

"What energy," I thought to myself. "Man has conquered everything. He has laid low and destroyed millions of shrubs and yet this shrub refuses to surrender to him." And I recalled a recent incident from the Caucasus, part of which I had witnessed with my own eyes, part of which I had gathered from an eyewitness and part of which sprang out of my own imagination . . . Here is that story and how it came to be.

What follows is the story of Hadji-Murad covering approximately three hundred printed pages and followed by the concluding half of the framing device: "His death reminded me of the burdock crushed in the middle of the plowed field."

The correlation between the parts forming this particular parallel structure is most unusual. This parallelism is nevertheless very much felt thanks to Tolstoi's description of the burdock and thanks also to the play on words (burdock = Tartar). The concluding part of the parallel is deliberately simple. Yet, it effectively recapitulates the principal elements of the parallel: one burdock stubbornly holding out amidst a plowed field, one last uncompromising Circassian amidst his pacified compatriots. The stubborn struggle for existence is not repeated, but its presence can be felt.

### The Mystery Novel

In Ann Radcliffe, one of the founders of the mystery novel, the mysteries are constructed in the following way:

The heroine lands in a castle where she finds a half-decomposed corpse behind a curtain. While apparitions roam through the castle, someone speaks through the conversations of drunken cutthroats, etc. At the end of the novel, at the denouement, we discover that the corpse was really made of wax and had been placed there by the count's predecessor, the proprietor, by order of the pope, as a form of penance. The mysterious voice turns out to belong to a prisoner, who had been wandering through the castle by making use of secret passageways, etc.

As you can see, these explanations are only partially satisfactory, as one of Radcliffe's contemporaries said.

In the second part of the novel, the story begins all over again. A new castle, new mysterious voices. Subsequently, we learn that these are the voices of smugglers. The castle is engulfed in music. It turns out that this music was played at the time by a nun, etc.

I shall not attempt to list all of Radcliffe's secrets, since I do not have her book at hand.

Curiously, these mysteries initially present false resolutions (as in Dickens, for instance). We often suspect something far more horrible than we actually find. For example, in the second part of the novel, the author suggests in no uncertain terms the idea of incest. The whole affair unfolds by means of indecent songs with their indecent rhymes, taking the form, for instance, of the celebrated but rarely cited song entitled "In Knopp's Shop,"

and so on, concluding with the solution: "Don't think the worst . . . yellow gloves."

I would like to remind the reader that this device, as I've already pointed out, is canonical for Russian folk riddles of the type: "It hangs, swings back and forth. Everybody tries to get his hands on it." The solution: "It's a towel."

When solving these riddles, the storyteller usually introduces a pause suggesting the "false," obscene solution. Let me offer an example of how such a riddle evolves into a plot (from *Tales and Songs of the Belozero Region*, recorded by Boris and Yuri Sokolov).

The "bylitsa" or true story presented below was recorded by an old woman, recording no. 131. This bylitsa is of interest to us because the moment of false resolution is clearly observable in it. Its content is a game of riddles:

There once was a young tailor who posed the following riddle: "A crow has lived two years. So what happens next?" I answer him: "He'll live another year." The tailor bursts out laughing at my guess. I then pose my own riddle to the tailor: "A man has no trade or occupation, a woman is covered with vegetation." The young tailor thinks of the worst case possible. No one seems to guess. So I tell them: "On the strip of land even bushes quickly grow, on the strip of land, on Mother Earth."

And so we see that the false solution is a very common element in the mystery story or mystery novel. The false solution is a true solution and provides the technique organizing the mystery. The moment of transition from one solution to another is the moment of the denouement. The inter-relationship of the parts composing the mystery is similar to that in plots founded on puns.

Characteristic of the mystery type is its kinship with the device of inversion, that is, rearrangement.

This type of mystery novel is usually represented by a story in reverse (i.e., in which the exposition of the present state of affairs is followed by an account of what has preceded it). We have a good example of this in the secret of the clocks in *Little Dorrit*, the mystery of the double, and so on.

On the other hand, the secret of the house and the secret of Dorrit's love for Clennam and of Clennam's love for Minnie is constructed without the use of inversion. Here the mystery is created by means of the exposition. A factual leitmotif and a metaphorical leitmotif form a parallel. Where, however, the mysteries are built on a transposition of cause and effect, such a parallel is achieved by introducing a false solution.

The organization of the mystery is very curious in Dickens's last novel, *Our Mutual Friend*.

The first secret is the secret of John Rokesmith. The author pretends to conceal from us the fact that John Rokesmith is none other than John Harmon. The second secret is Boffin's secret. We see how wealth has

spoiled the "Golden Dustman," and we do not know that Boffin is pulling our leg. Dickens himself says that he never intended to conceal Rokesmith's real name from the reader.

The mystery of John Harmon is a dead end. It does not lead us to a solution of the mystery or even help us to notice Boffin's secret. The technical apparatus of this novel is exceedingly complex.

A direct heir of the mystery novel is represented by the detective novel in which the detective is none other than a professional solver of mysteries. A mystery is presented (e.g., a crime). This is followed usually by a false solution, for example, investigation by the police. Then, the murder is exposed in its true light. In a work of this type, inversion is mandatory, involving at times, in its more complex forms, the omission of individual elements.

Such is the structure (sans detective) of the mystery in *The Brothers Karamazov*. For a more detailed analysis of the technique of the mystery, I have chosen *Little Dorrit* by Dickens.

### *Little Dorrit*

Structurally, Dickens's novel moves simultaneously on several planes of action. The connection between the parallels is established either by involving the characters of one plot line in the actions of another plot line or by stationing them in the same place. Thus, we discover that the protagonists live within proximity to each other. So for example Clennam lives in the housing area called Bleeding Heart Yard, the home also of "the patriarch" and the Italian John Baptist. The story line of *Little Dorrit* consists of the following: (1) the love between Dorrit and Clennam, (2) the coming into wealth and the subsequent ruin of the Dorrits, and (3) the blackmail attempt by Rigaud, who threatens to expose Mrs. Clennam.

But a novel of this sort can only be told from the end. While we're reading the novel, we have before us a whole series of mysteries, not the least of which are the relationships among the protagonists which are also presented as mysteries. These mysteries are then interwoven with each other. We may distinguish the following mysteries which run through the entire work:

1. The mystery of the clock.
2. The mystery of the dreams.

These are the fundamental mysteries. They frame the plot but are in essence unresolved.

3. The mystery of Pancks (inheritance). This mystery is of a partial nature, that is, it does not run through the entire novel. It brings about an inequality between Clennam and Dorrit. It is based on an inversion.

4. The mystery of Merdle playing a similarly subsidiary role.

5. The mystery of noises in the house. It prepares the denouement of the first two secrets.

6. The mystery of the love of Dorrit and Clennam. It belongs to the central plot, but in its technique it represents the deployment of a negative parallelism.

### 1. The Secret of the Watch

*Chapter 3, "Home"*: Arthur Clennam makes an appearance at his mother's house. Before us we see two or three books, a handkerchief, steel-rimmed glasses, a massive old-fashioned gold watch with a double case. Both mother and son are staring simultaneously at the gold watch:

"I see that you received the packet I sent you on my father's death, safely, mother."

"You see."

"I never knew my father to show so much anxiety on any subject, as that his watch should be sent straight to you."

"I keep it here as a remembrance of your father."

"It was not until the last, that he expressed the wish. When he could only put his hand upon it, and very indistinctly say to me 'your mother.' A moment before, I thought him wandering in his mind, as he had been for many hours—I think he had no consciousness of pain in his short illness—when I saw him turn himself in his bed and try to open it."

"Was your father, then, not wandering in his mind when he tried to open it?"

"No. He was quite sensible at that time."

Mrs. Clennam shook her head; whether in dismissal of the deceased or opposing herself to her son's opinion, was not clearly expressed.

"After my father's death I opened it myself, thinking there might be, for anything I knew, some memorandum there. However, as I need not tell you, mother, there was nothing but the old silk watch-paper worked in beads, which you found (no doubt) in its place between the cases, where I found and left it."

*Chapter 5, "Family Affairs"*: We find the following:

"I want to ask you, mother, whether it ever occurred to you to suspect—"

At the word *Suspect*, she turned her eyes momentarily upon her son, with a dark frown. She then suffered them to seek the fire, as before; but with the frown fixed above them, as if the sculptor of old Egypt had indented it in the hard granite face, to frown for ages.

"—that he had any secret remembrance which caused him trouble of mind—remorse? Whether you ever observed anything in his conduct suggesting that; or ever spoke to him upon it, or ever heard him hint at such a thing?"

"I do not understand what kind of secret remembrance you mean to infer that your father was a prey to," she returned, after a silence. "You speak so mysteriously."

"Is it possible, mother," her son leaned forward to be the nearer to her while he whispered it, and laid his hand nervously upon her desk, "is it possible, mother, that he had unhappily wronged any one, and made no reparation?"

Looking at him wrathfully, she bent herself back in her chair to keep him further off, but gave him no reply.

"I am deeply sensible, mother, that if this thought has never at any time flashed upon you, it must seem cruel and unnatural in me, even in this confidence, to breathe it. But I cannot shake it off. Time and change (I have tried both before breaking silence) do nothing to wear it out. Remember, I was with my father. Remember, I saw his face when he gave the watch into my keeping, and struggled to express that he sent it, as a token you would understand, to you. Remember, I saw him at the last with the pencil in his failing hand, trying to write some word for you to read, but to which he could give no shape. The more remote and cruel this vague suspicion that I have, the stronger the circumstances that could give it any semblance of probability to me. For Heaven's sake, let us examine sacredly whether there is any wrong entrusted to us to set right. No one can help towards it, mother, but you."

Towards the end of the chapter, Dickens hints that this mystery may have something to do with the little seamstress of *Little Dorrit*.

*Chapter 29, "Mrs. Flintwinch Goes on Dreaming"*: The riddle of the watch continues to be tangled up with the riddle of Little Dorrit. Little Dorrit tells the story of her life to Arthur's mother:

"Yes, ma'am; indeed it is. I have been here many a time when, but for you and the work you gave me, we should have wanted everything."

"We," repeated Mrs. Clennam, looking towards the watch, once her dead husband's . . .

*Chapter 30, "The Word of a Gentleman"*: Rigaud appears at the house, obviously intent on blackmail. He doesn't say anything directly, but takes the watch into his hands. "A fine old-fashioned watch," he said, taking it in his hand," and so forth.

*Chapter 8, "The Lock"*: Clennam imagines that his mother is speaking to him: "He has decayed in his prison; I in mine. I have paid the penalty."

*Chapter 15, "Mrs. Flintwinch Has Another Dream"*:

"None of your nonsense with me," said Mr. Flintwinch, "I won't take it from you."

Mrs. Flintwinch dreamed that she stood behind the door, which was just ajar, and most distinctly heard her husband say these bold words.

"Flintwinch," returned Mrs. Clennam, in her usual strong low voice, "there is a demon of anger in you. Guard against it."

*Chapter 23, "Machinery in Motion"*: "Alone, again, Clennam became a prey to his old doubts in reference to his mother and Little Dorrit, and revolved the old thoughts and suspicions."

Naturally, the riddles are interspersed throughout the novel rather than being developed throughout. In addition, the novel includes "chapters descriptive of manners and life," in which secrets are used for the purpose of binding the parts.

So, for example, chapters 6 and 7, containing a description of the Dorrit household, introduce no new secrets. The compositional role of these chapters is to impede the progress of the novel. If we insist on seeing these chapters as the core of the novel, then we must insist also that they bear the full brunt of the plot when squeezed by the framing vise of the riddle. The

descriptive chapters conclude with Dickens's usual recapitulating images, for example, the image of "the shadow of the wall."

The Circumlocutions Office and the Polips family are similarly described. These parts of the novel would have been called by Tolstoy "details."

Let us now turn to the following riddles.

## 2. The Riddle of the Dreams

### *Chapter 4, "Mrs. Flintwinch Has a Dream"*:

Having got her mistress into bed, lighted her lamp, and given her good-night, Mrs. Flintwinch went to roost as usual, saving that her lord had not yet appeared. It was her lord himself who became—unlike the last theme in the mind, according to the observation of most philosophers—the subject of Mrs. Flintwinch's dream.

It seemed to her that she awoke, after sleeping some hours, and found Jeremiah not yet abed. That she looked at the candle she had left burning, and, measuring the time like King Alfred the Great, was confirmed by its wasted state in her belief that she had been asleep for some considerable period. That she arose thereupon, muffled herself up in her wrapper, put on her shoes, and went out on the staircase, much surprised, to look for Jeremiah.

The staircase was as wooden and solid as need be, and Affery went straight down it without any of those deviations peculiar to dreams. . . . She expected to see Jeremiah fast asleep or in a fit, but he was calmly seated in a chair, awake, and in his usual health. But what—hey?—Lord forgive us!—Mrs. Flintwinch muttered some ejaculation to this effect, and turned giddy.

For Mr. Flintwinch awake was watching Mr. Flintwinch asleep. . . . "And all friends round Saint Paul's." He [i.e., the double] emptied and put down the wine-glass half-way through this ancient civic toast, and took up the box.

In this way, two mysteries are introduced: (1) the mystery of the double and (2) the mystery of the box.

The end of the scene is very curious: Affery remains standing on the staircase, frightened to such an extent that she cannot resolve to enter the room:

Consequently, when he came up the staircase to bed, candle in hand, he came full upon her. He looked astonished, but said not a word. He kept his eyes upon her, and kept advancing; and she, completely under his influence, kept retiring before him. Thus, she walking backward and he walking forward, they came into their own room. They were no sooner shut in there, than Mr. Flintwinch took her by the throat, and shook her until she was black in the face.

"Why, Affery, woman—Affery!" said Mr. Flintwinch. "What have you been dreaming of? Wake up, wake up! What's the matter?"

Subsequently, Flintwinch tries to convince his wife that she has had a dream.

Compositionally speaking, this is the heart of the matter. Some of the mysterious scenes are presented by Dickens with the special motivation of

eavesdropping at night. Since the dream resembles reality, a double construction is therefore possible, that is, "It's not reality. It's a dream."

Meanwhile, the true situation is given in a negative form. I could better demonstrate this situation to you by excerpting about twenty pages from the novel. But the expense of paper holds me back. This construction, utilizing the motivation of a dream, is quite common in literature. In folklore, for example, it takes the following form: A young girl lands in the house of hoodlums, sees them commit a murder and carries off the chopped-off hand of the victim. The ringleader of this gang later proposes to the young girl. During the wedding, she tells everything she knows. Everyone is convinced that she is describing a dream, but finally she shows the chopped-off hand in her possession. This motif also appears in parodic form in Zhukovsky's "Svetland," where the dream really turns out to be a dream.\*

Subsequently, Affery confirms the first part of Dickens's negative parallel, that is, that the "dream" was "reality." The role of the "cut-off hand" serves as evidence for Rigaud.

Chapter 15, "Mrs. Flintwinch Has Another Dream": Her dream records a conversation between Clennam's mother and her servant, Mr. Flintwinch. This conversation concerns certain secrets.

In chapter 30, "The Word of a Gentleman," the riddle is confirmed by the fact that Rigaud takes Mr. Flintwinch for someone else.

### 3. The Riddle of the Inheritance

Chapter 23, "Machinery in Motion": Most riddles are prepared for by some form of motivation. For example, in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold Bug" we encounter a man who loves to study codes. Generally speaking, the introduction of the character does not coincide with the beginning of the action. In this case, at the first appearance of Pancks, we discover that he has an interest in locating the heirs to escheated estates:

\*Compare "The Priest's Wife and the Highway Robbers" (Onchukov, no. 83). A similar story, but recognition is achieved by revealing a chopped-off finger with a ring on it: "And it's as if she has a finger with a ring on it under her bed." "No! No! My sweet lady," says one of the brigands. She takes out the finger with the ring from her pocket and shows it to them. At this point the robber tries to flee but is seized by the people. Onchukov, "The Merchant's Daughter and the Highway Robbers," no. 13: The brigands were sitting in the chamber. The young girl describes everything that had happened to her in a dream that night as well as her encounter with the brigands. She reveals everything, and the brigands listen. At each word they say: "How wonderful, my lass. Your dream has turned into reality." The whole affair ends with a recognition that is brought about by a chopped-off ear.

"Mr. Clennam," he then began, "I am in want of information, sir."

"Connected with this firm?" asked Clennam.

"No," said Pancks.

"With what then, Mr. Pancks? That is to say, assuming that you want it of me."

"Yes, sir; yes, I want it of you," said Pancks, "if I can persuade you to furnish it. A, B, C, D, DA, DE, DI, DO. Dictionary order. Dorrit. That's the name, sir?"

Pancks poses a number of questions to Clennam without revealing his purpose (chap. 24, "Fortune-Telling"). Pancks arrives at the house of Clennam's mother and speaks with Little Dorrit. He tells her fortune by examining her hand, speaks to her about her past, about her father and about her uncle. He tells her that he sees himself involved in her destiny and calls himself a gypsy and a fortune-teller.

Such predictions and presentiments extend throughout the novel.

Compare, for instance, the presentiments in Stendhal and in *David Copperfield*. The riddle surrounding the inheritance is developed with sufficient consistency and continuity, in contrast to the riddle of the framing story (the secret identity of Arthur's mother). The subsequent chapter, "Conspirators and Others," offers us a glimpse of a consultation by Rugg, a solicitor:

"There's a Church in London; I may as well take that. And a Family Bible; I may as well take that, too. That's two to me. Two to me," repeated Pancks, breathing hard over his cards. "Here's a Clerk at Durham for you, John, and an old seafaring gentleman at Dunstable for you, Mr. Rugg," etc.

Pancks appears momentarily in chapter 29 and utters, at most, just a few words: "Pancks the gypsy, fortune-telling."

The mystery surrounding the inheritance is resolved in chapter 32, "More Fortune-Telling":

"You are to understand"—snorted Pancks, feverishly unfolding papers, and speaking in short high-pressure blasts of sentences. "Where's the Pedigree? Where's Schedule number four, Mr. Rugg? Oh! all right! Here we are. — You are to understand that we are this very day virtually complete. We shan't be legally for a day or two. Call it at the outside a week. We've been at it, night and day, for I don't know how long. Mr. Rugg, you know how long? Never mind. Don't say. You'll only confuse me. You shall tell her, Mr. Clennam. Not till we give you leave. Where's that rough total, Mr. Rugg? Oh! Here we are! There, sir! That's what you'll have to break to her. That man's your Father of the Marshalsea!"

The excerpt above is preceded by a storm of joy which breaks upon Pancks, the source of which is not yet known to us.

The purpose of this secret is to create an inequality between Clennam and Little Dorrit: Dorrit is rich, Clennam is, relatively speaking, poor. The role of the secret in the unfolding of the details of the novel lies in this, that the descriptions of the Marshalsea Prison are interwoven with it.



#### 4. Merdle's Secret

*Chapter 33, "Mrs. Merdle's Complaint":* Mr. Merdle is filthy rich. The novel unfolds in his shadow. He inspires a passion both in Dorrit, who has recently come into a fortune, and also in the hearts of the indigent residents of Bleeding Heart Yard. We find Merdle suffering from a certain mysterious illness. At first, the matter seems to be rather simple, but gradually a mystery emerges:

"Do I ever say I care about anything?" asked Mr. Merdle.  
 "Say? No! Nobody would attend to you if you did. But you show it."  
 "Show what? What do I show?" demanded Mr. Merdle hurriedly.

*Chapter 12 (book 2), "In Which a Great Patriotic Conference Is Holden":* "Mr. Merdle, his eyes fixed cowardly on the Chief Butler's boots and hesitating to look into the mirror of this terrifying creature's soul, informs him of his intention."

*Chapter 16, "Getting On":* "'You know we may almost say we are related, sir,' said Mr. Merdle, curiously interested in the pattern of the carpet, 'and, therefore, you may consider me at your service.'"

*Chapter 24, "The Evening of a Long Day":* We again hear Merdle's enigmatic phrases. Fanny asks him whether her governess will receive anything at all from her father's will: "'She won't get anything,' said Mr. Merdle." He asks Fanny to hand him the penknife:

"Edmund," said Mrs. Sparkler, "open (now, very carefully, I beg and beseech, for you are so very awkward) the mother of pearl box on my little table there, and give Mr. Merdle the mother of pearl penknife."

"Thank you," said Mr. Merdle: "but if you have got one with a darker handle, I think I should prefer one with a darker handle."

"Tortoise-shell?"

"Thank you," said Mr. Merdle: "yes. I think I should prefer tortoise-shell." . . .

"I will forgive you, if you ink it."

"I'll undertake not to ink it," said Mr. Merdle.

The subsequent *chapter 25* bears the title "*The Chief Butler Resigns the Seals of Office*." The chapter is taken up with Merdle's suicide. His secret is revealed: he was a speculator, a bankrupt who had brought thousands of people to ruin:

The room was still hot, and the marble of the bath still warm; but, the face and figure were clammy to the touch. The white marble at the bottom of the bath was veined with a dreadful red. On the ledge at the side, were an empty laudanum-bottle and a tortoise-shell handled penknife—soiled, but not with ink.

And so the little mystery of the knife, soiled not with ink but with blood—a negative parallelism—closes the circle of Merdle's secret.

Merdle's secret serves the following purpose: by means of it, the author succeeds in comparing the circumstances of his protagonists. Dorrit is just

as poor as Clennam. Her role in relation to the details of the novel consists of "tightening" the descriptive passages.

#### 5. A Noise in the House

*Chapter 15, "Mrs. Flintwinch Has Another Dream":*

On a wintry afternoon at twilight, Mrs. Flintwinch, having been heavy all day, dreamed this dream:

She thought she was in the kitchen getting the kettle ready for tea, and was warming herself with her feet upon the fender and the skirt of her gown tucked up, before the collapsed fire in the middle of the grate, bordered on either hand by a deep cold, black ravine. She thought that as she sat thus, musing upon the question, whether life was not for some people a rather dull invention, she was frightened by a sudden noise behind her. She thought that she had been similarly frightened once last week, and that the noise was of a mysterious kind—a sound of rustling, and of three or four quick beats like a rapid step; while a shock or tremble was communicated to her heart, as if the step had shaken the floor, or even as if she had been touched by some awful hand. She thought that this revived within her, certain old fears of hers that the house was haunted; and that she flew up the kitchen stairs, without knowing how she got up, to be nearer company.

*Chapter 15, "Mrs. Flintwinch Has Another Dream":* "'There, Jeremiah! Now! What's that noise!'" Afterwards the noise, if indeed it was a noise, comes to a stop.

*Chapter 29, "Mrs. Flintwinch Goes on Dreaming":* Rigaud enters the house:

"Now, my dear madam," he said, as he took back his cloak and threw it on, "if you'll have the goodness to— what the devil's that!"

The strangest of sounds. Evidently close at hand from the peculiar shock it communicated to the air, yet subdued as if it were far off. A tremble, a rumble, and a fall of some light dry matter.

*Chapter 17 (book 2), "Missing":*

At that moment, Mistress Affery (of course, the woman with the apron) dropped the candlestick she held, and cried out, "There! O good Lord! there it is again. Hark, Jeremiah! Now!"

If there were any sound at all, it was so slight that she must have fallen into a confirmed habit of listening for sounds; but, Mr. Dorrit believed he did hear a something, like the falling of dry leaves.

*Chapter 23 (book 2), "Mistress Affery Makes a Conditional Promise Respecting Her Dreams":* "'I'll tell you then,' said Affery, after listening, 'that the first time he [Rigaud] ever come he heard the noises his own self.'"

On the following page, we're given a hint, though as yet we don't understand it, to the effect that the door to the house will not open, as if someone were holding it back.

Like the majority of secrets, the mystery of the house at first has a false resolution. The mystery of the watch is just now becoming clear. It turns out that Mrs. Clennam is most definitely not Arthur's mother. Arthur is the illegitimate son of his father's mistress, who was subsequently put away in a mental institution by Mrs. Clennam and her husband's uncle. The watch served as a reminder of the need for rectifying a wrong. Affery thinks that it was Arthur's mother who was put away in the madhouse. She says in *Chapter 30 (book 2), "Closing In"*:

"Only promise me, that, if it's the poor thing that's kept here secretly, you'll let me take charge of her and be her nurse. Only promise me that, and never be afraid of me."

Mrs. Clennam stood still for an instant, at the height of her rapid haste, saying in stern amazement:

"Kept here? She has been dead a score of years and more. Ask Flintwinch—ask him. They can both tell you that she died when Arthur went abroad."

"So much the worse," said Affery, with a shiver, "for she haunts the house, then. Who else rustles about it, making signals by dropping dust so softly? Who else comes and goes, and marks the walls with long crooked touches, when we are all a-bed? Who else holds the door sometimes?"

As you can see, the scene having to do with the "noises" has already been set up. We are now close to the real solution of the secret: The house, slowly subsiding to the ground, threatens to collapse. But the reader doesn't know that as yet.

## Denouements

The chief mystery of the novel, that is, the mystery of the watch, has already been revealed. Likewise, the secret of Arthur's birth has also been disclosed. The secondary mysteries are now being resolved one by one. First on the agenda is the mystery of the house. In one stroke the novelist eliminates Rigaud, who has essentially been playing the auxiliary role of the man who knows the secret. When the secret is exposed, Rigaud is no longer needed.

Mrs. Clennam runs home with Little Dorrit. They enter the gate.

*Chapter 31 (book 2), "Closed"*:

They were in the gateway. Little Dorrit, with a piercing cry, held her back.

In one swift instant, the old house was before them, with the man lying smoking in the window; another thundering sound, and it heaved, surged outward, opened asunder in fifty places, collapsed, and fell. Deafened by the noise, stifled, choked, and blinded by the dust, they hid their faces and stood rooted to the spot. The dust storm, driving between them and the placid sky, parted for a moment and showed them the stars. As they looked up, wildly crying for help, the great pile of chimneys which was then alone left standing, like a tower in a whirlwind, rocked, broke, and hailed itself down upon the heap of ruin, as if every tumbling fragment were intent on burying the crushed wretch deeper. . . . The mystery of the noises was out now;

Affery, like greater people, had always been right in her facts, and always wrong in the theories she deduced from them.

It is curious that the device of the secret is prolonged by Dickens throughout *Little Dorrit*. This device is even extended to the events, the beginning of which take place in our presence. They too are given as mysteries.

Dorrit's love for Clennam and Clennam's love for Minnie are not presented in the form of simple description. Rather, they are presented as "mysteries."

Dickens speaks of this love, and yet he also seems to deny it.

Clennam is overjoyed at the fact that he is not in love at the very same time that he is, in fact, in love.

*Chapter 16, "Nobody's Weakness"*: the following chapter utilizes the same device.

*Chapter 17, "Nobody's Rival,"* concludes in the following way:

The rain fell heavily on the roof, and pattered on the ground, and dripped among the evergreens, and the leafless branches of the trees. The rain fell heavily, drearily. It was a night of tears.

If Clennam had not decided against falling in love with Pet; if he had had the weakness to do it; if he had, little by little, persuaded himself to set all the earnestness of his nature, all the might of his hope, and all the wealth of his matured character, on that cast; if he had done this, and found that all was lost; he would have been, that night, unutterably miserable. As it was—

As it was, the rain fell heavily, drearily.

The technique in this excerpt consists of the following: a false interpretation of Clennam's action is provided by Dickens. He is not in love, and his true attitude is given through the metaphor of the rain.

*Chapter 24, "Fortune-Telling"*: Little Dorrit's love for Arthur Clennam is also presented in the form of a riddle. Little Dorrit tells Maggy a tale about a tiny little woman, who loved the shadow and who died without ever revealing the secret.

Dickens connects the riddle of Dorrit's love with the riddle of Pancks by the very title of the chapter:

"Who's he, Little Mother?" said Maggy. She had joined her at the window and was leaning on her shoulder. "I see him come in and out often."

"I have heard him called a fortune-teller," said Little Dorrit. "But I doubt if he could tell many people, even their past or present fortunes."

"Couldn't have told the Princess hers?" said Maggy.

Little Dorrit, looking musingly down into the dark valley of the prison, shook her head.

"Nor the tiny woman hers?" said Maggy.

"No," said Little Dorrit, with the sunset very bright upon her. "But let us come away from the window."

This device is similar to the one in the previous excerpt: the "sunset flush" on Little Dorrit's face is presented as if it meant "blushing with the excitement of hope." And the quote "let's move away from the window" is

a false solution. "Flush" really means "turning red" because of the change in the light.

Maggy recalls the princess's secret in the presence of Clennam in *chapter 32, "More Fortune-Telling."* Clennam is conversing with Little Dorrit:

"So you said that day, upon the bridge. I thought of it much afterwards. Have you no secret you could entrust to me, with hope and comfort, if you would!"

"Secret? No, I have no secret," said Little Dorrit in some trouble.

They had been speaking in low voices: more because it was natural to what they said, to adopt that tone, than with any care to reserve it from Maggy at her work. All of a sudden Maggy stared again, and this time spoke:

"I say! Little Mother!"

"Yes, Maggy."

"If you an't got no secret of your own to tell him, tell him that about the Princess. *She* had a secret, you know."

Clennam understands nothing and tortures Little Dorrit by telling her that someday she will fall in love:

"It was the little woman as had the secret, and she was always a-spinning at her wheel. And so she says to her, why do you keep it there? And so, the t'other one says to her, no I don't; and so the t'other one says to her, yes you do; and then they both goes to the cupboard, and there it is. And she wouldn't go into the Hospital, and so she died. *You* know, Little Mother; tell him that. For it was a reg'lar good secret, that was!" cried Maggy, hugging herself.

Clennam is at a loss to understand. We're dealing here with a game that resembles the game of peripeteia in classical tragedy. The resolution of the mystery has already been prepared, but is not yet recognized by the protagonists.

Of real interest to us is the recognition utilized in *The Cricket on the Hearth*. The first hint at the old man's change of clothes after the hostess's fainting spell is given in the incoherent words of the nanny and of Momma:

"Did its mothers make it up a Beds then?" cried Miss Slowboy to the Baby; "and did its hair grow brown and curly, when its caps was lifted off, and frighten it, a precious Pets, a-sitting by the fires!"

With that unaccountable attraction of the mind to trifles, which is often incidental to a state of doubt and confusion, the Carrier, as he walked slowly to and fro, found himself mentally repeating even these absurd words, many times. So many times that he got them by heart, and was still conning them over and over, like a lesson, when Tilly, after administering as much friction to the little bald head with her hand as she thought wholesome (according to the practice of nurses), had once more tied the Baby's cap on.

"And frighten it, a precious Pets, a-sitting by the fires. What frightened Dot, I wonder!" mused the Carrier, pacing to and fro.

Here the resolution (change of dress) is presented, but not recognized. The incoherence of form (the plural number, etc.) serves as the motivation for the non-recognition.

On the stage and in the novel, it is the usual practice, indeed, it is always the practice, for the secret or recognition to be first alluded to in the form of a hint. For example, in *Our Mutual Friend*, the presence of the Boffin couple at the wedding of John Harmon and Bella is intimated by Dickens when he speaks of a certain noise in the annex to the church.

It is the custom in the theater for the man who has had a change of dress to reveal himself first to the audience and only then to the stage characters. Very curious indeed is Chaplin's reversal of this device.

A crowd of people had been waiting for his appearance on stage, where he had promised to perform. One of the acts on the program called for a young man in tails to read a certain banal poem. A certain gentleman read the poem with impeccable taste and aplomb. Only when he turned his back to the audience and moved off stage, shuffling his feet in his inimitable way, did the audience recognize Chaplin.

This is very much analogous to the device of the spurious resolution.

A resolution is offered in the conversation carried on between John, who is in love with Dorrit, and Clennam, who has landed in debtors' prison. *Chapter 27 (book 2), "The Pupil of the Marshalsea";*

"Mr. Clennam, do you mean to say that you don't know?"

"What, John?"

"Lord," said Young John, appealing with a gasp to the spikes on the wall. "He says, What!"

Clennam looked at the spikes, and looked at John; and looked at the spikes, and looked at John.

"He says What! And what is more," exclaimed Young John, surveying him in a doleful maze, "he appears to mean it! Do you see this window, sir?"

"Of course, I see this window."

"See this room?"

"Why, of course I see this room."

"That wall opposite, and that yard down below? They have all been witnesses of it, from day to day, from night to night, from week to week, from month to month. For, how often have I seen Miss Dorrit here when she has not seen me!"

"Witnesses of what?" said Clennam.

"Of Miss Dorrit's love."

"For whom?"

"You," said John.

But the semantic resolution does not yet unlock the verbal riddle:

The equation: Dorrit-Clennam (little woman-shadow) has not yet been solved. The "shadow" theme reappears in the words of Maggy.

Love has been openly declared, but Clennam rejects it. The inequality between them (as in the case of Eugene Onegin-Tatiana) has tilted in favor of Dorrit:

Maggy, who had fallen into very low spirits, here cried, "Oh get him into a hospital; do get him into a hospital, Mother! He'll never look like hisself again, if he an't got into a hospital. And then the little woman as was laways a-spinning at her

wheel, she can go to the cupboard with the Princess and say, what do you keep the Chicking there for? (book 2, chap. 29)

Here the theme is complicated by Dickens's introduction of Maggy's delirium (she had been undergoing treatment in the hospital, and both the hospital and the chickens are her paradise). A similar device is used in *The Cricket on the Hearth*.

The resolution of the plot line, which may be called "The Love of Arthur and Dorrit and the Obstacles to Their Marriage," is presented, as you can see, in a rather trivial way by means of Merdle's secret. Old Man Dorrit had entrusted his entire fortune to this Merdle, and now Little Dorrit is ruined. And so by means of this turn of events their positions in society have become equal. And herein lies the resolution. What still remains to be solved is the framing mystery of the watch.

In Turgenev's *A Nest of the Gentry*, the inequality is expressed in the following way: Lavretsky cannot love Liza, because he's already married. He is released from his vows by the newspaper's report of his wife's death. His wife's return (the rumor of her death was false) restores the complication to the plot. Since the composition is not resolved, a spurious ending is required. An ending is spurious, in my opinion, when it introduces a new concluding motif as a parallel to the old one. The spurious ending of *A Nest of the Gentry* lies in the fact that Lavretsky is sitting on a bench, while "the young tribe is growing up."

In the case of Knut Hamsun, failure at love is presented entirely within the context of a psychological motivation. Lieutenant Glahn and Edvarda in *Pan* truly love each other, but whenever one says "yes," the other says "no." I do not mean to say, of course, that Hamsun's motivation or even that his entire composition is superior or more expertly done than that of Ariostovsky or Pushkin. It is simply different. Perhaps Hamsun's device will appear ludicrous with the years. Just as today, for instance, the attempt on the part of certain artists of the nineteenth century to conceal their technique appears equally odd to us.

### The Relationship among Members of a Parallelism As a Mystery

The device of several simultaneous planes of action, the relationship among which is not given immediately by the author, may be understood as a complication, as a peculiar continuation of the technique of the mystery.

So begins *Little Dorrit*. We are immediately confronted by two plot lines in this novel, the line of Rigaud and the line of Clennam, each of which is developed into a full chapter.

In the first chapter, entitled "Sun and Shadow," we encounter Mr. Rigaud and the Italian John Baptist. They are in prison—Rigaud on a

charge of murder and John for smuggling. Rigaud is led out to face trial. The crowd, gathered around the prison house, is in an uproar and wants to tear him to pieces. Like his prison-mate, Rigaud himself is not a principal character in the novel.

This manner of beginning a novel with a minor character instead of with the chief protagonist is quite common in Dickens, and can be found in *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Perhaps this device is connected with the technique of the riddle.

The second group of characters is given in the second chapter, entitled "Fellow-Travellers." This chapter is connected with the first chapter by the following phrase: " 'No more of yesterday's howling, over yonder, to-day, sir; is there?' "

*Little Dorrit* is a novel built on multiple levels. In order to connect these various planes, it was necessary for Dickens to connect the protagonists in some contrived way at the outset of the novel. Dickens selects for this purpose a place of quarantine. This quarantine corresponds to the tavern or monastery of story anthologies (see the *Heptameron* of Margaret of Navarre and the inn in *The Canterbury Tales*). At this quarantine we find gathered together Mr. and Mrs. Meagles, their daughter Minnie (Pet) and the servant Tattycoram (her story is about to be told), Mr. Clennam and Miss Wade.

The same holds for *Our Mutual Friend*. We have before us the first chapter, entitled "On the Look-out." Dickens introduces us here to Gaffer and to his daughter, who are towing a corpse attached to their boat. This chapter makes use of the device of the mystery, that is, we do not know precisely what these people on the boat are searching for, and the description of the corpse is presented obliquely:

Lizzie shot ahead, and the other boat fell astern. Lizzie's father, composing himself into the easy attitude of one who had asserted the high moralities and taken an unassailable position, slowly lighted a pipe, and smoked, and took a survey of what he had in tow. What he had in tow lunged itself at him sometimes in an awful manner when the boat was checked, and sometimes seemed to try to wrench itself away, though for the most part it followed submissively. A neophyte might have fancied that the ripples passing over it were dreadfully like faint changes of expression on a sightless face; but Gaffer was no neophyte, and had no fancies.

It is worth comparing this description with the fishing scene in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

In the second chapter, "The Man from Somewhere," Dickens describes the home of the Veneerings and introduces us to the attorney Mortimer and to a whole social circle, which serves as a Greek chorus throughout the novel. Anna Pavlovna's salon does the same for *War and Peace*.

At the end of the second chapter, we discover its connection with the first: we discover that a certain person who is heir to a huge fortune has drowned,



and we therefore connect his fate with the corpse towed by the boat.

In the third chapter, entitled "Another Man," Dickens introduces a new character by the name of Julius Handford. In the fifth chapter he brings in the Boffin family, and in the sixth chapter the Wilfer family. These plot lines are maintained all the way to the end of the novel, and they do not so much intersect as occasionally touch each other.

The plot lines of *A Tale of Two Cities* intersect even less. We perceive in this novel a transition from one plot line to another that is evidently foreign to it, as if it were a kind of riddle. The identification of the characters of the various plot lines is deferred to the middle of the novel.

At the present time, we're on the eve of a revival of the mystery novel. Interest in complex and entangling plot structures has grown greatly. For an example of a peculiarly distorted technique of the mystery, let us look at Andrei Bely.

It is interesting to observe in Andrei Bely a novel reincarnation of the technique of the riddle. I shall limit myself here to an example from *Kotik Letaeu*.

This work presents the two planes of "swarm" and "form." While "swarm" stands for the effervescent *coming-into-being* of life, "form" stands for the actual life that has *already* "come into being."

This swarm is formed either by a series of metaphor leitmotifs or by puns. We begin first with swarm and proceed on to form, that is, we're dealing here with an inversion. The pun is presented as a riddle. At times we also find in Bely the technique of the mystery in its pure form.

See for example, "The Lion":

Among the strangest illusions which have passed like a haze before my eyes, the strangest one of all is the following: a shaggy mug of a lion looms before me, as the howling hour strikes. I see before me yellow mouths of sand, from which a rough woolen coat is calmly looking at me. And then I see a face, and a shout is heard: "Lion is coming."

In this strange incident, all of the sullenly flowing images are condensed for the first time: like a shaft of light, illuminating my labyrinths, they cut through the illusoriness of the darkness that had loomed over me. In the midst of the yellow areas of sunlight I recognize myself. It's a circle; along its edges are benches; on them are dark images of women, like the images of night. It's nannies, and around them in the light are children, hands clasped to the dark hems of their dresses. There is a curiosity of many noses in the air, and in midst of it all there is Lion. (Subsequently, I saw the yellow circle of sand between Arbat and Dog Square, and to this day you will see a circle of greenery, as you pass from Dog Square. You'll see nannies sitting in silence while children frolic all over the place.)

This is Bely's first hint of a resolution. Lion's image appears once again: "The huge head of a wild beast, a lion, starts crawling towards us from one circle of light to another. And once again everything has disappeared."

And now the resolution. Twenty years later, the author is talking to a friend at the university:

"I am describing my childhood: the old woman and the reptilian monsters. I am speaking of the little circle and of the lion and of his yellow mug . . ."

"Come on, now. This lion's mug of yours is pure fantasy." My friend laughs.

"Well, yes. It was a dream."

"No, it's not a dream. It's a fantasy. It's a cock and bull story . . ."

"But I *did* see this in a dream," I insisted.

"The point is that you *didn't* have the dream. What you saw, simply, was a St. Bernard."

"No, I saw 'Lion,'" I insisted again.

"Well, all right, so you saw a lion. But don't you mean Lion, the St. Bernard?" my friend pressed on.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I remember Lion. I remember that yellow mug . . . It wasn't a lion, but a dog," he hesitated. "Your lion's mug was a fantasy," he launched on an explanation. "It belonged to a St. Bernard by the name of Lion."

"But how do you know?" I asked.

"When I was a child," he recollected, "I used to live around Dog Square. They used to take me for a walk. There I saw Lion. . . . He was a good, kind dog. Sometimes he would run onto the playground, carrying a stick in his mouth. We were afraid of him and ran in all directions, screaming."

"And do you remember that shout, 'Lion is coming'?"

"Of course I do."

Later, Bely confirms the mystical sense of "Lion." That device is also not so extraordinary.

Bely commonly states the metaphorical or the fantastic leitmotiv after first bringing out the story line.

Sometimes this is followed by a second, definitive resolution.

Let me illustrate with two examples from Turgenev.

The resolutions of "Clara Milich" are constructed along the first type (a lock of hair in the hand): this is an irreducible remnant. The denouement's self denial.

The second case is represented by "Knock! Knock! Knock!" The first riddle of the "knock" is explained, but the riddle of the "name" remains unsolved.\*

In Andrei Bely, we are dealing with the technique of the mystery in its purest form, as for example, in his *St. Petersburg*.

In the successors and imitators of Bely, particularly in Boris Pilnyak, we find the device of parallelism widely employed. However in this type of parallelism the relationship between the parallel planes is toned down and/or suppressed. These novels produce an impression of complex structure,

\*One of the protagonists has heard someone's voice calling him. Then follows a second resolution, where Ilya, the peddler, a namesake of the protagonist, hears the voice of his girlfriend calling him from the kitchen garden, i.e., the mysterious "call" to Ilya, the officer now dead, from the woman he had once jilted, turns out to be pure fantasy. [Trans. note]

while in fact they're quite elementary. The relationship among the parts is presented either through the most elementary of devices (the kinship bond among the leading characters) or through an episodic participation of a leading character of one plane in the action of another plane. See "A Tale of Petersburg," "Ryazan-Apple," "The Blizzard." It is interesting to follow in Pilnyak the coalescence of the individual stories into a novel.

I am planning to write a separate work concerning contemporary Russian prose, and at this point I wish only to assert that in all probability the technique of the mystery will occupy an outstanding role in the novel of the future, since it already has made deep inroads into those novels that are constructed on the principle of parallelism.

The interest in plot keeps growing. The time when a Leo Tolstoi could begin a story with the device of death ("The Death of Ivan Ilyich") and not tell the reader "what happens next" is evidently over.

Tolstoi himself loved the works of Alexandre Dumas and understood the business of plot very well indeed, but his literary orientation was elsewhere.

In the mystery novel, the solution is as important as the riddle itself.

The riddle makes it possible for the writer to manipulate the exposition, to enstrange it, to capture the reader's attention. The main thing is not to allow the reader to find out what is in fact going on, because, once recognized, such a situation loses its horror. For this reason, in Maturin's novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*, we are kept in the dark throughout the exposition about Melmoth's secret proposals to various people in dire straits: to prisoners of the Inquisition, to people who, to stave off death from starvation, sell their own blood, to inmates of an insane asylum, to people who had strayed into subterranean caves, and so on. Every time the action approaches the actual moment of the proposal, the text comes to an abrupt halt (the novel consists of several sections, confusedly connected with each other).

For many novelists, the duty of solving the mystery is a burdensome tradition, but for the most part they do not resort to fantastic resolutions. If fantasy is introduced, then it is only at the very end, as the denouement unravels. The fantastic is then presented as a direct or, on rare occasions, as an attendant cause of the action. And, if so, then in a special form, for example, as a prediction that permits the novel to develop against the backdrop of a necessity thus posited.

We encounter the device of the fantastic in Lewis's *The Monk*. Among its protagonists are a devil accompanied by a lieutenant spirit and the apparition of a nun. In the last part of the book, the devil carries off the monk and reveals the entire intrigue to him.

This revelation of the intrigue is no accident in the novel. With his complex plot structures, not unraveled by action, Dickens has recourse all the time to these devices.

Thus is the secret of the watch exposed in *Little Dorrit*. In addition, it is

again very typical that in order to elucidate it, Dickens gathers everyone in one room. This device is common to many novelists and has been parodied by Veniamin Kaverin in his "The Chronicle of the City of Leipzig for the Year 18—."

In Dickens, the protagonists are brought together quite literally against their will. So, for example, Rigaud is dragged before Clennam's mother, Pancks and John Baptist in *chapter 30 (book 2), "Closing In"*:

"And now," said Mr. Pancks, whose eye had often stealthily wandered to the window-seat, and the stocking that was being mended there, "I've only one other word to say before I go. If Mr. Clennam was here—but unfortunately, though he has so far got the better of this fine gentleman as to return him to this place against his will, he is ill and in prison—ill and in prison, poor fellow—if he was here," said Mr. Pancks, taking one step aside towards the window-seat, and laying his right hand upon the stocking; "he would say, 'Affery, tell your dreams!'"

The denouement is brought about by having Affery tell her dreams. Dreams are a new ironic motivation with an enstrangement of the old device of eavesdropping.

In Dickens, eavesdropping is carried on by clerks (*Nicholas Nickleby*), and occasionally by the leading characters.

In Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent*, eavesdropping is presented as fortuitous. This is a renewal of the device.

The artificiality of the denouement in *Little Dorrit* lies in this, that it takes place without any outside witnesses. Characters tell each other what they already know all too well. We cannot consider Affery to be an audience for the other characters.

The denouement in *Our Mutual Friend* is more successfully organized. Again, everyone is brought together here. They all reveal a secret, the secret of the bottle. They throw Wegg out, and then they tell the story to John Harmon's wife all over again from the beginning.

The denouement of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is similarly organized. All the leading characters are assembled. Old man Martin (a hoaxer and director of his own novel) explains all the riddles he himself has been responsible for.

Let me now present the denouement of *Little Dorrit*, also from *chapter 30, "Closing In"*:

The determined voice of Mrs. Clennam echoed "Stop!" Jeremiah had stopped already.

"It is closing in, Flintwinch."

The process of disposing of the riddles now begins.

First of all, we do not know what Rigaud needs from Clennam's house and why he had disappeared when he did, forcing everybody to search for him. It turns out that he had a secret, imposed a price on the secret, and when he was not paid for it he left the household for purposes of blackmail.

Rigaud takes Mrs. Clennam by the wrist and tells her the secret about a

certain house. Unfortunately, Rigaud's story and Mrs. Clennam's revelation of the secrets of the house take approximately twenty-four pages of printed text and cannot be quoted in their entirety.

Mrs. Clennam's story is motivated by the fact that she does not want to hear her story from the mouth of a scoundrel.

Let me now turn to the analysis of the denouement.

First to be resolved are the dreams of Mrs. Flintwinch.

Rigaud tells the story of "a certain strange marriage, a certain strange mother," and so on.

Flintwinch is interrupted by Affery:

"Jeremiah, keep off from me! I've heerd in my dreams, of Arthur's father and his uncle. He's a-talking of them. It was before my time here; but I've heerd in my dreams that Arthur's father was a poor, irresolute, frightened chap, who had everything but his orphan life scared out of him when he was young, and that he had no voice in the choice of his wife even, but his uncle chose her."

Rigaud continues. A happy union is concluded . . .

"Soon, the lady makes a singular and exciting discovery. Thereupon full of anger, full of jealousy, full of vengeance, she forms—see you, madame!—a scheme of retribution, the weight of which she ingeniously forces her crushed husband to bear himself, as well as execute upon her enemy. What superior intelligence!"

"Keep off, Jeremiah!" cried the palpitating Affery, taking her apron from her mouth again. "But it was one of my dreams that you told her, when you quarrelled with her one winter evening at dusk—there she sits and you looking at her—that she oughtn't to have let Arthur when he came home, suspect his father only; . . ."

You see now the technique of interruption. Several secrets are woven together into one and resolved as one.

Mrs. Clennam speaks first. It turns out that Arthur is not her son, but the son of her husband's mistress. The mystery of the watch is revealed:

She turned the watch upon the table, and opened it, and, with an unsoftening face, looked at the worked letters within.

"They did *not* forget."

She "did not forget."

Simultaneously Little Dorrit's secret is revealed.

It turns out that the watch was sent to Mrs. Clennam as a reminder. Arthur's father's uncle repented on his deathbed and left, Rigaud says, "One thousand guineas to the little beauty you slowly hunted to death. One thousand guineas to the youngest daughter her patron might have at fifty, or (if he had none) brother's youngest daughter, on her coming of age, . . ."

This brother was Frederick Dorrit, Little Dorrit's uncle.

I shall not continue to retell the novel and shall limit myself only to pointing out that the secret of the double is also resolved. The double turns out to be Mr. Flintwinch's brother.

We can now make the following observations.

As you can see, Little Dorrit's connection with Arthur's secret is tenuous at best. She is the niece of the protector of Arthur's mother. Her participation in the secret was purely formal, and not an active one. The very will and testament was counterfeit.

The secret in essence does not form a part of the plot. It is a supplement to the plot. The question of who Arthur is is, of course, very important to Arthur, but he never finds out about it.

*Chapter 34 (book 2), "Gone":* Mrs. Clennam hands over to Little Dorrit documents containing information that would reveal the secret.

Little Dorrit burns them by way of her husband:

"I want you to burn something for me."

"What?"

"Only this folded paper. If you will put it in the fire with your own hand, just as it is, my fancy will be gratified."

"Superstitious, darling Little Dorrit? Is it a charm?"

"It is anything you like best, my own," she answered, laughing with glistening eyes and standing on tiptoe to kiss him, "if you will only humour me when the fire burns up." . . .

"Does the charm want any words to be said?" asked Arthur, as he held the paper over the flame. "You can say (if you don't mind) 'I love you!'" answered Little Dorrit. So he said it, and the paper burned away.

The secret is woven into the entire novel, but it does not serve as a basis for the action itself. In essence, it is not revealed to the one person who is most uniquely concerned with it, that is, Arthur Clennam.

In essence, what Dickens needs here is not a secret but something mysterious to slow down the action.

Rigaud's secret is interwoven with the fundamental secret of "birth." Rigaud is the bearer of a secret. In accordance with the author's designs, he is involved in all the action. Yet even this is more a case of intention than realization.

Rigaud appears in the novel in the most varied situations, and it is interesting to see how Dickens emphasizes his connection with all of the leading characters.

*Chapter 1 (book 2), "Fellow-Travellers":*

Throwing back his head in emptying his glass, he cast his eyes upon the travellers' book, which lay on the piano, open, with pens and ink beside it, as if the night's names had been registered when he was absent. Taking it in his hand, he read these entries:

William Dorrit, Esquire	}	And suite.
Frederick Dorrit, Esquire		From
Edward Dorrit, Esquire		France
Miss Dorrit		to Italy.
Miss Amy Dorrit		
Mrs. General		

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gowan. From France to Italy.

To which he added, in a small complicated hand, ending with a long lean flourish, not unlike a lasso thrown at all the rest of the names:

Blandois. Paris. From France to Italy.

And then, with his nose coming down over his moustache, and his moustache going up under his nose, repaired to his allotted cell.

This grimace is none other than a "superscription" made by the writer. Rigaud simply adopted a new surname. Bringing him onto the stage, the author continues each time to apply the technique of the secret in every passage of the novel. It is as if he were applying makeup to the novel. But we recognize Rigaud either by the little ditty that he had picked up in prison, "Who Passes by This Road So Late?" or by his smile. The song is introduced in the first chapter of book 1:

Who passes by this road so late?  
Compagnon de la Majolaine!  
Who passes by this road so late?  
Always gay!

At first this song is sung by the prison-keeper to his young daughter. John Baptist joins in:

Of all the king's knights 'tis the flower,  
Compagnon de la Majolaine!  
Of all the king's knights 'tis the flower,  
Always gay!

Later, this song becomes Rigaud's song. We recognize him by it. The author has selected this song because it was "childlike" and at the same time "boastful." The braggadocio of the content corresponds to Rigaud's character, while the childlike character of the song, emphasized still further by the fact that it is first sung to a child, is necessary for contrast.

I fear making this analysis of the novel too exacting, of interest only to specialists. It is difficult for a nonspecialist (like myself) to illustrate the general laws of art in such minute detail. For I am not a showman but a *shower*.

Nonetheless, I will tell you one more detail. When Rigaud appears in his new role, the author at first shows his "secondary sign." No one can say whether he is handsome or ugly, and it is only later that the second sign is deployed, and it is at this moment of the second sign that recognition takes place (chapter 11).

Here we see the expression of the customary law of step-by-step construction in art.

Much the same can be said for the "noises in the house." By not allowing us time for a real resolution and confusing us with Affery's purposefully misleading resolution, Dickens produces new details: at first, simply a noise, then in succession the noise of something fragile falling, the rustling of dry material and the "noise of something reminiscent of falling leaves"

(book 2). Subsequently, when the door fails to open, Affery offers her a false resolution: "They're hiding someone in the house." At the same time, though, new technical instructions are given in her own words that are very precise: "... who is ... drawing lines on the wall?" This passage has to do with a description of the cracks on the wall.

Let us return to Rigaud, whom we have forgotten in our analysis of the novel's step-by-step construction. Rigaud himself is nothing more than a thief of documents. He is a passive bearer of a secret. He does not have "his own plot," as does Svidrigailov, who plays a similar role in *Crime and Punishment*.

An even more subsidiary role is played by Miss Wade.

What is the explanation for the success of the mystery novel, from Ann Radcliffe to Dickens?

This is the way I see the matter. The adventure novel had become obsolete. It was revived by satire. There are elements of the adventure novel in Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*) that play a purely ancillary role in the novel.

A time of crisis followed.

Fielding parodied the old novel in *Tom Jones* by presenting a hero of amoral character. Instead of the traditional loyalty expressed by the lover embarking on his adventures, we witness the merry escapades of Tom Jones.

Sterne composed a parody that was even more radical. He parodied the very structure of the novel by reviewing all of its devices. Simultaneously, a new, younger generation, aspiring to canonization, began its ascent.

It was Richardson who canonized the latter. According to legend, Richardson wanted to write a new manual of letter writing but ended up writing an epistolary novel instead.

At the same time, horror stories emerge on the scene, along with the Pinkertons of that age. We also meet with Ann Radcliffe and the mystery novel (Maturin).

The old novel tried to increase the range of its devices by introducing parallel intrigues.

In order to connect several intrigues, it was found convenient to use the technique of the mystery novel.

The final result was the complex plot structures of Dickens. The mystery novel allows us to interpolate into the work large chunks of everyday life, which, while serving the purpose of impeding the action, feel the pressure of the plot and are therefore perceived as a part of the artistic whole. Thus are the descriptions of the debtors' prison, the Circumlocution Office, and Bleeding Heart Yard incorporated into *Little Dorrit*. That is why the mystery novel was used as a "social novel."

At the present time, as I've indicated, the mystery technique is used by such young Russian writers as Pilnyak, Slonimsky (*Warsaw*), and by Veniamin Kaverin. In Kaverin we witness a "Dickensian" denouement



with a list of all of the principal characters. However, this is not so much reminiscence as parody:

"Enough," I said, entering, at long last, into the shop. "What nonsense are you babbling here. I can't make heads or tails. And is there any sense in getting so excited over such a petty thing?"

I picked up a large lamp with a dark blue lampshade and lit its bright flame, so that I could look intently at those present one last time before saying good-bye.

"You'll get what you deserve for this! you hack!" Frau Bach grumbled. "What gives you the idea that you can act as if you were at home?!"

"Pipe down, Frau Bach!" I said with full composure. "I need to say a few words to all of you before bidding farewell."

I got up on the chair, waved my arms and said: "Attention, please!" Instantly, the faces of all present turned to me:

"Attention! This is the final chapter, my dear friends. Soon we shall have to part. I have come to love each and every one of you, and this separation shall be very hard on me. But time goes on, the plot is used up, and nothing could be more boring than to revive the statue, to turn it around, and then to marry him to the virtuous . . ."

"May I be so bold as to observe," a stranger interrupted me, "that it would be very helpful, my dear writer, to explain a number of things first."

"Yes?" I said, lifting my eyebrows in surprise. "Did anything seem unclear to you at the end?"

"If I may be so bold as to inquire," the stranger continued with a courteous but cunning smile. "I mean, what about the charlatan, who . . ."

"Tsh!" I interrupted him with a cautious whisper. "Please, not a word about the charlatan. Mum is the word. In your place, my dear friend, I would have asked why the professor fell silent."

"You threw into the envelope some kind of a poisonous drug," said Bor.

"How silly!" I replied, "You are a tedious young man, Robert Bor. The professor fell silent, because . . ." At this very instant, Bach's old wife put out the lamp. In the darkness I carefully climbed down from the chair, shook tenderly the hands of all present and walked out. ("The Chronicle of the City of Leipzig for the Year 18—")

We see here the laying bare of the Dickensian device. As in the case of the English writer, all of the protagonists are brought together. It is not, however, the characters who explain the action but the author himself. What we have before us is not a denouement, as such. Instead, the device for its resolution is pointed out. There is no real denouement because the source of motivation here is parody.

## Chapter 7

### The Novel as Parody: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*

I do not intend in this chapter to analyze Laurence Sterne's novel. Rather, I shall use it in order to illustrate the general laws governing plot structure. Sterne was a radical revolutionary as far as form is concerned. It was typical of him to lay bare the device. The aesthetic form is presented without any motivation whatsoever, simply as is. The difference between the conventional novel and that of Sterne is analogous to the difference between a conventional poem with sonorous instrumentation and a Futurist poem composed in transrational language (*zaumnyi yazyk*). Nothing has as yet been written about Sterne, or if so, then only a few trivial comments.

Upon first picking up Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, we are overwhelmed by a sense of chaos.

The action constantly breaks off, the author constantly returns to the beginning or leaps forward. The main plot, not immediately accessible, is constantly interrupted by dozens of pages filled with whimsical deliberations on the influence of a person's nose or name on his character or else with discussions of fortifications.

The book opens, as it were, in the spirit of autobiography, but soon it is deflected from its course by a description of the hero's birth. Nevertheless, our hero, pushed aside by material interpolated into the novel, cannot, it appears, get born.

*Tristram Shandy* turns into a description of one day. Let me quote Sterne himself:

I will not finish that sentence till I have made an observation upon the strange state of affairs between the reader and myself, just as things stand at present—an observation never applicable before to any one biographical writer since the creation of the world, but to myself—and I believe will never hold good to any other, until its final destruction—and therefore, for the very novelty of it alone, it must be worth your worships attending to.

I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume—and no farther than to my first day's life—'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of

advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it—on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back— (285-86)\*

But when you examine the structure of the book more closely, you perceive first of all that this disorder is intentional. There is method to Sterne's madness. It is as regular as a painting by Picasso.

Everything in the novel has been displaced and rearranged. The dedication to the book makes its appearance on page 25, even though it violates the three basic demands of a dedication, as regards content, form, and place.

The preface is no less unusual. It occupies nearly ten full printed pages, but it is found not in the beginning of the book but in volume 3, chapter 20, pages 192-203. The appearance of this preface is motivated by the fact that

All my heroes are off my hands; — 'tis the first time I have had a moment to spare, — and I'll make use of it, and write my preface.

Sterne pulls out all the stops in his ingenious attempt to confound the reader. As his crowning achievement, he transposes a number of chapters in *Tristram Shandy* (i.e., chapters 18 and 19 of volume 9 come after chapter 25). This is motivated by the fact that: "All I wish is, that it may be a lesson to the world, 'to let people tell their stories their own way'" (633).

However, the rearrangement of the chapters merely lays bare another fundamental device by Sterne which impedes the action.

At first Sterne introduces an anecdote concerning a woman who interrupts the sexual act by asking a question (5).

This anecdote is worked into the narrative as follows: Tristram Shandy's father is intimate with his wife only on the first Sunday of every month, and we find him on that very evening winding the clock so as to get his domestic duties "out of the way at one time, and be no more plagued and pester'd with them the rest of the month" (8).

Thanks to this circumstance, an irresistible association has arisen in his wife's mind: as soon as she hears the winding of the clock, she is immediately reminded of something different, and vice versa (20). It is precisely with the question "Pray, my dear, . . . have you not forgot to wind up the clock?" (5) that Tristram's mother interrupts her husband's act.

This anecdote is preceded by a general discussion on the carelessness of parents (4-5), which is followed in turn by the question posed by his mother (5), which remains unrelated to anything at this point. We're at first under the impression that she has interrupted her husband's speech. Sterne plays with our error:

Good G---! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time, — "Did ever woman, since the creation of the world,

interrupt a man with such a silly question? Pray, what was your father saying? —Nothing. (5)

This is followed (5-6) by a discussion of the homunculus (fetus), spiced up with anecdotal allusions to its right of protection under the law.

It is only on pages 8-9 that we receive an explanation of the strange punctuality practiced by our hero's father in his domestic affairs.

So, from the very beginning of the novel, we see in *Tristram Shandy* a displacement in time. Causes follow effects, the possibilities for false resolutions are prepared by the author himself. This is a perennial device in Sterne. The paronomastic motif of coitus, associated with a particular day, pervades the entire novel. Appearing from time to time, it serves to connect the various parts of this unusually complex masterpiece.

If we were to represent the matter schematically, it would take on the following form: the event itself would be symbolized by a cone, while the cause would be symbolized by its apex. In a conventional novel, such a cone is attached to the main plot line of the novel precisely by its apex. In Sterne, on the contrary, the cone is attached to the main plot line by its base. We are thus immediately thrust into a swarm of allusions and insinuations.

Such temporal transpositions are frequently met with in the poetics of the novel. Let us recall, for example, the temporal rearrangement in *A Nest of the Gentry*, which is motivated by Lavretsky's reminiscence. Or then again "Oblomov's Dream." Similarly, we encounter temporal transpositions without motivation in Gogol's *Dead Souls* (Chichikov's childhood and Tentetnikov's upbringing). In Sterne, however, this device pervades the entire work.

The exposition, the preparation of a given character comes only after we have already puzzled long and hard over some strange word or exclamation already uttered by this same character.

We are witnessing here a laying bare of the device. In *The Belkin Tales* (e.g., "The Shot"), Pushkin makes extensive use of temporal transposition. At first we see Silvio practicing at the shooting range, then we hear Silvio's story about the unfinished duel, then we meet the count, Silvio's adversary, and this is climaxed by the denouement. The various segments are given in the following sequence: 2 - 1 - 3. Yet this permutation is clearly motivated, while Sterne, on the contrary, lays bare the device. As I have already said, Sterne's transposition is an end in itself:

What I have to inform you, comes, I own, a little out of its due course; —for it should have been told a hundred and fifty pages ago, but that I foresaw then 'twould come in pat hereafter, and be of more advantage here than elsewhere. (144)

In addition, Sterne lays bare the device by which he stitches the novel out of individual stories. He does so, in general, by manipulating the structure of his novel, and it is the consciousness of form through its violation that constitutes the content of the novel.

\*Page references are to James A. Work's edition (Odyssey Press, 1940). Shklovsky used a Russian translation of *Tristram Shandy* that appeared in the journal *Panteon literatury* in 1892.

In my chapter on *Don Quixote* I have already noted several canonical devices for integrating tales into a novel.

Sterne makes use of new devices or, when using old ones, he does not conceal their conventionality. Rather, he plays with them by thrusting them to the fore.

In the conventional novel an inset story is interrupted by the main story. If the main story consists of two or more plots, then passages from them follow alternately, as in *Don Quixote*, where scenes of the hero's adventures at the duke's court alternate with scenes depicting Sancho Panza's governorship.

Zelinsky points out something completely contrary in Homer. He never depicts two simultaneous actions. Even if the course of events demands simultaneity, still they are presented in a causal sequence. The only simultaneity possible occurs when Homer shows us one protagonist in action, while alluding to another protagonist in his inactive state.

Sterne allows for simultaneity of action, but he parodies the deployment of the plot line and the intrusion of new material into it.

In the first part of the novel we are offered, as material for development, a description of Tristram Shandy's birth. This description occupies 276 pages, hardly any of which deals with the description of the birth itself. Instead, what is developed for the most part is the conversation between the father of our hero and Uncle Toby.

This is how the development takes place:

— I wonder what's all that noise, and running backwards and forwards for, above stairs, quoth my father, addressing himself, after an hour and a half's silence, to my uncle Toby, — who you must know, was sitting on the opposite side of the fire, smoking his social pipe all the time, in mute contemplation of a new pair of black-plush breeches which he had got on; — What can they be doing brother? quoth my father, — we can scarce hear ourselves talk.

I think, replied my uncle Toby, taking his pipe from his mouth, and striking the head of it two or three times upon the nail of his left thumb, as he began his sentence, — I think, says he: — But to enter rightly into my uncle Toby's sentiments upon this matter, you must be made to enter first a little into his character, the out-lines of which I shall just give you, and then the dialogue between him and my father will go on as well again. (63)

A discussion concerning inconstancy begins immediately thereafter. This discussion is so whimsical that the only way to convey it would be to literally transcribe it verbatim. On page 65 Sterne remembers: "But I forget my uncle Toby, whom all this while we have left knocking the ashes out of his tobacco pipe."

Conversations concerning Uncle Toby, along with a brief history of Aunt Dinah follow. On page 72 Sterne remembers: "I was just going, for example, to have given you the great out-lines of my uncle Toby's most whimsical character; — when my aunt Dinah and the coachman came a-cross us, and led us a vagary. . . ."

Unfortunately I cannot quote all of Sterne and shall therefore leap over a large part of the text:

. . . from the beginning of this, you see, I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections, and have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going; — and, what's more, it shall be kept a-going these forty years, if it pleases the fountain of health to bless me so long with life and good spirits. (73-74)

So ends chapter 22. It is followed by chapter 23: "I have a strong propensity in me to begin this chapter very nonsensically, and I will not balk my fancy. — Accordingly I set off thus."

We have before us new digressions.

On page 77 the author reminds us that: "If I was not morally sure that the reader must be out of all patience for my uncle Toby's character, . . ."

A page later begins a description of Uncle Toby's "Hobby-Horse" (i.e., his mania). It turns out that Uncle Toby, who was wounded in the groin at the siege of Namur, has a passion for building model fortresses. Finally, however, on page 99, Uncle Toby finishes the task he had started on page 63:

I think, replied my uncle Toby, — taking, as I told you, his pipe from his mouth, and striking the ashes out of it as he began his sentence; — I think, replied he, — it would not be amiss, brother, if we rung the bell.

This device is constantly used by Sterne and, as is evident from his facetious reminders of Uncle Toby, he's not only aware of the hyperbolic nature of such development but plays with it.

This method of developing the action is, as I've already said, the norm for Sterne. Here's an example from page 144: "I wish, . . . you had seen what prodigious armies we had in Flanders." This is immediately followed by a development of the material concerned with the father's mania. The following manias are woven into the character of Tristram Shandy's father: the subject of the harmful effect of the pressure exerted on the baby's head by the mother's contractions during labor (149-54), the influence of a person's name on his character (this motif is developed in great detail), and the effect of the size of the nose on a person's faculties (this motif is developed with unusual magnificence from page 217 on). After a brief pause begins the development of the material concerned with the curious stories about noses. Especially remarkable is the story of Slawkenbergius. Tristram's father knows a full ten dozen stories by this man. The development of the theme of noseology concludes on page 272.

Mr. Shandy's first mania also plays a role in this development. That is, Sterne digresses in order to speak about it. The main plot returns on page 157:

"I wish, Dr. Slop," quoth my uncle Toby (repeating his wish for Dr. Slop a second time, and with a degree of more zeal and earnestness in his manner of wishing, than he had wished it at first)—"I wish, Dr. Slop," quoth my uncle Toby, "you had seen what prodigious armies we had in Flanders."

Again, the developmental material intrudes.

On page 163 we again find: "'What prodigious armies you had in Flanders!'"

This conscious, exaggerated development often takes place in Sterne even without the use of a repetitive, connective phrase:

The moment my father got up into his chamber, he threw himself prostrate across his bed in the wildest disorder imaginable, but at the same time, in the most lamentable attitude of a man borne down with sorrows, that ever the eye of pity dropp'd a tear for. (215-16)

There follows a description of a bodily posture, very characteristic of Sterne:

The palm of his right hand, as he fell upon the bed, receiving his forehead, and covering the greatest part of both his eyes, gently sunk down with his head (his elbow giving way backwards) till his nose touch'd the quilt;—his left arm hung insensible over the side of the bed, his knuckles reclining upon the handle of the chamber pot, which peep'd out beyond the valance,—his right leg (his left being drawn up towards his body) hung half over the side of the bed, the edge of it pressing upon his shin-bone.

Mr. Shandy's despair is called forth by the fact that the bridge of his son's nose was crushed during delivery by the midwife's tongs. This occasions (as I have already said) a whole epic on noses. On page 273 we return once more to the bedridden father: "My father lay stretched across the bed as still as if the hand of death had pushed him down, for a full hour and a half, before he began to play upon the floor with the toe of that foot, which hung over the bed-side."

I cannot restrain myself from saying a few words about Sterne's postures in general. Sterne was the first writer to introduce a description of poses into the novel. They're always depicted by him in a strange manner, or rather they are estranged.

Here is another example: "Brother Toby, replied my father, taking his wig from off his head with his right hand, and with his *left* pulling out a striped India handkerchief from his right coat pocket. . . ." (158).

Let us move right on to the next page: "It was not an easy matter in any king's reign, (unless you were as lean a subject as myself) to have forced your hand diagonally, quite across your whole body, so as to gain the bottom of your opposite coat-pocket."

Sterne's method of depicting postures was inherited by Leo Tolstoy (Eikhenbaum), but in a weaker form and with a psychological motivation.

Let us now return to the development. I shall offer several examples of

development in Sterne, and I shall select a case in which the device turns upon itself, so to speak, that is, where the realization of the form constitutes the content of the work:

What a chapter of chances, said my father, turning himself about upon the first landing, as he and my uncle Toby were going down stairs—what a long chapter of chances do the events of this world lay open to us! (279)

A discussion with an erotic tinge, of which I shall speak more later:

Is it not a shame to make two chapters of what passed in going down one pair of stairs? for we are got no farther yet than to the first landing, and there are fifteen more steps down to the bottom; and for aught I know, as my father and my uncle Toby are in a talking humour, there may be as many chapters as steps. (281)

This entire chapter is dedicated by Sterne to a discussion of chapters.

*Vol. 4, chap. 11:* We shall bring all things to rights, said my father, setting his foot upon the first step from the landing. . . . (283)

*Chap. 12:*—And how does your mistress? cried my father, taking the same step over again from the landing. . . . (284)

*Chap. 13:* Holla!—you chairman!—here's sixpence—do step into that bookseller's shop, and call me a *day-tall* critick. I am very willing to give any one of 'em a crown to help me with his tackling, to get my father and my uncle Toby off the stairs, and to put them to bed. . . .

I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume—and no farther than to my first day's life—'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it—on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back. . . . (285-86)

This orientation towards form and towards the normative aspect of that form reminds us of the octaves and sonnets which were filled with nothing but a description of the fact of their composition.

I would like to add one final example of Sterne's development:

My mother was going very gingerly in the dark along the passage which led to the parlour, as my uncle Toby pronounced the word *wife*.—'Tis a shrill, penetrating sound of itself, and Obadiah had helped it by leaving the door a little a-jar, so that my mother heard enough of it, to imagine herself the subject of the conversation: so laying the edge of her finger across her two lips—holding in her breath, and bending her head a little downwards, with a twist of her neck—(not towards the door, but from it, by which means her ear was brought to the chink)—she listened with all her powers:—the listening slave, with the Goddess of Silence at his back, could not have given a finer thought for an intaglio.

In this attitude I am determined to let her stand for five minutes: till I bring up the affairs of the kitchen (as Rapin does those of the church) to the same period. (357-58)



*Vol. 5, chap. 11:* I am a Turk if I had not as much forgot my mother, as if Nature had plaistered me up, and set me down naked upon the banks of the river Nile, without one.

However, these reminders are followed again by digressions. The reminder itself is necessary only in order to renew our awareness of the "forgotten mother," so that its development would not fade from view.

Finally, on page 370, the mother changes her posture: "Then, cried my mother, opening the door, . . ."

Here Sterne develops the action by resorting to a second parallel story. Instead of being presented discursively, time in such novels is thought to have come to a stop or, at least, it is no longer taken into account. Shakespeare uses inset scenes in precisely this way. Thrust into the basic action of the plot, they deflect us from the flow of time. And even if the entire inset conversation (invariably, with new characters) lasts for only a few minutes, the author considers it possible to carry on the action (presumably without lowering the proscenium curtain which in Shakespeare's theater most likely did not exist), as if hours had passed or even an entire night (Silverswan). By mentioning them and by reminding us of the fact that his mother has been left standing bent over, Sterne fulfills the device and compels us to experience it.

It is interesting in general to study the role of time in Sterne's works. "Literary" time is pure conventionality whose laws do not coincide with the laws of ordinary time. If we were to examine, for example, the plethora of stories and incidents packed into *Don Quixote*, we would perceive that the day as such hardly exists at all, since the cycle of day and night does not play a compositional role in the alternation of events. Similarly in Abbé Prévost's narration in *Manon Lescaut*: the Chevalier de Grioux relates the first part of the novel in one fell swoop, and then after taking a breather, he relates the remainder. Such a conversation would last about sixteen hours, and only if the Chevalier read them through quickly.

I have already spoken about the conventionality of time onstage. In Sterne this conventionality of "literary" time is consciously utilized as material for play.

Volume 2, chapter 8:

It is about an hour and a half's tolerable good reading since my uncle Toby rung the bell, when Obadiah was order'd to saddle a horse, and go for Dr. Slop the man-midwife;—so that no one can say, with reason, that I have not allowed Obadiah time enough, poetically speaking, and considering the emergency too, both to go and come;—tho', morally and truly speaking, the man, perhaps, has scarce had time to get on his boots.

If the hypercritic will go upon this; and is resolved after all to take a pendulum, and measure the true distance betwixt the ringing of the bell, and the rap at the door;—and, after finding it to be no more than two minutes, thirteen seconds, and three fifths,—should take upon him to insult over me for such a breach in the unity, or rather probability, of time;—I would remind him, that the idea of duration and of

its simple modes, is got merely from the train and succession of our ideas,—and is the true scholastic pendulum,—and by which, as a scholar, I will be tried in this matter,—abjuring and detesting the jurisdiction of all other pendulums whatever.

I would, therefore, desire him to consider that it is but poor eight miles from Shandy-Hall to Dr. Slop, the man mid-wife's house;—and that whilst Obadiah has been going those said miles and back, I have brought my uncle Toby from Namur, quite across all Flanders, into England:—That I have had him ill upon my hands near four years;—and have since travelled him and Corporal Trim, in a chariot and four, a journey of near two hundred miles down into Yorkshire;—all which put together, must have prepared the reader's imagination for the entrance of Dr. Slop upon the stage,—as much, at least (I hope) as a dance, a song, or a concerto between the acts.

If my hypercritic is intractable, alledging, that two minutes and thirteen seconds are no more than two minutes and thirteen seconds,—when I have said all I can about them;—and that this plea, tho' it might save me dramatically, will damn me biographically, rendering my book, from this very moment, a profess'd ROMANCE, which, before, was a book apocryphal:—If I am thus pressed—I then put an end to the whole objection and controversy about it all at once,—by acquainting him, that Obadiah had not got above threescore yards from the stable-yard before he met with Dr. Slop. (103-4)

From the old devices, and with hardly a change, Sterne made use of the device of the "found manuscript." This is the way in which Yorick's sermon is introduced into the novel. But the reading of this found manuscript does not represent a long digression from the novel and is constantly interrupted mainly by emotional outbursts. The sermon occupies pages 117-41 but it is vigorously pushed aside by Sterne's usual interpretations.

The reading begins with a description of the corporal's posture, as depicted with the deliberate awkwardness so typical of Sterne:

He stood before them with his body swayed, and bent forwards just so far, as to make an angle of 85 degrees and a half upon the plain of the horizon;—which sound orators, to whom I address this, know very well, to be the true persuasive angle of incidence; . . . (122)

Later he again writes:

He stood,—for I repeat it, to take the picture of him in at one view, with his body sway'd, and somewhat bent forwards,—his right leg firm under him, sustaining seven-eighths of his whole weight,—the foot of his left leg, the defect of which was no disadvantage to his attitude, advanced a little,—not laterally, nor forwards, but in a line betwixt them; . . .

And so on. The whole description occupies more than a page. The sermon is interrupted by the story of Corporal Trim's brother. This is followed by the dissenting theological interpolations of the Catholic listener (125, 126, 128, 129, etc.) and by Uncle Toby's comment on fortifications (133, 134, etc.). In this way the reading of the manuscript in Sterne is far more closely linked to the novel than in Cervantes.

The found manuscript in *Sentimental Journey* became Sterne's favorite device. In it he discovers the manuscript of Rabelais, as he supposes. The manuscript breaks off, as is typical for Sterne, for a discussion about the art of wrapping merchandise. The unfinished story is canonical for Sterne, both in its motivated as well as unmotivated forms. When the manuscript is introduced into the novel, the break is motivated by the loss of its conclusion. The simple break which concludes *Tristram Shandy* is completely unmotivated:

L--d! said my mother, what is all this story about?—

A COCK and a BULL, said Yorick—And one of the best of its kind, I ever heard.

*Sentimental Journey* ends in the same way: “. . . So that when I stretch'd out my hand, I caught hold of the Fille de Chambre's—”

This is of course a definite stylistic device based on differential qualities. Sterne was writing against a background of the adventure novel with its extremely rigorous forms that demanded, among other things, that a novel end with a wedding or marriage. The forms most characteristic of Sterne are those which result from the displacement and violation of conventional forms. He acts no differently when it is time for him to conclude his novels. It is as if we fell upon them: on the staircase, for instance, in the very place where we expect to find a landing, we find instead a gaping hole. Gogol's “Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka and His Auntie” represents just such a method of ending a story, but with a motivation: the last page of the manuscript goes for the wrapping of baked pies. (Sterne, on the other hand, uses the ending of his manuscript to wrap black currant preserves.) The notes for Hoffmann's *Kater Murr* present much the same picture, with a motivated absence of the ending, but they are complicated by a temporal transposition (that is, they are motivated by the fact that the pages are in disarray) and by a parallel structure.

The tale of Le Fever is introduced by Sterne in a thoroughly traditional way. Tristram's birth occasions a discussion concerning the choice of a tutor. Uncle Toby proposes for the role the poor son of Le Fever, and thus begins an inset tale, *which is carried on in the name of the author*:

Then, brother Shandy, answered my uncle Toby, raising himself off the chair, and laying down his pipe to take hold of my father's other hand,—I humbly beg I may recommend poor Le Fever's son to you;—a tear of joy of the first water sparkled in my uncle Toby's eye,—and another, the fellow to it, in the corporal's as the proposition was made;—you will see why when you read Le Fever's story:—fool that I was! nor can I recollect, (nor perhaps you) without turning back to the place, what it was that hindred me from letting the corporal tell it in his own words;—but the occasion is lost,—I must tell it now in my own. (415-16)

The tale of Le Fever now commences. It covers pages 379-95. A description of Tristram's journeys also represents a separate unit. It occupies pages

436-93. This episode was later deployed step for step and motif for motif in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. In the description of the journey Sterne has interpolated the story of the Abbess of Andouilletts (459-65).

This heterogeneous material, weighed down as it is with long extracts from the works of a variety of pedants, would no doubt have broken the back of this novel, were it not that the novel is held together tightly by leitmotifs. A specific motif is neither developed nor realized; it is merely mentioned from time to time. Its fulfillment is deferred to a point in time which seems to be receding further and further away from us. Yet, its very presence throughout the length and breadth of the novel serves to link the episodes.

There are several such motifs. One is the motif of the knots. It appears in the following way: a sack containing Dr. Slop's obstetrical instruments is tied in several knots:

'Tis God's mercy, quoth he [Dr. Slop], (to himself) that Mrs. Shandy has had so bad a time of it,—else she might have been brought to bed seven times told, before one half of these knots could have got untied. (167)

In the case of *knots*,—by which, in the first place, I would not be understood to mean slip-knots,—because in the course of my life and opinions,—my opinions concerning them will come in more properly when I mention. . . . (next chapter)

A discussion concerning knots and loops and bows continues ad nauseam. Meanwhile, Dr. Slop reaches for his knife and cuts the knots. Due to his carelessness, he wounds his hand. He then begins to swear, whereupon the elder Shandy, with Cervantesque seriousness, suggests that instead of carrying on in vain, he should curse in accordance with the rules of art. In his capacity as the leader, Shandy then proposes the Catholic formula of excommunication. Slop picks up the text and starts reading. The formula occupies two full pages. It is curious to observe here the motivation for the appearance of material considered necessary by Sterne for further development. This material is usually represented by works of medieval learning, which by Sterne's time had already acquired a comical tinge. (As is true also of words pronounced by foreigners in their peculiar dialects.) This material is interspersed in Tristram's father's speech, and its appearance is motivated by his manias. Here, though, the motivation is more complex. Apart from the father's role, we encounter also material concerning the infant's baptism before his birth and the lawyers' comical argument concerning the question of whether the mother was a relative of her own son.

The “knots” and “chambermaids” motif appears again on page 363. But then the author dismisses the idea of writing a chapter on them, proposing instead another chapter on chambermaids, green coats, and old hats. However the matter of the knots is not yet exhausted. It resurfaces at the very end on page 617 in the form of a promise to write a special chapter on them.

Similarly, the repeated mention of Jenny also constitutes a running motif throughout the novel. Jenny appears in the novel in the following way:

... it is no more than a week from this very day, in which I am now writing this book for the edification of the world, — which is March 9, 1759, — that my dear, dear Jenny observing I look'd a little grave, as she stood cheapening a silk of five-and-twenty shillings a yard, — told the mercer, she was sorry she had given him so much trouble; — and immediately went and bought herself a yard-wide stuff of ten-pence a yard. (44)

On page 48 Sterne plays with the reader's desire to know what role Jenny plays in his life:

I own the tender appellation of my dear, dear Jenny, — with some other strokes of conjugal knowledge, interspersed here and there, might, naturally enough, have misled the most candid judge in the world into such a determination against me. — All I plead for, in this case, Madam, is strict justice, and that you do so much of it, to me as well as to yourself, — as not to prejudge or receive such an impression of me, till you have better evidence, than I am positive, at present, can be produced against me: — Not that I can be so vain or unreasonable, Madam, as to desire you should therefore think, that my dear, dear Jenny is my kept mistress; — no, — that would be flattering my character in the other extrem, and giving it an air of freedom, which, perhaps, it has no kind of right to. All I contend for, is the utter impossibility for some volumes, that you, or the most penetrating spirit upon earth, should know how this matter really stands. — It is not impossible, but that my dear, dear Jenny! tender as the appellation is, may be my child. — Consider, — I was born in the year eighteen. — Nor is there any thing unnatural or extravagant in the supposition, that my dear Jenny may be my friend. — Friend! — My friend. Surely, Madam, a friendship between the two sexes may subsist, and be supported without — Fy! Mr. Shandy: — Without any thing, Madam, but that tender and delicious sentiment, which ever mixes in friendship, where there is a difference of sex.

The Jenny motif appears again on page 337:

I shall never get all through in five minutes, that I fear — and the thing I *hope* is, that your worships and reverences are not offended — if you are, depend upon't I'll give you something, my good gentry, next year, to be offended at — that's my dear Jenny's way — but who my Jenny is — and which is the right and which the wrong end of a woman, is the thing to be *concealed* — it will be told you the next chapter but one, to my chapter of button-holes, — and not one chapter before.

And on page 493 we have the following passage: "I love the Pythagoreans (much more than ever I dare to tell my dear Jenny)."

We encounter another reminder on page 550 and on page 610. The latter one (I have passed over several others) is quite sentimental, a genuine rarity in Sterne:

I will not argue the matter: Time wastes too fast: every letter I trace tells me with what rapidity Life follows my pen; the days and hours of it, more precious, my dear

Jenny! than the rubies about thy neck, are flying over our heads like light clouds of a windy day, never to return more — every thing presses on — whilst thou art twisting that lock, — see! it grows grey; and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, and every absence which follows it, are preludes to that eternal separation which we are shortly to make. —

— Heaven have mercy upon us both!

## Chapter 9

Now, for what the world thinks of that ejaculation — I would not give a groat.

This is all of chapter 9, volume 9.

It would be interesting to take up for a moment the subject of sentimentality in general. Sentimentality cannot constitute the content of art, if only for the reason that art does not have a separate content. The depiction of things from a "sentimental point of view" is a special method of depiction, very much, for example, as these things might be from the point of view of a horse (Tolstoi's "Kholstomer") or of a giant (Swift).

By its very essence, art is without emotion. Recall, if you will, that in fairy tales people are shoved into a barrel bristling with nails, only to be rolled down into the sea. In our version of "Tom Thumb," a cannibal cuts off the heads of his daughters, and the children who listen rapturously to every detail of this legend never let you skip over these details during the telling and retelling of the story. This isn't cruelty. It's fable.

In *Spring Ritual Song*, Professor Anichkov presents examples of folkloric dance songs. These songs speak of a bad-tempered, querulous husband, of death, and of worms. This is tragic, yes, but only in the world of song.

In art, blood is not bloody. No, it just rhymes with "flood." It is material either for a structure of sounds or for a structure of images. For this reason, art is pitiless or rather without pity, apart from those cases where the feeling of sympathy forms the material for the artistic structure. But even in that case, we must consider it from the point of view of the composition. Similarly, if we want to understand how a certain machine works, we examine its drive belt first. That is, we consider this detail from the standpoint of a machinist and not, for instance, from the standpoint of a vegetarian.

Of course, Sterne is also without pity. Let me offer an example. The elder Shandy's son, Bobby, dies at precisely the moment when the father is vacillating over whether to use the money that had fallen into his hands by chance in order to send his son abroad or else to use it for improvements on the estate:

... my uncle Toby hummed over the letter.

— — — — —  
— — — — —  
— — — — — 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. No: — he is dead, my dear brother, quoth my uncle Toby. (350)

Death is here used by Sterne for the purpose of creating a “misunderstanding,” very common in a work of art when two characters are speaking at cross-purposes about, apparently, the same thing. Let us consider another example: the first conversation between the mayor and Khlestakov in Gogol’s *The Inspector General*.

*Mayor:* Excuse me.

*Kh.:* Oh, it’s nothing.

*Mayor:* It is my duty, as mayor of this city, to protect all passersby and highborn folk from fleecers like you . . .

*Kh. (stammering at first, then speaking loud towards the latter part of his speech):* What can I — I . . . do? . . . It’s not my fault . . . I’ll pay for it, really! I’m expecting a check from home any day now. (Bobchinsky peeps from behind the door.) It’s his fault! He is to blame! You should see the beef he’s selling, as hard as a log. And that soup of his, ugh! Who knows where he dredged it up. I dumped it out of the window. Couldn’t help it. He keeps me on the very edge of starvation for days at a time . . . And while you are at it, why not get a whiff of his — ugh! — tea. Smells more like rotten fish than tea. Why the hell should I . . . It’s unheard of!

*Mayor (timidly):* Excuse me, sir, I’m really not to blame. The beef I sell on the market is always first class, brought into town by merchants from Kholmogorsk, sober, respectable people, if ever such existed, I assure you, sir. If only I knew where he’s been picking up such . . . But if anything is amiss, sir. . . . Permit me to transfer you to other quarters.

*Kh.:* No, I won’t go! I know what you mean by “other quarters”! Prison! that’s what you mean, isn’t that right! By what right? How dare you? . . . Why, I . . . I am in the employ of . . . in Petersburg. Do you hear? (with vigor) I, I, I . . .

*Mayor (aside):* Oh, my God! He is in a rage! He’s found me out. It’s those damned busybody merchants. They must have told him everything.

*Kh. (bravely):* I won’t go! Not even if you bring the whole police force with you! I’m going straight to the top. Yes, right up to the Prime Minister! (He pounds his fist on the table) How dare you?! How dare you?!

*Mayor (trembling all over):* Have mercy, please spare me, kind sir! I have a wife and little ones . . . Don’t bring me to ruin!

*Kh.:* No, I won’t! No way! And what’s more! What do I care if you have a wife and kids. So I have to go to prison for their sake? Just splendid! (Bobchinsky, peeking through the door, hides in fear.) No, sirree! Thanks but no thanks!

*Mayor (trembling):* It’s not my fault, sir. It’s my inexperience, my God, that’s all, just plain inexperience. And, you know, I am really anything but rich. Judge for yourself: The salary of a civil servant will hardly cover tea and sugar. Well, maybe I did take some bribes, Your Excellency, but, mind you, sir, just a ruble here and there, and only once or twice, if you know what I mean . . . Just something for the table or maybe a dress or two. As for that NCO’s widow, who runs a shop . . . I assure, sir, I never, I assure you, Your Excellency, never stooped so low as to flog her, as some people have been saying. It’s slander, nothing but slander, fabricated

by scoundrels with evil in their hearts! They would stoop to anything to do me in! I assure you, Your Noble Excellency, sir! . . .

*Kh.:* So what? What does all this have to do with me? . . . (reflecting) I can’t imagine why you are dragging in these scoundrels or the widow of a noncommissioned officer. . . . The NCO’s wife is one thing, but don’t you dare try to flog me. You’ll never get away with it . . . And, besides, . . . just look here! I’ll pay the bill, I assure you, sir, I’ll get the money if it kills me, but not just now. That’s why I am sitting here, because I am broke. Really, sir. I am clean broke.

Here is another example from Griboedov’s *Woe from Wit*:

*Zagoretsky:* So Chatsky is responsible for the hubbub?

*Countess Dowager:* What? Chatsky has been horribly clubbed?

*Zagoretsky:* Went mad in the mountains from a wound in the head.

*Countess Dowager:* How is that? He wound up with a bounty on his head?

We see the same device used (with the same motivation of deafness) in Russian folk drama. However, because of the looser plot structure, this device is used there for the purpose of constructing a whole pattern of puns.

The old grave-diggers are summoned before King Maximilian:

*Max.:* Go and bring me the old grave-diggers.

*Footman:* Yes, Your Majesty, I shall go and fetch them.

(Footman and Grave-diggers)

*Footman:* Are the grave-diggers home, sir?

*1st Grave-digger:* What do you want?

*Footman:* Your presence is requested by His Majesty.

*1st Grave-digger:* By whom? His Modesty?

*Footman:* No, His Majesty!

*1st Grave-digger:* Tell him that no one is home. Today is a holiday. We are celebrating.

*Footman:* Vasily Ivanovich, His Majesty wishes to reward you for your services.

*1st Grave-digger:* Reward me for my verses? What verses?

*Footman:* No! Not verses, services!

*1st Grave-digger (to 2nd grave-digger):* Moky!

*2nd Grave-digger:* What, Patrak?

*1st Grave-digger:* Let’s go see the king.

*2nd Grave-digger:* What for?

*1st Grave-digger:* For the reward.

*2nd Grave-digger:* For what gourd? It’s winter. Where in the world will you find a gourd in winter?

*1st Grave-digger:* No, not gourd, reward!

*2nd Grave-digger:* And I thought you were talking about a gourd. If it’s reward you’ve in mind, then by all means, let’s go!

*1st Grave-digger:* Well, let’s go.

*2nd Grave-digger:* Tell me, what kind of reward?

*1st Grave-digger:* Let’s just go. I’ll tell you when we get there.

*2nd Grave-digger:* No! Tell me now!

*1st Grave-digger:* Let’s go. I’ll tell you on the way.

*2nd Grave-digger:* Absolutely not! If you won’t tell me now, I won’t go.



*1st Grave-digger:* All right. Do you remember how we distinguished ourselves in the Battle of Sevastopol?

*2nd Grave-digger:* Yes. I remember very well.

*1st Grave-digger:* Well, there you are! That's what His Majesty probably has in mind. It's probably the fortieth anniversary of the Crimean War.

*2nd Grave-digger:* I see. Well, in that case, let's get going. . . (Onchukov, *Folk Drama of the North*)

This device, canonical for folk drama, completely supplants, at times, novelistic plot structures. This subject has been analyzed by Roman Jakobson and Pyotr Bogatyrev in their studies of the Russian folk theater.

However, Sterne's own pun on death (see above) does not surprise us half so much (or does not surprise us at all) as do the father's puns. Bobby Shandy's death serves for Sterne, above all, as a motivation for development: "Will your worships give me leave to squeeze in a story between these two pages?" (351).

Sterne interposes an excerpt from a letter of condolence written by Servius Sulpicius to Cicero. Its incorporation into the text is motivated by the fact that it is delivered by Mr. Shandy himself. This is followed by a selection of anecdotes from the classics on the subject of contempt for death. It is worth noting what Sterne himself has to say concerning Mr. Shandy's eloquence:

My father was as proud of his eloquence as MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO could be for his life, and for aught I am convinced of to the contrary at present, with as much reason: it was indeed his strength—and his weakness too.—His strength—for he was by nature eloquent,—and his weakness—for he was hourly a dupe to it; and provided an occasion in life would but permit him to shew his talents, or say either a wise thing, a witty, or a shrewd one—(bating the case of a systematick misfortune)—he had all he wanted.—A blessing which tied up my father's tongue, and a misfortune which set it loose with good grace, were pretty equal: sometimes, indeed, the misfortune was the better of the two; for instance, where the pleasure of the harangue was as *ten*, and the pain of the misfortune but as *five*—my father gained half in half, and consequently was as well again off, as it never had befallen him. (352)

The difference between human (i.e., actual) "happiness" or "unhappiness" on the one hand, and "happiness" and "unhappiness" as material for art is underscored here with extraordinary clarity.

It remains for the mother to learn of her son's death. This is accomplished by having Mrs. Shandy eavesdrop by the door, as a parallel action unfolds in the kitchen. In doing this, Sterne asked himself the solemn question: How long can a poor mother stand in such an uncomfortable pose?

A conversation is taking place at this moment in the study about the son's death. This death has already become woven into the discussions concerning death in general. After the deliberations concerning the possible ways of disseminating knowledge of the classics (369), it is imperceptibly woven into Socrates' speech at his trial.

. . . though my mother was a woman of no deep reading, yet the abstract of Socrates' oration, which my father was giving my uncle Toby, was not altogether new to her.—She listened to it with composed intelligence, and would have done so to the end of the chapter, had not my father plunged (which he had no occasion to have done) into that part of the pleading where the great philosopher reckons up his connections, his alliances, and children; but renounces a security to be so won by working upon the passions of his judges.—"I have friends—I have relations,—I have three desolate children,"—says Socrates.—

—Then, cried my mother, opening the door,—you have one more, Mr. Shandy, than I know of.

By heaven! I have one less,—said my father, getting up and walking out of the room. (370)

A very important source for development in Sterne is represented by erotic enstrangement, taking the form, for the most part, of euphemisms. I have already discussed this phenomenon in chapter 1. In Sterne we encounter an extraordinary variety of such cases of erotic enstrangement. There are numerous examples to draw from. Here are a few of them.

Let us begin with the identification of types of character:

I am not ignorant that the Italians pretend to a mathematical exactness in their designations of one particular sort of character among them, from the *forte* or *piano* of a certain wind instrument they use,—which they say is infallible.—I dare not mention the name of the instrument in this place;—'tis sufficient we have it amongst us,—but never think of making a drawing by it;—this is ænigmatical, and intended to be so, at least, *ad populum*:—And therefore I beg, Madam, when you come here, that you read on as fast as you can, and never stop to make any inquiry about it. (75-76)

Or, for example:

Now whether it was physically impossible, with half a dozen hands all thrust into the napkin at a time—but that some one chestnut, of more life and rotundity than the rest, must be put in motion—it so fell out, however, that one was actually sent rolling off the table; and as Phutatorius sat straddling under—it fell perpendicularly into that particular aperture of Phutatorius's breeches, for which, to the shame and indelicacy of our language be it spoke, there is no chaste word throughout all Johnson's dictionary—let it suffice to say—it was that particular aperture, which in all good societies, the laws of decorum do strictly require, like the temple of Janus (in peace at least) to be universally shut up. (320)

Very typical of this erotic enstrangement and the play provoked by it are two episodes in *Tristram Shandy* that very much resemble each other. Yet, while one episode is really no more than an episode, the other is developed into a plot line and forms one of the criss-crossing plot lines of the novel.

Chief among these plot lines is Uncle Toby's wound. Uncle Toby had suffered a severe wound in the groin. He is being wooed by a widow, who would very much like to know whether or not he had in fact been castrated by that wound. Yet, at this time she cannot bring herself to ask the fateful question. This greatly complicates the novel: