2017

Sympathy, Skepticism and Conversation in Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy and Henry Mackenzie's the Man of Feeling

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SYMPATHY, SKEPTICISM AND CONVERSATION IN LAURENCE STERNE'S TRISTRAM SHANDYA AND HENRY MACKENZIE'S THE MAN OF FEELING

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Bachelor of Arts in English Literature

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February 2010

submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

at

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my first thesis reader Dr. Rachel Carnell whose I owe much of my intellectual growth and literary knowledge to her graduate seminar "The Rising of the Novel". It is Dr. Carnell who showed me that eighteenth century has more than the famous names of Defoe, Fielding and Richardson, and introduced me to almost underrated female writers like Aphra Behn. I take special pleasure in her argument and discussion over my study at Cleveland State as she has given me a sense of what to say and how to say my own opinions in the literary essays, and has read over and over to prompt me thinking, writing, and rewriting. I should also like to express my thanks to her "botanical terms" which considerably lightened my writing experience. Nor should I forget her dedication that goes beyond academic support as she has given me the continued assurance, energetic spirit, and positive soul.

I am also indebted to my second reader Dr. Julie Burrell whose reading, recommendations and just smiling just to wish me good luck has greatly attributed to this project. I should like to record here that her enthusiastic and strong sense of justice in African American classes and seminars has always been an inspiration. In addition, I would like to thank my third reader Dr. Gary Dyre for taking the to read throughout this thesis.

I am grateful to Dr. Adam Sonstegard whose classes give me the benefits of his stylistic advice and amazing mental ability, and deep knowledge have always helped to improve my critical reading.

Special thanks to Jane Dugan who has been generous in providing administrative support & communication, and answering my questions with great patience over the last two years.

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ABSTRACT

While *Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling* have received continuous literary attention, few has been done in reading the skeptical and sentimental aspects of the two novels. This thesis glances through "conversation", a reader-author conversation may be defined as a dialogue with a reader which is mediated by text. Both Sterne and Mackenzie engage in a conversation with readers by making them laugh, question, criticize, sympathize, and reflect on the deeper meaning of the novels. Moreover, this author-reader conversation is impossible without the wide use of conversations in both novels, through which characters convey their emotions and thoughts. Both novels use conversation in all its forms and manifestations. As thesis shows, these novels employ satire, skepticism, and sympathy in a way that engages readers in conversation with the authors and their own beliefs and preconceptions. While some critics analyze *Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling* by separating their didactic spirit, or treating either side as the "winning" side. This is a false dichotomy as these novels neither strictly sentimental nor strictly skeptical, but they offer two sides perpetually in conflict. Sterne and Mackenzie balance sentimentalism and skepticism in a way that make them complementary rather than competitive.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Harold William Thompson, Henry Mackenzie's biographer, states that the young Mackenzie read *Tristram Shandy* and inspired to imitate the same tone of exquisite sentiment, that Laurence Sterne conveyed. Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) was written a few years after *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) appeared. In both novels, the narration moves backward and forward in time and is interspersed with essayistic passages. Both Mackenzie and Sterne offer their readers complex narrative structures that are full of emotion but which may be read skeptically. Both *Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling*, there are multiple aspects that point to the sentimental stance of the novels, including mournful scenes that invoke the reader's empathy. However, there are many elements in both novels that distract the readers from pure emotional connections with the characters, nudging some readers into a more skeptical reading. These elements include twists and turns, irony and humor. In other words, both Sterne and Mackenzie invite readers to ponder and stay conversant on how the novels might be interpreted.

Since *Tristram Shandy* appears to demonstrate that humans suffer at the hands of an unknown force, some critics, including Wolfgang Iser and Robert Markley, read it as a post-modern novel. They consider that the Shandean world has no single interpretation

but certainly characters suffer because of irrationality of the universe, and the world appears completely chaotic, which are all postmodern features. Furthermore, characters in *Tristram Shandy* attempt to impose meaning on their lives through fictional patterns disguising the fact that their condition is desperately meaningless. Donald Wehrs writes that "*Tristram Shandy* has proved suspiciously congenial to successive twentieth-century perspectives, yielding modernist, metafictional, existential, deconstructive, and Lacanian readings" (127). For Hillis Miller, who is influenced by Victor Shklovsky, *Tristram Shandy* serves as a model or representative of deconstructive analysis for its postmodernist narrative structure. Markely justifies Miller's approach, writing: "Miller does not try to interpret Sterne's novel but offers instead a "continuation" or of Tristram Shandy's "magnificent demonstration" of "the impossibility of distinguishing irrelevance from relevance, digression from the straight and narrow" (180). Critics have also discovered postmodern features in *The Man of Feeling* as well. For example, John Moore reads *The Man of Feeling* as "more like a postmodern novel than a premodern one" (qtd. in McHale 10). Yet, these critics do not attempt to situate these post-modern features in an eighteenth-century context.

The interpretation presented in recent criticism on *Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling*, despite its focus on postmodernism, also paradoxically has a strong foundation in formalism. However, both the formalist and postmodern approaches sever these eighteenth-century novels from the contexts in which they were written. For example, the criticism presented on both texts concentrates purely on the tragedy of "Shandeism." This criticism does not link the characters to the context which may have influenced their construction, thus limiting the insight we may glean from the novels

themselves. When we re-contextualize the novels within the backdrop of the eighteenth century, we may better understand the neoclassical tension between sympathy and skeptical elements in novels that initially may appear to be "post-modern."

Jonathan Lamb has studied Sterne's writing style as an imitator invoking criticism on his originality and textuality. Comparing *Tristram Shandy* with Sterne's *Journal to Eliza*, Lamb states that there is in both novels "a division between the body and the soul, action and sentiment, that is never properly bridged" (82). While I agree with Lamb to some extent, to dwell upon such an oversimplified reading of the conversation in *Tristram Shandy*, I think, risks overlooking the role of eighteenth-century assumptions of wit, satire and conversation. On the other hand, many critics have traditionally read *Tristram Shandy* as patchwork reflecting in individual response influence of Rabelais, Montaigne, and Cervantes on Sterne. Yet, in doing so, these critics have not discussed the comic/satirist relief that absurdity renders in *Tristram Shandy*. I argue that satire fosters sociability and sympathy. As Tristram insists:

> Writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all;- so no author, who understand the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself. (TS: 2.11.125)

As this passage shows Sterne and, similarly, Mackenzie celebrate texts that encourage both skeptical and religious dimensions creating what we can term today "conversation." In conceiving of these texts as "conversation," moreover, we recognize the texts' relationship to eighteenth-century readers, both sentimental and skeptical. In essence, recent readers have chosen the skeptical or "postmodern" reading over a sentimental

reading when the novelists themselves appeared to be allowing a conversation—even a debate—over these two works.

Before the late-twentieth century interest on the postmodern style of these two novels, critics traditionally focused, at least in the case of Sterne, on the humor of the text. In explaining the humor of *Tristram Shandy*, these critics also implicitly understood something about Sterne's use of conversation even if they did not fully recognize his appreciation of the opposing ways of reading his own text. *The Man of Feeling* has always been obviously a less humorous text for readers in that it may be read either as a celebration of tears and empathy or as an ironized—or even postmodern-critique of it. Yet, Mackenzie, like Sterne, was also engaging in conversation as long as his readers were sophisticated enough to simultaneously read skeptically and sentimentally and to engage in a mental conversation about the tension between these two modes and possible ways of reading their texts.

At this point, it is important to define the notion of "conversation." Offered the following definition of Joseph Brodsky's in his Nobel Prize speech: "a novel or a poem is not a monologue, but the conversation of a writer with a reader, a conversation […] that is very private, excluding all others […]. And at the moment of this conversation a writer is equal to a reader" (Knežević and Batrićević 191). Thus, for Brodsky, a reader-author conversation may be defined as a dialectic, a virtual dialogue with a reader, which is mediated by text (Mahaffey 7). Both Sterne and Mackenzie engage in a conversation with readers by making them laugh, question, criticize, sympathize, and reflect on the deeper meaning of the novels. Moreover, this author-reader conversation is impossible without the wide use of conversations in both novels, through which characters convey their

emotions and thoughts. Both novels use conversation in all its forms and manifestations. As I will show in the sections that follow, these novels employ satire, skepticism, and sympathy in a way that engages readers in conversation with the authors and their own beliefs and preconceptions.

A closer look at Sterne and Mackenzie's novels shows that both authors offer much more than conventional sentimental novels of their time. Sterne and Mackenzie toy with their readers by inviting them to appreciate the satire, irony, and humour of their novels, as well as reflect on the absurdity of some sentimental values. The structure and characters of *Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling* achieve at much more than simply invoking sympathy in readers. They induce the readers to think, question, and reflect on the deeper meanings and skeptical passages.

CHAPTER II
TRISTRAM SHANDY

2.1 Sterne in Eighteenth-Century Context and Skeptical Readers

Tristram Shandy, especially its humorous and skeptical aspects, is better appreciated when mapped in the context of its time. Critics have emphasized the originality of Stern's parody among the novelists of his era. Edward Hooker, in his 1948 article "Humor in the Age of Pope" has studied the evolution of the concept of humor and public attitude to it in literature since the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. According to Hooker, the period of Restoration was marked by disapproval and contempt towards humor as such; thus, humor was accompanied with ridicule and satire in the literary works of that time. Humorists were seen as violent people with uncontrollable impulses or those with an unstable temperament, with fancies dominating their common reason. Either of the two types represented a threat to the delicate fabric of civilization and self-control, compliance, and conformity promoted in those days. Humorists were condemned because of an association with weakness and stupidity, inability to control imagination and eccentricity, which all led to original behavior condemned by society. In any way, humor had a stable

stigmatic link to foolish, antisocial conduct, a deviation from normal patterns of life, that had to be avoided by well-bred and civilized individuals. (Hooker 365).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, attitudes to humor changed gradually, with mercantilism diluting the value of conformity and increasing the appreciation of individualism and diversity. As Hooker explains, humor lost its stable link with satire and ridicule, with even central figures in comedy acquiring humorist traits in contrast to Restoration comedy where only minor characters were ridiculed. The new age gave rise to ideas about making comedies joyous and pleasant instead of bitter satire on human follies; Addison even spoke of laughter as beautiful and noted for the first time that laughing at something and ridiculing it is not the same. During that period, a distinct type of humor emerged: the humor of the times and town; it involved humorists' satire on the attitudes of society to humor in the recent past. Humor grew more synonymous to fashion, prevailing taste, and became associated with individual genius, freedom, and diversity – all features of Englishmen's pride. According to Hooker, *Tristram Shandy*, humor was an outcome of rich human individuality (369-372). Critics have overlooked the modernity that is produced by the juxtaposition of the comic and individual world of *Tristram Shandy*. The continuous leaps of satire and culture through the long eighteenth century challenge the degree of homogeneity and broaden the contexts in which we situate and read the satire of Sterne.

Sterne is one of the few sentimental writers who manage to include in his novel much more than sentimental readers might have expected of him. Although Sterne is a clergyman, he does not approach his narration from the limiting perspective of didactic Christianity but rather engages in an unconventional confession, an intricate conversation

with the readers to both express his ideas about religion and morality and make them reflect on their own beliefs. Sterne encourages readers to look skeptically at everything they see and exercise their critical thinking. Twentieth-century critics of *Tristram Shandy*, who see Sterne either as secular or postmodernist, have misunderstood his era and his relationship to religion—which he took seriously even though he subjected it to humor or conversational interrogation. By contrast, Melvyn New provides original understanding of Sterne's skepticism, not in the assumed meaning that is used in the discussions today, i.e associated with secularism. New argues that Sterne exposed moral degradation and reflected on the true meaning of morality from a religious perspective, which distinguishes him from other eighteenth-century authors. As a "Cambridge Platonist", Sterne's approach to satirizing human vices and flaws is not aggressive or malicious, which is the main characteristic of his satire (New 13).

While critics such as New help us understand Sterne's skeptical, even playful, appreciation of his own religion and moral system, recent critics, including Kate Loveman, point out how eighteenth-century texts invited simultaneously both skeptical and sentimental readings. Although Loveman does not focus on Sterne, her approach helps us understand how Sterne invites his readers to join with him in conversing about sentimentality, skepticism, and faith itself.

Loveman explains, "a prestigious approach to texts, skeptical reading might take mild or severe forms, with readers' attitudes ranging from inquisitiveness about the factual status of a work to profound suspicion of the writer's intent" (20). Loveman also points out that within the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century contexts, skeptical reading was informed by social, religious, and political factors (20). Eighteenth-century readers

would converse skeptically. In Sterne's novel, Tristram stretches the deception to the next chapter by suggesting that the Homunculus, which represents the sperm, is

> engendered in the same course of nature,-endowed with the same locomotive powers and faculties with us: - That he consists as we do, of skin, hair, fat, flesh, veins, arteries, ligaments, nerves, cartilages, bones, marrow, brains, glands, genitals, humors, and articulations; -is a Being of as much activity, - and, in all senses of the word, as much and as truly our fellow-creature as my Lord Chancellor of England. (Sterne 2)

Here, Sterne acknowledges deception at two levels: and they include self-deception and deception of his readers.

Loveman refers to the concept of empiricism and suggests that epistemological developments emerged to form the reference point for deeper scrutiny of written accounts. In this case, Loveman explains that the experience is identified as the main basis for the knowledge construction (29). Empiricism requires readers to use their experiences, reason, and observations to establish the truthfulness of works. In *Tristam Shandy*, there are passages that would be questioned by skeptics because either they do not adhere to the standards of e

Empiricism, or are questionable on the basis of empirical standards. For example, Walter thinks that the soul must be situated in the human body, and he concludes that it is located at the cerebellum (118). The main limitation is the reason for his conclusion, because Walter suggests that the soul is located at the cerebellum because Bobby "made way for the capacity of his younger brothers-It unriddled the observations of drivellers and monstrous heads" (120). As a result, Bobby ends up being "a lad of wonderful slow parts" (122). Walter's theory suggests that Bobby's slow parts offer evidence that the

location of the soul at the cerebellum, but through reasoning, skeptics would point this does not prove the location of the soul. Walter also presents other theories with similar limitations. For example, Walter's theory of names is based on Aunt Dinah's involvement with the coachman. The Shandean narrator states:

> My father, as I told you, was a philosopher ingrain,-speculative,-systematical;-and my aunt Dinah's affair was a matter of consequence to him… The backslidings of Venus in her orbit fortified the Copernican system, call'd so after his name ; and the backslidings of my aunt Dinah in her orbit, did the same service in establishing my father's system, which, I trust, will forever hereafter be call'd the Shandean System, after his. (53)

These passages present Walter as a man who engages in speculative philosophy, and his theory in this case is severely limited in reference to epistemological standards. Skeptics could point out that Walter's theory is limited because it does not present adequate evidence to show that indeed the soul is located at the cerebellum.

Loveman's discussion about skeptical reading refers to the concept of sociable reading – which considers the potential social consequences of the text's interpretations and social uses, even when the reader reads the text alone and in silence (31). Loveman states that in the eighteenth century, coffee houses brought people from different backgrounds, and reading and the discussion of reports became central sociability components. Specific elements of focus would include political comment…verse satire and short poetic pieces" (32). *Tristam Shandy* would appeal to sociable readers because it makes extensive reference to political affairs. The narration can stir discussions about Roman rule, princes and monarchies. For example, Tristram states, "The stories of Greece and Rome, run over without this turn and application" (37). Moreover, Tristram mentions that "the case of Mr. Shandy, was this. In the reign of Edward the Sixth,

Charles duke of Suffolk having *Vide Swinburn on testaments" (215). Such statements can initiate varied thoughts about political affairs and specific issues of interest.

Moreover, Sterne's choice of a transcendental being who tells the story also appeals to skepticism, because this narrator conditions the realities that are presented to the readers. Sterne's narrator consciously chooses the aspects of his life that he presents to readers, and shapes their presentation. Therefore, though readers get to learn that Tristam Shandy is the narrator, the narrator's identity is revealed in chapters IV and V of book I. In chapter IV, Tristram states, "I was begot in the night, betwixt the first Sunday and the first Monday in the month of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand several hundred and eighteen" (4). In Chapter V, the narrator mentions his name by stating, "On the fifth day of November…-was I Tristam Shandy, Gentleman" (5). These instances demonstrate that the narrative structure of *Tristam Shandy* is unconventional, and this subjects the narrative to skeptical reading. The narrative is not sequential and this may make skeptics feel that the narrator is unable to give a truthful and complete account of events in his life. Whatever readers learn about Tristram, and other characters in the narrative, is limited to what he (Tristram) chooses to reveal, and how he chooses to reveal it. The unconventional nature of the narrator's frame limits readers particularly because Tristram does not try to enforce perceptions or meanings that have been pre-determined for the readers' reference, and he does not use references other that himself to present accounts of events.

Eighteenth-century skeptical readers probably would notice limitations in the narrative's portrayal of deceptive concepts as "facts." Moreover, the author undoubtedly put in extensive work into the novel as evidenced by its voluminous nature. Nevertheless,

the voluminous nature of the story, and indeed its unconventional nature invite skeptical reading. Therefore, though *Tristam Shandy* is prose fiction, these passages invite skeptical reading reinforces the need for readers to raise questions about what they read. Readers should ensure they are informed in order to question issues that relate to religious, social, and political concepts that are presented in the novel

2.2 Sterne and Religion

Despite its seemingly secular content, the novel's satire can be viewed from a religious perspective, as New demonstrates in his study of Sterne and the Anglican Church. As New points out, Sterne includes some ideas that were published in his sermons and reflected the values of the Anglican Church. For example, both in his sermon "Abuses of Conscious Considered" and in *Tristram Shandy*, he touches upon the question of man's ability to find morality outside of the church (Sterne 359). More specifically, Sterne held that although secular morality helps people become more just in dealing with others, it does not protect them from lust, pride, intemperance, and other vices (New 18). Moreover, Sterne suggests that by ignoring religious morality, a person may become too preoccupied with his or her passions, which severely interfere with reason. This, in turn, results in embarrassing and silly mistakes, misunderstanding, and miscommunication all of which are described so comically in the novel.

In the sermon "Inquiry after Happiness," Sterne warns against the vanity of human interests and passions. As New points out, this idea finds its reflection in the novel, where the characters' uncontrolled desire to pursue their ruling passions are presented as opposing God's commandments. For example, Tristram notes that his father was ruled by pride in his own eloquence. The passage below shows that Sterne delicately

satirizes on human frailty by simultaneously arguing against an innate moral capability that is detached from religion:

> …It was, indeed, his strength, – and his weakness too. – His strength, for he was by nature eloquent; and his weakness, for he was hourly a dupe to it; and, provided an occasion in life would but permit him to show his talents, or say either a wise thing, a witty, or a shrews one – (bating the case of a systematic misfortune) – he has all he wanted (Sterne 214, qtd. in New 23).

It is important to acknowledge that Sterne's religious beliefs affected his attitude towards satire in general. As New recognizes in one of Sterne's sermons called "Pride," Sterne carefully describes all advantages and disadvantages of using satire to expose human vices. On the one hand, Sterne points out that people obsessed with satirizing other peoples' mistakes risk becoming too proud of themselves, which is a great sin, according to Anglican belief. Sterne notes that it is easy for a man to become proud, so it is important to exercise good sense and reason to avoid this vice (17).

Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* is often perceived as fully secular, but much of what the author satirizes and the way he does it in has roots in the Anglican tradition. Sterne underlines that satire is, in fact, a virtue because it allows people to see their weak points and ruling passions by laughing with characters instead of laughing at them. For him, satire is the perfect tool to show the dark side of human nature, as it is similar to a mirror in which a person can see oneself clearly. Notably, Sterne's satire is opposed to invective discourse because it is aimed at helping people to detect their vices, not simply condemn them.

John Stedmond partially agrees with New and argues that Sterne, in his chaotic passages, ridicules the ruling passions and sensibilities of his time but manages to do it without the cynicism and conservatism of his predecessors. Stedmond believes that

Sterne was concerned with society getting more knowledgeable but less wise and intelligent and aims to demonstrate that experience does not always mean having a deeper understanding of the world.

The bulk of twentieth-century studies of Sterne's era invites the flexibility of argument and the absence of a fixed interpretation, and sentiment appears as an essential dimension in his criticism. Stedmond argues that Sterne's works were influenced immensely by the age of sentiment, which replaced the age of reason in the second part of the eighteenth century. Sentiment and passion indeed occupied a central place in Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*, whose main characters are guided mostly by their feelings and external influences. Sterne satirizes the dominance of common sense and its dangers through his foolish characters, yet still manages to hint at the dangers of sentiments as well. Stedmond notes that although Sterne's characters are ruled by their false beliefs, Tristram chooses not to attack them openly but makes his satire less discriminating and obvious. His diffident and tentative approach to satirizing the characters and their vices, as well on the wrongness of public opinion, vividly demonstrates Sterne's desire to use benevolent laughter instead of ruthless satire.

Furthermore, Sterne satirizes learning without wisdom, which is mistakenly taken for intelligence in his society. Through his characters, Sterne mocks the misapplication of intelligence and shows the possible consequences of this approach for the community and individuals. Father Shandy is the perfect example of such a person, who seems to possess knowledge but not wisdom. His purely theoretical, speculative, and often fatuitous philosophy builds a wall between his mind and the world and prevents him from seeing his family's genuine needs. Similarly, Uncle Toby is in the endless pursuit of knowledge;

although, similar to other characters, he can neither choose the right direction in learning nor apply the new information, which puts them in comic situations. Despite the seriousness of these issues, Sterne's approach to discussing them is good-humored. It makes readers ponder moral problems while being in good spirits.

2.3 Benevolent Humor and Moral Persuasion

In addition to understanding Sterne's connection to sentimentality and religion, we benefit from viewing him through the lens of what some critics term "benevolent humor" and what I term "conversation." The use of humor in literature gradually changed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This trend is particularly vivid in the English literary tradition, which shifted from irony and open criticism to a benevolent humor that is more tolerant both to characters and readers. Some critics suggest that the concept of benevolent humor, which is one of the characteristic features of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, is closely connected with sentimentality. This humor has no association with the so-called Hobbesian humor, which allows readers to feel their supremacy over characters, or with the corrective laughter that aims at humiliating. Rather, the sentimental laughter often used by Sterne to engage readers stems from the belief that the audience should express its emotions freely, and that good laughter is one of the central emotions through which genuine sympathy is achieved. In some way, benevolent laughter is a sign of sensitivity and humanity, concepts highly valued in the English sentimentalist tradition.

Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* is the perfect example of benevolent humor, in which wit and absurdity create a special connection with the reader. Its sociability and

sympathy allow the readers to laugh with characters instead of laughing at them. Sterne's novel is a comedy, in which the failure of interpretation and an absurd inability to achieve understanding play a central role. His characters are often narrow-minded and silly; yet they want to look smart and witty. However, when these characters make mistakes, play tricks, or simply look foolish, the readers are encouraged to look at such behavior with empathy, laughing and enjoying the narration without trying to judge.

Sterne uses benevolent laughter to draw his readers to acknowledge all the ambiguities and flaws in humanity. This benevolent humor encourages readers to engage in an inner conversation – to compare their own attitudes and actions with those of the characters and thus generate a better understanding of themselves and the world. The narrator's descriptions of characters' hobby-horses, which he uses to refer to the ruling passions, are harmless and gentle, and they do not imply condemning or ridiculing maliciously. An analysis of passages presented below demonstrates that Sterne's humor and comedy play many important roles – they build a social connection with the reader, expose and attract attention to human flaws to reflect on them and eradicate them, as well as simply make the audience laugh to enjoy themselves and take pleasure in reading.

Sterne reflects on the role of the English climate in creating whimsical eccentrics. In one of the passages, when Tristram is about to begin describing Uncle Toby's' character, he suddenly begins reflecting on the causes that made this man the way he is. Tristram's predecessors note that "there was great inconstancy in our air and climate," and "it is this which has furnished us with such a variety of odd and whimsical characters" (63). According to these people, it is the English weather that is "the true and natural cause that our Comedies are so much better than those of France, or any others

that either have, or can be wrote upon the Continent" (63). Based on these ideas, Tristram makes his own conclusions about the role the weather plays in the unique English humor and character:

> …this strange irregularity in our climate, producing so strange an irregularity in our characters, – doth thereby, in some sort, make us amends, by giving us somewhat to make us merry with when the weather will not suffer us to go out of doors, – that observation is my own; – and was struck out by me this very rainy day, March 26, 1759, and betwixt the hours of nine and ten in the morning. (64)

Tristram is assured that it is the weather that taught English people to engage in fantasy, "sensible and insensible," and express themselves eccentrically without the fear of being judged (539). In this way, Tristram explains his family's eccentricity, humor, and the pursuit of their hobby-horses with the English weather. Besides creating a comic effect, this reflection on English weather creates sympathy and sociability because English readers, for whom discussing the weather is part of the social etiquette, will inevitably see themselves in these passages. With moments full with satire and wit, *Tristram Shandy* has ascertained that it is a difficult novel to understand. The characters produce multiple connections and conversation through the act of laughter.

Furthermore, the focus on characters' hobby-horses produces a unique humorous effect that would make readers laugh. For instance, Walter and Toby see everything in terms of their hobby-horses, and anytime their ruling passions are encountered, there is misunderstanding and a lapse in communication. One of the most vivid examples of this comic approach is the passage when Walter believes that the problem is a bridge not for Uncle Toby's fortifications but for his son's nose (53). More importantly, Walter's hobby-horse gives away his single-minded commitment to one goal – the collection of knowledge, which is his sole pursuit and the cause of his many comic troubles.

Walter Shandy's obsession with small bits of information results in the fact that he pays attention to minor things without noticing truly important ones. This approach to consolidating the knowledge and constant attempts to explain the world are the causes of many absurd and fully humorous situations the author describes. For example, Walter becomes the cause of comedy when he assures Yorick in an extremely serious and solemn manner, "that there is a North-West passage to the intellectual world. . . — The whole depends, added my father, in a low voice, upon the auxiliary verbs, Mr. Yorick. Had Yorick tread upon Virgil's snake, he could not have been more surprised" (246).

Sterne shows how a tragedy for Walter from public to domestic transposition can become excellent irony and comedy for readers. Walter's knowledge is totally distanced from the reality in which he lives, which also produces the humorous effect. He dwells on the role of Christian names, the conception and birth process, noses, development of human character, political systems, population issues, traffic distribution, and many other unrelated things, and in none of them is Walter an expert. He builds theories that cannot be applied in the real world, and his logic is so perverse that one cannot take this character too seriously. Walter's obsession with information makes him suffer errors, disappointment, and confusion, as he cannot come to terms with the reality of his life. Believing that an honorable name and a big nose are what make a person happy and successful in life, Walter is shocked when his son is born with a squashed nose and, because of the priest's mistake, given the name Tristram. Tristram's Uncle Toby, in turn, also falls pray to his own hobby-horses, and he is undoubtedly the most comic embodiment of the hobby-horsing and false association of ideas. He is a former soldier who, like many other veterans, is rather nostalgic and sentimental about his younger days

in the military service, and he develops a fanatical preoccupation with everything related to military matters. He is especially interested in fortifications, about which he constantly reads and speaks. In this way, everything Toby does, thinks, sees or hears is inevitably associated with his obsession. For example, during the passage in which Dr. Slop speaks about the usefulness of forceps during deliveries, Toby seems to have little interest in what the doctor actually means and instead expresses the wish that the man "had seen what prodigious armies we had in Flanders" (108).

In a similar absurd situation, when Walter learned the sad truth about his son's nose, he asks Toby, "did ever a poor unfortunate man, … receive so many lashes?". Toby replies, "The most I ever saw given…was to a grenadier, I think in Makay's regiment" (174). All conversations Toby has with his family, sensations he experiences and even his love affair remind him of his hobby-horse, which makes for wonderful comedy. One can assume that former military servants reading this novel would see themselves in Toby, laugh with him, and think about their own nostalgia about the past.

Walter and Toby experience communication problems because of the inability to understand and accept each other's hobby-horses. Each of them is preoccupied with his own thoughts and interests, constantly speaking about them in all possible situations. For Toby, everything comes down to military operations, sieges and arms, whereas for Walter, there is no better topic for discussion than philosophy and theoretical knowledge. These differences and inability to meet on an intellectual level create multiple comic situations throughout the novel. For example, every time Walter begins reflecting on some philosophical problems, Toby whistles Lilliburlero to express his disinterest.

Similarly, Walter repeatedly voices his condescending attitude to his brother's obsession with war:

> My father, as you have observed, had no great esteem for my uncle Toby's hobby horse, – he thought it the most ridiculous horse that ever gentleman mounted, and indeed unless my uncle Toby vexed him about it, could never think of it once, without smiling at it, – so that it never could get lame or happen any mischance, but it tickled my father's imagination beyond measure. (137)

Reading these passages, we may assume that there cannot be brothers more different than these two, yet their differences are also a source of the genuine laugh and smile that make readers closer to them.

Interestingly, although both Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy are so severely influenced by their ruling passions that prevent effective communication, their good natures allow them to get along. In one of the passages, Tristram describes how after Walter insults Toby's hobby-horse, his brother

> … Looked up into my father's face, with a countenance spread over with so much good nature; – so placid; – so fraternal; – so inexpressibly tender toward him; – it penetrated my father to his heart: He rose up hastily from his chair, and seizing hold of both my uncle Toby's hands as he spoke: – Brother Toby, said he, – I beg thy pardon; forgive, I pray thee, this rash humour which my mother gave me. – My dear, dear brother, answered my uncle Toby, rising up by my father's help, say no more about it; – you are heartily welcome, had it been ten times as much, brother. (81)

Possibly, Sterne uses these characters to show that despite all differences, people can live in harmony with each other by taking everything with a smile. Sterne highlights that because language is an imperfect tool to convey information and emotions, benevolence of feelings should play the central role in communication, and this benevolence is inseparable from humor, sociability, and conversation.

It is generally believed that Sterne's benevolent humor is due to the description of Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy, whose good-natured personalities contribute to the most

human and tolerant sentimental comedy. Descriptions of Uncle Toby often referred to his good-nature, either when he responded to his brother's criticism or looked into Widow Wadman's eye "with twice the good nature that ever Galileo looked for a spot in the sun" (351). He was generally such a good and benevolent fellow that, according to the author, it was impossible not to want "to come and take shelter under him" (259). Furthermore, Uncle Toby's benevolence is clearly reflected in his attitude to poor Le Fever. Like a generous and committed Christian, Toby offers all possible assistance and emotional support to the man, and even though his efforts are often comic, his genuine concern is obvious. One can suggest that Uncle Toby's humanity and sentimentalism make all his mistakes and hobby-horses so likable. By creating this character so kind and benevolent, Sterne certainly created good humor, without any sign of aggression, criticism, or arrogance.

Although Walter Shandy is far less kind and good-humored compared to his brother, his concern for Toby prevents readers from judging him. A careful analysis of Walter's character shows that although he is much more controversial and unpredictable than his brother, his flaws and oddities are still surprisingly humane and cannot but incite smile in readers. Thus, one may note that characters in the novel are the central source of benevolence and good humor, and it is because of their love and compassion, the readers laughs with them, not at them. As stated by Tristram, Walter was

> …frank and generous in his nature, – at all times open to conviction; and in the little ebullitions of this subacid humour toward others, but particularly toward my uncle Toby, whom he truly loved, – he would feel more pain ten times told (except in the affair of my aunt Dinah, or where a hypothesis as concerned) than what he ever gave. (81)

Another source of humor in the novel is the false association of ideas that put characters into embarrassing and often absurd, yet amusing situations. For example, Tristram's father wound a clock once a month on the same day he shared intimacy with his wife. That clock and intimacy went together in woman's mind, and although she "could never hear he said clock wound up, – but the thoughts of some other things unavoidably popped into her head – and vice versa" (16). This association cannot but produce a humorous effect, especially given Walter's reply on his wife's question. This situation is even more comic because of the readers' ignorance of events, which in turn stem from Sterne's approach to the narration. The lack of proper context that hinders perception creates humorous associations, and the use of a fictional reader who asks, "Pray/ what was your father saying?" adds to the absurdity of the situation (13).

> Pray, my dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock? – Good G – ! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time, – Did ever woman since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question? (13)

In some way, the characters' sexual deficiency reflects their overall inability to understand the world around them, and it puts him into even more detached, yet amusing situations. Walter seems to know very little of the sexual life, as he is more concerned with philosophy and knowledge rather than feelings. He is the slave of the routine and apparently perceives his sexual life only as a way to conceive a child. Moreover, intimacy with his wife is no more than a marital duty for Walter, which can be proved by the fact that he associated it with other small and unpleasant duties. Thus, he "gradually brought some other little family concernments to the same period, in order, as he would often say to my uncle Toby, to get them all out of the way at one time, and to be no more plagued and pestered with them the rest of the month" (16). Naturally, such an attitude to

intimacy cannot but incite benevolent laugh in readers, some of whom may see themselves in this unfortunate and insecure man.

Moreover, there are repeated suggestions that Walter Shandy may be not the real father. In the beginning of the novel, Tristram announces that he was born on November 5, 1718, and adds that "to the æra fixed on," it "was as near nine calendar months as any husband could in reason have expected" (6). Attentive readers who noted that Tristram was conceived in the first week of March can suspect that Walter's wife may not have been a faithful and honorable domestic goddess. Although being quite banal, this detail certainly adds humor to the novel by making readers laugh at Walter's unawareness. This laugh, however, is neither malicious nor humiliating because the audience sympathizes this unfortunate man.

Uncle Toby's sexual relations, or rather a lack of them, also add humor to the novel. His mysterious wound in the groin leaves the readers, as well as the female characters of the novel, to wonder whether he is actually impotent. Sterne does not provide the answer to this question; nevertheless, readers are given delightfully comical pictures associated with Toby's wound. Possibly, it is because of his injury, he is ignorant and unable to communicate with the opposite sex, and, given Toby's obsession with war, he rather displaces his feelings upon fortifications and battles that he knows so well. In one of the passages, Uncle Toby acknowledges his inability in understanding and courting a woman and declares that he would rather participate in a battle than try building romantic relationship: "I wish I may but manage it right, said my uncle Toby; – but I declare, Corporal I had rather march up to the very edge of a trench" (355).

We may read that sympathy and benevolence are the key characteristics of this comic and conversant novel. Despite the fact that Sterne makes his characters narrow-minded, foolish and unfortunate, he endows them with many humane, attractive features that incite sympathy in readers. For example, although Walter and Toby are both obsessed with their hobby-horses and unable to communicate effectively with other people, they are surprisingly benevolent and kind, which make readers laugh with them, not at them. Possibly, another reason for benevolent laugh and sociability created by Sterne is his ability to make readers see themselves in characters' misfortunes and flaws. Absurdity and satire characteristic of this novel only highlight the absurdity of the world readers live in and induce the audience to reflect on the complexity and ambiguousness of the reality. It is important to note that subversions of satire are flexible, which suggests the many sided possible readings of both eighteenth-century and modern readers.

Like his uncle, Tristram also has some sexual problems that put him in a humorous position. As already noted, the main character was born with a crashed nose, and the author ensures that readers perceive a distinct sexual and genital connotation in his remarks (142). Walter, for example, questions a great family's ability to survive an "uninterrupted succession of six or seven short noses" (143). Moreover, as if this adversity was not enough, young Tristram got a mysterious injury, possibly being made impotent by a falling window sash. Further hints at Tristram's sexual deficiency can be noticed throughout the novel. For example, in one of the passages, the protagonist experiences some problems with his "dear Jenny" and reflects on "what had not passed" (23). In this way, Tristram shares the same sexual problems his father and uncle have, which make the family's story look even more absurd and amusing.

Thus, the failure of interpretation is the primary source of humor in Sterne's novel. In some way, this approach to creating a comedy can be compared to that of Cervantes, as both authors sparingly used characters' inability to understand each other as the source of comedy. The benevolent humor Sterne embraces because it does not criticize diversity and differences, but acknowledge them as part of the human communication.

Despite the barriers that misunderstanding builds between characters, Sterne makes a surprising conclusion. He highlights that different people can still laugh together and take pleasure in their differences, which is illustrated in the passage when Walter Shandy and Corporal Trim share a book about military engineering. Despite the major misunderstanding occurring between characters, the author describes how "the company smiled," which demonstrates Sterne's conviction that differences are not troublesome but pleasant (237).

Misunderstanding as a source of good humor comes not only from characters but also from the author-reader relationship. As already noted, the narration is the key source of comedy and conversation as it undermines readers' awareness or reality and makes them question every word they read. Sterne, through his Tristram character, focuses disproportionately on trifles and constantly interrupts the narration to speak about the seemingly unimportant events. His digressions, however, although looking rather redundant, serve the major role of creating the duality, the tension between what is expected and what is offered. This approach, in turn, creates a humorous effect when a reader realizes the duality and laughs at one's initial misunderstanding of the situation. Clearly, not every reader can accept the fact that Sterne fools him through his intricate

use of language and metaphors, yet those who learn to take pleasure in solving linguistic conundrums will certainly enjoy author's rich jokes.

Sterne's humor stems from the interaction between Tristram and readers' hobby-horses. Tristram's hobby-horse is the habit of telling complex and digressive stories, whereas readers' hobby-horse is the obsession with clear and traditional narrative structures. Tristram seems to be perfectly aware of his readers' preferences, and he pokes fun at their constant desire to organize the world around them and judge it according to the set criteria. The playful and witty language between Tristram and the reader is the form of a joke, and it takes the readers on the unexpected journey across Shandy's family life. In this way, Sterne seems to highlight the fact that no one including readers is exempt from hobby-horses, so the only thing that can be done is simply to laugh at them. Everyone is a human being, hints the author, and everyone has one's ruling passions. Sterne suggests, in other words, that humans will never know each other fully in an intellectual sense only but that they must seek this knowledge through sympathy and conversation.

2.4 Satire and the Reader of *Tristram Shandy*

Tristram Shandy demonstrates one of the most complicated and multifaceted narrative structures of the eighteenth century. Throughout its long passages, Sterne constantly engages in playful dalliance with readers, making them challenge their conceptions and use a great deal of mental conversation between what they read and how they conceive as the true meaning. For many readers, this process may prove to be rather frustrating and irritating because Sterne's narrative lacks the conventional coherence and a clear structure that could lead readers through the story. It is extremely challenging to

choose whether to surrender to the writer and blindly believe everything he says or rather try to use one's own critical thinking to make sense of this literary conundrum**.** It seems that Sterne reveals that conversation find itself, not only in dialogue with others, but also in the readers' internal consciousness as a possible way to question their variant preconceptions about the world.

By circumscribing the present and past, Sterne liberates his narration from the signs of decidability like chronology which ultimately has always invited readers to skepticism. Instead of letting the story unfold gradually from the very beginning and describing events in the chronological, coherent order, the author unceremoniously teases and irritates the audience. He jumps back and forth in time and presents the events in small bits so that it is extremely difficult to create the full picture. At the beginning of the story, Sterne pauses to explain the readers his position concerning the narrative and give a valuable advice as to how the book should be read. Sterne is aware that his manner of telling the story will probably annoy his readers; yet, he determined to continue no matter what and only wants the audience to be more patient:

> …if you should think me somewhat sparing of my narrative on my first setting out, bear with me, and let me go on, and tell my story my own way: or if I should seem now and then to trifle upon the road, or should sometime put on a fool's cap with a bell to it, for a moment or two as we pass along, don't fly off, but rather courteously give me credit for a little more wisdom than appears upon my outside; and as we jog on, either laugh with me, or at me, or in short, do anything, only keep your temper. (10-11)

Sterne's contradicting ideas concerning the reader's role can be difficult to understand at once. On the one hand, the narrator acknowledges that his readers are totally dependent on him because they would not be able to understand the story without his generous explanations. He is assured that unlike his free and open-minded understanding of the

literature, readers' perception of the narrative is much more blindfolded and conventional; therefore, they cannot take full advantage of what he offers to them.

On the other hand, Sterne makes it perfectly clear that without trying to apply the guess, a reader would not understand what is happening before his eyes. He invites his readers "to think as well read" (57) and give up their habits of skipping through the pages without giving them much thought. He wants to convince the readers that they should not rely on their literary skills but rather try to read through the lines and get free from their preconceptions and conventional imaginative approaches. A simple observation of events is not enough to understand Sterne, just as it is not enough to make sense of the world around. Literary experience, according to Tristram, is something deeper than cognitive perceptions and understanding; it is built through the inner turmoil and mistakes that readers make. It seems that readers would be mistaken and deluded by his story so that they would eventually learn to think for themselves.

Sterne refuses to limit his story to the conventional epic or romantic frameworks because this would result in creating a convenient reality for his readers – a simple and realistic world and single angle to the world. There are three main approaches Sterne uses to make readers confront themselves and their established beliefs. The first and most apparent one is the novel's narrative form. Sterne plays with his audience by manipulating their expectations of the structure they got used to in previous books.

Sterne induces his readers to think, question, and make decisions for themselves, thus engaging them in two types of a conversation – the author-reader conversation and an inner dialogue between readers' own attitudes and beliefs and their desire to perceive the meaning. A method of composition that presents, contradictory, though reconciled,

"digressive" and "progressive" (1.22.81). Thus, for example, in one of the passages, the narrator allows readers to choose whether they want to follow the narration further of simply skip though the chapter to proceed to the rest of the book. He notes, "I can give no better advice, than that they skip over the remaining part of this Chapter; for I declare beforehand, 'tis wrote only for the curious and inquisitive" (8). In this way, readers are faced with a dilemma – to continue reading to understand the story better or try to make sense of the narration without this part.

Narrative structure and serialization presented in Sterne's novel reflect the literary trends of his time and the shift in sociocultural patterns. In this relation, Marshal Brown notes that the literary tradition of the 1760s as an era of great unpredictability on its characters and new experimental forms. In essence, narrative opens up conversation with readers on the changing cultural trends and invites them to find their place in this new reality. Sterne ensures that readers feel embarrassed for not being able to find the central narrative line, yet he encourages them to do so by analyzing the string of digressions and seemingly unrelated events that lead to the protagonist's birth. When readers look at the title, they took for granted that it is the story of the Tristram Shandy, and this idea makes them hostages of their own misconceptions. The Shandean narrator wants to demonstrate that the lives of all characters are interrelated and that the story of one man cannot be told without describing multiple related events, conversations, and experiences. He makes it clear that it is naïve to begin a story with the protagonist's birth without at least hinting at the endless chain of causes that resulted in his coming into being. In this way, Sterne educates his readers by failing to meet their expectations and making them question their vision of the story.

Readers are encouraged not to make hasty conclusions based on what they see but try to put themselves in a similar situation and live it through, thus getting free of the prejudices and bias. For example, Yorick, who has been the object of Tristram's humor, readers should understand Tristram's generous motives and eliminate skepticism and laziness to benefit from reading. While making jokes and insulting his audience, he teaches them to forget about their preconceptions and injured vanity and try to give in to new experiences.

The narrator engages his audience into the imaginative play by using multiple meanings of words that confuse, entrap inexperienced readers and creates comic joy. The narrator uses words that induce readers to make false conclusions as they are often left in a state of an impasse because of not being able to decide what meaning they should choose and what the author actually hinted at. When Sterne notes that Dr. Slop was making a bridge for Tristram's nose, which has been crushed "flat as a pancake to his face" (218), Sterne clarified that by the nose he actually meant this part of the face and nothing else. Yet, this does not prevent readers from guessing what else the narrator might have hinted at. One needs to admit that although this approach leads to some confusion and misunderstanding, it offers a significant degree of freedom to the readers by giving them an opportunity to train their imagination.

By employing an unconventional narrative structure, Sterne plays with ambiguity of the language and human perceptions. He teaches readers that their multiple perspectives on the story formed as a result of questioning and imaginative efforts are more useful compared to the traditional understanding of literature. Sterne also makes readers conscious of the uncertainty surrounding their own lives and demonstrates them

how easy it is for a talented narrator to puzzle them and affect their judgments. Sterne teaches that by learning to control our misconceptions, we may gain insight into the true state of things or at least try to understand the position and experience of other people. In other words, by having an internal conversation between our perceptions and our misperceptions, Sterne teaches readers, both sentimental and skeptical, how to converse and debate.

CHAPTER III
THE MAN OF FEELING

3.1 Sentimental Narration of *The Man of Feeling*

Mackenzie like Sterne, engages in conversation with readers by playing with the sentimentalist style and genre. *The Man of Feeling* was written at the age of sentimentalism in 1771, and it is traditionally viewed as one of the most vivid representations of this literary genre. The novel follows a protagonist named Harley, who decides to leave his rural estate to travel to London, where he hopes to ask a favour of a baronet. However, his quest for financial advancement and deep emotions ends not the way Harley was expecting. As the narration progresses, the protagonist meets many disadvantaged, disengaged personalities, whom he sincerely sympathizes. Through these encounters, Harley develops into a typical sentimental individual who emotionally reacts to the troubles, miseries, and misfortunes of the different situations, which are designed to enrich his personality and shape his social awareness and morality. Thus, *The Man of Feeling* is a simple sentimentalist novel with the straightforward message designed to incite readers' emotions. Yet, it is difficult to understand this story, or to appreciate the protagonist and values he endorses through a twentieth-century outlook. A brief background of the eighteenth-century sentimental perspective provides a framework for viewing why the sentimental reading overlook, rigidly all other possible forms of readings. To understand how *The Man of Feeling* appeals to the readers' sentiments, we

should first explore the features that make this novel the ultimate representation of the genre.

It is traditionally believed that *The Man of Feeling* is the typical sentimental work. Undoubtedly, Mackenzie depicts typical sentimental characters with their exaggerated sensitivity and empathy for human emotions. According to Csengei, the novel's protagonist is "over-sentimental" and emotional, indulging in emotions so powerful that they seem inappropriate and even foolish for a contemporary reader (952). For eighteenth-century readers, however, this emotionality was a sign of morality and honour, which was cherished and valued in both men and women. Mackenzie perfectly reflected these social and artistic trends of his times, incorporating such unfailing characteristics of sentimentalism as crying and weeping, sympathy, pathos, and excessive emotionality.

A closer look at some of the novel's characteristics will help to put it within the sentimentalist framework. The first and most apparent feature of the novel that allows attributing it to the sentimental genre is its fragmentary structure. Written in a mood of fragmentary, each chapter in the novel illustrates an isolated and emotional scene in which feelings and moral truth are exhibited to the reader. As explained in the novel, these are "recitals of little adventures, in which the dispositions of a man, sensible to judge, and still more warm to feel, had room to unfold themselves" (263). Together, these scenes of Harley's encounters with unfortunate people during his travels, his emotional reactions to their stories, and the end of his unsuccessful journey encourage readers to fill the gaps in the narration and build personal emotional bonds with the protagonist. The tableaux are derived from the remains of a manuscript that a parish curate, who clearly does not have sympathy for Harley's feelings, has torn into wadding for the gun. The so-

called *manuscrit trouvé* technique is designed to create the emotional intensity by making readers believe that *The Man of Feeling* is the real historical document with real people described in it.

Mackenzie have fragmentary narration, which was so popular at the age of sentimentalism. The novel starts with a narrator who, as can be inferred from the text, found "a bundle of little episodes, put together without art" in a curate's possession (viii). By the time readers come to the end, however, there is someone else narrating protagonist's story, a mysterious person who calls himself Harley's friend but about whom readers know nothing. In addition, the large part of Harley's story is comprised of accounts he hears second-hand and readers sometimes found themselves to be removed from the action. While this technique was not popular in a sentimental novel that is written to stir the emotions, we may assume that the novel suggests more than what it seems to suggest from the first reading. On the contrary, it helps to place emphasis on the character and his emotions and individual scenes rather than the story as a totality. By attracting readers' attention to dramatic moments with intense emotions, the story focuses on Harley's sensibility, excluding unimportant events and descriptions.

The next feature that allows attributing *The Man of Feeling* to the sentimental genre is the main character himself. The archetypal sentimental character of the eighteenth century was benevolent and overly emotional, engaging excessively in syrupy sentimentalism and refraining from any disgraceful words or actions (Csengei 952). Harley in *The Man of Feelings* is the typical sentimental character, who is benevolent, overly emotional, sensible, and kind. What Harley lacks in money and land he makes up for in genuine feeling, as this man is the eponymous man of feeling. No matter whom this

character encounters—whether a prostitute or a swindler—he feels genuinely sympathetic for these people and builds emotional ties with them. For him, feelings are so elusive and otherworldly that they cannot even be expressed in words:

> It ne'er was apparell'd with art,
>
> On words it could never rely;
>
> It reign'd in the throb of my heart,
>
> It gleam's in the glance of my eye (243)

It was considered normal for the eighteenth-century readers to see sentimental characters weeping and crying, as these utter representations of emotions vividly demonstrated people's ability to sympathize and experience complex emotions as noted by Csengei (952). When meeting unfortunate and disadvantaged people, Harley cannot hide his emotions, "He put a couple of guineas into the man's hand: 'Be kind to that unfortunate' – He burst into tears, and left them" (66). In a scene when Harley meets a depressed girl who lost her lover, Harley cries a lot, and his tears help the girl regain her ability to feel again, "Do you weep again? said she; I would not have you weep: you are like my Billy; you are, believe me; just so he looked when he gave me this ring; poor Billy!" (64).

More importantly, it seems like Harley's emotionality does not leave anyone intact, "except the keepers, there was not an unmoistened eye around her" (64). Therefore, Harley's emotionality is not only an expression of emotions but also a social tool aimed to unite people and encourage humanism and high morality, which were so valued in the sentimental era. A later scene on the graveyard, where Harley tried to console the little girl, is also full of tears and excessive sentimentality: "Harley kissed off her tears as they flowed, and wept between every kiss" (209). It seems that there is not a

person to whom Harley does not feel sincere sympathy through the course of the novel, as every story of an unfortunate man or woman incites tears from this sentimental character.

Although contemporary readers do not cry over sentimental novels anymore and do not understand the over-abundance of the scenes of crying and weeping in the eighteenth-century literature, these representations of emotions were in fact extremely widespread (Csengei 952). The main characters of sentimental novels were frequently moved to tears, which were recognized as a positive moral value in both men and women. Crying and weeping were acceptable and even desired in a wide array of situations, and they were widely used by writers to demonstrate their characters' powerful emotions and moral qualities (953). Moreover, not only characters were moved to tears but also readers were expected to cry as they read the story. Crying, in this situation, was believed to demonstrate the individual's ability to sympathize and adequately respond to the principles of sentimental morality and sociability.

The Man of Feeling is full of dramatic, tear-jerking scenes that allow creating an intense and even theatrical atmosphere (Alegre 9). When Harley leaves his country estate, his aunt says goodbye to him "with a tear on her cheek," while his servant Peter is "choaked with the thought, and his benediction could not be heard" (27). It seems that every character Harley meets cries, which may look odd for today's readers but was normal for the eighteenth-century readers. In every scene of crying, characters are depicted as impoverished and suffering creatures that desire sympathy and support. For example, the narrator "As he [Atkin's father] spoke these last words, his voice trembled in his throat; it was now lost in his tears! He sat with his face half turned from Harley, as

if he would have hid the sorrow which he felt" (151). As has been previously noted, the protagonist himself cries excessively throughout the novel. As the narrator observes, "A blush, a phrase of affability to an inferior, a tear at a moving tale, were to him [Harley], like the Cestus of Cytherea, unequalled in conferring beauty" (19). Harley vividly sends the message of the movement of sensibility and of the sentimental literature particularly – that to experience powerful emotions is a sign of a good person.

In *The Man of Feeling*, like in any sentimental novel, tears are the means of connecting with people, a tool that helped to build emotional ties, and ultimately conversational communication between readers to become better persons through sympathy and compassion. "He had by this time clasped my hand, and found it wet by a tear which had just fallen upon it. – His eye began to moisten too – we sat for some time silent…" (269). Similarly, in a scene where Harley meets a girl suffering because of her lover Billy, Harley's tears allow creating an emotional bond: "My Billy is no more! Said she, do you weep for my Billy? Blessing on your tears! I would weep too…" (63). More importantly, for sentimental writers such as Mackenzie, to fulfill the literary purpose of the novel and incite sympathetic emotions in their readers, tears served as an important tool. In line with the sentimental tradition, Mackenzie constructed as many tearful scenes and situations, which were expected to elicit tears from sympathetic readers. Yet, this is not the only way the novel invites us to read it.

As in *Tristram Shandy*, fragmentation in *The Man of Feeling* resolves itself into a textual conversation, making readers engage in some consequential communication. This fragmentation, which is achieved with the help of the *manuscrit trouvé* technique, can be perceived as both a typical sentimental technique as well as an approach to distance

readers from the protagonist and introduces skepticism. The structure of the novel told from the third-person perspective, guarantees the protagonist remains opaque and inscrutable. Mackenzie uses complicated structure with several narrators and scattered chapters that is atypical of simple sentimental novels. Thus, the writer used three different narrators, who make the story look subjective and biased. These narrators comprise the Editor, whose opinion is given in the introduction, commentary, and footnotes; the narrator who calls himself a Harley's friend, and the unnamed narrator who came across the manuscript by accident. As result, readers' attention is drawn to the complexities of the narration instead of unique Harley's experience and readers would eventually confronted whether the narrator made parody of sentimental narrative.

As stated earlier, fragmented narration used by Mackenzie may be viewed as both a means of inciting sympathy and a tool used to engage the reader in inner conversation and reflection. If we look at the novel closely, we can see that the narration includes multiple observations of Harley that serve to distance the reader from him. For example, rather that helping readers plunge into Harley's mind and understand his inner world, Mackenzie incorporates perplexing descriptions such as the one of Edwards whose "white locks behind crossed the brown of his neck with a contrast the most venerable to a mind like Harley's" (178). This description points to the distance between the old man and Harley, suggesting that their minds are different. In another puzzling description, Mackenzie compared Harley's mind with "the mirrors of the ladies" (44), which makes the reflection look better than it is in reality. In this way, rather than simply having a chance to get in Harley's head, readers have to make sense of such puzzling descriptions, which inevitably distance them from the story.

Furthermore, the fragmented and unpolished structure of the book leaves readers in doubt. Inconsistent and difficult-to-follow narration functions as a set of isolated illustrations rather than segments of one story. At the beginning, readers learn about the narrator and a priest, who go hunting somewhere in the country. In this introductory chapter, the author makes readers believe that the story presented later is authentic and true, derived from "a bundle of papers" belonging to a real person (vii). In the later chapters, the writer tells Harley's story, from a brief description of his life and financial difficulties to the unfortunate journey to London and back. Instead of further describing Harley's misfortunes, Mackenzie jumps to an unconnected story of a man named Mountford, which, in my opinion, distracts readers from the initial narrative. The novel ends with a tragic scene of Harley's death and unknown narrator's reflection on his story, which seem shallow and stereotyped to uncover the protagonist's character.

Thus, on the one hand, Mackenzie raises many pressing issues throughout the story, attempting to understand whether keeping a moral stance is virtuous or foolish, whether pity is a humane act or a narcissistic gesture that makes people proud of themselves, and whether or not to oppose the challenges of the harsh reality. On the other hand, because of the fragmented and complicated structure that does not fully reveal the character and his inner world, none of these questions are adequately addressed. This means that although *The Man of Feeling* incites readers' genuine thought and interest, none of the questions raised in the story is fully resolved, which makes the experience unsatisfying.

Similarly, in *The Man of Feeling*, the ostentatiously fragmented structure of the text encourages readers to follow the story selectively and discontinuously, and it seems

that Mackenzie gives them the desired experience but fails to encourage personal judgment. At the same time, however, he delicately hints at the danger of empathetic, sentimental reading by using the character of Emily Atkins. Emily was educated from "plays, novels, and those poetical descriptions of the beauty of virtue and honour, which the circulating libraries easily afforded" (112). Such education has fostered idealized, romantic expectations of the world and men, which eventually made Emily fell pray of the rake because he resembled "the warm ideas of an accomplished man" (115). Through Emily's character, the author shows readers that identifying oneself with the fictional characters or "exercising sensibility without judgement" is a dangerous thing (Shields 72). Thus, to my mind, fragmentariness of the narration in *The Man of Feeling* is both an explicit reference to sentimental principles and a tool to show the artificiality of sentimental values.

However, fragmentariness may as well pursue another goal, just as in *Tristram Shandy* – to make readers think, to engage in a meaningful conversation with the text and its hidden connotations. Unstructured narration may pose a challenge to readers who got used to authors explaining every word. Nonetheless, those who are ready to give up their preconceptions are invited to engage in an intellectual, meaningful conversation with the author and with one's own attitudes to literature and life in general. Mackenzie not only encourages readers to sympathise with the character but also questions their actions as well, and build the connection between the story and their lives. Using a conventional structure would prevent the author from encouraging readers to think, and would enable readers to converse.

3.2 Satire and Irony: A Skeptical Interpretation of Mackenzie

In the late eighteenth century, there were debates about the role of literature, and skeptical readers would therefore challenge the intellectual insight not only about religion and theory, but also about whether sentimental literature might reform the public sphere. *The Man of Feeling* must be read within this debate about literature in culture. Mackenzie's novel has attracted fewer literary analyses over the centuries, probably because of its apparent undecidability. Even today, critics seem to prefer to pin it down either as earnestly sentimental or ironically parodic. In trying to pin it down along the lines of this binary divide, however, readers miss the possibility that Mackenzie, like Sterne, was asking his readers to engage in a mental conversation about the relationship between their impulse to empathy and their impulse to parody.

According to Hume, emotions serve both as objects and as means of inciting feelings and stimulating moral evaluation. British sentimentalism of the eighteenth century was based on the same principle – novels both offered fictional emotions and aimed to evoke true conversations and genuine feelings in readers. It was the time of the huge literary prints and wide circulation, so book copies were shared, read, and discussed in big groups, which contributed to both skepticism and sociability. By imagining some emotional stories, sentimentalist writers stimulate readers to engage in public conversations, to compare and substantiate their views, and generate a deeper understanding through communication. Through this process, readers develop attitudes to moral dilemmas and ethical problems. While there certainly were true stories able to evoke sincere compassion and sympathy, fiction was nevertheless the most suitable tool to attract readers' attention to certain moral issues and social values. Reading fiction stimulated readers' imagination and allowed them to imagine how they would act in a

similar situation and what emotional experience they would have. In this way, eighteenth-century sentimentalism was the perfect means of developing ethics and social consciousness.

Many eighteenth-century readers would likely have been deeply moved by the abundance of tearful scenes in *The Man of Feeling*, which helped them exercise their sensitivity and indulge in sentimental emotions. Some critics even argue that *The Man of Feeling* was so successful at that period "due to its capacity to move and affect deeply" (Censgei 952) and such capacity would have not possible with compelling conversation and presentation of different facets of sentimentality and scepticisms. The suffering and distress the protagonist faces throughout the novel, either during his unfortunate journey to London or in his failed relationships with Miss Walton, unfailingly provoked readers' sensibility that was believed to help them respond adequately to emotional situations in actual social interactions. One needs to understand that in the age of sentimental fiction, readers were required to respond with tears and identify themselves with characters' emotions and grief in order to demonstrate that they possess innate virtue.

Harley is a weak person, which points to the fact that emotions are of little use in his contemporary society – impersonal, expanding empire with different values and needs. As the story advances, Harley himself experiences a growing awareness that his benevolence and emotionality are rare and that only "a few friends ...redeem my opinion of mankind' (269). At the deathbed, the protagonist admits that the principles he embraces cannot survive in this harsh reality: "The world is a general selfish, interested, and unthinking, and throws the imputation of romance or melancholy on every temper more susceptible than its own" (269-270). By questioning the relevance of Harley's

sensitivity and making it look slightly inadequate, Mackenzie addresses the social implications of sentimentalism and its moral values. Harley may be noble and benevolent but there is no place in the modern society for the sentimental country gentleman with his ideals.

Mackenzie clearly realised the limitation of fictional emotions and their inability to transmit realistic and genuine ideas. Possibly, this limitation of sentimentalist literature induced Mackenzie to try an unconventional approach to narration and employ satire and irony to make conversations more lively and meaningful. Like Sterne, Mackenzie expressed his skepticism about sentimental fiction and its ethical value; therefore, his unusual approach to connecting with readers is fully justified. As a result, Mackenzie's novel is impossible to comprehend without engaging in sceptical reading. In this case, sceptical reading refers to "a prestigious approach to texts, sceptical reading might take mild or severe forms, with readers' attitudes ranging from inquisitiveness about the factual status of a work to profound suspicion of the writer's intent" (20). Loveman suggests that sceptical reading focuses on "controversial biographical, political or religious interpretation of the text" (20). On particular interest, sceptical reading establishes conversation in the sense that *The Man of Feeling* compelled readers to both accept sentimentalism and question its relevance.

Some critics argue that Mackenzie was not a sentimental writer, especially if compared to Laurence Sterne, and that his *The Man of Feeling* cannot be viewed as a typical sentimentalist novel (Alegre 1). To support this claim, critics note that Mackenzie's representation of sentimental feeling is too theatrical and that elaborately hidden irony and satire point to the author's mockery of sentimental values. Overly

complicated structure and satirized characters also seem to contradict the principles of the eighteenth-century English sentimentalism. In this way, *The Man of Feeling,* although sentimental in its form and content also offers comprehensive social interaction on elaborate parody of sentimentalism.

Some critics claim that the novel is an elaborate joke and satire on syrupy emotions, which is mistakenly considered the best example of the sentimental movement. As William Burling asks, "Is Harley, the hero, an ideal man or a fool? And is the novel sympathetic to sentimentalism or opposed to it?" (136). *The Man of Feeling* follows the standard requirements of the sentimentalist genre. However, a closer look at some of the sentimental features suggest that the author may have satirized the sentimental values and provided the hidden meaning behind the overly complicated structure of the narration, excessiveness of tears and theatrical emotions, as well as characters' extreme emotionality.

Although the tone never gets close to the point where the novel would become an explicit satire against the sentimental values, some of the passages seem rather ironic. Irony is most vividly seen in his attitude towards the manuscript, as the emotional and elevated story of Harley becomes the curate's "excellent wadding" (vii). Apparently, the down to earth and plain curate cannot understand the dramatism of Harley's life and sympathize his emotional experiences, he admits, "I began to read them, but I soon grew weary of the task; for, besides that the hand is intolerably bad, I could never find the author in one strain for two chapters together: and I don't believe there's a single syllogism from beginning to end" (vii). As the unnamed "editor," observes, however, he gets "a good deal affected" by the sentimental story (viii). Mackenzie supports that only

genteel, well-educated, and prosperous males with refined feelings and the ability to sympathize can appreciate Harley's feeling.

The elements of irony can also be seen in the story about Harley's old friend Edwards. who returns home as a poor, injured veteran, with emotional trauma and inability to forget the horrible things he experienced: "Oh! Mr Harley, had you see him, as I did, with his hands bound behind him, suffering in silence, while the big drops trickled down his shrivelled cheeks, and wet his grey beard, which some of the inhuman soldiers plucked in scorn!" (196). Besides his wartime experiences, Edwards faces many challenges at home, one of which is the death of his loyal dog Trusty. When the man tells the moving story of the dog, Harley is "bathed in tears," while Edwards "dropped one tear and no more" (187). At this point, Harley's inability to restrain his grief seems inappropriate and even ridiculous, especially if compared to his friend's composure. This lachrymose, typically sentimental response highlights the need to differentiate between the appreciation of virtue from virtuous behaviour. Instead of taking Edwards as an example of stoicism and moral strength, Harley prefers to bear the fruits of his experience, "let me hold thee to my bosom; let me imprint the virtue of thy sufferings on my soul" (199). Mackenzie hints at Harley's inability to apply his empathy and benevolence in practice. Instead of trying to use his apparent virtues to win the heart of Miss Walton or improve his financial position, Harley prefers to engage in syrupy sentimentality that does him no good.

Although Harley possesses all the qualities that were valued in the sentimental era, they also make him defenceless and even pathetic, especially when people take advantage of his naivety. In a chapter ironically called "His Skill in Physiognomy," the

protagonist meets a card-sharper, whom he misidentifies as an honourable gentleman: "He observed […] a fresh-looking elderly gentleman, in conversation with a beggar […] [The gentleman] was just then expressing his compassion for the beggar, and regretting that he had not a farthing of change about him. At saying this he looked piteously on the fellow" (85-86). Being too credulous, Harley does not suspect that a man so benevolent and sympathetic may cheat him. Although Mackenzie in this chapter focuses on the sad consequences of being naïve like Harley, his depiction of the cardsharper satirizes protagonist's credulity, for "physiognomy was one of Harley's foibles" (86). Being confident in his skills and his acquaintance's decency, Harley fails to notice that the man is shamelessly tricking him. Even when Harley learns the truth, he still refuses to believe that someone with a face so honest could do be so deceitful. The scene with the sharper thus clearly satirizes and mocks sensitivity and benevolence of the protagonist.

Pathos and the theatrical atmosphere apparent in the scene of Harley's death offer further evidence of irony and satire. Undoubtedly, this solemn occasion was designed to incite powerful sympathetic emotions in the eighteenth-century readers, but it might seem artificial and unconvincing to some readers. This scene is so stereotypical and so widely appearing with variations in all kinds of sentimental literature that it would literally fail to appeal to genuine sympathy. It seems that it is the tears to be elicited that are highlighted, and not Harley's sufferings or deep religiosity. Instead of fighting for his ideals and doing something worthy admiration, benevolent and kind-hearted Harley prefers to accept that he is not interested in the worldly matters. He tells his friend: "There is a certain dignity in retiring from life at a time, when the infirmities of age have not sapped our faculties. This world, my dear Charles, was a scene in which I never much delighted. I was not

formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the dissipation of the gay…" (268). Being a sufferer at the hands of human cruelty and selfishness is typical for a sentimental character, but this scene suggests that Harley over-indulged in his feelings and emotions.

Mackenzie engages in conversation with readers on problems typical for the sentimental literature of the eighteenth century, such as sympathy and sensibility. In addition, such characteristic features of sentimentalism as fragmentariness, over-abundance of scenes of crying and weeping, as well as archetypal sentimental characters, which were all exemplified by the textual evidence, make this novel a perfect representation of the genre. On the other hand, *The Man of Feeling* incorporates several features not characteristic of its age, which can be interpreted as anti-sentimental. Mackenzie's ironic tone and elaborately hidden satire are heard through the whole novel, expressing themselves in accounts of characters' actions and emotions. In addition, fragmentariness of the narration seems to complicate the plot instead of making it plain and simple, which contradicts the principles of the sentimental genre. Contemporary readers might be inspired to discuss ambiguous passages of the text and provide their own interpretations of the story, and to engage in emotional experience and test their ability to sympathize.

While some critics analyze *Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling* by separating their didactic spirit, or treating either side as the "winning" side. This is a false dichotomy as these novels neither strictly sentimental nor strictly skeptical, but they offer two sides perpetually in conflict. Sterne and Mackenzie balance sentimentalism and skepticism in a way that make them complementary rather than competitive.

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