

1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era

Volume 23

Article 8

2016

TURNING ROUND OR STANDING STILL Movement and Stasis in Defoe, Pope, and Sterne

Allan Ingram

Hélène Dachez

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/sixteenfifty>



Part of the [Aesthetics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Allan Ingram and Hélène Dachez (2016) "TURNING ROUND OR STANDING STILL Movement and Stasis in Defoe, Pope, and Sterne," *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era*: Vol. 23, Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/sixteenfifty/vol23/iss1/8>

TURNING ROUND OR STANDING STILL

Movement and Stasis in Defoe, Pope, and Sterne

ALLAN INGRAM AND HÉLÈNE DACHEZ

*I*t happen'd one Day about Noon going towards my Boat," wrote Defoe in around 1719, or wrote fictitious Robinson Crusoe concerning the fictitious 1680s, "I was exceedingly surpriz'd with the Print of a Man's naked Foot on the Shore, which was very plain to be seen in the Sand."¹ The effect on Crusoe, after some eighteen years of solitude, with no human movement, or evidence of it, but his own, is electric. He continues:

¹ Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Michael Shinagel (New York: Norton, 1994), 112.

I stood like one Thunder-struck, or as if I had seen an Apparition; I listen'd, I look'd round me, I could hear nothing, nor see any Thing; I went up to a rising Ground to look farther; I went up the Shore and down the Shore, but it was all one. I could see no other Impression but that one, I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my Fancy; but there was no Room for that, for there was exactly the very Print of a Foot, Toes, Heel, and every part of a Foot. (112)

There, impressed in the sand, is the very basis of human movement, bones, joints, tendons, all present in replication, all as suggestive of motion as at the moment the footprint was formed, and yet static. The movement has gone by. No image carries its passing with it as strongly as a footprint. No image remains so invested with the energies and intentions that made it. It is both a memorial to a will that was at a single place at a single moment, and at the same time a reminder of the lingering frailty of human activity, biding a while before the sea takes it. Movement has become stasis: silent, enigmatic, promising so much, seeming to reveal all of itself, yet profoundly self-contained, apparently offering an answer to something, but in fact leaving us unsure even of what the question was.

Crusoe's own first impulse is itself one of stasis. He stands as if "Thunder-struck." He listens and looks. But his stasis rapidly becomes in its turn movement as he goes to rising ground, goes up the shore and down the shore, then returns to the print. His mental agitation is enacted in his physical motion. As he returns to his "Castle" (112), moreover, the still image of the footprint goes with him, impressing itself as the turning point around which his whole island universe now revolves:

After innumerable fluttering Thoughts, like a Man perfectly confus'd and out of my self, I came Home to my Fortification, not feeling, as we say, the Ground I went on, but terrify'd to the last Degree, looking behind me at every two or three Steps, mistaking every Bush and Tree, and fancying every Stump at a Distance to be a Man; nor is it possible to describe how many various Shapes affrighted Imagination represented Things to me in, how many wild Ideas were found every Moment in my Fancy, and what strange unaccountable Whimsies came into my Thoughts by the Way. (112)

Crusoe's world, suddenly, has closed in upon him. His own movement that until now had been unself-conscious, innocent, free flowing, subject to the passing moment, has become fearful, guiltily aware, self-observed, predetermined by the awful knowledge of that still image there on the shore. He, now, is the orbiter, circling in his mind the fixed obsession that is the print, or even the vacancy, left by a man's naked foot.

Defoe, then, has identified a crucial figure, in that movement is constructed in relation to stillness, is begotten by it and is even implicit within what could as easily have been its opposite: the footprint suggests the movement of its making, and in doing so is instrumental in producing intense movement, both psychological and physical, in Crusoe. Crusoe's entire sense of himself is radically changed and he goes from a thing of unself-conscious routine to one of frantic, unpredictable movement.

Yet a reversal of this pattern can also be found, as in Pope's *Windsor Forest*.² The still point of Pope's turning world comes at what, in the original 1704 version of the poem, was the resolution, the celebration of individual and national contentment after the moving pattern of seasons, of history, of change that constitutes the previous two hundred lines. Passing time brings Pope to the picture of the truly happy man:

Happy next him who to these Shades retires,
Whom Nature charms, and whom the Muse inspires,
Whom humbler Joys of home-felt Quiet please,
Successive Study, Exercise and Ease.
He gathers Health from Herbs the Forest yields,
And of their fragrant Physic spoils the Fields:
With Chymic Art exalts the Min'ral Pow'rs,
And draws the Aromatick Souls of Flowers.
Now marks the Course of rolling Orbs on high;
O'er figur'd Worlds now travels with his Eye.
Of ancient Writ unlocks the learned Store,
Consults the Dead, and lives past Ages o'er. (237-48)

The truly happy man (and the portrait, of course, is that of Pope's old friend and mentor Sir William Trumbull) is one for whom movement is constrained to the perfect location, both in place and in state of mind, and whose physical

² Alexander Pope, *Windsor Forest*, ed. John Butt, *The Poems of Alexander Pope* (London: Methuen, 1963), 195-210.

stasis allows him equally perfect freedom to rove in fields of knowledge and insight, at peace with his kind, his history, his maker and himself—"T'observe a Mean, be to himself a Friend, / To follow Nature, and regard his End" (251-52), as Pope adds. In the full 1714 version of the poem, moreover, this rendering of the classical ideal finds itself at the very center of the poem, no longer a concluding hymn to contentment but itself the still point at the heart, that to which previous and subsequent movement relates and returns. Stasis, in *Windsor Forest*, is a version of restored innocence, a condition that is attainable only after the cessation of movement.

Innocent movement, movement that is contentedly unaware of self-awareness, such as Crusoe had once enjoyed and as the happy man enjoys in the restrictedness of his physical space, becomes, at the end of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, a model of a more personal kind, while nevertheless remaining a construction of stasis within wider movement.³ Pope's father, as depicted there, is himself a pattern of the limitations enjoyed by the blest, limitations that arise from being exempt from the worldly.

Born to no Pride, inheriting no Strife,
Nor marrying Discord in a Noble Wife,
Stranger to Civil and Religious Rage,
The good Man walk'd innoxious thro' his Age. (392-95)

Failure to engage with the world can be a special kind of stasis, one in which a privileged few are enabled to recover those "Groves of *Eden*, vanish'd now so long" (7) that Pope cites at the opening to *Windsor Forest*. So, of his father:

No Courts he saw, no Suits would ever try,
Nor dar'd an Oath, nor hazarded a Lye:
Un-learn'd, he knew no Schoolman's subtle Art,
No Language, but the Language of the Heart. (396-99)

Yet movement that is contented through unawareness, through mental serenity, is not always innocent in Pope. Pope's father, in fact, represents a rare exception. Elsewhere in *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, the figure of stasis amidst movement is that of Codrus, the very type of ignorant foolishness:

³ Alexander Pope, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, ed. John Butt, *The Poems of Alexander Pope* (London: Methuen, 1963), 597-612.

Let Peals of Laughter, *Codrus!* round thee break,
Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty Crack.
Pit, Box and Gallery in convulsions hurl'd,
Thou stand'st unshook amidst a bursting world. (85–88)

Serenity can also be vacancy, stasis incorrigible folly. The world is not so straightforward as *Windsor Forest* would have it, and for every legitimately happy man there are a hundred fools, stupidly still while mankind laughs and moves on.

Or as the reader laughs and mankind—or the character—moves on, or moves about—or stands still. In *Tristram Shandy*, the pattern according to which elements revolve around an axis creates a type of comedy hinging on motion and commotion—a fact the Abbess of Andoüillet and her novice Margarita become painfully aware of.⁴ The journey to Bourbon is organized to fight against threatening stasis: the Abbess suffers from “*Anchylosis* or stiff joint” (7.21, 404), because of which she can hardly move. Although the episode should emphasize movement, the characters are plagued with stasis. The gardener, who has become muleteer for the occasion and exchanged the restricted space of the abbey garden for the open space of the road, stops at an inn after giving “the mules . . . a sound lash . . . as much as to say to [them] . . . ‘get on’” (7.21, 406). He soon forgets the two women on the road, his mind moving along totally different lines. Once the mules understand no one is there to goad them onward, they decide to stand still, and to ignore the agitation around them and the two sinful words the women utter by halves to make them less reprehensible:

Abbess, Bou—bou—bou—
Margarita, —ger,—ger,—ger

Margarita, Fou—fou—fou
Abbess, —ter,—ter,—ter. (7.25, 409)

The only effect those words have on the animals is to make a very negligible part of them—their tails—move, and the narrator comically says: “it went no further” (7.25, 409). And yet, during this standstill, as if to prove that stasis for some also means and cannot but go hand in hand with movement

⁴ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinion of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. Ian Campbell Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

for others, the narrator has moved on his journey. Leaving the two women forever stuck with the mules that will not take a step in any direction, he boasts to the lady reader:

WHAT a tract of country have I run!—how many degrees nearer to the warm sun am I advanced, and how many fair and goodly cities have I seen, during the time you have been, and reflecting, Madam, upon this story! There's FONTAINEBLEAU, and SENS, and JOIGNY, and AUXERRE, and DIJON . . . and CHALLON, and Mâcon . . . and a score more upon the road to LYONS.

(7.26, 409)

The pattern is repeated in Slawkenbergius's tale, where the stranger's incredible—and perhaps fake—nose, is at the center not only of the character's face, but also of the general commotion that comes to take place in Strasburg, as well as at the center of the various hypotheses put forward to explain if and how such an organ can possibly exist. The very slow pace at which the stranger rides through the city is set in sharp contrast with the general agitation all Strasburgers come to experience as a result of his passage: "the city was like a swarm of bees—men, women, and children . . . flying here and there—in at one door, out at another—this way and that way—long ways and cross ways—up one street, down another street—in at this ally, out at that" (4.202). Even when motion and commotion decrease at night, the abbess of *Quedlingberg* and the four dignitaries of her chapter are unable to find peace, so much so, that "there was no keeping a limb still among them—in short, they got up like so many ghosts" (4.203). As for the nuns in the "penitentiaries of the third order of saint Francis," they "were still in a worse condition than the abbess of *Quedlingberg*—by tumbling and tossing, and tossing and tumbling from one side of their beds to the other the whole night long" (4.203)—the height of motion in an extremely restricted space. Extreme motion and agitation, as well as all the hypotheses the nose has given rise to, however, end up in "rest and quietness" (4.213), as the road taken by the Strasburgers to meet the stranger on his return journey and the actual road he has taken, across the Pyrenees towards Valadolid, never cross again, thereby making the Strasburgers' motion vain. As a consequence, at the end of the story the Strasburgers, like Pope's Codrus, remain stupidly still, as the reader laughs at them while the stranger moves on as slowly and peacefully as he came.

Compared to mules and horses, man, according to Walter Shandy, is "of all others the most curious vehicle" (4.8, 223), capable of moving and

being static, or even of being statically moving and movingly static. In particularly important scenes Sterne freezes the movements made by his puppet-like characters, so that their very actions become static, at the same time as he heightens the suspense of the scenes. As she is gingerly walking along the corridor, Mrs. Shandy hears Toby say to her husband the word "wife" (5.5, 286). Because she thinks she is the subject of their conversation, she decides to eavesdrop on them through the door standing ajar, and is described by Tristram with "the edge of her finger across her two lips—holding her breath, and bending her head a little downwards, with a twist of her neck" (5.5, 286–87). Seven chapters elapse before Tristram, "determined to let her stand [in this attitude] for five minutes" (5.5, 287), frees his mother from this frozen—and most uncomfortable—position by allowing her to open the door of the parlor and talk to her husband (5.13, 297). Later on, it is a locked door that separates widow Wadman from Toby, when he comes to her house to confess to her that the love attacks she has been carrying out have finally hit their target. In a mirror-like frozen position, Tristram describes Toby and Bridget standing motionless, right after having moved and right before moving again, on each side of a door, capable of moving on its hinges to let Toby in or of remaining closed. "He stood with the rapper of the door suspended for a full minute in his hand, he scarce knew why. Bridget stood perdue within, with her finger and her thumb upon the latch, benumb'd with expectation" (9.16, 510). Widow Wadman is also part of the frozen motion picture, where everything and everyone is held in suspense, since she "sat breathless behind the window-curtain of her bed-chamber" (9.16, 510). The door opens and Toby confesses his love a few moments later, launching the novel on the track of a fresh injection of sentimentalism.

Sentimental and sympathetic feelings may be defined as the result of a movement toward the other, be he a man or an animal.⁵ Feelings go from widow Wadman to Toby and back, and it is no wonder their "amours" should be expressed through physical movement: "the first moment Widow Wadman saw him, she felt something stirring within her in his favor—Something!—something!" (8.6, 438–39). What matters most is not what is felt but the very arousal of feelings. Toby's eye and then his heart are the targets of the widow's shafts, and the feelings come to circulate through his whole being.⁶

⁵ See the scene where Tristram takes pity on an ass, standing motionless on the road and preventing him from moving on, to whom he gives a macaroon (7.31, 419–20).

⁶ "The heart is tender," Tristram adds, "and the passions in these tides ebb and flow ten times a minute" (8.11, 443).

A still more physical motion is at the core of Trim's discovery of love for the Beguine that nurses him back to health when his knee is wounded at the battle of Landen. It is precisely when the woman strokes and rubs the wounded part—and, one is tempted to say, by the very movement itself—that Trim becomes aware of his feelings for her, and the corporal, unable to move freely and confined to the room in an inn that has been turned into a sick room, experiences the same feelings as Toby does, a prelude, no doubt, for yet another type of physical motion.

I perceived, then, I was beginning to be in love—As she continued rub-rub-rubbing—I felt it spread from under her hand . . . to every part of my frame. The more she rubb'd, and the longer strokes she took—the more the fire kindled in my veins—till at length, by two or three strokes longer than the rest—my passion rose to the highest pitch—I seiz'd her hand— (8.22, 463)

Stasis, however, wins the day in *Le Fever's* story, narrated by Trim, and then by Tristram. Unable to move, the lieutenant is lying in an inn room, waiting for death to come. His end is announced through the negation of motion by Trim in a dialogue he has with Toby, who believes against all odds that a recovery is still possible:

But alas! said the corporal,——the lieutenant's last day's march is over. . . . —In a fortnight or three weeks, added my uncle *Toby*, smiling,——he might march.——He will never march . . . in this world, said the corporal:——He will march; said my uncle *Toby* . . . —An' please your honour, said the corporal, he will never march, but to his grave:——He shall march, cried my uncle *Toby* . . . —He shall march to his regiment.——He cannot stand it, said the corporal. (8.6, 341)

Le Fever's deathbed scene moves along the same line, and the text renders the character's death in quasi physical terms, as a fight fought by motion and stasis, and won by the latter: "Nature's instantly ebb'd again,——the film returned to its place,——the pulse fluttered——stopp'd——went on——throb'd——stopp'd again——moved——stopp'd——shall I go on?——No" (6.10, 343). To signify that the character's life is spent, everything around the lieutenant stands still or stops its course, even inanimate objects: "hardly could the wheel at the cistern turn round its circle" (6.10, 342).

If Toby here is an innocent character, convinced that sincerity of emotion can halt the inexorable movement of death—not only a failure to engage with the world, but to engage with the inevitabilities of life itself—it is, of course, in keeping with the naivete of the narrator himself, or perhaps his naive sophistication, for ever determined to keep a hold on the multiplying complexity of his narrative and increasingly incapable of doing so. Tristram's description of himself "and here am I sitting, this 12th day of August, 1766, in a purple jerkin and yellow pair of slippers, without either wig or cap on" (9.1, 486)—belies, and hopelessly so, the vast construction of movements, countermovements, promises, crosscurrents and undercurrents that his undertaking involves, an innocence in the face of an expanding universe to match Crusoe's comfortable solitude, or Pope's father's linguistic purity, or even Toby's own simplicity of heart.

In the world Tristram creates, the characters are more often than not on the move and most of them are seen traveling, albeit at different paces. Tristram tells the reader "I keep a couple of pads myself, upon which, in their turns . . . I frequently ride out and take the air;—though sometimes . . . I take somewhat longer journies than what a wise man would think altogether right" (1.8, 13). Yorick is first encountered by the reader riding his horse and their two bodies are so similar that the narrator compares them to a centaur (1.10, 17). Mrs. Shandy is described traveling to and then from London, on the occasion of her false pregnancy (1.15–16, 36–37), and the stranger in Slawkenbergius's tale is never seen dismounted (4.196–217).⁷

This textual world of movement adopts the same pace as that of the travelers dealt with. Yorick's slow pace enables him to pore over matters quite peacefully. "As his movement was not of the quickest," Tristram says, "he had generally time enough upon his hands to make his observations . . . [as] brisk trotting and slow argumentation . . . were two incompatible movements" (1.10, 17–18). Similarly, the pace of the narration slackens in the chapter where Tristram is ingenuous enough or cunning enough to ask the reader "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

⁷ Julia McMaster underscores "the prominence of all those horses, hobby-horses, asses, mules, donkeys, jackasses, and jennys that cavort their quadruped way through *Tristram Shandy*" (Julia McMaster, "'Uncrystallized Flesh and Blood': The Body in *Tristram Shandy*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 2 [1990]: 197–214), 209.

be as many chapters as steps" (4.10, 225). For Tristram, writing is akin to riding and moving and the different threads of the text are so many roads that fork off or intersect.⁸ Neither the narrator nor the reader knows what he is about to come across along the way, which is regularly anything but straight, or regular. The text follows several tracks, sometimes at the same time, sometimes at different times, and textual movements are as unexpected as the physical movements of the characters the only certainty being that the narrator is sitting:

When a man sits down to write a history . . . he knows no more than his heels what lets or confounded hindrances he is to meet with in his way,—or what a dance he may be led, by one excursion or another, before all is over. . . . If he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. He will have views and prospects to himself perpetually solliciting his eye, which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly. (1.14, 32)

Concomitant motions sometimes end up in collision, as Dr. Slop's and Obadiah's case bears witness to. Obadiah collects Dr. Slop much before he reckoned he would, when the two characters' paths cross as unexpectedly as violently. Before describing the collision, the narrator asks the reader to imagine Dr. Slop "coming slowly along, foot by foot, waddling thro' the dirt upon the vertebrae of a little diminutive pony,—of a pretty colour;—but of strength,—alack!—scarce able to have made an amble of it," and "*Obadiah* mounted upon a strong monster of a coach-horse, prick'd into a full gallop, and making all practicable speed the adverse way" (2.9, 85). As a result of the shock, straight movements become circular, until stasis sets in:

the MOMENTUM of the coach-horse was so great, that *Obadiah* . . . rode in a circle three times round Dr. *Slop* . . . and at last, when he did stop his beast, 'twas done with such an explosion of mud, that *Obadiah* had better have been a league off. In short, never was

⁸ Tristram explains the process—original compared to that of other travel writers—whereby writing and riding merge: "if we may judge from what has been wrote of these things, by all who have *wrote and gallop'd*—or who have *gallop'd and wrote* . . . or who for more expedition than the rest, have *wrote-gallopping*, which is the way I do at present" (7.4, 387–88).

a Dr. *Slop* so beluted, and so transsubstantiated, since that affair came into fashion. (2.9, 86)

In Volume 7, where Tristram narrates his journey to France in an attempt to flee death, the different roads he simultaneously follows meet and the movements accomplished at totally different times become superimposed. As he explains,

I have brought myself into such a situation, as no traveller ever stood before me; for I am at this moment walking across the market-place of Auxerre with my father and my uncle Toby . . . and I am this moment also entering Lyons with my post-chaise broke into a thousand pieces—and I am moreover this moment in a handsome pavillion. . . upon the banks of the Garonne. . . —Let me collect myself, and pursue my journey. (7.28, 414)

If Tristram fails to “collect” himself, motion, life and the creative process are in danger of stopping short. Tristram, as well as most characters in Sterne’s novel, is threatened by the interruption of movement. Mrs Shandy’s initial question to Walter, “*Pray, my dear . . . have you not forgot to wind up the clock?*” (1.1, 5) meant at first to preclude stasis (that is, to keep the clock working and its hands moving) has an ironical, or perhaps tragical, consequence. Because of it, Walter’s activities are interrupted, and procreation—jeopardized from December to May by Walter’s sciatica, which itself prevents movement (1.4, 9)—is further endangered. Tristram is significantly called “child of . . . interruption” (4.19, 236). The effect of Mrs. Shandy’s highly unseasonable question is devastating indeed: “it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits, whose business it was to have escorted and gone hand-in-hand with the *HOMUNCULUS*, and conducted him safe to the place destined for its reception” (1.2, 6).⁹ Stasis and death are deeply suggested by Yorick and his exceedingly lean horse, chosen by his master to meditate more conveniently upon passing time and the vanity of the world, “with the advantage of a

⁹ Later, Walter Shandy laments that “the few animal spirits I was worth in the world, and with which memory, fancy, and quick parts should have been convey’d,—were all dispersed, confused, confounded, scattered, and sent to the devil” (4.19, 236). Widow Wadman also is very worried about the cessation of movement and procreation. Like Walter Shandy, her late husband was plagued with sciatica, and some of the questions she asks about Toby’s groin wound express her anguish: “—Was it more tolerable in bed? . . . —Was he able to mount a horse? / Was motion bad for it?” (9.26, 528–29).

death's head before him" (1.10, 18). The man and his mount are described in terms evocative of the grim reaper, and the effect of their passage is particularly arresting: "he could never enter a village, but he caught the attention of both old and young.—Labour stood still as he pass'd,—the bucket hung suspended in the middle of the well,—the spinning-wheel forgot its round,—even the chuck-farthing and shuffle-caps themselves stood gaping till he got out of sight" (1.10, 17).¹⁰

If stasis means death, movement means life and vitality.¹¹ Tristram spends most of Volume 7, where motion accelerates more than in any other volume, trying to escape Death both literally and figuratively so. The character is set in motion by the knocking of Death at his door, and the extreme speed with which he embarks upon a boat bound for France shows how urgent his flight is: "I will lead him a dance he little thinks of—" he announces, "for I will galop . . . without looking once behind me . . . and if I hear him clattering at my heels—I'll scamper away to mount Vesuvius—from thence to Joppa, and from Joppa to the world's end, where, if he follows me, I pray God he may break his neck—" (7.1, 386). Until Tristram finally wins this race with and against Death, he keeps moving at neck-breaking and breathtaking speed: "off I went like a cannon. . . . I ship'd into the boat . . . and scudded away like the wind," (7.1, 386) "I'm pursued myself like a hundred devils" (7.7, 391), "making all possible speed" (7.15, 397), "I must away" (7.19, 403), "my wild way of running on" (7.31, 418). Only when he is sure Death will not catch up with him does Tristram, who has been traveling straight forward for the first time since he started writing, allow himself a fresh spell of winding movements, which take him to a field where peasants are dancing their time away in a "ring of pleasure" (7. 43, 431) after their day's labor. K. E. Smith significantly analyzes the dance as "the very apotheosis of life . . . a commitment to life, an act of writing which will energeise Tristram and enable him to continue writing of Uncle Toby's amours . . . [as well as] a resurrection from the dead."¹²

¹⁰ The analogy between Yorick and the grim reaper is put forward by Duncan Patrick, "Character and Chronology in *Tristram Shandy*: Four Papers on a Chronological Table," *The Shandean* 14 (2003): 38–68, 50–51.

¹¹ To Bishop Hall, who tells him "so much motion . . . is so much unquietness; and so much of rest, by the same analogy, is so much of heaven," Tristram answers "I . . . think differently; and that so much of motion, is so much of life, and so much of joy—and that to stand still, or rather to get on but slowly, is death and the devil—" (7. 13, 396).

¹² K. E. Smith, "Ordering Things in France: The Travels of Sterne, Tristram and Yorick," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 292 (1991): 15–25, 21–22.

Motion and the moving text, hinging on circular, crisscrossing and digressive movements, rescue the already dead characters from oblivion, endowing them with movement, as if they were still alive, or alive again.¹³ "I can fancy, an' please your honour, I see him this moment . . . passing jollily along the street, swinging his stick, with a smile and a chearful word for everybody he met" (9.5, 492), Trim says about his deceased brother Tom. Although, or perhaps because, all the characters Tristram deals with are dead when he starts writing his life and opinions, he chooses, in order to characterize them and make them live again, to concentrate on their respective "hobby-horses," where all types of motion—physical, moral, mental, sentimental, and aesthetic—meet. Tristram's obvious "hobby-horse," which he defines as "the sporting filly-folly which carries you out for the present hour . . . which a man makes a shift to get a stride on, to canter it away from the cares and solitudes of life" (8.31, 471), is obviously *Tristram Shandy*, a moving creation based on motion, which enables him to counteract death and re-create life.¹⁴

Death, for Pope's happy man, is an easy passing, not specifically in *Windsor Forest* but certainly in *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. "His Life," says Pope of his father,

tho' long, to sickness past unknown,
His Death was instant, and without a groan. (402-3)

No posting between Vesuvius and Joppa here: the truly innocent man is also innocent of death. It is the poet, rather, who, like Tristram, has his own end in mind at the end of his own poem. The wish is to encounter death as his father does:

Oh grant me thus to live, and thus to die!
Who sprung from Kings shall know less joy than I. (404-5)

¹³ Robert L. Chibka points out that Tristram's "book retrieves remembered friends from the grave, mourns their vitality, and finds in them images of his own end" (Robert L. Chibka, "The Hobby-Horse's Epitaph: *Tristram Shandy*, *Hamlet*, and the Vehicles of Memory," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 3 [1991]: 125-51), 132.

¹⁴ As Melvyn New remarks, "as a writer, Tristram never really dismounts; he becomes one with his hobby-horse" (Melvyn New, *Laurence Sterne as Satirist: A Reading of Tristram Shandy* [Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1969]), 95-96. One cannot but think of one of Tristram's comments: "I shall continue [writing and publishing two volumes of my life every year] . . . as long as I live." (1.14, 33)

The *Epistle to Arbuthnot* is not a tranquil poem. It is full of activity, anger, mental torment and physical movement. From the moment that "John" is instructed to "shut the door" (1) and "Tye up the knocker" (2) the poet is preoccupied with intrusions, old scores and new scores, those who hate him and those whom he hates, or plans to hate. Pope's writing might end with death but its impetus, like Sterne's text, is with the living. If Crusoe can date his lost peace of mind from the moment he sees the footprint, Pope's declared intention to shut out the world is the signal for the increased agitation in which the example of his father, living and dying, represents a forlorn and hopeless aspiration for him. Movement and stasis, like life and death, are in uneasy and ambiguous relation to each other. Like the foot and its print, the evidence is enigmatic. In their respective dilemmas, and in their different ways, Crusoe and Tristram, Defoe, Pope and Sterne, are themselves rather like Mrs. Shandy: "she went out of the world at last without knowing whether it turned *round*, or stood *still*" (6.39, 378).