

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* :A Study of Sterne's Character as a Misogynist

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Abstract

The idea of this research is to show how Laurence Sterne appears as a misogynist, a women hater in his novel, *Tristram Shandy* which is written during the 1760s in the eighteenth century. It shows this through different ways : first by pointing to the voice Sterne uses in narrating Tristram Shandy's story in addition to the kind of his readers – he is biased to male readers in specific when he uses bawdy words, having direct or indirect sexual connotations that stir sexual caprice in males , second by measuring the space given to human female, and by studying the way she is presented by the author if she is given any role to mention in comparison to the way her counterpart is portrayed, and third by referring to the nature of Sterne's relationships with women in his life, which point to the psychological motive behind his misogyny .

The aim of the research is to draw a portrait of Laurence Sterne as a misogynist as represented in his novel *Tristram Shandy*. To do so, Tristram Shandy's character, and Sterne's narration with his narrator's whom the author is one with, have to be analyzed both physically and psychologically. Tristram, born on the 5th of November,1718¹ is a maimed person , the result of a marital act that is interrupted by his mother. During the act of conceiving Tristram, the systematical father , Walter Shandy, who "on the first Sunday night of every month throughout the whole year" (TS,Vol.I,Ch.IV), is

accustomed to "wind up a large house-clock,"(Ibid.) is interrupted by his wife , asking him "Pray , my dear,...,have you not forgot to wind up the clock" (TS,Vol.I,Ch.I)? He responds her saying "Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?"(Ibid.)Thus, Tristram attributes his lack of virility to his parents and with a sigh, he laments :

I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing ;_that not only the production of a rational Being was concern'd in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body,perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind ;_... . Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it ; __you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transfused from father to son ,& c. __ and a great deal to that purpose:

(TS,Vol.I,Ch.I)

From the above passage, one concludes that Tristram's parents lead a life of sexual frustration .Actually, leading such a sexually frustrated life is the reason behind the advent of Tristram's narration. Being a subject to a series of misfortunes: a crushed nose resulted from using the forceps by the inefficient Dr. Slop, the man midwife who is brought by Walter Shandy in spite of Elizabeth Shandy's opposition to labour her , and an injured penis as a result of a window sash accident .

The conception scene appears to be so insightful. It gives some insight about the view Sterne holds towards women. Though Walter

does not suffer from any "literal injuries to his penis,"² his life is also melancholic in the sense that he fails to communicate with his wife both intellectually and sexually. His intellectual frustration becomes analogous to his sexual one. Mrs. Shandy is the silent woman in the Shandy Hall : she hardly speaks in the novel and she remains so even during her confinement when she is surrounded by men. This kind of male "sexism"³ seems to govern her life with him .It is he who speaks, gives opinions, and takes decisions while she is passive, accepting what he says and decides. This is only because he thinks, as all men in eighteenth century-England believed, that women are inferior beings and are therefore not worthy of having decisions. Such a kind of man domination is clear when the moment of delivery comes. Mrs. Shandy prefers to give birth to her child in London for according to her marriage contract, she "could live her pregnancy where she most liked,"⁴ but unfortunately , Mrs. Shandy adds a clause to it:she is given the right to choose the place where she wants to give birth to her baby for once only and she has lost such right due to false pregnancy. Accordingly, her husband, who believes in "the ignorance of an old woman" (TS, Vol.II, Ch.VI) sends his brother, Uncle Toby to fetch Dr. Slop, the man midwife, to deliver his wife by means of a new obstetrical device, the forceps, established by that Dr. Slop's authority against Mrs. Shandy's "⁵ Furthermore, Mr. Shandy's belief in obstetrical technologies and his prejudice against women which is an attitude " inherent in the eighteenth century "⁶ makes him also conclude that a Caesarean section is the best way to labour a baby, indicating that " the safety of the child over the mother "⁷ and depicting "the mother's body as a gruesome threat to the baby. "⁸

Like father, like son, Tristram, as his father, Walter Shandy whose "desire for a rational sexuality in which women have no part"⁹ which "demonstrates a perverse type of 'overly-envy' mimicked to some extent in Tristram's authorial androgyny,"¹⁰ also suffers from psycho-sexual troubles that make of him, as gender studies show, such "phallocrat"¹¹ narrator. Unable to have any sexual relation with a woman, as shown in volume VII, when he flees to France seeking rest from his confusion and trying to put an end to his "insecurity with sexuality"¹² there, he develops a desire to communicate freely with his readers, using dirty words associated with sexual organs in males to have a kind of sexual satisfaction. Tristram begins his story as follows :

I am verily persuaded I should have
made a quite different figure in the
world from that, in which the reader
is likely to see me.

(TS, Vol. I, Ch. I)

It is clear from the above passage that Tristram tries to draw the readers' attention and makes them sympathize with him for being an irrational sexual activity. Through such a kind of narration, Sterne manages to bring his readers to be "involved in the satire"¹³ that he opens his novel with :he satirizes the view that Tristram espouses, saying instead "that at time like that [the time of conception]- rational thinking simply stops."¹⁴ Not only does Tristram succeed in involving readers ,but also in getting the "intimacy"¹⁵ of his "constructed male-readers"¹⁶ as he seductively advises them :

You must have a little patience. I have undertaken,
you see, to write not only my life, but my opinions
also; hoping and expecting that your knowledge of
my character, and of what kind of a mortal I am, by

the one, would give you a better relish for the other:
 As you proceed further with me, the slight acquaint-
 ance which is now beginning betwixt us, will grow
 into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is in fault,
 will terminate in friendship Therefore, my dear
 friend and companion, if you should think me some-
 what sparing of my narrative on my first setting out,
 bear with me, __ and let me go on, and tell my story
 my own way: _or 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, for a moment or two as we pass a long, _
 don't fly off, __but rather courteously give me credit for
 a little more wisdom than appears upon my outside ; __
 and as we jogg on, either laugh with me, or at me, or in
 short, do any thing , __only keep your temper .

(TS, Vol.I, Ch. VI I)

As mentioned before, the conception is interrupted by Mrs. Shandy. Rather than "conjoining them,"¹⁷ this sexual intercourse comes to separate them. Likewise, the narrative thrust, Tristram says, is interrupted with this sexual interruption and thus woman "at fault"¹⁸ is the cause .The textual intercourse focuses mainly on the Shandy males, and women who "are easily invoked or dismissed as it suits Tristram's whim "¹⁹ or rather presented from phallic power perspectives. Tristram ,in volume I, keeps addressing his readers often using words as 'Sir', 'my Lord', 'your worship ', 'your reverences' and 'madam '. The reader, Lodwick Hartley says, many times can "assume the part of madam,"²⁰ but not the part "of the more familial and intimate 'dear girl.' "²¹ So Sterne's readers , as his characters ,are segregated by gender . This kind of segregation is clear as he uses the term 'madam' instead of 'dear girl.' Furthermore, the word 'madam'

may show in some situations derogatory connotations. Thus, if the novel is to be analyzed rhetorically , one can have a clear view of Sterne's hostility towards women as his work attributes all kinds of debasement of "modern culture, both literary and by implication political"²² as far as women are concerned. Divided by gender, Sterne's novel, he himself says," cannot be put into the hands of any woman of character"²³ but into the hands of "widows."²⁴ Dr. Richard Mead advises Sterne to "excise certain passages from his second edition."²⁵ Refusing to do so, Sterne announces the following :

An author is not so soon humbled as you imagine... no, but to make the book better by castration ... that is still sub judice, and I can assure you upon this chapter, that the very passages and descriptions you propose, that I should sacrifice in my second edition, are what are best relished by men of wit, and some others whom I esteem as sound critics .²⁶

Sterne asks a Yorkshire lady if she has read his. She answers him saying that she has not read it for she is told that "it is not proper for female perusal."²⁷ Justifying what he writes and his intention , Sterne in return replies :

My dear good lady, do not be gulled by such stories; the book is like your young heir there,[referring to a three-year old child, rolling on the carpet in his white tunics] he shews at times a good deal that is usually concealed, but it is all in perfect innocence .²⁸

Why is not it safe for women to read Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*? is a question that needs to be answered. The answer to this question is Sterne's sly and sexual language: everything in *Tristram Shandy* is emblematic of phallic authority. Tristram's pen, Frank Brady says, becomes "symbolic of another instrument."²⁹

Sexually impotent, Tristram tries to overcome the phallic loss by using such a sexual language in writing his story. Written during the eighteenth century that is marked by gender anxieties, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, as Tristram's story, is seen as an attempt through which the author can secure "his place in a male homosocial community that validates and reaffirms his masculine identity."³⁰ As such, Sterne's desire not to castrate his text, metaphorically speaking, is a desire to preserve not only "the status of phallus "³¹of his text but also of his own.

Why Sterne holds such a hostile attitude towards women is another question to be answered. The answer has psychological soundings: one cannot know the answer unless one knows something about Sterne's psychological state of mind and probes into his personal and conjugal life. Suffering from tuberculosis while writing *Tristram Shandy* and living a melancholic life with a wife he has "little love "³²to are two reasons behind the omnipresence of a diseased body in his novel and his aversion towards women. Just as Sterne's relation with his wife, Elizabeth Lumley, is a failure, so is his parents'. Their marriage is an unhappy one, arranged as his father, Ensign Roger Sterne owes his mother's stepfather a debt. At the age of ten, he is separated from his parents and is being "brought up and provided for by a cousin of his father."³³ His mother is described as "a nagging wife and an indifferent, rapacious "³⁴woman "whom it would have been

hard to love"³⁵Tired of living with his wife whom he has no sexual intercourse with since 1761, Sterne leaves her in anger and goes to London where he begins his sentimental love affairs. He finds in sentimental love the cure to his health and marital and spiritual depression. He once wrote the following:

it is time to cure myself, to make myself
Antony, a happy man, a free man, and to
do some good to myself, as Soloman exhorts
us, that nothing is better in this life than that
a man live merrily, and eat and drink and
enjoy good things, because this is his portion
and dowry in this world.³⁶

Yet his sentimental love affairs with Catherine Fourmantle, Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, and others do not last as they are all based on sympathy rather than real love. Women prove to be the source of his displeasure and misery. He clearly tells Lady Warkworth the following :

O my Lady ____ what a dishclout a soul hast thou made of me?... Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you and as far as his legs would carry him, rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, ____and a fresh, where his heart and his reason tells him he shall be sure to come off loser, if not totally undone? Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me? Does it give you pleasure to make me more unhappy____or does it add to your triumph, that your eyes and lips have turned a man into a fool, the weakest, the most ductile, the most

tender fool, that ever woman tried the weakness of—
and the most unsettled in my purpose and resolutions
of recovering my right mind.³⁷

Fooled by women due to his belief in sentimental love that is based on sympathy, Sterne comes to see in the world of women not only the "world of frustration,"³⁸ but also a world where men would fall victims to it. Walter Shandy tells his brother, Uncle Toby the following: "We shall have a devilish month of it ... fire, water, women, wind ... to have so many jarring elements breaking loose, and riding triumph in every corner of a gentleman's house." (TS, Vol. IV, Ch. XVI)

In *Tristram Shandy*, women are presented in a sketchy way. Only one woman is given a somewhat enough space in Sterne's novel. This woman is Mrs. Wadman, a widow and a symbol of external beauty and not internal one. Thinking that the beauty of a woman cannot be "indisputable,"³⁹ Tristram, the author's spokesman, provides, rather than describes Mrs. Wadman, his reader with a blank page so as to draw her according to his imagination. He says :

To conceive this right, — call for pen and ink — here's
paper ready to your hand. — Sit down, Sir, paint her
to your own mind_ as like your mistress as you can_
as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you_
'tis all one to me __ please but your own fancy in it.

(TS, Vol. VI, Ch. XXXVIII)

Like other widows in the novel, Mrs. Wadman is presented badly as a lustful woman, using Walter's words "that animal" (TS, Vol. II, Ch. VII) whose curiosity drives her to know whether the innocent Uncle Toby, the man she deceives by her sultry eyes and

makes him fall in love with her , is sexually potent .She has such a desire to know if he is sexually fit since her first husband is "afflicted with a Sciatica."(TS,Vol. IX,Ch.XXVI)Thus, she begins approaching him and he falls in her trap as he does not know "so much as the right end of a Woman from the wrong" (TS,Vol. IX,Ch.IV). Being ignorant of women and "their concerns"(TS,Vol. II,Ch.VII),Uncle Toby unfortunately falls a victim to Mrs. Wadman's tricks and plans. Her attack begins with her advance towards his sentry-box. Describing how she attacks him, Tristram says:

... when an attack was resolved upon, Mrs. Wadman had nothing more to do, when she had got advanced to the door of the sentry box, but to extend her right hand; and edging in her left foot at the same movement, to take hold of the map or plan, or upright, or whatever it was, and with out- stretched neck meeting it half way, way ,_to advance it towards her ; on which my uncle Toby's_ passions were sure to catch fire – for he would instantly take hold of the other corner of the map in his left hand, and with the end of his pipe, in the other, begin an explanation.

(TS,Vol. VIII,Ch.XVI)

By her touch on his forefinger, Mrs. Wadman manages to "set something at least in motion"(TS,Vol. VIII,Ch.XVI). Another trick is to bewitch him with her eyes and she succeeds in doing so. Pretending that she has either a mote or sand in her eye, she asks him to look into it . Uncle Toby finds nothing but he has swallowed her bait, clear in Tristram's following speech :

Now of all eyes, which ever were created__from

your own, Madam, up to those of Venus herself, which certainly were as venereal a pair of eyes as ever stood in a head __there never was an eye of them all, so fitted to rob my uncle Toby of his repose, as the very eye, at which he was looking.

(TS,Vol. VIII,Ch.XXV)

Mrs Wadman manages to make him think that she is concerned about his health. When Dr. Slop tells her that Uncle Toby has recovered from his wound in the groin he receives in the war of Namur, she asks him about the meaning of a recovery. Actually, such a question covers her real intention: realizing if he still maintains "his virility despite his war wound"⁴⁰ Commenting on the nature of her question, Tristram says :

There is an accent of humanity in an enquiry of this kind which lulls SUSPICION to rest __ and I am half persuaded the serpent got pretty near it, in his discourse with Eve, for the propensity in the sex to be deceived could not be so great, that she should have boldness to hold chat with the devil, without it __ But there is an accent of humanity – how shall I describe it ? __ 'tis an accent which covers the part with a garment, and gives the enquirer a right to be as particular with it, as your body-surgeon .

(TS,Vol. IX,Ch.XXVI)

As a body-surgeon, she thus asks Dr. Slop some other questions. She wonders if Uncle Toby is "able to mount a horse" (TS,IX,Ch.XXVI)or can "lie on both sides alike with it"(Ibid.). But before she is answered, she asks Uncle Toby this time a question she thinks would enable her to probe into him: "And whereabouts dear Sir, did you receive this sad blow" (TS,Vol. IX,Ch.XXVI) ? By her last

categorical question, she tries to "find out the exact physical rather than geographical spot"⁴¹ of his wound. But to her surprise, he sends Trim, the corporal to fetch him a map to show her geographically where he is wounded. Toby's innocence, ignorance of the other sex, and belief that any word has no other meanings "outside it"⁴² all contribute to his delusion Trim stops. So late, Trim reveals to him her sexual nature, shattering by that "his faith in female purity."⁴³ Had he not been innocent (i.e., sexually sensible), he would have discovered her sexual nature earlier. He fails to discover her though there are some references in the novel that can be clues about her carnality. Discussing the reasons that motivate one to get married, Mrs. Wadman tells him:

As for children __ though a principle end perhaps of the institution, and the natural wish, I suppose, of every parent __yet do not we all find, they are certain sorrow, and very uncertain comforts? And what is there ,dear Sir, to pay one for the heart-aches _ what compensation for the many tender and disquieting apprehensions of a suffering and defenseless mother who brings them into life?

(TS,IX,Ch.The Eighteenth)

Conclusion

Reading Sterne's novel, *Tristram Shandy*, one can induce that Sterne is a misogynist whose hatred towards women makes him either ignore them, giving them no roles in his novel, or present them in a very nasty way. Considering women, and widows, as carnal beings or animals, he shows the reader how Mrs. Wadman, a representative of all her gender, is responsible for the fall of her counterpart, Uncle

Toby. In *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne proves himself to be so extremist in his view about women in the sense that he does not make of her the animal that has such hunger for body, but also as a victimizer of the male. Thus, one can see that all of his male characters are unhappy and frustrated because of the presence of a woman in their lives as with Walter Shandy whose cold relationship with his wife reflects Sterne's psyche and frigid conjugal relation with his wife, or with Uncle Toby who, like Sterne, is fooled by the sentimental Mrs. Wadman. By these two examples, Sterne wants to show "the sexually subversive possibilities in the responsiveness of sensitive nerves and the aggrandizement of feelings"⁴⁴ Such possibilities make of Sterne and his men characters in the novel helpless, paradoxically creative, and objects of foolery .

Notes

¹Douglas Brook points out that the date 5 November is the date of misfortune in English history . Accordingly , this date is used by Sterne so as to show the theme of sterility in the novel by giving a portrait of his hero with maimed genitals. See, Douglas Brook, *Number and Pattern in the Eighteenth-century Novel* (London , Routledge and Kegan Paul , 1973), p.172 .

²Anonymous , " The Body is Bawdy in Laurence Sterne's ' Tristram Shandy ' " nd. ,26/12/2010<< hubages. Com/hub/The- Body –is Bowdy- in – Laurence-Sternes-Tristram- Shandy...>> .

³Elizabeth Brunner, "Tristram Shandy :Critical Interpretation" April,8, 1999, 1/12/2010.<<http :// elizbunner. tripod.com/ Tristram Shandy.>> .

⁴Livia Giovine, "Wedding in the 18th Century" nd.,6/5/2011.<<www.tristramshandyweb.it/sezioni/.../moll/Pamela.htm>> .

⁵Julianne M. Karey , "Laurence Sterne and the 'Uncrystalized Flesh ' :Discursive Maiming, Textual Healing, and the Hermeneutics of the Body in Tristram Shandy "(a thesis) , 2005m25/2/2012 . <<summit . sfu . ca/system/files/iritems 1/9727/ETD4654 . pdf.>> .

⁶Rachel Jordan, "Provincializing World Literature: Tristram Shandy and *Midnight's Children* as Precursors to Current Postcolonial Critical Theory "(a thesis), 2009, 25/2/2012.<< <http://etd.lib.clemson.edu/0050M-10533.pdf>>>.

⁷Karey.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Oliver Lovesey, "Divine Enthusiasm and Love Melancholy:Tristram Shandy and Eighteenth Century Narratives of Saint Errantry",2011,8/12/2011.<<<http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vo/16/iss3/5>>>

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Nathalie Zimpfer,"Portrait of the Narrator as a Phallocrat:Tristram from Swiftian Modern to Self-Defeating Shandy",2010,8/12/2011.<<www.cairn.info/load-pdf.php?ID-ARTICLES=ETAN-613-0290>>.

¹²Jukka Tiusanen, "Emotion, Motion, Feeling and Falling in Laurence Sterne's Narratives" ,2010,8/12/2011. << www.vakki.net/publications/2010/VAKKI2010-Tiusanen.pdf. >>.

¹³Toby A. Olshin,"The Novel of Quickness" in *Tristram Shandy :An Authoritative Text,The Author on the Novel, Criticism* ,ed. , Howard Anderson (New York, ww .Norton &Company ,Inc., 1980),p.525.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Howard Anderson ,"*Tristram Shandy and the Reader's Imagination*" in *Tristram Shandy :An Authoritative Text, The Author on the Novel, Criticism* ,p.611.

¹⁶Michael Hardin ,"*Seducing the Male- Reader :Julio Corta'zar's Hopscotch and the Pleasure of Losing*" , nd. , 6/5/2011.<< <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/IFR/bin/get.cgi?directory=Vol.25/&filename=Hardin.html>>> .

¹⁷Barbara M. Benedict, "'Dear Madam': Rhetorics ,Cultural Politics and the Female Reader in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*",1992, University of North Carolina Press ,8/12/2011.<www.jstor.org/stable/10-2307/4174438 .. >> .

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Leigh A. Ehlers , " Mrs. Shandy's ' Lint and Basilican': The Importance of Women in *Tristram Shandy* ", Jan. , 1981 , 8/12/2011 . << URL : [http : //www . jstor/org/stable/3199313](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3199313)>> .

²⁰Lodwick Hartley, "The Genius of Laurence Sterne" in *Tristram Shandy:An Authoritative Text, The Author on the Novel, Criticism* ,p.495.

²¹Ibid.

²²Benedict.

²³Laurence Sterne, "The Author on the Novel" in *Tristram Shandy:An Authoritative Text, The Author on the Novel, Criticism*, p.464.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Goliath," 'Good Cursed, bouncing Losses':masculinity, Sentimental irony ,and exuberance in *Tristram Shandy*," 2008,The Gale Group, 4/6/2010.<< [http://goliath .ecnext.com/coms 2/gi-0199-7048783/Good-cursed-bouncing-losses-masculinity.html](http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms_2/gi-0199-7048783/Good-cursed-bouncing-losses-masculinity.html).>> .

²⁶Sterne, Cited in " 'Good Cursed, bouncing Losses':masculinity, Sentimental irony ,and exuberance in *Tristram Shandy*."

²⁷Arthur A. Cash, *Laurence Sterne :The Later Years* (London, Routledge ,1986), P.70 .

²⁸Sterne, Cited in Laurence Sterne :The Later Years , P.70 .

²⁹Anonymous , " The Body is Bawdy in Laurence Sterne's ' *Tristram Shandy* ' .

³⁰Goliath.

³¹Ibid.

³²George Saintsbury, "Introduction" in *Laurence Sterne :Tristram Shandy* (London, Everyman's Library,1912), p.XXV .

³³C. H. Macafee , "The Obstetrical Aspects of *Tristram Shandy* ," nd.,8/12/2011.<<www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/.../ulstermedj_00166-0018.pdf>>.

³⁴A. Alvarez , "Introduction" in *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, ed. ,Graham Petrie (Harmondsworth :Penguin Books Ltd. ,1967), p.8 .

³⁵Peter Quennell , Cited in "The Obstetrical Aspects of Tristram Shandy ".

³⁶Sterne, Cited in *Laurence Sterne :The Later Years* , P.106.

³⁷Ibid. , p. 212-213.

³⁸Ehler.

³⁹Richard F. Hardin , "Marlow Society of American Newsletter" ,Spring 2002, 8/12/2011.<< dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet / fichero - articulo ?codigo>> .

⁴⁰Tiusanen.

⁴¹Kuo-jung Chen , "A Cock- and-Bull Story and Michael Winterbottom's Film Adaptation " ,March 2010, 25/2/2012.<www.concentric-literature.url.tw/issues/.../7.pdf>> .

⁴²Sigurd Burckhardt , "Tristram Shandy's Law of Gravity " in *Tristram Shandy:An Authoritative Text,The Author on the Novel, Criticism* ,p.598.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Anonymous, "Sensibility",nd. ,24/1/2011.<<www.answers.com/Topic/sensibility>> .

رواية ترسترام شاندي للورنس ستيرن
دراسة لشخصية ستيرين باعتباره كارها للنساء
م. أسيل هاتف جسام
مركز اللغات الاجنبية / كلية الآداب / الجامعة المستنصرية
م.هديل هاتف جسام
مركز اختبار التوفل/ جامعة ديالى

الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث لورنس استرن باعتباره كاتباً كارها للنساء في روايته ترسترام شاندي التي كتبها في ستينيات القرن الثامن عشر. يكشف البحث عن ذلك من خلال طرق عديدة: أولاً الإشارة إلى الصوت الذي استخدمه استرن في روايته ترسترام شاندي بالإضافة إلى نوع القارئ له . امتاز استرن وبشكل خاص بانحيازها إلى القراء الذكور دون الإناث عند استخدامه لمفردات بذيئة ذات مدلول جنسي مباشر أو غير مباشر تستثير الشهوة الجنسية لديهم . ثانياً يتناول هذا البحث المجال الذي فسحه للمرأة ليكون لها دور في روايته وبالتالي كيفية ظهورها بالمقارنة مع ندها الرجل إذا ما أعطيت أي دور يذكر . ثالثاً يحاول هذا البحث التطرق إلى طبيعة العلاقات النسوية لأسترن في حياته , وبكلمات أخرى, إلى الدافع النفسي وراء كراهيته لهن .