

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-31263-9 - Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy
Wolfgang Iser
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Landmarks of world literature

Laurence Sterne

TRISTRAM SHANDY

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-31263-9 - Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy
Wolfgang Iser
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Landmarks of world literature

General Editor: J. P. Stern

Dickens: *Bleak House* – Graham Storey
Homer: *The Iliad* – Michael Silk
Dante: *The Divine Comedy* – Robin Kirkpatrick
Rousseau: *Confessions* – Peter France
Goethe: *Faust. Part One* – Nicholas Boyle
Woolf: *The Waves* – Eric Warner
Goethe: *The Sorrows of Young Werther* – Martin Swales
Constant: *Adolphe* – Dennis Wood
Balzac: *Old Goriot* – David Bellos
Mann: *Buddenbrooks* – Hugh Ridley
Homer: *The Odyssey* – Jasper Griffin
Tolstoy: *Anna Karenina* – Anthony Thorlby
Conrad: *Nostramo* – Ian Watt
Camus: *The Stranger* – Patrick McCarthy
Murasaki Shikibu: *The Tale of Genji* – Richard Bowring
Sterne: *Tristram Shandy* – Wolfgang Iser

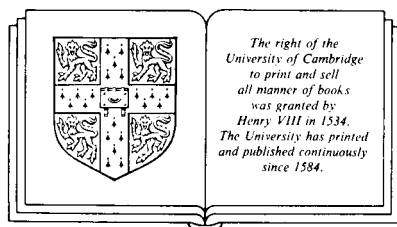
Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-31263-9 - Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy
Wolfgang Iser
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

LAURENCE STERNE

Tristram Shandy

WOLFGANG ISER

Translated by David Henry Wilson



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge
New York New Rochelle Melbourne Sydney

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-31263-9 - Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy
Wolfgang Iser
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521328074

© Cambridge University Press 1988

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1988
Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2008

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Iser, Wolfgang.

Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy / Wolfgang Iser: translated by David Henry Wilson.

p. cm. – (Landmarks of world literature)

Bibliography: p.

ISBN 0-521-32807-1. ISBN 0-521-31263-9 (pbk.)

1. Sterne, Laurence, 1713–1768. Life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman. I. Title. II. Series.

PR3714. T73184 1988

823'.6 – dc 19 87-31164

CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-32807-4 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-31263-9 paperback

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i>	vii
<i>Chronology</i>		viii
<i>Further history of Tristram Shandy</i>		xv
I Subjectivity revealed through textual fields of reference		1
1 Does <i>Tristram Shandy</i> have a beginning?		1
2 Subjectivity discovered through Locke's philosophy		11
3 Locke's philosophy as a pattern of communication		17
4 Manic subjectivity		20
5 Melancholic subjectivity		24
6 Decentred subjectivity		30
7 Wit and judgment		33
8 The discovery of communication by verbalising subjectivity		35
9 The body semiotics of subjectivity as discovery of man's natural morality		45
10 Eighteenth-century anthropology		48
II Writing strategies		55
1 The first-person narrator		55
2 Interruption		60
3 Digression		71
4 Equivocation		82

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-31263-9 - Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy

Wolfgang Iser

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi Contents

III	The play of the text	91
	1 The imaginary scene	91
	2 The games played	94
	3 The humour	106
IV	Epilogue	121
	<i>Bibliography and guide to further reading</i>	130

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-31263-9 - Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy
Wolfgang Iser
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface

My sincere thanks are due to The Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, who granted me a Fellowship that enabled me to write this book. I am most grateful for the hospitality and support given to me by all the staff and for the magnificent organisation provided by Sanford Budick. I benefited greatly from talks with other fellows, and in particular from my discussions with Stanley Cavell.

My thanks also to Cambridge University Press, and in particular to Professor Peter Stern, who first approached me with the idea for the book, and to Terence Moore, who welcomed it despite its maverick nature.

Finally, once again I am deeply indebted to David Henry Wilson for rendering my German into readable English.

For the sake of easy access, I have quoted from readily obtainable editions of Sterne and Locke: all *Tristram Shandy* references are to the Signet Classic edition, New York 1980, with an afterword by Gerald Weales, (quoted by book, chapter, page), while those to Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* are based on John W. Yalton's edition, Everyman's Library, London 1971, (quoted by book, chapter, paragraph).

*Chronology**

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 1711 | <i>Sterne's life and works</i> | <i>Related literary and historical events</i> |
| 1712 | | J. Addison and R. Steele edit <i>Spectator</i> ; David Hume born; Handel goes to London; final witch trials in London; |
| 1713 | Laurence Sterne born November 24 at Clonmel, Tipperary, Ireland, where his father, ensign Roger Sterne, was stationed; long journeys and migrations during the subsequent ten years; | Treaty of Utrecht with the famous Asiento; Denis Diderot born; Shaftesbury dies; |
| 1714 | | Tory ministry collapses after the death of Queen Anne; George I succeeds to the throne; personal union between England and Hanover; Handel, <i>Water Music</i> ; |
| 1715 | family moves to Dublin; | Louis XIV, <i>Roi du Soleil</i> dies; first excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum; |
| 1716 | | first American theatre in Williamsburg; G.W. Leibniz dies; |
| 1717 | | Maria Theresia born; Freemasonry in London; vaccination against smallpox in England; |
| 1718 | on the move again – from Bristol to Hampshire to Dublin again; | Declaration of war against Spain; Halley discovers movement of the fixed stars; |
| 1719 | | Daniel Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> ; Handel becomes director of the London opera; |

- 1720 six months with Mr Fetherston and his family near Wicklow; the miraculous escape, falling into a mill-race while the mill was in operation, and being rescued unhurt;
- 1721 Chudleigh's regiment moves again to Dublin;
- 1722 in Dublin barracks Laurence learns to read and write; taken to England, separated from his family; enrolled at school, Hipperholme, with Nathan Sharpe as his master and friend;
- 1724 learns to read and write Latin and Greek and acquires a good knowledge of classical literature;
- 1725 Jacques Sterne receives Doctor of Law from Jesus College, Cambridge;
- 1726
- 1727 Roger Sterne's regiment ordered to Gibraltar, where he is severely wounded in a dual with a fellow officer;
- 1728
- 1729 Roger's regiment sent from Gibraltar to Jamaica
- 1730 to fight a slave uprising;
- Robinson Crusoe* translated into German; opening of Old Haymarket Theatre in London; Canaletto born;
- Robert Walpole, leader of Whigs, first English Prime Minister till 1742; Watteau dies; J.S. Bach, *Brandenburg Concertos*;
- John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, dies;
- Joshua Reynolds born; Adam Smith born;
- F. G. Klopstock born; Immanuel Kant born; Paris Stock Exchange opens;
- Peter I (the Great) dies; Pope translates *Odyssey* into English; Casanova born;
- Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*; after being arrested at the Bastille twice, Voltaire goes to England;
- George I dies, George II succeeds to the throne;
- Pope, Swift and Arbuthnot publish *Miscellanies*;
- Thomas Gainsborough born; Newton dies;
- American Philosophical Society founded in Philadelphia;
- John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*;
- Catharine II (the Great) born; G.E. Lessing born;
- James Thomson, *The Seasons*;

Sterne's life and works

- 1731 Roger dies of fever at Port Antonio; his mother tries to settle in England, but has to return to Ireland; Laurence remains with Mr Sharpe another year;
- 1732 Richard Sterne dies; Laurence left without any friends;
- 1733 spends a year with young Richard Sterne at Elvington; on July 6, Sterne registers *in absentia* at Jesus College, Cambridge; arrives five days later; receives one of the scholarships that Archbishop Sterne had designated for poor boys of Yorkshire or Nottinghamshire;
- 1735 makes friends, matriculates and prepares for his examinations;
- 1736 friendship with John Hall-Stevenson and John Fountayne begins;
- 1737 B.A. at Jesus College; assistant curate of St Ives;
- 1738 admitted to priesthood by Samuel Peploe, Bishop of Chester, at a special ordination held in the cathedral church of Chester; vicar at Sutton-upon-Forest, near York;
- 1739 hires Richard Wilkinson as his assistant curate, a rather unusual move;
- 1740 the names of Peter Torriano, Frederick Keller and Laurence Sterne appear together in the *Grace Book* of Cambridge, presumably after they had become Masters of Arts;
- Related literary and historical events*
- Daniel Defoe dies;
- George Washington born (first President of the USA); Voltaire, *Zaïre*; Joseph Haydn born; Academy of Ancient Music in London; Pope, *Essay on Man*;
- Franz Mesmer born;
- James Watt born;
- Antonio Stradivari dies;
- John Wesley, his brother Charles, and George Whitefield establish Methodist movement;
- Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*;
- Karl VI, German emperor, dies, Karl VII succeeds to the throne; Frederick William I of Prussia dies; Frederick II (the Great) succeeds to the throne; Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*; University of Philadelphia founded;

- 1741 marries Elizabeth Lumley; becomes prebendary in York Minster; chief writer for the Whigs in the by-election;
- 1742 enters politics on the side of a temporary organisation of Walpole supporters; open and bitter quarrel between Jacques and Laurence Sterne, uncle and nephew, reaching its climax in the years 1747–51; *The York Gazetteer*, *Query upon Query*;
- 1743 goes to Stillington, adjoining Sutton; publishes 'The unknown world, verses occasioned by hearing a pass-bell' in *The Gentleman's Magazine*;
- 1744 Sterne's cousin Richard dies; on November 1 purchases the Tindal Farm at Sutton;
- 1745 till 1759 immense reading activity; a daughter named Lydia born and baptised on October 1 and buried the next day;
- 1746 'The case of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, consider'd' preached at St Michael le Belfry;
- 1747 published the same year; probably composed most of his sermons during the decade after he settled in Sutton 1742–51; with John Fountayne drawn into chapter affairs; on December 1 a daughter is born;
- 1748 David Garrick, Sterne's friend, plays Richard III in London;
- Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*; Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*; Edmund Halley dies;
- Thomas Jefferson born (second President of the USA); Antonio Vivaldi dies;
- Frederick II starts Second Silesian War; Jean Paul Marat born; Alexander Pope dies;
- Prince Charles Edward Stuart returns to Britain; Jonathan Swift dies;
- war in South-India between England and France;
- Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle; Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*; Jeremy Bentham born; David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*; Voltaire, *Zadig*;

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1749 | <i>Sterne's life and works</i> | <i>Related literary and historical events</i>
Henry Fielding, <i>Tom Jones</i> ; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe born;
Johann Sebastian Bach dies; |
| 1750 | attends seven of eleven chapter meetings to help Fountayne, and because he is personally concerned with the question of substitutes; sworn in as Lord Fauconberg's commissary; Dean Fountayne seeks to reconcile the estranged mother, son, and uncle; antiquarian studies, anthropological studies; Elizabeth delivered of a dead child; sworn in as the dean's substitute; | Tobias Smollett, <i>The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle</i> ; the first volumes of the <i>French Encyclopaedia</i> published (35 vols. by 1780); the Blue Stockings meet in London; |
| 1751 | exchanges letters with Blake about his farming, the weather and parish business; | George Berkeley dies; Hogarth, <i>The Analysis of Beauty</i> ; |
| 1752 | Justice of the Liberty; out of favour with Archbishop of York, so that his former curate, Richard Wilkinson, is preferred when the perpetual curacy of Coxwold becomes vacant; recommends Hogarth's <i>The Analysis of Beauty</i> to his readers; preferred authors are Lucian, Rabelais, Cervantes, Robert Burton (<i>The Anatomy of Melancholy</i>) and John Locke (<i>Essay on Human Understanding</i>); | George Washington clashes with French troops near Fort Duquesne; |
| 1753 | the private and political war with his uncle comes to an end; | colonial war between England and France (till 1763); earthquake destroys Lisbon; |
| 1754 | professional and business affairs are finally on a relatively sound footing; | Frederick II captures Dresden; Seven Years' War; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart born; |

- 1757 Newcastle and William Pitt, the elder, settle on a coalition cabinet, with Newcastle in charge of domestic and Pitt of foreign affairs; riots over the high cost of food;
- 1758 Horatio Nelson born; Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas*; involved in local scandal; Elizabeth's psychological condition badly affected; lively correspondence between Sterne and John Blake, Master of the Royal Grammar School; Sterne's daughter Lydia in bad health;
- 1759 moves with his family to York; publishes *A Political Romance* (History of a good warm watch-coat); publishes Vols. I and II of *Tristram Shandy* in York (London edition, January 1, 1760); reluctantly heeds advice of his clerical friends that the *Romance* be suppressed; burns the copies (but not all);
- 1760 lionised in London, presented with the living at Coxwold; Shandy Hall; Dodsley announces a new edition of *Tristram Shandy*; Sterne promises a fresh volume every year; publishes *The Sermons of Mr Yorick*, May and June 1760;
- 1761 publishes Vols. III and IV of *Tristram Shandy*, June 1760–May 1761; Vols. V and VI of *Tristram Shandy* in London, June 1761–January 1762; meets Dr Johnson;
- the Russians in Berlin; George II dies, George III succeeds to the throne;
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*;

Sterne's life and works

- 1762 January–June, travels in France although the dreaded disease of his youth (consumption) has broken out again; arrives in Paris on January 16 or 17, completely exhausted by the journey, yet recovers very rapidly to the surprise of his physicians; stays in France from August 1762 till May 1764;
- 1763 installs himself with his family in Toulouse;
- 1764 wants to return to Coxwold; leaves his wife and daughter in the South of France; stops on his way back in Paris, where he meets old friends; this season Hume is the great sensation of Paris society;
- 1765 Yorkshire and London: *Tristram Shandy*, Vols. VII and VIII, June 1764–April 1765;
- 1766 publishes Vols. III and IV of *The Sermons of Mr Yorick*; a tour of Italy from October 1765 till May 1766; witnesses a fresh eruption of Vesuvius; sits for a portrait bust in terracotta by Nollekens; the last Vol. (IX) of *Tristram Shandy*, June 1766–March 1767; at Coxwold his health declines rapidly; Ignatius Sancho, a former slave, writes famous letter asking Sterne to handle the subject of slavery in his next book and thus draw public attention to it (cf. *TS IX/6*); prepares publication

Related literary and historical events

- Catherine II, Tsarina of Russia; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*; Johann Gottlieb Fichte born; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*;
- Peace of Paris; Jean Paul born; Mozart on concert tour through Europe;
- Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*; William Hogarth dies; Jean Philippe Rameau dies;
- Lessing, *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*;
- August Wilhelm Schlegel born; Wilhelm von Humboldt born; Georg Philipp Telemann dies;

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-31263-9 - Laurence Sterne: Tristram Shandy

Wolfgang Iser

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

- of the *Sermons of Mr Yorick* and has a vision of 1,000 guineas before a word of the book is written; *The Journal to Eliza*, March–October 1767; friendship with Mrs Draper from January 1767 till April 1767, when she leaves for India to meet her husband;
- 1768 *A Sentimental Journey*, June 1767–February 1768; a hard winter brings influenza, which leads to pleurisy; Laurence Sterne dies at 4 p.m. on Friday, March 18.
- 1769 *Sermons by the Late Reverend Mr Sterne* (3 vols.).
- Further history of *Tristram Shandy*
- 1759–67 Vols. I–II first edn York, 1759; (2nd edn London: Dodsley, 1760)
Vols. III–IV London: Dodsley, 1761
Vols. V–VI London: Becket and Dehondt, 1762
Vols. VII–VIII London: Becket and Dehondt, 1765
Vol. IX London: Becket and Dehondt, 1767
- 1765 *Das Leben und die Meynungen des Herrn Tristram Shandy*, transl. by J.F. Zückert, Berlin und Stralsund (6 vols.)
- 1774 *Tristram Shandis Leben und Meynungen*, transl. by J. Bode, 9 parts, Hamburg (2nd rev. edn, 1776)
- 1776–85 *La Vie et les Opinions de Tristram Shandy*, transl. by M. Frénais, York et Paris; Ruoult (2 vols.)
- 1779 *Het Leven en de Gevoelens van Tristram Shandy*, transl. by Bernardus Brunius, Amsterdam: Mummithuisen (5 vols.)
- 1797 *Œuvres de Laurence Sterne*, transl. by Frénais and D.L.B. (de la Beaume), Paris (6 vols.)

- 1804–7 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. into Russian by M.S. Kajzarov, St Petersburg (6 vols.)
- 1816 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, with a life of the author, written by himself, New York: Huntington (4 vols.)
- 1832 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, with a life of the author, by Sir Walter Scott, Paris: Baudry
- 1835 *La vie et les opinions de Tristram Shandy par Sterne*, Paris: A. Hiard
- 1848 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, comprising the humorous adventures of Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim . . . beautifully illustrated by Darley, Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot & Co.
- 1848 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, a complete edition, Aberdeen: Clark & Son
- 1858 *Vie et opinions de Tristram Shandy, gentilhomme* followed by *Voyage sentimental* and *Lettres d'Yorick à Eliza*, par Sterne, transl. by M. Léon de Wailly, Paris: Charpentier
- 1865 *Tristram Shandy's Leben und Meinungen*, transl. by F.A. Gelbecke, Berlin (2 parts)
- 1884–5 *Sterne. La vie et les opinions de Tristram Shandy*, 1st and 2nd parts transl. by M. Frénais and 3rd and 4th parts by M. de la Beaume, Paris: Librairie de La Bibliothèque Nationale (4 vols.)
- 1884 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, by Laurence Sterne; with an introduction by Henry Morley. London and New York: Routledge & Sons
- 1890 *Oeuvres de Laurence Sterne. Vie et opinions de Tristram Shandy*, new translation by A. Hédouin, Paris (4 vols.)
- 1899 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, with an introduction by Wilbur L. Cross, New York and London
- 1905 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, London: Newnes
- 1922 *La Vita e le Opinions di Tristano Shandy*, ed. by Ada Salvatore, Modena: Peraguti
- 1928 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, with illustrations and decorations by John Austen and an introduction by J.B. Priestley, London and New York
- 1937 *Das Leben und die Ansichten 'Tristram Shandy'*, transl. into German by Rudolf Kassner, Berlin: Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft

- 1939 *Leben und Meinungen des Herrn Tristram Shandy*, rev. German edn by Bruno Wolfgang, Berlin
- 1940 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, ed. by James Aiken Work, New York: Odyssey Press
- 1946 Laurence Sterne, *Vie et opinions de Tristram Shandy, gentilhomme*, transl. by Charles Mouran, Paris: Laffont (1st edn)
- 1955 *Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. into Serbo-Croatian by S. Vinaver, Belgrade
- 1958 *Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. into Polish by K. Tarnowska, Warsaw
- 1963 *Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. into Czech by A. Skoumal, Prague
- 1965 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, ed. by Ian Watt, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Comp.
- 1967 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, ed. by Graham Petrie, introduction by Christopher Ricks, Baltimore: The Penguin English Library
- 1968 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. into Russian and with an introduction by A. Elisatratova, Moscow
- 1969 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. into Romanian and with an introduction by Mihai Miroiu and Mihai Spariosu, Bucharest
- 1970 *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, ed. by Graham Petrie, introduction by Gilbert Phelps, London: Folio Society
- 1972 *Leben und Meinungen von Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. by Otto Weith, Epilogue by Erwin Wolff, Stuttgart
- 1975 *Tristram Shandy, gentleman*, transl. into Slovak by J. Vojtek, Bratislava

* The chronology, the further history and the bibliography were compiled by Dr Monika Reif-Hülser