

The thesis is concerned with the nature of the comic effect that is brought out by narrative procedures, the way the novel is “construed” (7).

In the early passages of the thesis much space is devoted to establishing the precise nature of the narrator's position within or without the fictional realm. It is argued that the novel *Tristram Shandy* is shaped as an autobiography. But to be specific, many eighteenth-century novels were shaped as *pseudo*-autobiographies. The statement that the narrator claims to be author is blatantly not valid in such cases, thus the narrator cannot be outside of the fictional world created. Even in the case of *Robinson Crusoe* more layers of mediation interfere, such as that of the editor persona. Already in the Restoration there are frequent cases of narration utilizing complex narratorial personas inside and outside, such as the problematic “eye-witness” teller-character, omniscient, yet also disempowered narrator of *Oroonoko* etc. Eva Taubrová seems to mechanically take over the implications of Iser's chapter on “The first-person narrator”.

Related to this is her use of his understanding of “in the midst of things”. It is significant that Iser does not deal at all with the one novelist who was also “writing to the moment” with his heroines “in the midst of present distress”. What precisely is the difference between Samuel Richardson's “midst” which is said to be a “delusion” (page 18) and Sterne's success? Probably the weakest part of the thesis is chapter 2.1., where it is difficult to distinguish when Eva Tabrová is summarizing Wolfgang Iser's argument, when she is supporting it with her own evidence, when she incorporating other views, and when she is turning away and in fact performing a critique.

Another question in relation to this text by Iser – Fundamental to his interpretation of the novel is that the premise that “all narrative is basically metaphorical, whereas Tristram's writing is metonymical, and in order to highlight this substitution, Sterne reinforces his narrator's metonymy with irony”(W.Iser, chapter II of *Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy*). In the thesis, we get some insight into the idea of imitation but it is especially the idea of metonymy, which is crucial for a proper understanding of the novel as “life as happening”, but also the role of irony that interest me.

While the thesis correctly distinguishes between omniscient and authorial narration at the outset of her thesis, by page 20 there is an oversimplified slip in the equation between the two.

How should the following sentence on page 17 be understood? “Although he/she might adopt a detached perspective, or even address the reader sometimes, the narrator views him/her as belonging to the fictional world.” Who views whom?

The passage about the film adaptation is strangely out of place. What is the exact nature of “the paradox” in the film version? What are the sources of the comic in the film? (By the way, discussion of the film in relation to the narrative and other strategies of the novel have been discussed in a recent excellent M.A. thesis by Iva Jestřábová, defended in 2008.)

Somewhat surprising is the usage of such an elementary text as *Cliff's Notes* as a secondary source about Sterne (5), even if only for biographical data.

The thesis is full of irritating errors that could have been eliminated by more careful proofreading, e.g. he had to be learned to reflect (not taught, 16), lead (not led, 39), Lakoón (44), Trisarm, and circumscription (when circumcision is meant, 56), etc.

Overall, the thesis seems to be a highly ambitious study which does not always fulfill all the expectations. Sometimes the thesis reads like a survey of interpretations, sometimes like a critical reading of these, and only sometimes are these actually convincingly connected with the creation of the comic effect. Even if the focus is on narrative techniques and procedures, sometimes we slip into themes and tone also. So why is there no mention at all of the use of irony and even satire? Since Rabelais and Bakhtin are frequently applied to the analysis, why is there no mention of the context of Menippean satire? Does irony really not contribute to comic effect, is the novel not parodic and satiric, and are these features not sources of the comic? Or are these not features of narrative procedures, the narrative voice at all?

Writing on *A Sentimental Journey to France and Italy* Friedrich Nietzsche said The connection with this travelogue is not out of place, as *Tristram Shandy* actually shares several similar procedures in many scenes – note e.g. the encounter with the mad girl Maria. It is a paradigmatic sentimental scene. Yet, it also displays how Sterne constantly combines the sentimental and the comic: The rapid revolution of emotional weight from gravity (pathos, tragedy, pity, interference of Heaven in Maria's interest) to comic raillery (is this a parody of the sentimental impulse? or more?). What is the role of such bathos in the comic effects?

Despite all my critical comment above, the thesis is most certainly recommended for defence. It displays a large degree of erudition in theoretical and critical literature. It performs valid critical reflection, in spite of some linguistic errors it also remains a highly readable text. As such it definitely fulfills all requirements for such work on the M.A. level. Therefore, I suggest the preliminary mark of very good (**velmi dobře**). The final result will depend on the oral defence of the thesis.

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