized and understood the objects, characters, or atmosphere in the novel through the external descriptions, which are offered by the narrator. It is seen in the matter of cause and effect, where there must be a reason for everything. Sterne, like modern impressionists, has no interest in causes and effects. He is wholly absorbed in his sensations.

He seeks to seize impressions as they emerge to the observer, so that he can be conscious of aspects unnoticed in his normal view of things if he is absorbed in the generalization of reality. Sterne's method

is, thus, known as intellectual realism. In his work, he makes the reader's imagination merge with shifting impressions where, "picture forever dissolves into picture, and the result is a flowing, melodious harmony unsurpassed in English prose".<sup>47</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Kuhn, "Introduction" to *Three Sentimental Novels*, (New York: OUP, 1970), p.vi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Ross Brown .***The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*** . (New York: Octagon Books, 1970) pp.74-75.

<sup>4</sup>Lodwick Hartley .***Laurence Sterne in the Twentieth Century***, (New York: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p.56.

<sup>5</sup>William Bowman Piper .***Laurence Sterne***, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1965), p.93.

<sup>6</sup>Ernest Rhys, ed .***A Sentimental Journey and The Journal to Eliza***, (London: J.M.Dent, and Sons, 1947), p.30.All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

<sup>7</sup>Brissenden, p.221.

<sup>8</sup>C. Hugh Holman .***A Handbook to Literature***, p.408.

<sup>9</sup>Albert J. Kuhn, p.xvi .

<sup>10</sup>***A Sentimental Journey***, p.20.

<sup>11</sup>Richard Kuhn .***Structure of Experience: Essays on the Affinity between Philosophy and Literature***, (London: Basic Books, 1970), pp.58, 59.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., p.63.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Mc Nellie, ed .***Essays of Virginia Woolf***, vol.iii, p.33.

<sup>14</sup>Robin Wells .***Prince Charming***, (New York: Dorchester Publishing Co., 1999), p.44.

<sup>15</sup>***A Sentimental Journey***, p.98.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, R.E.Pritchard *D.H.Lawrence: Body of Darkness*, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1971), pp.32-43, 189-195.

<sup>17</sup>Jean-Jacques Mayoux essay entitled, “Lawrence Sterne”, in John Traugott, *Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p.108.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>D.H.Lawrence *Sons and Lovers*,(London:Heinemann Educational Books, 1972), pp.173.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.306.

<sup>21</sup>*A Sentimental Journey*, pp.46-47.

<sup>22</sup>Brissenden., p.225.

<sup>23</sup>This and following explanation of Freud’s view of the psyche is adopted from Gumini Salgado, *A Preface to Lawrence*, (London, Longman, 1982), p.86.

<sup>24</sup>*A Sentimental Journey*, p.71.

<sup>25</sup>*A Preface to Lawrence*, p.86.

<sup>26</sup>*A Sentimental Journey*, p.87.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.,p.55.

<sup>28</sup>*A Preface to Lawrence*,p.90.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp.91-92.

<sup>30</sup>*A Sentimental Journey*, p.10.

<sup>31</sup>See, for example, Wolfgang Iser *The Implied Reader: Patterns and Communication in Prose Fiction from*



***Bunyan to Beckett***, (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 164-178.

<sup>32</sup>Brissenden, p.231.

<sup>33</sup> ***A Sentimental Journey***, p.53.

<sup>34</sup> Holman., p.164

<sup>35</sup> ***A Sentimental Journey.***, p.76.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Virginia Woolf "Introduction" to ***A Sentimental Journey***, (London: Oxford University Press, 22/11/2003) (internet), p.iv.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Walter Bagehot, p.114.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.116.

<sup>42</sup> ***A Sentimental Journey***, p.18.

<sup>43</sup> Ernest A. Baker, p.265.

<sup>44</sup> ***A Sentimental Journey***, p.23.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid .p.60

<sup>46</sup> Virginia Woolf . ***To the Lighthouse***, (London: Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett, 1978), pp.110, 111,113,114.

<sup>47</sup> Edward Wagenknecht . ***Cavalcade of the English Novel***, (New York: Holt, Rineholt & Winston, 1963), p.81.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Conclusion**

*Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* can be regarded as two of the most important and fascinating eighteenth-century English novels. In Sterne's time they were more read and ridiculed

than clearly understood, due to their seemingly eccentric and chaotic structure. *Tristram Shandy*, for instance, was attacked for being immoral or obscene. The strangeness of its structure, form, and content made the attacks repeated in different ways throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The case remained so even in the twentieth century. In the eighteenth century, *Tom Jones* and *Clarissa*, for example, had gained great praise and admiration by the reading public. They were even called as the greatest English novels, whereas Sterne's work did not get that extravagancy of evaluations. Yet, for all their elements of appeal and greatness, the novels of Richardson and Fielding are more likely to appear to the twentieth-century readers as great only to the eighteenth-century taste, and to those who are interested in the conventional mode of fiction.

Sterne's novels came to be known later as "experimental", and the experimental in fiction, as in other forms of literature, is always considered as a hallmark of modernity. The modern trait of Sterne's work is affirmed when a great novelist and critic, like Virginia Woolf, remarks on different occasions that his work is innovative, and that it proves its belonging to the twentieth-century fiction. The different kinds of novelists who followed him could not reach the essence of his genius, and what they presented in their work was but superficial imitations.

Sterne's masterpieces might employ references and borrowings from different traditional authors before him. They might be full of quotations that are taken from different sources of knowledge, but all these things become insignificant beside the various modern elements that dominate the atmosphere of his masterpieces. These elements can be considered as compensation to what has been taken to be as

disadvantages by the eighteenth-century standards of novel writing. The revolutionary time-scheme of *Tristram Shandy* is the first and most important of these elements. It is an important key to his newness. It is also the direct result of the influence of John Locke's Essay on Sterne's thinking, especially the element of the association of ideas in man's mind. Sterne stresses two concepts of time: the time in the clock, which is measurable, and the time in the mind, which is qualitative and immeasurable. He shifts the normal sense of time as an external unity to an internal unity. This shift is done through the association of ideas in the individual mind.

The association of ideas makes the characters imprisoned inside their minds, coping with memories in their past, giving little attention to their present activities, and thus ignoring the outside details, including the succession of chronological time. This is found as the origin of the stream-of-consciousness technique of modern fiction. Sterne's concern resembles the moderns' in calling into question the borderline between life and fiction, i.e., the attempt of drawing life as truthfully as possible on the printed page. It was a mode of intellectual realism that was founded by Sterne, and seen as close to reality as the modern fiction is in its own systems. The time-scheme in this novel with its digressive nature generates simultaneousness. This contributes to the modern filmmaking technique.

The novel for Sterne was not only a record or a mere organized events. For instance, writing a novel for him was not a certain character that was born on such a date who met this and that as he or she grew up, and so on. In *Tristram Shandy*, he presents a novel that is set even before the hero's birth. It is an account of what happened, through memories, to his parents prior to giving birth to their only son.

There is also the ever present playing and digression with time from the past to the present and to the past again. Thus, there is no plot and ending in the traditional sense, which associates Sterne's technique with Virginia Woolf's. The digressive technique, flash backs and shots in ***Tristram Shandy*** also contribute to the modern technique of filmmaking and the scenario.

The language Sterne undertakes also reveals his belonging to the twentieth-century writers. He employs it as it is really dominated by the incoherent impulses of the mind. The function of language appears in the dialogues between the characters. Unlike the eighteenth century writers, he made his characters speak so as to reveal more than the simple conflict between the middle and the working classes. Like a modern novelist, he shows that there are social changes and psychological impacts on man's attempts for communication. When they speak, the characters often do not speak as they think. They talk obliquely, hinting at certain points, then trying to make others understand them. The effect is that the language the characters use in Sterne's work is a deceptive index to what they actually feel.

The "hobby horses" in ***Tristram Shandy*** is concluded to be a method that affirms this fact. The conversations are always under the impact of the characters' "hobby horses". Every single character is completely absorbed in his own hobby horsical world or obsession. These obsessions are shown to have the power, as in modern fiction, of alienating the characters from their own society, The dialogues the Shandys use do not express what they really mean to convey. Their worlds are sometimes found incomplete and shaky or incomprehensive in certain situations, because they follow the fluctuating stream of their minds. Not only this, the characters in ***Tristram Shandy*** may foreshadow the nature of the post-war

characters in the Drama of the Absurd for World War II influenced men's psychology. The old values and family ties collapsed. The sense of futility and uncertainty of modern life generated man's estrangement and alienation. Twentieth-century novelists and dramatists presented this condition and created absurd characters that stressed the meaninglessness of life and uselessness of language. Accordingly, a special resemblance has been established in the thesis between Sterne's characters, and his employment of language and dialogue and that of Samuel Beckett's and George Orwell's, especially the hero of ***Burmese Days***, Flory. The focus is always on his inner anguish and difficulty to make himself clear whenever he finds that the people fail to understand him, or as he thinks they do so. So, Flory and Toby have physical defects that estrange them from others.

Interestingly, Sterne has created a new technique of narration in his novels. He presents two characters, Tristram and Yorick, and makes them writers who write the novels, and at the same time they are involved in the novels. As in modern fiction, we have a hero who is also a writer or a narrator. Thus, ***Tristram Shandy*** is of two levels: it is a novel about writing a novel. Indeed, Joseph Conrad is one of the modern novelists who presents in his ***Heart of Darkness*** a character, Marlow, who is the narrator and at the same time a character in the story. Like Tristram and Yorick, ***Heart of Darkness*** is manifested through its narrator and led through his own impressions and intuition. Although ***Tristram Shandy*** is written in the tradition of the sentimental novel, it is found that ***A Sentimental Journey*** might be a better example to represent the sentimental feature of Sterne. In this novel the mode of sensibility has a contemporary delicate and an effective role. It refers to the quickness of response to varying shades of feeling

and sensations in a certain situation, and it is the source of reflection in the fiction of the modern period. It is also found that the reflections in the novel can be made the source of the epiphany as used by Joyce, as well as of the impressionistic technique, mainly of Virginia Woolf. In fact, Sterne's art is greatly reflected in Virginia Woolf's work. She was the first to capture Sterne's modernity as a writer.

The author (Tristram) is a self-conscious narrator, whose purpose is to show that he is writing a novel and to show the difference between fiction and reality. It is found that this technique develops the twentieth-century preoccupation with "Metafiction" and "anti-novel".

Laurence Sterne perceived, as a modern psychologist does, the true complexity of the human heart and mind through his character Yorick. He examined the human soul and body, and revealed not only the good and bright aspects of his psychology, but also the weaknesses and contradictions for which it was difficult to find a rational explanation. For characters like Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, and Moll Flanders, for instance, life may be simple and open, with no mysteries surrounding them. They live their life with some kind of strength and confidence, paying little attention to its ups and downs or complicated situations as they seemed to be preoccupied mainly with providing their material necessities in a harsh economic reality. For Sterne's heroes, the things are less clear and simple. Every single action and image implies certain ambiguities, and requires much thoughts and reflections. They are rather eccentric heroes who are represented as limited to the world of their own minds.

In conclusion, Sterne seems to be aware of the psychological ties between man and his social environment. He shows that this environment, which is composed of men and women and reality as a

whole, is far more complex than it appeared to the rationalist or the realist of the eighteenth century. In the light of the modern developing psychology, ***A Sentimental Journey*** can be assumed in the tradition of the modern psychological novels, like these of D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce. The theme of erotic love is always implied in the novel. In short, we can say that Sterne, throughout these things, concentrates on the individual within himself, alienated from society.

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## ملخص الدراسة

قليل هم الكتاب الذين يكون نتاجهم الأدبي محدودا ولكنه يمنحهم شهرة كبيرة، كما هي الحال مع الكاتب لورنس ستيرن . فمن بين روائيي القرن الثامن عشر يعتبر لورنس ستيرن أكثرهم غرابة وجدلا بين قرائه و رواياته المتميزتان هما نتاج عقلية خلاقية وأصيلة. تتناول هذه الدراسة جوانب الحداثة في عمل لورنس ستيرن والتي اعتبرت فيما بعد رائدة لرواية القرن العشرين . تتألف الدراسة من أربعة فصول تتبعها قائمة مراجع: يتكون الفصل الأول من ثلاثة أقسام.

يستعرض القسم الأول بعض الروائيين المهمين في القرن الثامن عشر واعمالهم، إضافة إلى سيرة حياة لورنس ستيرن كما و يوضّح اختلافه عن معاصريه. ويتناول القسم الثاني بعضا من الأساليب المهمة والحركات الأدبية التي شكلت رواية القرن العشرين، مشيرا إلى بعض الأعمال المهمة كرواية جيمس جويس (يوليسز)، و بعض من أساليب روايات فرجينيا وولف، التي أعتقد أنها الأقرب للورنس ستيرن من أي روايي آخر في القرن العشرين. ويركز القسم على مفهوم الزمن واعتماد المحدثين على الوجدان والأحاسيس أكثر من اعتمادهم على الجوانب التقليدية في بناء الحكمة، إضافة إلى تعاملهم مع مفهوم الذاكرة والزمن الماضي والحاضر. ويبحث هذا القسم بعض الحركات الأدبية المهمة كالانطباعية وأسلوب ما وراء الرواية. أما القسم الثالث فيعطي شرحا مختصرا عن معنى الواقعية في القرنين الثامن عشر والعشرين.

الفصل الثاني يتألف من خمسة أقسام: القسم الأول يقوم بتحليل رواية لورنس ستيرن الأولى (حياة وآراء ترسترام شاندي)، ويبين الروح الحديثة في هذه الرواية إذا ما قورنت بمقاييس كتابة الرواية الحديثة، بينما تختلف عن الرواية العاطفية التي انتهجها معاصروه. ويشير هذا القسم إلى بعض الأساطين أمثال (سيرفانتس و رابليه و جون لوك) الذين يشكلون تأثيرا تعزى إليه بعض السمات التقليدية في هذه الرواية، لكن التركيز سيكون على مضمون مقالة جون لوك باعتبارها أكثر أهمية. ويستعرض القسم الثاني التعامل الخلاق لمفهومي الزمن والذاكرة ويربطهما مع مفهومهما الحديث كما ويستعرض التشابه بين أسلوب فرجينيا وولف و جيمس جويس مع أسلوب ستيرن. يتعامل القسم الثالث مع معنى "الهواية" التي ذكرت مرارا في الرواية وطورت فيما بعد ما يعرف بالهاجس المسيطر على العقل، حيث يسيطر هذا الهاجس على الفعاليات الذهنية للشخصية ويقود بالنهاية إلى العديد من حالات سوء الفهم وصعوبة التواصل والذي يعطي بدوره معنى لمفهوم الغربة

الحديث. ويتناول القسم الرابع مفهوم ترابط الأفكار المستوحى من جون لوك و مدى تشابهه مع أسلوب تيار الوعي الحديث. أما القسم الخامس فيستعرض كيفية توظيف ستيرن للغة والرجوع والانحراف بالسرد بما يشبه إلى حد معين لغة الرواية الحديثة وتقنية صناعة الأفلام.

ويستكشف الفصل الثالث رواية ستيرن الثانية بتحليل بعض الجوانب المهمة الأخرى التي تتعلق بنفسية الشخصية، ويتركز اهتمامه على نقطتين جوهريتين هما حقيقة أن رحلة يورك (بطل الرواية) هي ليست مجرد رحلة عادية وإنما رحلة عبر النفس، والنقطة الثانية وهي الأهم هي اهتمام ستيرن بالعلاقات ما بين الجنسين. يحاول هذا الفصل ربط ما مر به البطل من تجارب مع النساء في فرنسا مع المفهوم الأدبي الحديث المعروف بمصطلح (أدب الغزل). والهدف هو إيجاد بعض التشابه ما بين استعراض العناصر الغزلية وخصوصا تلك التي تثار عن طريق اللمس كونها ذات مغزى استثنائي مشابه لما وظفه روائي آخر من القرن العشرين وهو د. لورنس. أما الفصل الرابع فهو مخصص إلى ما توصلت إليه الدراسة من استنتاجات.

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**روح الحداثة في روايتي لورنس ستيرن**

**ترسترام شاندي و رحلة عاطفية**

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□ أطروحة مقدمة إلى مجلس كلية الآداب  
□ في الجامعة المستنصرية كجزء من متطلبات  
□ نيل درجة الماجستير في الأدب الإنكليزي

□ إعداد

□ ياسر مطلب عبد الله

□ إشراف

أ. الدكتورة إقبال حسين علي الجباري

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