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II
MELVYN NEW
Sterne and the modernist moment

'To define—is to distrust', as Tristram triumphantly informs Eugenius, although he immediately realises he has a victory without laurels: 'I triumph'd over him as I always do, like a fool' (TS 3.31.258). Similarly, I have foolishly managed over the past fifteen years to write about Sterne and modernist authors without ever defining modernism or postmodernism. I have, for example, written about Sterne and Proust, Sterne and Nietzsche, Sterne and Svevo, but have continued to believe all along that Sterne is neither proto-modernist nor proto-postmodern, neither an anticipation of Joycean stream of consciousness nor a foretaste of a Derridean breakdown between signified and signifier (which, assuredly, first happened in Eden, not in Paris). Rather, Sterne, like all great artists, was a writer of his own time and place; all that we can really mean when we assign a prophetic aura to his work is that authors of a later period have read Sterne in ways that we must now take seriously, their powerful lenses proving to be filters we are unable to avoid. As I expressed it in explaining Proust's influence on Sterne: 'twentieth-century readers, reading the best that has been produced in their own century, come to earlier literature through that experience and cannot free their reading from it.'

With this in mind, let me define modernism in the narrowest possible sense, keeping in mind that by *modernism* I mean modernism, and 'nothing more, or less', as Sterne says about defining the word nose (TS 3.31.258). It was a condition of Western thought that started with Nietzsche, but perhaps earlier with Kierkegaard, and perhaps before that with Hume and Kant—a condition that some believe ended with the anointing of postmodernism and Derrida at Johns Hopkins University in 1968, although here, again, precursors might be discovered, every messiah having had his John the Baptist. Still others would argue that postmodernism was merely a contrarian moment, fuelled by politics, in a modernist age, and that, this moment having passed, we continue to be modernists into the twenty-first century, like Jews holding fast to Torah and Talmud, unwavayed by false messiahs and new testaments. In short, by modernism, I mean the question that should stand uppermost in our consideration of what it means to be human in our own time: how is it possible in this most hair-raising of eras to still stand erect? 'What a life of it has an author, at this pass!' (TS 3.33.262).

Put alternatively, we might suggest that the singular aim of postmodernism was to demonstrate the flaws of modernist thought by means of a philosophical-linguistical-sociological (and, thinking of *Tristram Shandy* (1.21.72), all other categories of thought 'ending ... in ical') assault on its aesthetic and metaphysical (counter-materialist) tendencies. To reassert, then, the meaning of modernism, we should allow the aesthetic and metaphysical to speak for themselves. More narrowly formal definitions have their uses, and to think of modernist narration in terms of its characteristic disruptions of temporal sequence, narrative framing, and the realist illusion is at least to approach the affinity with Sterne acknowledged by writers such as Joyce, and subsequently adumbrated by critics. Yet modernism begins by placing the very concept of definition itself under question, and its manifestations—in works of literature, music, art—are everywhere a warning against the definitional process, the defining of matter by form. For this reason, I will eschew generalisations and instead examine very closely two representative excerpts from two modernist fictions; what is most worth observing about Sterne in proximity to the artists of the modern era will, it is hoped, emerge from this examination.

The first passage, pertinently enough since I have invoked an image of the modernist as persistent Jew, is to be found in *Street of Crocodiles* (1934) by Bruno Schulz (1894–1942), a Polish Jew shot to death in his home town, Drogbych, by the Gestapo. The second passage is from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, published some nine years before *Street of Crocodiles*. Needless to say, Woolf was not a Jew (though married to one), but the persistence with which she cleaves to the notion that her formal innovations in the face of modern dilemmas had to be steeped in familiarity with her aesthetic past will here suffice for what I will suggest is one of modernism's most paradoxical characteristics: a persistent metaphysical engagement with the past, whatever the present or the future might hold. Woolf greatly admired Sterne, and indeed wrote an introduction to a new edition of *A Sentimental Journey* three years after writing *Mrs Dalloway*. Schulz, on the other hand, gives no explicit indication that he had read Sterne, but he did read and translate Kafka, who certainly read Nietzsche, who called Sterne 'the most liberated spirit who ever wrote'—only three degrees of separation.

Bruno Schulz was an art teacher at a local high school for all of his adult life. *Street of Crocodiles*, a collection of loosely connected short stories, was published when he was forty, followed by a second collection, *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, in 1937; he was supposedly working on a
novel, The Messiah, when he was killed in 1942. Like Tristram, the narrator of the stories in Street of Crocodiles has a theory-driven father, Jacob, 'that incorrigible improviser, that fencing-master of imagination ... that metaphysical conjurer' (Schulz 24). His primary theory is nothing less than a new thesis of creation, unfolded in two linked stories, 'Tailors' Dummies' and 'A Tractate on Tailors' Dummies, or The Second Book of Genesis'.

Jacob formulates not only a commentary on Schulz's own disorienting and magnificently innovative fictions, but also a useful window through which to view whatever we eventually come to define as modernism.

The 'Dummies' are connected to Jacob's dry-goods shop, and serve for the fitting and cutting of garments; for Jacob, however, it is not the garments but the remnants that become the foundation of his theory, the 'heap of cuttings, of morley rags and pieces ... the thousand scraps, the frivolous and fickle trimmings' (Schulz 27). If this notion moves us closer to the world of Tristram Shandy (where the planet itself is said to be made of the 'shreds and clippings of the rest' (TS 1.5.8), where a marbled page serves as a 'motly emblem' of the work (3.36.268), and where Uncle Toby's virtue is finally reduced to 'nothing but empty bottles, tripes, trunk-hose, and pantofles' (9.22.777)), so does Jacob's concomitant interest in the seamstresses (grissets) drop us into the very middle of A Sentimental Journey, Yorick, and the beautiful grisset in Paris. Responding to the 'magnetism of his strange personality', the young women allow Jacob to 'study the structure of their thin and ordinary little bodies', to feel their pulses, so to speak. On one particular occasion, the theory is formulated: 'pulling Pauline's stocking down from her knee and studying with enraptured eyes the precise and noble structure of the joint', Jacob revises Genesis: 'If ... I were to attempt a criticism of creation, I would say "Less matter, more form!" Ah, what relief it would be for the world to turn their forms as matter that doesn't matter, the refuse of their lives. For both them selves.'

As Jacob spins his theory, its dangers become more and more apparent. Matter is pliable like a woman, submissive to every impulse, it is a territory outside any law, open to all kinds of charlatans and diletanti, a domain of abuses and of dubious demographical manipulations. Matter is the most passive and most defenseless essence in [the] cosmos. Anyone can mold it and shape it, it obeys everybody. All attempts at organising matter are transient and temporary, easy to reverse and to dissolve.

The further one carries the theory, the more appalling it becomes, the passivity of matter suggesting that each new formalism can be freely imposed on it, that between Hegel and Heidegger (to invoke the philosophical bookends of modernism), the reduction of all matter to a new formalism, ever and always in the name of history and the reality of things (what 'really matters'), was not only acceptable but demanded: 'Homicide is not a sin. It is sometimes a necessary violence on resistant and ossified forms of existence which have ceased to be amusing' (30).

Or, as Jacob concludes, with the blindness of Uncle Toby pursuing the 'great ends of [his] creation' as he delivers his apologetical oration in defence of warfare (TS 6.32.557), 'here is the starting point of a new apologia for sadism' (Schulz 31).

Modernism, I suggest, is an aesthetic (and metaphysical) attempt to confront the sadism inherent in the mind's encounter with matter. Put in Sterne's
language, with a nod toward Keats, could we ride our hobby-horses 'peaceably and quietly along the King's high-way', and not compel others to 'get up behind [us]' (TS 1.7.12), could we celebrate the infinitude of matter without any 'irritable reaching after fact and reason', we could indeed celebrate a world of rich fecundity without guilt or shame or tartuffery. And indeed, 'They order ... this matter better in France', a land of grisettes and filles de chambre (SJ/BJ 3; my italics). That is not, however, the world in which we find ourselves, and the forms by which we attempt to control matter's infiniteness, even when they begin in jest, always end in downright earnest' (TS 1.19.61). This entire passage from Tristram Shandy is worth contemplating as an indication of the incipient 'sadism' of Walter's theorising: he was serious;—he was all uniformity;—he was systematical, and, like all systematic reasoners, he would move both heaven and earth, and twist and torture every thing in nature to support his hypothesis' (1.19.61). As the twentieth century bears witness, formalisms always begin with a rhetorical demonstration (Walter) and always—at least in our cultural memory—end in warfare (Toby).

Clearly, however, this cannot be the only view of formalism entertained by Sterne, or by modernists, both being so often brilliant formalists themselves. Art is, after all, a complicating rather than a simplifying discourse, the antithesis of the political. Modernist aesthetics is intensely aware of its own involvement in the containment of matter. Here is a description of Jacob, a fragment broken loose from a story written by a Polish Jew in 1934:

As my father proceeded from these general principles of cosmogony to the more restricted sphere of his private interests, his voice sank to an impressive whisper, the lecture became more and more complicated ... and the conclusions which he reached became more dubious and dangerous ... He half-closed one eye, put two fingers to his forehead while a look of extraordinary slyness came over his face. He transfixed his listeners with these looks ... (Schulz 31)

Is there anyone who has read Tristram Shandy who will not here recognise Walter Shandy, a fragment within a novel written by an Anglican cleric between 1759 and 1767? The mind creates the formal linkage, binds the two figures and two fragments together, and then prepares to publish its insight to the world: 'What could be wanting in my father but to have wrote a book to publish this notion of his to the world? Little boots it to the subtle speculatist to stand single in his opinions,—unless he gives them proper vent' (TS 1.19.63). We do not, as yet, destroy those who disagree with us about such literary links (the matters of literature do not seem to matter very much), but as the nation of Israel (Jacob) discovered, transfixing listeners (the act of conversion) is the beginning of the justification of conviction, control, sadism, and war.

Modernism—in its complicated aesthetic engagement with formalism, in its ironies and self-conscious scepticism that turns most evidently on its own doubts, its own heresies, its own relationship with its heritage—is a desire to deconvict the world. Sterne may be considered one of those authors who first suggested that such an ironic or pacific vision might possibly be more Christian than the doctrinalism that his world inherited; he called such doctrinalism 'polemical divinity', but significantly enough, when asked to define it, Yorick pulls out a copy of Rabelais and reads a page (TS 5.28.462-29.464): there has perhaps never been an era in which the 'modernist' urge to deconvict has not been accompanied by the counter-urge to reform the world to the shape of one's own convictions. Precisely for this reason, such sceptical foresight—or insight—into the habitual tenacity of human beings with 'important' ideas ought not be labelled 'modernism', which only celebrates yet another formalism, that of precursiveness. It is more useful, perhaps, to suggest that, in the infinitude of matter's potential, Schulz is the lens through which we can locate the modernist moment in Sterne, just as Sterne is the lens through which the modernist moment in Rabelais comes to light—and to fruition. Hence, the modernist, as opposed to the postmodernist, has no predominant instinct to destroy the forebears (the art of politics), but rather, as with Sterne, a paradoxical embrace of the past alongside both innovation and a highly individualised, not to say idiosyncratic, vision: the unexpected always depends on the expected.

One more point may help to complicate further this shared moment between Sterne and Schulz. As noted, Jacob's entire theory begins with a woman's body, and, indeed, it also collapses in the same encounter. The women of his audience discover how easy it is to break his spell, and in a gesture rich with scriptural significance, one of the girls moves 'her chair forward and, without getting up from it, lifted her dress to reveal her foot tightly covered in black silk, and then stretched it out stiffly like a serpent's head' (Schulz 33). In case we miss his point, Schulz repeats the image: 'Adela's outstretched slipper trembled slightly and shone like a serpent's tongue. My father rose slowly, still looking down, took a step forward like an automaton, and fell to his knees. The lamp hissed in the silence of the room ... whispers of venomous tongues floated in the air, zigzags of thought' (34). As with Sterne, human sexuality—the crevice in the fireplace, Slawkenbergius's nose, the cursed slit in the petticote, the making of sausages, and countless other images, male and female—calls formalism back to matter, the infinite fertility of matter, and the inadequacy of human efforts to subdue it. We can return to the Garden for our explanation, or we can accept, with Rabelais and Sterne,
Freud and Proust, Nietzsche and Schulz (that is, with modernists of every era), that the human mind, that fortress of conviction and certainty, is always and everywhere vulnerable to the zigzag of sexuality's - the body's - approaches.

Hence, it should not surprise us that when Tristram encounters the fact that 'matter and motion are infinite', it is embedded within Trim's funeral oration and a discussion of his persuasive genius. Death, along with impotence, hovers over both Shandy Hall and Toby's bowling green, but it is important to Sterne's ultimately Christian vision that love and sexual desire hover there as well. Where Sterne differs from his era, perhaps, is in his willingness to entertain the possibility that this overlapping, here on earth and in the constant interplay of human interaction, is preparatory to salvation. That Trim's oration is pieced together from the Book of Common Prayer is telling; but it is equally noteworthy that Trim, alongside his mourning, offers us a lesson in persuasiveness - and seduction. The dropping of his hat as an emblem of death works precisely because we are 'not stocks and stones ... but men clothed with bodies, and governed by our imaginations' (TS 5.7.431–2). For Sterne, this vulnerability marks the pathway of persuasiveness, and he opens to the reader, much as Schulz would do almost two centuries later, the dangerous landscape of modernity:

Ye who govern this mighty world and its mighty concerns with the engines of eloquence, who heat it, and cool it, and melt it, and mollify it, and then harden it again to your purpose—

Ye who wind and turn the passions with this great windlass, and, having done it, lead the owners of them, whether ye think meet—

Ye, lastly, who drive—and why not, Ye also who are driven, like turkeys to market, with a stick and a red clout—meditate—meditate, I beseech you, upon Trim's hat.

The world of twentieth-century political positiveness, whether from the right or from the left, and the instruments of its persuasiveness, from oratory, rhetoric, and propaganda to torture and warfare, are here foreshadowed with a deftness of touch that almost seems a justification for sadism; in the space between 'eloquence' and 'a stick and a red clout', one can locate perhaps every historical event of a most anguished century.

Sterne refuses, however, to let this vision dominate his text. The courting of Susannah turns vulnerability into a relationship that Sterne will not allow us to ignore, much less to condemn: the persuasion or seduction to human sexuality. As he talks about death and corruption, Trim directs his speaking toward Susannah: 'What is the finest face that ever man looked at—? I could hear Trim talk so for ever, cried Susannah, - what is it! (Susannah laid her hand upon Trim's shoulder) — but corruption? — Susannah took it off (TS 5.9.435). Our most profound theories and thoughts - even those offered as an alternative Genesis, or as reparation for the sin and death entailed by the Fall therein - are tinged with what it means to be human, to have 'this delicious mixture' (5.9.435) within us. These 'threads of love and desire ... entangled with the piece' (S/J/B 124) must always be acknowledged, not as matter to be overcome, not as sin, or disease, or madness, but as the site of love and caring, that single gesture of openness toward a fellow creature that might disown the world of its certainties, that might disarm its violence, and that might, just possibly, have saved us from the twentieth century. Modernism is that single gesture defined aesthetically, and while both Sterne and Schulz acutely (and humorously) chronicle the opposing human embrace of closure (close-mindedness), they continue to dream, each in his own way, of the harmonies that could change the world. It is certainly no accident that both authors image themselves, finally, as a human being stretching across an abyss in search of the bodily matter of the human being on the other side (see Fig. 12).
even more unlikely pairing - the highly successful Harley Street physician, Sir William Bradshaw, and the Yorkshire sesquipedalian, Dr Slop - be reduced to another, at least insofar as both represent the ultimate weapon in the reduction of matter to form, the advent of science and technology. Perhaps no image in literature is more pregnant with the dangers of the finite mind (and its yearnings for conviction) than Dr Slop's forceps, designed to engage matter with precisely the right force, but sufficiently flawed, despite its set screws and other mechanical precautions, that one's nose is in constant danger. Needless to say, his other 'instruments of delivery' are instruments of death, instruments, significantly enough, that impale and carve the infant skull for its easier removal from the womb.

I have, on occasion, considered Sterne a satirist in the tradition of Swift, Pope, and the Scriblerians, but nothing he ever wrote is equal to the savage indignation informing Woolf's portrait of Sir William. She begins with a slight undertone of irony at his expense: 'a heavy look, a weary look (the stream of patients being so incessant, the responsibilities and privileges of his profession so onerous), which weariness, together with his grey hairs, increased the extraordinary distinction of his presence and gave him the reputation ... not merely of lightning skill and almost infallible accuracy in diagnosis, but of sympathy; tact; understanding of the human soul.' His diagnosis of Septimus Warren Smith marks the conviction of true science: 'He could see the first moment they came into the room (the Warren Smiths they were called); he was certain directly he saw the man; it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case of complete breakdown - complete physical and nervous breakdown ... he ascertained in two or three minutes (writing answers to questions, murmured discreetly, on a pink card)' (Woolf 81). The repressed anger in this description is obvious enough, but at its core is Woolf's own engagement with history, as we recall how and why Septimus has become a challenge to the medical profession (even if only a three-minute challenge), a victim of that warfare Uncle Toby practises so benignly (in the eyes of many a Tobyphilic, at any rate) on his bowling green; in fact, is Woolf not recalling Sterne aurally when she defines Septimus's war as 'the European War - that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder'?

Against the 'heroism' of warfare, the human attempt to subdue matter to its own dimensions, as Swift would have it, Sterne has an alternative vision, that he has 'committed an appalling crime and been condemned to death by human nature' (Woolf 82). We might well ask, what is the matter with Sterne, the primary medical (and psychiatric) question, but Sterne already knows that, as a defender of what mattered to some people, he has destroyed - and seen destroyed - what mattered to others. The aborting of the infinite fecundity of matter, the inability after the fact to keep straight the difference between what matters (what we preserve) and what did not seem to matter (what we discard, destroy), that is his disease - the matter of (and with) his mind. Sir William's diagnosis is, it would seem, wonderfully correct: 'he was not mad, was he? Sir William said he never spoke of "madness"; he called it not having a sense of proportion' (82).

Is it possible that modernism, as both form and matter, can be defined simply by its lack of Sir William's 'sense of proportion'? Similarly, is Sterne's purchase on modernism the fact that his eponymous hero is not born until the third volume, and is only five years of age when the ninth volume concludes - epical signifiers of disproportion? Obviously so, but with one vital qualification if we are to distinguish between modernism and postmodernism, each of which might claim 'lack of proportion' as its raison d'être, each of which lays claim to Sterne (if not to Woolf) as its prescient ancestor. Woolf can, perhaps, help us locate the distinction.

Sir William is, I would suggest, Woolf's own prescient ancestor of postmodernism, for his worship of proportion - 'Proportion, divine proportion, Sir William's goddess' (Woolf 84) - is ultimately science's response to the world's formlessness, to the lamentable fecundity of matter that calls forth the mind's unceasing efforts - by means of forms, formulas, formulations - to exercise sufficient control. If Sir William attempts to 'cure' the world of its 'prophetic Christs and Christesses, who prophesied the end of the world, or the advent of God' (Woolf 84-5), by prescribing a glass of milk and better sleeping habits, so too has postmodernism attempted, at long last, to relieve the world of 'Christ (a common delusion)' (84), insofar as Christ, in John's gospel formulation, is the Word, the Logos, the guarantee that there is, after all, some relationship between our words and the world - or, as Sterne's Yorick would have it, between a mother and her son, despite the best reasonings of canon law and visitation dinners (TS 4.30.393-4). If Sir William finds madness in the 'advent of God', so the postmodernist finds it there as well, although 'God' is not as useful a theoretical word as 'truth', 'determinacy', 'certainty' (that is, 'untruth', 'indeterminacy', 'uncertainty') or any of the other evasions of late twentieth-century dogmatism. What unites the doctor and the theorist, in other words, is their absolute embrace of positive knowledge, not as an alternative possibility within matter's fecundity, but as the signifier of matter's impotence in the hands of science and the theoretical, the power of the human mind.

In both instances, however, it is not the content of the theory that matters (after all, as Woolf astutely notes, 'we know nothing about - the nervous system, the human brain' (Woolf 84)), but the reductive systemisation that makes possible the Harley Street professionalism of the physician, the academic institutionalisation of the theorist: the certainties of the politician. For 'Proportion has a sister', Woolf writes,
less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess even now engaged—in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purities of London, wherever, in short, the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is her own...Conversion is her name and she feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adorning her own features stamped on the face of the populace. At Hyde Park Corner on a tub she stands preaching...How would he work—how to raise funds, propagate reforms, initiate institutions! But Conversion, fastidious Goddess, loves blood better than brick, and feasts most subtly on the human will.16

It is modernism's acutely nervous foreshadowing of the 'Goddess of Conversion'—a foreshadowing arising, perhaps, from the events ticking all across Europe and Asia from the mid-nineteenth century to the Doppelganger explosions of communism and fascism—that separates modernism from postmodernism. As modernism wanes, 'conversion' re-enters the marketplace of ideas as a new mode of orthodoxy and respectability, the non-aesthetics of a world in which everything is political; it is a world Sterne, Schulz, and Woolf deplored. Indeed, Sterne's own nervous foreshadowing of the decline of Christian thought—'I hesitate not one moment to affirm, that in half a century, at this rate, we shall have no souls at all; which being the period beyond which I doubt likewise of the existence of the Christian faith, 'twill be one advantage that both of 'em will be exactly worn out together' (TS 7.14.595)—ties him far more closely to the modernist than to the postmodernist. We see this not only in his creation of Walter Shandy, that great converter through logic and argumentation, but even more so in his figure of Uncle Toby, whose bowling-green activities bespeak a world at war, much in the same way that Sir William in Harley Street and the preacher on his tub at Hyde Park Corner (Sterne's great progenitor Swift is surely summoned by that image) re-inscribes for Woolf (and Septimus) the horrors of war. To suggest that Septimus's guilt is madness, as Sir William does, is perhaps the mirror image of the suggestion that Uncle Toby is innocent; in both instances, we fail to recognize the impetus that drives both Sterne and the modernist artist: a dread of the orthodox, the straight line, the insistence of form over known or contained. Schulz, with his strong acquaintance with kabbalistic Judaism, shares that same sense of religion, not as definitive truth but as infinite possibility. It is not, finally, Christianity that modernism seeks to recover (as a careful reading of the greatest of modernist poets, T.S. Eliot, would show), but art and metaphysics, both of which were most overtly manifested in Western thought in the wake of ineffable monotheism.

Bruno Schulz, Virginia Woolf, and Laurence Sterne would not necessarily agree with this formulation of their work, or the notion of modernism it entails. In responding to the exercise of finding the modernist connection in Sterne, I have already accepted the postulate that some 'sense of proportion' exists between the two, that it would require only a proper ordering of observations and insights to 'solve' the equation, repair our previous lack of knowledge, cure our ignorance. I suspect, however, they would—in their own unique voices—ask me to dismount my hobby-horse. Or perhaps—if I have been able to capture the modernist spirit in any way—they might see in my zigzag approach to the question to Uncle Toby's tactical march to the very centre of the place (which, we note, may prove a place of impotence after all, but the paths of a maze (another Shandean image) from which neither I nor my reader can emerge with any positive sense of the ground traversed, much less a sense of proportion or convertible knowledge. Life and art converted into knowledge: the devastating path of conversion upon which Hegel set us in the interval between Sterne, who foresaw his visionary scheme (our systems of knowledge, Tristram declares (TS 1.21.72), have 'gradually been creeping upwards towards that Akh of their perfections, from which...we cannot possibly be far off'), and Schulz and Woolf, who had to live with its consequences. All three authors worked to invert that seeming inevitability of matter subdued to knowledge, all three in their own ways (and it is, I would maintain, a modernist credo—if modernists had credos) worked to convert knowledge back into art and thus into life. In that celebration of art (and life), Sterne joined with Schulz and Woolf to shape a modernist possibility: 'But this is not matter of SYSTEM;...nor is it matter of BREVIA—nor matter of FACT—at least that I know of; but his matter copulative and introductory to what follows' (8.8.665). That is the eighth and last paragraph in the eighth chapter of the eighth volume of Tristram Shandy is probably—not assuredly—an accident; the modernist mind can leave it at that.

NOTES
3. For the broad spectrum of twentieth-century authors interested in Sterne, see the essays collected in Laurence Sterne in Modernism and Postmodemism, eds. David Pierce and Peter de Vooeg (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996); also the bibliography of works cited. Pierce's introduction to this volume cites Joyce's famous invocation of Sterne to explain his attempt 'to build many planes of narrative with a single esthetic purpose' in Finnegans Wake (10).


5. See Miriam L. Wallace, 'Thinking Back Through Our Others: Rereading Sterne and Resisting Joyce in The Waves', Woolf Studies Annual 9 (2003), 193-220; while the essay itself is an example of postmodernism run amok, the quotations garnered from Woolf's essays and manuscripts concerning Sterne are well worth recovering.

6. On Nietzsche and Sterne, see Duncan Large, ""The Freest Writer": Nietzsche on Sterne', Shandean 11 (1999), 9-29. The phrase 'freest writer' is from Human, All Too Human (1886), quoted by Large, at 11: 'How, in a book for free spirits, could there be no mention of Laurence Sterne, whom Goethe honoured as the freest spirit of his century? Let him accept the honour now of being called the freest writer of all time, in comparison with whom all others seem stiff, square, intolerant, and boorishly direct.' New also discusses this passage at length (Book for Free Spirits, 15-17, 113-17).

7. The translation reads 'Treatise', but as others have noted, 'Tractate', with its allusiveness to talmudic commentary, is perhaps a more telling rendition.


10. See, in particular, Sermon 29, 'Our conversation in heaven', and New's discussion of it as a commentary on A Sentimental Journey (Sf/B) 273-5).

11. Cf. Sf/B 116: 'But there is nothing unmixed in this world; and some of the gravest of our divines have carried it so far as to affirm, that enjoyment itself was attended even with a sigh—and that the greatest they knew of, terminated in a general weep, in little better than a conviction.' For a discussion of this passage, and its roots in Montaigne (another modernist), see Sf/B 346-7, n. to 116.6-7, and see also 124 ('The Conquest').

12. See the concluding apolothesis of A Sentimental Journey: 'so that when I stretch'd out my hand, I caught hold of the Fille de Chambre's END OF VOL. II. (Sf/B) 165); also The Drawings of Bruno Schulz, ed. Jerry Ficowski (Evaston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), esp. 'The Book of Idolatry', 52-107.

13. Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2000), 81; hereafter cited parenthetically as 'Woolf'.

14. Woolf 81; my italics. Cf. Toby's 'apologetical oration': 'If, when I was a schoolboy, I could not hear a drum beat, but my heart beat with it—was it my fault?' (TS 6.32.355).