Borrowings, Opinions, and Metaphors of Authorship in *Tristram Shandy*

Jen-chou Liu

ABSTRACT

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is (in)famous for its many borrowings from other literary texts. In a series of metaphors, Sterne conceptualizes different models of authorship, each in turn sabotaged by irony. The scribe metaphor depicts writing as an act of divine inspiration, but it masks the centrality of borrowing in Sterne's authorship. Picking-up and settlement metaphors illustrate the "progress and establishment" of opinions—an essential process for forming authorial identities—through the domains of Lockean philosophy and parochial poor relief. While they shed light on the importance of labor, originality, sociability, and knowledge in discourses on authorship, picking-up and settlement metaphors are compromised by their associations with Walter Shandy, Tristram's eccentric father. No metaphor neatly encapsulates Sterne's take on authorship, but borrowing anchors all of the metaphors. As textual grafts, Sterne's borrowings construct an authorship defined by ceaseless, playful conversations between authors, readers, and ideas.

KEYWORDS Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, authorship, metaphor, borrowing, opinion

Ex-position, Issue No. 47, June 2022 | National Taiwan University
DOI: 10.6153/EXP.202206_(47).0012

Jen-chou LIU, Lecturer, Department of English, University of Minnesota, USA

As a literary technique, borrowing does not have an agreed-upon definition and can be called many different names.[1] A general but helpful definition is provided by philosopher and musicologist Leonard B. Meyer, who asserts that borrowing occurs whenever "existing materials—usually fairly brief excerpts (a melody, a line or stanza of verse, or part of a painting), but sometimes larger sections or even whole works of modest size—are quoted, copied, or reproduced exactly, or almost exactly" (199). Abounding with a dizzying variety of literary borrowings, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) has inspired many debates since its publication. In 1798 John Ferriar published the earliest study of Sterne's borrowings, *Illustrations of Sterne, with other Essays and Verses*, and identified "the ludicrous writers" of France (François Rabelais, François Béroalde de Verville, and Agrippa d'Aubigné) as Sterne's main sources (7). After Ferriar, most scholars have discussed Sterne's borrowings in the tradition of learned wit, from Renaissance humanists (Michel de Montaigne, Robert Burton, and Miguel de Cervantes) to the Scriblerians (Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift).[2] Melvyn New's Florida Edition of *Tristram* (1978) and *The Notes* (1984) epitomizes this approach, for the editors attempted to identify thoroughly every author, text, or idea Sterne read and borrowed either directly or indirectly.[3] Resisting the trend toward stabilizing Sterne's intertextual relationships with other authors, Jonathan Lamb adopted a poststructuralist approach and read Sterne's borrowings as "'fragments' on fragments . . . exotic bits and pieces not as the language of an ultimately decipherable message, but as parts of a figurative arrangement whose efficacy lies in its unannotable ambiguity" (*Sterne's Fiction* 4).[4]

Different as they can be, all scholarly understandings of and approaches to Sterne's borrowings impose external frameworks (e.g., wit, poststructuralist ambiguity) on *Tristram* to make sense of the borrowings therein. Such impositions

[1] Similar terms include "allusion," "echo," and "intertextuality." See Machacek. For the metaphorical relationship between allusion and grafting, see Pasco. For how literary borrowing can be categorized into seven types—plagiarism, adaptation, retelling, parody, criticism, revision, and expansion—based on what the audience knows about the original, see Rabinowitz.

[2] See, for example, Anderson; Jackson; Wehrs; and Hawley.

[3] *The Notes* distinguish between "authors/texts and ideas . . . between those authors/texts that Sterne certainly knew and loved, and what we might call his 'index learning,' his use of encyclopedias and other works of 'reference,' from which he borrowed not only ideas but as well the names of the authors who promulgated them" (New 7-8).

[4] Lamb protests against the Florida edition for putting *Tristram* "in a grid of borrowings, quotations and allusions that considerably restricts the freedom to read beyond the annotated pale" (*Sterne's Fiction* 2). Thomas Keymer calls Lamb's defensiveness "the poststructuralist armour . . . in which intertextuality is an infinite field of potential relations from which readers, unconfined by authorial intention or editorial fiat, select at will" (11).

are understandable, for Sterne never explicitly states how or why he borrows so extensively. However, *Tristram* does provide some clues to deciphering Sterne's stance on borrowing. I locate such clues in three metaphors that illustrate the formation and importance of opinions, for which borrowings play a pivotal role. First, Tristram uses the scribe metaphor to describe his writing process, a topic on which he delights in expounding. When analyzed in an eighteenth-century religious context, the scribe metaphor is exposed as a fraud, for Sterne rejects inspiration and defends borrowing as the proper method for sermon writing. Secondly, in order to tease out Sterne's view on borrowing and authorship, I turn to two metaphors that describe the process of forming opinions, one of the pillars of writing and reading *Tristram*. Sterne deliberately replaced common keywords such as "history" and "adventures," found in the titles of many eighteenth-century novels, with *Opinions*.[5] As Tristram explains to the reader, "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" (1.6.9). Whereas Tristram never misses an opportunity to expand on his or other characters' opinions, he does not explain how he forms these opinions. Instead, he develops the picking-up and settlement metaphors to explain how his father, Walter Shandy, forms his opinions on noses and names. As "an excellent natural philosopher," Walter is passionate about "abstruse thinking;—the ideas of time and space,—or how we came by those ideas,—or of what stuff they were made,—or whether they were born with us—or we pick'd them up afterwards as we went along,—or whether we did it in frocks,—or not till we had got into breeches" (1.3.4, 3.18.223). Walter's hobbyhorse, which Melanie D. Holm characterizes as "a passion for order, explanation, and learned disquisition" (364), makes him the ideal focal point to investigate the relationship between borrowings and opinions under the larger system of Sterne's authorship. With the picking-up metaphor, Tristram demonstrates how an author develops opinions through borrowings, the labor of which constitutes originality. Based on Lockean property theory, the picking-up meta-

[5] Some examples include Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719); Henry Fielding's *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749); Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa. Or the History of a Young Lady* (1747-48); Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748); Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751); and Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote; Or the Adventures of Arabella* (1752). Eighteenth-century novelists, according to Gérard Genette, "avoided flaunting a status Aristotle had never heard of [i.e. the novel], and contrived to suggest their genre status more indirectly by way of parageneric titles in which the words *history*, *life*, *memoirs*, *adventures*, *voyages*, and some others generally played a role" (95).

phor focuses on the author-work relationship but ignores the growing importance of networks in the literary marketplace. To account for the marketplace, Tristram develops the settlement metaphor and situates authorship in a community founded on parochial sociability. By tracing how the three metaphors—scribe, picking-up, and settlement—are developed and eventually undermined by Tristram's and Sterne's uses of irony, I recast borrowing as a heuristic tool with which to define authorial identity—the only constant amid Sterne's ever-shifting metaphors of authorship.

The Scribe Metaphor

After the famous cabbage planter passage wherein he defends his digressive and nonlinear writing style, Tristram explains his "most religious" way of beginning a book: "I begin with writing the first sentence—and trusting to Almighty God for the second" (8.2.656). Tristram compares himself to a faithful scribe duly recording divine inspirations, yet this image takes an interesting turn when he admits that he may have "intercept[ed] many a thought which heaven intended for another man" (8.2.657). Inspirations are like letters: the moment a message is sent from above, it becomes temporarily untethered and ownerless until it reaches its intended recipient. The idea of interception raises all kinds of important questions about Tristram's authorship. If it is intercepted by someone like Tristram in the middle of the transmission, does this act constitute borrowing or theft? If an author cannot but sit and wait for divine inspiration, clueless about when and what heaven will send, then this hypothetical author cannot know if someone like Tristram has intercepted and incorporated the message into his work. If inspiration is a gift and the intended recipient has no knowledge of the gift, who has the right to or owns the gift during the transmission? Lamb reads Tristram's scribe metaphor as an explication of intertextuality, of the materials Tristram freely borrows: "he outlines a potential community of ideas which is achieved whenever his interceptions are made, as they often are, at the level of libraries rather than the middle air" ("Sterne's System" 797). While his analysis sheds light on a secular community of authors and books, Lamb does not fully consider the religious context in which Tristram situates the metaphor—"I'm sure it is the most religious" (8.2.656)—which both connects the metaphor to borrowing and undermines the metaphor's sincerity. Despite Tristram's braggadocio, the scribe metaphor hides the ubiquitous practice of borrowings in sermons and misleadingly praises an inspirational model of writing that Sterne ironically denounces for its over-reliance on enthusiasm.

As a novelist, Sterne depicts sermon borrowings first in "A Fragment in the Manner Rabelais" (1759), where Longinus Rabelaicus claims that a good sermon should be like "a thorough-stitch'd system of KERUKOPAEDIA," where quotations or borrowed thoughts are woven into one's own sermon like a piece of fabric (9: 165). Rabelaicus then suggests that all published sermons be compiled into one large volume to be "put into the Hands of every Licenced Preacher in Great Britain & Ireland just before He began to compose" (9: 166). Practicing Rabeliaicus's method, Homenas, who has to preach next Sunday, borrows "[f]ive whole pages, nine round Paragraphs, and a Dozen and a half of good Thoughts" from the Anglican clergyman Samuel Clarke. His borrowings, he claims, are "fair and square" because he is merely doing what any person would "lawfully call in for Help" in "any other human Emergency" (9: 166). In *Tristram*, the parson Yorick has the habit of writing down on the first page of every sermon he composes "the time, the place, and the occasion of its being preached: to this, he was ever wont to add some short comment or stricture upon the sermon itself" (6.11.513-14). On one of his sermons, Yorick annotates: "*[f]or this sermon I shall be hanged,—for I have stolen the greatest part of it. Doctor* Paidagunes *found me out. Set a thief to catch a thief*" (6.11.514). Yorick does not elaborate on the content of his sermon or Dr. Paidagunes's finding, but his casual admission of theft and reference to Paidagunes as a thief suggest how prevalent stealing was among sermon writers.

A pastor and sermon writer himself, Sterne also borrows frequently in his sermons. In the preface to his first collection of sermons, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (1760), Sterne admits that he has taken great liberty when it comes to identifying the sources of his quotations: "there are some other passages, where I suspect I may have taken the same liberty,—but 'tis only suspicion, for I do not remember it is so, otherwise I should have restored them to their proper owners" (4: 2). In his biography of Sterne, Ian Ross notices that Sterne's sermons "show notable dependence on the published work of other preachers," to the point "that in some cases [his practice] has been considered as tantamount to plagiarism" (241). However, most scholars have excused Sterne's alleged plagiarism in his sermons by pointing out that borrowing was an accepted convention in eighteenth-century sermon writing. In an essay published in *The Spectator* no. 106, for example, Joseph Addison and Richard Steelel write that Roger de Coverley gave his chaplain

> a Present of all the good Sermons which have been printed in *English*, and only begged of him that every *Sunday* he would pronounce one of them in the Pulpit. Accordingly, he has digested them into such a Series, that they follow one another naturally, and make a continued System of practical Divinity. (279-80)

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Anglican clergymen routinely borrowed from published sermons because they sought not to develop progressive ideas but to reaffirm what was conventional, therefore safe, so as not to jeopardize their tenures (Gow 124).

Tristram's scribe metaphor presents writing as a product of divine inspiration, yet its sincerity is dubious once we consider Sterne's criticism of inspiration in his sermon "Humility," where he attacks those who compose sermons by relying not on published sermons but on inspiration. Sterne compares these writers to

> the most illiterate mechanicks, who as a witty divine said of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one,—were yet able so to frame their nonsense to the nonsense of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they pray'd and preach'd by inspiration, by that the most common actions of their lives were set about in the Spirit of the LORD. (4: 242)

Sterne argues that, without erudition and established scholarship to support their sermons, these preachers are like illiterate laborers who should attend, rather than compose, sermons.[6] Good sermons should, as Sterne does in his own, rely on borrowings from published ones. One of the consequences of frequent borrowings is that the styles of sermons composed by different clergymen became similar to one another. Sterne's sermons were no exception. As New observes, "Sterne's voice coincides with the Anglican discourse as it developed in the hands of [John Tillotson, Samuel Clarke, John Wilkins, William Wollaston, Edward Stillingfleet, John Sharp] at the end of the seventeenth century and is part of the eighteenth-century chorus that imitated and emulated that discourse" (5: xiv).[7] Tristram's fallaciously inspirational approach to writing is similar to how Sterne presents himself to the world as a spontaneous writer: "to me inconsiderate Soul that I am, who never yet knew what it was to speak or write one premeditated word," and who only writes with "that careless irregularity of a good and an easy heart" (*Letters* 7.160). In his annotation to this passage, New refers readers to Sterne's letter to David Garrick (dated January 27, 1760), in which Sterne describes his first installment (i.e., Volumes I and II) of *Tristram* as "hot as it came from my Brain, without one Correction" (*Letters* 7.112). As Lewis Perry Curtis notes in his edition of Sterne's letters, Sterne's claim of spontaneity is

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[6] Sterne's disapproval of inspiration aligns with his attack on "the mistaken enthusiast" in "On Enthusiasm" (4: 365). For a historical and linguistic overview of enthusiasm, see Tucker. For how Romanticism defined itself against the dangers of enthusiasm, see Mee.

[7] For a comprehensive examination of the sources of Sterne's sermons, see Hammond.

"a Shandean invention" that conceals the careful revisions the novelist undertook (87). Ultimately, the scribe metaphor is a red herring that distracts us from recognizing the importance of borrowing in Sterne's fictional and sermon writings.

The Picking-Up Metaphor

On the subject of noses, Walter Shandy strongly opines that their lengths are connected to family fortunes: long noses lead to prominence, short noses to obscurity. Walter's opinion is not original but borrowed from his family, where "[f]or three generations at least, this *tenet* in favour of long noses had gradually taken root" (3.33.261). The tenet started with Tristram's great-grandfather, who had to pay his wife a jointure of three hundred pounds a year because he had "little or no nose" (3.31.257). Walter relies on the tenet to explain the fall of the Shandy family, which "felt the turn of the wheel, and had never recovered the blow of my [Tristram's] great grandfather's nose" (3.31.261). After recounting the history of his father's opinion on noses, Tristram uses a metaphor to explain how Walter forms opinions: "He pick'd up an opinion, Sir, as a man in a state of nature picks up an apple.—It becomes his own" (3.34.262-63). This picking-up metaphor is immediately followed by a staged philosophical debate between Didius and Tribonius, lawyers of ancient Rome, which the former launches by asking: "Pray, Mr. *Shandy*, what patent has he to shew for it? and how did it begin to be his? was it, when he set his heart upon it? or when he gather'd it? or when he chew'd it? or when he roasted it? or when he peel'd? or when he brought it home? or when he digested?—or when he—?" (3.34.263).

Both the picking-up metaphor and Didius's questions are borrowed from John Locke's the *Second Treatise of Government*, where Locke defines property in relation to labor:

> Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a *property* in his own *person*: this no body has any right to but himself. The *labour* of his body, and the *work* of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *property*. (19)

As examples of his labor-based theory of property, Locke uses apples: "He that is nourished by the acorns he picked up under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself. No body

can deny but the nourishment is his" (*Second Treatise* 19). Having discussed man's appropriation of acorns and apples, Locke asks a series of rhetorical questions: "I ask then, when did they begin to be his? when he digested? or when he eat? or when he boiled? or when he brought them home? or when he picked them up? and it is plain, if the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could" (*Second Treatise* 19). The actions enumerated in Darius's questions are basically identical to Locke's, but the order in which they are presented is reversed. Whereas Locke emphasizes the importance of gathering by putting it at the end of his questions, Tristram begins with gathering and builds a crescendo toward digesting. More importantly, Tristram adds a new action—cooking—to the questions. While Locke does mention boiling in his questions, boiling is one of the simplest ways to cook food without adding any condiments or ingredients. By replacing boiling with cooking, Tristram opens up extra metaphorical room in which to imagine more complex ways of engaging with opinions.

Tristram's addition of cooking is crucial to the picking-up metaphor, for it introduces intellectual labor, a type of labor not covered by Locke in the *Second Treatise*.[8] In his answer to Didius, Tribonius further develops the significance of intellectual labor in the picking-up metaphor:

> [T]he sweat of a man's brows, and the exsudations of a man's brains, are as much a man's own property, as the breeches upon his backside;—which said exsudations, &c. being dropp'd upon the said apple by the labour of finding it, and picking it up; and being moreover indissolubly wafted, and as indissolubly annex'd by the picker up, to the thing pick'd up, carried home, roasted, peel'd, eaten, digested, and so on;—'tis evident that the gatherer of the apple, in so doing, has mix'd something which was his own, with the apple which was not his own, by which means he has acquired a property. (3.34.263-64)

The Lockean type of physical labor ("the sweat of a man's brows") is distinguished from intellectual labor ("the exsudations of a man's brains"). Together, they turn an apple/opinion into the indissoluble property of the person who exerts both physical and intellectual labor. After this staged debate, Tristram concludes that Walter indisputably owns his opinions, for "they had cost him

[8] Even if Locke does not directly address intellectual property in his discussions of labor, value, and property, many modern scholars have endeavored to elucidate a Lockean theory of intellectual property. In "Justifying Intellectual Property," one of the earliest and most influential discussions on the topic, Edwin C. Hettinger famously rejects a Lockean theorization of intellectual property on the grounds that intellectual labor is drastically different from physical labor. For a review of the debates, see Mossoff.

moreover as much labour in cooking and digesting as in the case above, so that they might well and truely be said to be his own goods and chattles" (3.34.264). Walter's intellectual labor does not stop at claiming the opinion he borrowed from the Shandean tenet as his own. He, as Tristram describes, "would intrench and fortify them [opinions] round with as many circumvallations and breast-works, as my uncle *Toby* would a citadel" (3.34.264). Striving to defend his opinion on noses, Walter "collected every book and treatise which had been systematically wrote upon noses" (3.34.265). Tristram's picking-up metaphor reveals that borrowing is not a lazy act of appropriating the product of others' labor or of shirking from investing one's own labor into producing new, original thoughts. Instead, borrowing involves expending labor in the form of "cooking and digesting." Consequently, borrowing is no longer a mere appropriation of others' labor, but a reinvigoration and compounding of labor on labor.[9] The picking-up metaphor unpacks the complex ways in which borrowing operates in *Tristram*. Both its vehicle and tenor are borrowed: Walter borrows the opinion from his family; Tristram borrows the picking-up imagery from Locke.

While the picking-up metaphor illustrates the workings of borrowing on at least two levels, Tristram's insistence on the origin of Walter's opinion and his addition of excretion to the metaphor expose the danger of solipsism in a Lockean theorization of opinion forming. As Heather Keenleyside notes, the picking-up metaphor is founded on "Walter's Lockean notion that an opinion can be his in the same way as an apple, that consciousness—and so persons—are composed of simple ideas that are picked up and put together like bits of matter" (119). This erroneous conflation between the material and the immaterial is one of the fundamental problems in Locke's labor theory of property, and Sterne uses it to debunk Walter's Lockeanism.[10] However, Keenleyside's discussion still centers on one person's relationship with objects and ideas without considering the roles of other people. Opinions do not grow on trees like apples. They are not the Lockean ideas, which originate from either sensation or reflection. Walter's borrowed opinions are not actual objects that, as Locke describes, "*con-*

[9] When Lamb analyzes Sterne's use of commonplace proverbs that have lost their vibrancy after long use, he draws a similar conclusion about Sterne's technique: "Whatever truth has been lost from the proverb by timeless repetition is renewed by an active or dramatic imitation which makes words once more conversant about things" ("Sterne's System" 805).

[10] Keenleyside argues that in *The Second Treatise*, Locke's theory of property, constructed on the identification of appropriation with eating, "effectively transforms the person from a living creature into a collection of goods, a mechanical assortment of the things he picks up. . . . Locke elides the distinction between 'his' and 'him,' possession and person. Or, he refashions aspects of persons *as* possessions: thoughts and actions can be one's property in the same way as an apple in a basket, or in one's belly" (120).

vey into the Mind, several distinct *Perceptions* of things" such as color and texture, nor are they the product of "the *Perception of the Operations of our own Minds* within us, as it is employ'd about the *Ideas* it has got" (*Essay* 105). As Tristram emphatically reminds us, his father borrowed the opinion from the family:

> the whimsicality of my father's brain was far from having the whole honour of this, as it had of almost all his other strange notions.—For in a great measure he might be said to have suck'd this in, with his mother's milk. He did his part however.—If education planted the mistake, (in case it was one) my father watered it, and ripened it to perfection. (3.33.261)

Erasing the prehistory of the Shandean tenet of noses, the picking-up metaphor presents a solipsistic world where only opinions, but not the persons who authored said opinions, exist. In other words, the community of authors from whom a person (e.g., Walter) borrows opinions is excluded from the picking-up metaphor.[11] This exclusion is symbolically represented in the picking-up metaphor when Tristram ends his imitation of Locke's rhetorical questions with "—or when he—?" The first dash indicates a pause, a hesitation sparked by the indecency of his last question about excretion, the biological end product of the human digestive system. As Keenleyside observes, the final dash challenges the premise of the picking-up metaphor: "Eating is unlike 'picking up' because not everything that one eats becomes either his or him; digestion is always accompanied by excretion, incorporation by loss" (121). The addition and coexistence of cooking and excretion in the picking-up metaphor represent Sterne's critique of Locke's labor theory of property: intellectual labor and an authorial community are both indispensable to how borrowings facilitate opinion forming. To conceptualize how borrowings and opinions operate in an authorial community, Sterne turns to the settlement metaphor.

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[11] Sterne's implicit criticism of Locke's exclusion of community is indicative of his overall engagement with the philosopher. In his seminal study of Sterne's relationship with Locke, *Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric*, John Traugott argues that Sterne shares Locke's skepticism about communication but overcomes Locke's pessimism by developing interpersonal bonds through rhetoric: "Whereas Locke would resolutely analyze all ideas and exactly determine the significations of words in order to reconcile necessarily isolated minds . . . Sterne's purpose is to demonstrate and describe the constant frustration of such analysis, the impossibility of determining meaning apart from a context of human situations" (xv). For "a comprehensive account of the establishment, development, decline, and recent re-emergence of an interpretatively powerful idea: that Laurence Sterne was profoundly influenced by the philosophical empiricism of John Locke," see Jones.

The Settlement Metaphor

In addition to noses, Walter also has a strong opinion on names, as he believes that "good or bad names . . . irresistibly impress'd upon our characters and conduct" (1.19.58). Tristram describes again how Walter developed his opinion:

> [H]e had a thousand little sceptical notions of the comick kind to defend.—most of which notions, I verily believe, at first enter'd upon the footing of mere whims, and of a *vive la Bagatelle*; and as such he would make merry with them for half an hour or so, and having sharpen'd his wit upon 'em, dismiss them till another day.
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> I mention this, not only as matter of hypothesis or conjecture upon the progress and establishment of my father's many odd opinions,—but as a warning to the learned reader against the indiscreet reception of such guest, who, after a free and undisturbed entrance, for some years, into our brains,—at length claim a kind of settlement there.—working sometimes like yeast;—but more generally after the manner of the gentle passion, beginning in jest,—but ending in downright earnest. (1.19.61)

Like the picking-up metaphor, Tristram's settlement metaphor describes how Walter forms his idiosyncratic opinions, although here opinions are compared to guests instead of apples. Personified as guests, opinions are untethered from their original authors and roam freely before they enter Walter's brain and become his. However, we cannot tell Walter's exact stance toward his guests. Is he a hospitable or indifferent host? Does he encourage and respect his idea-guests, or does he merely tolerate their presence? We cannot pin down Walter's stance, nor can we fully comprehend the metaphor, because Tristram remains vague about what he means by settlement. The only other settlement mentioned in the novel is the marriage between Tristram's mother and Walter, according to which Walter must supply her with 120 pounds for childbirth and have the child delivered in London. Because of this marriage settlement, Tristram "was doom'd, by marriage articles, to have my nose squeez'd as flat to my face, as if the destinies had actually spun me without one" (1.15.46).

Marriage settlements were a common legal document in the eighteenth century, especially among landed aristocrats, that stipulated how properties should be transferred upon the death of a spouse. Nevertheless, Tristram is not referring to marriage settlements in his metaphor because a marriage between husband and wife is by no means founded on one party's free and undisturbed entrance

upon the other. What is clear about this metaphor is that Tristram imagines the brain as some kind of space—house, estate, town, country—that people can enter and settle in. Since settlement was commonly used in eighteenth-century discourses about land, I argue that in Tristram's metaphor, settlement should be understood as "[l]egal residence or establishment in a particular parish, entitling a person to relief from the poor rates; the right to relief acquired by such residence" (OED).[12] Sterne's tenure as a vicar in Yorkshire would have made him familiar with the workings of his parish and the lives of his parishioners. Furthermore, the Christian doctrine of charity, a topic on which he enthusiastically preached, was historically connected to poor relief.[13] Read in the context of poor relief, the settlement metaphor uses the parish as a trope that situates borrowing and opinion in an authorial community founded on sociability—a community where authors freely borrow from one another.

An institutional program of social welfare, poor relief originated from the English Old Poor Law that had its roots in the medieval period. After the Black Death (1348-50) wiped out at least a quarter of England's population, labor was in short supply, and wages rose astronomically. A series of statutes were passed in the late fourteenth century to discipline beggars and vagrants and to put every able-bodied man to work. Tudor monarchs continued to legislate in order to discipline the poor. In 1494 the Vagabonds and Beggars Act was passed, imposing harsher punishments on those who could but would not work. While beggars and vagrants were subject to ever-stricter laws, English monarchs also sought ways to relieve the disabled and the elderly, those who would but could not work. In the mid-sixteenth century, after Henry VIII disbanded monasteries, priories, convents, friaries and other religious institutions previously responsible for giving alms to the poor, English monarchs assumed responsibility for relieving the poor. During Elizabeth's reign, the Old Poor Law began to be codified, first with the 1597 Act for the Relief of the Poor and then with the Poor Relief Act of 1601. The most important step for managing and implementing poor relief was the practice of settlement, a legal means to establish and prove one's residence in a specific parish. Without settlement, one could not legally apply for poor relief. In 1662 the Poor Relief Act, also known as the Settlement Act, laid down the prin-

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[12] When used to mean "[t]he act of settling as colonists or new-comers; the act of peopling or colonizing a new country, or of planting a colony" (OED), settlement appeared in many publications about Britain's colonial project in North America. Colonizers often targeted at ownerless virgin land, or in cases where the land had already been inhabited by indigenous people, the colonists' relationship with the locals was rarely the kind of peaceful settlement Tristram's metaphor implies. As a result, colonization is not the appropriate context in which to understand the settlement metaphor.

[13] See his sermon "The case of Elijah and the widow of Zerephath considered," *Sermons* 4: 40-56.

ciples of settlement. The act stipulates that any newcomer to a parish that is "likely to be chargeable" can acquire settlement if he has lived in the parish unchallenged for forty days or if he rents a property worth ten pounds a year. Once settlement has been established, the individual can file his application for relief with the overseers, who are elected from within the parish by the parishioners who pay poor rates, a local tax based on the value of the property in which one lives. The goal of this tax was to fund poor relief. Relief took the form of direct payments (e.g., pensions and doles) or wages for those employed in workhouses. In the eighteenth century, poor relief had been developed not across a centralized system where the state was responsible for managing the relief, but on a local scale firmly rooted in the parishes. As a result, it "meant that far from being impersonal, a business run at a distance according to narrow principles, the relief of the poor was a matter for face-to-face management by overseers among their neighbors" (Slack 20).

Read in the context of poor relief, the settlement metaphor presents Walter not as a generic host whose stance we cannot determine, but a charitable one who shelters and provides relief to poor, vagrant ideas. The parish, the geopolitical unit through which poor relief was administered, emerges in the settlement metaphor as a critical literary trope organizing relationships among authors. As Scott McKenzie argues,

> [t]he parish is the primary topos of managing the poor, but it might also be called the first topos (and topography) of the English novel. By the end of the eighteenth century the home has become the major topos—not to say telos—of the novel (as it is, for a time, of poverty management). Both parish and home subsist in fiction as conceptual frames and localizing principles that help organize the representation of place, space, and social affiliation. (619)[14]

In *Tristram*, the trope of the parish underscores the altruistic and social aspect of borrowing. It suggests that borrowing could be an equivalent of social welfare in intellectual property because it promotes the circulation of ideas and opinions. Individual authors become fixed territorial parishes through which ideas could

[14] McKenzie bases his argument on a reading of Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, which includes many references to and descriptions of poor relief and settlement. He mentions *Tristram*, but only the general geography of the characters and events: "a 'world' marked out by the Shandy estate, Toby's bowling-green theater of warfare, Yorick's 'sallies about his parish,' and the midwife's 'small circle described upon the circle of the great world, of four *English* miles diameter, or thereabouts'" (619).

freely migrate. No longer focused exclusively on the individual, the settlement metaphor promotes a sense of community, as all authors, like parishioners, are neighbors who collaborate to maintain and improve the wellbeing of ideas. The parish trope puts the settlement metaphor in the tradition of the estate metaphor. In his influential *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*, Mark Rose examines important metaphors of authorship and argues that the estate metaphor, whose history could be traced back to the image of the "tiller of a field" in classical and biblical literatures, is one of the most powerful metaphors for conceptualizing the relationship between an author and his works in the eighteenth century (40). As he explains more clearly in "Copyright and Its Metaphors," the estate metaphor "likens writing to agriculture and specifically to plowing, with the writing instrument or stylus being a kind of plow by which one makes furrows on the field of a wax tablet" (6).[15] Using the parish as a spatial trope, Sterne's settlement metaphor illustrates how borrowing and opinion help promote sociability within a parochial community of authors.

Originally formulated by Tristram to explain "the progress and establishment" of Walter's opinions, the settlement metaphor contains an embryonic form of Sterne's concept of authorship, one that is founded on parochial sociability. However, the specific way in which Tristram presents his metaphor—"a warning to the learned reader"—raises questions about the legitimacy of such a reading. Opinions formed via Walter's method are, according to Tristram, like "yeast" or "the gentle passion": "beginning in jest,—but ending in downright earnest." Both similes connote intoxication. Yeast is the agent of alcoholic fermentation, and love is often portrayed as irrational. The earnest opinions thus formed become a unique type of madness, one that is distinctly Lockean. As Tristram speculates, "[Walter's] judgment, at length, became the dupe of his wit" (1.19.61). Tristram's comment recalls Locke's famous separation of wit and judgment in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

[15] Rose credits Henry Fielding, who "played with the notion of the commonwealth of letters as an actual territory," for popularizing the estate metaphor in the eighteenth century ("Copyright" 8). In *Tom Jones*, Fielding thus describes the relationship between ancient and modern authors: "The ancients may be considered as a rich common, where every person who hath the smallest tenement in Parnassus hath a free right to fatten his muse" (540). This common-land metaphor is based on the open field system belonging to feudal England before the enclosure movements and the rapid developments of domestic as well as international trades in the seventeenth century. Fielding chooses the language of trade and war to describe the relationships among authors in this community (Parnassus). He suggests that the intellectual properties of the ancients are considered "free-booty" for the moderns "to plunder and pillage" without the least trace of shame or guilt (540).

> For *Wit* lying most in the assemblage of *Ideas*, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures, agreeable Visions in the Fancy: *Judgment*, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully, one from another, *Ideas*, wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another. (2.11.2)

Tristram suggests that Walter's overindulgence in wit and jest has clouded his judgment. Read in the context of the *Essay*, Tristram's warning of Walter's witty opinions echoes Locke's criticism of the association of ideas, which Locke defines as the "Connexion of *Ideas* wholly owing to Chance or Custom; *Ideas* that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some Men's Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but is Associate appears with it" (*Essay* 2.33.5). Due to its unreasonableness, Locke calls the association of ideas a kind of madness, for "that opposition to Reason deserves that Name, and is really Madness" (*Essay* 2.33.4). Since Walter often forms his opinions by freely borrowing and joining other people's ideas on a whim, the earnestness he develops with regard to opinions could echo the madness Locke equates with the association of ideas.

His warning about Walter's wit notwithstanding, Tristram does not present the settlement metaphor as an absolute interdiction against opinions, for he lets readers judge for themselves. Even if he invokes Locke's separation of wit and judgment when assessing the formation of his father's opinion, Tristram mockingly rejects such separation in "The Author's Preface": "inasmuch as they [wit and judgment] are two operations differing from each other as wide as east is from west.—So, says *Locke*,—so are farting and hickuping, say I" (3, 227). Furthermore, Tristram presents the judgment-becoming-the-dupe-of-wit comment as just one of many possible explanations: "Whether this was the case of the singularity of my father's notions,—or that his judgment, at length, became the dupe of his wit;—or how far, in many of his notions, he might, tho' odd, be absolutely right;—the reader, as he comes at them, shall decide" (1.19.61). Without precluding the possibility that his father's opinions may be right, Tristram asks readers to judge Walter's opinions as these surface in the novel. By asking readers to evaluate opinions, Tristram includes them in his parochial community, thereby expanding and complicating notions of sociability and authorship.

Grafts of Borrowing

Tristram's sociability with readers of the novel is modeled on friendship, the reciprocity of which promotes readers' acquisition of knowledge. Tristram constantly speaks directly to readers, giving explanations, directions, and reminders. He imagines his relationship to the reader as one between two "perfect strangers to each other" at first. As the story progresses, however, "the slight acquaintance which is now beginning betwixt us, will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is in fault, will terminate in friendship" (1.6.9). Writing, in Tristram's mind, is the process through which the author and the reader converse with each other, because "[w]riting, when properly managed . . . is but a different name for conversation" (2.11.125). This conversational and friendly model of author-reader relationship entails high expectations of reciprocity from the reader, the ideal of which Sterne describes as a "true feeler": "a true feeler always brings half the entertainment along with him. His own ideas are only call'd forth by what he reads, and the vibrations within, so entirely correspond with those excited, 'tis like reading himself and not the book" (*Letters* 8: 646).[16] At the core of the reciprocation between Sterne and his true feelers, knowledge is the most important subject and what sustains their conversation. As Sterne explains in a sermon, "Conversation is a traffick; and if you enter into it, without some stock of knowledge . . . the trade drops at once" (*Sermons* 20: 194). In the novel, Tristram insists that readers should read his book not for adventures but for knowledge. Instructing his lady reader to pause and reread a chapter, Tristram explains that the purpose of his instruction is

> to rebuke a vicious taste which has crept into thousands besides herself,—of reading straight forwards, more in quest of the adventures, than of the deep erudition and knowledge which a book of this cast, if read over as it should be, would infallibly impart with them.—The mind should be accustomed to make wise reflections, and draw curious conclusions as it goes along. (1.20.65)

It is crucial for Tristram to correct what he calls "this self-same vile pruriency for fresh adventures in all things" (1.20.66) and imparts knowledge to his readers.

[16] The concept of "true feeler" had already appeared in *Tristram* in slightly less well-defined terms. Tristram believes that "[t]he truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself" (2.11.125). When listening to Trim's story of the king of Bohemia, Toby teaches him how to tell the story properly and explains that, when listening to or reading a merry story, "a man should ever bring one half of the entertainment with him" (8.19.682).

Tristram's hobbyhorse is authorship, for he revels in sharing his opinions on writing with the reader. In the beginning of the fifth volume, Tristram asks a series of rhetorical questions about what constitutes true authorship:

> Tell me, ye learned, shall we for ever be adding so much to the *bulk*—so little to the *stock*?
>
> Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?
>
> Are we for ever to be twisting, and untwisting the same rope? for ever in the same track—for ever at the same pace? (5.1.408)

Tristram's answer to the three questions is, of course, no. One should neither add to the bulk nor write hackneyed books. Given that "stock," in Sterne's works, is often associated with knowledge and "bulk" with appearance lacking substance, this passage explains why unoriginal authors add to the bulk but not to the stock: they write books that seem pleasing yet remain hollow, and do not contribute to the production or dissemination of knowledge.[17]

The way "knowledge" defines Tristram's authorship sheds new light on the function of opinion in the novel. Walter's opinions, the forming of which the picking-up and settlement metaphors describe, may be singular and eccentric, but they repay the conscientious reader, for whom opinions are like a litmus test: they help identify and screen the true feelers who are capable of acquiring knowledge through opinions. The heuristic function of opinions can be illuminated by eighteenth-century understandings of opinions and their relationship to knowledge. As Ephraim Chambers states in *Cyclopaedia*, an opinion is "a probable belief; or a doubtful and uncertain judgment of the mind . . . Plato makes *opinion* a medium between knowledge and ignorance; clearer and more express than ignorance; yet more obscure and unsatisfying than knowledge" (Chambers). By studying and weighing the opinions they read in *Tristram*, readers learn not to become the dupes of wit but to exercise their judgment in the pursuit of know-

[17] In his dedication to Lord John Spencer, Sterne offers Volumes V and VI to his patron: "they are the best of my talents, with such bad health as I have, could produce:—had providence granted me a larger stock of either, they had been a much more proper present to your Lordship" (5, dedication, 405). In Walter's view, an educator's responsibility to children is "to open their minds, and stock them early with ideas" (5.42.484). He is confident that by studying the *Tristrapaedia*, Tristram will "increase his knowledge to such a prodigious stock" (6.2.493). The association of stock with knowledge is seen when Tristram describes his father possessing "a great stock of knowledge" of love (6.36.564). As for bulk, Sterne usually uses it in the expression "the bulk of the world" to imagine the general public of mankind in a particularly vulnerable state, prone to be deceived. See his sermons 1, 6, 11, 26, 39, 43, and 44 (*Works* 4: 6, 58, 64, 103, 251, 253, 373, 404, 410, 414).

ledge. Tristram encourages his readers to enjoy the association not *of* but *with* ideas: forming friendly relationships with ideas and using them as a heuristic tool for obtaining knowledge.

Yet, like the scribe, picking-up, and settlement metaphors, Tristram's explanation of authorship becomes problematic upon closer examination. As many scholars have noted, Tristram's images of apothecaries and rope are borrowed from Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.[18] It is characteristically Shandean of Tristram to use borrowings, a form of recycling old mixtures and ropes, to encourage making qualitative contributions to "the stock" instead of adding mere quantities to "the bulk." In four attempts, Tristram describes the various components of Walter's and his authorial identities, but each attempt falls short of a coherent conceptualization of authorship. With the picking-up and settlement metaphors, Tristram describes how Walter forms opinions through borrowings. The picking-up metaphor illustrates how borrowings are acts of intellectual labor, but the metaphor could not keep pace with the expanding literary marketplace or capture how authorship was increasingly determined by one's relationships and networks. To correct the weaknesses of the Lockean picking-up metaphor, Tristram expands authorship beyond one individual's subject matter and writing process, and uses borrowings and opinions to foster an inclusive community characterized by sociability among all authors. As promising as they are, Tristram ultimately pulls the rug out from under the metaphors when he attaches excretion and madness to them—possibly all part of an elaborate joke about Walter's eccentricity. When Tristram uses the scribe metaphor to present a seemingly straightforward representation of his own authorship, the metaphor is both misleading and ironic because it opposes the convention of borrowing in sermon writing, a convention Sterne ultimately endorses. When Tristram uses the bulk and the stock to urge originality, Sterne again deflates the rhetoric by having Tristram borrow from *Anatomy of Melancholy*. In a novel where writing can never catch up with life, one metaphor follows another in pursuit of the ever-shifting and ever-retreating goalposts of authorship.

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[18] Burton criticizes the practice of stealing from past authors: "As Apothecaries we make new mixtures everyday, poure out of one Vessell into another" (1: 9); "we weave the same Web still, twist the same Rope againe and againe" (1: 10). For discussions of Tristram's borrowing of Burton, see Work 342n1 and Jackson 459. Lamb points out that Burton's passage was also plagiarized from other sources, so Tristram's passage adds an "extra element of fidelity" because "[t]he copy includes the defect of the original and finds a 'genuine' community with it in terms of defectiveness" (*Sterne's Fiction* 48). Sterne's borrowings from Burton might be attributable to a revived interest in *Anatomy* during the late eighteenth century. People started to notice and identify allusions to *Anatomy* in such writers as Milton, Shakespeare, and the *Tatler* contributors (Jackson 133-34).

Despite the incomplete and evasive nature of the scribe, picking-up, and settlement metaphors, one constant remains: borrowing. Borrowing constitutes both the cornerstone of authorship and the means through which authorship is represented. Here, I want to revisit and seek clues in Tristram's bulk and stock passage, a fertile ground whose substance and style are informed by borrowing. Although Sterne uses "stock" in the figurative sense to characterize knowledge, the word's original and literal meaning opens up a new authorial metaphor. As Samuel Johnson registers in *A Dictionary of the English Language*, "stock" could mean "1. The trunk; the body of a plant. 2. The trunk into which a graft is inserted." In early modern and eighteenth-century Britain, grafting was often used as a trope to describe writing.[19] Alexander Pope, a satirist of the learned wit tradition that, many argue, includes Sterne, writes: "Writers in the Case of borrowing from others are like Trees which of themselves wou'd produce only one sort of Fruit, but by being grafted upon others, may yield variety" (1: 19-20). Sterne's extensive borrowings graft a dizzying array of passages onto *Tristram*, creating a variety that allures and intimidates the reader. As a metaphor for authorship, grafting is particularly apt for *Tristram*, a text preoccupied with writing and meaning. In "Signature Event Context," Jacques Derrida suggests that every sign can be detached from its original context, containing thus "other possibilities in it by inscribing it or *grafting* it into other chains. No context can entirely enclose it" (9). In a passage that seems eerily Shandean, Derrida argues:

> Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written . . . in a small or large unit, can be *cited*, put between quotations marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring. This citationality, this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly, it is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could not even have a function called "normal." (12)[20]

[19] See, for example, William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 15" and Francis Quarles's *Argalus and Parthenia*.

[20] Tracing the etymological roots of "grafting" and "writing," Derrida notes in *Dissemination* that "[o]ne ought to explore systematically not only what appears to be a simple etymological coincidence uniting the graft and the graph (both from *graphion*: writing implement, stylus), but also the analogy between the forms of textual grafting and so-called vegetal grafting, or even, more and more commonly today, animal grafting" (202). On Derrida's discussions of grafting in relation to language and dissemination, see *Dissemination*, 151, 202, 203, 234, 299, 304, 354-56.

Sterne's borrowings exemplify the citationality, duplication, and duplicity of the text. Founded on such borrowings, Sterne's authorship entails a never-ending, shape-shifting play in which the author converses with the readers and other authors.

As if predicting how the borrower will be borrowed, Tristram juxtaposes writing and excretion in his papilliotes chapter. During his stay in Lyon, Tristram is sent into a panic when he loses his notes, "the best remarks . . . that ever were made—the wisest—the wittiest" (7.36.639). He recalls that he left the remarks in his chaise, which he had sold to the chaise-vamper a bit earlier. He arrives and awaits at the chaise-vamper's house the merchant's return from May-poling; instead, he finds the merchant's mistress rushing home to use the toilet. As she removes her papilliotes—small triangular pieces of paper that keep curls of hair in place—from her hair and throws them to the ground, Tristram recognizes the pieces to be his remarks and cries, "you have got all my remarks upon your head, Madam!" (7.38.641). Like Walter's opinions-cum-apples, the papilliotes are caught between life (May-poling) and excretion, only the association with writing is much stronger. Agonized by the twisted remarks, Tristram bursts out: "ay! by my faith; and when they are published, quoth I,—" (7.38.641). After a pause, he acquiesces and calmly states: "They will be worse twisted still" (7.38.641). If authorship is a game of borrowing, Sterne recognizes that he is not above the game. What goes around comes around.

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***Manuscript received 27 July 2020,*
accepted for publication 8 Apr. 2022