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# Yorick's Sentimental Journey Continued

## A Reconsideration of the Authorship

*Lodwick Hartley*

*A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* by Mr. Yorick came out under the imprint of T. Becket and P. A. DeHondt, in February 1768, a month before the death of the author, Laurence Sterne. Slightly over a year later an edition in four volumes with a continuation "By Eugenius" as Volumes III and IV appeared—presumably from the bookshop of Samuel Bladon of Paternoster Row, though no publisher or bookseller was anywhere indicated.<sup>1</sup> This work has traditionally been assigned to John Hall-Stevenson (1718–85), a Yorkshire gentleman who had been a college mate of Laurence Sterne at Cambridge, who had grown into one of the novelist's warmest friends, and who had been immortalized in *Tristram Shandy* as the discreet counselor of the eponymous hero.

*The author of two books on Sterne, including the standard biography, MR. HARTLEY, head of the English Department at North Carolina State University at Raleigh, is a frequent contributor to scholarly journals. He has published essays not only on such eighteenth-century writers as Cowper and Sterne but also on Shakespeare, Poe, and Katherine Anne Porter.*

<sup>1</sup> *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy. By Mr. Yorick.* London [Samuel Bladon], 1769. Vols. III–IV, *Yorick's Sentimental Journey Continued . . . By Eugenius.* Other editions: London, printed for P. Miller and J. White, 1774; London, 1775; London, 1782; London, printed for T. Osborne, 1784; London, 1784; London, 1790; London, 1791; London, 1792; Basle, 1792; London, 1794; New York, 1795; Vienna, R. Sammer, 1725, 2d ed., 1798; London, 1796; Basle, 1800; London, printed at the Minerva Press for A. K. Newman, 1813; pub. separately, London, The Georgian Society, 1902. The ascription to Bladon is made in three brief reviews, as follows: *London Magazine*, 38 (Jan. 1769), 323–25; *Monthly Review*, 40 (May 1769), 428; *Critical Review*, 27 (May 1769), 390. In the same issue of the *London Magazine* is a review (pp. 325–26) of another Sternean imitation ascribed to Bladon: *A Four Days Tour Through Part of the Land of Dumpling. By Peregrine Post.* As late as 1783 the same bookseller was still bringing out such imitations, as two editions of Leonard MacNally, *Tristram Shandy, A Sentimental, Shandean Bagatelle, in Two Acts* in that year suggest. I have cited from the Georgian Society edition of *YSJC*.

The relatively pallid characterization allowed Hall-Stevenson in the novel is in delightfully ironic contrast to the colorful legend that he created for himself, first as the eccentric *doyen* of a loosely organized and relatively innocuous Hell-Fire Club called the Demoniacs—a group of Yorkshire parsons, military men, squires, and schoolmasters who met at irregular intervals at Hall-Stevenson's ruinous Skelton or "Crazy" Castle near Guisborough in Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>—and second as a hypochondriac recluse, immured in his musty library among his curious and erotic books.<sup>3</sup> His published works like *Crazy Tales* (1762) and *Makarony Fables* (1768)—not to mention various other collections of fables, fabliaux, and imitations, often with the intention of political satire—nourished the legend. Some refutation of it, however, is plainly evidenced in the actual record of Hall-Stevenson's travels on the Continent, of his appearance at the York races, of his visits to fashionable watering places like Harrogate and Scarborough (though ostensibly for his health), of his visits to and residences in London, of his activities as friend and satellite of the famous and notorious John Wilkes, and even in the proliferation of his publications themselves. The frequently puerile obscenities in his published works, together with his unflagging attempt in them to suggest that his friend Sterne was not less pornographic and scatological than he, created any other impression than that he was discreet.

So clear in *Tristram Shandy* is the relationship between Tristram and Eugenius—Sterne and Hall-Stevenson—that for over two centuries it has been impossible to conceive of the name of Eugenius as being attached to anyone else but Hall-Stevenson, whatever the circumstances. When Death knocked at Tristram's door, was he not interrupted in the midst of telling such a tawdry story to Eugenius as he might have been assigned in Hall-Stevenson's *Crazy Tales*? And did he not later tell Eugenius, "I have forty volumes to write, and forty thousand things to say and do, which nobody in the world

<sup>2</sup> Aside from the informative entry by Sir Sidney Lee in the *DNB*, biographical details about Hall-Stevenson will be found in all biographies of Sterne and passim in Lewis Perry Curtis's edition of Sterne's *Letters* (New Haven, 1935). See also Louis C. Jones, *The Clubs of the Augustan Rakes* (New York, 1942), pp. 155–65. My own detailed study of the literary career of Hall-Stevenson will appear in the May, 1971, issue of *PMLA*.

<sup>3</sup> See my own, "From Crazy Castle to the House of Usher," *Studies in Short Fiction*, 2 (1965), 256–61.

will say and do for me except thyself”?<sup>4</sup> Thus in the continuation of the *Journey*, was not Eugenius, who could be none other than Hall-Stevenson, merely executing a commission of his dead friend? It all seems so simple as to make any questioning of the authorship of the continuation sound fatuous. But only those who have not read the imitation carefully, or looked at its bibliographical history, can be free from some skepticism. In 1950 Professor Karl F. Thompson questioned the attribution on purely bibliographical grounds. There were, Thompson demonstrated, two distinct textual traditions: one for the “authorized” editions of *A Sentimental Journey*, based on the edition of 1768 printed for well-known booksellers in an attractive format, and another for editions deriving from the version of 1769 *with* the continuation, issued at the outset without indication of printer or bookseller in a different format, with cheaper paper and cruder illustrations.<sup>5</sup>

Without categorically rejecting the assumption that Hall-Stevenson might, indeed, have been the author, Thompson argued that the continuation, largely re-narrating the events and scenes of the *Journey*—the chief differences being expansion, often inept, of episodes contained in the original—might easily have been the work of any reasonably competent hack. An oversupply of Sternean imitators, with only such prominent ones as William Combe and Richard Griffith identifiable, argues that such a hack could with little difficulty have been employed by any bookseller willing to trade on Hall-Stevenson’s reputation for salacious verse and trusting in the inevitable tendency of the public to identify the author of the continuation with him.

It should be admitted that Hall-Stevenson’s announced passion for getting into print on almost any terms renders the purely bibliographical argument against his authorship weaker than it might otherwise be. His attempt as “Anthony Shandy” to ride to fame in the wake of his “cousin” Tristram at first netted him Sterne’s own publisher, Dodsley; and he seemed able to move to Becket when Sterne made the change, though *Crazy Tales* does not actually bear Becket’s name on the title page. Moreover, other publications

<sup>4</sup> Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, ed. James A. Work (New York, 1940), p. 480.

<sup>5</sup> “The Authorship of ‘Yorick’s Sentimental Journey Continued,’” *Notes and Queries*, 195 (22 July 1950), 318–19.

of his were issued under the imprint of such familiar booksellers as Hinxman and Almon; and he plainly was able to return to Dodsley and Becket for his last books in 1780 and 1783, respectively. A number of his minor pieces, it is true, bore no indication of printer or bookseller. So far, however, as any record indicates, Hall-Stevenson had no dealings with Bladon, the presumed publisher of the continuation.

One might also observe at this point that, although the identification of Eugenius with Hall-Stevenson might have been made perfectly clear in Sterne's own writing, Hall-Stevenson (when he was not assuming a different pseudonym for purposes other than trading on his relationship with Sterne) preferred posing as Anthony Shandy, an author in his own right, rather than as Eugenius, a character in the novel.

The bibliographical evidence against Hall-Stevenson's authorship would, of course, be stronger if it could find support elsewhere. Such evidence is available. First, however, let us consider some circumstances that may at first seem to argue neither on one side or the other.

Early in 1768, the year of Sterne's death, Hall-Stevenson had published *Makarony Fables*, a small collection of imitations of La Fontaine mainly written for purposes of political satire. In the fables Hall-Stevenson continues his earlier partisanship to the cause of Wilkes, attacking a number of political, semipolitical, and literary figures, including Lord Bute, Dr. William Warburton, and Samuel Johnson, and maintaining a pose (borrowed from the late Charles Churchill) as the scourge of politicians in general. Incidentally, in a fable called "The Blackbird," Sterne is introduced in a typical Hall-Stevensonian attempt to connect him with the kind of anti-Catholicism and diabolism most notoriously found in the Medmenham Brotherhood led by Sir Francis Dashwood. For Sterne's alleged sacrilege, Hall-Stevenson gives the usual excuse of the Georgian rakes—namely, that of attacking religious hypocrisy.

Also in the same year, Hall-Stevenson published *A Sentimental Dialogue Between Two Souls in the Palpable Bodies of an English Lady of Quality and an Irish Gentleman*.<sup>6</sup> This curious work is set

<sup>6</sup> John Hall-Stevenson, *Works* (London: Printed by J. Nichols for J. Debrett [etc.], 1795), II, 241–65.

forth as a fragment of a continuation of *Tristram Shandy* and is designed ostensibly as Chapter xiii of Volume XII in which “Tristram Shandy presents his compliments to the Gentlemen of Ireland, and begs acceptance of a Sentimental Offering, as an acknowledgment due to the Country where he was born.” In this connection, *sentimental* (as I have indicated elsewhere) seems to have little relationship to that elevation of sensibility for which Sterne had become famous. In fact, the whole dialogue from the introduction to the “translated” poem, designed to give focus to the fragment, is about coition and sexual prowess—in some contrast to Tristram’s concern with impotence in the novel. References to the Widow Wadman and to Uncle Toby were inserted to give an air of authenticity. But bristling as it is with double-entendres and bawdy bilingual puns, its resemblance to Sterne’s style is superficial at best. In short, it is a sorry job; and though it might suggest a possible link with a continuation of *A Sentimental Journey*, an argument that Hall-Stevenson moved from an attempted continuation of *Tristram Shandy* to a stylistically easier imitation in a continuation of the *Journey* would not be at all points compelling.

If, as accords with the *Public Advertiser* indicated, the edition of the *Journey* with the continuation “By Eugenius” came out on 25 May 1769, Hall-Stevenson would have had only slightly over a year after the death of Sterne on 18 March 1768 to write the continuation and see it through the press.<sup>7</sup> And even though the record of his writing does not entirely support the opinion in some quarters that he was lazy, it is a little difficult to figure out where he found time to write the continuation in a year when he was engaged in writing other things, including a brief but unusually competent (for him) group of Horatian imitations in support of John Wilkes, plus a short piece called “The Speech of Alderman Wilkes delivered in a Dream”—all of which were published in a volume called *Lyrical Consolations* in 1769.

Though Hall-Stevenson’s friend Sterne had died, his friend John Wilkes was very much alive and very much in need of all the support and consolation he could get. Wilkes, who had been expelled from Parliament in 1764 and who had been in exile on the Continent, returned to London, was elected to Parliament from Middle-

<sup>7</sup> *Letters*, pp. 450–51.

sex, imprisoned on the old charge, expelled again from Parliament, and several times reelected and declared ineligible. Hall-Stevenson's involvement in these crucial events seems to have been of lively importance to him.

Demands on him were of course being made by Sterne's widow and her daughter, Lydia, who were trying—at times frenetically—to raise enough money to pay off Sterne's obligations and to establish some kind of financial security for themselves. Hall-Stevenson was asked, first of all, to collect subscriptions for a three-volume set of sermons, over which the ladies were haggling with Becket and other booksellers. Second, he was asked to write in collaboration with John Wilkes a biography of Sterne—the proceeds of which would, naturally, go to the ladies.

A somewhat petulant letter from Lydia to Hall-Stevenson written from Angoulême on 13 February 1770 indicates that the latter had not been written (*Letters*, p. 453). Since on the previous 22 July 1769, Lydia in a letter to Wilkes confessed that she owed much gratitude to Hall-Stevenson, Professor L. P. Curtis assumed that this gratitude was in part due to Hall-Stevenson's having written the continuation of the *Journey* for the benefit of the ladies and that having performed this service the gentleman regarded himself as having discharged all obligations to do anything further (*Letters*, p. 452). Even a casual reading of the continuation, however, should render such an interpretation unacceptable. Let us look at the evidence.

By his own admission, whoever wrote the continuation also wrote the sketch of Sterne prefacing it. And if the writer of the sketch was John Hall-Stevenson, the inaccuracies in it are largely inexplicable.<sup>8</sup>

Hall-Stevenson's friendship with Sterne had begun, as we have seen, at least as early as their Cambridge days; furthermore, Sterne had officiated at his friend's marriage on 12 February 1740. Thus there is no reason why Hall-Stevenson should have written, as the writer of the preface did, that Sterne was born "in the barracks at Dublin" rather than in Clonmel; that he got the living of Sutton

<sup>8</sup> See *YSJC*, vii–xv. It should be noted that some details in this account are apparently drawn from Dr. John Hill's highly inaccurate biographical article in the *London Chronicle* for 3–6 May 1760, a source that Hall-Stevenson would have in no wise needed to use.

in 1745 rather than in 1738; and that he received his first prebendal stall in the York Minster *after* he wrote *A Political Romance* rather than considerably *before*. Yet assuming that by some rare chance Hall-Stevenson's memory might have slipped in these matters, he could not by any stretch of the imagination have failed to know that the Earl Fauconberg presented Sterne with the living of Coxwold in the North Riding, not Cawood in the West Riding. In fact, so great is the last error as to suggest that the writer of the sketch was not only somebody other than Hall-Stevenson but that he might not even have been a Yorkshireman. Finally, what with Hall-Stevenson's close connections with events in London in 1768, he would certainly have known with some exactness that Sterne was buried in the new burial ground of St. George's, Hanover Square (situated among the fields of Paddington on the Bayswater Road), not vaguely "near Marybone."

On another level, one may reasonably ask whether a gentleman who seemed to take some care about maintaining civil relations with Mrs. Sterne and Lydia would have written of the former: "The lady complained of infidelity to her bed; the prebend apologised for this separation, on account of her temper, which he averred was insupportable" (*YSJC*, xiii). Mrs. Sterne's cousin, Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, was saying much the same thing about her privately; moreover, Sterne and Hall-Stevenson just as privately had sometime previously agreed about Mrs. Sterne's intractability. But a public statement is another matter.

The Sterne ladies went back again to France in July of 1769. The writer of the prefatory sketch anticipated this event with a remark that is plainly sarcastic: "The ladies . . . so far from testifying any dislike to their residence in France, are now preparing to return to that country, having partly made a provision for their future support in their former recluse manner of life."

In a final "One Chapter More" of the continuation itself, the writer, speaking not for Yorick but in his own person, complains: "The pains which have been taken to suppress this work, are as illiberal as unjust"; and he further intimates that such attempts have backfired. This statement—given the general context—suggests that far from approving the continuation, Lydia and her mother had attempted to block it, doubtless with any aid they

could get from Becket, whose interests were also involved. It may, therefore, be that the continuation came out without indication of printer or bookseller to evade legal action.

In their struggles to get their affairs in order, in their importuning people of note to subscribe to the *Sermons*, in their insistence on help of various sorts from their friends and Sterne's, and in their attempts to play one publisher off against another for their own advantage, the Sterne ladies appear in what is undoubtedly their most unattractive light. But if, even under such circumstances, Hall-Stevenson was the author of the continuation, we should have to assume that he was unchivalrous in a manner that not even the misogyny and the misogamy often expressed in his verse and his letters, together with the crudity of some of his satirical attacks, have prepared us for. We should have to believe further that in regard to Lydia and Eliza Sterne, he had assumed a particularly repulsive stance—being one thing before their faces and something a good deal more sinister behind their backs. Certainly, we could not expect Lydia to have continued writing him, for whatever reason, if she had known the full extent of his villainy. And we might also have to assume that the factual errors in the prefatory sketch were deliberately made for purposes of concealment and spite!

Only a small amount of Hall-Stevenson's prose is extant; and most of what exists (with an exception or two) is in relatively brief examples of political satire or in introductions to his verse. Thus any attempt to make a stylistic comparison between prose pieces that we know to be his and the continuation in order to prove his authorship of the latter is likely to be futile. On the other hand, one may observe, as an argument *against* his authorship, that nowhere else than in the continuation did he make such an extended effort in prose. Other types of internal evidence one way or the other are as difficult to adduce as stylistic ones.

One possible suggestion of a connection between Hall-Stevenson's known work and the continuation has already been mentioned: the prose *Sentimental Dialogue Between Two Souls*. This fragment, together with a verse bit called "An Epistle from John Me to His Excellence My Lord Myself" (unpublished until the *Works* of 1795, II, 223–32) may suggest some highly superficial similarity to the penultimate section of Book II of the continuation,

called "A Vision / A Dialogue Between My Soul and My Body"; but the similarity is not sufficiently strong to become convincing. In this curious conclusion to the continuation, the final speech of Yorick's Soul runs as follows: "Have not thy works tended to the corruption of the age? to the depravity of the morals of the rising generation?—What recompence canst thou offer?—Not thy religious discourses: they are but a small counterpoise, and read but by a few." At this point, Yorick awakes to find that this speech and the preceding dialogue have been only part of a dream or vision. He then says, "I saw, but too clearly saw the justice of the reasoning of my Soul, even in sleep. What a wretch am I! —How have I misapplied those talents that Nature destined for superior uses!—Vile dauber of paper!" (*YSJC*, p. 105). And with this Methodistic sort of retractation, he dies (incidentally, of what appears to be a massive brain hemorrhage!).

Granted, as I have suggested, that elsewhere during Sterne's lifetime Hall-Stevenson showed a persistent and often a seemingly perverted unwillingness to admit anything pure or serious in Sterne's character or work, he did nothing so completely gratuitous as this assumed posthumous admission of guilt by Sterne. Moreover, one gathers from the correspondence between the two men that one of the chief reasons for Hall-Stevenson's attribution of bawdiness to his friend was in justification of his own low turn of mind. Thus a condemnation of Sterne such as that in the dream sequence could have been made with the least possible show of logic or grace. And finally, the remark about Sterne's "religious discourses" seems maliciously unfair to his survivors when one remembers that three volumes of the remaining *Sermons* were issued on 3 June 1769, less than ten days after the continuation came from the press, and that from these the ladies naturally hoped to profit.

Certainly, one explanation of the persistent attribution of the continuation to Hall-Stevenson may be an argument from silence. Nowhere, apparently, is there a record of his *denying* authorship—something that he plainly had plenty of time to do had he not been the author and had he so chosen. With the death of Sterne, his own literary career was far from ending. And if the continuation of the *Journey* was scurrilous, there is no evidence that Hall-Stevenson's later published work was less so. Hall-Stevenson, like Heming-

way's Count Greffi, did not become more devout with age. And a man who could be guilty of writing the *Moral* [read *Immoral*] *Tales* of 1783 could, some might argue, be guilty of anything.

Yet if the argument from silence may be used on one side, it may also be used on the other. It is true that the witness may not be the most reliable in the world: I refer to the none-too-careful anonymous editor of Hall-Stevenson's *Works* of 1795. According to his testimony, he sought his material from Hall-Stevenson's grandson and the current master of Skelton Castle, John Wharton, Esq., M.P. for Beverley. This gentleman is credited with having presented the editor with "corrected copies of the greater part of these works," showing "the utmost liberality and politeness" in doing so. Such cooperation indicates both unusual openhandedness and broadmindedness, especially since some of the unpublished pieces (the ballad on the Dashwoods, for example) might better have been left out of print. At any rate, there is evidence that Hall-Stevenson's grandson was willing to help make the edition as inclusive as possible. "The Author," the editor commented, ". . . died, leaving his performances to the mercy of accident; many of them little known; and some difficult to obtain. . . . In a short time, what has now been obtained with difficulty would have been impossible to procure on any terms whatever" (*Works*, I, vii). The statement has been remarkably prophetic. Except for relatively few letters and fragments of letters written to Sterne and Wilkes, manuscript materials relating to Hall-Stevenson are scarce indeed.

Hall-Stevenson died in 1785. His son, Joseph William, died in the following year, after which time Skelton Castle seems to have remained derelict for several years before the Whartons occupied it. It is thus possible that valuable papers were lost or destroyed. But as late as 1844 William Durrant Cooper, who was auditor to the estate and who had access to the family papers, reported seeing the minutes of the Demoniacs. These reputedly were in Sterne's hand. Moreover, Cooper published a volume of letters that he found at Skelton under the title of *Seven Letters Written by Sterne and His Friends* (1844). Since the time of this publication, the minutes and the originals of the letters have disappeared. Such seems also to have been the fate of manuscripts of Hall-Stevenson's works.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Arthur H. Cash's extensive search in Yorkshire for information relating to

Thus for better or for worse, the three-volume edition of the *Works* of 1795 must be regarded, for all practical purposes, as establishing the canon for Hall-Stevenson. The prefatory sketch ends with the statement that the author was "the *Eugenius* of Mr. Sterne." But though other aspects of Hall-Stevenson's work are discussed, there is not the slightest hint of his being the author of the continuation. This circumstance is rendered more significant by the fact that the editor gives every indication of wishing to present as complete an edition as possible. Thus even though the length of the continuation of the *Journey* might understandably have precluded its being reprinted in any such edition of the verse and prose, at least one might expect its absence to be commented upon—if Hall-Stevenson, indeed, was the author.

References to Hall-Stevenson after his most active period of friendship with Sterne and Wilkes are not frequent. At least one amusing, if trivial, bit of evidence indicates that it was because of his own literary achievement, rather than because of his being any sort of appendage to another artist, that he was finally remembered as "Crazy" Hall—in the way in which the century had nicknamed "Estimate" Brown, "Corsica" Boswell, and "Dictionary" Johnson. Moreover, the same bit of evidence shows that literary productions not his were still being attributed to him. Boswell wrote in the entry for "Thursday 3 May" in the *Journal in London*, 1781: "I dined Lord Eglinton's. Crazy Hall was there; we took to each other much. Told me he had not written in "Public Advertiser" against Methodist."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps only the author of *Crazy Tales* and master of "Crazy" Castle himself could state thus categorically when confronted that he had *not* written the continuation of *A Sentimental Journey* and that he had *not* in it spoken against his dead friend, Laurence Sterne. We, however, who do not know so certainly can at least, in the phrase of Horace Walpole, still entertain some lively "historic doubts."

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Sterne and Hall-Stevenson has turned up no manuscripts or additional holograph letters of Hall-Stevenson or his group there. I am indebted to Professor Cash's advice in several details of this essay.

<sup>10</sup> *Private Papers of James Boswell*, ed. Geoffrey Scott and F. A. Pottle (New York, 1932), xiv, 212.