

Sentimentalism, the Shandean Counterpart
of Self-Enclosure:
A Study of *A Sentimental Journey*

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Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick* (1768) is, perhaps owing much to its title, generally regarded as a leading work of the Sentimental movement in eighteenth-century England. Sentimentalism in the so-called "age of sensibility,"¹ to begin with, does not simply indicate a predominance of feeling over reason but has a moralistic shade of meaning, as Ian Watt summarizes:

'Sentimentalism' in its eighteenth-century sense denoted an un-Hobbesian belief in the innate benevolence of man, a credo which had the literary corollary that the depiction of such benevolence engaged in philanthropic action or generous tears was a laudable aim.²

Sterne affects himself a sentimentalist when he asserts that his design in *A Sentimental Journey* is "to teach us to love the world and our fellow-creatures better than we do"³ Despite the author's bombastic words, however, sentimentalism neither thoroughly pervades the whole work nor infiltrates every cell of the "sentimental" traveler's system. Yorick, Sterne's persona in this work, is disposed to set up a balance between contrastive elements in various situations; his sentimentalism, accordingly, is not so much the keynote of his whole

character as the counterpart of the contrary mode within himself—that is, an inclination to self-enclosure. I will examine in this article what the sentimental traveler's sense of balance signifies and how, in practice, he keeps a balance between self-enclosure and sentimentalism.

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A Sentimental Journey, although much less confused and confusing in its time-structure than *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-67), still retains capriciousness on the narrator's side, requiring reorganizing efforts on the reader's side. First of all, it is often the case that two scenes of absolutely different levels are juxtaposed so closely as to leave the reader momentarily puzzled. In writing the preface to his journey, for instance, Yorick, riding by himself in a chaise, grows absorbed in examining the purpose of traveling abroad:

—But there is no nation under heaven abounding with more variety of learning—where the sciences may be more fitly woo'd, or more surely won than here—where art is encouraged, and will so soon rise high—where Nature (take her all together) has so little to answer for—and, to close all, where there is more wit and variety of character to feed the mind with—Where then, my dear countrymen, are you going—

—We are only looking at this chaise, said they—Your most obedient servant, said I, skipping out of it, and pulling off my hat—We were wondering, said one of them, who, I found, was an *inquisitive traveller*—what could occasion its motion.¹

The connection between the two paragraphs may be not readily understandable. Yorick's question at the end of the former paragraph—

“Where then, my dear countrymen, are you going”—is no doubt put to unspecified English people within the realm of Yorick’s imagination, but in the latter paragraph his “dear countrymen” all at once become palpable, actually answering Yorick’s question! The trick, once discovered, is quite simple: two English travelers who happen to be standing near the chaise, give the answer to the sentimental traveler, wrongly guessing that Yorick puts the question to them. The former paragraph reveals Yorick’s imaginary realm, while the latter reveals the actual realm; they are connected without any proper explanation about the change of level.

Usually, the tone of the imaginary realm rises higher and higher until at last the reader is suddenly pulled back to the actual. The heightened tensions slacken unexpectedly enough to produce some comical atmosphere. The digressive tale of the notary, which Yorick is reading in the paper, is interrupted at its climax, too:

... the notary held up the point of his pen betwixt the taper and his eye—

—It is a story, Monsieur le Notaire, said the gentleman, which will rouse up every affection in nature—it will kill the humane, and touch the heart of cruelty herself with pity—

—The notary was inflamed with a desire to begin, and put his pen a third time into his ink-horn—and the old gentleman turning a little more towards the notary, began to dictate his story in these words—

—And where is the rest of it, La Fleur? said I, as he just then enter’d the room. (pp.105-06)

As the tale is not complete, Yorick raises his eyes from the fragment

to ask La Fleur, his servant, where the rest is. Daniel George, a literary critic, may possibly have such a scene in mind when he points out "quick cinematographic transitions"⁵ as one of the pleasures we find in *A Sentimental Journey*. The reader, who is ready to listen to the old gentleman's story the notary must have written down, perhaps stumbles over the abrupt change of level, recognizing belatedly that "And where is the rest of it, La Fleur?" are the words not of the gentleman in the fictional realm but of Yorick in the real realm.

Such contrasts are apparently aimed at taking the reader by surprise. The "deliberate intention of shocking the reader," as Walter Allen justly observes, is "of fundamental importance in Sterne."⁶ The author's mischievous nature is shared by Yorick as well as by Tristram Shandy, who in his "Life and Opinions" dares to declare: "... if I thought you was able to form the least judgment or probable conjecture to yourself, of what was to come in the next page, —I would tear it out of my book."⁷ Changing arbitrarily the level of scenes, the sentimental traveler intends to shock the reader by the contrast. His intention works to good purpose, effecting a double shock: whereas we become surprised, in the first place, to find an unexpected discrepancy in level between two adjacent scenes, what strikes us more is that the discrepancy, crucially definite as it surely is, could remain so inconspicuous as to be likely to almost escape our notice. The scene in which Yorick is absorbed in his deep thought and the scene in which Yorick, coming out of the absorption, starts communicating with other people are juxtaposed so naturally and smoothly, without any artificial conjunction, that the contrast somehow gives us the sense of continuity as much as discrepancy. Nothing is more surprising than

the fact that imaginary and actual realms can lie so continuous to each other.

A Sentimental Journey abounds with various kinds of contrasts, some of which are more elaborately prepared, so elaborately that it becomes no longer easy to draw a sharp line between contrastive elements. There is the chapter, for example, entitled "THE DESOBLIGEANT." The basic meaning of the French word is "unsociable." Since the preceding chapter describes Yorick's uncharitable deeds to the Franciscan monk, the reader reasonably expects that "THE DESOBLIGEANT" will be concerned with Yorick's nature. Although it soon turns out that the French word, in this case, does not indicate any abstract concept but refers only to the common name of a chaise holding but one person, the simple revelation still leaves something to be desired. The sentimental traveler explains the circumstances under which he comes to see the chaise:

Now there being no travelling through France and Italy without a chaise—and nature generally prompting us to the thing we are fittest for, I walk'd out into the coach yard to buy or hire something of that kind to my purpose: an old Desobligeant in the furthest corner of the court, hit my fancy at first sight, so I instantly got into it.... (p. 8)

When Yorick says he is "finding it [the Desobligeant] in tolerable harmony with my [his] feelings" (p. 8), we recognize that our original guess that the title of the chapter will have something to do with Yorick's psychology was nearly, even if not exactly, right. For the meaning of the word "Desobligeant" becomes twofold here: it is a single-seater chaise admirably adapted for Yorick, who is *desobligeant*. The

word, endowed with two meanings which are confused, can pass in two different realms at the same time.

Things can be contrasted only when each identity is clearly established, but an intrinsic quality of Yorick's world is the flexibility or substitutability of identity. There is working, in many cases, some magnetism between the contrasting elements; it has the effect of endowing a small misunderstanding with great significance. In visiting Monsieur Le Count de B**** to ask him for help to get a passport, Yorick happens to introduce his name as the same name of the King of Denmark's jester in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The Count misunderstands Yorick's explanation, identifying the sentimental traveler with Shakespeare's fictional personage. Yorick, since he can by no means convince the Count of his true identity, becomes obliged to accept his false identity to gain a passport. The point here is whether the Count's misunderstanding is thoroughly an absurd one. Indeed, no great gap between the two Yoricks is found, even without requiring Tristram Shandy's information that our Yorick is perhaps blood-related to Shakespearean Yorick.⁸ A "fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy,"⁹ a phrase given to the jester by Shakespeare, could be fairly used to describe our sentimental traveler. While the traveler himself looks displeased at the ignored gap between reality and fiction, we recognize that our sentimental traveler may well be compared to the Shakespearean Yorick, and that to juxtapose or confuse contrastive elements is a tendency not only for Yorick but for the entire Yorickian world. The plain irony caused by an apparent discrepancy often leads to the more profound, complex irony in that world.

Everything tends to show a hazy, rather than sharp, outline in A

Sentimental Journey; if Yorick adheres to distinction, the effect does nothing but disclose his queerness rather than any punctiliousness. In the preface to his journey Yorick sets forth his study of travel abroad by classifying people into eleven kinds, such as "Idle Travellers," "Lying Travellers," "Proud Travellers," and so on. The classification, notwithstanding Yorick's scientific, rigid tone, apparently has no reasonable basis whatever. (Needless to say, an idle traveler can be lying and proud as well.) The more serious Yorick affects to be, the more ridiculous his classification looks, as ridiculous as Walter Shandy's odd theories. To cite another instance, the hotel master at Paris, making a complaint about Yorick's evening tryst with a young woman, maintains that he should not have minded if the tryst had occurred in the morning. Yorick, while the master's suspicion offends him, becomes so interested in the fact that the time difference is so important, as to remark in a carefree manner, "I like a good distinction in my heart" (p. 96). Instead of clearing himself from the charge of adultery, his attention easily moves to a minor distinction, just as he becomes displeased to see his true identity mixed up with a Shakespearean fictional personage when he should willingly suffer anything to get a passport. These examples merely indicate Yorick's inclination to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel: disengaged from urgent needs in real life, he likes to study, with a sober look, trifling differences in matters of little consequence. No matter how scrupulously he sometimes distinguishes between trivial things, the whole Yorickian world, which mingles and absorbs those things, makes Yorick's attitude look absurd.

In most cases Yorick himself prefers the mixed to the unmixed,

leaving matters ambiguous to defining them, and rocking from side to side to standing straight. He finds utmost delight in an exchange of very delicate gestures, which, according to Alan D. McKillop, Sterne considers to be the "psycho-physical crossroads of life."¹⁰ The following scene with Madame de L*** may be too subtle for the reader to trace with patience:

I fear, in this interval, I must have made some slight efforts towards a closer compression of her hand, from a subtle sensation I felt in the palm of my own—not as if she was going to withdraw hers—but, as if she thought about it—and I had infallibly lost it a second time, had not instinct more than reason directed me to the last resource in these dangers—to hold it loosely, and in a manner as if I was every moment going to release it, of myself.... (p. 19)

The main reason he admires Madame L*** is that she has a "guarded frankness" (p. 16), an oxymoron which manifests Yorick's ideal virtue. He cannot help being impressed by such people as remain in a betwixt-and-between status, like the beggar in Montriul, in whom "beggary and urbanity, which are at such variance in other countries, should find a way to be at unity" (p. 36); or the old French officer at the Opera comique, "whose manners are softened by a profession which makes bad men worse" (p. 56); or dwarfs who are "by force of accidents driven out of their own proper class into the very verge of another" (p. 59); or the Chevalier de St. Louis, who is reduced to selling *patés* but still keeps his dignity; or Maria, who lives wandering between real and illusional realms. Taking it for granted that "there is nothing unmixed in this world" (p. 88), the sentimental traveler becomes attached to those who ramble between one realm and another.

In the sentimental traveler's world, to remain unstable between discrepant modes attains, paradoxically, some sort of stability; contrastive elements are confusingly juxtaposed in order to acquire such Yorickian equilibrium. Refraining from going too far in one direction, Yorick tries to keep balance between extremes, as he warns himself in growing anxious about his passport: "A heart at ease, Yorick, flies into no extremes—'tis ever on its center" (p. 77). His way of associating with women is an apposite illustration: constantly in love with women one after another, Yorick ultimately keeps faithful to Eliza, his true love. When the fair *fille de chambre* visits him in his room and loses balance by clumsily lifting both feet at the same time, he helps the girl, who is "off her center" (p. 93), to raise up herself. Neither a genuine lecher nor a pure moralist, Yorick takes a middle-of-the-road course.¹¹ With regard to attractive women, he usually expends considerable efforts to follow this course; but in other situations, he reacts rather mechanically. According to Yorick's observation, the Franciscan monk is about seventy years old, judging from his hair, and no more than sixty, judging from his eyes. The sentimental traveler then concludes without hesitation that the monk is "*certainly* sixty-five" (p. 5, *Italics Mine*) simply because "Truth might lie between." If Yorick sinks too deep in thought, a sort of servomechanism pulls him back in the opposite direction, to the actual, visible landscape, so that he can ultimately take the middle-of-the-road course. Thus the Yorickian equilibrium is maintained not by a stationary state but by an oscillatory state.

II

Now that we have acknowledged as a premise that the sentimental

traveler is inclined to pursue balance, and that his equilibrium is attained only when he swings between two contrary modes, his sentimentalism can be adequately regarded as the counterpart of some contrary mode within himself, rather than as his unconditional, primary quality. The question to be discussed now is what quality in Yorick counterpoises his sentimentalism: to put it more plainly, what kind of inhumane, indifferent, anti-sentimental state induces Yorick to appreciate a "belief in the innate benevolence of man."

If we inquire more closely into Yorick's present life, which may appear full of exciting, enjoyable events one after another, it soon turns out that on one side of his principal balance there hangs an overwhelming isolation. Undertaking a solitary journey, away from home, Yorick cannot but speculate about the loneliness attendant upon traveling abroad:

... from the want of languages, connections, and dependencies, and from the difference in education, customs and habits, we lie under so many impediments in communicating our sensations out of our own sphere, as often amount to a total impossibility. (p. 9)

Yorick, on his journey, meets only the casual passersby; even La Fleur, who is closest to Yorick, never seems to understand him. His isolation prompts his deep sympathy for the Desobligeant, which is "standing so many months unpitied in the corner of Mons. Dessein's coach-yard" (p. 14); for the Franciscan monk, who "abandon'd the sword and the sex together, and took sanctuary, not so much in his convent as in himself" (p. 21); and for the caged starling, which sings a song for liberty—"I can't get out"—in an unknown language in Paris. Whereas he likes to see and flatter beautiful women and enjoys brilliant society

circles, the sentimental traveler, when he is alone, looks at his own overwhelming isolation reflected in these artless objects of his sympathy.

Yorick talks pathetically about those who are isolated as if they were all victims of the indifferent world; and yet, at least in the case of the sentimental traveler himself, the overwhelming isolation results from internal rather than external factors. His frequent, great emphasis upon the influencing power of circumstances makes Yorick look more fatalistic than he really is. When he addresses the "great Governor of nature," saying, "...thou hast made us—and not we ourselves" (p. 94); or talks about the man who first transplanted the grape of Burgundy to the Cape of Good Hope, "...it did not depend upon his choice, but that what is generally called *chance* was to decide his success" (p. 12); or says in excuse for breaking his promise to see Madame de R****, "...I am govern'd by circumstances—I cannot govern them" (p. 78) (reminding us of Tristram Shandy's famous words, "Ask my pen, —it governs me, —I govern not it"¹²), Yorick cannot but sound thoroughly passive and deterministic. The fact is, however, his innate desultoriness prevents him from exerting his own will or reason, and that his resignation to God, chance, circumstances, or whatever, becomes virtually nothing but a varying expression of his own sentiment. The uncontrollably epiphanic nature of sentiment somehow causes Yorick to feel himself always influenced from without.

Yorick's sentiment, which, in fact, holds the key to the elucidation of his overwhelming isolation, is stimulated by intuition and realized by impulse. No matter how speculative he pretends to be, and how frequently he reflects on past days, Yorick cannot become a true empiricist with profound wisdom. His intuitive manner in judging and

impulsive manner in acting tend to bring, inevitably, many problems afterwards, and still he becomes none the wiser for his accumulated bitter experiences. His way of hiring La Fleur as a servant most appositely illustrates the pattern of his manner. On his first meeting with the young fellow, Yorick does not fail to admonish himself that it is his "weakness" to be "apt to be taken with all kinds of people at first sight" (p. 31); and yet, his own warning does not work effectively and the sentimental traveler chooses to remain an intuitive physiognomist, deciding (as always) to hire La Fleur simply on impulse:

When La Fleur enter'd the room, after every discount I could make for my soul, the genuine look and air of the fellow determined the matter at once in his favour: so I hired him first--and then began to inquire what he could do.... (p. 31)

When it becomes clear that the new servant can do nothing but beat a drum and play a march or two upon the fife, Yorick is obliged to confess, "... [I] can't say my weakness was ever so insulted by my wisdom, as in the attempt [to hire La Fleur]" (p. 31). We should esteem his frankness to admit his failure as it is, but some tentative regret expressed here is still insufficient to amend his intuitive and impulsive manner.

The reason why the sentimental traveler cannot eventually reform his hit-or-miss manner is that, at the bottom of his heart, he does not seriously regard it as weakness to be amended, but rather prefers letting matters take their course. His sentiment most characterized by elasticity, Yorick does not feel embarrassed to change his attitude. If his impulsiveness leads him to choose such situations as soon prove

unfavorable to himself, Yorick comes to see each situation in a different light. from a different point of view, instead of simply regretting his erroneous choice in vain. So, gradually satisfied with La Fleur as a faithful partner, for all his incapability as an efficient servant, Yorick goes back on his previous words, maintaining, "... I had never less reason to repent of the impulses which generally do determine me, than in regard to this fellow..." (p. 32). In the same way, his journey as a whole changes its purport, too, as occasion demands. He sets out on his sentimental journey from impulse alone: a gentleman¹³ sneeringly insinuates that Yorick, who has never been to France, does not have the right to talk about France, and the quick-tempered parson immediately packs up his baggage and leaves for France even without a passport. Nevertheless, on arriving at France, Yorick no longer remembers the odious gentleman who sneered at him and sets his mind on enjoying his journey in his own way, ultimately making a solemn declaration, a part of which repeats Sterne's purpose in writing *A Sentimental Journey*: "... 'tis a quiet journey of the heart in pursuit of NATURE, and those affections which rise out of her, which make us love each other—and the world, better than we do" (pp. 84-5). Not that Yorick forces himself to palliate and justify his original misjudgment or recklessness, but that he can quite naturally switch his sentiment without being bound by his past impulsive motive.

The sentimental traveler bases his judgments not on the objective standards (cultivated through his past experiences and universal recognition) but on a subjectivism immediately affected by his present, specific situations; it is from the self-reliance involved in the subjectivism that his overwhelming isolation principally arises. As Yorick says,

"When man is at peace with man, how much lighter than a feather is the heaviest of metals in his hand!" (p. 4); the weight of a feather or a metal is not definite but changeable by the mood in which he feels it. While he is alone, Yorick finds in the Desobligeant something congenial to himself; but once he starts looking for a chaise which can hold Yorick and Madame L*** together, the chaise becomes completely different to him: "... 'twas a churlish beast into whose heart the idea could first enter, to construct such a machine; nor had I much more charity for the man who could think of using it" (p. 25). A fixed standard in the outer world, if any, is far less significant than his subjective sense of value, which, depending solely upon his desultory sentiment, is seldom shared by other people. It matters little for the sentimental traveler whether his view is, objectively seen, rational or not. He will neither admit the autonomy of the outer world nor accept any objective standard of judgment. After all, the outer world does not so much alienate Yorick as Yorick neglects the world.

As a man of curiosity, Yorick's concern is less about what is actually there than about what he sees there in using his own imagination. In this light, Tristram Shandy has good reason to compare Yorick to Don Quixote.¹⁴ Just as the knight of the woeful figure takes windmills for outrageous Giants, and a simple inn for a great castle, so our sentimental traveler is likely to fictionalize reality as he pleases. His unique forte for discovering something interesting in any given situation lets him declare:

I pity the man who can travel from *Dan* to *Beersheba*, and cry.
'Tis all barren—and so it is; and so is all the world to him who

will not cultivate the fruits it offers, I declare, said I, clapping my hands cheerily together, that was I in a desert, I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections—If I could not do better, I would fasten them upon some sweet myrtle, or seek some melancholy cypress to connect myself to—I would court their shade, and greet them kindly for their protection . . . (p. 28)

It is interesting to compare these words with Frederick R. Karl's observation on Primrose, the sentimental hero of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766):

. . . he [Primrose] demonstrates, not how to grapple with changing phenomena, but how the individual must develop attitudes toward change. That is, through sentiment or feeling, one learns only how to *accept* adversity, not how to fight it. . . Much of the passivity implicit in the viewpoint of the sentimentalists can be attributed to an acceptance of what is.¹⁵

Though Karl's observation is, to a certain degree, applicable to Yorick, Yorick's sentiment or feeling shows a much more positive vitality than Primrose's; our sentimental traveler does not only accept adversity as voluntarily as Primrose but also, taking one step further, almost involuntarily turns everything, adverse or not, to his taste. It is true that Yorick adopts a hit-or-miss manner in judging matters, but, in reality, there is no "miss" in his life, for he successfully recovers from any bad choices.

Though the sentimental traveler takes "translation" as one of his special skills,¹⁶ and Mark Loveridge, a critic, calls him "a great reader, an inveterate interpreter," insisting that *A Sentimental Journey* is "as

much about the problems of reading as *Tristram Shandy* is about those of writing,"¹⁷ Yorick is a creator rather than a mere translator-reader-interpreter. His contact with Madame L*** offers a good example:

Having, on first sight of the lady, settled the affair in my fancy, 'that she was of the better order of beings' —and then laid it down as a second axiom, as indisputable as the first. That she was a widow, and wore a character of distress—I went no further; I got ground enough for the situation which pleased me . . . (p. 23)

Yorick suddenly becomes anxious to have more information about the lady—what is her name, her family's name, and from where she came. Quite inquisitive as he is, the sentimental traveler eventually dares not ask the lady such matter-of-fact questions, fearful of ruining his subjective world. What Yorick describes is nothing but his subjective world, which is self-enclosed, self-contained, and isolated from the outer objective world. It is not such extrinsic elements as "the want of languages, connections, and dependencies" or "the difference in educations, customs, and habits" but the intrinsic element of his own solipsistic tendency that makes the sentimental traveler feel, "we lie under so many impediments in communicating our sensations out of our own sphere, as often amount to a total impossibility." While he is bent on constructing his own microcosmic world, Yorick remains in the state of self-enclosure, experiencing an overwhelming isolation.

III

Now we enter upon the final stage of investigating Yorick's balance

between self-enclosure and sentimentalism. The traveler's overwhelming isolation, which fundamentally results from his own solipsistic tendency, impels him in the opposite direction to appreciate sentimentalism, a "belief in the innate benevolence of man," for the extroversive, sociable mode of the latter is supposed to compensate for the introversive, unsociable mode of the former. In declaring that he has been in love almost all his life, the sentimental traveler talks about the benefit of love:

...I hope I shall go on so [being in love], till I die, being firmly persuaded, that if ever I do a mean action, it must be in some interval betwixt one passion and another: whilst this interregnum lasts, I always perceive my heart locked up—I can scarce find in it, to give Misery a sixpence; and therefore I always get out of it as fast as I can, and the moment I am re-kindled, I am all generosity and good will again; and would do any thing in the world either for, or with any one, if they will but satisfy me there is no sin in it. (p. 34)

Yorick tries to be in love, to be openhearted, to be generous, to have good will—in sum, to be sentimental—so that he can get out of his self-enclosure. To what extent, then, is his attempt successful? Is his self-enclosure appropriately remedied by sentimentalism?

Sentimentalism, helping Yorick come out of his self-enclosure, wears the color of what is called Shandeism, that most remarkable spirit of Tristram Shandy's family. Quite ambiguous as its definition is, Shandeism is a quixotic way of life, pursuing a hobby-horse in good earnest. Its function is to accelerate a kind of metabolism, that is, to vitalize human lives and give some sort of order to them, as Tristram

asserts:

True *Shandeism*, think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely thro' its channels, and makes the wheel of life run long and chearfully round.¹⁸

Yorick often employs the same physiological expressions that Tristram uses to describe Shandeism in order to explain his own sentimental feelings. After finishing the first dinner in France, the sentimental traveler makes himself at home: "...I felt every vessel in my frame dilate—the arteries beat all chearily together, and every power which sustained life, perform'd it with so little friction..." (p. 4): and after parting from Madame L***: "...the pleasure of the experiment has kept my senses, and the best part of my blood awake, and laid the gross to sleep" (p. 28). It is curious that both Tristram and Yorick try to explain in physical terms what is spiritual or mental. Be that as it may, Shandeism, taking various forms, helps people establish their identities, and sentimentalism can be regarded as Yorick's version of Shandeism. Just like the odd philosophizing for Walter Shandy, the construction of a battlefield for Uncle Toby, and the desultory way of writing for Tristram, sentimentalism is a Shandean means of self-expression for Yorick.

Unpracticality being one of the most striking features of Shandeism, Yorick's sentimentalism is displayed, in most cases, only within the realm of imagination, and it suddenly withers and vanishes in the actual realm. Little wonder that this principle provides a ground for those who call the sentimental traveler a hypocrite, for Yorick certainly

discloses inconsistency on many occasions, thinking one thing and doing quite another. Satisfied with the first dinner in France, for example, the sentimental traveler grows absorbed in a most generous and benevolent feeling:

When man is at peace with man, how much lighter than a feather is the heaviest of metals in his hand! he pulls out his purse, and holding it airily and uncompress'd, looks round him, as if he sought for an object to share it with . . . (p. 4)

Despite Yorick's admiration of being openhearted, however, the timely appearance of the Franciscan monk asking for a contribution immediately makes Yorick shut his heart as well as his purse. Yorick's malicious attitude to the monk in the actual realm cannot help spoiling the generosity he has just declared within the imaginative realm. In another scene, the sentimental traveler becomes so impressed by the sad episode of a poor man and his beloved dead ass that he cannot help reflecting alone in a chaise, "Shame on the world! . . . Did we love each other, as this poor soul but loved his ass— 'twould be something" (p. 41). While these sonorous words are fresh from his mouth, Yorick starts abusing the postillion who drives the chaise at full speed: "The deuce take him and his galloping too—said I—he'll go on tearing my nerves to pieces . . ." (p. 42). Yorick hates the postillion's reckless driving not because, right after listening to the heart-warming relation between the man and his ass, he cannot stand seeing the horses now given an unfeeling lash under his very eyes, but because he just wants to relish an aftereffect of his sentimental feeling without any physical disturbance. Whereas he can be most sympathetic toward the dead ass in the realm of imagination,

the sentimental traveler remains utterly indifferent to the living horses in the actual realm. His noble thought, in this manner, often loses its authenticity owing to his next action; as a result, Yorick may be branded a hypocrite.

Yorick's sentimentalism, unless it entirely vanishes, becomes subject to some deterioration in the actual realm. In examining his frequent inconsistency, we must admit, to do him justice, that sudden change of his mood is not always from generosity to meanness; but the converse case, by which Yorick contrives to impress us and himself with the better side of his nature, is susceptible to a hidden intention of a quite different kind. To give a case in point, Yorick's heart cannot but smite him the moment the Franciscan monk leaves him alone: "...I would have given twenty livres for an advocate—I have behaved very ill; said I within myself..." (p. 8), and he actually does apologize to the monk afterwards for his former mean behavior. It is doubtful, however, whether he could become so ready to apologize if he did not have a secret intention to win the favor of Madame L***, who turns out to be a friend of the monk's. In another episode, after a trifling dispute with the hotel master at Paris, Yorick determines, by way of retaliation, to buy nothing from the peddler who is introduced to him by the master. While, on seeing the Grisset, Yorick's hard heart immediately melts into generosity, this case again leaves it open to question whether he could become so kind if it were not a lovely young girl but a shabby old man who entered his room. The sentimental traveler's kindness to charming women seldom fails to be tainted, more or less, by his philogyny; a sensually oriented element involved in it cannot help making his sentimentalism look cheap and

shallow, at least cheaper and shallower than he likes it to be considered.

Yorick's sentimentalism, when it survives in the actual world, takes the form of vanity as often as of philogyny. His manner of giving alms to the poor in Montriul, for instance, is too pompous and ceremonious to win the reader's admiration. In the beginning, Yorick insists with plausible modesty that it is not necessary to set down the motives for giving alms, for "...they will be register'd elsewhere" (p. 35), implying God's omniscience. As soon as he faces the poor and starts the "first publick act of my [his] charity in France," however, Yorick behaves as if he were himself God. Having only eight sous for sixteen poor people, he gives one sous to a humble man, who "instantly withdrew his claim" when he realizes Yorick's finances; two sous to a man, who "generously offer'd a pinch [of snuff] on both sides of him"; and another two sous to an old soldier, who "had been campaign'd and worn out to death in the service" (p. 36). In this way, Yorick somehow assumes an air of Almighty God on the Last Judgment, evaluating the poor one by one. Being increasingly intoxicated with this act of charity, he becomes so self-conceited and self-contented that his sentimentalism looks faded again.

Because Yorick's benevolence deteriorates in actual life, illusion naturally overlaps with the substance of his sentimentalism; the impracticality latent in Shandeism makes an illusion of Yorick's sentimentalism. When the traveler talks of illusion, of its significance as a means of his getting on in his life, we perceive that it could be the description of sentimentalism:

Sweet pliability of man's spirit, that can at once surrender itself to illusions, which cheat expectation and sorrow of their weary moments! — long—long since had ye number'd out my days, had I not trod so great a part of them upon this enchanted ground: when my way is too rough for my feet, or too steep for my strength, I get off it, to some smooth velvet path which fancy has scattered over with rose-buds of delights; and having taken a few turns in it, come back strengthen'd and refresh'd . . . (p. 87)

These words, while reminding us of the function of his sentimentalism, also correspond exactly with Sterne's appreciation of Shandeism:

...if God, for my consolation under them [my miseries], had not poured forth the spirit of Shandeism into me, which will not suffer me to think two moments upon any grave subject, I would, else, just now lie down and die—die . . .²⁹

Behind Yorick's notion of illusion as well as Sterne's of Shandeism there lies a pessimistic view of real life: reality is too harsh for the traveler to keep looking at straight. Illusion helps the traveler get on in his life by making him become disconnected with the real life. Just as he needs sentimentalism in order to refrain from doing mean actions, Yorick commits himself to illusion for a relief from sordid reality, as the art of self-defence. Sentimentalism and illusion, which barely save Yorick from unbearable desperation, are one and undivided, for sentimentalism is a form of Shandeism, whose real substance is illusion. What is called sentimentalism in the imaginary realm is nothing but illusion in the actual realm.

Because he tends to be self-enclosed and isolated in the actual realm, Yorick attempts, in compensation for it, to become openhearted and

benevolent at least in the imaginary realm. The title of the work is suggestive of the situation: loneliness or forlornness implied in the word "journey" is dexterously modified by the adjective "sentimental." Just like the adjective additionally attached to the noun, Yorick's sentimentalism is supposed to work originally as a mere supplement for his solipsistic tendency. And yet, it comes to encroach upon his life more and more until, finally, it becomes difficult to tell which on earth is the more primary in Yorick, self-enclosure or sentimentalism, as difficult as to explain the difference between the sentimental traveler and Shakespearean Yorick, or to figure out what the title of a chapter, "THE DESOBLIGEANT", exactly signifies. In this manner, two contrary, seemingly incompatible modes—self-enclosure and sentimentalism—are introduced into Yorick and reconciled, making a peculiar Yorickan equilibrium. Pessimistic though he may be down at the bottom, Yorick so successfully keeps balance between self-enclosure and sentimentalism as to look quite stable and carefree in everyday life. It is even inadequate to call him a hypocrite on the ground that he becomes benevolent in the imaginary realm but malevolent in the actual; to be a hypocrite, we need to have two faces—a true face and a false one, but Yorick's two faces have both become true to him. This distinction differentiates Yorick from other sentimental characters produced in the eighteenth century. The title character of *Pamela* (1740) by Samuel Richardson, Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield* by Goldsmith, and Harley in *The Man of Feeling* (1771) by Henry Mackenzie, for instance, always remain benevolent themselves, facing the sordid, indifferent world, whereas we see within Yorick benevolence and indifference coexisting with each other.²⁰

Ordinary sentimentalism of the eighteenth century demonstrates a firm belief in the innate benevolence of man, too simple a view for Sterne to share. Yorick's sentimentalism, even if it successfully counterbalances his solipsistic tendency, can never attain superiority over it, much less to completely shatter his self-enclosure. For, paradoxically enough, the sentimental traveler's attempts to be benevolent promote his overwhelming isolation in a more complex way, by producing the irony that he can be openhearted only within his enclosed world. Observing Yorick, who can ignore the horses which are cruelly lashed right before his eyes in order to sentimentally think of a dead ass, we are obliged to recognize that the more sentimental, the more self-enclosed. Sentimentalism, Yorick's version of Shandeanism, carries with it the state of self-enclosure. To build one's own microcosmic world and become enclosed in it is the essence of Shandeanism; each person indulges himself in his hobby-horse life, instead of trying to really approach and communicate with others. Just like Walter Shandy's odd theories and Uncle Toby's military obsessions, Yorick's sentimentalism becomes the cause, as well as the result, of complete isolation.

NOTES

- 1 Northrop Frye is responsible for naming the last part of the eighteenth century by the term. Insisting that in the history of literature there is a recurrent opposition of two views of literature, that is, the view of literature as product and the view of literature as process, Frye continues to observe:

In our day we have acquired a good deal of respect for literature as process, notably in prose fiction. . . . So it seems that our age ought to feel a close kinship with the prose fiction of the age of sensibility, when the sense of literature as

process was brought to a peculiarly exquisite perfection by Sterne, and in lesser degree by Richardson and Boswell. (Northrop Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," *ELH*, XXIII [1956], 145.)

- 2 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 174.
- 3 R. Brimley Johnson (ed.), *The Letters of Laurence Sterne* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1927), pp. 159-60.
- 4 Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick* in *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick with The Journal to Eliza and A Political Romace*, ed. Ian Jack ("The World's Classics"; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 13. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the work will be from this edition and page numbers will be indicated in my text.
- 5 Daniel George, "Introduction" to Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* ("Everyman's Library"; London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1962), p. vi.
- 6 Walter Allen, *The English Novel: A Short Critical History* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954), p. 75.
- 7 Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. Ian Watt ("Riverside Editions"; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 59.
- 8 Tristram talks about the Yorick's family:
 ...the family was originally of *Danish* extraction, and had been transplanted into *England* as early as in the reign of *Horwendillus*, king of *Denmark*, in whose court it seems, an ancestor of this Mr. *Yorick's*, and from whom he was lineally descended, held a considerable post to the day of his death. Of what nature this considerable post was, this record saith not; —it only adds, That, for near two centuries, it had been totally abolished as altogether unnecessary, not only in that court, but in every other court of the Christian world.
 It has often come into my head, that this post could be no other than that of the king's chief Jester; —and that *Hamlet's Yorick*, in our *Shakespeare*, many of whose plays, you know, are founded upon authenticated facts, —was certainly the very man. (Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, pp. 18-9.)
- 9 William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, V, i. 179-80, ed. John Dover Wilson ("The Works of Shakespeare"; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 119.

- 10 Alan D. McKillop, *The Early Masters of English Fiction* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1979), p. 187.
- 11 As to Yorick's attitude toward women, William B. Piper has a more unsparing opinion than I do: "Yorick's feelings for women were almost mechanical, running high when one was present and ebbing the moment she departed." Also, Piper places Eliza on the same level with other women: "Even his eternal love for Eliza was subject to Yorick's sentimental giddiness: it ebbed when he came across some other pretty woman and flowed when Yorick was again alone." (William B. Piper, *Laurence Sterne* ["Twayne's English Authors Series"; New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1965], pp. 101-05.)
- 12 Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, p. 316.
- 13 Ian Jack notes that a "gentleman" in this case means a "manservant". (Ian Jack, "Explanatory Notes" to Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, p. 231.)
- 14 Referring to Yorick's horse as "full brother to *Rosinante*, as far as similitude congenial could make him" (Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, p. 14), Tristram continues to say,

[Yorick chose] rather to bear the contempt of his enemies, and the laughter of his friends, than undergo the pain of telling a story, which might seem a panegyric upon himself.

I have the highest idea of the spiritual and refined sentiments of this reverend gentleman, from this single stroke in his character, which I think comes up to any of the honest refinements of the peerless knight of *La Mancha* ... (Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, p. 17.)
- 15 Frederick R. Karl, *A Reader's Guide to The Eighteenth Century English Novel* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1974), p. 224.
- 16 Writing about the old French officer he meets at the Opera comique, Yorick makes a small digression:

There is not a secret so aiding to the progress of sociality, as to get master of this *short hand*, and be quick in rendering the several turns of looks and limbs, with all their inflections and delineations, into plain words. For my own part, by long habitude, I do it so mechanically, that when I walk the streets of London, I go translating all the way ... (p. 57)
- 17 Mark Loveridge, *Laurence Sterne & The Argument About Design* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 172.

- 18 Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, p. 255.
 19 R. Brimley Johnson (ed.), *The Letters of Laurence Sterne*, p. 95.
 20 Regarding the main theme of *A Sentimental Journey* as the connection between sexual attraction and the finer feelings in man and woman, Ian Jack remarks:

It is the combination of Sentiment with a sophisticated eroticism which saves the book from insipidity and makes it still a living classic in an age when Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, the most celebrated of all the imitations, has become a mere historical curiosity. (Ian Jack, "Introduction" to Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, p. xx.)

Kenneth C. Slagle is not so successful in defending Henry Mackenzie:

His use of sensibility is at once more genuine than the pawky exploitation of Sterne, more believable than the prodigal largess of tens of thousands of pounds in a season by Brooke. Sir Walter Scott's observation that Harley is "a hero constantly obedient to every emotion of his moral sense" is of key importance in understanding Mackenzie. (Kenneth C. Slagle, "Introduction" to Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1958], p. ix.)

J. H. Plumb says that the characters of *The Vicar of Wakefield* "will scarcely bear analysis." because

The good are very, very good and most of the wicked damnable; only the rogue, Jenkinson, is allowed to be betwixt and between; otherwise the heart is overwhelmingly in the right or the wrong place. (J. H. Plumb, "Afterword" to Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* ["A Signet Classic"; New York: New American Library, 1961], p. 187.)