

---

---

*THE CRITICAL HERITAGE*

LAURENCE STERNE

Edited by  
ALAN B. HOWES



## LAURENCE STERNE: THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

## THE CRITICAL HERITAGE SERIES

General Editor: B. C. Southam

The Critical Heritage series collects together a large body of criticism on major figures in literature. Each volume presents the contemporary responses to a particular writer, enabling the student to follow the formation of critical attitudes to the writer's work and its place within a literary tradition.

The carefully selected sources range from landmark essays in the history of criticism to fragments of contemporary opinion and little published documentary material, such as letters and diaries.

Significant pieces of criticism from later periods are also included in order to demonstrate fluctuations in reputation following the writer's death.

# LAURENCE STERNE

## THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

Edited by

ALAN B. HOWES



London and New York



First Published in 1971  
Reprinted in 1995 by Routledge

11 New Fetter Lane  
London EC4P 4EE  
&  
29 West 35th Street  
New York, NY 10001

Compilation, introduction, notes and index © 1971 Alan B. Howes

Printed in Great Britain by  
TJ Press, Padstow, Cornwall

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

ISBN 0-415-13425-0

## General Editor's Preface

---

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the *Critical Heritage Series* present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views, significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality – perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

B.C.S.

## Contents

PREFACE	page xxi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xxiii
INTRODUCTION	I
NOTE ON THE TEXT	37
<i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols I, II (1760)	
I STERNE on the composition of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols I, II, 1759	39
(a) Letter to Dodsley, May 1759	39
(b) Letter, summer 1759	39
(c) Letter to Dodsley, ? October 1759	40
2 STERNE to his readers, 1759–60	41
(a) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. I	41
(b) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. I	42
(c) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. I	42
(d) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. II	44
(e) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. II	44
(f) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. II	45
3 STERNE promotes his book, January 1760	45
4 WILLIAM KENRICK, the first review of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , January 1760	46
5 STERNE defends <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , January 1760	48
6 Reviews in the magazines, January–February 1760	52
(a) Notice, <i>Critical Review</i> , January 1760	52
(b) Notice, <i>London Magazine</i> , February 1760	52
(c) Notice, <i>Royal Female Magazine</i> , February 1760	53
7 LORD BATHURST praises Sterne, spring 1760	53
8 HORACE WALPOLE on <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , April 1760	55
9 The design of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , March–April 1760	56
(a) DR THOMAS NEWTON, March 1760	56
(b) Letter, April 1760	57
10 The serious attacks, spring 1760	61
(a) MARY GRANVILLE DELANY, letters to Anne Granville Dewes, April, May 1760	61

# CONTENTS

(b) Review, <i>Critical Review</i> , April 1760	62
(c) Letter, <i>The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure</i> , April 1760	62
II The bantering attacks, spring 1760	64
(a) Letter, <i>Grand Magazine</i> , April 1760	64
(b) <i>Explanatory Remarks on the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy</i> by Jeremiah Kunastrokius, April 1760	66
(c) <i>The Clockmakers Outcry Against the Author of The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy</i> , May 1760	67
(d) <i>Tristram Shandy's Bon Mots, Repartees, odd Adventures, and Humorous Stories . . . and a New Dialogue of the Dead, between Dean Swift, and Henry Fielding, Esq.</i> , June 1760	71
12 The first biography of Sterne, May 1760	73
13 <i>The Sermons of Mr. Yorick</i> , vols I, II, spring and summer 1760	75
(a) STERNE, preface to <i>The Sermons of Mr. Yorick</i> , May 1760	75
(b) Review, <i>Critical Review</i> , May 1760	76
(c) Review, <i>Monthly Review</i> , May 1760	77
(d) Review, <i>Royal Female Magazine</i> , May 1760	78
(e) REVEREND HENRY VENN, letter to Mrs Knipe, June 1760	79
(f) GEORGINA, COUNTESS COWPER, letter to Anne Granville Dewes, September 1760	79
14 BOSWELL on Sterne, spring 1760	80
15 Sterne as Juvenilian satirist, June 1760	85
16 Sterne and BISHOP Warburton, June 1760	86
(a) Warburton, letter to Sterne	87
(b) STERNE, letter to Warburton	88
(c) Warburton, letter to Sterne	88
17 THOMAS GRAY on Sterne, June 1760	89
18 LADY BRADSHAIGH on Sterne, June 1760	90
19 GOLDSMITH attacks Sterne, June 1760	91
20 Sterne and the <i>Monthly</i> reviewers, June 1760	95
21 Attack on Sterne and the Methodists, July 1760	100
22 Sterne and an appreciative reader, summer 1760	102
(a) REVEREND ROBERT BROWN, letter to John Hall-Stevenson, July 1760	102
(b) STERNE, letter to Brown, September 1760	103
23 HORACE MANN on Sterne's 'humbugging,' November 1760	104
24 <i>Tristram Shandy</i> as satire, 1760	105
25 EDMUND BURKE on <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , 1760	106

# CONTENTS

<i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols III, IV (1761)	
26	The composition of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols III, IV, 1760 108
	(a) STERNE, letter to Mrs Fenton, August 1760 108
	(b) STERNE, letter to Stephen Croft, December 1760 108
27	Sterne to his critics and readers, <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols III, IV, 1760-1 109
	(a) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. III 109
	(b) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. III 110
	(c) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. III 111
	(d) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IV 115
	(e) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IV 115
	(f) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IV 116
	(g) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IV 117
	(h) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IV 117
	(i) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IV 118
	(j) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IV 118
28	Reviews of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols III, IV, February-April 1761 119
	(a) OWEN RUFFHEAD, review, <i>Monthly Review</i> , February 1761 119
	(b) Notice, <i>British Magazine</i> , February 1761 124
	(c) Review, <i>Critical Review</i> , April 1761 125
29	SAMUEL RICHARDSON on Sterne, January-February 1761 128
30	Some private opinions, February-June 1761 130
	(a) DR THOMAS NEWTON, February 1761 130
	(b) RICHARD HURD, March 1761 130
	(c) MARK HILDESLEY, April 1761 131
	(d) DR JAMES GRAINGER, June 1761 131
31	A mock funeral discourse, October 1761 132
<i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols V, VI (1761)	
32	The composition of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols V, VI, summer 1761 135
	(a) STERNE, letter to John Hall-Stevenson, June 1761 135
	(b) STERNE, letter to Lady Anna Dacre (?), September 1761 135
33	Sterne to his readers, 1761 136
	(a) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. V 136
	(b) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. V 136
	(c) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. VI 136
	(d) <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. VI 137

# CONTENTS

34	Assessments of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols V, VI, 1761-2	138
	(a) REVEREND BAPTIST NOEL TURNER in <i>New Monthly Magazine</i> , report of conversation, 1765(?)	138
	(b) Notice, <i>British Magazine</i> , January 1762	138
	(c) Review, <i>Critical Review</i> , January 1762	138
	(d) Review by JOHN LANGHORNE in <i>Monthly Review</i> , January 1762	140
35	RICHARD GRIFFITH: Sterne's appeal to pit, box, and gallery, 1761-2	142
36	A poetic tribute, February 1762	144
37	Sterne and the great humorists, May 1762	145
38	Sterne's bad example, June 1762	146
39	DAVID HUME on Sterne, November 1762, January 1773	147
40	Sterne's nonsense, December 1762	148
41	CHARLES JOHNSTONE: Sterne in the character of a wit, 1762	149
42	Sterne's Rabelaisian caricatures, 1762	151
43	CHARLES CHURCHILL on Sterne, 1762	152
44	A poetic tribute to <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , July 1763	153
45	Sterne's upstart book, 1764	154
46	Sterne no fit ambassador from hell, 1764	155
	<i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols VII, VIII (1765)	
47	The composition of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols VII, VIII, 1762-5	157
	(a) STERNE, letter to Robert Foley, November 1762	157
	(b) STERNE, letter to Mrs Elizabeth Montagu (?), June 1764	157
	(c) STERNE, letter to Robert Foley, November 1764	158
	(d) STERNE, <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. VIII	158
48	Reviews of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols VII, VIII, January-April 1765	159
	(a) Notice, <i>Universal Museum and Complete Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure</i> , January 1765	159
	(b) Notice, <i>Critical Review</i> , January 1765	159
	(c) Review by RALPH GRIFFITHS in <i>Monthly Review</i> , February 1765	161
	(d) Notice by JEAN BAPTISTE SUARD in <i>Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe</i> , as translated in <i>London Chronicle</i> , 1765	168
49	MRS MONTAGU on Sterne, April 1765	169
	(a) Letter to Mrs Sarah Scott	169
	(b) Letter to Mrs Sarah Scott	170

# CONTENTS

50	<i>Sermons of Mr. Yorick</i> , vols III, IV, 1765-6	171
	(a) STERNE, letter to Thomas Hesilrige, July 1765	171
	(b) Review, <i>Critical Review</i> , January, February 1766	171
	(c) WILLIAM ROSE, review, <i>Monthly Review</i> , March 1766	172
	(d) WILLIAM COWPER, letter to Joseph Hill, April 1766	172
51	Sterne and a Black admirer, July 1766, June 1778	174
	(a) IGNATIUS SANCHO, letter to Sterne, July 1766	174
	(b) STERNE, letter to Sancho, July 1766	175
	(c) IGNATIUS SANCHO, letter, June 1778	176
	<i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IX (1767)	
52	<i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IX, January-March 1767	178
	(a) STERNE, <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IX	178
	(b) Notice, <i>Critical Review</i> , February 1767	179
	(c) Notice, <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , February 1767	180
	(d) RALPH GRIFFITHS, review, <i>Monthly Review</i> , February 1767	181
	(e) Letter, <i>Lloyd's Evening Post</i> , March 1767	183
	(f) <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , March 1767	184
53	The composition of <i>A Sentimental Journey</i> , 1767-8	184
	(a) STERNE, letter to Lydia Sterne, February 1767	184
	(b) STERNE, letter to Thomas Becket, September 1767	184
	(c) STERNE, letter to Sir William Stanhope (?), September 1767	185
	(d) RICHARD GRIFFITH, <i>A Series of Genuine Letters between Henry and Frances</i> , 1770	185
	(e) STERNE, letter to Mrs William James, November 1767	187
	(f) STERNE, letter, November 1767	188
	(g) STERNE, letter, November 1767	188
	(h) STERNE, letter to Sir George Macartney, December 1767	189
	(i) STERNE, letter, February 1768	189
	(j) STERNE, <i>A Sentimental Journey</i>	189
	(k) STERNE, <i>A Sentimental Journey</i>	191
54	JOHN HALL-STEVENSON on Sterne, January 1768	193
55	Sterne and an American admirer, 1767-8	195
	(a) DR JOHN EUSTACE, letter to Sterne, undated	195
	(b) STERNE, letter to Eustace, February 1768	196
	<i>A Sentimental Journey</i> (1768)	
56	Reviews of the <i>Sentimental Journey</i> , spring 1768	197
	(a) Review, <i>Critical Review</i> , March 1768	197

# CONTENTS

	(b) Notice, <i>London Magazine</i> , March 1768	198
	(c) RALPH GRIFFITHS, review, <i>Monthly Review</i> , March, April 1768	199
	(d) Notice, <i>Political Register</i> , May 1768	201
57	Some private opinions of the <i>Sentimental Journey</i> , spring 1768	202
	(a) HORACE WALPOLE, letter to Thomas Gray, March 1768	202
	(b) HORACE WALPOLE, letter to George Montagu, March 1768	202
	(c) JOSEPH COCKFIELD, letter to the Reverend Weeden Butler, March 1768	202
	(d) ELIZABETH CARTER, letter to Mrs Elizabeth Vesey, April 1768	203
	(e) MRS ELIZABETH BURNEY and MRS FANNY GREVILLE on the <i>Sentimental Journey</i> , spring 1768	204
58	Comments and tributes on Sterne's death, 1768	204
	(a) <i>London Magazine</i> , June 1768	204
	(b) WILLIAM WARBURTON, letter to Charles Yorke, April 1768	205
	(c) <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , April 1768	206
	(d) 'The Fig Leaf,' April 1768	206
	(e) 'Occasional Verses on the Death of Mr. Sterne,' August 1768	206
	(f) MRS ELIZABETH MONTAGU, letter, 1768 ?	207
	(g) DAVID GARRICK, 1768	208
59	Sterne's headstone, 1769	209
60	JOHN TRUMBULL on Sterne, 1769, 1773	210
	(a) 'On the Philanthropy of the Author of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> . 1769'	210
	(b) <i>The Progress of Dulness</i> , 1773	210
	The 1770s: praise and blame	
61	RICHARD GRIFFITH and Sterne's 'posthumous works,' 1770, 1772	212
	(a) GRIFFITH in <i>The Posthumous Works of a Late Celebrated Genius</i> , 1770	212
	(b) GRIFFITH in <i>The Posthumous Works of a Late Celebrated Genius</i> , 1770	213
	(c) GRIFFITH in <i>Something New</i> , 1772	214
62	THOMAS JEFFERSON on Sterne, 1771, 1787	215
	(a) Letter to Robert Skipwith, August 1771	215
	(b) Letter to Peter Carr, August 1787	216
63	RICHARD CUMBERLAND on Sterne, 1771, 1806	216
	(a) <i>The West Indian</i> , 1771	216
	(b) <i>Memoirs of Richard Cumberland</i> , 1806	217



# CONTENTS

64	SAMUEL JOHNSON on Sterne, 1773, 1776, 1781	218
	(a) Conversation with Goldsmith, April 1773	218
	(b) Conversation with Boswell, March 1776	219
	(c) Conversation with Mary Monckton, May 1781	219
65	GEORGE COLMAN the Elder on Sterne, July 1775	220
66	Sterne's <i>Letters</i> , 1775	221
	(a) Review, <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , April 1775	221
	(b) Review, <i>London Review</i> , June 1775	221
	(c) RALPH GRIFFITHS, review, <i>Monthly Review</i> , November 1775	222
	(d) HENRY MACKENZIE, letter to Elizabeth Rose, November 1775	223
67	COURTNEY MELMOTH on Sterne, 1775, 1776	224
	(a) 'The Tears of Genius,' 1775	224
	(b) <i>Observations on the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young</i> , 1776	225
68	BOSWELL on Sterne in <i>The Hypochondriack</i> , 1778, 1780	227
	(a) 'On Conscience,' April 1778	227
	(b) 'On Imitation,' August 1780	227
69	JOHN CLELAND on Sterne, 1779	228
70	Some attacks during the 1770s	229
	(a) JOHN WESLEY, February 1772	229
	(b) JACOB DUCHÉ, letter, September 1772	229
	(c) Anonymous <i>Joineriana: or the Book of Scraps</i> , 1772	230
	(d) THOMAS O'BRIEN MACMAHON, 1774	232
	(e) PERCIVAL STOCKDALE, 1778	232
	(f) REVEREND PHILIP PARSONS, 1779	233
71	Some neutral critics of the 1770s	235
	(a) ROBERT LLOYD, 1774	235
	(b) WILLIAM WELLER PEPYS, letter to William Franks, 1776 ?	235
	(c) JOHN NOORTHOUCK, 1776	236
72	Some tributes of the 1770s	237
	(a) CHARLES JENNER, 1770	237
	(b) Anonymous <i>Letters Concerning the Present State of England</i> , 1772	237
	(c) <i>Westminster Magazine</i> , November 1774	238
	(d) JOHN OGILVIE, 1774	240
	(e) JOSEPH CRADOCK, 1774	241
	(f) <i>Westminster Magazine</i> , January 1775	241
	(g) Anonymous <i>Yorick's Skull; or, College Oscitations</i> , 1777	243
73	JOHN HENDERSON reads from Sterne, 1770-85	244

# CONTENTS

The 1780s: anthologies and complete works	
74	Sterne's <i>Complete Works</i> , 1780 246
75	Sterne's imitators, 1781 248
76	Sterne a wit, not a genius, 1781 249
77	VICESIMUS KNOX on Sterne, 1782, 1788 ? 251
	(a) <i>Essays Moral and Literary</i> , 1782 251
	(b) <i>Essays Moral and Literary</i> , 1782 252
	(c) <i>Essays Moral and Literary</i> , 1782 254
	(d) <i>Winter Evenings</i> , 1788 ? 255
	(e) <i>Winter Evenings</i> , 1788 ? 255
78	Sterne anthologized, 1782, 1787 256
	(a) <i>The Beauties of Sterne</i> , 1782 256
	(b) <i>The Beauties of Sterne</i> , 1787 257
79	HANNAH MORE on Sterne, 1782, 1808 259
	(a) 'Sensibility,' 1782 259
	(b) <i>Coelebs in Search of a Wife</i> , 1808 259
80	ROBERT BURNS on Sterne, 1783, 1787, 1788 260
	(a) Letter to John Murdoch, January 1783 260
	(b) Letter to Mrs Dunlop, April 1787 261
	(c) Letter to Dr John Moore, August 1787 261
	(d) Letter to Mrs Dunlop, December 1788 261
81	CLARA REEVE on Sterne, 1785 262
82	MRS PIOZZI on Sterne, 1786, 1791 263
	(a) <i>Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D.</i> , 1786 263
	(b) Diary, October 1791 264
83	GEORGE GREGORY on Sterne, 1787, 1788, 1809 265
	(a) A translator's note, 1787 265
	(b) <i>Sermons</i> , 1787 266
	(c) <i>Essays Historical and Moral</i> , 1788 266
	(d) <i>Letters on Literature, Taste, and Composition</i> , 1809 266
84	ANNA SEWARD defends Sterne, 1787, 1788 268
	(a) Letter to the Reverend George Gregory, December 1787 268
	(b) Letter to Gregory, October 1788 269
85	Johnson's biographer on Sterne, 1787 272
86	HENRY MACKENZIE on Sterne, 1788, c. 1825-31 273
	(a) 'Account of the German Theatre,' April 1788 273
	(b) Quotation in <i>The Anecdotes and Egotisms of Henry Mackenzie</i> , c. 1825-31 274
87	Sterne and the first American novel, 1789 274
88	Some attacks and defenses of the 1780s 276

# CONTENTS

(a) LEONARD MACNALLY, 1781	276
(b) WILLIAM CREECH, August 1783	277
(c) JAMES BEATTIE, 1783	277
(d) Anonymous <i>Unfortunate Sensibility</i> , 1784	278
(e) <i>Westminster Magazine</i> , November 1785	278
(f) ELY BATES, 1786	279
(g) JOHN HOWE, letter to the Reverend Thomas Crampton, October 1788	280
The 1790s: plagiarism	
89 CHARLES DIBDIN on Sterne and Johnson, 1790	281
90 JOHN FERRIAR and Sterne's plagiarism, 1791, 1798, 1812	283
(a) 'Comments on Sterne,' January 1791	283
(b) <i>Illustrations of Sterne</i> , 1798	287
(c) <i>Illustrations of Sterne</i> , 1812	292
91 JOSEPH DENNIE on Sterne, 1792, 1796	293
(a) Letter to Mr and Mrs Joseph Dennie Sr, April 1792	293
(b) <i>The Lay Preacher</i> , 1796	294
92 ISAAC D'ISRAELI on Sterne, 1795, 1796, 1840	294
(a) <i>An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary         Character</i> , 1795	294
(b) <i>Miscellanies; or Literary Recreations</i> , 1796	295
(c) <i>Miscellanies of Literature</i> , May 1840	295
93 JEREMIAH NEWMAN on Sterne, 1796, 1805	297
(a) <i>The Lounger's Common-Place Book</i> , 1796	297
(b) <i>The Lounger's Common-Place Book</i> , 1805	299
94 WILLIAM GODWIN on Sterne, 1797	300
95 WILLIAM WILBERFORCE on Sterne, 1797	301
96 The <i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i> on Sterne, 1797	303
97 NATHAN DRAKE: Sterne and the pathetic, <i>Literary Hours</i> , 1798, 1804	304
98 Walpoliana: 'a dead ass and a living mother,' 1799	305
99 ROBERT SOUTHEY on Sterne, 1799, 1834	306
(a) Letter to C. W. William Wynn, April 1799	306
(b) <i>The Doctor</i> , 1834	306
100 American attacks of the 1790s on Sterne's morality	307
(a) <i>Massachusetts Magazine</i> , June 1790	307
(b) <i>American Museum</i> , August 1791	308
(c) REVEREND JOHN BENNETT, <i>Letters to a Young Lady</i> , 1791	309
(d) HANNAH WEBSTER FOSTER, <i>The Boarding School</i> , 1798	309

# CONTENTS

101	Some tributes of the 1790s	311
	(a) GEORGE MOUTARD WOODWARD, <i>Eccentric Excursions</i> , 1796	311
	(b) JENKIN JONES, <i>Hobby Horses</i> , 1797	311
	(c) WILLIAM COMBE, <i>Fragments: in the Manner of Sterne</i> , 1797	313
102	Some comments of the 1790s on Sterne's plagiarism	313
	(a) 'EBORACENSIS', letter, <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , May 1794	313
	(b) 'R. F.', letter, <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , June 1798	314
	(c) 'M.N.', letter, <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , August 1798	314
	(d) WILLIAM JACKSON, <i>The Four Ages</i> , 1798	315
	(e) Review, <i>Critical Review</i> , June 1799	315
103	Some comments of the 1790s on Sterne's style and substance	316
	(a) <i>European Magazine</i> , October 1790	316
	(b) JOHN NOORTHOUCK, review, <i>Monthly Review</i> , July 1791	317
	(c) HENRY JAMES PYE, <i>A Commentary Illustrating the Poetic of Aristotle</i> , 1792	317
	(d) DUGALD STEWART, <i>Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind</i> , 1792	318
	(e) THOMAS WALLACE, 'An Essay on the Variations of English Prose,' June 1796	319
	(f) MARY BERRY, 1798	320
	(g) THOMAS J. MATHIAS, <i>The Pursuits of Literature</i> , 1798	320
	(h) D. WHYTE, <i>The Fallacy of French Freedom, and Dangerous Tendency of Sterne's Writings</i> , 1799	321
	1800-15: strains old and new	
104	CHARLES LAMB on Sterne, 1801, 1822	323
	(a) Letter to Wordsworth, January 1801	323
	(b) 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading,' July 1822	323
105	Some American views: Sterne the libertine, 1802, 1803, 1822	324
	(a) <i>New England Quarterly Magazine</i> , 1802	324
	(b) SAMUEL MILLER, <i>A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century</i> , 1803	324
	(c) JOHN RANDOLPH, letter to Theodore Dudley, February 1822	325
106	Sterne's sentimental works, 1805	326
107	Applause and censure, 1807	328
108	PRISCILLA PARLANTE defends Sterne, 1810	331
109	MRS BARBAULD on Sterne, 1810	332
110	The <i>Port Folio</i> on Sterne, 1810, 1811	333

# CONTENTS

(a) MATTHEW CAREY, 'Remarks on the Charge of Plagiarism Alleged Against Sterne,' October 1810	333
(b) Anonymous 'Critical Comments on Sterne, Smollett, and Fielding,' November 1811	337
III WILLIAM MUDFORD on Sterne, 1811	341
II2 FRANCIS JEFFREY on Sterne in the <i>Edinburgh</i> , 1813, 1823	344
(a) Review of Mme de Staël's <i>De la Littérature considérée dans ses rapport avec les institutions sociales</i> , February 1813	344
(b) Review of Scottish novels, October 1823	345
II3 BYRON: 'that dog Sterne,' December 1813	346
II4 JOHN AIKIN on Sterne, 1814	347
II5 Sterne's characters: goblins and portraits, 1814	348
1815-39: the Romantics' reassessment	
II6 COLERIDGE on Sterne, 1818, 1825, 1828, 1833, undated	353
(a) 'Wit and Humour,' February 1818	353
(b) <i>Aids to Reflection</i> , 1825	357
(c) Letter, 1828	357
(d) <i>Table Talk</i> , August 1833	357
(e) Marginalia in copy of Shakespeare, undated	358
II7 HAZLITT on Sterne, 1819, 1826	359
(a) <i>Lectures on the English Comic Writers</i> , 1819	359
(b) <i>Plain Speaker</i> , 1826	361
(c) <i>Notes of a Journey Through France and Italy</i> , 1826	363
II8 JOHN KEATS on the Shandean, January 1820	364
II9 SIR THOMAS NOON TALFOURD on Sterne and Mackenzie, 1820	365
120 Sterne and Johnson: 'genius' and 'judgment,' 1820	366
121 THOMAS HOOD: a burlesque of Sterne, 1821	367
122 DE QUINCEY on Sterne and Richter, December 1821	369
123 SCOTT on Sterne, 1823	371
(a) <i>Miscellaneous Prose Works</i>	371
(b) <i>Miscellaneous Prose Works</i>	375
124 Sterne, in the <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> , 1827-8	376
125 CARLYLE on Sterne, 1827, 1838	379
(a) Review, <i>Edinburgh Review</i> , 1827	379
(b) Lecture, June 1838	381

## France

126 Reviews of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , <i>Journal Encyclopédique</i> , 1760-7	382
(a) Review of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols I, II, April 1760	382

# CONTENTS

	(b) Review of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols III, IV, May 1761	382
	(c) Review of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols V, VI, March 1762	383
	(d) Review of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols VII, VIII, January 1766	384
	(e) Review of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vol. IX, March 1767	384
127	DENIS DIDEROT on Sterne, October 1762	385
128	DEYVERDUN on Sterne's originality, 1769	386
129	Frénais's translation of the <i>Sentimental Journey</i> , 1769, 1786	387
	(a) FRÉNAIS, translator's preface to the <i>Sentimental Journey</i> , 1769	387
	(b) Review, <i>Journal Encyclopédique</i> , July 1769	388
	(c) Review, <i>Mercure de France</i> , August 1769	388
	(d) Review, <i>L'Année Littéraire</i> , 1786	389
130	VOLTAIRE on Sterne, 1771, 1777	390
	(a) <i>Dictionnaire Philosophique</i> , 1771	390
	(b) Review of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> in <i>Journal de Politique et de Littérature</i> , April 1777	392
131	Frénais's translation of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , 1776, 1777	394
	(a) FRÉNAIS, preface to <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , vols I-IV, 1776	394
	(b) Review, <i>L'Année Littéraire</i> , 1776	395
	(c) Review, <i>Mercure de France</i> , January 1777	396
	(d) Review, <i>Journal Encyclopédique</i> , January 1777	396
132	Continuations of Frénais's <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , 1785, 1786	398
	(a) Review, <i>Journal Encyclopédique</i> , May 1785	398
	(b) Review, <i>L'Année Littéraire</i> , 1785	399
	(c) Review, <i>Journal Encyclopédique</i> , January 1786	399
	(d) Review, <i>Journal Encyclopédique</i> , March 1786	400
133	Two views of the 1780s	400
	(a) MALLET DU PAN, review, <i>Mercure</i> , November 1785	400
	(b) Anonymous essay, <i>Journal Encyclopédique</i> , August 1786	401
134	MADAME SUARD on Sterne, June 1786	402
135	Comments at the turn of the century	405
	(a) FRANÇOIS ANDRIEUX, review, <i>Décade Philosophique</i> , 1796	405
	(b) PIERRE BLANCHARD, <i>Le Reveur sentimental</i> , 1796	405
	(c) PIERRE-SIMON BALLANCHE fils, <i>Du Sentiment considéré dans ses rapports avec la littérature et les arts</i> , 1801	406
136	MADAME DE STAEL on Sterne, 1800, 1810	407
	(a) <i>De la Littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales</i> , 1800	407
	(b) <i>De l'Allemagne</i> , 1810	408
137	GARAT on Sterne, 1820	409
138	Sterne in the standard reference works, 1830, 1836	415

# CONTENTS

(a) WALCKENAER, <i>Vies de plusieurs personnages célèbres des temps anciens et modernes</i> , 1830	415
(b) <i>Dictionnaire historique ou biographie universelle</i> , 1836	417
139 CHARLES NODIER on Sterne, 1830	418
(a) <i>Histoire du Roi de Bohême et de ses sept châteaux</i> , 1830	418
(b) 'Miscellanées, variétés de philosophie, d'histoire et de littérature,' 1830	419
Germany	
140 The first German translation of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , 1765	422
141 WIELAND on Sterne, 1767, 1774	423
(a) Letter to J. G. Zimmermann, November 1767	423
(b) Review, <i>Der teutsche Merkur</i> , 1774	424
142 HERDER on Sterne, November 1768	426
143 <i>A Sentimental Journey</i> in German, 1768	427
144 The Lorenzo cult, April 1769	429
145 GOETHE on Sterne, 1772, 1820-2, 1826, 1828, 1829, 1830	431
(a) Review, <i>Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen</i> , March 1772	431
(b) <i>Campagne in Frankreich</i> 1792, 1820-2	432
(c) <i>Über Kunst und Alterthum</i> . Lorenz Sterne, January 1826	432
(d) <i>Aus Makariens Archiv</i> , <i>Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre</i> , 1828	433
(e) <i>Journal</i> , December 1829	434
(f) Letter to C. F. Zelter, December 1829	434
(g) <i>Journal</i> , October 1830	435
(h) Letter to C. F. Zelter, October 1830	435
146 VON BLANCKENBURG: Sterne as humorist, 1774	436
147 The extremes of sentimentality, 1780, 1781	438
(a) L. F. G. GOECKINGK, 'Der Empfindsame,' 1780	438
(b) CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH TIMME, <i>Der Empfindsame</i> , 1781	439
148 TIECK on Sterne, 1795	440
149 LICHTENBERG on Sterne, 1772-5, 1799, 1800	441
(a) <i>Aphorisms</i> , 1772-5	441
(b) <i>Beobachtungen über den Menschen</i> , 1799	441
(c) <i>Ästhetische Bemerkungen</i> , 1800	442
150 NOVALIS on Sterne, 1799-1801	444
151 FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL on Sterne, 1800	445
152 JEAN PAUL RICHTER on Sterne, 1804	447
153 HEGEL on Sterne, 1818-26	448
154 HEINE on Sterne and Jean Paul, 1830s	449

## CONTENTS

### The Netherlands

155	The Dutch translation of <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , 1777	451
156	OCKERSE on Sterne, c. 1782, 1788, 1819	452
	(a) Comment, c. 1782	452
	(b) <i>Ontwerp tot een Algemeene Characterkunde</i> , 1788	452
	(c) 'Leibnitz en Sterne', 1819	453
157	DE PERPONCHER on Sterne, 1788	453
158	WILLEM KIST on Sterne, 1823	454
159	OTTO GERHARD HELDRING on Sterne, 1831-3	455

### Russia

160	The Russian Sterne: KARAMZIN, 1790, 1792	456
	(a) <i>Letters of a Russian Traveler</i> , June, July 1790	456
	(b) Editorial note, <i>Moscow Journal</i> , February 1792	458
161	Two enthusiasts of the 1790s	458
	(a) Remarks by MICHAÏL N. MURAVIEV, 1790s	458
	(b) GAVRIIL PETROVICH KAMENEV, <i>Muza</i> , 1796	459
162	Sterne satirized, 1805	459
163	PUSHKIN on Sterne, 1822, 1827, undated	462
	(a) Letter to Peter Andreievich Vyazemsky, January 1822	462
	(b) 'Fragments from Letters, Thoughts, and Notes,' 1827	463
	(c) Remarks, reported by A. O. Smirnova	463

### Italy

164	FOSCOLO: Sterne's Italian translator, 1805	464
165	Sterne's sentimental side, 1822	466
	(a) GIOVANNI FERRI DI S. COSTANTE, 'Sterne and Marivaux,' 1822	466
	(b) GIOVANNI FERRI DI S. COSTANTE, 'Sterne's Humor,' 1822	466
	(c) GIOVANNI FERRI DI S. COSTANTE, 'Sterne's Tomb,' 1822	467
166	Sterne, the Italian, 1829	468

APPENDIX: EDITIONS OF STERNE'S WORK, 1760-1830	469
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	474
INDEX	476



## Preface

---

'Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?' Laurence Sterne asks in a passage in volume V of *Tristram Shandy* deploring plagiarizers, which is itself plagiarized from Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. I cannot plead Sterne's witty excuse for pouring from many vessels into this present one, though I hope the mixture will be sufficiently new to make the undertaking worthwhile. A close look at the criticism of Sterne in England and America, as well as on the Continent, during the seventy years following the initial appearance of *Tristram Shandy* in 1760 provides more than one kind of insight. First and foremost, it contributes to an understanding of the special quality of Sterne's work and hence to a richer reading of that work by the twentieth-century reader. But it also illuminates the critical attitudes and practices of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

A few words of explanation are in order. I have printed extensive passages from Sterne's own works because his entire literary career consisted of a long dialogue with his readers, real or imaginary, sensitive or insensitive, serious or bantering. I have tried to suggest something of the range of response among Sterne's readers by letting individual voices be heard even if they are not in any way typical. Much of the criticism of Sterne centered more on biographical and moral assessments than on literary ones, and although I have in general excluded criticism that is purely biographical, I have included some discussions in which conclusions about Sterne's work are drawn from biographical or moral considerations. I have included only a very limited amount of criticism of Sterne's *Sermons*, although some critics of Sterne's time would have seen these as his major work. I have tried to indicate the extent of Sterne's impact on the Continent with selections drawn from several countries where Sterne was revered and where he exerted an important influence.

Finally, the question of a terminal date for showing Sterne's contemporary reception was troublesome. One could find justification for stopping as early as Sterne's death in 1768 or as late as Sterne's first full-length biographer, Percy Fitzgerald, whose *Life of Sterne* appeared

#### PREFACE

nearly a hundred years later in 1864. In a sense both dates reflect something of the contemporary reception, since Fitzgerald brings together some of the accumulated attitudes that begin even during Sterne's lifetime. The date of 1830 is a compromise, based on my feeling that after various ups and downs Sterne's reputation was securely established by the Romantic critics. They are both the first critics since his own time to come as close to a genuine appreciation as some of Sterne's contemporaries did, and probably the last critics to grow up with Sterne as an inevitable, as well as an important and loved part of their literary educations. After them Sterne gradually becomes a less frequently read though (in our own time, at least) more frequently respected classic. I have included a few selections dated after 1830 when they represented attitudes formed by a critic before that date or served to round out earlier comments by the same critic.

The following short titles have been used throughout; the full bibliographical information for each will be found in the Bibliography: *Life* for Cross's 3rd edition; *Letters* for Curtis's edition. The selections from *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey* reproduce the text of the first edition in each case, with page numbers from that edition appearing in square brackets at the end of each selection. For the convenience of the modern reader, the corresponding pages in Work's edition of *Tristram Shandy* (referred to as Work) and Stout's edition of the *Sentimental Journey* (referred to as Stout) appear at the beginning of each selection. All page references in other citations of Sterne's two works are to these editions.

I am especially grateful to my translators who have helped to provide background as well as undertaking the actual translations: for the French selections, to Isabel B. Howes, who collaborated with me; for the German selections, to Professor Valentine C. Hubbs of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures of the University of Michigan; for the Dutch selections, to Jelle Atema; for the Russian selections (except as otherwise noted), to Patricia Due; for the Italian selections, to William Paden Jr. Finally, unlike Sterne, I do not 'hate to praise my wife,' Lidie M. Howes. She has served as typist, editor, critic, and—most important—as lifter of spirits whenever I needed to be restored to a state of true Shandeism.

## Acknowledgments

---

I wish to thank the following publishers and individuals for permission to reprint extracts from the sources listed below. All possible care has been taken to trace ownership of the selections included and to make full acknowledgment for their use.

Cambridge University Press for *The Correspondence of Richard Hurd and William Mason*, ed. E. H. Pearce and Leonard Whibley; the Clarendon Press, Oxford, for *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George B. Hill and L. F. Powell; *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Arthur Friedman; *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley; *Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig; *Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. J. DeLancey Ferguson; *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, ed. Douglas Grant; and *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll; Columbia University Press for Nikolai Karamzin, *Letters of a Russian Traveler 1789-90*, trans. Florence Jonas; Constable and Co. Ltd for *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs; Curtis Brown Ltd for *Mrs. Montagu*, ed. Reginald Blunt; J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd for *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Thomas M. Raysor, also published by E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc. in Everyman's Library Edition and used with their permission; Harvard University Press for Ernest J. Simmons, *English Literature and Culture in Russia (1553-1840)*; William Heinemann Ltd, McGraw-Hill Book Co. and Yale University for *Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*, ed. Geoffrey Scott and Frederick A. Pottle; Hodder & Stoughton Ltd for *Correspondence of William Cowper*, ed. Thomas Wright; Indiana University Press for *The Critical Prose of Alexander Pushkin*, ed. and trans. Carl R. Proffer; the Johns Hopkins University Press for L. P. Curtis, 'New light on Sterne,' *Modern Language Notes* (lxxvi), 1961; Methuen & Co. Ltd for *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas; J. B. Metzlersche for Friedrich von Blanckenburg, *Versuch über den Roman* (in translation); Oliver & Boyd Ltd for Henry Mackenzie, *Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock*, ed. Horst W. Drescher; Oxford University Press for *Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*; Prof. Thomas M. Raysor for his edition of *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*; Princeton University Press

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

for *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd; Stanford University Press for James Boswell, *The Hypochondriack*, ed. Margery Bailey; Marian C. Thompson for *Anecdotes and Egotisms of Henry Mackenzie*, ed. Harold W. Thompson; University of North Carolina Press for Alexander Cowie, *John Trumbull, Connecticut Wit*; and Alan Dugald McKillop, *Samuel Richardson, Printer and Novelist*; University of Texas Press for *The Satiric Poems of John Trumbull*, ed. Edwin T. Bowden; Prof. J. Thomas Shaw for his edition of *Letters of Alexander Pushkin*; Yale University Press for *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with George Montagu*, ed. W. S. Lewis and Ralph S. Brown Jr.; Horace Walpole's *Correspondence . . . with Henry Zouch*, ed. W. S. Lewis and Ralph M. Williams; *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir David Dalrymple*, ed. W. S. Lewis, Charles H. Bennett, and Andrew G. Hoover; *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir Horace Mann*, ed. W. S. Lewis, Warren Hunting Smith, and George L. Lam; and *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Thomas Gray*, ed. W. S. Lewis, George L. Lam, and Charles H. Bennett. I am also most grateful to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, for permission to print James Boswell's 'A Poetical Epistle to Doctor Sterne, Parson Yorick, and Tristram Shandy' from Manuscript Douce 193.

## Introduction

---

### I. MORE HANDLES THAN ONE

A few weeks before Laurence Sterne's death an American admirer sent him an odd walking stick, 'a *shandean* piece of sculpture' with '*more handles than one*.' In his letter of thanks Sterne lamented that in reading *Tristram Shandy* readers chose 'the handle . . . which suits their passions, their ignorance or sensibility. There is so little true feeling in the *herd* of the *world*,' he continued, 'that I wish I could have got an act of parliament, when the books first appear'd, "that none but wise men should look into them." It is too much to write books and find heads to understand them,' he concluded (No. 55b).

The reader who traces the criticism of Sterne during the seventy years after the appearance of the initial volumes of *Tristram Shandy* might well share this view, for Sterne has suffered more critical vagaries than most major writers. The reader is likely to tire, as Sterne did during his lifetime, of the bantering attacks (designed mainly to earn their Grub Street authors a pittance), of the importance placed upon secondary or extraneous issues (centered on Sterne's clerical character and his personal life), and of the general failure of critics to come to grips with Sterne's essential method (exemplified by the tendency to see his work as merely a collection of fragments). The reader likewise tires, as Sterne would have, of many of the controversies that continued after his death: the disputes about the moral effect of his books, the sincerity of his feelings, and the relationship of his character to his works; and the endless discussion of the nature and extent of his borrowings from other writers. Much of the criticism of Sterne centers on a few major themes; but there are variations; for if Sterne's work invited clichés, it also invited very personal responses. The personal responses are due in part to Sterne's manner and the relationship he attempts to establish with his readers. They are due in part to the extremely varied nature of his work, which offered, as one critic said, something for each of 'the three different classes of auditors; pit, box, and gallery' (No. 35). Finally, they are due in part to the meeting of the man and the critical

## INTRODUCTION

philosophies of the moment, for in some ways Sterne was an artistic rebel, attracting both ardent partisans and violent opponents, and he carried on a running battle with his critics, as well as a continuing dialogue with his readers.

The nature of that battle and the subjects of that dialogue were partly determined by some of the attitudes and practices of eighteenth-century criticism. The eighteenth century conceived of the task of the critic somewhat differently than we do, and some of its critical practices seem strange to modern critical sensibilities. First of all, the critic thought of his task in evaluating a work as automatically including the evaluation of the character of the writer as well, and many critics regarded the two as inseparable. The critic also felt obliged to give his readers a notion of the range of a work through a fairly large amount of summary, often letting summary substitute for analysis. Most important, the 'court of criticism' was no empty metaphor. The critic tried to judge the 'beauties' and 'defects' of a book, and his series of judgments would often add up to an overall positive or negative view; but there was seldom any attempt to give a full-scale interpretation of a work as a whole or to see it through the lens of a single critical perspective, and often the contradictory evidence pro and con was left unreconciled.

Standards for criticism centered around the concept of decorum, a concept which applied in several different contexts. It applied first of all to the character of the writer, with the result that a book considered appropriate for a young wit or man about town to have written was not necessarily considered appropriate for a clergyman. When Mrs Montagu suggested that her cousin Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* would 'not have misbecome a young Ensign' (No. 58f), she also meant to imply that it did not become a clergyman. Decorum applied also to the accepted conventions of what remained within the bounds of good taste and morality for any writer. It applied as well to the notion of what patterns and forms were appropriate to a particular genre. Thus decorum had to do with professional character, morality and aesthetics.

In the continuing battle with his critics and the continuing dialogue with his readers, Sterne challenged the notion of decorum in all of these applications. To a friend who had warned that 'some gross allusions' in *Tristram Shandy* 'would betray a forgetfulness of his character,' Sterne replied 'that an attention to his character would damp his fire, and check the flow of his humour; and that if he . . . hoped to be read,

## INTRODUCTION

he must not look at his band or cassock' (No. 9b). To Bishop Warburton, who had similarly urged caution, Sterne replied: 'I will . . . do my best; though laugh, my lord, I will, and as loud as I can too' (No. 16b). To a *Monthly Review* reviewer who insulted Sterne's professional character and complained that publishing the *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* in a way which capitalized on the popularity of *Tristram Shandy* was 'the greatest outrage against Sense and Decency . . . since the first establishment of Christianity' (No. 13c), Sterne replied that he would overlook such annoyances from the critics 'with good temper' (No. 27a). To a correspondent who had apparently chastized Sterne for the flood of obscene imitations and bantering criticisms he had occasioned, Sterne replied: "'God forgive me, for the Volumes of Ribaldry I've been the cause of"—now I say, god forgive them—and tis the pray'r I constantly put up for those who use me most unhandsomely. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Sterne showed similar defiance in the face of charges that his work was immoral or obscene. Though he admitted his book was 'a little tawdry in some places' (No. 3), he exclaimed sarcastically: 'Heaven forbid the stock of chastity should be lessen'd by the life and opinions of Tristram Shandy' (No. 5). And men of such different character as Samuel Richardson (No. 29) and John Cleland (No. 69) agreed that Sterne's work did not arouse the passions. The *Sentimental Journey* Sterne called, probably only half jokingly, his '*Work of Redemption*' (No. 53d); and he also said that if any readers thought it 'not . . . a chaste book . . . they must have warm imaginations indeed!' (No. 53g). Critics in general agreed that it was at least less indecent than *Tristram Shandy*; but they raised other issues. Was Sterne's sentimental philosophy sincere and did it not substitute the indulgence of benevolent emotions for right conduct and active charity? Was not this philosophy therefore immoral? 'Merely to be struck by a sudden impulse of compassion at the view of an object of distress, is no more benevolence than it is a fit of the gout,' wrote Elizabeth Carter to one of Sterne's friends, adding that she had not read Sterne's book and probably never would (No. 57d). Sterne himself did not live long enough to engage in the debates over the *Sentimental Journey*.

In his dialogue with critics and readers Sterne took most pains of all to justify and explain his method, though sometimes, perhaps, with tongue in cheek. At the same time that he was relying on the value of parody for making fun of some of the usual narrative conventions, he was also keenly aware of the possibility that his audience, trained in the notions of what was appropriate to a given form, might miss the point



#### INTRODUCTION

of what he was trying to do. Especially in the early volumes of *Tristram Shandy* he is at pains to point out that his work is 'digressive, and . . . progressive too,—and at the same time' (No. 2c), that 'writing . . . is but a different name for conversation' (No. 2f), that 'rules and compasses' or exact critical measurements are likely to destroy 'a work of genius' (No. 27b), and that 'to write a book is . . . like humming a song—be but in tune with your self . . . 'tis no matter how high or how low you take it' (No. 27h). Sterne also gave plentiful hints about his indebtedness to Locke (Nos 2d, e), and put his fundamental philosophy in the mouth of Walter Shandy: 'Every thing in this world . . . is big with jest,—and has wit in it, and instruction too,—if we can but find it out' (No. 33b). Many of Sterne's readers unfortunately did miss the point of some of these remarks: at best, they saw his work as a kind of dazzling chaos in which brilliant fragments jostled each other without plan; at worst, they saw only a wild farrago of discordant elements (see, for example, Nos 6b, 23, 25, 30d).

This lack of communication was not the only unfortunate element in the dialogue between Sterne and his readers. Sterne's bantering and ironic tone invited bantering responses, and much of the criticism of his work during his lifetime was only half serious at best (see, for example, Nos 11, 21, 31, 40). Often it was designed to display the critic's wit rather than contribute to an understanding of Sterne's work; and even serious critics engaged in a certain amount of banter of this sort (see, for example, Ralph Griffiths's remarks in Nos 48c and 52d). Furthermore Sterne's mannerisms and the particular kind of relationship he tried to establish between himself and his audience struck different readers very differently. Goldsmith objected to Sterne's manner as composed of 'bawdy' and 'pertness' (No. 19), while a more appreciative reader who savored Sterne's manner was willing to 'ride fifty miles to smook a pipe with him' (No. 22a). Sterne realized that his readers would disagree—'I shall be attacked and pelted, either from cellars or garrets, write what I will,' he said. 'Tis enough if I divide the world;—at least I will rest contented with it' (No. 26b). At the same time he did take some account of the public's reception of his work, in particular catering in later installments of *Tristram Shandy* and in the *Sentimental Journey* to the widespread taste for 'the pathetic.' There were ups and downs in the sale of Sterne's works both during his life and later—he complained in volume VIII of *Tristram Shandy* (chapter 6) of having 'ten cart-loads of [the] fifth and sixth volumes still'—but the number of editions of his works throughout the period is ample testimony



## INTRODUCTION

to his success in pleasing not one but many different publics (see Appendix).

### II. THE PUBLICATION OF *Tristram Shandy* (1760-7)

As we try to follow and assess the dialogue between Sterne and his critics and readers from the distant vantage point of our own time, we encounter difficulties, starting with the appearance of the initial installment of *Tristram Shandy*, and resulting, in part at least, from the very personal nature of responses to Sterne. We may sometimes have to rely on speculation about the degree to which individual responses are representative or eccentric, widely shared or singly held. The reviews of the early installments of *Tristram Shandy* in the *Monthly Review* afford a good illustration of some of the difficulties. William Kenrick, reviewing the first installment of *Tristram Shandy* in the 1759 Appendix to the *Monthly* found the author 'infinitely more ingenious and entertaining than any other of the present race of novelists. His characters are striking and singular,' Kenrick continued, 'his observations shrewd and pertinent; and, making a few exceptions, his humour is easy and genuine' (No. 4). A little more than a year later Owen Ruffhead reviewed the second installment of *Tristram Shandy* for the *Monthly* in quite a different key. Centering his remarks around a lengthy quotation from Hobbes, Ruffhead read Sterne a lecture on 'discretion' and the 'flagrant impropriety of character' for a clergyman to write such a book as *Tristram Shandy*. He further charged Sterne with 'dullness,' asserting that the characters were 'no longer striking and singular' and that Sterne's 'prurient humour' was a prostitution of wit which might 'be compared to the spices which embalm a putrid carcase.' He did express the hope that Sterne would take his 'friendly admonitions in good part,' and avoid 'the misapplication of talents,' but the generally negative tone of the review was in sharp contrast to the generally positive tone of the earlier review (No. 28a).

One is tempted to account for the difference between the two reviews more by the differences between the reviewers<sup>2</sup> than by the differences between the two installments of Sterne's novel. Kenrick, author of the earlier review, was a volatile and controversial literary hack who quarreled with many of the leading literary men of the day, sometimes wrote anonymous pamphlets in order to answer himself in others, and 'seldom wrote without a bottle of brandy at his elbow.' He was proud of his versatility and the rapidity with which he worked. Ruffhead, in

## INTRODUCTION

contrast, was a meticulous and careful writer. Trained as a lawyer, he brought 'the methodical industry that was habitual to him' to every task he undertook. One might expect that Kenrick would read Sterne more enthusiastically than Ruffhead.

But there are further complications. Although Sterne's name and his profession were unknown when Kenrick wrote his review, some five months later Sterne published *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, proclaiming his dual role as clergyman and novelist and bringing down upon his head the wrath of Ruffhead in a review of the *Sermons* in the *Monthly* for mounting the pulpit 'in a Harlequin's coat' and making 'obscenity . . . the handmaid to Religion' (No. 13c). Sterne himself had also appeared on the London scene in the meantime, and his behavior during this and subsequent London visits was at least questionable if not indiscreet (see No. 41). Since the same censures for impropriety of character are picked up by John Langhorne in his review of the third installment of *Tristram Shandy* for the *Monthly* (No. 34d), the further question occurs as to how far the policy of the magazine as such guided subsequent reviews.

Over the years the *Monthly* was likely to read Sterne lectures on the necessity for maintaining the dignity of his clerical character and to applaud his 'pathetic' passages while censuring his breaches in decorum in the humorous parts of his work (see Nos 34d, 48c, 52d). The *Critical Review*, on the other hand, thought of Sterne as the British Rabelais almost from the first and was willing to accept him on those terms (see Nos 28c, 34c, 52b). The *Critical* saw no impropriety in the manner in which Sterne had published his *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (No. 13b), and was only perfunctory in censuring any supposed moral lapses in his work. In general, the *Critical* had less to say about Sterne than the *Monthly*: the five reviews of *Tristram Shandy* in the *Monthly* total 28,000 words, while the *Critical* devoted only 4,000 words to reviews of Sterne's novel.<sup>3</sup> Out of this tangle we can conclude only that Sterne called forth more critical disagreement than most writers. To some critics, knowledge of Sterne's profession made a profound difference in the way they judged his work; while to others, Sterne's violations of professional decorum were venial, if they were to be considered lapses at all. The taste and moral sense of each individual was usually the ultimate determining factor in criticism of Sterne. Periodicals, like individuals, tended to develop a consistent point of view over the years; but no views of Sterne were universally held.

But to return to the initial reception of *Tristram Shandy*. During the

#### INTRODUCTION

first few weeks of 1760 favorable reviews appeared in most of the periodicals, commending Sterne's characters and expressing good-natured bewilderment at how to characterize Sterne's work (No. 6). As the weeks passed, the novel's fame spread and Tristram became a fad with a soup, a game of cards, and a racehorse named after him. 'Who is more thought of, heard of, or talked of, by dukes, dutchesses, lords, ladies, earls, marquisses, countesses, and common whores, than Tristram Shandy?' asked one anonymous pamphleteer a year later. Not since the days of *Pamela* and *Tom Jones* had a book become so quickly fashionable.<sup>4</sup> Curiosity about its unknown author mounted.

Sterne himself burst upon the London scene in early March, satisfying that curiosity and adding to the fame of both his book and its author, but at the same time making it impossible henceforth for most critics to keep the man and his work separate in their judgments of either. At once lionized by fashionable London society (Nos 7, 14), Sterne began to play a public role which he did not abandon for the rest of his life. It is a role with ambiguities and unanswered questions. Was Sterne the rather odious 'professed wit' described by Charles Johnstone (No. 41), or was he the ubiquitous 'wellcome Guest' described by Boswell (No. 14)? Was Johnson's antipathy to Sterne (Nos 34a, 64) due more to his belief that Sterne failed to live up to the demands of his profession, to his opposition to Sterne's politics, or to his rejection of both Sterne's moral and aesthetic principles? Whatever the answers to questions like these, it seems clear that Sterne's conduct in London helped to swell the flood of pamphlets, imitations, and bantering attacks that capitalized upon his fame of the moment, often in bawdy or vulgar ways (No. 11). More serious attacks, of course, also came from sincere moralists who genuinely reprehended the supposed indecency of Sterne's novel and the impropriety of his conduct (No. 10).

Predictably, the famous names of the day were divided in their estimates of Sterne. Boswell wrote a warm appreciation in doggerel verse after meeting Sterne during the spring of 1760 (No. 14), but Johnson apparently avoided Sterne and remained firm in his disapproval (Nos 34a, 64). Thomas Gray thought there was 'much good fun' in *Tristram Shandy* and 'humour sometimes hit & sometimes mist' (No. 17); but Horace Walpole thought Sterne's book 'a very insipid and tedious performance' (No. 8). Samuel Richardson and his friend Lady Bradshaigh might well be expected to disapprove of Sterne: indeed they did, though—they hint—almost in spite of their inclinations as they read and enjoyed at least parts of the book (Nos 18, 29). Goldsmith,

#### INTRODUCTION

as we have seen, objected to Sterne's manner, called him a 'bawdy blockhead,' and thought *Tristram Shandy* empty of everything except false wit (No. 19). Edmund Burke, on the other hand, viewing *Tristram Shandy* primarily as satire, commended Sterne for his 'talent of catching the ridiculous in everything that comes before him' (No. 25). During the first few months after the appearance of *Tristram Shandy* most of these critical opinions had been formed, though some of the statements by major figures were not circulated until later. The battle lines had been drawn.

Sterne himself entered into the battle with some gusto, replying to his critics in the next installment of *Shandy*, which appeared in January of 1761. He chided the *Monthly Review* for its attack on the *Sermons*, but undertook to receive all criticism in good humor (No. 27a), and justified his work as providing a kind of comic catharsis by promoting healthy laughter (Nos 27g, j). Sterne was pleased with volumes III and IV, if we are to judge from statements in his letters (No. 26a), although he knew they would stir up even more controversy than the first two volumes among readers and critics (No. 26b). Ironically, the controversies were perhaps less sharp because critics were generally in agreement in the unfavorable tone of their criticism (Nos 28, 30a, 31). It became almost as much the fashion to attack the third and fourth volumes of *Tristram Shandy* as it had been to praise the first and second. The *Critical Review* alone felt that the first installment had been overvalued, the second undervalued by other critics (No. 28c). The novelty of *Tristram Shandy* had begun to wear off, and many critics thought that in the second installment Sterne had resorted to obscenity and obscurity when true wit failed him (see, for example, No. 31).

As Sterne worked on the next installment, volumes V and VI, he wrote to a friend, 'I care not a curse for the critics' (No. 32a); and as he neared the end of the two volumes he thought they were 'the best,' partly because he was 'delighted' with 'uncle Toby's imaginary character' (No. 32b). In the new volumes themselves he addressed fewer remarks to critics and readers to justify his technique, though he reiterated that he was trying to achieve the proper blend of wit and judgment, jesting and seriousness, in his book (No. 33c). The criticism of volumes V and VI was in general more favorable than that of volumes III and IV, and the story of 'Le Fever' was widely reprinted. The *Critical* found the volumes pretty much of a piece with those that had preceded them and noted again the resemblance to Rabelais but also added special praise for the story of 'Le Fever' (No. 34c). John Langhorne in the

#### INTRODUCTION

*Monthly* echoed this praise and asserted that the new installment was 'in point of true humour' superior to the previous one, in spite of some remaining traces of indecency. Sterne's forte, he concluded, lay in the pathetic.

The next three years Sterne spent in pursuit of health on the Continent; he did not return to England until the summer of 1764. The story of the reception of Sterne and his works abroad will be told below. During his absence, his popularity in England continued, though with something of a lull. A false rumor of his death shortly after his departure brought tributes (No. 36) and critics continued to refer to him (Nos 37, 40, 42, 45).

Unable to complete two more volumes in the usual Shandy pattern by his deadline after his return to England, Sterne experimented in volume VII with a plan to use his travels—a plan which later came to more complete fruition in the *Sentimental Journey*. When the seventh and eighth volumes appeared in January of 1765, however, the reviewers felt that Sterne had imposed upon the public by padding this installment with extraneous materials from his travels (No. 48). Most reviewers intimated that Sterne should stop writing installments of *Shandy*, though Ralph Griffiths, in the *Monthly*, suggested that Sterne might 'strike out a new plan' and cultivate his talents in 'the pathetic' (No. 48c).

Sterne may well have taken this advice to heart as he took his second Continental tour from the fall of 1765 to the spring of 1766, traveling mainly in Italy and gathering materials which later found their way into the *Sentimental Journey*. During his absence the third and fourth volumes of the *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* appeared without the furor which had accompanied the publication of the first two volumes of sermons (No. 50).

After his return to England, Sterne's immediate concern was another installment of *Tristram Shandy* and the occasional glimpses we catch of him during the composition of the lone ninth volume show a man unchanged. Sterne wonders how he can 'keep up that just balance betwixt wisdom and folly, without which a book would not hold together a single year' (No. 52a); and to a Black admirer who has written to enlist his talents in the cause against Negro slavery, he replies that his pen is 'at the service of the afflicted' (No. 51b). Wit and judgment, sense and nonsense, humor and pathos—these are the elements out of which he will continue to blend his work. And the blend continues to puzzle critics, as they attempt to characterize volume IX of *Tristram Shandy*.

#### INTRODUCTION

Its wit 'may be termed generical,' the *Critical Review* asserts (No. 52b); and Griffiths in the *Monthly* finds a new way to describe Sterne—as a harlequin producing 'the pantomime of literature' (No. 52d). What a pity, Griffiths concludes, 'that Nature should thus capriciously have embroidered the choicest flowers of genius, on a paultry groundwork of buffoonry!' (No. 52d). A review in the *Gentleman's Magazine* stated that there could be 'neither epitome nor extract' of Sterne's work; and concluded that 'its *bad* is an object of judgment, though its *good* is an object of taste' (No. 52c).

#### III. *A Sentimental Journey* (1768)

Further inspiration for *Shandy* was lacking for the moment, but Sterne was now ready to make a more extensive use of material from his travels. The *Sentimental Journey*, he wrote to his daughter Lydia, was to be 'something new, quite out of the beaten track' (No. 53a). Its purpose, he wrote several months later to a friend, was 'to teach us to love the world and our fellow creatures better than we do' (No. 53e). This book, he said, 'the women will read . . . in the parlour, and *Tristram* in the bed-chamber' (No. 53i).

Response to the *Sentimental Journey* was in the main enthusiastic. The *Monthly Review* and the *Political Register* termed it Sterne's 'best' work (No. 56c, d); of the reviews, the *Critical* alone was unfavorable (No. 56a). The harshness of this latter review was probably due to Sterne's satirical portrait of Smollett as Smelfungus (No. 53j), since although Smollett's connection with the *Critical* had long since ceased, the reviewers probably still felt loyalty to him. Private opinions likewise were not unanimous, though the general tone was highly favorable. Walpole thought that Sterne's travels were 'exceedingly good-natured and picturesque,' and 'infinitely preferable to his tiresome *Tristram Shandy*' (No. 57a, b). A year later Fanny Burney wrote in her diary, 'I am now going to *charm* myself for the third time with poor Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*.'<sup>5</sup> But not all the women read or enjoyed the *Sentimental Journey* in the parlor: Fanny Greville replied to Elizabeth Burney's praise of Sterne with the statement that 'when a man chooses to walk about the world with a cambrick handkerchief always in his hand, that he may always be ready to weep, either with man or beast,—he only makes me sick' (No. 57e).

Tributes on the occasion of Sterne's death followed hard upon the heels of comments on the *Sentimental Journey*—indeed, some periodicals



#### INTRODUCTION

combined reviews of Sterne's travels with eulogies (No. 56b, c); but even in death Sterne found no agreement in the final assessments of his character and works, some writers excusing his faults, while others lamented or censured his weaknesses (No. 58).

#### IV. 1769-79: CONTINUING CONTROVERSIES

In the years between Sterne's death and the publication of the first authoritative edition of his works in 1780, his reputation continued to grow. Johnson was indeed wrong when he asserted in 1776 that *Tristram Shandy* had not lasted (No. 64b), but no major critics treated Sterne at length. There were brief remarks, both pro and con, from other famous men on both sides of the Atlantic, leaving accounts fairly even. The disapproval expressed by American poet John Trumbull (No. 60) is balanced by the enthusiasm of Thomas Jefferson, who thought that Sterne's works 'form the best course of morality that ever was written' (No. 62b). John Wesley's contemptuous dismissal of the word 'sentimental' as 'not English' and his assertion that Sterne's 'book agrees full well with the title, for one is as queer as the other' (No. 70a), is contradicted in popular poet Samuel Jackson Pratt's rhapsodic praise of Sterne's sensibility and the 'milky and humane temperature' about his pulses (No. 67a). Lesser-known critics also tended to divide along the old familiar lines, with Sterne's defenders opposing clichés to the clichés of his detractors. In reply to the charge that Sterne's work lacked form or order, his defenders pointed to the originality of his genius and the excellence of his characters; in reply to attacks upon his philosophy as 'shallow' or 'false,' they praised his mastery of the 'pathetic' and his 'knowledge of the human heart'; in answering strictures upon his indecency they stressed the cathartic effect of his humor and the excellence of his satire (Nos 70, 72). The publication of various editions of Sterne's letters (No. 66) meant that his sentimental philosophy was frequently considered against the background of his own life and particularly his relationship with Mrs Draper (see No. 53d, I, p. 187).

#### V. 1780-90: *The Beauties of Sterne*

In 1780, proof that Sterne had begun to stand the test of time came when a group of London booksellers published a 'complete edition' of Sterne's works, 'with those embellishments usually bestowed on our

## INTRODUCTION

most distinguished authors.' As the unknown editor said, time had indeed 'fixed [Sterne's] reputation as one of the first writers in the English language . . . and advanced him to the rank of a classick' (No. 74).

During the next decade Sterne paid the price for having become a classic: he was anthologized . . . and, in the process, bowdlerized. *The Beauties of Sterne*, which purported to be 'Selected for the Heart of Sensibility' and to contain 'all his Pathetic Tales, & most distinguished Observations on Life' first appeared in 1782 (No. 78a); it had reached a seventh edition within a year, and a twelfth edition by 1793. Homer and Shakespeare, as well as most of the major literary figures of the previous fifty years, were accorded similar treatment; but in the case of Sterne, anthologizing gave an unusually distorted picture, since the editor took care to make his selections so that 'the chaste part of the world' could not possibly be offended. Thus Sterne's humorous side was further deprecated and the disordered or fragmentary character of his work underlined by the implication that his 'pathetic' tales and his 'sentiments' on a variety of subjects were the only worthwhile things he had written. Even though the tenth edition of the *Beauties* in 1787 attempted to redress the balance somewhat between the sentimental and humorous sides of Sterne's work (No. 78b), the overall effect of this anthology was to suggest that Sterne's works were valuable not as artistic wholes but only for particular highlights.

*The Beauties of Sterne* thus increased the tendency to value the *Sentimental Journey*, with its greater share of 'sentiments' and 'pathetic passages,' above the more boisterous *Tristram Shandy*. Robert Burns accorded equal praise to Sterne's two books (No. 80); but minor novelist Clara Reeve is much more typical in not knowing what she can 'say of [*Tristram Shandy*] with safety,' yet asserting with confidence that the *Sentimental Journey* is 'indisputably a work of merit' (No. 81).

Better-known figures like Mrs Piozzi (No. 82) and Henry Mackenzie (Nos 66d, 86) make only passing references to Sterne, and the man to treat Sterne's work at greatest length during the eighties was Vicesimus Knox, ordained minister and headmaster of Tonbridge School. His *Essays Moral and Literary*, in which he first commented at length on Sterne in the edition of 1782, had reached a thirteenth edition by 1793. Though 'far below Shakespeare on the scale of genius,' Knox asserts, Sterne shares with him 'the power of shaking the nerves, or of affecting the mind in the most lively manner in a few words.' Knox gives Sterne the praise of 'genius,' but he finds it impossible to 'give him the praise of morality,' and he revives the old charge, never quite thoroughly dis-



#### INTRODUCTION

credited, that Sterne arouses the passions. The pathetic, he concludes, was Sterne's 'chief excellence,' though even this side of Sterne's work poses dangers to morality and conduct (No. 77). Most other critics of the eighties agree that the pathetic is Sterne's major excellence, and some of them praise rather than distrust the moral tendency of his sentimental philosophy (Nos 87, 88).

From deprecating the quality and importance of Sterne's humorous side it was but a short step to suggesting that it was, in fact, not original at all but was plagiarized; and George Gregory took that step in 1787 (though he implied that Sterne was also indebted to other authors for his sentimental side as well (No. 83)). Gregory's friend Anna Seward, minor poetess known as the Swan of Lichfield, sprang to Sterne's defense (No. 84), and her battle with Gregory over Sterne's originality gave a preview of the more extensive battles which were to follow, beginning during the nineties after the fuller revelation of Sterne's borrowings. Meanwhile, there were some minority reports from critics who, rather than contributing to the tendency to fragment Sterne's work, saw it whole. Anna Seward herself called attention to the 'happy, thrice happy, mixture of the humorous and the pathetic' (No. 84a), and Leonard MacNally, imitator of Sterne and author of a dramatic adaptation of *Tristram Shandy*, felt the works of Sterne would always have a place 'in the hands, in the heads, and in the hearts of every man, ay, and every woman too, of feeling' (No. 88a).

#### VI. 1790-1815: PLAGIARISM AND SENTIMENT

During the next twenty-five years the preference for Sterne's pathetic side continued, reinforced by Dr John Ferriar's discoveries of Sterne's plagiarisms, which usually involved his humorous material. Ferriar read a paper entitled 'Comments on Sterne' to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester in 1791 and this was subsequently published in the Society's *Memoirs* in 1793. Ferriar's avowed wish was to make Sterne more 'intelligible.' 'I do not mean to treat him as a plagiarist,' he says, and adds that any 'instances of copying . . . will detract nothing from his genius.' Though Ferriar finds borrowings particularly from Rabelais and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, he believes that his researches 'leave Sterne in possession of every praise but that of curious erudition, to which he had no great pretence, and of unparelled originality, which ignorance only can ascribe to any polished writer' (No. 90a).

#### INTRODUCTION

Ferriar revised his comments for a book-length publication with quite different conclusions. In the *Illustrations of Sterne*, which appeared in 1798, he stated that Sterne had a 'natural bias to the pathetic,' and in the 'serious parts of his works, he seems to have depended on his own force,' but 'in the ludicrous, he is generally a copyist.' Sterne is praised for 'the dexterity and the good taste with which he has incorporated in his work so many passages, written with very different views by their respective authors' (No. 90b), but this is faint praise compared to Ferriar's earlier remarks in the 'Comments.'

After Ferriar's disclosures, the more acute critics minimized the importance of Sterne's borrowings (Nos 102d and e, 109, 110); but minor critics with a moral bent seized on Sterne's plagiarism as a means for attacking the supposed immorality of all his work (No. 102a). The harshness of moral judgments against Sterne increased with the growth of the Evangelical movement at the turn of the century, and two of its chief spokesmen, William Wilberforce and Hannah More, condemned him in strong terms. Hannah More referred to his sentimentality as a 'disease' (No. 79), and Wilberforce attacked him for 'corrupting the national taste' and producing 'a morbid sensibility in the perception of indecency' (No. 95). Biographical misinformation added fuel to the flames, and the sincerity of Sterne's sentimental philosophy was called into further question by the charge, as Byron put it, that Sterne 'preferred whining over "a dead ass to relieving a living mother"' (see Nos 96, 98, 113). Only in the twentieth century have we begun to achieve a better perspective on Sterne's difficult relationships with his mother and his wife.

In spite of all the attacks, however, Sterne's influence continued to be felt: 'All the would-be lady writers have sprung from RICHARD-SON,' wrote Charles Dibdin in 1790, 'just as all the would-be gentlemen writers have sprung from STERNE' (No. 89). Dibdin also opened up the interesting speculation that the esthetic principles which Sterne practiced, if he had developed them into full-fledged theories, could have provided lively competition for the literary dogmas that Samuel Johnson was enunciating. Sterne, if he did not wish exactly to number the streaks of the tulip, wished nonetheless to count the strokes of his pulse as it beat faster with each new experience, thus demonstrating his affinity with the coming age rather than with that which was passing. Later, as one critic suggested, Wordsworth had become 'the Sterne of poetry,' since he had 'endeavoured to extract sentiment where nobody else ever dreamt of looking for it' (No. 124).

#### INTRODUCTION

Meanwhile, there were other critics besides Dibdin who began to take Sterne's measure more accurately, as more extended treatments of his works appeared (Nos 106-11, 115). In these lengthier studies critics make somewhat more perfunctory references to Sterne's obscenity or immorality and praise his special talents—the 'light electric touches,' as Mrs Barbauld says, 'which thrill the nerves of the reader who possesses a correspondent sensibility of frame' (No. 109), or 'the art of painting with his *pen*,' praised by Edward Mangin (No. 115). These critics also tend to make light of the charges of plagiarism. Though they may express impatience with Sterne's mannerisms, they recognize his fundamental talent in characterization. Sterne's style remains the subject of lively controversy, with personal taste the decisive factor in judgments (see Nos 94, 103, 104, in addition to the more extended treatments of Sterne mentioned above).

#### VII. 1815-30: THE ROMANTICS REDISCOVER *Tristram Shandy*

During the next fifteen years, between 1815 and 1830, Sterne's literary fortunes rose as three major figures, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Scott, made significant contributions to an understanding of his work (Nos 116, 117, 123). All three preferred *Tristram Shandy* to the *Sentimental Journey*: Hazlitt gives most of his attention to Sterne's earlier work and Scott assumes that 'Sterne's reputation [is] chiefly founded on *Tristram Shandy*.' Coleridge found 'truth and reality' in *Tristram Shandy*, but 'little beyond a clever affectation' in the *Sentimental Journey*, which he characterized as 'poor sickly stuff.'

These three major figures helped to put into a better perspective some of the problematic things about Sterne which had distorted the judgments of earlier critics. Thus Scott gave a kinder biographical treatment of Sterne (though he used virtually the same facts and sources that were available to earlier writers), and Hazlitt asserted that one should not believe those people who tell you 'that Sterne was hard-hearted.' These critics also see Sterne's 'indecenty' as more a matter of taste than a matter of morality. Though the 'licentious humour of *Tristram Shandy*' argues 'coarseness of mind, and want of common manners,' Scott says, it is not 'the kind which applies itself to the passions, or is calculated to corrupt society.' For Coleridge, Sterne's indecenty amounted to 'a sort of *knowingness* . . . a sort of dallying with the devil,' which would have little effect if society itself were innocent. It is quite separate, Coleridge insists, from Sterne's characters 'which are

## INTRODUCTION

all *antagonists* to this wit.' These three critics likewise make light of the charges of plagiarism, either ignoring them or asserting, as Scott does, that Sterne should be pardoned 'in consideration of the exquisite talent with which the borrowed materials are wrought up into the new form.'

Even these critics still find it difficult to come to grips with the eccentricity of Sterne's form. Hazlitt suggests that Sterne's works 'consist only of *morceaux*—of brilliant passages,' and Scott describes *Tristram Shandy* as 'no narrative, but a collection of scenes, dialogues, and portraits, humorous or affecting, intermixed with much wit, and with much learning, original or borrowed.' Coleridge alone saw Sterne's 'digressive spirit' as 'the *very form* of his genius' with continuity supplied by the characters. All three agree on the excellence of the characters themselves. Hazlitt calls attention to the skill with which Sterne maintains 'consistency in absurdity' in his characterizations and describes Uncle Toby as 'one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature.' Scott agrees that Uncle Toby and Trim are 'the most delightful characters in the work, or perhaps in any other.'

Though both Scott and Hazlitt note 'mannerism and affectation' in Sterne, both in general appreciate his style and his humor. For Hazlitt, Sterne's style is 'the most rapid, the most happy, the most idiomatic,' in short, the 'pure essence of English conversational style.' Both Hazlitt and Coleridge appreciate the comic elements in Sterne, and Coleridge describes the essence of Sterne's comedy well: 'the little is made great, and the great little, in order to destroy both, because all is equal in contrast with the infinite.'

Other prominent figures of the period knew and admired Sterne's work. Jane Austen parodied *Tristram Shandy* in her juvenilia.<sup>6</sup> Wordsworth was reading *Tristram Shandy* in 1791, one of his few 'incursions into the fields of modern literature,' and he spoke admiringly of Yorick as having 'a deal of the male mad-cap in him.'<sup>7</sup> Shelley quotes Sterne in an early essay.<sup>8</sup> Keats refers to Sterne in letters, showing a somewhat bewildered admiration for the Shandean (No. 118). Lamb, though he regretted that Sterne had 'put a sign post up to shew where you are to feel,' nonetheless thought of Sterne's works as among 'Great Nature's Stereotypes' (No. 104).

Finally, De Quincey and Carlyle, both in discussions of Jean Paul Richter, show a sensitive understanding of Sterne's humor and its relationship to his sentiment. Though Sterne is inferior to Richter in De Quincey's view, he believes that both have demonstrated 'the possibility of blending, or fusing . . . the elements of pathos and of

#### INTRODUCTION

humour, and composing out of their union a third metal *sui generis*' (No. 122). Carlyle states the same idea with a slight variation: 'The essence of humor is sensibility. . . . True humor springs not more from the head than from the heart; it is not contempt, its essence is love; it issues not in laughter, but in still smiles, which lie far deeper.' Shakespeare, Swift, and Ben Jonson all have their place in the annals of British humor, but Sterne is 'with all his faults, our best' (No. 125a). The major critics of the Romantic period had rescued Sterne's sliding fortunes and enshrined his work, and particularly *Tristram Shandy*, on a high pedestal indeed.

#### VIII. STERNE IN AMERICA

Almost from the first appearance of *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne's popularity in America mirrored that in England, and some of the same critical arguments took place on both sides of the Atlantic. Dr John Eustace, when he sent Sterne the 'shandean piece of sculpture' in 1767, mentioned above, stated that he had admired *Tristram Shandy* 'ever since his introduction to the world' and had been 'one of his most zealous defenders against the repeated assaults of prejudice and misapprehension' (No. 55a). But all of Sterne's books had enthusiastic supporters. Four years earlier Benjamin Franklin reported that at Fort Pitt 'as they cannot yet afford to maintain both a Clergyman and a Dancing-master, the Dancingmaster reads Prayers and one of Tristram Shandy's Sermons every Sunday.'<sup>9</sup> Harvard students read both *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey* enthusiastically during the seventies,<sup>10</sup> and in 1774 Sterne became the first novelist to have a collected edition of his complete works published in the colonies.<sup>11</sup> More than a decade later, Sterne furnished material for William Dunlap's *The Father, or American Shandyism*, which was performed successfully in 1789 and became 'the first American play printed that had been performed in a regular theatre.'<sup>12</sup>

American diaries attest the popularity of Sterne's 'sensibility' during the seventies,<sup>13</sup> and it was this side of Sterne's work that drew both the warmest praise and the most violent censure over the years in America, as Sterne became 'high priest of the cult of sensibility.'<sup>14</sup> Sterne's fragments appeared frequently in the pages of the *Massachusetts Magazine* during its brief history from 1789 to 1796,<sup>15</sup> and the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy*, which appeared in 1789, contained a warm defense of Sterne against the 'antisentimentalists' (No. 87). But

## INTRODUCTION

at the same time that Sterne was imitated and praised, many moralists saw a danger in his sensibility (Nos 100, 105). As one writer said, 'By blending sentiments of benevolence and delicacy with immorality and looseness, he induces some people to think that debauchery may be innocent, and adultery meritorious' (No. 105a), and another writer saw him as a 'cassocked libertine' (No. 105c). There was ambivalence in the attitudes toward Sterne: it was as hard for the Americans as for Sterne's own countrymen to determine the point at which tender and benevolent emotions turned into selfish and destructive ones. The very 'sensibility' which won Sterne most praise also caused the strongest attacks against him.

In general, the *Sentimental Journey*, with ten American editions before 1800, was more popular than *Tristram Shandy*: it is significant that no separate edition of *Shandy* appears to have been published in America during the period. But some discerning critics did come closer to full-fledged appreciation of Sterne. William Wirt, later to be attorney-general of the United States, admitted that 'every body justly censures and admires alternately' *Tristram Shandy*, but was sure that it 'will continue to be read, abused and devoured, with ever fresh delight, as long as the world shall relish a joyous laugh, or a tear of the most delicious feeling.' A few years earlier Wirt had started his career with 'his whole magazine of intellectual artillery comprised [of] no other munitions than a copy of Blackstone, two volumes of *Don Quixote*, and a volume of *Tristram Shandy*.'<sup>16</sup> Theodosia Burr, daughter of Aaron, also found Sterne intellectually stimulating. Unlike the usual novelists who 'really furnish no occupation to the mind,' Sterne offers opportunities for discoveries: 'Half he says has no meaning, and, therefore, every time I read him I find a different one,' she says.<sup>17</sup>

Among other famous Americans, Sterne had both advocates and detractors. The praise of Jefferson and the censure of Trumbull have already been noted (Nos 62, 60). When Tom Paine traveled to France in 1787, he praised Sterne for being free of the usual prejudices Englishmen displayed toward France: 'Except Sterne,' he said, 'there is scarcely a traveling English author, but who, on his return home, has cherished and flattered those errors for the purpose of accommodating his work to the vulgar palates of his readers.'<sup>18</sup> The young Emerson felt that Goethe's enthusiasm for Sterne (No. 145) was one of the German writer's 'few blunders,'<sup>19</sup> but Sterne's name appeared more frequently than that of any other English author in the early journals of Washington Irving. '[I]t was largely in the mood of the literary Sterne,' Irving's



#### INTRODUCTION

biographer says, 'that Irving traveled through France and Italy.'<sup>20</sup> Irving in turn spawned his own imitators, and the young Whittier experimented with fiction before he became a poet, trying a style which was 'about half way between the abruptness of Laurence Sterne and the smooth gracefulness of W. Irving.'<sup>21</sup>

Despite these evidences that Sterne was widely read and appreciated in America, there was no major critical statement by an American to correspond with the famous pronouncements of the English Romantics, though the *Port Folio*, edited by Joseph Dennie, carried two important articles on Sterne in 1810 and 1811. The first, written by Philadelphia publisher Matthew Carey, undertook to vindicate Sterne from the charge of plagiarism (No. 110a); the second, which is unsigned, defended Sterne from the charge of hypocrisy, since the reader 'need not search farther than his own heart to find all those incongruities of character so apparent in the page and in the life of Lawrence Sterne.' This second critic then goes on to give some remarks on Sterne's style. Sterne is 'always disappointing and always delighting his reader.' In the 'whole compass of English literature' there is no other example 'of wit so uniformly sportive' and the 'opposition of character' provides 'inexpressible diversion' for the reader. Sterne's 'artless, unstudied, yet sweet and captivating pathos' is also to be commended, and he gives 'interest' to 'apparently trivial' incidents. He is 'not a profound writer' and 'skims the surface of things,' but 'if he had written more systematically,' he might have 'lost that spritely naïveté that now exhilarates and warms us in every page' (No. 110b).

#### IX. ON THE CONTINENT

On the Continent Sterne was in some places even more popular than he was in England or America, though sometimes even less well understood.<sup>22</sup> It was the *Sentimental Journey* which had primary appeal throughout Continental Europe, though its vogue often stimulated a secondary interest in *Tristram Shandy*. Partly as a result of the dominant popularity of Sterne's travels, perhaps partly as a result of the difficulty in translating Sterne's bawdier humor, there were fewer attacks upon the supposedly immoral tendency of his work and in general fewer comments on the more boisterous *Tristram Shandy*.

Sterne was not entirely fortunate in his translators, for they sometimes added or subtracted whole sections in their translations of both the *Sentimental Journey* and *Tristram Shandy*, translated spurious works

## INTRODUCTION

as genuine, or even used the translation to satisfy personal literary grudges. It is not far from the truth to say that often foreign critics were talking about a virtually different book when they discussed Sterne's works in translation. Sterne's translators did, nonetheless, make possible the rapid and early spread of his popularity. The German translation of the *Sentimental Journey* had appeared before the close of 1768 (No. 143) and the French translation a few months later (No. 129). Zückert's German translations of *Tristram Shandy* had not lagged far behind the appearance of the separate English installments of the novel (No. 140) and Bode's competing translation of the whole novel appeared in 1774 (No. 141b). In France, parts of *Tristram Shandy* were translated during the seventies by Frénais (No. 131), and two conclusions to his translation appeared in the eighties (No. 132).

Sterne was first known elsewhere on the Continent through the original English editions or the French and German translations of his work, but as his popularity increased, his works were translated into other languages as well. Bernardus Brunius translated *Tristram Shandy* into Dutch in 1776-9 (No. 155) and Sterne's travels in 1779. Italians had to wait until 1829 for a translation of selections from the novel (No. 166), but translations of the *Sentimental Journey* into Italian appeared in 1792 and 1813, and a Spanish translation was published in 1821. Sterne's travels were translated into Polish in 1817, and at that time Poland's national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, and his friends were 'joyous young men' and 'Sternians' during their college days.<sup>23</sup> Selections from the *Sentimental Journey* were translated into Russian as early as 1779, though a complete translation was not made until 1793. Brief selections from *Tristram Shandy* were translated into Russian during the nineties, though a complete translation was not undertaken until 1804-7. By the end of the eighteenth century *Tristram Shandy* had appeared in Danish (1794) and the *Sentimental Journey* in both Danish (1775) and Swedish; early in the nineteenth century Sterne's travels appeared in Hungarian.<sup>24</sup>

### France

In spite of the fact that the French lagged slightly behind the Germans in translating Sterne's works, Sterne was better known earlier in France, in part because of his two trips to that country in search of health in 1762-4 and 1765-6. Sterne was fêted in the salons of Paris on his trips to the capital, but although he wrote to Garrick that 'Tristram was almost as much known here as in London,'<sup>25</sup> the statement of a contemporary that 'there are not five people in Paris possess'd of a *Tristram*



## INTRODUCTION

*Shandy*, nor one of those who are, who pretends to understand it'<sup>26</sup> is probably much nearer the truth. The *Journal Encyclopédique* reviewed each of the English installments of the novel as it came out, at first with a certain admiration, mingled with surprise at the book's popularity in England, later with a tone of firm disapproval (No. 126). There were enthusiastic and appreciative readers, however, like Diderot (No. 127), Georges Deyverdun (No. 128), and Voltaire (No. 130), though Voltaire apparently did not fully understand the English text. Mlle de Lespinasse, we are told, was the first to have the 'patience' to 'venture to the end of *Tristram Shandy*.' She 'adored' Sterne because 'works which were uneven, imperfect, even outlandish, found favor in her eyes, if she discovered in them some strokes of genius or of sensibility.' Later it was she who 'made the *Sentimental Journey* famous in Paris.'<sup>27</sup>

But the *Sentimental Journey* did not need anyone to help make its reputation in France. At once more intelligible than *Tristram Shandy*, and more available to French readers in Frénais's translation (No. 129), the *Sentimental Journey* won and kept a place in French hearts by its basically sympathetic portrayal of Frenchmen and French life. The work of Rousseau, who, like Sterne, presented man as 'the creature of instinct, given over to the fluctuations of sensation and of feeling,' had also helped to pave the way for the widespread acceptance of Sterne and his sensibility in France.<sup>28</sup> The young Jules Michelet, later to become famous as a leading French historian, confided to his journal in 1820: 'To my shame, the story of Maria made me cry almost as much as the death of my mother.'<sup>29</sup>

But by no means all the French were in tune with Sterne's sensibility, though Sterne had more defenders than detractors. Mlle de Sommery thought the book was without wit, ridiculous and trivial; Sterne's pleasure 'in feeling the finger-tip of the lady with black silk gloves' made her 'die with laughter.' Mme Suard, wife of a journalist and miscellaneous writer who had known Sterne during his Paris visits, hastened to write a spirited defense of Sterne and the *Sentimental Journey*, which was first published in 1786 (No. 134). 'Sterne's merit,' she said, 'lies in having given interest to details which have no interest whatever in themselves.' Sterne 'enlarges . . . the human heart by painting his own feelings for us,' and the 'interest which he takes in recounting all his feelings, passes into the hearts of his readers.'

Though *Tristram Shandy* was slow to be translated, the task had been completed by the middle eighties, and the translations of Sterne's novel were in general enthusiastically received (Nos 131, 132, 133). A

## INTRODUCTION

few years later Mme de Staël cited Sterne as the best example of that English humor in which there is 'moodiness . . . almost sadness' (No. 136a). Both Dominique-Joseph Garat (No. 137) and Charles Nodier (No. 139) read *Tristram Shandy* with pleasure and made perceptive comparisons between Sterne and Rabelais. Garat, writing in 1820, refers to Voltaire's two British Rabelais, Swift and Sterne: in all three, Rabelais 'buffoonery and philosophy are always very close to each other,' he says. 'But Rabelais and Swift make you think while making you laugh,' he continues, 'and never touch your heart.' In Sterne, 'laughter, profound thoughts, and gentle tears can be found on the same page.' Sterne is better than the other two at handling the 'imbroglio' of his narrative and his opinions, though, Garat says, 'the story of Tristram is not really that of a man; it is that of human nature in Europe, as Sterne saw it.' Nodier believes that the 'two great mockers have blazed a trail for modern philosophic thought,' though Rabelais lived in an age of growth and Sterne in a dying age. From this difference in the times in which they lived, other differences followed: 'The gaiety of Rabelais is that of a boisterous child who breaks his most precious toys in order to lay bare their mechanisms. The gaiety of Sterne is that of a slightly moody old man who amuses himself by pulling the strings of his puppets.'

### Germany

In Germany, as in France, it was the *Sentimental Journey* which first won fame and attention for Sterne, although an unsuccessful translation of parts of *Tristram Shandy* had appeared in 1763 and 1765 (No. 140). Christoph Martin Wieland, attacking this translation in a letter in 1767 but defending *Tristram Shandy* for its fund of 'genuine Socratic wisdom' (No. 141a), became an early partisan of Sterne, as did Johann Gottfried von Herder, who wrote the next year that he was 'already . . . accustomed to following [Sterne's] sentiments through their delicate threads all the way into the soft inner marrow of his humanity' (No. 142).

As Herder wrote, sometime in November 1768, he was preparing to read the *Sentimental Journey*, if his knowledge of English would 'not prove inadequate.' Actually Bode's German translation of the *Sentimental Journey* had already come out some weeks previously, with the famous statement in its preface by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (described only as 'a well-known German scholar') that he would have given five years of his own life if Sterne could have been spared for another five years of writing (No. 143). The success of the *Sentimental Journey* in

#### INTRODUCTION

Germany was immediate, giving a new word to the German language (No. 143); and in the spring of 1769 Johann Georg Jacobi initiated the Lorenzo cult, whose devotees carried snuffboxes like the one Father Lorenzo gave Sterne (No. 144). During the seventies, which has been called the 'great Yorick decade,' Sterne's popularity increased, and in 1774 Bode's successful translation of *Tristram Shandy* appeared (No. 141b), reaching some German readers who had not responded to Sterne's sentimental side.<sup>30</sup> The next year poet Charles Ramler wrote to fellow poet Tobias Gebler that 'everyone wants to jest now like Sterne.'<sup>31</sup> Friedrich von Blanckenburg's discussion of Sterne as a humorist both 'of the intellect' and 'of the heart' appeared the same year (No. 146). Goethe's *Werther* also was published the same year, its way prepared, as Goethe later said, by the sentimentality of Sterne (No. 145b). Imitations of Sterne began to appear in large numbers, and Sterne cults sprang up. A few years later a poetic cemetery was set up in the park at Marienwerder near Hanover with graves for all of Sterne's famous characters; and Louise von Ziegler of Darmstadt, we are told, 'so far assumed the character of Maria as to adopt as the companion of her contemplations not, indeed a goat . . . but, more hygienically, a lamb.'<sup>32</sup> Such extremes of sentimentality brought the inevitable satirical attacks (No. 147), and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, professor at Göttingen who had visited England in the middle seventies, became the leader of a movement against Sterne and his sentimentality. He later characterized Sterne as 'a creeping parasite, a flatterer of the Great' and a hypocrite (No. 149).

Sterne's fame continued without serious check in Germany, however. In 1795 Ludwig Tieck noted the gentleness of Sterne's laughter (No. 148), and five years later Friedrich Schlegel compared Sterne's style to 'that clever game of paintings called arabesques' (No. 151). Critics frequently compared Sterne with Jean Paul Richter (Nos 150, 154), who likewise himself cited Sterne for his combination of humor with seriousness (No. 152). In 1825 Schopenhauer offered to undertake a translation of *Tristram Shandy*, a book which he read 'again and again,' but nothing came of the project.<sup>33</sup> Heinrich Heine thought Sterne 'of equal birth with Shakespeare': he 'reveals to us the remotest recesses of the soul' (No. 154).

Goethe's career corresponds almost exactly with the period under consideration, and he had a lifelong admiration for Sterne. Near the end of his life he said it 'would be impossible to reckon how much effect Goldsmith and Sterne had' on him during the 'main period' of

#### INTRODUCTION

his development (No. 145f). Sterne was 'the most beautiful spirit that ever lived,' a 'free soul' with whom 'sagacity and penetration are infinite.' He was 'a model in nothing,' but 'a guide . . . in everything' (No. 145d). Goethe re-read Sterne late in his life and found that with the years his admiration had increased and was still increasing. 'I still have not met his equal in the broad field of literature,' he said (No. 145h).

#### The Netherlands

Sterne was also held in high esteem in the Netherlands. Though *Tristram Shandy* was translated first into Dutch during the middle seventies (No. 155), the Dutch apparently understood and appreciated the *Sentimental Journey* more fully, after its translation in 1779. By 1782, Willem Antony Ockerse, theologian, critic, and lifelong admirer of Sterne, reported that after Sterne 'sentiment is so much in vogue that one may assume it as a livery of the lovesick world' (No. 156a); a few years later he called attention to another influence from Sterne, the fact that one could strike 'literary sparks' from unlikely sources (No. 156b). Sterne was sometimes attacked for his immorality—Rhijnvis Feith said he wrote 'sometimes for heaven and sometimes for hell'<sup>34</sup>—but one critic, at least, recognized that it was only Sterne's imitators who were guilty of evoking the passions 'too strongly'; Sterne himself knew 'how to play upon the fine strings of the nobler and more delicate sentiments' (No. 157). As in other countries, special groups of Sterne devotees were formed and we are told of Sterne clubs toward the end of the century, whose members called each other by the names of Sterne's characters and even tried to dress in a manner which would recall Sterne.<sup>35</sup> Critics during the early nineteenth century praised Sterne's 'enchanted' pen (No. 158), and his talent for catching life 'as it appears in reality . . . always full of sympathy, always breathing love' (No. 159).

#### Russia

In Russia, as elsewhere on the Continent, the *Sentimental Journey* won acceptance for Sterne, making him the most popular and influential English novelist during the last years of Catherine the Great's reign. Fragments from Sterne's *Journey* were translated in Russian periodicals as early as 1779, but a complete translation did not appear until 1793. Meanwhile, some Russians had read Sterne in English or in the French or German translations, and at the beginning of the nineties there were two Russian books of travel by authors who owed something to their

#### INTRODUCTION

reading of Sterne. One book won exile to Siberia for its author, while the other helped to place its author in the forefront of the Russian Sentimental movement. Alexander Radishchev's *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, which derived its form from the *Sentimental Journey* and contained a savage indictment of 'tyranny in general and Russian serfdom in particular,' appeared in 1790. Catherine the Great had the 'mutinous' Radishchev placed on trial, and although he pleaded that he was merely attempting an imitation of Sterne, he was condemned to death, a sentence later commuted to exile to Siberia.<sup>36</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, who traveled extensively in Europe from 1789-90, published his *Letters of a Russian Traveler* between 1791 and 1801. Karamzin was hailed by critics as 'the Russian Sterne' (though later scholars have debated the extent of Sterne's influence on Karamzin). In any event, Karamzin caught something of the spirit of Sterne in his book, especially in the passage in which he visits Dessein's hotel in Calais (No. 160a). In a later statement he praised Sterne's 'secret of shaking with words the most delicate fibers of our hearts' (No. 160b). Other Russian writers during the nineties praise Sterne's sensibility and his knowledge of 'the secret recesses of the heart' (No. 161a, b). As in other countries, the extremes of a sentimental movement called forth satire, and in 1805 Prince Alexander Shakhovskoi successfully satirized both Sterne and the Sentimental movement in his play, *The New Sterne* (No. 162). Later Pushkin gave high praise to *Tristram Shandy* (No. 163a), which had been translated in full only between 1804 and 1807, finally paving the way for writers later in the century to focus on that side of Sterne. Pushkin himself predicted that Gogol would be 'a Russian Sterne,' since he 'knows how to laugh,' but at the same time 'makes us weep' (No. 163c).

#### Italy

Italians had to content themselves with reading Sterne's work in English or other foreign languages, particularly French, during most of the eighteenth century, but a translation of the *Sentimental Journey* by Angelo Gaetano Vianello from Frénais's French version was published at Venice in 1792 and another translation was published at Milan in 1812. The most famous translation from the English version, that by poet and scholar Ugo Foscolo, appeared at Pisa in 1813 (No. 164), with later editions in 1818 and 1825. In his 'Character of Yorick,' which serves as a preface to his translation, Foscolo points to Sterne's purpose in the *Sentimental Journey* to 'teach us to know others in ourselves.'

#### INTRODUCTION

He pictures Sterne as 'a free mind' and 'an eccentric spirit,' who put much of himself into the *Sentimental Journey* 'with the avowed presentiment of approaching death . . . as though in abandoning the earth he wanted to leave it some perpetual memory of a soul so different from others' (No. 164). A few years later Giovanni Ferri di S. Costante discussed Sterne several times in the periodical *Lo Spettatore Italiano* (No. 165). Ferri, like Foscolo, chiefly appreciated Sterne's sentimental side. Carlo Bini, translator of other English works, at last translated selections from *Tristram Shandy* into Italian in 1829; but he too appreciated mainly Sterne's sensibility, suggesting that Sterne was almost an Italian in his thought and temperament: 'You would say his thought had been developed in the breezes of our clear skies, and, mixed with his blood, there flowed within him a flame of the Italic sun' (No. 166).

It is fitting that a consideration of Sterne's reception and impact upon the Continent should end with Bini's testimony to Sterne's chameleon-like ability to enter into the intellectual life and the hearts of the people in each country where he was read. Though Sterne's 'philosophy' may not have been exactly 'the most brilliant invention of eighteenth century anglomania'<sup>37</sup> since some English readers also appreciated this side of Sterne, it is nonetheless true that Sterne was often taken more seriously in other countries than in his own. Sterne's influence was perhaps greatest in Germany where, according to one critic, he 'affected in a greater or less degree, nearly every German writer from 1765 to the close of the century.'<sup>38</sup> Sterne's sensibility likewise found a receptive audience in the France of Rousseau as well as in the Germany of the young Goethe and the Storm and Stress movement, but his humor was also appreciated by enthusiastic individual readers with tastes as different as those of Goethe and Voltaire.

#### X. SINCE 1830

Sterne has remained a writer of international stature, though there have been further ups and downs in his literary fortunes, especially in England. Though the statements of major critics during the Romantic period were somewhat slow to circulate and hence had a less marked effect immediately than they had later, during the next few years Sterne's reputation remained high. The remarks of literary historian George L. Craik and literary critic Leigh Hunt during the 1840s may be cited as illustrative. Countering the assertion of other critics that



#### INTRODUCTION

Sterne's 'beauties are but grains of gold glittering here and there in a heap of sand,' Craik believed that 'of no writer could this be said with less correctness,' since Sterne's language, descriptions, and characters are 'wrought with the utmost care, and to the highest polish and perfection.'<sup>39</sup> Hunt gave special praise to the character of Uncle Toby: 'as long as the character of Toby Shandy finds an echo in the heart of man,' he says, 'the heart of man is noble.' Hunt also found 'the profoundest wisdom' in *Tristram Shandy*, and described Sterne as 'Rabelais, reborn at a riper period of the world, and gifted with sentiment.' To accuse Sterne of 'cant and sentimentality,' Hunt believed, 'is itself a cant or an ignorance.'<sup>40</sup>

A major challenge to Sterne's reputation came only a few years later, however, from a man who was all too ready to accuse Sterne of cant and sentimentality. In his 'Lectures on the English Humourists,' delivered in 1851, Thackeray drew a dramatic but uncomplimentary and inaccurate portrait of Sterne the man and then used that portrait to give an adverse reading of Sterne the writer. Sterne was hypocritical and licentious, Thackeray charges, and 'there is not a page in Sterne's writing but has some thing that were better away, a latent corruption—a hint, as of an impure presence.' 'The foul Satyr's eyes leer out of the leaves constantly,' Thackeray says, and when he thinks of Sterne he is 'grateful for the innocent laughter and the sweet and unsullied page which the author of *David Copperfield* gives to my children.' Though Thackeray finds 'genuine love and kindness' in 'a hundred pages' of Sterne's books, the rest is false, for Sterne usually 'exercised the lucrative gift of weeping' only to achieve money and fame. Thackeray's final estimate of Sterne is that he is 'a great jester, not a great humourist.'<sup>41</sup>

Ideas of decorum had become more strict since the eighteenth century, and if some of Sterne's original readers were upset at his failure to live up to his clerical character, it is not surprising that part of Thackeray's hysterical denunciation seems to derive from the same source. At the same time, the Victorians were obviously fascinated by the 'bawdier' and 'less refined' quality of life in the eighteenth century, and some critics, taking their cue from Thackeray, intensified the drama and distorted the picture even further. John Cordy Jeaffreson, exaggerating Thackeray's already exaggerated picture, presented Sterne as 'the hero of a hundred love affairs,' 'the adroit teller of nasty stories,' and 'the vain, wicked, sensual old dandy.'<sup>42</sup>

But Thackeray did not speak for his age, an age in which there was

## INTRODUCTION

as much critical disagreement about Sterne as ever. Charlotte Brontë thought that what Thackeray said about Sterne was 'true,'<sup>43</sup> and Anthony Trollope agreed with Thackeray's account of Sterne's 'meanness and littleness.'<sup>44</sup> Dickens and Bulwer, on the other hand, were enthusiastic readers of Sterne, and Bulwer imitated Sterne.<sup>45</sup> Bulwer also gave special praise to Sterne's style: '[H]e flings forth his jocund sentences loose and at random; now up towards the stars, now down into puddles; yet how they shine where they soar, and how lightly rebound when they fall!'<sup>46</sup>

Extended correctives to Thackeray's view of Sterne may be found in the Reverend Whitwell Elwin's essay in the *Quarterly Review* in 1854 and American essayist Henry T. Tuckerman's 'The Sentimentalist: Laurence Sterne,' published in his *Essays, Biographical and Critical* in 1857. Both see Sterne more as a lighthearted epicurean than a hypocrite or villain. In contrast to Thackeray, both Elwin and Tuckerman are also careful to separate literary criticism from biography, and both make light of any charges of plagiarism. Elwin thinks of *Tristram Shandy* as Sterne's masterpiece, while Tuckerman refers to the *Sentimental Journey* as Sterne's 'most finished, and most harmonious work,' but also gives an appreciative account of the earlier work:

To read *Tristram Shandy* is like comparing notes with a kindly, eccentric, philosophical good fellow, somewhat of a scholar, but more of a human creature, who 'loves a jest in his heart,' can rail good-naturedly at the world, and is consoled by wit and animal spirits for its neglect. We soon, therefore, accede to his purpose, honestly avowed, and let 'familiarity grow into friendship.'

In short, 'we seem to participate in the authorship, to enter into the process of the book . . . surrendering . . . the reins of imagination into [Sterne's] genial hand.'<sup>47</sup> Elwin is somewhat harsher than Tuckerman on Sterne's indecency and the affectation of his style, but the 'strokes with which the portraits [of the Shandy brothers] are drawn,' he believes, 'are altogether so deep and yet so delicate, so truthful and yet so novel, so simple in the outline, and yet so varied in the details, so laughable and yet so winning, that we question if, out of Shakespeare, there is a single character in English fiction depicted with greater or even equal power.'<sup>48</sup>

Thackeray's biographical distortions were further corrected by Percy Fitzgerald's *Life of Laurence Sterne*, the first full-length biography, which appeared in 1864. Fitzgerald presented a much more sympathetic