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Sterne and the “New Species of Writing”

THOMAS KEYMER



OF THE PLURALITY of discourses and traditions that bump up against one another in *Tristram Shandy*, two have dominated critical attempts to make generic (and hence interpretative) sense of Sterne’s richly heteroglot text. One strain of criticism reads *Tristram Shandy* as a belated exercise in Renaissance learned wit; the other as a parody (or, if the implications of its parodic gestures are pursued, a deconstruction) of representational conventions in the modern novel. Each identity, all too often, is presented as exclusive of the other, and the critical dichotomy persists not least because its most evident point of stress—the overtly Cervantic aspect of *Tristram Shandy*—has been obscured by readings that present Cervantes himself as primarily an exponent of Erasmian satire, or of fideistic skepticism in the vein of Montaigne, rather than in his alternative guise as a proto-novelist.¹ The difficulty of grounding the novel-centered approach to Sterne in features equivalent to the close and direct allusiveness of his learned wit set pieces, moreover, has often left it stranded in anachronism or generality, so fueling the counterclaim that *Tristram Shandy*’s subversiveness of

novelistic convention is nothing more than accidental or proleptic, or even a mere illusion. At best, in this view, the metafictional element in Sterne's writing is a chance by-product of his cooption, within a mock-autobiographical framework, of Scriblerian techniques of fragmentation and disruption, and lacks any solid connection to a genre in which he took little or no provable interest.

Yet it is not necessary for the novel-centered approach to *Tristram Shandy* to take refuge in classic poststructuralist theory, with its rationale for cutting relational meanings loose from inconvenient circumstances of chronology or intention. To acknowledge the prominence of the learned wit tradition in Sterne's writing need not be to deny the deliberacy of its engagement with newer forms. Instead we may find within it a cornucopia of textual relations in which Menippean satire and metafictional self-consciousness co-exist and unfold themselves in different intertextual modes, and display, as they do so, a hybridization of traditions and genres that in itself is typically novelistic. Here the satirical mode is characteristically determinate, involving necessary connections with specific precursors named, quoted, or otherwise verbally indicated in the text, and this applies even where (as in the instances of determinate intertextuality that fill the standing *Scriblerian* column of "scholia" to the Florida annotations) the verbal indications are so subtle, or the indicated sources so recondite, that they pass undetected for centuries. The novelistic mode, by contrast, is characteristically aleatory, gesturing toward a plurality of potential intertexts through its play on terms, tropes, or conventions that all of them hold in common, but necessarily specifying no single one.²

Although Sterne's engagement with the novel genre, I argue below, can occasionally be pinned down to concrete allusion, this fuzzier kind of intertextuality is its usual and appropriate mode for several reasons. The expectations inevitably generated by *Tristram Shandy's* title and fictional content, coupled with the fashionable prominence of the "new species of writing" over the previous twenty years, made it unnecessary for Sterne to flag his entanglement with the genre with anything like the specificity needed to evoke historically more distant imbrications—imbrications that, as a result, have dominated the work of source-hunters since the time

of John Ferriar's *Illustrations of Sterne* (1798). Sterne's primary interest, moreover, is with large questions about the novel and its mechanisms, not with the uniqueness of particular novels. Where a specific instantiation of the genre does help to clarify these larger generic conditions, the towering contemporary stature of certain key works—by Richardson and Fielding above all—acts as a natural check on the randomness of association otherwise generated by aleatory intertextuality, so that only the faintest of allusive touches can serve to bring to mind a specific reference point.

The coexistence with Sterne's noisy displays of learned wit of this quiet but no less pervasive engagement with the novel genre—an engagement that also seems, if we listen to the evidence of reception, to have been immediately accessible to early readers—takes several forms, and marks not only the “novelistic-sentimental” final volumes of *Tristram Shandy* but also its “satirical-Scriblerian” opening. *Tristram Shandy* absorbs and resumes the most vexed topics of experimentation and debate in novels such as *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones*, notably the mimetic efficacy (or otherwise) of narrative language, the dynamics of communication between narrator and reader, and the openness of narrative meaning to plural construction. Several years intervened, however, between the well-publicized retirements of Richardson and Fielding and the inaugural installment of *Tristram Shandy*, and in the interim novelists had made further innovatory gestures while explicitly registering the new (and in some respects newly adverse) conditions of authorship and publication in the later 1750s. In this respect, forgotten experimental novels of this decade such as John Kidgell's *The Card*, the anonymous *Life and Memoirs of Mr. Ephraim Tristram Bates*, Thomas Amory's *The Life of John Buncl, Esq.*, William Toldervy's *The History of Two Orphans*, and Edward Kimber's *The Juvenile Adventures of David Ranger, Esq.*, constitute an equally significant body of precursor texts. Sterne not only adopts the episodic repertoire and formal reflexiveness of the subgenre represented by these novels, ostentatiously trumping their prior deployment of both with elaborate displays of narrative involution and excess. He also digests and reworks the most innovative feature they share, which is their tendency to push a literary self-consciousness inherited from Field-

ing into a more directly practical self-consciousness about the mechanisms and institutions of print culture: specifically, about the relationship between authorial production and its materialization as a printed object, and about the overdetermination of both by the forces of literary commodification, consumer fashion, and regulatory reviewing. Sterne's systematic exploitation of this incompletely realized potentiality in the novels of the 1750s, like his parodies of circumstantial realism in Richardson or his Fielding-esque tropes of narrative as conversation or travel, is too capricious and ironic to be assimilated to a consistent thesis about the emerging genre. *Tristram Shandy* recurrently indicates, however, an explosive skepticism about the referential and rhetorical pretensions of novelistic discourse, specifically as these were developed and interrogated in the twenty years preceding its opening volumes of December 1759.

Tristram Shandy, Satire, and the Novel

The competing traditions of *Tristram Shandy* criticism reach back to the earliest reviews. At one extreme is a fatuous puff in the *London Magazine* for February 1760, which finds *Tristram Shandy* "rare" and "unaccountable," and asks: "what shall we call there?—Rabelais, Cervantes, What?" (CH, 52). The point is carried no further, but clearly heralds that modern approach to Sterne that finds its *locus classicus* in Jefferson's influential essay on "*Tristram Shandy* and the Tradition of Learned Wit," and its amplest expression in the rich intertextual annotations of the Florida edition: the idea that *Tristram Shandy*, inexplicable by the literary norms and conventions of its own day, can be understood only by analogy with Renaissance satire (and only then with reference to some idiosyncratic further element in the brew, an indefinable "What"). Here the *London* obligingly picks up a message that Sterne had carefully embedded in his opening volumes, and that his fashionable promoters were spreading about town. It is in the second installment that Sterne most pointedly stakes his claim (with Tristram's oath "by the ashes of my dear *Rabelais*, and dearer *Cervantes*" [3.19.225]) to be the true

heir to these long-dead masters, a latter-day phoenix sprung from their embers; but the claim is hinted well enough in the opening volumes, with their pervasive Rabelaisian echoes and several overt allusions to *Don Quixote*. It gained resonance from the pontifications of Bishop Warburton, who, having previously published two genealogical accounts of the modern novel (one culminating with Richardson, the other with Fielding), presented Sterne as a case apart. Here was “the English Rabelais,” Warburton was telling anyone who would listen, who had written “an original composition, and in the true Cervantic vein”³—praise that (with nice economy of contradiction) makes plain the advantage Sterne reaped by flagging such distant forebears as his primary models. At a time when Richardson’s status as the very type of originality had been sealed by the dedication to him of Young’s *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), and similar claims had been made for Fielding in commentaries like *An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding* (1751), it is as though the noise Sterne makes about Rabelais and Cervantes could preempt allegations of indebtedness to his immediate contemporaries, and so assist his standing, paradoxically, as an original himself.

A yet earlier reviewer, however, had been willing enough to accept the originality of *Tristram Shandy* while unhesitatingly associating it with the modern novel. Writing in the *Monthly Review*, which had been complaining for years about the staleness of the fiction churned out since the retirement of Richardson and Fielding (“those loads of trash, which are thrown in upon us under the denomination of *Lives, Adventures, Memoirs, Histories, &c.*”⁴), William Kenrick praised Sterne’s work for reconfiguring the hackneyed outlines of the genre. Sterne’s title implied the whole process. “Of *Lives and Adventures* the public have had enough, and, perhaps, more than enough, long ago,” Kenrick writes, with all the weariness of a jobbing reviewer: “A consideration that probably induced the droll Mr. Tristram Shandy to entitle the performance . . . his *Life and Opinions.*” *Life and Adventures* had indeed been a standard formula since the days of *Robinson Crusoe*, and Kenrick was right to imply that there had been no previous *Life and Opinions*. By creatively recasting the usual formula, and playing on its terms in the text

itself, Sterne advertises his self-conscious preoccupation with discourse over story (or opinion over transaction, as Tristram would have it), and thereby flags his ironic relationship to the genre as a whole. Kenrick seems to understand as much when recommending him, in conclusion, "as a writer infinitely more ingenious and entertaining than any other of the present race of novelists" (*CH*, 47–48). In this usage it is the modern sense of "novelist" that clearly applies, though Kenrick's larger point is that Sterne himself is also a "novelist" in what then was the primary sense.⁵ He is a novelist among novelists, an innovator among writers of fiction—a judgment that gains real weight from Kenrick's extensive recent experience of where the genre now stood. As a new recruit to the *Monthly*, Kenrick seems to have been allocated a disproportionate share of novels, and had reviewed at least twelve in the previous year—several of which, as he confesses in the case of William Guthrie's *The Mother; or, The Happy Distress*, were "so very little interesting, that we could not bear to read through them at all."⁶

Kenrick was not alone in his view of *Tristram Shandy's* opening installment as essentially (though also eccentrically) novelistic. His diagnosis of the work as pointedly disrupting the norms of the genre was echoed by Horace Walpole, who wrote of it as "a kind of novel . . . the great humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards"—as though we might find in *Tristram Shandy* a precursor of much more recent narrative experiments like Martin Amis's novel in rewind, *Time's Arrow* (1991).⁷ From here it is a simple step to that alternative line of interpretation advanced by modern commentators who, like Kenrick before them, approach *Tristram Shandy* via a specific professional interest in the novel as a genre: the view that this is not a belated exercise in learned wit satire but a modern novel about novel writing, which self-consciously stages (as Everett Zimmerman succinctly puts it) "a complex parody of conventional narrative procedures."⁸

But whose narrative procedures, and which ones? There is a telling evasiveness in Zimmerman's phrasing here, and specifically in "conventional," which haunts this whole approach. Sterne writes at a time when the conventions of fictional representation, such as they were, remained fluid, ill-defined, and keenly con-

tested: Witness the Richardson–Fielding dispute of the 1740s, which was as much about competing narrative strategies as it was about religion and ethics, or ideologies of gender and class. Do we assume that *Tristram Shandy* is sending up the minute and massive particularizations of Richardsonian narrative, the magisterial manipulations of Fielding’s, something else entirely—or all three at once? Or do we assume no relationship at all to any specific precursor, and read the antinovelistic element of *Tristram Shandy* as essentially fortuitous—a deconstructive potential inherent in the text, which illuminates, through strictly synchronic analysis and without any corresponding diachronic claim, the assumptions and mechanics of narrative realism in its classic (that is, later) phase? Michael McKeon elegantly conflates the diachronic and synchronic versions of this approach to Sterne when writing that the formal breakthroughs achieved by novelists of the 1740s were “pursued with such feverish intensity over the next two decades that after *Tristram Shandy*, it may be said, the young genre settles down to a more deliberate and studied recapitulation of the same ground, this time for the next two centuries.”⁹ Equations as deft as these have a powerful appeal, but they also reveal the extent to which a strictly formalist case about Sterne’s affinity with postmodern narrative (McKeon’s “next two centuries” take us, of course, to the 1960s) can slip, almost by default and without demonstration, into a historical assertion about his posture toward Richardson, Fielding, and the novelists who wrote in their wake. An implied analogy with writers of experimental metafiction like Barth, Burroughs, or B. S. Johnson, or with the French *nouveau roman* (a critique, overtly theorized as such by exponents like Robbe-Grillet, of nineteenth-century realism), is being used to support a proposition about Sterne’s relationship toward his own precursors. This proposition is otherwise unsubstantiated—and has never, indeed, been argued through.

To review the rise of *Tristram Shandy*’s reputation as a work that counts Richardson and Fielding (as much as Warburton, say, or Locke) among its satirical butts—as a work in which the groaning conventions of mid-eighteenth-century fiction meet their parodic Waterloo—is to see this slippage in action. The classic prewar read-

ings of *Tristram Shandy* as parodic antinovel or sophisticated meta-novel are unabashedly ahistorical, and largely sidestep the question of Sterne's posture toward experiments with narrative, and debates about it, in the decades before he wrote. It is hardly surprising (given the resources available to him in 1920s Russia) that Viktor Shklovsky's celebration of Sterne as "a radical revolutionary as far as form is concerned" is based on little acquaintance with earlier novels, and Shklovsky's claim, though brilliantly substantiated through formal analysis, has no historical weight. Foils for his argument about the antithetical relationship "between the conventional novel and that of Sterne" are repeatedly found in the repertoire of the century to follow, and, although generalizations about prior conventions are occasionally ventured—"Sterne was writing against a background of the adventure novel with its extremely rigorous forms that demanded . . . that a novel end with a wedding" (which hardly touches the most prominent background novels, such as *Amelia* or *Clarissa*)—the overall case is synchronic.¹⁰ In much the same period, though of course independently, Virginia Woolf remarked of Sterne that "no young writer could have dared to take such liberties with . . . the long-standing tradition of how a novel should be written," but did little to develop this instinctive sense of *Tristram Shandy*'s iconoclastic stance toward earlier fiction. Instead Woolf was mainly concerned with an ulterior motive in the present: that of coopting Sterne for her ongoing campaign against the bricks-and-mortar realism typified by Galsworthy and Bennett. Her deft reading of *A Sentimental Journey* converts it into a stream-of-consciousness novel *avant la lettre*, laudably indifferent to its material environment, and alert to the fluidity of perception: "no writing seems to flow more exactly into the very folds and creases of the individual mind, to express its changing moods, to answer its lightest whim and impulse."¹¹

From influential analyses such as these—which finely adumbrate Sterne's proleptic unravelling of high-realist conventions, but fail to ground it in any demonstrable response to eighteenth-century fiction—flows the more or less unexamined assumption, in more recent criticism, that the narrative conventions unpicked by Sterne are specifically those of his immediate precursors: the

novelists who, like Richardson and Fielding, self-consciously saw themselves as giving shape (or shapes) to “a New Species of Writing.”¹² Literary historians of the postwar years made more targeted attempts to seal the connection, but even the most distinguished, Ian Watt, found his proposition that Sterne turns irony “against many of the narrative methods which the new genre had so lately developed” hard to substantiate in practice. Sometimes Watt simply flannels, as in his strained analogy with Defoe (whose “brilliant economy of suggestion” Sterne is held to absorb) or in his odd claim that “Fielding’s criticism of Richardson is implicit in the way that Sterne’s masculine embodiment of sexual virtue is pitted against the Widow Wadman’s villainous Lovelace.”¹³ And, whereas other aspects of Watt’s thesis have been valuably developed or contested by a second wave of rise-of-the-novel studies in the 1980s and 1990s, this particular part has stayed much where it is. McKeon’s excellent *Origins of the English Novel* typifies the tendency of revisionist studies to cut out in midcentury, thereby confining Sterne’s relationship to the tradition to passing reference (the sentence cited above being McKeon’s only mention of *Tristram Shandy*). The most authoritative recent overview of the century as such, by John Richetti, guardedly sidesteps the issue by restating the Renaissance-satirical inheritance of *Tristram Shandy* and stressing its identity as “almost *sui generis*,” “not a novel in the customary sense.” By confining Sterne to his chapter on sensibility, Richetti focuses his analysis instead on ethical rather than narratological aspects of *Tristram Shandy*’s contemporary resonance, and specifically its equivocal status as “a proleptic parody of the novel of sentimental education.”¹⁴

One possible response at this point would be to say that Sterne’s status as a witty parodist (and/or a sophisticated deconstructor) of the “new species of writing” and its underlying conventions is so self-evident that demonstration would be pointless. Watt has made the general point that “Sterne’s narrative mode gives very careful attention to all the aspects of formal realism: to the particularisation of time, place and person; to a natural and lifelike sequence of action; and to the creation of a literary style which gives the most exact verbal and rhythmical equivalent possible of the ob-

ject."¹⁵ Add to this Watt's recognition that this attention is typically parodic in cast, and chapter-and-verse specification seems otiose. More recently, however, formidable questions have been posed that demand a direct answer. Why, in this most allusive of works (to say nothing of every other published or manuscript source from Sterne's pen), does Sterne never refer explicitly to Richardson or Fielding, and why has no modern editor of *Tristram Shandy* (including Watt himself, in the Riverside edition of 1965) caught Sterne reworking any specific passage from their fiction? As the Florida edition so richly documents, the embeddedness of *Tristram Shandy* in a learned wit tradition from Rabelais and Montaigne to Swift and the Scriblerians is not only close but also overt. Locke, Sterne's philosophical source-cum-stooge, is cited by name on fully seven occasions. Intertextual allusiveness is *Tristram Shandy's* stock in trade, and from volume 1, which will be "no less read than the *Pilgrim's Progress* itself" (TS, 1.4.5), to volume 9, which will "swim down the gutter of Time" with Warburton's *Divine Legation* and *A Tale of a Tub* (TS, 9.8.754), Sterne's strategy is to highlight its operation—though his total silence about Robert Burton, incontestably a major source for *Tristram Shandy*, should make us pause before assuming that "Sterne's system of imitation," in Jonathan Lamb's phrase, always proclaims its own workings.¹⁶

One explanation—Melvyn New's—is that this absence should not surprise us: Sterne fails to cite the novelists for the simple reason that he takes no interest in them. The assumption that he has any such interest derives not from the text itself, but from an inherent bias in our institutional and pedagogic arrangements, in which casual juxtapositions slide inexorably into causal conclusions. As New puts it, "what might appear to us as innocent, neutral, or inevitable—the inclusion of *Tristram Shandy* in the eighteenth-century novels course, immediately following Fielding and Richardson—is in fact an interpretative act, one that preconceives the genre—and hence our expectations—of the work." Our sense of Sterne's responsiveness to the representational practices of *Clarissa* or *Tom Jones* is simply "the result of teleologically structured novels courses and the critical writing they generate," not of any concrete connection to works that (as New insists elsewhere)

Sterne “gives no sign anywhere of having read.”¹⁷ From this point of view, those features that seem to offer mileage for reading *Tristram Shandy* as directly responsive to earlier novels are better explained as accidental by-products of the learned wit tradition, solidly attributable to the disrupted forms and self-conscious literariness of genuine precursor texts like *The Anatomy of Melancholy* or *A Tale of a Tub*. Pursuing these same objections, J. T. Parnell identifies the formal techniques of Swift and Sterne as a satirical inheritance from Erasmus, Montaigne, Rabelais, and other writers of a fideistic-skeptical tradition, which both inheritors could redeploy in mockery of Enlightenment system building. The resulting effect of structural havoc and communicative impasse may retrospectively look like parody of novelistic discourse, but is something entirely other. “Some well-worn commonplaces of Sterne criticism may have to be put to rest,” Parnell concludes: We must now accept “that he may never have read the ‘novelists,’ let alone contemplated a devastating critique of the shortcomings of the emerging genre.”¹⁸

My argument here is that Sterne did indeed contemplate a critique of the emerging genre, and also that he achieved it. I do not mean, however, to deny the centrality of the Rabelaisian–Cervantic inheritance detected by some of *Tristram Shandy*’s earliest readers and emphasized in the formidable line of scholarship that culminates with New and Parnell. It is vital, moreover, to retain one telling part of New’s objection to the novel-centered approach, which is that (in so far as it works at any such level of detail at all) the reading of *Tristram Shandy* as a sophisticated dismantling of mid-eighteenth-century narrative practices almost invariably works by caricaturing these practices as lumbering and epistemologically naive—“by turning Fielding and Richardson into dolts,” as New robustly puts it.¹⁹ Rather than seeing Sterne as engaged in mockery alone, I see him as alert and responsive to problems that Richardson and Fielding were themselves intelligently exploring, and as following up these explorations in a mode of exaggeration or *reductio ad absurdum* that, though certainly often parodic, is not necessarily dismissive. Sterne was indebted to both the Rabelaisian–Cervantic tradition and to the modern novel, and wholly rejected neither; in this respect the very plenitude of *Tristram Shandy*’s discursive en-

tanglements intensifies its allegiances to the modern novel, this being the medium *par excellence* of generic hybridization and polyglossia.²⁰

For this sense of creative coexistence between learned wit and novelism, as opposed to either/or competition between them, one may look back again to *Tristram Shandy's* earliest reception, and specifically to a third review, which appeared in the *Critical Review* immediately between the notices of the *Monthly* and the *London*. Like Kenrick's in the *Monthly*, it is a review that gains authority from its provenance in a periodical that, since its foundation in 1756, had extensively covered developments in the novel genre. Having voiced its uncertainties about the literary identity of this new work, the *Critical* moves implicitly toward a composite identity by calling Toby, Trim, and Slop "excellent imitations of certain characters in a modern truly Cervantic performance, which we avoid naming" (CH, 52). Alan B. Howes has convincingly identified this unnamed work as *Peregrine Pickle* (written, of course, by the editor of the *Critical*, Tobias Smollett, who was also *Don Quixote's* most recent translator); and by invoking this simultaneously modern yet Cervantic performance the *Critical* adroitly registers *Tristram Shandy's* double face. Backward-looking yet up to date, Sterne's work absorbs from Cervantes his sophisticated debunking of romance conventions (the aspect of *Don Quixote* that dominated the views of mid-eighteenth-century readers who, like Smollett, thought it written "with a view to ridicule and discredit" heroic romance²¹) but redirects this metafictional concern toward the species of fiction now generally held, as in Charlotte Lennox's recent *The Female Quixote*, to have rendered romance obsolete.

In later reviews the *Critical* pulled markedly away from the analogy with *Don Quixote*: Sterne's imitation was so botched as to leave "no more resemblance between his manner and that of Cervantes, than there is between the solemnity of a Foppington and the grimace of a Jack Pudding." But even as it did so the *Critical* continued to indicate the overlap between learned wit and novelism, stressing now the Rabelaisian inheritance of *Tristram Shandy* as seen in "the same sort of apostrophes to the reader, breaking in upon the narrative . . . the same whimsical digressions; and the same parade of

learning.”²² In the broadest terms, *Tristram Shandy* draws from the learned wit tradition of which both Rabelais and Cervantes were part, up to and including *A Tale of a Tub*, an overall preoccupation with textuality, indeterminacy, and fragmentation of form, adding, once again, the new move of focusing this preoccupation on the novel—which by now had become the preferred genre, of course, of Swift’s “freshest moderns.” This redeployment on to new objects of traditional satirical moves is characterized, moreover, by the same ambivalence that had marked Swift’s response to *Grub Street* half a century beforehand (an ambivalence also discernible, it might be added, in the increasingly complex attitude to romance that develops as *Don Quixote* progresses). Sophisticated aloofness mingles throughout with intense imaginative absorption, and for all its interludes of ridicule and hostility *Tristram Shandy* is better seen as wittily developing the rigorous self-consciousness of earlier novelists, rather than as magisterially revealing to these writers narratological cruxes that they had been pondering all along.

Imagining Dr. Slop

One way of establishing the groundedness of *Tristram Shandy* in mid-eighteenth-century fiction, yet also the resistance of this feature to single-source annotation, is through localized close reading. Consider a well-known passage from volume 2, in which, having self-consciously “prepared the reader’s imagination for the entrance of Dr. *Slop* upon the stage” (2.8.120), Tristram introduces the physician and man-midwife in chapter 9. Then follows Slop’s farcical unseating, in which, continuing his play in the novel with ill-matched durations of action and narration, Sterne brilliantly inverts the familiar comic technique of burlesque acceleration (the effect that predominates in Fielding’s *Shamela*, for example, with its high-speed parodic rerun of *Pamela*’s plot). An entire chapter lingers here on the events of a few seconds, slowing down the frames of its narrative to particularize how the overweight Slop “left his pony to its destiny, tumbling off it diagonally, something in the stile and manner of a pack of wool” (2.9.122–123). Two chapters later, Tris-

tram goes on to theorize about his own narrative practice, in ways prompted by his depiction of Slop.

The episode is famous not least because Sterne cites it himself as an instance of his comic technique. He specifies, indeed, the technique's source. Addressing a reader who had criticized the pre-publication version for its overload of ornamentation, he is ready, he says, to "reconsider Slops fall & my too Minute Account of it—but in general I am perswaded that the happiness of the Cervantic humour arises from this very thing—of describing silly and trifling Events, with the Circumstantial Pomp of great Ones" (*Letters*, 77; see also 79). Minutely particularized, and with a mock solemnity that lurches into comic bathos (the fussy redundancy of "stile and manner"; the crashingly inelegant—though also oddly evocative—"pack of wool"), the passage brings back to life the satirical repertoire of *Don Quixote*. It is as though the pompous elaboration is there to assert, purely at the level of style, the claim that Sterne was more explicitly making in other private and public identifications of *Tristram Shandy* as a work of "Cervantic Satyr" (*Letters*, 120)—as a work of ostentatiously literary mock-heroic, in other words, which in its seventeenth-century origins has little to do with more recent, trashier fiction.

Critics anxious to stress the Cervantic inheritance of *Tristram Shandy* have seized on this passage and Sterne's commentary to press their case, and this same sense of a text drenched in the traditions of Renaissance satire is richly substantiated by the Florida notes, which associate Slop's fall with similar equestrian mishaps in Montaigne and Scarron. One might even press further down this route, and invoke other, nonsatirical sources to locate Sterne's playfulness with material little different in kind from the diet of satirists such as Burton a century beforehand. In the relentless domino effect of Dr Slop's losses—first his whip, then his stirrup, then his seat, "and in the multitude of all these losses . . . the unfortunate Doctor lost his presence of mind" (2.9.122)—Sterne pirouettes around a proverbial sequence first imported from France in seventeenth-century collections such as George Herbert's *Outlandish Proverbs* (1640), and recently revived by Benjamin Franklin: "For want of a nail the shoe is lost; for want of a shoe the horse is lost; for want

of a horse the rider lost.”²³ Two chapters later, a reference back to “Dr. *Slop*’s sad overthrow” (2.11.126) is another mock-heroic touch, jokily enlisting the physician among the rebel angels who, in *Paradise Lost*, “rue the dire event, / That with sad overthrow and foul defeat / Hath lost us heaven.”²⁴ Not only does Sterne’s text spring a practical joke here on the critic who tries to locate it, luring him within range of its own satire on the scholarly equivalent of over-circumstantial narrative (or “writing like a Dutch commentator,” as Tristram puts it elsewhere [9.13.763]). It also seems to disclose, as the outcome of any such commentary, a picture of provincial isolation in which the literary materials Sterne plays on are those of the minster library or the local great house, and not of the fashionable modern marketplace for new fiction.

But not exclusively so. The Florida annotations also record, at the very outset of the chapter, a striking parallel with Le Sage’s picaresque novel, *Gil Blas*, specifically in Smollett’s 1748 translation. “Imagine to yourself a little, squat, uncourtly figure of a Doctor *Slop*, of about four feet and a half perpendicular height,” Tristram begins, setting up an intermittently anaphoric sequence of imperatives (“imagine . . . imagine . . . imagine”) that culminates in his much-quoted resolution, two chapters later, to halve meanings with the reader and “leave him something to imagine . . . as well as yourself” (2.11.125). As the Florida editors note, the instruction bears comparison with Smollett’s wording (“Figure to yourself a little fellow, three feet and a half high, as fat as you can conceive”), and it is possible that Sterne was elaborating its specific gestures. The more important general point, however, is that the “imagine to yourself”/“figure to yourself” formula was a standard trope in the fictional repertoire of the day, used in particular to herald set-piece exercises in the grotesque. “Imagine to yourself, a man rather past threescore, short and ill made, with a yellow cadaverous hue, great goggling eyes, that stared as if he was strangled,” as Cleland introduces one of his heroine’s less appetizing clients in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748–149).²⁵ Specific suggestions about derivation become unnecessary here, and perhaps even misleading. By adopting what had become a cliché of modern novelistic discourse, and using it to build toward the famous writing-as-conversation pas-

sage, Sterne does much more than echo Smollett, Cleland, or any other source. He prepares his readers to understand this passage as addressing, in general, the stock rhetoric of fictional representation as practiced in the past two decades.

In the sentence following this "imagine to yourself" formula, Tristram's allusion to Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* adds to the effect in ways again partly registered by the Florida editors. Citing a set of instances from Fielding and Smollett (as first collated by William V. Holtz in his account of *Tristram Shandy's* engagement with contemporary aesthetic theory), they identify "Sterne's evocation of Hogarth in relation to character-drawing" as a commonplace of the day.²⁶ It might be added that the reference here to Hogarth on how a figure may be "caracatur'd, and convey'd to the mind" (2.9.121) points, more directly than any of Holtz's four examples, to the Hogarth-centered discussion of character and caricature in the preface to *Joseph Andrews* (which Hogarth himself had prominently cited in his print of 1743, *Characters and Caricaturas*, "for a Farthar Explanation of this Difference").²⁷ Even in its opening sentences, Sterne's chapter is keying itself very firmly to the mimetic codes and conventions developed in fiction since the *Pamela* controversy, and specifically to the novel's self-consciousness about them.

And this is merely the tip of the iceberg. Episodic precedents for Slop's sad overthrow are easily as frequent in fiction of the 1740s and 1750s as in Montaigne or Scarron, and often much closer in detail. Banana skins were thin on the ground in eighteenth-century England, but of the alternative hazards to which comic novels of the period expose their characters, falling off a horse must be the surest. A conspicuous victim is Parson Adams, who nearly manages it twice in a single chapter, and then only "by good Luck, rather than by good Riding" (*JA*, 300). Closer to Slop's case is that of Dr. Zachary Heartley, a physician and man-midwife in William Toldervy's *The History of Two Orphans* (1756), who early in the narrative rides out into the country, having been "summoned to attend a woman in labour, four miles distant from the town where he lived." Like Sterne, this minor novelist derives the humor of his scene from a comic disproportion between action and narra-

tion. The difference is that, where Sterne lavishes too much detail on Slop's fall, Toldervy's offhand abruptness involves too little. Heartley rides full speed to his destination without mishap, and safely delivers the baby; "but, returning homewards on a gentle trot, the legs of his horse flew up, and the doctor pitching upon his head, died on the spot." The inevitable instruction ensues: "our readers may more easily figure to themselves the deplorable situation of Mrs. *Heartley*, on her receiving this terrible account, than we can describe."²⁸

The likelihood that Sterne knew Toldervy's novel (which is prominently advertised in another he must surely have known, the anonymous *Life and Memoirs of Mr. Ephraim Tristram Bates*) is strengthened by other situational parallels, including the obsessive reminiscences of a half-pay soldier whose companions "can't take a nap after pudding" (as one of them complains) "but must be disturbed with your curs'd expeditions to *Flanders*."²⁹ Whether or not he saw himself as stealthily reworking Toldervy's text, however, hardly matters. As with the "figure to yourself" instance from *Gil Blas*, the significant thing about Heartley's "sad catastrophe" (as Toldervy calls it in his chapter title) is that it typifies the repertoire of the genre. Whatever Sterne's relationship to any individual case, the underlying point is that he is playing ostentatiously here with some of the most hackneyed formulae, both verbal and episodic, of the modern novel in general. By calling to mind the standard clichés of the genre, he clearly identifies this genre as the subject of his theoretical and satirical play on representation and reading in the chapters to come, while displaying his virtuosity as a writer able to take its stalest gestures and render them fresh.

As the display goes on, Sterne continues to lift his ideas from the genre, even as he trumps it. His "Circumstantial Pomp" of narration may very loosely be thought of as Cervantic, but its particular distinguishing feature—pompous scientism—has a more immediate ancestry than the emphasis on Cervantes obscures. With its incongruous technical vocabulary, the mock-scientific account of Obadiah's speeding horse ("a phenomenon, with such a vortex of mud and water moving along with it, round its axis . . . to say nothing of the NUCLEUS . . . the MOMENTUM of the coach-

horse") is less original than it might seem in applying the lexical resources of Cartesian physics to slapstick collisions and falls. (All these terms, of course, would originally have suggested a much more specialized register than they do today, a fact pointed up by Tristram's etymologically fussy spelling of "phenomenon" and the typographical emphasis of "nucleus" and "momentum.") In *Peregrine Pickle* (1751)—the novel identified by the *Critical Review* on other grounds as a proximate source for *Tristram Shandy*—Smollett exaggerates his distinctive effect of random violence and brutality by framing it, with amused detachment, in the language of scientific observation. Here, too, a speeding horse terrifies "a waggoner who . . . saw this phenomenon fly over his carriage"; a food-fight is observed by a witness "secure without the vortex of this tumult"; an assailant twists his victim's nose "with the momentum of a screw or peritrochium."³⁰ Anna Seward may or may not have been right to judge that Slop's fall, "so happily told, outweighs . . . all the writings of Smollett," but she was certainly right to sense the connection.³¹ The difference is that Sterne distils and concentrates into a single chapter a comic resource that Smollett leaves scattered and latent.

This well-known episode of Slop's fall makes clear the groundedness of *Tristram Shandy* in modern fiction. Though identifying the passage as distinctively "Cervantic" in its mock-heroic elaboration of trivial matter, Sterne pursues this goal by reworking one of the most familiar plot devices in the mid-eighteenth-century repertoire, and doing so in terms that pick up and exaggerate verbal formulae and narrative tropes from identifiable recent novels. Nor should this convergence of Renaissance satire and modern fiction surprise us, given the extent to which Sterne's neo-Cervantic pose was anticipated by many eighteenth-century writers who saw Cervantes as first and foremost a novelist himself—as the pioneer, indeed, who "introduced novel writing," or founded a "Species of Fiction . . . of Spanish invention."³² Ronald Paulson has documented the role of *Don Quixote* (with *Paradise Lost*) as "one of two books that profoundly shaped English writing of the eighteenth century,"³³ and here Sterne's identification with Cervantes binds him more rather than less closely with recent developments in the novel, the

genre in which this shaping was most actively felt. Fielding had already won for himself the designation of “our *English Cervantes*,”³⁴ and the title-page claim of *Joseph Andrews* to be “Written in Imitation of the *Manner* of CERVANTES” is reminder enough that, in harking back to *Don Quixote*, Sterne was not bypassing the work of recent novelists, but drawing on a stock that Fielding had made common to them all. The intensive Cervantic gestures of *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* were among the more prominent results, and by the 1750s minor writers were queueing up to associate their novels with this tradition. *The Juvenile Adventures of David Ranger* (in which Edward Kimber asks the “inspirer of the inimitable *Cervantes*, of the facetious *Scarron*, of the thrice renowned *Sage* . . . to shed thy influence on thy humble votary”) typifies the trend, while also indicating the impossibility of disentangling it, now, from the mediating influence of Fielding and Smollet: more directly over-shadowing his text, Kimber acknowledges, are “the multiloquacious *Henry F*———, or that poetical, critical, physical, political novelist *Dr.* ———”.³⁶ Clearly enough, to be Cervantic by now was to be in the mainstream of novelistic production, in which responsiveness to *Don Quixote* (even via conduits such as the Motteux–Ozell translation of 1700–1703, which Sterne appears to have used) could no longer fail to be colored by the modern novels that now defined and diffused the influence of Cervantes’s text.

Nor is it any easier to disentangle from this strictly modern hinterland to *Tristram Shandy* the other Renaissance satirical sources that Sterne most clearly flags, who like Cervantes are standard points of reference, too, in Fielding, Smollett, and their school. Even the punctilious Pamela is a reader of Rabelais (though only when decently married in Richardson’s sequel), and Smollett’s scathing remarks about readers “who eagerly explore the jakes of Rabelais” while primly castigating contemporary fiction make clear his currency in a period when sanitizing translation and learned annotation had brought Rabelaisian bawdry within the pale of politeness (or almost so).³⁶ The reference to Lucian, Rabelais, and Cervantes in *Tristram Shandy* (3.19.225) has an obvious precedent in *Tom Jones*’s invocation of “thy *Lucian*, thy *Cervantes*, thy *Rabelais*,” and this or similar invocations of tradition were regularly imitated in

between, in works ranging in distinction from *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (which throws in Scarron, Le Sage, and Swift for good measure) to Adolphus Bannac's *The Life and Surprizing Adventures of Crusoe Richard Davis* (which made the *Critical Review* scoff at its claim to be following "Lucian, Rabelais and Swift").³⁷ Fielding gets in first, too, when adopting from "the celebrated *Montagne*, who promises you one thing and gives you another" (*JA*, 77), the quintessentially Shandean idea—or so one might have thought it—of a chapter that fails to get round to its advertised content.³⁸

To say all this, of course, is not to revive the tedious old scandal of Sterne the plagiarist, or to intensify it by alleging that in the very act of imitating Renaissance satire Sterne was also imitating the imitations of more recent novelists. By juxtaposing explicit references to Cervantes and others with implicit invocations of modern fiction, Sterne could present *Tristram Shandy* as doing to the "new species of writing" what *Don Quixote* had done to romance, which was to test, explore, and satirize its working assumptions. Though one of the defining features of the "new species" in general was its formal self-consciousness, *Tristram Shandy* brings new sophistication to bear on a primary area of narrative experimentation and narratological debate at the time: the question of how the novelist, addressing the unknown mass readership of the modern literary market, can simultaneously stimulate and control the responses of the distant, diversified audience that consumes his writing. It does so as intensively as anywhere else in the "Cervantic" passage concerning Slop's fall, above all as elaborated in the chapters that follow.

Varying a remark about drama that he will shortly attribute to Walter ("there is something in that way of writing, when skilfully managed, which catches the attention" [2.17.165]), Tristram similarly finds in oral media a recipe for circumventing the distancing effects of print. Writing, "when properly managed," should resemble conversation (2.11.125). Absence, in this now celebrated analogy, will turn into presence, and print become talk—not mere unstructured chat (conversation being an art), but a regulated transaction with interlocutors who will be given a reciprocal role. Fielding offers a relevant sense of the required balance between

rules and ease in an essay that defines as synonymous “*Good Breeding . . . or the Art of pleasing in Conversation*,” and finds that art most pleasurable when practised in egalitarian spirit. Conversation works best, he writes, “in the Society of Persons whose Understanding is pretty near on an Equality with our own,” and must arise “from every one’s being admitted to his Share in the Discourse.”³⁹ This is very much the spirit in which Tristram applies the conversation trope to his own narrative practice:

As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all;—so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader’s understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself. (2.11.125)

The anonymity of print is dispelled, and perfect communication prevails.

Or that is Tristram’s theory. But in a novel where perfect or even adequate communication is conspicuous by its absence, and conversation as practiced by its characters the least auspicious way of making it happen, a whiff of contextual irony is hard to dispel. Nor is there any sense at this point (though the experience of serialization would later provide it) that conversation in any genuinely interactive sense is within the novel’s reach. Tristram will talk to his readers, and they will imaginatively respond; but there the conversational flow of response and counterresponse must come to a halt. Thereafter only Tristram’s manic construction of imaginary inscribed readers, including—notoriously in recent feminist criticism—the prurient, imperceptive “Madam,” can simulate a way round the impasse. At this point there is not even a hypothesized reader of the “Madam” kind on show, and in the absence of any audibly responsive voice it is not long before Tristram is forced to contravene his own theory, in a welter of bossy imperatives. “’Tis his turn now,” he magnanimously tells his reader; but then, far from bestowing on this reader the creative or proactive

role implied by the conversation model, he becomes increasingly directive.

Let the reader imagine then, that Dr. *Slop* has told his tale;—
—and in what words, and with what aggravations his fancy
chooses:—Let him suppose that *Obadiah* has told his tale
also, and with such rueful looks of affected concern, as he
thinks will best contrast the two figures as they stand by each
other: Let him imagine that my father has stepp'd up stairs
to see my mother:—And, to conclude this work of imagi-
nation,—let him imagine the Doctor wash'd,——rubb'd
down,—condoled with,—felicitated,—got into a pair of *Oba-
diah's* pumps. (2.11.126)

In the first flush of reader-response theory, commentators turned a blind eye to the fussy overdetermination of response at this point. But it is now a familiar observation that Tristram's mutualist narrative aesthetic has unceremoniously been dumped. Within a few sentences, the relaxed convenor of collaborative meanings has mutated into a control freak. Already we are on the way to an answering passage from volume 5, in which, with condescending mock solicitude, Tristram explicitly retracts the collaborative model. "It is in vain to leave this to the Reader's imagination," he now writes. The task is beyond his audience, whose brains should not be tortured: "'Tis my own affair: I'll explain it myself" (5.18.450).

These instructions on how to view Dr. Slop brilliantly complete (and collapse) the discursive sequence that begins with Tristram making ready "the reader's imagination" for this character's appearance in chapter 8—a sequence we must recognize not only as a memorably vivid exercise in farce, but also as a sophisticated exploration of the dynamics of narrative communication. As such, it has become an almost compulsory reference point for the novel-centered approach to Sterne, whether in readings that take at face value Tristram's aesthetic of reader participation and equate it with Sterne's own, or in those that detect ironic space between these positions.⁴⁰ The advantage of this second option is that it lets us

see the extent to which Sterne is playing skeptically not just with a narratological issue in the abstract but with an urgent and explicit area of debate in the fiction of the previous two decades.

Notes

1. On Cervantes and humanist satire, see Donald R. Wehrs, "Sterne, Cervantes, Montaigne: Fideistic Skepticism and the Rhetoric of Desire," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 25 (1988), 127–51; also J. T. Parnell, "Swift, Sterne, and the Skeptical Tradition," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 23 (1994), 220–42.

2. On the distinction between determinate and aleatory intertextuality (first formulated by Riffaterre), see Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 130–31, 140. I use the term *aleatory* here in a strictly limited sense, to denote textual features that call to mind a genre in general but specify no single example, so that different readers, according to the contingencies of their individual reading experiences, will sense different particular hypotexts (i.e., earlier novels) beneath the hypertext of *Tristram Shandy*.

3. *CH*, 56: Warburton's widely repeated words are reported here by Horace Walpole, who notes the contradiction inherent in making *Tristram Shandy* "the only copy that ever was an original." For Warburton on the novel genre, see his preface to the first edition of *Clarissa* (1747–48), 3:iii, which he later adapted (shifting the compliment from Richardson to Fielding) as an extended note to Pope's *Epistle to Augustus* (*The Works of Alexander Pope*, 9 vols. [1751], 4:166–69). Warburton had earlier contributed an essay on romance (as "A Supplement to the Translator's Preface") to Charles Jarvis's translation of *Don Quixote* (1742).

4. *Monthly Review*, 11 (Dec. 1754), 470.

5. "Innovator; assertor of novelty" (Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* [1755], s.v. Novelist). Johnson's secondary sense, "A writer of novels," had been current since the 1720s, though Johnson gives no illustration.

6. *Monthly Review*, 21 (Apr. 1759), 380. Kenrick joined the *Monthly* in February 1759, by which time novels were normally relegated to short notices in the "monthly catalogue" appendix (*Rasselas* and *Tristram Shandy* being the only works of fiction to win main-review billing in 1759). These notices are listed by number alone in Benjamin Christie Nangle, *The*

Monthly Review, First Series, 1749–1789: Indexes of Contributors and Articles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 231–34: they correspond to entries about Sarah Fielding's *The Countess of Dellwyn*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and minor novels such as *The Campaign: A True Story*, *Abassai: An Eastern Novel*, and *The Auction: A Modern Novel*.

7. Walpole was writing in April 1760 (CH, 55), and of course later installments of *Tristram Shandy*, in their narrative loops and involutions, are far less straightforward (or straight-backward) than his comment suggests: see Samuel L. Macey, "The Linear and Circular Time Schemes in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*," *Notes and Queries*, 36 (1989), 477–79.

8. Everett Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction: History and the Eighteenth-Century British Novel* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 203.

9. Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 419.

10. Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose* (Elmwood Park, Ill.: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 147, 156.

11. Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader, Second Series*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 78, 79. Woolf's piece first appeared in 1928 (as an introduction to the World's Classics *Sentimental Journey*), four years after her famous essay on "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," on which its valorization of disorder and fragmentation as truer to consciousness appears to draw.

12. For Richardson's use of this term, see *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 78 (26 Jan. 1747); for Fielding's, see *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies, rev. and intr. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) (hereafter JA), 8 (preface).

13. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), 291, 294.

14. John Richetti, *The English Novel in History, 1700–1780* (London: Routledge, 1999), 271.

15. Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, 291.

16. See Jonathan Lamb, "Sterne's System of Imitation," *Modern Language Review*, 76 (1981), 794–810.

17. Melvyn New, "Swift as Ogre, Richardson as Dolt: Rescuing Sterne from the Eighteenth Century," *Shandean*, 3 (1991), 49–60 (at 50,55); Melvyn New, *Tristram Shandy: A Book for Free Spirits* (New York: Twayne, 1994), 103 (and see also pp. 17–18).

18. Parnell, "Swift, Sterne," 239.

19. New, "Swift as Ogre," 50.
20. Jack Lynch puts it nicely in his account of the book as "made up of the 'shreds and clippings' of other discourses," such that "the eminently Erasmian *Tristram Shandy* is Bakhtinian heteroglossia writ large" ("The Relicks of Learning: Sterne among the Renaissance Encyclopedists," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 13 [2000], 1–17 [at 16]).
21. Miguel de Cervantes, trans. Tobias Smollett, *The History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote*, 2 vols. (1755), 1:x.
22. CH, 126. James G. Basker attributes this second review to Smollett himself (*Tobias Smollett: Critic and Journalist* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 260), a supposition lent weight by Smollett's fondness for the proverbial "Jack Pudding" allusion (as in Tobias Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle*, ed. James L. Clifford, rev. Paul-Gabriel Boucé [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983], 387: "the grimaces of a jack-pudding"). Foppington is also proverbial, from Cibber's celebrated creation of the role in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1696) and his own *The Careless Husband* (1704).
23. *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 865. Another of Herbert's imports from France is a version of Maria's "God tempers the wind . . . to the shorn lamb" (*Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, 312–13; see SJ, 369).
24. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), bk, 1, lines 134–36.
25. John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, ed. Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 15.
26. *Notes*, 153, citing William V. Holtz, *Image and Immortality: A Study of Tristram Shandy* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1970), 43.
27. See Martin C. Battestin with Ruthe R. Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London: Routledge, 1989), 366 and plate 35.
28. William Toldervy, *The History of Two Orphans*, 4 vols. (1756), 1:25.
29. *Ibid.*, 1:80.
30. Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle*, 39, 239, 665.
31. CH, 270 (letter to George Gregory, 5 Dec. 1787). Seward takes a similar view of Sterne's debt to, and transcendence of, Smollett's characterization: "You observe that Toby Shandy is the Commodore Trunnion of Smollett. It is long since I read *Peregrine Pickle*, and it made so little impression, that I have no remembrance of the Commodore. It is impossible that I should ever, even after the slightest perusal, have forgotten . . . Toby Shandy."
32. "A Short Discourse on Novel Writing," in *Constantia: or, A True Picture*

of *Human Life*, 2 vols. (1751), 1:x; William Warburton, preface to *Clarissa* (1747–48), 3:iii.

33. Ronald Paulson, *Don Quixote in England: The Aesthetics of Laughter* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), ix; on Sterne, see 150–58.

34. Francis Coventry (?), *An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding*, ed. Alan D. McKillop, Augustan Reprint Society Publication no. 95 (Los Angeles: Clark Library, 1962), 46 (see also 33).

35. Edward Kimber, *The Juvenile Adventures of David Ranger, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1756), 1:1.

36. Tobias Smollett, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, ed. Damian Grant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 8; see also Shaun Regan, "Translating Rabelais: Sterne, Motteux, and the Culture of Politeness," *Translation and Literature*, 10 (2001), 174–99.

37. Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. Martin C. Battestin and Fredson Bowers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 13.1. 686; Smollett, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, 7–8; *Critical Review*, 2 (Nov. 1756), 357.

38. On Montaigne's currency in the period, see Claude Rawson, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 69–70; also Fred Parker, *Scepticism and Literature: An Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

39. Henry Fielding, "An Essay on Conversation," in *Miscellanies I*, ed. Henry Knight Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 124, 142, 146. See also Sterne's *Sermons*, 5.194: "Conversation is a traffick."

40. Notably, in the first category, Wolfgang Iser, *Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 60–71; in the second, Elizabeth W. Harries, *The Unfinished Manner: Essays on the Fragment in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 41–55; Helen Ostovich, "Reader as Hobby-horse in *Tristram Shandy*," *Philological Quarterly*, 68 (1989), 325–42.