

LAURENCE STERNE AND SALMAN RUSHDIE:  
THE FUNCTION OF WHATSITSNAME

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BY

MARK ANTHONY CANNY, B.A.

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**AUTHOR:** Mark Anthony Canny, B.A. (McMaster  
University)

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the function of memory in both Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children. I establish two applications of memory to writing, the first being a linear recording of events while the second is more digressive. The narrator in each of the novels professes the first approach but he is continually frustrated in his attempts to capture reality. The implications of memory for writing and reading are a link between the two works. By examining the techniques both Sterne and Rushdie use to apply memory to the writing of their novels, I will provide new perspectives on each novel.

## THE PROBLEM OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge several people for their OSAP --Original Silliness And Punning--assistance; and I wish for their sakes I had the key of my study out of my draw-well, only for five minutes, to tell you their names--recollect them I cannot--so be content to accept of these, for the present and the past--not to mention the future--in their stead.--

There is the great Dr. Graham Roebuck, whose encouragement and help speeded along the delivery of this thesis,--to say nothing of Dr. James King, who was present at the conception of the idea to join Salman Rushdie and Laurence Sterne in unholy Shandylock...but there is no escaping the fact that Nancy Walsh suggested the idea just moments before this, so my digressive path has stumbled across the origin of my thesis on pseudomimesis.

This list of acknowledgements would be incomplete if I forgot to mention and thank the following five people: my typist, Mandy Canny, for her time and patience...and time, did I mention time?; my friend and fellow survivor of the twilight office, Doug Wilson, for his individuality and belief in personal freedom--I still suspect that he plagiarized these two attributes (in an effort to prove that

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HOLEY-MOLEY! What a spongey-brain. I have just remembered that I should thank the academy. No, that won't do, I must thank the people. Wait! I should have started by thanking my parents--is it too late to write this all over again?

Fray, what was the author writing?----Nothing....

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## THE PROBLEM OF EPIGRAPHS

"I don't know how my grandmother came to adopt the term  
whatsitsname as her leitmotif, but as the years passed it  
invaded her sentences more and more often. I like to think  
of it as an unconscious cry for help...as a seriously-meant  
question. Reverend Mother was giving us a hint that, for  
all her presence and bulk, she was adrift in the universe.  
She didn't know, you see, what it was called"

-Salman Rushdie  
Midnight's Children, 41.

"screaming me over and over and over I leave you with  
photographs pictures of trickery stains on the carpet and  
stains on the memory"

-Robert Smith  
"Disintegration"

"The memory throws up high and dry  
A crowd of twisted things"

-T.S. Eliot  
"Rhapsody on a Windy Night"

"There is a shorter, purer novel locked inside this shaggy  
monster"

-Clark Blaise  
on Midnight's Children, 19.

"As you read this letter you must be thinking that I have  
completely forgotten the world we left behind. I go on and  
on about the camp, about its various aspects, trying to  
unravel their deeper significance, as though there were to  
be no future for us except right here..."

But I do remember our room."

-Tadeusz Borowski  
"Auschwitz, Our Home  
(A Letter)", 120-121.

"Of interest is a rare 10" LP, 'This is Bunk Johnson  
Talking...', issued by William Russell's American Music  
Label, which has Bunk Johnson whistling the way he remembers  
Bolden playing"

-Michael Ondaatje  
Coming Through Slaughter, 87.

## I

### THE PROBLEM OF INTRODUCTION

Rushdie owes an obvious debt to Laurence Sterne, both in details (an obsession with noses, with impotence) and in narrative manner (including a beginning some thirty years before the hero's birth); and he is a superb stylist, who brings to his task the same kind of esoteric learning and mischievous enjoyment that Sterne brought to his. Like Sterne, too, he is a fine but maddening storyteller, offering the reader hints and promises, deliberately delaying the flow of narrative, and gleefully recapitulating his achievements. (Choice, 1549)

The resemblances between Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children have been noted, but no pressure has yet been applied to this acknowledgement of the influence of Sterne upon Rushdie. The quotation above is an example of the limited extent to which criticism has progressed on the subject; it is not attributed to a writer and is simply a brief review. However, the quotation says more about Rushdie's debt to Sterne than most if not all of the articles on Midnight's Children. This thesis attempts to examine in detail the affinities between the two novels. I will explore the function of memory in the novels, focusing on its application to the storytelling process. The implications of memory for writing and reading are a link between Tristram Shandy and Midnight's Children. However, this

study will not merely treat the concept of memory in isolation, as this would lead to aberration. Instead, the concept of memory will be examined in its function as the primary source of interrelatedness within each novel, as well as in its role as the basis for comparison between the two novels. A study limited to the two novels in question, without mention of other novels both similar and different from them, will at first seem to be an extremely insular undertaking. After all, Laurence Sterne writes from a tradition including Swift and Cervantes, while Salman Rushdie not only owes a literary debt to these authors but also to Proust, Woolf, Joyce, Grass and many others. Bill Buford describes Rushdie as a "garrulous story-teller who single-handedly returns the English language to the tradition of magic realism, that charmed line extending from Cervantes through Sterne to, most recently, Milan Kundera and Gabriel Marquez" (Buford, 22). This only hints at authors writing in a similar vein to Sterne and Rushdie, but it is just as important to remember authors like James or Fielding who represent aspects of novel writing which first Sterne and then Rushdie parody or comment upon in their own style. To embark on a detailed study of this sort would, however, extend the bounds of this thesis to unmanageable proportions. Moreover, it would inaugurate a line of enquiry tangential to the main axis, by removing the focus from the two novels under examination.

While this one-on-one approach must by its exclusivity leave unattempted any detailed analysis of such interesting areas of speculation as the respective trends in the novels of the contemporaries of Sterne and Rushdie, it does, however, provide an opportunity to explore the worlds within Tristram Shandy and Midnight's Children. By examining the techniques both Sterne and Rushdie use to apply memory to the writing of their novels, I will provide new perspectives on each novel. Having written this section, I have just remembered that there is no problem of introduction. Read on...

## II

### THE PROBLEM OF ENTRY

It is not enough to say that Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children contains many similarities to Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy. In order to compare the function of memory in both novels, it is necessary to first enumerate some of the correspondences between the works. Birth, time, names and noses are dominant concerns in the novels. While these similarities are quite obvious, they must still be listed. A register of the affinities between the novels is no replacement for a treatment of the works as respective wholes. However, each of the novels resembles a loose affiliation of fragments. Moreover, this fragmentation actually forms a semblance of coherence in the works of Sterne and Rushdie. The similarities cannot be completely isolated, as birth and time, for example, are interrelated. This pattern continues, however absurdly, to include family curses, wounds, absent fathers and knots. The most striking similarities between the novels, which are the first-person storytelling of Tristram Shandy and Saleem Sinai, and also their listeners within the text, will be discussed at length in a later chapter on the application of memory to narrative form. To clear the way for this discussion, it is necessary to write a chapter on similarities.

There are different ways to approach birth. Sterne's Tristram Shandy and Rushdie's Midnight's Children provide a glimpse of the problems involved not only in the delivery of people in childbirth but also in the conception of ideas and words. Consequently, the novels become so detailed that the respective narrators are carried back to a time long before their own births. Accordingly, Saleem Sinai is not born until the novel is 116 pages old. As Salman Rushdie notes, he is fully aware of "the Tristram Shandy trick" (interview with Glendinning, 36). This birth is deferred from the announcement in the opening line of Midnight's Children: "I was born in the city of Bombay" (MC, 9). Rushdie's novel playfully touches on Sterne's work and Tristram's unbelievably problematic birth. Tristram exacerbates the difficulty by opening the novel with his conception, which his father Walter Shandy blames for his son's troubles: "My Tristram's misfortunes began nine months before ever he came into the world" (IS, 37). The conditions of birth are tied to the lives of the narrators in the novels, and in this respect, the world of India in Midnight's Children bears an uncanny resemblance to Sterne's Shandy world.

Tristram and Saleem are each trying to deliver a book, and their labours are protracted in excruciating and usually extremely comic ways. The two novels are filled with screams and shouts. On a physical level, Tristram's mother is in competition with Dr. Slop's bag in the delivery

process (TS, 179). The attempts at birth also work at a higher level, one of ideas, as one of Walter Shandy's penetrating outbursts is aborted by a knock on the door, which is the ultimate manifestation of interruption in the Shandy household: "Here a devil of a rap at the door... crushed the head of as notable and curious a dissertation as ever was engendered in the womb of speculation" (TS, 122). There is another level in the birth process, and that is the creation on paper of a life. Tristram endeavours to give birth to himself in the novel. Parson Yorick makes a reference to this act of writing: "the paper is so strongly impregnated" (TS, 322). The language of birth, which includes references to sterility and failure, is one link between the two novels.

In Midnight's Children, Saleem Sinai is born on August 15, 1947 at the stroke of midnight. This coincides with the birth of Indian independence (MC, 116-17). Almost immediately, though, Saleem is physically exchanged with another child (MC, 117). Another physical mishap occurs as his father, Ahmed Sinai, has his toe crushed by a falling chair (MC, 116). Saleem claims responsibility, which is an early indication of his insistence on relating everything back to himself. India's failures become Saleem's failures to such an extent that his curse is the only possible explanation, in Saleem's opinion, for the bombing deaths of his relatives: "In my family, we have always been

vulnerable to things which fall" (MC, 329,341). With the men in their lives in such a weakened condition, Saleem's mother, Amina, resembles the widow Wadman in her concern for the ability of the man in her life to perform: "(she) felt the uncreated lives rotting in her womb" (MC, 175. TS, 594-5). The language of birth, along with failed attempts at conception, dominates the novel. Dr. Narlikar is the living incarnation of birth-control. He sees beauty in "sterile twentieth-century concrete" (MC, 176). The tetrapods become his ideal substitute for sex, but he is "crushed into death by the weight of his beloved obsession" (MC, 177).

This is just one of the "miscarriages of life" which plague the novels (TS, 35). The Shandy world is one created out of impotence, if that is possible, and in fact wish-fulfillment is a prevailing concern: "I wish..." (TS, 35). Like memory, wishing can involve a feeling of loss or a feeling of gain. Almost every character in Tristram Shandy wishes for something at one time or another: "---'I WISH, Dr Slop,' quoth my uncle Toby (repeating his wish for Dr Slop a second time, and with a degree of more zeal and earnestness in his manner of wishing, than he had wished at first)" (TS, 171). Tristram makes a wish for his narrative: "I wish it may have its effects;--and that all good people, both male and female, from her example, may be taught to think as well as read" (TS, 84). I wish to point out that there will be a larger discussion of the relationship

between the narrator and the reader of the novels in the next chapter. Many critics adopt this language of wish-fulfillment in their discussions of the novels: "we can open our hearts when we wish" (Nuttall, 291). Saleem Sinai is also subject to a wish or two: "...making me wish, if-only, if-only, so that, having once resigned myself to the cracks, I am now assailed by pangs of discontent, anger, fear and regret" (MC, 406). The ability of a wish to change things is always in doubt. Love is rarely consummated; Amanda and Amandus are in love but they "both drop down dead for joy" (TS, 496). In Midnight's Children, this sort of untimely interruption is taken to absurd heights; as the movie "The Lovers of Kashmir" suffers an "abortive end" due to the news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination (MC, 142). Whether it is Saleem giving birth to love, or Tristram describing the birth of gunpowder, there is an overwhelming sense of the frailty of life, emotions and even thoughts in these two novels (MC, 329. TS, 539).

Nonetheless, the births of the respective narrators seem to take on an undue emphasis. Padma notes this obsession at the end of the first book of Midnight's Children: "after all everybody gets born, it's not such a big thing" (MC, 120). Saleem, and Tristram, obviously disagree with such a statement. Tristram goes back to his conception to chastize his parents in front of readers while the Shandys perform their "duty" to him (TS, 35). Saleem

introduces someone into his story only to appropriate the person as a parent: "my inheritance includes this gift, the gift of inventing new parents whenever necessary" (MC, 108). Even this is not enough for the child born at the same time as his country, since Saleem credits himself for giving birth to his son Aadam (MC, 419). Saleem actually does give birth to the book, just as he describes his mother carrying him in book-form: "What had been (at the beginning) no bigger than a full stop had expanded into a comma, a word, a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter; now it was bursting into more complex developments, becoming, one might say, a book - perhaps an encyclopaedia - even a whole language..." (MC, 100). Rushdie builds on Sterne's novel by drawing on a narrator who is obsessed with writing down the details of his life, as Tristram is, and creating Saleem Sinai, whose birth occurs at a crucial point in India's history: "After all, one is not born every day" (MC, 112).

The openings of each novel place emphasis on time and clocks. Tristram's mother interrupts Walter during intercourse to ask him a question: "have you not forgot to wind up the clock?" (TS, 35). Similarly, Saleem's is a "clock-ridden, crime-stained birth" (MC, 10). The novels hit the reader ticking, and there is a sense of seconds ticking away for the duration of Tristram's and Saleem's stories: "time (having no further use for me) is running out" (MC, 9, 106). Tristram's battle with time is an

obsession. He wants to record his life and opinions before he dies (TS, 65,179). Saleem faces the same problem, but his worries are considerably increased, in his opinion, because of the exact time of his birth: "thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (MC, 9). As if the novel's readers need reminding, Saleem even entitles a chapter "Tick, tock" (MC, 106).

Sterne and Rushdie do not present a conventional view of the clock-face of time since the exacting nature of time is a foil to the failures of the narrators and characters in the two novels. Tristram frequently asserts that there is no time to look into the certainty of details in his story in a novel which professes to be concerned with his life and opinions (TS, 53). Time is present in the novel so that Tristram can continually exhibit his failure to control it. Similarly, time eludes Saleem. The British try to turn back the clock, but this is absurd in a country where time does not exist in any meaningful sense (MC, 33): "no people whose word for 'yesterday' is the same as their word for 'tomorrow' can be said to have a firm grip on time" (MC, 106). Saleem attempts to adhere to the laws of time in a Shandean fashion, but is constantly bewildered: "Saddled now with flypaper-dreams and imaginary ancestors, I am still over a day away from being born...but now the remorseless

ticktock reasserts itself: twenty-nine hours to go, twenty-eight, twenty-seven..." (MC, 111).

A curious relationship develops between the titles of the novels and the actual contents of the works they introduce. It is all Tristram can do to get himself born into the narrative, and even then, his life and opinions are galloped over: "-A great MORAL might be picked handsomely out of this, but I have not time-'tis enough to say, wherever the demolition began, 'twas equally fatal to the sash-window" (TS, 371). In the same way, Saleem is a child of midnight, but he is not born into the narrative for a long time.

A straightforward linear description of birth and life is rendered impossible due to the complexities of just one life. Tristram describes his book as a machine, "one wheel within another" (TS, 95). In effect, the book is a clock. Tristram extends this idea to his family, with references to the various "springs" and "wheels" (TS, 70, 280, 285, 353, 391). The Shandy "machine" is as much "out of joints" as the great clock of Lippius of Basil (TS, 353, 506). However, this is all the better for Tristram: "I shall be able to give the world a better account of the clock in its decay, than I could have done in its flourishing condition" (TS, 506). "Time presses" upon Tristram, but he seems to be able to relate his story only under such constrictions (TS, 388).

Saleem Sinai is fathered by time, but even this father is inadequate for him (MC, 111). Midnight's Children has a clocktower, and it is also obsolete: "a clocktower which has not worked since the rains of 1947" (MC, 146). Time stands literally in a state of disrepair in India. In an attempt to stitch his own life together with the life of the nation, Saleem battles with time. However, he finds himself with "no time to pause" and yet he must retreat "a little in time" repeatedly to explain things (MC, 275). Time is personified, only to be shot after a "slow-motion chase" (MC, 359). In Saleem's India, "time matters" but, paradoxically, "Time (also) lies dead in a rice-paddy" (MC, 9, 359, 419). It is no wonder when Saleem goes to such trouble to twist time backwards and forwards. Tristram also does battle with time, in an attempt to write and live. Indeed, both narrators constantly remind readers that the end of a book based on an individual's life signifies the death of that individual: "Time wastes too fast: every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity Life follows my pen" (IS, 582). Despite this fact both narrators share a devilish wit and laugh in the face of time, which is also the face of death. Their humour revolves mostly around noses, but this will be better discussed at a later point. On the subject of time, Midnight's Children is "a cry of despair" (Couto, 62); however, it is also a comic work which exhibits "the unflagging zest of a Tristram Shandy" (Cunningham, 535).

One way to measure Midnight's Children alongside Tristram Shandy is by comparing the noses in the novels. Both narrators play with their noses, leaving the reader to decide if a nose in the text is only a nose or if there is a sexual pun involved. Sexual failure haunts both Tristram's and Saleem's families. Robert Towers has also pointed his finger at the possibility that Saleem's nose is a carry-over from Tristram Shandy (Towers, 30). The size of the nose is not so telling, then, since storytelling takes up Tristram's and Saleem's time. They are "in love with storytelling itself" (Frichett, 85). Consequently, they have little time for anything else. Tristram's nose is crushed at birth, but in his typical digressive manner, he uncovers that the loss of his nose is due to nothing else but his parents' "marriage-articles" (TS, 167). Saleem trails his huge nose back to his grandfather's accident in 1915 (MC, 10). Tristram inserts a chapter on noses to address this nose problem, while simultaneously revealing nothing: "For by the word Nose, throughout all this long chapter of noses, and in every other part of my work, where the word Nose occurs,--I declare, by that word I mean a Nose, and nothing more, or less" (TS, 225).

Readers are left with two paths to take on the issue of noses, one that is "dirty" or one that is "clean" (TS, 225). Tristram's diminished nose is the making of him (TS, 232). Similarly, Saleem's nose is essential to his

character. It has powers "to make history", while his other pencil or cucumber, in Padma's opinion, lacks any such ambitions (MC, 17, 51). Instead, Saleem spends himself in "a breathless stream of words" (Prichett, 85). Tristram goes to similar lengths in his discussion of noses, even including "Slawkenbergius's Tale" in the novel (TS, 249). In the tale, people want to "touch" a stranger's nose, to discover if it is false or true (TS, 251, 255). They are frustrated in their curiosity, having been aroused but left unsatisfied. This tale adopts the nose pun to play with double readings, ending with the whole town following the stranger's nose unheeding of the fact that their town will be taken over by the French (TS, 273). Their suspicions fall only on the nose; this resembles Tristram's grandmother and her concerns about his grandfather's nose (TS, 224, 269). Even Tristram cannot resist the excitement of all this dwelling on noses: "Lord, how I have heated my imagination with this metaphor!" (TS, 526).

Saleem Sinai's grandfather, Aadam Aziz, possesses a "mighty organ", that is to say, he has a large nose (MC, 13). Its "bridge is wide", and this description echoes Uncle Toby's confusion when a bridge is necessary for Tristram's depressed nose (MC, 13. TS, 221). Tai the boatman tells Aadam about noses, which enables Saleem to record a cliché into a lesson for his own life: "Follow your nose and you'll go far" (MC, 18). This warning saves Aadam's life, albeit

without his knowledge: "As Brigadier Dyer issues a command the sneeze hits my grandfather full in the face. 'Yaaaakh-thoooo!' he sneezes and falls forward, losing his balance, following his nose and thereby saving his life" (MC, 36). Not only are noses capable of saving lives but they also run down the generations: "We were a dynasty born out of a nose" (MC, 272). This is quite an achievement, that is, if a nose is only a nose. According to Saleem, a nose is the key to his pickled form of history: "and above all a nose capable of discerning the hidden languages of what-must-be-pickled, its humours and messages and emotions..." (MC, 460). The similarity between this and Walter Shandy's hypothesis on noses is plain to see, in fact, it is as plain as...: "(...And already I can see the repetitions beginning; because didn't my grandmother also find enormous...and the stroke, too, was not the only...and the Brass Monkey had her birds...the curse begins already, and we haven't even got to the noses yet!)" (MC, 12. IS, 265).

Speaking of noses, as Tristram and Saleem often do, another subject comes to mind, namely that of names: "though there are many stories...there is not one amongst them which my father read over with half the delight--it flattered two of his strangest hypotheses together--his NAMES and his NOSES" (IS, 265). Just as the birth and nose of a child are crucial, the name of that child holds major significance in the worlds of the two novels. Tristram is

named by default, since Walter's 'Trismegistus' is distorted by accident, and the rest is the history of a child who has been "tristramed" (IS, 77,240,281). In one of his many systems, Walter places equal weight on the propagation and the naming of a child (IS, 163). Consequently, the misnaming strengthens Walter's view of the failing fortunes of the Shandy house (IS, 282). Just as Tristram does not have the opportunity to pick his own nose, he is also tied to his name until he dies (IS, 288).

A name is a container of sorts. It holds a person's identity. Tristram's identity is out of sorts, for his name or container is altered and as a consequence it fails to hold Tristram together. He is not wise Trismegistus, just "sad" Tristram (IS, 81). All of the names in Tristram Shandy have different associations. A name can be an obvious echo like Parson Yorick, descriptive as in Corporal Trim, deemed unworthy by association as in aunt Dinah, or simply a faceless label like Bobby that exists in the novel only as a name to be peeled away (IS, 52,69,89,139,312). There are many more names in the novel, as in any novel, but in Tristram Shandy the names of characters are an intricate part of the drama and comedy of the novel. Le Fever and Dr. Slop present these two extremes (IS, 123,360). Tristram also bombards readers with expert after expert, but the chief among them is Hafen Slawkenbergius, whose grandsounding name roughly translates as a chamber-pot of

offal (IS, 249, 634). If this name is full of Hafén's identity, then Tristram is probably not such a bad name by comparison.

In Midnight's Children, Saleem goes by as many names as India has ethnic groups. His world is a fluid one, where identity is an elusive resource that is in a state of depletion. Timothy Hyman has also noted the inability of the characters in Midnight's Children to maintain a grip on themselves (Hyman, 135). In addition, there are problems when it comes to names and nicknames. Indira Gandhi becomes "the Widow" (MC, 173, 421). Evelyn Burns becomes Eve, the "Adam's-apple" of Saleem's eye (MC, 181). Amina Sinai has her name changed from Mumtaz, while Wee Willie Winkie never reveals his real name (MC, 64, 101-102). "Reverend Mother" hovers over the novel, while Padma, Saleem's "dung-lotus", listens to its composition (MC, 24,32,40). Saleem's sister, once known only as the "Brass Monkey", earns a new name of "Jamila Singer" (MC, 107, 294). Cyrus-the-great's name is transformed by his mother into an even more extraordinary one, that of "Lord Khusro Khusrovand" (MC, 269). His mother does this to erase her late husband from Cyrus' identity, remaking her son in "her own strange image" (MC, 268-9).

Nothing is stable in Saleem's India, not even a name: "There are as many versions of India as Indians" (MC, 269). It is no surprize that Reverend Mother begins to call everything "whatsitsname" (MC, 41, 138). Saleem changes his

name so often that it almost becomes a disease: "Saleem Sinai, variously called Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha and even Piece-of-the-Moon" (MC, 9). While Saleem is called Sinai, his name has the associations of "desert-mountain-covenant of promised land-restrictive commandments" (Parameswaran, 45). However, Saleem's heritage stems from William Methwold, or "Myth world" (Parameswaran, 45). Padma rebukes Saleem when she discovers that his name is not his own (MC, 118). Parvati-the-witch, a nameful in herself, later gives 'buddha' back his name, Saleem, and restores an identity, however fragmented, to the man born with a large nose and at least two names (MC, 379).

Tristram is born, and he proves it by returning to his own conception. Even at this early stage in the proceedings, though, Walter Shandy is an absent father. His ideas of the duties required on the first Sunday of the month completely disconnect him from what he is actually doing (TS, 35-9). Consequently, Walter is never really a part of Tristram's life. This is quite a paradox, since he is Tristram's father and he does endeavour to write a Tristra-paedia totally concerned with Tristram (TS, 368). The problem is that Walter abandons Tristram while writing this work.

Similarly, Saleem's father, Ahmed Sinai, is an absent figure in his son's life. Apart from the time that Saleem's birth causes a chair to fall on Ahmed's toe, he

hardly appears in the novel (MC, 82). It is probably more accurate to say that Ahmed appears often in the novel, but he is always "fading" (MC, 201). Saleem associates his father with the smell of failure. Ahmed succumbs to "abstraction" and turns away from "unreliable...human relationships" (MC, 202). First he wants to put the Quran in "accurately chronological order", a task worthy of Walter Shandy, and then Ahmed invests his imagination and money in Dr. Narlikar's tetrapods (MC, 82, 202). Ahmed blames his family for "emasculating him so that he didn't have the energy" to re-order the Quran; this is a curious way of wording his complaint, but it does echo Padma's chagrin at Saleem for preferring his writing to her more pressing needs (MC, 296).

The absent fathers in both novels are replaced by benign uncle figures. Tristram makes this substitution obvious by devoting an entire subplot to Uncle Toby's courtship of the widow Wadman as well as writing a dedication to his uncle (TS, 230). The "goodness of his nature" is the way Tristram constantly describes his uncle (TS, 412). Toby is the hobby-horsical appendage to a pipe; he is a whistling machine, but he is also a pure soul, incapable of hurting a fly (TS, 126, 176, 230, 242, 245).

Indeed, Uncle Toby is a "lamb" (TS, 553). Saleem's Uncle Hanif is another lamb, but he is destined for slaughter. Saleem likes his uncle because Hanif is "put

together rather loosely"; he is childlike, and is childless (MC, 239). Saleem resembles his uncle to a large degree, just as Tristram favours Toby. While Hanif and Toby have the respective hobby-horsical obsessions of cards and war, Saleem and Tristram put the same kind of childlike enthusiasm into their writing (MC, 246. IS, 294). Saleem's Uncle Hanif walks off a roof, and as usual in the novel, his nephew claims responsibility:

he had stepped out into the evening sea-breeze, frightening the beggars so much (when he fell) that they gave up pretending to be blind and ran away yelling...in death as in life, Hanif Aziz espoused the cause of truth and put illusion to flight...Murder breeds death; by killing Homi Catrack, I had killed my uncle, too. It was my fault; and the dying wasn't over yet. (MC, 271)

There are many more similarities between the two novels. They are all interrelated and have some connection to identity. Wounds, for example, afflict Tristram, Saleem, and many of the characters in their respective lives. Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim and Tristram are just three on a lengthy casualty list (IS, 110, 113). Tristram is circumcised by accident as a direct consequence of Uncle Toby's cure, namely the building of a war in miniature on the bowling-green, for which Trim recruits sash-pullies from the window (IS, 367-9). Saleem is just as unfortunate, losing parts of his finger and scalp, not to mention the fact that he is literally "crumbling" to pieces (MC, 9, 234). His father's broken big toe is small suffering compared to the mass

sterilization of the *Midnight's Children* (MC, 82, 439). Saleem's personal wounds combine with his changing name to reflect his disintegrating identity. The Shandy world and Saleem's India are places where wounded people live with the failures of their births, names and noses in time. Consequently, none of the similarities between the two novels can be treated in isolation.

So much for my chapter upon similarities, which I hold to be the first chapter in my whole work; and take my word, whoever reads it, is full as well employed, as in picking noses (my variation on IS, 284).

### III

#### THE PROBLEM OF MEMORY

##### A. The Narrator

This chapter establishes two applications of memory to writing, the first being a linear recording of events while the second is more digressive. The narrator in each of the novels professes the first approach but he is continually frustrated in his attempts to capture reality. The implications of memory for writing and reading are a link between Tristram Shandy and Midnight's Children. The application of memory to reading will be recounted in the second section of this chapter. The first section will explore the application of memory to narrative form. Both Tristram Shandy and Saleem Sinai tell numerous stories under the pretext of telling their own life stories. Consequently, to explain or even find their own identities, the two narrators have to relate the history of their respective worlds.

Their narratives are related from memory, as if memory is a container of the self. The novels are not completely enveloped in the past, though, for the first misconception about memory is that it only deals with things of the past (Edwards, 265). By contrast, Saleem and

Tristram constantly refer to the ending of their respective novels. They project into their own future: "being determined as long as I live or write (which in my case means the same thing)" (IS, 175). Statements like this unite the life of the book with that of the storyteller. At the end of telling your life story, you are dead. Both narrators keep writing; they are so caught up in telling their stories that they sometimes forget that to stop doing so is to die. A fact as dark as death is not easily forgotten, but the narrators are subject to failures of memory: "This is why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget. (We are a nation of forgetters.)" (MC, 37).

Saleem and Tristram attempt to translate their lives onto paper. However, they both reject their date of birth as a satisfactory starting point. Instead, they launch their narratives from times before their births. This is of course impossible in terms of their own memories, since the events they relate occur prior to a time when Saleem or Tristram can be considered as reliable witnesses. They account for this disparity by attributing their stories to various documents and anecdotes. Not only do the narrators relate the past, but they also rely on other peoples' versions of memories, further removing the narratives from the actual identities of Tristram and Saleem. They both go to great lengths to reclaim the past. Tristram has a

concern for "the recovery of a dead or dying past - the immediate past of his family and also the more distant historical past of some of the interpolated documents" (Dyson, 127). This comment on Tristram could easily apply to Saleem, whose narrative is also born out of the past. Keith Wilson has also noted this relationship between narrator and memory in Midnight's Children (Wilson, 28). Rudolf Bader describes Saleem as saving "the present through the presentation of the past" (Bader, 76). Saleem attempts to place history in pickle-jars, a metaphor for the chapters in the novel: "Twenty-six pickle-jars stand gravely on a shelf; twenty-six special blends, each with its identifying label" (MC, 384). This concern for remembering and labelling memories represents the narrators' struggle to find themselves. Helene Moglen sees Sterne's Tristram as a "counter-hero" because his narrative asks the question "Who am I?" (Moglen in The Winged Skull, 73).<sup>1</sup> Moglen does not go as far as Tristram does, though, since both narrators digress from that question to its logical predecessor - "Who was I?" They look into their past to discover themselves in the present.

Saleem and Tristram employ memory in a self-conscious way. Patricia Waugh attributes Tristram's

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1 In the text of this thesis, all parenthetical references to papers from The Winged Skull will be attributed to the author of the essay in question. However, the bibliographical entry will appear under the names of the editors of the collection, Arthur H. Cash and John M. Stedmond.

exploits in memory to the undercutting of memory itself, highlighting it as a construction in the same way that language is a construction (Waugh, 3). The narrative in Tristram Shandy involves putting past memories into words, and this process, according to Waugh, is far from objective (Waugh, 3). This is the problem that both narrators face. The only way to convey their lives through memory is by putting it all down on paper: "Every present action, including the act of writing, conjures up memories of past causes, conditions, or contingent associations, which in chain reaction fashion, carry the same process still further" (Davidson, 20). Saleem does not wait for memories to come. Instead, he deliberately explores the concept of memory: "I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks" (MC, 38). Tristram also draws attention to the fact that he is incorporating memory into his narrative; his reliance upon remembering things gradually suggests that his work cannot exist without the power of memory: "--Not that I altogether disapprove of what Montaigne advances upon it--'tis admirable in its way--(I quote by memory.)" (TS, 289-90).

Considering that Tristram and Saleem are writing novels, it is strange that they even have to resort to memory. However, memory is not a simple subject to discuss, and the narrators in the two novels are not alone in their

puzzlement at the workings of memory. One problem in remembrance concerns "factual memory" in opposition to "personal memory" (Edwards, 266). Tristram and Saleem attempt to corroborate their stories by referring to official documents or events such as the battle of Namur or the death of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (TS, 103. MC, 278). Both narrators go even further, until public and private history begin to leak into each other, resulting in errors in the two narratives: "The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" (MC, 166). A.D. Nuttall views the memories of past occurrences by a private person as subject to verification by "public criteria" (Nuttall, 284). Tristram is a central figure, but "he simply provides a magnetic field in which the array of minutiae can, like iron filings, form themselves into designs" (Stedmond, 42). This magnetic quality in Tristram perhaps explains why the Shandy people or clock-like machines are out of order; the eccentricity in the Shandy household is appropriately conveyed in Tristram's narrative, which acts in the manner of a faulty machine. This is a direct consequence of the narrator's memories.

We are no closer to the concept of memory. We have only the fact that Tristram and Saleem, despite their

positions as storytellers, are less than infallible when it comes to using memory. They are proof that "false memories" can occur (Edwards, 266). Saleem's vision is fragmentary since he has "a fallible memory compounded by quirks of character and of circumstance" (Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands, 10). His error concerning Gandhi's death is one of many; it leads to doubts regarding Saleem's reliability as a narrator. W.J. Weatherby has also had these doubts (Weatherby, 48). Maria Couto describes Saleem's narrative as "the pickling of memory, time (and) history" (Couto, 62). Saleem's penchant for pickling has suspicious implications when he transfers his pickling process onto history. Valentine Cunningham also sees that Saleem's cooking and writing implies that he is "altering" things (Cunningham, 535). Saleem's memory is flawed, which calls his narrative into doubt, but this is as certain as one person can be when tracing life from memory. Maria Couto also views the distortions of Saleem's narrative as contributing to the novel's "pervasive tone of uncertainty" (Couto, 62). History is the most important theme in Midnight's Children, as Rudolf Bader notes, but he fails to elaborate this point (Bader, 75). The recapturing of history through memory is a more satisfactory way of wording this thematic concern, since Saleem's grasp of history is constantly in question: "(I am suddenly reminded of Nadir Khan's friend the painter: is this an Indian disease, this urge to encapsulate the

whole of reality? Worse: am I infected, too?" (MC, 75). If the narrative is history in any sense of the word, then Saleem must account for his errors: "Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? Am I so far gone, in my desperate need for meaning, that I'm prepared to distort everything - to re-write the whole history of my times purely in order to place myself in a central role?" (MC, 166). Saleem does indeed place himself in a central role, dominating the narrative even before he is born. It is as if he wants to familiarize himself with events which shape him, even though they occur before his birth. Rushdie has also commented on this prevailing concern in the novel for reclaiming important knowledge: "Most of what matters in our lives takes place in our absence" (Rushdie in Haffenden's Interviews with Novelists, MC, 427). Saleem's fallible memory attempts to reconstruct events which the narrator does not witness; considering that Saleem makes mistakes about things he witnesses, his record of events prior to his birth is doubly in question.

Tristram Shandy also looks back in his narrative. He shares Saleem's ability to describe past events in colourful detail. Memories of the past are lively and forceful (Edwards, 267). Consequently, despite Tristram's fallible memory, he believes that what he is writing is the truth (IS, 63, 93). This is why he does not change his version of the past. Wayne C. Booth sees "the narrator's

indeterminately untrustworthy judgement" as an indication of the "modern" quality of the novel (Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, 239). Booth's use of the term "modern" is a prime example of the trend of critics to label Sterne's novel as entirely modern without acknowledging that Sterne writes from a tradition of learned wit including, for example, the essays of Montaigne. However, narrators plagued by uncertainty are far more visible and vulnerable in this century. Like Saleem Sinai, Tristram is not above pointing out his diminishing abilities: "(and shall be kept so, whilst I have power to preserve anything)" (TS, 531). If the narrators of the two novels in question are themselves in question, the implications for the validity of knowledge are ominous. Paul Edwards concludes that any discussion of memory cannot escape a taint of skepticism (Edwards, 272-274). Saleem and Tristram base their narratives on their ability to remember things, but their lives and opinions continually collide with each other and also with the official version of history.

As narrators, their duty is to tell a story, but their failing memories threaten to destroy their credibility. Ian Watt emphasizes time in his discussion of narrative form; the only way a speaker can persuade someone else that anything happened is by saying where and when the event took place (Watt, "Realism and the Novel", 385). Tristram writes from memory but he frequently "can't

recollect" names, never mind times (TS, 174). In the first chapter of this study, the discussion of time in the two novels included references to the narrators' insistence that they have no time to search for or check details of their narratives. The ensuing gaps in their stories correlate with gaps in their memories. Depending on the validity of memory, then, the novels are either something saved or something lost. Robert Gorham Davis notes that Tristram Shandy is an example of something saved by memory:

"Tristram Shandy is in perfect accord with the operation of memory in leaping back and forth in time and reporting events of various degrees of remoteness with equal vividness or immediacy" (Davis in The Winged Skull, 33). Tristram's visual translation of his memories resembles not just the art of painting but also a movie being shown on the page or screen of the novel. This may seem to be a perilous leap of the imagination, but it is just such a leap that Sterne makes in his novel. However, I am leaping ahead of myself, for a discussion of the visual aspects of the novels and their role in the relationship between the narrators and readers will appear in its proper place, in the second section of this chapter. Returning to the memory at hand, that is, the ability or rather the inability of Tristram and Saleem to be certain about their accounts of the past, the implication arises that the present of the narratives is just as subject to failure. After all, they both attempt to explain their present lives in terms of the past.

"Orderly arrangement is essential to good memory", according to Frances Yates in The Art of Memory (Yates, 17). This is the lesson learned from the poet Simonides, whom Yates credits as the inventor of memory. According to his feat of memory, people must store the things "they wish to remember" in their memory (Yates, 17). This echoes the discussion of wish-fulfillment in the first chapter of this study. If people are to store only the things they wish to remember, though, this implies that a choice is possible; people can leave things out of the memory process. This has implications for Tristram and Saleem. It raises questions concerning the details which the narrators may or may not choose to remember. Both Tristram and Saleem employ voluntary memories to relate their lives. They announce that they are consciously making an effort to remember: "I can see it all perfectly - it's amazing how much you can remember when you try" (MC, 125). Nevertheless, there is a darker side to remembering. Corporal Trim's memory of his brother Tom becomes a painful and very real obstacle when he attempts to read the sermon (TS, 153-154). Tristram ranges from playful reminders that he has forgotten his uncle Toby to deliberate sabotage of his own narrative: "--No doubt, Sir,--there is a whole chapter wanting here--and a chasm of ten pages made in the book by it" (TS, 88, 311). Tristram, then, is also assaulted by involuntary memories, but he tears them out of his history. Saleem Sinai is just

as suspect when it comes to suppressing information: "Here I record a merciful blank in my memory. Nothing can induce me to remember... (and) there is no chutney or pickle capable of unlocking the doors behind which I have locked those days!" (MC, 433). Simonides' ordered system also implies that distortions occur if order is lost. Both Tristram and Saleem profess order in their narratives, taking their lives to extremes by beginning decades before their births. This is their version of order.

Memory itself is part of an order as it is one of the five parts of rhetoric (Yates, 17, 24). Moreover, memory may be the most important part of rhetoric, for without it, there can be no performance. Consequently, the oral tradition depends on memory as does all storytelling. Saleem and Tristram hinder their progress from the start, simply because their emphasis on memory drags the narrative further and further back in time. Patricia Waugh has also noted Tristram's "problem of beginnings" (Waugh, 26). In Tristram Shandy, the person in the present derives his "character and manifestations entirely from the past" (Baird, 803). In one perspective, Tristram and Saleem are attempting to relate events in their true order. They return to times and people which shape their lives, but once they start this process, they soon fall prey to the endless regressions. Nancy Walsh notes that the danger of Tristram's method of storytelling is that he becomes

"trapped in a seamless web of memory, thus obstructing the forward, progressive flow of the narrative" (Walsh, 54-55). A.D. Nuttall views the repeated faltering in Tristram's story as a "sustained disruption of the norm of linear narrative" (Nuttall, 51). Memory is responsible for this breach, or rather the vagaries of memory are to blame. Tristram constructs a narrative out of this quest for order: "This will not be explained the worse, for setting off, as I generally do, at a little distance from the subject" (TS, 432).

Saleem Sinai also succumbs to a digressive path filled with knots and confusion. Valentine Cunningham marvels at Saleem's penchant for "spinning webs of meaning around pepperpots and bicycles, spittoons and Mrs Gandhi's parted hair" (Cunningham, 535). He forgets to add that Saleem's webs are spun from memory, according to a system delivered by the very lack of order in the novel. Edward Elishen also notes this: "(it is a) narrative system that permits the storyteller to gasp, despair, exult, wave wands, throw up his hands, wipe a sweating brow, and be clearly observed in the act of manipulating enormous narrative burdens" (Elishen, 24). Indeed, Saleem is engaged in a battle with order which is inextricably linked to memory, time and writing: "...I have become, it seems to me, the apex of an isosceles triangle, supported equally by twin deities, the wild god of memory and the lotus-goddess of the

present...but must I now become reconciled to the narrow one-dimensionality of a straight line?" (MC, 150). This is a resounding echo of Tristram Shandy's struggle with the "line" of narrative, nowhere more pronounced than at the end of Volume VI:

If I mend at this rate, it is not impossible-- by the good leave of his grace of Benevento's devils--but I may arrive hereafter at the excellency of going on even thus;

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which is a line drawn as straight as I could draw it, by a writing-master's ruler, (borrowed for that purpose) turning neither to the right hand or to the left. (TS, 454)

The line in this quotation is not only an untied knot but it is also "the line of GRAVITATION", a pun on the grave or death. Once again, there is the sudden memory of the narrative's end, which in turn signifies Tristram's death. The end of the book and the end of his life are bound together in Tristram's mind, as if in a knot.

One cannot mention associated ideas in Tristram Shandy without thinking of John Locke. His work, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, has a significant bearing on both Sterne's novel and Midnight's Children. However, it is not just for the traditional point made by critics that Sterne works from Locke's essay and ideas. As will be discussed in the following pages, there is another view held by some critics; they believe that Locke's essay does not merit the attention it has received in studies of Tristram

Shandy. Locke's brief discussion of the association of ideas must be read in conjunction with his comments on memory in order to see exactly how Sterne views him. This will also help to account for the narratives in Tristram Shandy and Midnight's Children. In Book II, xxxiii, of Locke's essay, he describes the association of ideas as a "wrong connexion of ideas" (Locke, 316). According to Locke, ideas move along as if on a "track", but two disconnected ideas can become one. This "tying together of ideas" is, in effect, a knot in a person's mind, a mental handkerchief of sorts (Locke, 316). Since this association is opposite to reason, Locke can find no name for it but "madness" (315). Moreover, this "accidental" connection can go unknown to its victims, whom Locke describes as applauding "themselves as zealous champions of the truth, when indeed they are contending for error" (320). Such are Saleem and Tristram.

In Book II, x, John Locke calls memory "the store-house of our ideas" (Locke, 97). However, he argues that these ideas must be deeply impressed, for a heedless effort will not set the "stamp" deep enough (98). Even if an idea is stamped in our memories, Locke points out that time will cause the idea to fade, as all ideas fade; even vivid childhood memories often "die" (98). This word choice is extremely appropriate. Not only thoughts but also memories can be aborted or left undelivered. Locke describes these

fading memories as resembling tombstones, with clear marble edges but "the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away" (Locke, 98). This description is very telling considering the marble and black pages in Tristram Shandy (TS, 61, 233). When we try to recover a fading memory, "our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching" (Locke, 98).

Locke ponders a few possible aspects of memory in his brief discussion. He considers the possibility that the "animal spirits" convey memory (Locke, 98). Walter Shandy is very much of the opinion that these two things are connected (TS, 295). However, it is probably the case that Locke and Walter do not mean the same thing when they use the words "animal spirits". Locke also states the possibility that "the constitution of the body does sometimes influence the memory" (Locke, 99). This possibility haunts both Saleem's and Tristram's narratives. Locke provides the example that a disease can wipe out an entire memory (Locke, 99). In Saleem's case, and country, the disease is optimism; it clouds over past horrors in the minds of the forgetful nation (MC, 299). Tristram also competes with the crushing realities of life; he retreats into a world of memory where he can forget about the cares of the world. Locke concludes that without memory the rest of our faculties are mostly "useless" (Locke, 99). In effect, a person who has lost her memory cannot live. He

also extends his discussion to hint at a supreme being able to hold all times at once in a now that is "always present" (Locke, 100).<sup>2</sup>

John Locke's essay does not relate directly to the two novels in question. Locke is more important for the light, perhaps by digression, which he shines upon memory and the narrative form of Midnight's Children and Tristram Shandy. Arthur H. Cash also de-emphasizes the importance of Locke to Sterne. Cash considers the word digression to be "meaningless" when applied to Sterne's novel (Cash, 125). Since digression is everywhere in the novel, Cash feels that the word itself is useless. However, Cash forgets that a novel like Tristram Shandy is the ultimate example of a digressive text, and for this reason the word digression is useful. Digression, as defined in The Oxford English Dictionary, is "the action of digressing, or turning aside from a path or track" (OED). This kind of deviation dominates Sterne's novel in a way that should not be forgotten. Cash is correct to point out that Locke's section on the association of ideas appeared as an appendage

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<sup>2</sup> Locke's essay includes numerous examples for every idea. He adds a final one in his discussion of ideas "for the pleasant oddness of it" (Locke, 319). Before he gives the example, though, Locke defends it against any possible charge that he has ornamented it "with some comical circumstances of a little beyond precise nature". This serious defence can be seen in a comical light. Locke proceeds to describe the odd person, assuring readers that everyone knows someone like this. I hasten to add that everyone has also read someone like Locke, whose logic is a well constructed mask for a sprawling essay. Locke ends the section in typical Shandean fashion: "it is impossible to speak clearly and distinctly of our knowledge...without considering first the nature...of language; which therefore must be the business of the next book" (Locke, 320).

on Locke's essay in its fourth edition (Cash, 126). Locke does of course outline some thoughts and labels like "the train of ideas", but he neglects to expand and explain these things. Cash has also seen this (Cash, 129). To him, Sterne uses digression only as a "subsidiary comic device" (Cash, 134-5).

The fact that Sterne's novel is influenced by Locke's essay is a commonplace, but the essay is just one among a series of launching points for Sterne. Tristram Shandy itself is a launching point waiting to throw up; this is brought forth by Tristram's equivalent of mental vomiting onto the page. Tristram reaches or retches deep within himself and his past to such an extent that his memory patterns do have one thing in common - Tristram. James E. Swearingen has also noted this common factor, albeit not quite so graphically or tastelessly (Swearingen, 69). This self-concern on the part of Tristram extends to his memory of his impending demise. Swearingen has noted this as well; he discusses this future concern as having an influence on memories of the past (Swearingen, 109). Saleem Sinai should not be forgotten here, for he suffers from a similar dilemma or digression:

Interruptions, nothing but interruptions!  
The different parts of my somewhat  
complicated life refuse, with a wholly  
unreasonable obstinacy, to stay neatly in  
their separate compartments. Voices spill  
out of their clocktower to invade the circus-  
ring, which is supposed to be Evie's domain...  
and now, at the very moment when I should be

describing the fabulous children of ticktock,  
 I'm being whisked away by Frontier Mail -  
 spirited off to the decaying world of my  
 grandparents, so that Aadam Aziz is getting in  
 the way of the natural unfolding of my tale.  
 Ah well. What can't be cured must be  
 endured. (MC, 187)

John Locke's essay contains more interruptions and  
 learned roundabouts than Tristram Shandy and Midnight's  
 Children combined. Consequently, there is a huge store of  
 potential laughter for someone reading the essay with a mind  
 for the comic. A.D. Nuttall has also noted this; he  
 describes Locke's essay as a "monster...in detail luminous  
 but as a whole rambling and unintelligible" (Nuttall, 45,  
 53). Sterne adapts Locke's essay for his own comic  
 purposes. Locke is important, but as is so often the case  
 in the novel, Locke's essays are not so important that they  
 can escape Sterne's comedic fire. In his "parody of  
 narrative representation, Sterne discloses the skull that  
 lies beneath the flesh of history as well as of fiction"  
 (Zimmerman, 144).

The art of narrative is like a hobby-horse for the  
 narrator. In Tristram Shandy, the hobby-horse is easily  
 tripped up, but it is also an escape from the crushing  
 forces of life. Norman N. Holland also discusses the hobby-  
 horse, which he sees as the central symbol in Sterne's  
 novel: "man's belief that he dominates reality is as  
 illusory as the child's pretence that he covers distance on  
 a hobby-horse" (Holland, 425). There should be no surprise

that Tristram and Saleem place their own hobby-horsical narratives first at all times. A hobby-horse has a part to play in memory, too: "A Hobby-Horse allows a man to forget himself, his limitations, and his failures" (Davidson, 20). Jean-Jacques Mayoux argues that Tristram not only accepts "mental interference" but he also constructs his narrative from it in a blending of past and future where memory steps across as an obstacle to linear narrative (Mayoux in The Winged Skull, 7). As in all other aspects of the novel, Tristram treats his hobby-horse in a self-conscious manner: "--I'll tread upon no one,--quoth I to myself when I mounted --I'll take a good rattling gallop; but I'll not hurt the poorest jack-ass upon the road" (TS, 296). Tristram does indeed treasure his narrative as if it were a toy from his childhood. Once again, a discussion of the novel returns to the world of children's games. Memory, and consequently narrative, are hobby-horses for both Saleem Sinai and Tristram Shandy. Saleem writes in a country with a strong oral tradition: "One of the things about the Indian tradition is that the performer and the creator are almost always the same person" (Rushdie in Interviews..., 253). Saleem, then, puts on a show. It is as much for himself, though, as for anyone else, and this is where the hobby-horse rides in. Saleem has every right to please himself because he is trying to find himself in the past. The fact that he relates his own story is the purest form of memory

preservation. However, the theme of fragmentation is nowhere more pronounced than in Saleem's narrative.

Saleem is childlike, and this is reflected in his narrative. His attention span is no greater than his retention span. This is enough to make his head spin a story which places himself at the heart of the novel. Rushdie has also commented on Saleem's narrative distortions: "(You can see Saleem's) whole persona as a childlike one, because children believe themselves to be the centre of the universe" (Rushdie in Interviews..., 243). As Rushdie notes, Saleem never grows up; he continues to believe himself to be the "prime mover" in history (Rushdie in Interviews..., 243). However, Saleem's childlike nature serves other purposes. Rudolf Bader recalls Saleem's "innocence" when reporting events of war (Bader, 78-9). While Maria Couto interprets the novel's flowing sentence structure and repetition as an echo of "the chant of traditional texts" (Couto, 63), I would like to suggest another possibility. Saleem's narrative possesses the charm of a child's word game or rhyme:

'Back to Bom!' I yelled happily...and then we were in a real Bombay taxi, and I was wallowing in the sounds of hot-channa-hot hawkers, the throng of camels bicycles and people people people, thinking how Mumbavedi's city made Rawalpindi look like a village, rediscovering especially the colours, the forgotten vividness of gulmohr and bougainvillaea, the livid green of the waters of the Mahalaxmi Temple 'tank', the stark black-and-white of the traffic policemen's sun umbrellas and the blue-and-

yellowness of their uniforms; but most of all the  
blue blue blue of the sea... (MC, 297)

Mary Pereira teaches him this game of fluid identity:

Anything you want to be, you kin be,  
You kin be just what-all you want (MC, 383).

I have just remembered that I left some of my  
remarks on Locke's essay out of my chapter - but to insert  
them here might ruin the paragraph I'm upon - and if I spell  
it here, it would certainly put things out of order. Oh  
well. What can't be cured must be written!

In contrast to Locke's brief treatment of  
association and memory, Sterne attempts the absurd task of  
fully exploring the bottomless pits of memory, time, and  
knowledge in a narrative form. Christopher Ricks views  
Sterne's novel as a "half-loving ridicule of learning run  
mad" (Ricks, 11). In Tristram Shandy, the narrator's  
haphazard journey through memory shows "the disorderly  
fashion in which men think" (Davidson, 19). Once again,  
this is taken to a self-conscious level: "I say much  
against my will, only because the story, in one sense, is  
certainly out of its place here...but then if I reserve it  
for either of those parts of my story,--I ruin the story I'm  
upon,--and if I tell it here--I anticipate matters, and ruin  
it there" (TS, 215).

It is just this sort of page-wasting that Tristram  
and Saleem incorporate into their narratives as a shelter  
against the wasting away of time. However, they are not

always conscious of their digressions; the reader must pay close attention to notice any aberrations on the part of the narrators. Speaking of Uncle Toby's military hobby-horse, Tristram reverts back to his own saddle without knowing: "and in a short time, these led the way for a train of somewhat larger,--and so on--(as must always be the case in hobby-horsical affairs)" (TS, 95,432). Tristram's narrative is one of these affairs, since he goes back beyond memory to a time before his own birth in order to explain things more clearly. By drawing his surrounding world into his hobby-horsical narrative, Tristram illustrates the extreme of what Locke views as the wrong connection of ideas. He does not simply connect two ideas by accident. For Tristram, nothing is that simple. Instead, he constantly juggles a mass of unconnected ideas in his mind. However, to Tristram, everything somehow relates back to his life and opinions. Consequently, he must write, or drop, everything down onto the page. Howard Anderson also notes this; he fails to employ a juggling metaphor, but he does comment on Sterne's enacting of Locke's theory of association as an aberration (Anderson, 28, 34, 41).

Saleem Sinai is no less a victim of the grammatical growth rate of his narrative. Green tin trunks, silver spittoons, pickle jars and perforated sheets haunt his memories. All of these things are aids to remembering for Saleem. They are repositories of the past. The perforated

sheet, in particular, represents his narrative quest through memory, where events are gradually related, bit by bit. The sheet also suggests the partial success of trying to construct a complete picture of reality, whether it be of the past or the present. The reality Saleem is looking for is himself, but he can only find a fragmented self.

Maria Couto has also noted this metaphor of the hole: "it suggests the development of a fractured self, and the manner in which the novel is written - gradually, in vignettes of finely observed detail - reveals a mosaic of experience spread over three generations" (Couto, 62). The span of the novel is an epic echo. Elaine Campbell describes epics as stories weaved "upon the memories of old men recording their long lives" (Campbell, 47). She contrasts this with Saleem who "succumbs in early-middle age" (Campbell, 47). Tristram is hardly of epic age, either, so they must be writing for another reason. Saleem attempts to get everything down before he forgets, which implies that if he were to wait a few decades, he would no longer have any memories to relate. The "old ones" in the novel remember "upside down", so India seems to have entered a period in its history where epics are no longer possible (MC, 387). Even Saleem's early start seems destined for futility. John Leonard, in discussing Milan Kundera's The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, offers an insight into the

implications of memory-loss: "senility is childhood in reverse; forgetting is a version of death" (Leonard, 22).

At one pivot in the novel, Saleem Sinai forgets his name (MC, 365). It is a tremendous relief for him, albeit a temporary one. The other children of midnight leave each other to find relief (MC, 441). Similarly, in Tristram Shandy, Uncle Toby displaces his wound onto the fortifications on the bowling green (IS, 217). Consequently, he avoids the pain of remembering, that is, until the widow Wadman threatens to return his wound back to his person. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean have also seen this (Landry and Maclean, 541). Just as Toby transfers a painful memory onto the green, Tristram displaces the cares of his world onto the white page: "The art of memory is like inner writing" (Yates, 22).<sup>3</sup> This writing, though, is fragile: "Tristram's narrative becomes itself a figure of disintegration" (Zimmerman, 140). According to Everett Zimmerman the black page in Sterne's novel expresses "the dead end of narrative rather than an escape from it" (Zimmerman, 140). Saleem and Tristram, though, could be on the verge of the birth of a new form of narrative. Of course, they could be on the verge of something completely different, like a narrative breakdown...

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<sup>3</sup> Frances Yates fills her book with digressions and systems. However she is plagued by disorder: "Though we have now reached the Renaissance, with Camillo, we have to retrace our steps to the Middle Ages during this chapter" (Yates, 175). She frequently reminds readers

Nothing can pry the narrators' digressive fingers from their books. Tristram returns to his tale of the midwife immediately after Parson Yorick's death (IS, 63). Norman N. Holland has also noted "the Shandean preoccupation with memoirs" (Holland, 424). Yorick's sphere of existence in Tristram's story is replaced by the midwife's "circle...of four English miles diameter" (IS, 42). There are many such spheres in the novel, and Yorick returns in his sphere to provide the punchline (IS, 615). Tristram's narrative is a fluid one, where people come and go and come back again. Similarly, Saleem's narrative has people "flooding" into Saleem and memories leaking out of him (MC, 136,208). In a comic inversion, Saleem is "the speck" which contains the beach (Rushdie in Interviews..., 249). Una Chaudhuri also comments on this: "the self as world is both the method and the matter of *Midnight's Children*" (Chaudhuri, 533). She forgets to add that "the self as world" is also the madness, memory, music and mayhem of the novel. Keith Wilson acknowledges that Rushdie's novel is not just an Indian novel, whatever that label means: "(it) evokes the earliest English novelistic acknowledgement of the impossibility of reconciling life and narrative form

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that things are unclear because she is working alone (329). The book is eccentric but interesting in a Shandy sort of way: "I have had to compress the chapter as much as possible lest this book, which is about the history of the art of memory, should lose its bearings" (352). Yates' book is truly a Shandy machine. Lest I forget her potential as a midnight's child, Yates also leaves questions for others as if she is in a pickle. She is the first to note that her book is not a complete study of the "forgotten art" of memory (374).

into linearity - Tristram Shandy" (Wilson, 33-4). Both narrators swallow worlds, including all sorts of odds and deadends. This leads to "digression, the non sequitur, the unsought symbol" (Chaudhuri, 533).

Stanley Munsat, in The Concept of Memory, states that there are no easy generalizations about the nature of memory (Munsat, X). Munsat should stop writing there, for his book even in its introduction has a Shandy flavour to it, not to mention the smell of chutney. However, the book is an interesting, albeit digressive and incomplete, study of memory. He points out that if a person makes an error about the past memory is blamed, whereas someone who is forgetful in the present becomes the focus of blame (Munsat, 18). Saleem cuts up history just as he cuts up his note to Commander Sabarmati (MC, 259). Rushdie also notes this, and describes Saleem as an "interested party" (Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands, 22,24).<sup>4</sup> Not only does Saleem make errors but he compounds the problem by admitting his inability to correct them: "my memory refuses, stubbornly, to alter the sequence of events...But if small things go, will large things be close behind?" (MC, 222). Is Saleem to be blamed for being human, the owner of a fallible memory? Certainly not, but it is hard not to laugh at the various

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4 In the first few essays in Imaginary Homelands, Rushdie discusses Saleem as an unreliable narrator and also the novel as a work of memory. Critics have taken little or no notice of Rushdie's comments on memory, which date from as early as 1982. Perhaps the point is considered a commonplace unworthy of any detailed comment, never mind a thesis...

springs that go off in Tristram's and Saleem's narratives (Bergson, 73).<sup>5</sup>

W.J. Mitchell has a connected point on the narrative line in Sterne's novel; he writes that the line represents not only the narrative but also the "moral status of the narrator" (Mitchell, 286). It is Tristram's attempt to adhere to this line, according to Mitchell, that entangles him in a knotted narrative. Through his memories, "the past almost crowds out the present" (Baird, 803). Tristram and Saleem are writing for trouble just by assuming the pose of the sole chronicler of their respective worlds. Jean-Jaques Mayoux has also seen this; he calls Tristram a "master-mind" with a "master-memory" (Mayoux in The Winged Skull, 7). This calls to memory John Locke's allusion to a supreme being of memory (Locke, 100). Walter Shandy is another potential "master-memory" for his ability to forget Bobby's death by recounting his learned texts: "...continued my father, smiling, for he had absolutely forgot my brother Bobby" (TS, 351). For that matter, or memory, the Nosarians and the Antinosarians miss the status of memory-masters by a nose, the stranger's nose to be imprecise: "The stranger's nose was no more heard of in the dispute--it just served as a frigate to launch them into the gulph of school-divinity,

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<sup>5</sup> Bergson's essay on the comic includes many Shandean references to springs and mechanisms which can suddenly break down and cause laughter.

--and then they all sailed before the wind" (IS, 266).

Tristram is the ultimate memory manipulator, peerless in his ability to forget his characters, his stories, and ultimately, himself. However, Saleem Sinai is an undisciplined Shandean disciple: "But I mustn't race ahead. The affair of the curious baton of Commander Sabarmati must be recounted in its proper place. Effects must not...be permitted to precede causes" (MC, 247).

Tristram and Saleem are attempting something admirable in their narratives, however frustrating and comical the results may be. Tristram restores Stevinus to the world: "Ill-fated sermon! Thou wast lost...dropped...trod deep into the dirt...buried...sold...transferred...--lost for ever to thy own, the remainder of his days,--nor restored to his restless MANES till this very moment, that I tell the world the story" (IS, 157). In addition, Hafen Slawkenbergius, one of Tristram's favourite people, is credited with amazing feats of memory: "should the wisdoms...of governments...and all that statesmen had wrote...be forgot...--and Slawkenbergius only left,--there would be enough in him in all conscience, he would say, to set the world a-going again" (IS, 245). The "world" here sounds like a Shandy clock or machine, and this is no mere coincidence, since Tristram is himself in the process of starting the world up by simultaneously reclaiming his past and deferring the future: "In a word, my work is

digressive, and it is progressive too,--and at the same time" (TS, 95). Tristram's narrative is a machine, "one wheel within another", which he one page and then another manages to keep "a-going" (TS, 95). Similarly, Saleem or "buddha" as he is called when he has no memories, is bitten by a snake and proceeds to start or create his world over again: "The child-soldiers listened, spellbound, to the stories issuing from his mouth, beginning with a birth at midnight, and continuing unstoppably, because he was reclaiming everything, all of it, all lost histories, all the myriad complex processes that go to make a man" (MC, 364-5). By extension, Saleem is engaged in exactly this kind of reclamation process. The irony, though, is that Saleem can still not remember his name (MC, 365).

Despite their position as storytellers, Tristram and Saleem undermine their own abilities in every page of their narratives. Every event they record leaks out of them, but their powers as the sole unifying elements in the two novels are questionable. Patricia Waugh has noted the absence of a centre in Tristram Shandy (Waugh, 525). It is hard to find the centre when there are no indications of something outside of the centre to use as a point of reference. In their narratives, then, Tristram and Saleem are frustrated in their attempts to provide a centre, or story, for they cannot master the art of beginnings, middles or ends: "I am reminded of the importance of speed; driven on by the

imperatives of rip tear crack, I abandon reflections; and begin" (MC, 406). The narrators are engaged in a battle with time in their struggle to preserve memory. The magicians in Midnight's Children lose the very thing that Saleem desperately tries to save:

Somewhere in the many moves of the peripatetic slum, they had mislaid their powers of retention, so that now they had become incapable of judgement, having forgotten everything to which they could compare anything that happened. Even the Emergency was rapidly being consigned to the oblivion of the past, and the magicians concentrated upon the present with the monomania of snails. Nor did they notice that they had changed; they had forgotten that they had ever been otherwise... (MC, 444).

Saleem's return to Bombay echoes the impotence of the magicians' memories. He wants the old Bombay to return, and tries to fulfill his wish by whispering the Kolynos Kid's slogan: "'Keep Teeth Kleen and Keep Teeth Brite! Keep Teeth Kolynos Super White!' But despite my incantation, the past failed to reappear" (MC, 452). The Kid is "timeless", the kind of child Saleem resembles in his narrative game of holding onto the past: "...and you may wish to think of me, too, as an involuntary Kolynos Kid, squeezing crises and transformations out of a bottomless tube, extruding time on to my metaphorical toothbrush; clean white time with green chlorophyll in the stripes" (MC, 240). However, Saleem's toothpaste has knots rather than stripes. His shared narrative, which professes to tell not only his story but

also that of India since independence, becomes a strange combination of digressions in a typically Shandean fashion: "I'm talking as if I never saw him again; which isn't true. But that, of course, must get into the queue like everything else; I'm not strong enough to tell that tale just now" (MC, 299).

Saleem and Tristram both glory in and suffer from the give and take of narrative form. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, they constantly allude to their future deaths, but they cannot die in the course of the narrative because they are narrating the events in their life. The details of their death cannot be conveyed by them, as they will be dead. Robert Gorham Davis has also made this ominous note on the narrative of Sterne's novel (Davis in The Winged Skull, 38). The conclusion, or the last page which can be seen as the conclusion of Tristram Shandy, allows the dead Parson Yorick the last word: "A COCK and a BULL, said Yorick - And one of the best of its kind, I ever heard" (TS, 615). Although Tristram appears to have explained himself and his Uncle Toby's affair with the widow Wadman, the final joke leaves matters quite open. In Midnight's Children, Saleem tries to ensure that his narrative will continue, in one jar or another: "Thirty jars stand upon a shelf, waiting to be unleashed upon the amnesiac nation. (And beside them, one jar stands empty.)" (MC, 460). This leaves the jar wide open for a continuance,

but in one sense, Saleem is admitting that his history is incomplete, with the implication that things must start all over again. Bergson's view that laughter is especially prone to occur when someone is forced to start a process over again after building it up can be applied to the endings of both novels (Bergson, 80-5). Just as they attempt to fashion a suitable form for their memories in the narratives, Tristram and Saleem continue the struggle from beyond the grave ending, in Saleem's case, and the comic one in Tristram's narrative. These attempts within the narratives are not very successful, so their future endeavours do not look promising: "Sometimes I feel a thousand years old: or (because I cannot, even now, abandon form), to be exact, a thousand and one" (MC, 440). For Saleem, there is "no escape" from form (MC, 440). Tristram, too, feels the crushing weight of narrative order: "--but the account of this is worth more, than to be wove into the fag end of the eighth volume of such a work as this" (TS, 566). Writing of which, I have forgotten to start a new section on memory and the reader in the two novels. After all, this section on the narrator has made little or no mention of readers, but it is crucial to this study that the curtain be drawn so that I may find some people willing to pose as readers. I am not strong enough to write the section just now, never mind right this one, which if I remember correctly, has a Shandean air to it. Instead, I

rest my pen, with Saleem, and write: "For me, there can be no going back; I must finish what I've started, even if inevitably, what I finish turns out not to be what I began..." (MC, 166).

### E. The Reader

This division between the two sections of this chapter is not a separation in any real sense. Instead, it is an artificial device along the lines of my fancy. Consequently, an adapter rather than a chapter is called for, since the narrator and the reader in each of the two novels are inextricably linked, like linking things, like things that link, like knots. Having written too much, I set off thus:

Tristram Shandy and Midnight's Children are written in a calculated way to give the impression of capriciousness. As Lodwick Hartley notes: "In a novel about the writing of a novel, the reader should not be surprised to be ushered frequently into the writer's study" (Hartley, 67). Tristram and Saleem deliver, or at least they try to, narratives which exist on many levels. Any expectations in the mind of the reader concerning his or her role in reading a novel or the narrator's role in telling one are self-consciously exposed. The narrators in the novels in question raise questions about their ability to

communicate with the reader and this is why I provide the reminder that, in order to understand me, readers of this section must preserve the first section in their memories at all times. However, I fear that you may mimic the magicians in Midnight's Children, and so I remind you of Saleem's advice: "I...was deeply shocked by the magicians' unwillingness to look behind them, 'People are like cats', I told my son, 'you can't teach them anything'" (MC, 445).

Tristram Shandy constantly urges readers to remember that he is writing a book: "I sat down to write my life for the amusement of the world, and my opinions for its instruction" (TS, 222). A book can be read, shut up, thrown away, or even sat upon; Tristram never lets the reader forget the possible responses to his work: "I fear the reader, when I come to mention it to him, if he is the least of a choleric temper, will immediately throw the book by; if mercurial, he will laugh most heartily at it" (TS, 77). Indeed, the heart of the novel is communication. This is enacted in the relationship between the narrator and his readers, both inside and outside of the novel. From the first line of Saleem's narrative, all of the expectations of the reader are exposed: "... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date" (MC, 9). This element of involving the reader implies that reading is a hyperactive rather than a passive process. Instead of reading a novel, the reader is suddenly engaged in what

appears to be a conversation. Patricia Waugh describes this as an extremely modern aspect of Sterne's novel: "the novelist... (is a) conversationalist... dependent on the reader for identity and sympathy" (Waugh, 26). This tendency of some critics to see everything as modern can become tiresome; after all, most if not all of literature involves a relationship between the reader and the author. Still, Tristram expects the reader to treat the book as a book but at the same time he extends the possibilities of what a book can or should be. This game on the narrator's part leaves stretch-marks on the reader's imagination and memory, for Tristram provides the reader with equal responsibility for the delivery of his novel.

Tristram, and Saleem for that memory, are not just writing for an uninvolved reader. On the contrary, they talk as if to a friend. In order to establish this friendship, Tristram and Saleem are forced back in time to acquaint the reader with the facts of their lives. This process of sharing, which accounts for the digressions in each novel, is an attempt by the narrators to make the reader their friend. Memory has a part to play in this game, for trying to convey a life in words to a stranger is exactly the problem Tristram and Saleem set for themselves. They require the indulgence of the reader as if he or she were catering to the whims of a child. Tristram gently reminds the reader of events related at earlier points in

his narrative, not in any awkward sense, but rather as if he were reminiscing with an old friend who had even shared these experiences; as a consequence Tristram assumes that the reader has memories of his entire narrative (TS, 71). Occasionally, Tristram will playfully enact the kind of feeling between a storyteller and a listener who are friends: "I think I told you...if I remember" (TS, 63). The reader is not just a listener for Tristram treats the narrative as a shared journey (TS, 205). This does not mean, however, that the reader is free from blame when Tristram's narrative begins to take a digressive turn. By contrast, the reader is credited with shared responsibility since the work is a two-way read: "But I forgot my uncle Toby, whom all this while we have left knocking the ashes out of his tobacco-pipe" (TS, 88).

In Tristram Shandy, then, the reader of the novel is depicted as an involved and therefore culpable participant in the narrative. As the narrator in Midnight's Children, Saleem Sinai also joins forces with the reader. Padma, as a character, reader and critic inside the novel, is a depiction of the conventional reader. Through the course of the narrative, she is characterized as a typical reader, for she bullies Saleem no end about his beginnings: "But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next: 'At this rate', Padma complains, 'you'll be two hundred years

old before you manage to tell about your birth'" (MC, 38).

Padma acts out all of the possible forms of response to which a reader can resort. She slams the door, interrupts Saleem, questions him constantly, and she even accuses him of trickery regarding his name (MC, 122, 118, 169).

Saleem's defence is as much given to the reader of the novel as it is to Padma: "No: I'm no monster. Nor have I been guilty of trickery. I provided clues..." (MC, 118). The reading process is not only a game and a friendship but it is also a mystery where the reader is responsible for making sense of the information provided by the narrator. This implies that the reader must possess a good memory as well as a healthy imagination. In effect, the reader must compensate for Saleem's shortcomings as a narrator and a person: "we all found that it made no difference! I was still their son: they remained my parents. In a kind of collective failure of imagination, we learned that we simply could not think our way out of our pasts..." (MC, 118). The reader plays a similar role to Padma's muscles, since they are both gauges for Saleem in determining if he is communicating anything (MC, 270). Without Padma, Saleem is writing in a vacuum. Padma leaves him, exercising the most fatal possibility open to a reader of a novel (MC, 118). When she is gone, Saleem falls deeper into uncertainty, trying to affirm what he is writing by referring to Padma's presence and approval, even though she is absent: "(Padma

would believe it; Padma would know what I mean!)" (MC, 158, 167). She finally returns, but she is still the straight-reading bully who wishes that Saleem would get his "nose" out of the paper (MC, 192-3). This possible pun points to the intimate relationship Saleem attempts to establish with the reader of his story: "I have not, I think, been good at describing emotions - believing my audience to be capable of joining in; of imagining for themselves what I have been unable to re-imagine, so that my story becomes yours as well..." (MC, 293).

Tristram Shandy addresses his story to a wide range of readers, including Madam, Sir, Jenny, critics and reverences and many other references. If Tristram Shandy is a conversation, then it is one between a large number of people: "WRITING, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation" (TS, 127). Tristram is most intimate with Madam. He frequently scolds her for not paying attention, even ordering her to re-read a chapter. She is not above questioning his abilities and his response emphasizes the difficulties of communication: "You told me no such thing, Sir. Madam, I beg leave to repeat it over again, That I told you as plain, at least, as words, by direct inference, could tell you such a thing" (TS, 82). Tristram teases Madam later on, though, urging her to read past a questionable passage "and never stop to make any enquiry

about it" (TS, 97). Despite all of this playfulness, Tristram is extremely self-conscious about the "patience" or rather the impatience of the reader (TS, 98, 388). Tristram combats this by reminding the reader of whom the book is being written for, while simultaneously insulting the critics for whom he is not writing: "Did you think the world itself, Sir, had contained such a number of Jack Asses?--How they viewed and reviewed us...and (when we were) just getting out of sight--good God! what a braying did they all set up together!" (TS, 397, 211).

The relationship between the narrator and the reader is one that seems to rely on the reader being a friend and helper to the storyteller in these two novels. Such a level of intimacy is necessary if the reader is to accept some of the things which Tristram and Saleem have to say: "(who could, you remember, travel through mirrors)" (MC, 188, 219). Only a friend is willing to believe such a thing. A critic, on the other hand, will laugh a cruel disdainful sort of laugh. Saleem is only too aware of this: "Although I'm well aware that I am providing any future commentators or venom-quilled critics (to whom I say: twice before I've been subjected to snake-poison; on both occasions, I proved stronger than venenes) with yet more ammunition" (MC, 360). Saleem battles not only with time and memory but also with the critic, not to mention the critical aspect of most readers. Accordingly, Saleem's outbursts serve a purpose,

since he employs laughter as a means of disarming his potential critics.

In an effort to make his account complete, Saleem even refers to himself in the third person in several passages (MC, 360, 386). He is, after all, telling his life story. Tristram also reminds the reader that his narrative is his own: "All I wish is, that it may be a lesson to the world, 'to let people tell their stories their own way'" (TS, 602). Once again, there is the wish-fulfillment which permeates the two novels. Padma provides an almost identical line in a resounding echo of Tristram, except that this time the reader within the novel is talking to the narrator as well as to the reader outside of the novel: "Padma began to cry. 'I never said I didn't believe', she wept. 'Of course, every man must tell his story in his own true way'" (MC, 211). Of course, Saleem has a curious way of mingling his story with history:

the modes of connection themselves inspired in me a blind, lunging fury. Why me? Why, owing to accidents of birth prophecy etcetera, must I be responsible for language riots and after-Nehru-who, for pepperpot-revolutions and bombs which annihilated my family? Why should I, Saleem Snotnose, Sniffer, Mapface, Piece-of-the-Moon, accept the blame for what-was-not-done by Pakistani troops in Dacca?... Why, alone of all the more-than-five-hundred-million, should I have to bear the burden of history? (MC, 382).

Saleem's story places him at the centre of his country's life and possibly imminent death, but his memory claims are

continually qualified by statements like "as remembered" or "unless I've forgotten" (MC, 414, 422).

In Tristram Shandy, the narrator is also qualified in the body of the text itself as well as by the footnotes: "This must be a mistake in Mr Shandy; for Graff wrote upon the pancreatic juice, and the parts of generation" (TS, 605, 164). This new voice in some of the footnotes competes with Tristram's version of things. However, as it is placed at the bottom of the page, the challenge is marginalized. Shari Benstock has noted this strange use of footnotes in the novel. She identifies the "pseudoerudition" of the notes as a sign of the instability of the narrative (Benstock, 207-8). This view complements the argument proposed by Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, who see signs of gender instability in the range of references to readers in the novel (Landry and Maclean, 523). These critics and their opinions represent a new age in Sterne studies, where the novel is appropriated for the most insular purposes. In a self-conscious way, the narrative of Tristram Shandy does focus attention upon its own weaknesses. However, this inward-turning aspect of the novel opens up new possibilities for the narrative form rather than closing them down. The best example of this self-exploration is the fact that Tristram's preface to the novel does not appear until the third volume (TS, 202). He also mentions a map which will appear in the twentieth volume, as it is still in the

engraver's hands (TS, 63-4). All of this extra material is treated as part of the text. The implication of this is that the reader is also part of the novel that he or she is reading. Shari Benstock has also read this in the novel (Benstock, 210).

A problem occurs when the various bits and pieces of the novel are either missing or contradictory to the narrator's opinions and memories. Such disparities collide at an alarming rate in both novels. Tristram's narrative "disintegrates into damaged texts, poor translations, and dubious proveniences [sic]" (Zimmerman, 138). In trying to familiarize the reader with himself and his history, Tristram is always the first to admit that the possibility of success is minimal. However, he revels in the fact that the reader cannot grasp too much of his story: "--His attitude was as unlike all this as you can conceive" (TS, 138). The reader is not to become that most serious of creatures - an anti-Shandean -, though, but rather Tristram urges that he or she give up the "reins" to the narrator; this recalls the hobby-horsical narrative to memory (TS, 193, 203). The reader is to live in the Shandy world, which is a place in the past, an eccentric but feeling location where death is far, far away. To keep this wish alive, Tristram playfully enlists the reader's help (TS, 285). He also teases the reader by alluding to information which he does not reveal: "I wish for their sakes I had the key of

my study out of my draw-well, only for five minutes, to tell you their names--recollect them I cannot--so be content to accept of these, for the present, in their stead,--" (TS, 439).

What Patricia Waugh calls "the manipulation of white space" in Tristram Shandy can and should be considered in light of Midnight's Children (Waugh, 96). Tristram plays with visual signals like a hand, a dash or an asterisk (TS, 131, 195, 211, 314, 414). He also encourages the reader to imagine Toby's whistling, or even that the narrator has dropped the curtain over the scene (TS, 159, 347). Time and space are moved around just as easily, albeit mostly against Tristram's will, or at least that is what he claims. All of this is done in order to explain his life to the reader in the most complete way possible: "--all which put together, must have prepared the reader's imagination for the entrance of Dr Slop upon the stage,--as much, at least (I hope) as a dance, a song, or a concerto between the acts" (TS, 123). The novel is a puzzle which the reader has to make, incorporating a black page, some snips, a marble page, a cross, blank pages, and even a flourish by Corporal Trim (TS, 61, 125, 180, 233, 451, 576). Tristram actually urges the reader, at one point, to "paint" the widow Wadman on the blank space he provides (TS, 450-1). Moreover, Tristram tears out a chapter and concludes that "the book is more

perfect and complete by wanting the chapter, than having it" (TS, 311). This echoes in Saleem's extra pickle jar.

Speaking of Saleem, the elements of Tristram Shandy mentioned above are Tristram's attempts to communicate by way of visual and physical devices in the novel. Tristram seems overly concerned that the reader understand him. Saleem feels the same pressure of writing: "I fell victim to the temptation of every autobiographer, to the illusion that since the past exists only in one's memories and the words which strive vainly to encapsulate them, it is possible to create past events simply by saying they occurred" (MC, 443). To validate his claims, then, Saleem resorts to all kinds of visual references. His vivid memories are translated in the narrative as if onto a movie screen, which he fills up with sights, sounds and smells in an effort to communicate his memories. The two novels are not so different in this respect, since Tristram's seeming digressions into the visual arts look ahead to Saleem's use of the page as a screen:

Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grains; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves - or rather it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality... (MC, 165)

The closer the reader and the narrator get to the present, the screen, the more chaotic things become. Saleem makes

self-conscious references to the novel as a movie. When he loses his memory, he admits to the reader that he is aware that the amnesia is suspect: "amnesia is the kind of gimmick regularly used by our lurid film-makers. Bowing my head slightly, I accept that my life has taken on, yet again, the tone of a Bombay talkie" (MC, 350). By admitting to amnesia once, Saleem casts a shadow of doubt over his entire narrative. He is trying to put the "shards of the past" into some kind of meaningful picture for the reader: "But now hands enter the frame -" (MC, 217, 427). The reader sees events as if through a camera lens, but Saleem is directing the action, and although it seems that at times the reader is a co-director, Saleem is quick to defend his personal artistic vision or version: "'Do not think', I admonish her, 'that because I had a fever, the things I told you were not completely true. Everything happened just as I described'" (MC, 209).

Not only is Saleem able to ride in his mother's head but he is also willing to do the same to the reader along the course of his hobby-horsical narrative (MC, 218). He accomplishes this in the same way that Tristram does, by professing his strict adherence to a direct line of communication when he is actually interrupted from this progress at every page along the way. A.D. Nuttall has seen this in Tristram: "he offers himself to the reader as a man ingenuously eager to pursue a linear narrative but endlessly

seduced and frustrated by intractable material"

(Nuttall,47). Nuttall goes on to make the most fitting description of the function of the reader in Sterne's novel:

we are an invisible intruder in Shandy Hall,  
a baffled eavesdropper whose curiosity is  
for some time frustrated by unintelligible  
family jokes. This too is a kind of realism.  
As in life, we see before we understand  
(Nuttall,50).

The reader, then, resembles Mrs Shandy listening at the door, or Madam blushing with curiosity, or Padma who prefers to challenge Saleem rather than to listen to him.

Everett Zimmerman, commenting on Tristram Shandy, describes the characterization of the reader of the novel as "a perverse punster" (Zimmerman, 133). Saleem acknowledges that the reader can be no more than this: "I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world" (MC, 383). This swallowing involves all of the reader's senses as well as his or her memory. The attempt must be made, even though Tristram's and Saleem's fears of "absurdity" can also reflect back onto the blank reader who, if he or she is willing, is slowly stored with the memories necessary for, if not complete understanding, then friendship:

if I should seem now and then to trifle upon  
the road,--or should sometimes put on a  
fool's cap with a bell to it...--don't fly  
off,--but rather courteously give me credit  
for a little more wisdom than appears on my  
outside;--and as we jog on, either laugh  
with me, or at me, or in short do any thing,  
--only keep your temper (TS,41).

"Above all things, I fear absurdity," Saleem writes twice in his narrative, in a self-conscious comment on the task at hand (MC, 9, 461). He remembers as much as he can and tries to communicate this "source-book" to the reader, who is not only involved in the process but is also encouraged to pick up where Saleem's nose falls off (MC, 295). In both novels, then, memory plays a crucial role in establishing the possibility of communication between the narrator and the reader. The label "reader" is expanded to include characters within the narrative as well as the reader outside of the text: "I'm telling my story for him, so that afterwards, when I've lost my struggle against cracks, he will know. Morality, judgment, character...it all starts with memory...and I am keeping carbons" (MC, 211).

-Pray reach me my fool's handkerchief - I fear you sneezed into it, Madam -'tis in your pocket - I'll blow in it anon -

Bless Me! you have had it upon your nose this half thesis.

- There let it sneeze, with a

Ah-ah choo

and a arr-floo e

and a heh-heh-heh

choo choo c

And now, Madam, we may venture, I hope, a little to go on and on...(my variation on TS, 488).

#### IV

#### THE PROBLEM OF CONCLUSION

In my first thesis, many ideas came home to roost (my variation on MC, 205-207).

In my first thesis, I explored the connection between Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children regarding the storytelling process. In order to do this, I dislocated the concept of memory from the novels while professing that, since memory is an integral part of each novel, such a dislocation was impossible. However, in discussing two Shandean novels where chapters are like so many wheels in a machine, to take just one cog or idea out of its place causes the machine or novel to break down.

In my first thesis, I detached such a cog, namely that of memory, but as chapters turned out, I was better able to describe the novels in their respective conditions of failure than I ever could a fully-functional novel.

In my first thesis, I rejected all labels and genres, applying only the flexible title of memory-novel to Tristram Shandy and Midnight's Children. As Stanley Munsat notes, there is no single form of memory, so any study of memory is "doomed to failure" (Munsat, 124).

In my first thesis, I did not lose sight of the two novels in question, or rather the two novels in digression.

I saved Ross Feld for last, for his description of Midnight's Children as a "gaudy" novel that only Laurence Sterne could like, is as much an affirmation of the ties or knots between the two novels as any of the brief acknowledgements made by critics of the influence of Sterne upon Rushdie (Feld, 712).

In my first thesis, I had no time or space to treat Sterne's novel as either a part of the eighteenth-century developments in literature or as a curiously postmodern work. My neglect to participate in the outlandish wish on the part of critics to define a novel in such a meaningless way stems from my belief that the novel form has always been and always will be a fluid one which, paradoxically, involves all sorts of containers. Clarence Tracy has noted the fluidity of genres in the eighteenth-century (Tracy in The Winged Skull, 97-98). Sterne writes Tristram Shandy at a time when the novel is just being born. However, not every novel written by Sterne's contemporaries is a brilliant delivery of the possibilities of art, and many novels of the time can be seen as signalling a stagnation and even the approaching death of the form. Similarly, Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children comes at a time when the fluidity of the novel form on the one hand threatens to dry up but on the other hand it seems to be flooding out of more apertures than ever before.

In my first thesis, I will leave room for one extra chapter. There are so many promised chapters left to write, but I join with Saleem Sinai as he cracks up:

Once, when I was more energetic, I would have wanted to tell his life-story; the hour, and his possession of an umbrella, would have been all the connections I needed to begin the process of weaving him into my life, and I have no doubt that I'd have finished by proving his indispensability to anyone who wishes to understand my life and benighted times; but now I'm disconnected, unplugged, with only epitaphs left to write. So, waving at the champion defecator, I call back: 'Seven on a good day', and forget him.  
(MC, 457)

Saleem can no longer lose himself in his memories. By contrast, Tristram Shandy's final joke, voiced through Parson Yorick, who is still alive in Tristram's memory, is one more instance of the narrator's ability to forget both himself and also his approaching death:

when a man is telling a story in the strange way I do mine, he is obliged continuously to be going backwards and forwards to keep all tight together in the reader's fancy... (but) there is so much unfixed and equivocal matter starting up, with so many breaks and gaps in it,--and so little service do the stars afford, which, nevertheless, I hang up in some of the darkest passages, knowing that the world is apt to lose its way, with all the lights the sun itself at noon-day can give it--and now you see, I am lost myself!-- (TS, 444, 615)

In my first thesis, I confront the problem of the application of memory to the art of narrative in Tristram Shandy and Midnight's Children. The narrator in each of the novels attempts not only to recall his life but also to

transform it onto paper. However, so much history and so many people become intertwined in the life of just one person that both Saleem and Tristram suffer from failing memories as well as from the need to order their lives in such a way as to convey their identity in one shape or another to the reader of their respective stories. Each novel is saturated with memories, as the self-conscious exploration of memory becomes a parody of the art of story telling. The memory of the reader is converted into a part of the game or puzzle of the novels and, as a consequence, the reader is implicated when the narrative line takes the form of a knot, or when the progressive steps in a ladder of linearity succumb to digression: "For every snake, there is a ladder; for every ladder, a snake" (MC, 306).

And in my first thesis, as I have already promised, I leave one chapter a jar, in which readers may write "Humph!" or "Abracadabra!" or "Zounds!", or if they find themselves in a pickle, they may even tell their very own CHUTNEY and BULL story.

That's how it is in my first thesis: nothing but chapters on the pages, nothing but memories in them.

## THE PROBLEM OF EPITAPHS

"Are we for ever to be twisting, and untwisting the same rope? for ever in the same track--for ever at the same pace?"

-Laurence Sterne  
Tristram Shandy, 339.

"...Clarissa leant over the banisters and cried out, 'Remember the party! Remember our party to-night!' But Elizabeth had already opened the front door; there was a van passing; she did not answer."

-Virginia Woolf  
Mrs Dalloway, 112.

"I let my thoughts slip back into the past, to that empty museum, that dead world, varnished like a coffin"

-Michel Tournier  
Friday Or The Other Island,  
36.

"And through the spaces of the dark  
Midnight shakes the memory  
As a madman shakes a dead geranium"

-T.S. Eliot  
"Rhapsody on a Windy Night"

"Is this the point I am looking for?"

No.  
Not here."

-William Golding  
Free Fall, 52.

NAGG: Do you remember--

NELL: No.

-Samuel Beckett  
Endgame, 16.

"Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it."

-Salman Rushdie  
Imaginary Homelands, 41.

"As if everything in the world is the history of ice."

-Michael Ondaatje  
Coming Through Slaughter, 87.

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