

Laurence Sterne

(1713-1768)

Text 2

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy

Preliminary task

Read the following chapter and consider the layout. What difference do you notice between Chapter 18 and Chapter 19?

(from Vol. VI, Ch. 19)

After my father had debated the affair of the breeches with my mother, — he consulted Albertus Rubenius¹ upon it; and Albertus Rubenius used my father ten times worse in the consultation (if possible) than even my father had used my mother: For as Rubenius had wrote a quarto *express, De re Vestiaria Veterum*, — it was Rubenius's business to have given my father some lights. — On the contrary, my father might as well have thought of extracting the seven cardinal virtues out of a long beard, — as of extracting a single word out of Rubenius upon the subject.

Upon every other article of ancient dress, Rubenius was very communicative to my father; — gave him a full and satisfactory account of

The Toga, or loose gown.

The Chlamys².

The Ephod³.

The Tunica, or Jacket.

The Synthesis⁴.

The Paenula⁵.

The Lacema⁶, with its Cucullus⁷.

The Paludamentum⁸.

The Praetexta⁹.

The Sagum, or soldier's jerkin¹⁰.

The Trabae¹¹: of which, according to Suetonius, there were three kinds. —

— But what are all these to the breeches? said my father.

Rubenius threw him down upon the counter all kinds of

- Albertus Rubenius** = Albert Rubens (1614-1657), son of the painter Paul Rubens, was a writer and an antiquarian. He wrote *On the Clothing of the Ancient*, the source of the information presented in this passage.
- the Chlamys** = short woollen garment worn by the Greeks.
- the Ephod** = vestment worn by the priests at Hebrew religious ceremonies.
- the Synthesis** = loose dressing gown.
- the Paenula** = a long woollen garment.
- the Lacema** = a cloak worn over the toga.
- Cucullus** = a hood attached to an overcoat.
- the Paludamentum** = a soldier's cloak.
- the Praetexta** = a purple bordered gown worn by Roman magistrates and free born children.
- jerkin** = a close-fitting jacket.
- the Trabae** = an official state robe.

shoes which had been in fashion with the Romans.

— There was,

The open shoe.

The close shoe.

The slip shoe¹².

The wooden shoe.

The soc¹³.

The buskin¹⁴.

And The military shoe with hobnails¹⁵ in it, which
Juvenal takes notice of.

There were, The clogs¹⁶.

The patins¹⁷.

The pantouffles.

The brogues¹⁸.

The sandals, with lachets to them.

There was, The felt shoe.

The linen shoe.

The laced shoe.

The braided shoe¹⁹.

The calceus incisus²⁰.

And The calceus rostratus²¹.

Rubenius shewed my father how well they all fitted, —
in what manner they laced on, — with what points, straps,
thongs²², lachets, ribbands, jags²³, and ends. —

— But I want to be informed about the breeches, said
my father.

Albertus Rubenius informed my father that the Romans
manufactured stuffs of various fabrics, — some plain, —
some striped, — others diapered²⁴ throughout the whole
contexture of the wool, with silk and gold — That linen did
not begin to be in common use till towards the declension
of the empire, when the Egyptians, coming to settle
amongst them, brought it into vogue.

— That persons of quality and fortune distinguished
themselves by the fineness and whiteness of their cloaths²⁵;
which colour (next to purple, which was appropriated to
the great offices) they most affected²⁶, and wore on their
birth-days and public rejoicings. — That is appeared from
the best historians of those times, that they frequently sent
their cloaths to the fuller, to be cleaned and whitened: —
but that the inferior people, to avoid that expence,
generally wore brown cloaths, and of a something coarser
texture, — till towards the beginning of Augustus's reign,
when the slave dressed like his master, and almost every
distinction of habiliment was lost, but the *Latus Clavus*²⁷.

And what was the *Latus Clavus*? said my father.

Rubenius told him, that the point was still litigating
amongst the learned: — That Egnatius, Sigonius, Bossius
Ticinensis, Bayfius, Budaeus, Salmasius, Lipsius, Lazius,
Isaac Casaubon, and Joseph Scaliger²⁸, all differed from
each other, — and he from them: That some took it to be
the button, — some the coat itself; — others only the
colour of it: — That the great Bayfius, in his *Wardrobe of
the Ancients*, chap. 12 — honestly said, he knew not what
it was, — whether a tribula, — a stud, — a button, — a

12. **slip shoe** = loose fitting light shoe.
13. **the soc** = a light shoe worn by actors in comedies.
14. **the buskin** = a heavy boot worn by actors in tragedies.
15. **hobnails** = short nails with heavy heads, used for the soles of heavy shoes.
16. **the clogs** = wooden carved shoes.
17. **the patins** = pattens, overshoes with wooden soles.
18. **the brogues** = strong thick-soled shoes.
19. **the braided shoe** = shoe with laces woven together as braids.
20. **the calceus incisus** = a cut-work shoe.
21. **the calceus rostratus** = a shoe with a pointed toe.
22. **thongs** = narrow leather strips.
23. **jags** = ornamental pieces of material.
24. **diapered** = crossed in geometrical patterns.
25. **cloaths** = clothes.
26. **affected** = liked and used.
27. **Latus Clavus** = literally a broad nail applied to the purple stripe of the tunic of Roman patricians.
28. **that Egnatius ... Scaliger** = Italian and French Renaissance scholars and humanists.

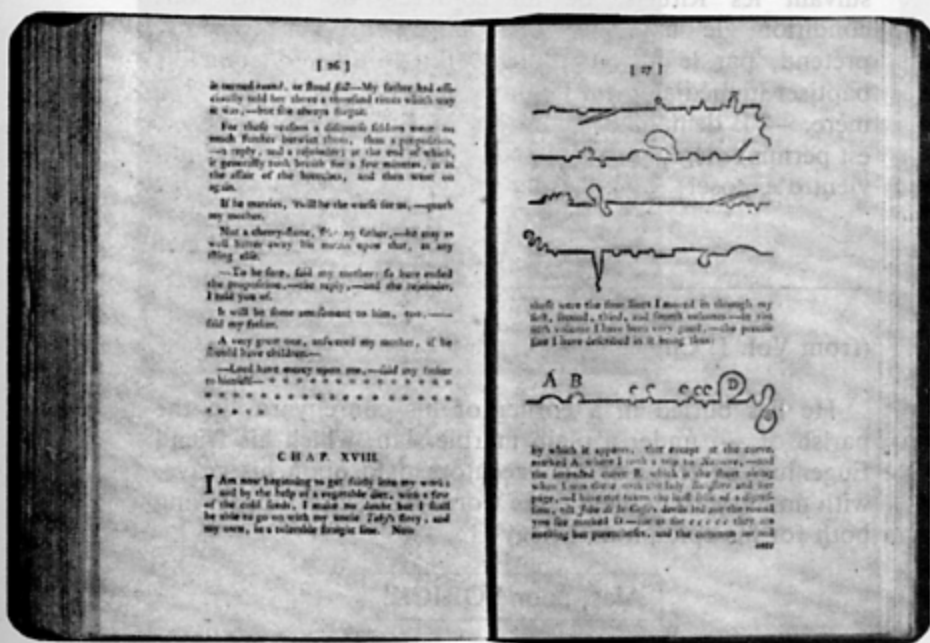
loop, — a buckle, — or clasps and keepers²⁹. —

— My father lost the horse, but not the saddle — They are *hooks and eyes*, said my father — and with hooks and eyes he ordered my breeches to be made.

29. *tibula ... keepers* = sewing accessories.

Hints

1. Examine Rubenius's detailed description of clothes and decide if it is relevant to the main topic (= breeches).
2. Focus on the father's remarks about Rubenius's explanations and state his attitude.
3. What does the expression 'my father lost the horse but not the saddle' mean in this context?
4. Can you state how Sterne makes a parody of the scholars and their disputes? Provide examples from the text.
5. List the elements through which humour is achieved in this scene (see task 8, p. 42).



Tristram Shandy's pages from a contemporary edition.

Concluding task

Here below are some more extracts from the novel. Consider the layout and state what features make them different from the ordinary printed page.

(from Vol. I, Ch. 8)

I take somewhat longer journeys than what a wise man would think altogether right. — But the truth is, — I am not a wise man; — and besides am a mortal of so little consequence in the world, it is not much matter what I do; so I seldom fret or fume at all about it: Nor does in much disturb my rest, when I see such great Lords and tall Personages as hereafter follow; — such, for instance, as my Lord A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, and so on, all of a row, mounted upon their several horses; —

(from Vol. I, Ch. 20)

Mémoire présenté à Messieurs les Docteurs de Sorbonne

Un Chirurgien Accoucheur représente à Messieurs les Docteurs de Sorbonne, qu'il y a des cas, quoique très rares, où une mère ne sauroit accoucher, & même où l'enfant est tellement renfermé dans le sein de sa mère, qu'il ne fait paroître aucune partie de son corps, ce qui seroit un cas, suivant les Rituels, de lui conférer, du moins sous condition, le baptême. Le Chirurgien, qui consulte, prétend, par le moyen d'une *petite canulle*, de pouvoir baptiser immédiatement l'enfant, sans faire aucun tort à la mère. — Il demand si ce moyen, qu'il vient de proposer, est permis & légitime, & s'il peut s'en servir dans le cas qu'il vient d'exposer.

(from Vol. I, Ch. 12)

He lies buried in a corner of his churchyard, in the parish of —, under a plain marble slab, which his friend Eugenius, by leave of his executors, laid upon his grave, with no more than these three words of inscription, serving both for his epitaph and elegy

Alas, poor YORICK!

Ten times a day has Yorick's ghost the consolation to hear his monumental inscription read over with such a

variety of plaintive tones, as denote a general pity and esteem for him; — a foot-way crossing the churchyard close by the side of his grave, — not a passenger goes by without stopping to cast a look upon it, — and sighing as he walks on

Alas, poor YORICK!

(from Vol. I, Ch. 12)



(from Vol. III, Ch. 11)

i n

Maledictus sit vivo, moriendo,

(from Vol. I, Ch. 8)

manducando, bibendo, esuriendo, sitiendo, jejunando,
dormitando, dormiendo, vigilando, ambulando, stando,
sedendo, jacendo, operando, quiescendo, mingendo,
cacando, flebotomando.

i n

Maledictus sit in totis viribus corporis,

i n

Maledictus sit intus et exterius.

i n

i n

Maledictus sit in capillis; maledictus sit in cerebro.

(from Vol. V, Ch. 2)

— he's gone! said my uncle
Toby — Where — Who? cried my father. — My nephew,
said my uncle Toby. — What — without leave — without
money — without governor? cried my father in
amazement.

(from Vol. I, Ch. 1)

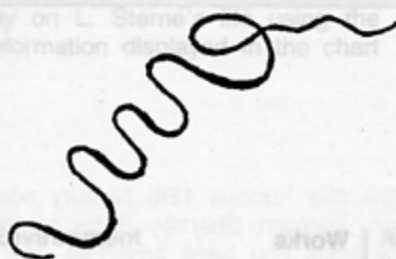
He lies buried in a corner of his churchyard, in the
parish of —, under a plain marble slab, which his friend
Eugenius, by leave of his executors, laid upon his grave,
with no more than these three words of inscription, serving
both for his epitaph and elegy

Alas, poor YORICK!

Ten times a day has Yorick's ghost the consolation to
hear his monumental inscription read over with such a

(from Vol. IX, Ch. 4)

Whilst a man is free, — cried the corporal, giving a flourish with his stick thus —

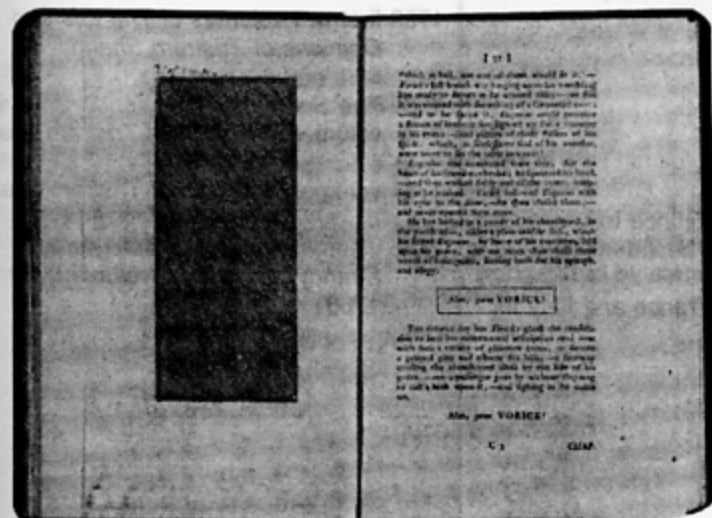


A thousand of my father's most subtle syllogisms could not have said more for celibacy.

(from Vol. IX, Ch. 20)

—	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

— You shall see the very place, Madam; said my uncle Toby.



Tristram Shandy's pages from a contemporary edition.