Sterne’s Rabelaisian Fragment: A Text from the Holograph Manuscript

Introduction

Because the canon of Laurence Sterne is small in comparison with those of other eighteenth-century authors of equal stature, it becomes especially desirable, indeed necessary, for the student of Sterne to give full attention to every available scrap of his writing. That full attention has not been given is suggested by the history of the “scrap” which is the subject of this essay: a manuscript of twenty-three leaves, in Sterne’s hand, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, where it has the number M.A. 1011.1 The holograph measures 19.3 x 11.7 cm., and is now bound in full green straight-grain levant morocco, by MacDonald. It is probably a rough draft and has frequent cancellations, some of which totally obscure the text written beneath. Written on the rectos of the leaves of white laid paper, the versos are blank, except for a canceled reading on folio 11, an insertion in the text on folio 19, and what may be the numeral one on folio 7, the last folio of Chapter i. Chapters i and ii are indicated at the top of folios 1 and 8 respectively. The leaves are numbered in a modern hand.

The manuscript was first published seven years after Sterne’s death in his daughter’s collection of his letters.2 It appears at the end of the third volume, under the title, “The Fragment”; on the title page affixed to each volume it is called, “A Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais.” Lydia Sterne Medalle took many liberties with her father’s writing, in particular bowdlerizing several passages to make them acceptable to the un-Rabelaisian sensibilities of the late eighteenth century. Later editors of Sterne’s Works, including the editors of the standard editions of 1904 and 1927, simply reprinted Mrs. Medalle’s text. The text presented here is, then, the first true text to be published of Sterne’s Rabelaisian fragment.

Conjectures as to Sterne’s intentions in the fragment are limited by the slightness of what remains—less than 1,500 words. Nevertheless, a few suggestions can be made. Most obviously, Sterne seems to have had a satire on learning and sermon writing in mind. One character in the fragment is Longinus Rabelaius, who proposes in Chapter i to write a Kerukopaedia, an Art of Sermon-writing. Although this work is never actually begun, its author’s name suggests a parody of Peri Hypsous (On the Sublime), perhaps in the manner of Pope’s Peri Bathous.3

At the same time that Longinus Rabelaius is making this proposal, the cleric Homenas4 is discovered in the midst of stealing his Sunday sermon from the Sermons of Dr. Samuel Clarke, often considered the “gloomy Clerk” of Book iv of the Dunciad. In Tristram Shandy (p. 427), Yorick is said to have written on the first leaf of one of his sermons: “—For this sermon I shall be hanged,—for I have stolen the greatest part of it.” That Sterne is recalling his own career as a sermon writer (and sermon thief) in these passages has been documented in Lansing Hammond’s study of Sterne’s sermons.5 Sterne’s capacity to see “himself in the true point of ridicule,” as he says of Yorick (p. 19), is clearly evident.

These two characters, Longinus Rabelaius and Homenas, are surrounded by a congeneric group of Rabelaiic fellows: Panurge, Gymnast, Triboulet, and Epistemon are specifically named. While a gathering of wits is certainly one of Rabelais’s favorite devices, the group may also call to mind Sterne’s participation in the Demoniaca—a Shandean gathering of Yorkshire men who seemed to share a common delight in wine, in bawdy, and in Rabelais. Indeed, one of the group, Robert Lascelles, was nicknamed Panty, from Pantagruel.6 Such a gathering also might remind us of the Scriblerians, out of whose association came, among other productions, Peri Bathous.

Sterne’s attempt at the Rabelaisian style in the fragment reminds us once again of his immense
Sterne's efforts both to be like Rabelais and Swift and yet keep a “due distance” from them are clearly illustrated in the fragment. On the one hand, there is the Rabelaisian freedom with language and the church. “Shit” is used as an expulsive several times; and the divine, Homenas, imagining himself falling from the pulpit, cries that he has fractured his skull “and beshit himself into the Bargain.” On the other hand, signs of a new restraint are also evident in the holograph. Sterne's first intention was to have Homenas steal his sermon from Dr. John Rogers, enabling him to pun: “Homenas who had to preach next Sunday ... was all this while Rogering it as hard as He could drive in the very next Room.” This bit of bawdy occurs on folio 8, and on folio 14 Sterne is still using Rogers. He had second thoughts, however, and ultimately changed all the mentions of Rogers to Clarke, including the joke of folio 8.
which becomes the very innocent, “was all this while at it.” Again, on folio 7, Sterne had originally written “every Sir Reverence & Licenced Preacher”; “Sir Reverence” has been canceled, a correction almost certainly determined by the phrase’s use as a cant term for feces—by Rabelais among others.9 And again, on folio 13, the ambiguous apostrophe, “Dearly Beloved Roger, the Scripture moveeth thee & me in sundry Places,” is canceled, Sterne perhaps feeling that the parody of the Book of Common Prayer (“Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture move us in sundry places”) was too bold or too licentious. Such self-censorship comes nowhere near the bowdlerization performed by Mrs. Medalle, but it does suggest that Sterne was aware of changing tastes and changing standards of decorum, although his attitude toward this change is perhaps best represented by the summoning of the councils of concupiscence and delicacy in Tristram Shandy (p. 348).

Sterne’s debt to Rabelais is also evident in his phrasing. The Rabelaisian penchant for the comical anatomy is evident in such sentences as “the Art of making all kinds of your theological, hebdomadical, rostrumical, rostrummical what d’ye call ‘ems” (fol. 3); and again, “but the most true, the most strong, the most philosophical, and the most hydrostrical Reason, why . . .” (fol. 20). But it is in Sterne’s pervasive and persistent echoes of short, seemingly random phrases that he most clearly demonstrates how carefully he had mastered the idiom of his predecessor. The following Rabelaisian words and phrases are found in the fragment: “thrice-Reverend,” “thorough-stitch’d,” “Half in Half,” “as . . . as ever piss’d,” “Sir Reverence,” “nimming,” “done his Business,” “tickle it off,” “ding dong,” “slap dash,” and “crack, again.”9 If Sterne did indeed capture the flavor of Rabelais, it was, I believe, his ear for the Rabelaisian vocabulary that made his efforts successful.

The Rabelaisian fragment is interesting also because of its relationship to Tristram Shandy. Most obviously, the character Homenas returns in Book iv, as noted earlier: “I’m to preach at court next Sunday, said Homenas—run over my notes . . .” (p. 315); and Sterne’s interest in sermon writing is perhaps continued in Yorick’s several discussions of his sermons (p. 317; pp. 426–30).9 We can also hear an echo of the Kerukopaedia in the Tristrapedia—the similar thrust at the encyclopedic cataloging of knowledge which has always been a prime target (and parodic form) of satire. Finally, Sterne’s attention to details of physical description, so obvious a facet of Tristram Shandy, is readily seen in the fragment, as in the description of the tears on folios 15–16. This close scrutiny of physical reality by the author is clearly Rabelaisian in origin and satiric in intention. Hence we see Panurge miss the right answer by “twelve feet & about five Inches” (fol. 4); we see Homenas steal “Five whole Pages, nine round Paragraphs, and a Dozen and a half of good Thoughts” (fol. 10); and we see Homenas weep for “Six Minutes and almost twenty five seconds” (fol. 15). Sterne’s similar attention to minutiae in Tristram Shandy may owe more to Rabelais’s satiric realism than is often assumed.

Wilbur Cross has suggested that the fragment is most comparable to the Visitation dinner in Tristram Shandy and suggests that it was written in the autumn of 1760, and abandoned for use in Book iv as too ribald, perhaps on the advice of Stephen Croft.11 I would argue instead that the fragment was written after Sterne’s success with the Political Romance (1759), and was his first attempt at what ultimately became Tristram Shandy. This would place the date of composition in January or February of 1759, since by the end of May Sterne was already offering Volume i to Dodsley and promising Volume ii by Christmas (Letters, pp. 74–75).

Evidence for the earlier date is found primarily in several passages of the fragment which recur in Tristram Shandy. In the fragment, for example, Sterne had originally written:

I may sit up whole Winter Nights baking my Blood with hectic Watchings and write as solid as a Father of the Church—or, I may sit down whole summer Days evaporating my Spirits into the finest Thoughts, and write as florid as a Mother of it, & in either Case, impair my Health, waste my animal Strength, dry up my radical Moisture, bring myself into a most costive Habit of Body, & hasten all the Infirmities of my old age,—In a Word, I may compose myself off my Legs, & preach till I burst,—and when I’ve done, ’twil be worse, than if not done at all.—(fols. 12–13)

In Tristram Shandy (ii, Ch. iii), an apostrophe is addressed to Toby:

Is it fit, good-natur’d man! thou should’st sit up, with the wound upon thy groin, whole nights baking thy

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blood with hectic watchings?—Alas! 'twill exasperate thy symptoms,—check thy perspirations,—evaporate thy spirits,—waste thy animal strength,—dry up thy radical moisture,—bring thee into a costive habit of body, impair thy health,—and hasten all the infirmities of thy old age. (p. 90)12

Significantly, Sterne canceled that portion of the fragment closest to the passage in Tristram Shandy, the catalog of effects that "hectic watchings" will bring. While it is of course possible that Sterne imitated Tristram in the fragment, it seems far more likely that he produced the fragment earlier and kept it by his side, waiting for the proper moment to use it. As he waited he found occasion to use the passage under discussion and deleted a portion of it from the fragment without damaging the meaning of the passage.

Other similarities between the fragment and Tristram Shandy lend support to this view. For example, in a discussion between the Shandys in Volume ii, Chapter xvii—significantly, on sermon writing—Walter says:

... and if the clergy of our church... would take part in what they deliver, as deeply as this poor fellow has done,—as their compositions are fine; (I deny it, quoth Dr. Stop)—I maintain it, that the eloquence of our pulpits... would be a model for the whole world..." (p. 141)

In the fragment, Longinus Rabelaisian defends his idea of the Kerukopaedia by saying that if all the rules of sermon writing could be bound up and "put into the Hands of every Licenced Preacher in great Britain & Ireland just before he began to compose, I maintain it—-I deny it flatly, quoth Panurge—What? answer'd Longinus Rabelaisian with all the Temper in the World" (fol. 7). To be sure, Sterne did not cancel this passage in the fragment, and hence it is more possible to consider the passage in Tristram as its source. Taken with the parallel passages cited earlier, however, the probability is strong that Sterne is continuing to cull the fragment for ideas as he writes his masterpiece.

A slighter example is found perhaps in Sterne's original phrase, "little Devil astride a Mortgage" on folio 10; this has been changed to "little black Devil" and "astride a Mortgage" is canceled. In Volume i, Chapter viii of Tristram Sterne wrote: "... like so many little party-colour'd devils astride a mortgage..." (p. 14). Again in the fragment Sterne had written, "I know no more of Greek & Latin than my Arse" (fol. 5); in Tristram (i, Ch. iii), Tristram writes of his mother: "... but she knew no more than her backside what my father meant" (p. 7). Finally, in Volume ii, Chapter vi, Tristram talks about "that ornamental figure in oratory, which Rhetoricians stile the Aposiopesis" and explains it thus: "Make this dash,—'tis an Aposiopesis.—Take the dash away, and write Backside,—'tis Bawdy" (p. 100). In the fragment Sterne wrote of an "aposiopesistic Break, marke thus——" and then had canceled "aposiopesistic" (fol. 21).

This last example actually finds a closer parallel in Volume iv, Chapter xxvii, the Visitation dinner: "... that interjection of surprise so much disconted upon, with the aposiopests break after it, marked thus, Z—-ds..." (p. 322). In the same chapter, there is another interesting parallel between Tristram Shandy and the fragment. Tristram writes of Phutatorius:

So that notwithstanding he looked with all the attention in the world, and had gradually skrewd up every nerve and muscle in his face, to the utmost pitch the instrument would bear, in order, as it was thought, to give a sharp reply to Yorick, who sat over-against him—Yet I say... (p. 319)

In the fragment it is Panurge who is described:

That notwithstanding Panurge had open'd his Mouth as wide as he could for his Blood in order to give a round Answer... And the' Head was full of Matter, & he had skrew'd up every Nerve and Muscle belonging to it, till all cryed, crack, again, in order to give a due projectile Force to what He was going to let fly... Yet for all that... (fol.s 17-19)

In view of the several parallel passages cited, I would argue that Sterne had written the Rabelaisian fragment before he began Tristram Shandy; that he had kept it by his side during the writing of at least the first four books, hoping to fit it in somewhere, borrowing occasionally from it; and that after the Visitation dinner in Volume iv, where it had probably seemed most suitable for insertion, and yet was never found quite fit, Sterne more or less abandoned the fragment as unusable. It seems evident to me, then, that the "Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais" was Sterne's first attempt at creative writing after the success of the Political Romance. As such, it is a significant part of the Sterne canon, and deserves better treatment than Mrs. Medalle gave it in 1775.

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Notes

1 I wish to thank the Pierpont Morgan Library for permission to publish this edition of the fragment, and Douglas C. Ewing of that library for his valuable assistance; a grant from the Johnson Fund of the American Philosophical Society for the preparation of this edition is gratefully acknowledged.

2 Letters of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne... published by his Daughter, Mrs. Medalle. In Three Volumes (London: T. Becket, 1775).

3 In his sermon, "Search the Scriptures," Sterne calls Longinus "the best critic of the eastern world ever produced" (The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, Shakespeare Head Press ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, ii, 230); and in Tristram Shandy, we are told to read him: "read away—if you are not a jot the wiser by reading him the first time over—never fear—read him again" (ed. James Aiken Work, New York: Odyssey, 1940, p. 282; hereafter cited in text). Interestingly enough, Tristram encourages us, in a similar manner, to read Rabelais: "Read, read, read, read, my unlearned reader! read,—" (p. 226).

4 The name of the bishop of Papimay in the fourth book of Gargantua and Pantagruel. The name is first spelled "Homenas" and annotated as: "a production of that of Homme. They use it, in Languedoc, when they wot'st, say, a great Loggerheaded Booby, that has neither Wit nor Breeding" (The Works of Francis Rabelais, M.D. Now carefully revised, and compared throughout with the late new Edition of M. Le du Chat, by Mr. Ozell, London: Printed by J. Hughes... For J. Brindley... and C. Corbett...).

1737, iv, 195; hereafter cited as Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais.) Cf. Work’s note in Tristram Shandy, p. 315, where Homenas reappears, preparing a sermon to be preached “next Sunday.” It should be remembered, in discussing Rabelais’s influence on Sterne, that Sterne’s "Rabelais" was this free-wheeling Renaissance translation by Urquhart and Motteux.

5 Laurence Sterne’s Sermons of Mr Yorick (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1948).


8 See, e.g., Urquhart-Motteux, Rabelais, iv, 275.

9 See the notes to the text for citations.

10 On fol. 12 of the fragment, Homenas bewails himself, "Alas poor Homenas!" Is it possible that this phrase gave Sterne the inspiration for masking himself as the Shake- spearean jester in Tristram Shandy?


12 Cf. An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber... Written by Himself, 2 vols. (London: Printed by John Watts for the Author, 1740), p. 12: "Can it be worth my while to waste my spirits, to bake my Blood, with serious Contemplations, and perhaps impair my Health, in the fruitless Study of advancing myself... ."

A Note on the Text

In editing Sterne’s holograph I have attempted to record, in the textual notes, a complete and accurate reading of Sterne’s cancellations and revisions. Some normalizing of the text was required, since Sterne is inconsistent about capitalization, italics, and the like. I have silently normalized the following:

Capitals: I have followed Sterne’s capitalization in almost every case; in a few instances where he begins sentences with a lowercase letter I have capitalized the letter; where Sterne’s intention is doubtful, I have chosen the reading most consistent with his own practice. Long "s’s has been modernized.

Italics: I have consistently italicized proper names, though Sterne is inconsistent in doing so. Where Sterne uses oversized or distinctive letters, or a double underscoring, I have used capitals.

Punctuation: (a) apostrophes in an elided past tense ending are silently supplied when required; (b) quotation marks around direct discourse, when initiated by Sterne, have been completed where required; quotation marks when repeated at the beginning of a line are omitted; (c) Sterne’s use of the double hyphen and of superscript abbreviations has been modernized; punctuation of abbreviations has been supplied when required.

Key to Symbols

( ) Pointed brackets enclose cancellations.
* * * Carets enclose readings which Sterne inserted above or below a line.
↑ ↑ Inverted carets enclose readings which Sterne appears to have inserted on a line after the line was first inscribed.
≈ ≈ Wavy lines enclose a reading which is superimposed on the canceled reading which immediately precedes it.
? An italic question mark in front of a canceled reading indicates a conjectural reading.
! A single vertical line indicates the end of a line in the manuscript; it is used only to clarify revisions.

Shewing two Things; First, What a Rabelaic Fellow, Longinus Rabelaicus, is;—and Secondly, How Cavalierly He begins his Book.— — — —

My dear and thrice-Reverend Brethren, as well Arch-Bishops and Bishops as the Rest of the Inferior Clergy! Would it not be a glorious Thing, If any Man of Genius and Capacity amongst us for such a Work, was fully bent within Himself to sit down immediately and compose a thorough-stitch’d System of the Kerukopedia, daintily setting forth, to the best of his Wit and Memory, & collecting for that Purpose all that is needful to be known & understood of that Art?——Of what Art, cryed Panurge?——Good God! answer’d Longinus Rabelaicus (making an Exclamation, but taking Care to moderate his Voice at the same Time) Why,—of the Art of making all kinds of your theological, hebdomadical, rostrummical, hurdmundrical what d’ye call ’ems——I’ll be shot quoth Epistemon if all this Story of thine of a roasted Horse is simply no more than Sausages?, quoth Panurge. Thou hast fallen twelve feet & about five Inches below the Mark, answer’d Epistemon, for I hold them to be, Sermons, which said word, (as I take the matter,) being but a Word of low Degree, for a Book of high Rhetoric; Longinus Rabelaicus was foreminded to usher & lead into his Dissertation, with as much Pomp & Parade as he could afford; and for my own Part, either I know no more of Greek & Latin than my Arse, or the Kerukopedia, is nothing but the Art of making ’em——And, why not, quoth Gymnast of preaching ’em, when We’ve done?—Believe me, dear Souls! This is Half in Half & if some Skillful Body would but put us in a Way to do this to some Tune———Thou wouldst not have ’em chanted surely quoth Triboulet, laughing?—No, nor canted neither quoth Gymnast, crying——But what I mean, my Little Cods, says Longinus Rabelaicus (who is certainly one of the greatest Critick’s in the western World, and as Rabelaic a Fellow as ever piss’d) what I mean, says he, interrupting them both, & resuming his Discourse, is this, That if all the scatter’d Rules of the Kerukopedia, could be but once carefully collected into one Code, as thick as Panurge’s Head, and the Whole cleanly digested——(Shite! says Panurge,) who felt himself aggrieved——and bound up, continued Longinus, by way of a regular Institute, and then put into

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8 [Above “compose” are three marks of unknown purpose; see Plate] 12 Art, (says) cryed.
17-18 shot /3/ quoth Epistemon if all, all this /4/ 19 [Before “Thou” in the left-hand margin is a caret below the line and a cross above the line] 24 usher “&” lead into 27 Arse, (? if)~ or ~
29 Believe me. (Good Folks) dear Souls. 32 quoth (Panurge) Triboulet. 35 World, (j) and 36 as ever (liv’d) piss’d.
the Hands of every Licenced Preacher in great Britain & Ireland just before He began to compose, I maintain it—
I deny it flatly, quoth Panurge—What? answer’d Longinus Rabelaicus with all the Temper in the World.

Rabelaicus

Chap. 2d

In which the Reader will begin to form a Judgment, of what an Historical, Dramatical, Anecdotical, Allegorical and Comical Kind of a Work, He has got hold of.—

HOMENAS who had to preach next Sunday (before God knows whom)—knowing Nothing at all of the Matter—was all this while at it as hard as He could drive in the very next Room: for having /8/ foul’d two clean Sheets of his own, and being quite stuck fast in the Enterance upon his third

General Division, & finding Himself unable to get either forwards or backwards—with any Grace—“d—n it,” says He, (thereby Excommunicating every Mother’s Son who should think differently) “Why, may not a Man lawfully call in for Help, in this, as well as any other human Emergency?” So without any more Argumentation—/9/ excommunication, except starting up and nimming down from the Top Shelf but one, the second Volume of Clark’s tho’ without any felonious Intention in so doing, He had begun to clapp me in (making a Joynt first) Five whole Pages, nine round Paragraphs, and a Dozen and a half of good Thoughts all of a Row; and because there was a confounded high Gallery,—was transcribing it away, Like a little black Devil. /10/ Now—quoth Homenas to Himself, “Tho’ I hold all this to be fair and square Yet, if I am found out, there will be the Deuce & all to pay.—

Why are the Bells ringing backwards; You Lad!—What’s all that Crowd about, honest Man! Homenas was got upon Dr. Clark’s back, Sir—and what of that, my Lad? Why Sir, He has broke his Neck, and fractured his Skull and bethat into the Bargain, by a fall /11/ from the Pulpit two Stories high. Alass poor Homenas!—Homenas has done his Business—Homenas will never preach more while Breath’s in his Body!—No, Faith. I shall never again, be able to tickle it off as I have done. I may sit up whole Winter Nights baking my Blood with hectic Watchings and write as

43 every (Sir Reverence & Licenced 43-44 & Ireland. 45, flatly. 50 Comical (a) Kind 53 while (Rogerings) sat, it 57 backwards—(with any Grace) with any (Credit) Grace. 59 differently “v” (from him) 63 of (the abovesaid participle Doct. (you know who)) of (Norris) Clark. 67 do (86 little “black” Devil (astride a Mortgage) [The “k” in “black” appears on fol. 11 in the lower right hand margin. Sterne appears to have written off the edge of fol. 10 onto the leaf sticking out beneath it.] 71 backwards (?); ~ 72 about (?) ~ 72-73 Dr. (Rogers’s) (Clark’s) 76 [On fol. 11” opposite “Homenas! . . . has” is the canceled reading: “In the first, I may square cut all my”; Sterne may have intended to insert this reading after “done” (l. 79).] 77 never ([three or four words, canceled by heavy loopings; the last word may be “more”]) speak more while Breath’s in his Body!—

—No,
solid as a Father of the Church—or, I may sit down whole summer Days evaporating my Spirits into /12/ the finest Thoughts, and write as florid as a Mother of it.—In a Word, I may compose myself off my Legs, & preach till I burst,—and when I’ve done, ’twil be worse, than if not done at all. — /13/ Pray, Mr. Such a one, Who held forth last Sunday? Doctor CLARK, I trow, says one. Pray what Doctor CLARK, quoth a second? Why, HOMENAS’s Doctor CLARK, quoth a third. O Rare HOMENAS! cries a fourth—your Servant, Mr. HOMENAS, quoth a fifth.—’twil be all over with me before G-d.—I may as well shite as shoot.—”22 Here, Homenas burst into a Flood of Tears /14/ which falling down helter skelter, ding dong,23 without any kind of Intermission for Six Minutes and almost twenty five seconds, had a marvellous Effect upon his Discourse: for, the aforesaid Tears, do you mind, did so temper the Wind24 that was rising upon the aforesaid Discourse,—but falling for the most part perpendicularly, & hitting the Spirits at right Angles which were mounting horizontally all over the Surface of his Harrangue, they not only play’d the Devil and all, with the /15/ Sublimity—But moreover, the said Tears, by their nitrous Quality did so refrigerate, precipitate, & hurry down to the Bottom of his Soul, all the unsavory Particles which lay fermenting (as you saw) in the middle of his Conception, That he went on in the coolest & chastest Stile (for a Soliloquy, I think) that ever mortal Man utter’d.—

“This is really & truely a very hard Case,” continued Homenas, to himself (Panurge, by the by, and all /16/ the Company in the next Room hearing all along every Syllable He spoke; for you must know, That notwithstanding Panurge had open’d his Mouth as wide as he could for his Blood in order to give a round Answer to Longinus Rabelaisic’s Interrogation which concluded the last Chapter—Yet Homenas’s Rhetoric had pour’d in so like a /17/ Torrent, slap dash25 thro’ the Wainscot amongst them, and happening at that uncritical Crisis when Panurge had just put his ugly Face into the above-said Posture of Defence,—That he stop’d short,——He did indeed. And tho’ his Head was full of Matter, & he had skrew’d up every /18/ Nerve and Muscle

81 or, (on the other hand), I 83 it, (& in either Case, impair my Health, waste my animal Strength, dry up my radical Moisture, bring myself into a most, costive Habit of Body, & hasten all the Infirmities of my old age.)—In 85 he (“Dearly Beloved Roger, the Scripture moveth thee & me in sundry Places” ’tis so recent a Story, & will bear so /13/ villainous an Application I shall never hear an End on’t.) 88 /13/ worse, than if not done at all.— 89-88 Doctor (ROGERS) CLARK, [three occurrences] 88 HOMENAS’s 95-96 the (y) (said Tears) afores’ Tears, do you mind, did 96-97 upon (it) the afores’ Discourse, 97 &part. 100 &they. 101 Sublimity (/w/) is inseparable from Heat,)—→ 104 &as you saw, 107 Man (heard,) utter’d. 108-109 [The closing quotation mark is after “himself” in the MS.] 111 know, (tho’ I absolutely forgot to tell you before,) That 113 to (make a proper Reply) give a round Answer, to 115 in (slap dash) ~ so like a ~ 119 short,— [Almost four lines are canceled here with heavy looping and a line; the passage ends “gaping and staring like a stuck Pig”—He
belonging to it, till all cryed, crack, again, in order to give a due projectile Force to what He was going to let fly full in Longinus Rabelicus’s Teeth, who sat over against him,—Yet for all that, He had the Continence to contain himself,—he had indeed—for He stopt short, I say, without uttering one Word, except Damn it. Many reasons may be asserted for this, but the most true, the most strong, the most philosophical, and the most hydrostrical Reason, why Panurge did not go on,—was,—That the foremention’d Torrent did so drawn His Voice, that he had none left to go on with. God help him, poor Fellow!—So He stopt short, (as I’ve told you /20/ twice before) and all the Time Homenas was speaking, He said not another Word good or bad but stood gaping & staring like any what you please. So that the Break, marke thus—which Homenas’s Grief had made in the middle of his Discourse, which He could no more help than He could fly—produced no other Change in the Room where Longinus Rabelicus, Epistemon, Gymnast, Triboulet and nine or ten more honest /21/ Blades, had got kerokopaedizing together,—But, that it gave Time to Gymnast to give Panurge a good squashing Chuck under his double Chin; which Panurge taking in Good Part, & just as it was meant by Gymnast; He forthwith shut his Mouth—and gently sitting down upon his broad Arse, tho’ somewhat excentrically & out of Neighbour’s Row, but listening, as all the rest did, with Might & Main, They plainly /22/ and distinctly heard every Syllable of what you will find recorded in the very next Chapter.)

Notes

1 Sterne uses this formula in his Author’s Preface, Tristram Shandy, iii, Ch. xx: “Now, my dear Anti-Shandean, and thrice able critics . . .” (p. 193). It is used by the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais in the prologues to Books i, ii, iii, and v.
2 A coinage from the Greek ἐφοργασμός, preaching, sermon; cf. the English “kerygma” and “kerystic.”
3 “fairly” in the Medalle ed., iii, 166.
4 Cf. Tristram Shandy: “. . . so that Slawkenbergius his book may properly be considered, not only as a model,—but as a thorough-stitch’d ornest and regular institute [see the fragment, fol. 7] of noses; comprehending in it, all that is . . . needless to be known about them . . .” (p. 232). Variants of “thorough-stitch’d” are used by the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais in iii, 325 and v, 18.
5 Cf. Tristram Shandy, i, “Good G—! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time . . .” (p. 5).
Sterne’s Rabelaisian Fragment

7 “. . . I know no more of Latin than my horse . . .” in the Medalle ed., iii, 167.
8 Cf. Tristram Shandy, p. 325 and p. 352. The OED cites the latter under the definition: “half (to or by half) the total amount.” The phrase occurs in the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais, iv, 66.
9 Cf. the treatise by the hack author of A Tale of a Tub: “A critical Essay upon the Art of Canting, philosophically, physically, and musically considered.”
10 “my friends” in the Medalle ed., iii, 168.
12 “pooh, says Panurge” in the Medalle ed., iii, 169.
13 Cf. Tristram Shandy: “. . . and my uncle Toby having some measures to take about his breeches—and Yorick about his fourth general division—. . . the company broke up. . . .” (p. 590).
14 “Curse it!” in the Medalle ed., iii, 171.
15 “To take. In cant, to steal.” Johnson’s Dictionary. In the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais, iii, 256, Triboulet is described as a “Nimbling and filching” fool.
16 The canceled readings here suggest that Sterne’s first intention was to have Homenas borrow from the sermons of Dr. John Rogers (1679–1729), the “abovesaid participle Doct.,” whose name conveniently enabled him to indulge in a bawdy play on “Rogering it,” i.e., copulating (see fol. 8). After canceling Rogers, Sterne appears to have written “Norris” (Dr. John Norris, 1657–1711), and then canceled Norris, writing “Clark” alongside. This is undoubtedly Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675–1729). For the extent of Sterne’s borrowings from all three divines, see Lansing V. D. H. Hammond, Laurence Sterne’s Sermons of Mr Yorick (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1948).
17 Presumably an ethical dative as in Shakespeare, Rom. iii, i. 5–7: “Thou art like one of these fellows that, when he enters the confines of a tavern, claps me his sword upon the table. . . .”
18 “. . . anciently a practice to which the authorities of towns, &c., resorted as a sign of distress, or as an alarm to the people.” W. C. Hazlitt, Faiths and Folklore of the British Isles (London: Reeves and Turner, 1905), i, 44.
20 Cf. the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais, iv, 176: “. . . the first time that the greedy Thief swallow’d them, they had like to have done his Business.”
21 Cf. Tristram Shandy: “. . . how should I tickle it off” (p. 194). Gardner D. Stout, Jr., notes that the phrase is used by the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais, prologue to Book iv: see “Some Borrowings in Sterne from Rabelais and Cervantes,” ELN, 3 (1965), 113.
22 “’Twill be all over with me, by Heav’n—I may as well put the book from whence I took it” in the Medalle ed., iii, 174.
23 Cf. Tristram Shandy, where the critics “tickled off” Tristram’s jerkin, “pell mell, helter skelter, ding dong, cut and thrust . . .” (pp. 161–62); and where Toby and Trim mount: “. . . fall in upon them, pell-mell—Ding dong, added Trim.—Horse and foot, said my uncle Toby.—Helter skelter, said Trim . . .” (p. 380). The Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais uses “ding dong” in this manner in v, 99, and v, 146.
25 Cf. Tristram Shandy: “. . . the baptizing all the HOMUNCULI at once, slap-dash, by injection . . .” (p. 62). The term is used in the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais, iv, 58.
26 Cf. the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais: “. . . they did eat . . . till their Belly was like to crack with it again” (ii, 112).
27 “Z. . . ds” in the Medalle ed., iii, 177.
28 Here, and in the canceled passage on fol. 18, Sterne is perhaps recalling the image from the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais: “Panurge star’d at him like a dead Pig . . .” (v, 30); and: “. . . staring at each other, like so many dead Pigs . . .” (v, 66).
29 “A stool” in the Medalle ed., iii, 179.