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Laurence Sterne's Innovation and Postmodern Literature

(Within Reception Criticism Context)

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Abstract

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Introduction

A novel has had a very interesting path of development from its origin up to the modern era. It has been altered many times and has appeared in numerous masks. We cannot make any certain statements about the origin of novel though, since it is as complex and mysterious as the analysis of the emergence of a human being - a creator.

XVIII century politician Lord Chesterfield in the letters to his son wrote:

"I am in doubt whether you know what a novel is: it is a little gallant history, which must contain a great deal of love, and not exceed one or two small volumes. The subject must be a love affair; the lovers are to meet with many difficulties and obstacles, to oppose the accomplishment of their wishes, but at last overcome them all; and the conclusion or catastrophe must leave them happy" (Chesterfield, 1838:91).

These words are good proof of the rate of novel alteration during the centuries, since this definition sounds absolutely unfamiliar, strange and even ridiculous to the modern reader that holds a postmodernist novel in his hands and has basically different image of the novel concept.

Postmodern art is a creation of the World War II. This great depression gave origin to many fundamental changes in literature. . . and in the end, what is the result of this complex and multilayer process of evolution? What is the postmodern novel like?

Postmodern novel rejects general truths, ridicules linear, ordered narrative, and increases the role of visualization in the process of narrative and perception. Uses magical realism, parody, allusions. It is self-reflexive, hybrid and fragmentary, rejects traditional plot, standard technique of narration; the line between reality and fiction is blurred, the function of the reader is fundamentally changed.

Studies have shown that almost all the traits listed above may be united under three main terms: intertextuality, metafiction and ergodic narrative, which might be considered as the main characteristics of postmodernism in literature. Ergodic literature, though, is a relatively new term that may become one of the most important elements of XXI century literature and therefore has not been studied or analyzed basically yet.

The aim of the thesis is to study the functions, characteristics and history of three main traits of postmodern novel: intertextuality, metafiction and ergodic narrative, through receptive criticism, search for their roots in Laurence Sterne's novel "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman" and make parallels to find out the real existence of these roots in Sterne's masterpiece and prove him the predictor of postmodern narrative, since in the XVIII century he experimented almost all its main techniques.

The objectives of the thesis are to:

a) Study characteristics, functions and origin of three main elements of postmodern novel: intertextuality, metafiction and ergodic narrative.

b) Analyze Laurence Sterne's innovative experiments in narration technique, plot development, chronology, structure and function of graphic symbols.

c) Study examples of intertextuality, metafiction and ergodic narrative in postmodern novels.

d) Make parallels between postmodern narrative and techniques used by Sterne, in order to prove the evident similarity.

The thesis consists of introduction, 3 chapters, conclusion, and reference list.

Chapter 1

1.1 Reception Theory (reader-response criticism)

In the history of literary criticism, the period of 1960-1970s was prominent due to the emergence of important theory of receptive approach (or reader-response criticism) that was in entire contrast to New Criticism or Formalism, in which reader's role was absolutely ignored. From 1960s, the principles of receptive approach were presented and formulated in works by Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes, Roman Ingarden and others.

The receptive approach goes outside the limits of the text and argues that, in process of storytelling, authors acknowledge existence of the recipients of the text, taking into consideration their taste, psychology, knowledge, attitudes etc. and therefore, in this act, an author is not alone and the recipient (a reader) has its active function as well. Accordingly, interpretation and concretization of one and the same text is as various as the amount of recipients, since in consciousness of different readers the perception of the text is different, or what is more, it is different each time even in case the same recipient reads the text in different times. This variation in perception is impossible to avoid, as the reader is always influenced by his expectations, wishes, interests, background, moods etc. According to Ingarden, prior to the act of reading, the work itself is made up of four strata: the phonetic stratum, the semantic stratum of meaning-units, the stratum of represented objectivities and the stratum of schematized aspects. The reader concretizes the work, changing a schematic formation a complete aesthetic element. Concretization is achieved by adding determinations to the schemes on all strata. In finding material for the removal of textual indeterminacies the reader is controlled by his own experience in life and literature. The concretization of the representational stratum is more obviously dependent on the character and experience of the reader.

Thus, "thinking about readers and the way they make sense of literature has led to what has been called 'reader-response criticism', which claims that the meaning of the text is the experience of the reader" (Culler, 2000: 63).

Some critics argue that potential reader, an imaginary recipient, takes part in creation of a text, it is especially obvious in metafictional technique, in which a reader is addressed directly, an author plays game with him and this participation is either evident or obscured. According to Georgian critic, R. Karalashvili, the presence of a recipient is unavoidable as the nature of a language itself requires it. He writes:

"The recipient is a necessary element of creative process, as the main function of the language as well as poetic language, is communication; which, as a concept, assumes the existence of the sender and recipient. Therefore, the existence of a recipient is conditioned by the nature of language itself" (Karalashvili, 1977:45).

1.2   General analysis of metafictional technique

The term "metafiction" was first coined by William Gass in his essay "Philosophy and the Form of fiction". According to him, many of the so-called anti-novels are really metafictions.

Metafiction is a fiction that comments fiction. It is realizing the fact that the work created is a fiction and permanently draws reader's attention to this fact. The presence of a reader is constantly felt and his function is more like co-authorship of the text. Standard plot with ordered, linear development and logical ending is rejected, the methods of storytelling, as well as narrative technique, are discussed within the novel; it contains elements of theory and criticism; author involves himself among fictional characters and makes comments about narrative process.

Patricia Waugh characterizes metafiction as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh, 1984:2). According to her, metafiction explores a theory of writing through the practice of writing fiction. Therefore, metafiction demonstrates the realization of the fact that it is created and someone is expected to percept it. So, the role of a reader is no longer passive and he is involved in this process of creation and perception. Consequently, if he does not play the narrator's game, does not follow the rules stated by the author or play his part properly, the text will lose its sense and turn into chaos, so the dialogue is the powerful tool of metafictional narrative.Practice of the direct reference to the reader, that was intensely used by Laurence Sterne and flourished in postmodern era, is the element of even the most recent experiments in literature, as it is in case of Mark Danielewski's "House of Leaves" that was published in 2000:

"Drugs are useless. So are crosses, holy water or 9 mm guns. Sorry. About the only way I know is to find the house but since the house never existed to begin with, well, you see how that works . . . Still if somehow, some way you find the house, or figure out how to make these nightmares stop, please tell me. I'm so tired I'm just dying to sleep" (Danielewski, 2000:58).

The reader is a part of this mystery. He might "somehow" find the house as well as the narrator and he is deliberately involved in storytelling. In some cases, he is even given priority to have the leading part. As the protagonist is tired and is "dying to sleep", the reader is left alone to make difference.

It is often difficult in metafiction to distinguish real characters and author from the fictional ones, since the line between them is blurred and this fact is stated in the process of narration. Like it is in Curt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse 5 ", we can never be certain if a narrator is the one who really went through the war, as he declares: "All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway are pretty much true" (Vonnegut 2015:11). Who says these words? Vonnegut or a protagonist? Is it fiction or are there particles of reality? The narrator starts storytelling with this hint of "more or less" reality and leaves a reader under permanent doubt. Likewise, we wonder if Tim O'Brian is a real narrator in his novel "Things they carried," taking into consideration the fact that he really fought in Vietnam war.

We feel uncertainty about it as the words of the narrator are declaration of the vague reality: "I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth" (O'Brian, 1990: 179).

In its basis, metafiction is deconstruction of standard norms of storytelling. Consequence of the belief that everything important and innovative has already been written and invented, so all we can do, is to destroy, make contrast, disfigure those traditions and in this very process metafictional technique has gained its extraordinarily interesting form, that has become inseparable element of postmodernism in literature.

1.3 Intertextuality

In spite of the fact that examples of intertextuality can be found in literature of much older periods, it has become an important component of postmodern novel. Julia Kristeva, who first coined the term "intertextuality" in 1966, assumes that authors are not original and do not create anything from their texts from original minds but compile from the already existing texts. She considers text "a permutation of texts" where "several utterances, taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one another" (kristeva 1980: 36).

Postmodern authors were certain that texts are not and cannot be independent structures that are entirely original and argue that any kind of text is a combination of parts, citations, characters, terms names etc. from other texts.

Umberto Eco has more radical attitude and assumes that the role of an author in a text creation is really weak. "It is not true that works are created by their authors. Works are created by works, texts are created by texts, all together they speak to each other independently of the intentions of their authors" (Plett 1991: 193).

Emergence and intense use of the term "intertextuality" has been inevitable, as postmodern art cannot be analyzed basically without its study through the prism of intertextuality. It seems like being in a closed circle that encloses postmodern art and authors are doomed to combine the texts within the circle eternally, unable to break the siege. They permanently collect and cobble together the pieces of countless texts to create the mosaic. The borrowed texts make multiple layers and gain different meanings that effect the general perception of the completed image of this mosaic.

Many postmodern authors demonstrate experiments with intertextuality and its variations in their works. Among them are: James Joyce's "Ulysses" – Homer's "Odyssey", Matt Haig's "The Dead Fathers Club"- Shakespeare's "Hamlet", Jane Smiley's "A Thousand Acres" – Shakespeare's "King Lear", C.S Lewis' "Perelandra" – John Milton's "Paradise lost", Jean Rhys' "Wide Sargasso Sea"- character from Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre", John Steinbeck's "Tortilla Flat" – Legends of King Arthur. One of very interesting examples of intertextuality is Ernest Hemingway's novel "For Whom the Bell Tolls" – The title copies John Donne's words.

The examples of intertextuality can be found in all the stages of literary history. Even The Bible should be considered intertextual since New Testament quotes Old Testament, however, in postmodernism it reached its intense flourish and develops numerous forms of use.

1.4 Ergodic literature

The term "ergodic literature" was first coined by Espen J. Aarseth in his book "Cybertext – Perspectives on Ergodic Literature". The word "Ergodic" originates from Greek word "ergon" that means "work" and "hodos" meaning "Path". Aarseth gives the following explanation of ergodic literature:

"In ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text. If ergodic literature is to make sense as a concept, there must also be non-ergodic literature, where the effort to traverse the text is trivial, with no extranoematic responsibilities placed on the reader except (for example) eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages." (Aarthes, 1997:2)

If we look back to the literary works of the past centuries in order to find first examples of novels that broke the rules of triviality, we will perhaps pay attention to the epistolary novel that was written in letters, therefore it may be considered the embryo of the ergodic narrative. However, Sterne's experiments were much more intense, extraordinary similar to the novels of late XX century and even to the novels of XXI century.

Ergodic technique is the brainchild of visualization era, cinematography and media. It changes visual form of the text and uses these visual tools in order to create additional element for narrative, that have as powerful function as the words and what is the most important, they are inseparable from the text. In other words, unlike the illustrations, that are only decoration and can be taken from the text any time without causing any changes to the meaning or perception of the narrative, the omission of ergodic elements can be as harmful for the text as omission of words, sentences or even the whole chapters.
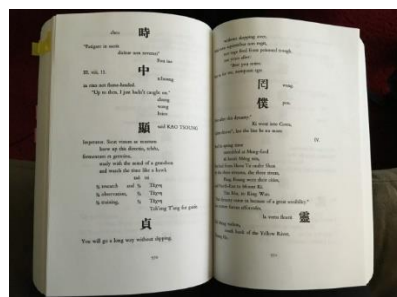
Among the elements of ergodic technique, there are:

Texts with typographic details, like dashes, full stops, quotation marks, etc. that have function of words or pauses. As it is in Laurence Sterne's "Tristram Shandy":

Mixture or several languages through the narration and coding of the text:

Ezra Pound, "The Cantos"
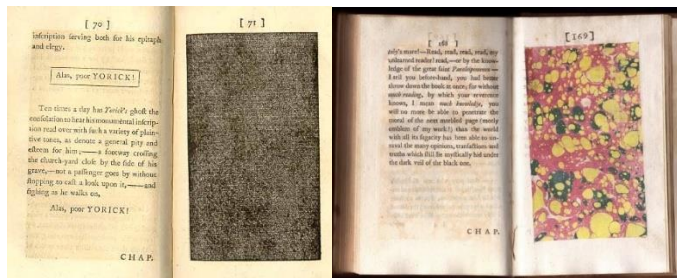
Handwritten supplements, letters, maps, notes, etc.

(Doug Dorst) J. J. Abrams "S"
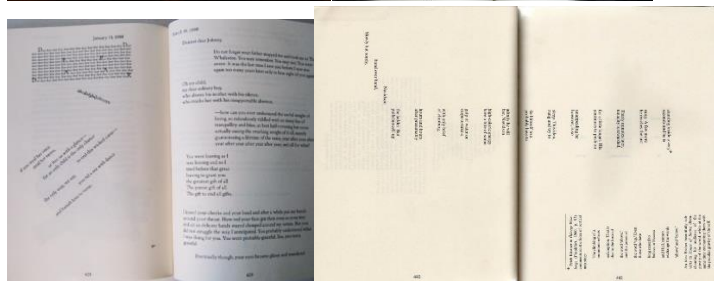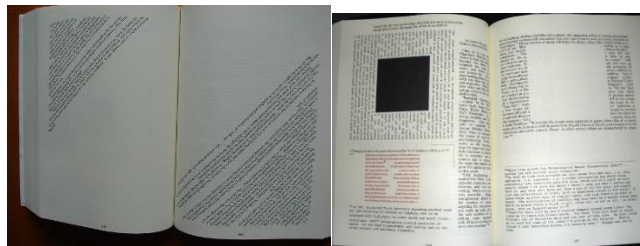
Unbound pages:

B.S Johnson "The Unfortunates"

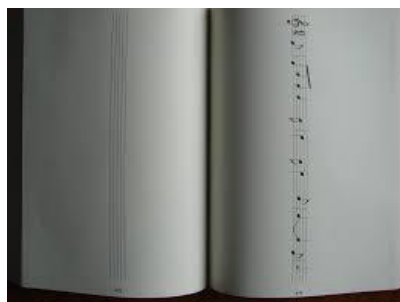Nonverbal narrative with empty pages, colored pages, etc.
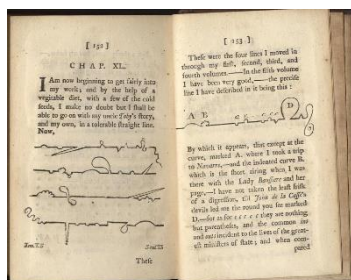

Nonstandard text layout:

M. Danielewski „House of leaves"

Various typographic symbols:

M. Danielewski „House of leaves"

Laurence Sterne "Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy,   Gentleman".

It may be assumed that ergodic literature is on the starting stage of its existence and development. Will it become one of the main characteristics of the future literature? Readers of XXI century expect something new from the novel, something different from the trivial texts.

Chapter 2

Laurence Sterne's Innovation

In 2005, in his interview after the adaptation of Laurence Sterne's novel "Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, the Gentleman", Steve Coogan, who played Shandy, said:

"Tristram Shandy" was a post-modern classic written before there was any modernism to be post about. So it was ahead of its time" (www.gantdaily.com).

The roots of postmodern novel characteristics: metafiction, intertextuality, typographic narrative, originate in much earlier period than XX century. The footprints lead us to the XVIII century English literature and its genius novelist, Laurence Sterne. Plotless structure, permanent digressions, obscure chronology, typographic narrative technique, involvement of a reader, discussion of narrative methods within narrative, combination of numerous texts, quotations, characters, names etc. assign "Tristram Shandy" to the postmodern storytelling, rather than literature of the XVIII century. The methods used by Sterne were extraordinary, innovative and contrastive from the traditions of that period. However, further analysis and parallels to the postmodern novel reveal that this technique, called eccentric, chaotic and absurd, in fact predicted almost all the main traits of postmodern novel.

The narrative style of "Tristram Shandy" is self-reflexive. The narrator permanently makes digressions from the storytelling, discusses various themes, most of which have no connection to the main subject of the novel, although the main subject itself is quite obscure to identify. The narrator

uses numerous texts, quotations, characters, names etc. from different fictional or nonfictional texts that requires proper knowledge from the reader.

In the "London Magazine" XXIX (1760), the reviewer of the first installment of "Tristram Shandy" wrote:

"Oh rare Tristram Shandy! - what shall we call thee? – Rabelais, Cervantes, What?" (London Magazine 29, February 1760). These words emphasized multi textual character of the novel later named as an "intertextuality".

Besides the fact that Cervantes has great influence on Sterne as a humorist, there are interesting associations with Don Quixote in "Tristram shandy".

"A horse who, to shorten all description of him, was full brother to Ronsinante". (Sterne, 2010:44).

Sterne uses interesting associations with Shakespearian themes, motifs, characters and symbols. As it is in case of Yorick:

„That Hamlet's Yorick in our Shakespeare" (Sterne, 2010:53) and reference to the wisdom disguised in fool's mask:

"Therefore, my dear friend and companion, if you should think me somewhat sparing of my narrative on my first setting out, — bear with me, — and let me go on, and tell my story my own way: — or if I should seem now and then to trifle upon the road, — or should sometimes put on a fool's cap with a bell to it, for a moment or two as we pass along, -- don't fly off, — " (Sterne, 2010:32)

Sterne often uses quotations from John Locke's "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding":

"Pray, Sir, in all the reading which you have ever read, did you ever read such a book as Locke's Essay upon the Human Understanding? — Don't answer me rashly, -- because many, I know, quote the book, who have not read it, --- and many have read it who understand it not: ---"(Sterne, 2010:133).

The title itself, "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman," is an excellent example of concealed intertextual irony. The meaning and structure of the title perfectly reflects traditions and attitudes of XVIII century novel - life, opinions, adventure. . . however, the plot of the novel completely destroys the expectations that the title form suggests, since through the storytelling, reader realizes that only the word "opinions" has real connection to the plot of the novel and others are only mocking at XVIII century novel traditions.

Sterne uses the whole passages from Robert Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy", though the name of the author is not mentioned. Critics among his contemporaries often argued Sterne's plagiarism, though as Walter Scott considered Sterne was: ‚one of the greatest plagiarists, and one of the most original geniuses whom England has produced" (Scott, 1848: 298). As future proved, this technique of multiple text adaptations become important element of postmodern novels, later known as "intertextuality".

Sterne experiments on paradoxical development of themes through exaggeration of minor details and dedication several pages and even several chapters to its discussion, that makes narrative development seemingly plotless as important themes are paid the least attention and become obscure. "Tristram Shandy" is an excellent example of this technique, since the novel the title of which is "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman", and starts with the story of main character conception, contains only several passages about Tristram Shandy himself and leaves Tristram in the shadow of other characters and their stories, or numerous less important details with permanent digressions. Therefore, the narrative continuously distracts reader's attention, plays game with him, highlighting the least important details. Similarly, he describes Corporal Trim's manner of standing and dedicates at least 2 pages to these descriptions:

"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"(Sterne 2010:184).

"How the duce Corporal Trim, who knew not so much as an acute angle from an obtuse one, came to hit it so exactly;—or whether it was chance or nature, or good sense or imitation" (Sterne, 2010:184).

One of the most innovative and extraordinary characteristics of "Tristram Shandy" narrative style is the role of a reader in the process of storytelling. Sterne gave the reader unimaginable function for XVIII century literary traditions. The reader is no longer passive, invisible recipient of a story, but he becomes important part of the narrative, plays one of the main roles, is referred to directly. The narrator discusses methods of storytelling with a reader, asks questions, gives directions, praises or criticizes. A reader is a coauthor who has enough power to make decisions about story development and without his involvement it will lose the sense.

„—How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter? I told you in it, That my mother was not a papist.—Papist! You told me no such thing, Sir.—Madam, I beg leave to repeat it over again, that I told you as plain, at least, as words, by direct inference, could tell you such a thing.—Then, Sir, I must have miss'd a page"(Sterne, 2010:97).

What makes the real dialogue is bilateral character of narrator-reader relationships. In other words, a reader is not only referred to, but he gives answers: "You told me no such thing, Sir". Accordingly, it creates the atmosphere of live dialogue, multilayer chronology of story time and narrative time, multidimensional structure.

"To such however as do not choose to go so far back into these things, I can give no better advice than that they skip over the remaining part of this chapter; for I declare before-hand, 'tis wrote only for the curious and inquisitive.

—Shut the door.—

I was begot in the night betwixt the first Sunday and the first Monday in the month of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighteen" (Sterne, 2010:27).

The amazingly unexpected "___Shut the door____" creates impression that at the very moment we are sitting in Tristram's living-room, listening to the narrator and gives time line effect of pulsation. The story time chronology itself is chaotic, it disorderly goes to the past or even to the future events that have not happened yet:

„ A cow broke in (tomorrow morning) to my uncle Toby's fortifications" (Sterne, 2010:344).

In the process of storytelling a narrator often dictates a reader the rules of perception of the composition, what should be his attitude towards the story and even the pace of reading. He is not only the narrator of the story but a guide, an instructor, who explains methods being used, characteristics of his narrative technique, or the reasons why those methods are being used.

"By this contrivance the machinery of my work is of a species by itself; two contrary motions are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with each other. In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive too,—and at the same time"(Sterne, 2010:115).

The ending of the novel has no connection to the concept of denouement, as far as there is no intrigue or drama to have development and the novel that starts with conception of the main character and therefore creates the impression that we will read a story of Tristram Shandy, full of exciting adventures ends with absolutely unexpected ending discussing uncle Tobby's relationships with a widow and the last symbolic words:

"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" (Sterne, 2010:690).

"A cock and a Bull" expression that originates from French **'coq-a-l'âne'** and is defined as „an incoherent story, passing from one subject to another" is the symbol of Sterne's narrative style as well as metafictional narrative style of postmodern novels.

The important part of Sterne's narrative technique is typographic presentations of "Tristram Shandy". Sterne gave as much importance and value to the graphic symbols as words in a storytelling. The text is distinguishable from all the works of Sterne's contemporaries even at first sight:
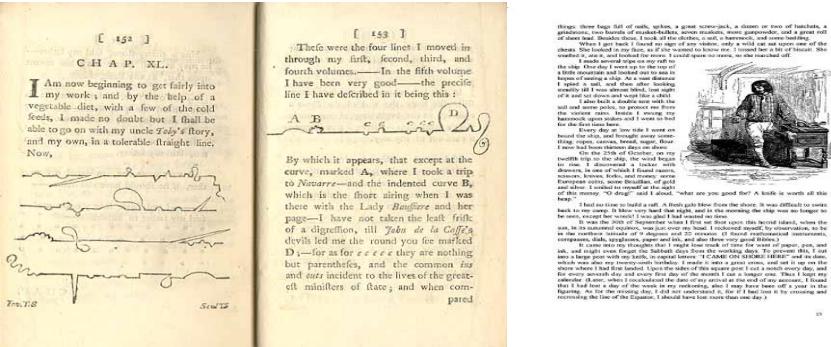

Laurence Sterne "The Life and   Daniel Defoe "Robinson Crusoe"

Opinions of Tristram Shandy,

the Gentleman"

The text is full of dashes that vary in length. The reason why Sterne chose these symbols is controversial. It is possible to assume that punctuation in the novel is part of the game Sterne plays with narrative technique generally and deliberate destruction of commonly accepted norms of narrative like, when he says about Horace ". . . for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived" (Sterne, 2010:27). However, the narrative mode of "Tristram Shandy" needs something more than a standard punctuation to maintain its live flowing, live speech with natural pauses and interruptions. For this, as Ian Watt writes: "Dashes were invaluable for enacting the drama of inhibited impulse, of the sudden interruptions and oscillations of thought and feeling which characterize Tristram as a person and as a narrator"(Watt, 2002:132).
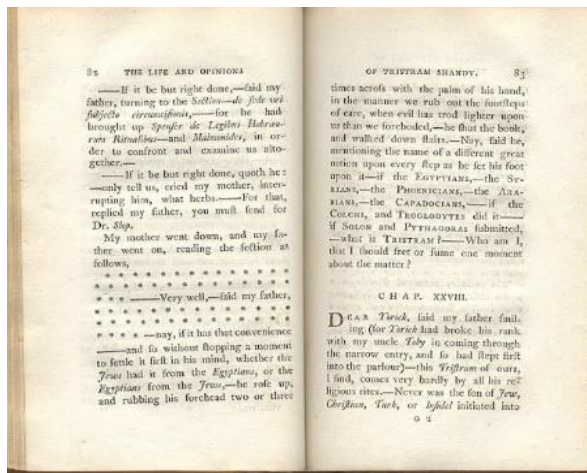
Manipulation with pages is a commonly used practice in "Tristram Shandy". Sterne emphasizes the fact that conventional language is unable to describe life and goes beyond a traditional text layout in order to involve reader more intensely. Like it is in the case of a blank page where a reader is offered to draw a picture of a widow to his own mind.
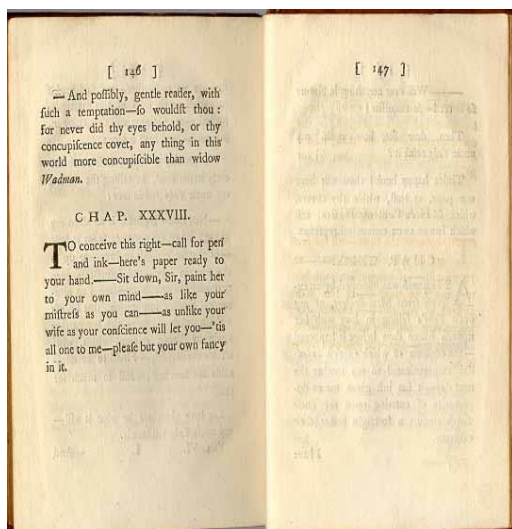
Marble page that was made by hand and considered by Sterne: "motley emblem of my work!" (Sterne 2010:336) and black page memorializing the late Parson Yorick:
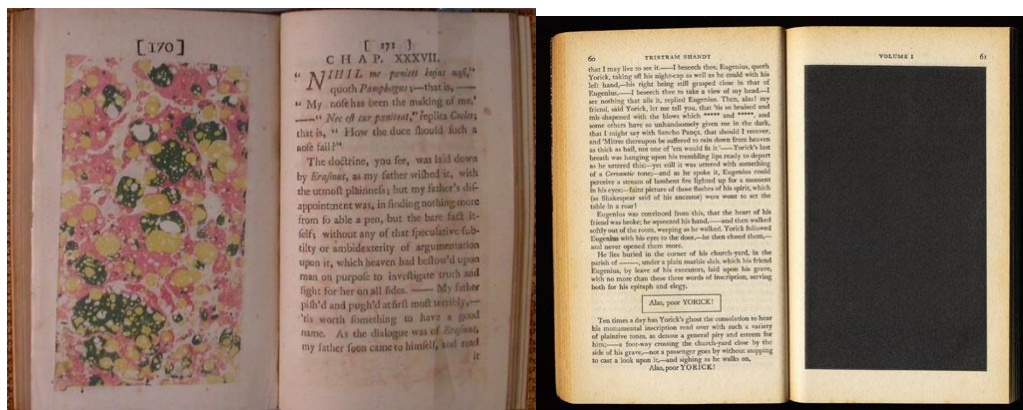
This mode of narrative technique alters the function of typography as means of decoration to the text and equalizes it with words, or in some cases even gives typography superiority over the trivial means of expression. For instance, in chapter XL Shandy demonstrates his story line:
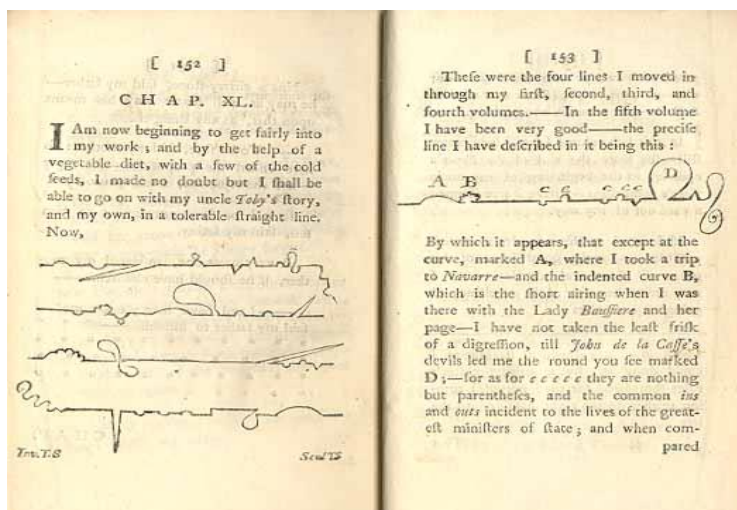
These diagrams excellently demonstrate narrative line of "Tristram Shandy", acknowledging the fact that the narrator deliberately makes chaos and disorder in chronology and story layers and since words are not enough for effective demonstration of the storyline followed by the narrator, typography is given superiority to act as powerful medium of storytelling.

Future proved Sterne to be the originator of the technique that is closer to XX or even XXI century literary conventions, rather than XVIII century novel traditions. Sterne created typographic narrative, analogues of which may be listed among the novels of ergodic literature, that is too new to be studied properly and supposedly may be one of the important traits of future literature.

Sterne was ahead of his time with his innovative technique. The characteristics of the postmodern novel for which XX century literary theory coined new terms, have roots in Sterne's narrative style. "Tristram Shandy" with its multiple text combinations predicted intertextuality of postmodern literature, presence of a reader, discussion of narrative technique within the narrative, destruction of standard plot conventions was precursor of metafictional technique of the future and extraordinary typographic modes that ruin the trivial ways of text perception is prediction of ergodic literature.

Chapter 3

Intertextuality, Metafiction and Typographic Narrative in Postmodern Novel

The fruits of Stern's innovations passed the centuries, various literary styles and influenced many authors of much later period. The technique originated by Sterne flourished in late XX century and may have development even in XXI century literature. In the following chapter we make parallels between narrative style of "Tristram Shhandy" and several postmodern novels, in order to prove him an originator of the major mediums of postmodern novel narrative technique: intertextuality, metafiction and ergodic storytelling.

3.1 Intertextuality in Postmodern Novels

In spite of many examples of intertextuality found in literary forms of any period throughout the history, it is important to emphasize that Sterne was one of the first novelists that used intertextuality in its genuine postmodern form.

After more than two centuries of Stern's epoch, intertextuality has become one of the most important traits of postmodern literature as postmodernism believes that everything has already been written and we are not able to create anything new, fundamentally original. Therefore, authors are doomed to be enclosed by already existing literary space, forced to combine the text that have already been created and can never escape the closed circle. As a result, according to Borges, "the certitude that everything has been written negates us or turns us into phantoms" (Borges 2000:3). Tomas Pynchon uses ironic intertextual reference with Shakespeare, that is excellent demonstration of this certitude. When the main character of "The Crying of Lot 49" Oedipa meets director of a play, Driblette, to discuss the play, he says:

"It isn't literature, it doesn't mean anything. Wharfinger was no Shakespeare.

' 'Who was he?' she said.

'Who was Shakespeare. It was a long time ago" (Pynchon, 2014:92).

It is a symbolic example of the main traits of intertextuality from Sterne to the postmodern literature. Mocking at the modern art that does not mean anything and has the only function to entertain the crowd. Pynchon plays game with the reader. By mentioning Shakespeare, he evokes in reader's consciousness the associations with the great art of the past, in order to strengthen the image of the miserable present. It is mocking at the society, a representative of which may ask a question who Shakespeare was and this is certitude that everything great has already been written.

Among Pynchon's intertextual references, there are interesting associations with the character of the famous fairytale Rapunzel:

„And had also gently conned herself into the curious, Rapunzel-like role of a pensive girl somehow, magically, prisoner among the pines and salt fogs of Kinneret, looking for somebody to say hey, let down your hair"(Pynchon, 2014: 23).

The remote tower with no entrance or exit represents an enigmatic paranoia, mysterious evil power that captivates Rapunzel . Oedipa locked herself in this boundless tower and realizes impossibility of escape, the hopelessness of the inner imprisonment: "If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else?" (Pynchon, 2014: 23).

Through analysis of postmodern intertextuality it is important to mention Curt Vonnegut's works. As William Rodney Allen writes about Curt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse 5": "… in creating this cosmic, nonlinear narrative Vonnegut uses fragments of all sorts of traditional narrative forms, much as a bird might use twigs, bits of string, and its own feathers to construct a nest, something very different from the sum of its parts" (Allen 2009:3-16). This definition describes the general characteristic of postmodern intertextuality in the best way. "Slaughterhouse 5" demonstrates narrative, scattered in time, space and dimensions and combines numerous texts to create mosaic like "a bird might use twigs, bits of string, and its own feathers to construct a nest".

Along with numerous fictional or nonfictional texts, Vonnegut uses interesting forms of intertextuality, like introduction of a character from his own novel. In chapter V Bill Pilgrim meets Mr. Rosewater, who is a character from Vonnegut's previous novel "God Bless you Mr. Rosewater" (1965). With doubling of a character traumatized by the war Vonnegut emphasizes the absurdity of war turning human life into meaningless chaos and mutilating their existence.

"They had both found life meaningless, partly because of what they had seen in war. Rosewater, for instance, had shot a fourteen-year-old fireman, mistaking him for a German soldier. So it goes. And Billy had seen the greatest massacre in European history, which was the firebombing of Dresden. So it goes "(Vonnegut, 2000: 107).

It is worth mentioning some remarkable examples of intertextual references from the Bible. In the first chapter Vonnegut tells the story of Sodom and Gomorrah from the Bible:

"And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she did look back, and I love her for that, because it was so human. She was turned to a pillar of salt. So it goes.

People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore. I've finished my war book now. The next one I write is going to be fun. This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt" (Vonnegut 2000:31).

The author identifies himself with pillar of salt, acknowledging the fact that in spite of unbearable pain that turns him into a pillar of salt, he looks back to all the catastrophe and suffering that the war caused and is not afraid to witness them, as it is "so human".

Intertextuality has become that very enigmatic tower from Pynchon's intertextual reference, which captivates postmodern literature. As history revealed, it is not losing its powers, but is becoming more intense. Sterne's bold experiment in intertextuality was important for literature of postmodern era, that is depended on intertextuality, since as Fredric Jameson Writes in his essay " Postmodernism and Consumer Society":

"The writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds . . . only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought already" (Jameson 1998:7).

3.2   Metafiction in Postmodern Literature

The fact that nearly all the aspects listed above may be considered part of metafictional technique, makes it clear that it's impossible to discuss postmodernist novel without metafiction. The term was first coined by William H. Gass in his essay "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction", in which he depicts metafiction as fiction about fiction and writes that many of the so-called anti-novels are really metafictions. This is a text, the status of which is only a text, story within a story, where the process of creation and perception is the most important and as John Barth writes, it imitates not the real world but the novel itself (Barth:1968).

It is often difficult to distinguish real characters or the author and the fictional ones, as it is in the case of Curt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse 5" narrator. Is he a person who really went through a war? He says: "All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway are pretty much true" (Vonnegut, 2000:3). Who says these words Vonnegut or the protagonist? Is it fiction or are there particles of reality? The narrator starts storytelling with this hint of "more or less" reality and leaves a reader under permanent doubt. Likewise, we wonder if Tim O'Brian is a real narrator in his novel "Things They Carried" taking into consideration the fact that he really fought in Vietnam War. We feel uncertainty about it as the words of the narrator are declaration of the vague reality: "I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth" (O'Brian, 1990: 179).

In metafictional novel the function of narrator is no longer passive. He acts as co-author of the fictional text. Therefore, if a reader does not get involved in a story creation and perception, if he does not follow the rules stated by the narrator, if he does not play his role appropriately, the text will lose its sense and turn into chaos. Therefore, dialogue is an important tool of metafictional narration and it often contains discussion of writing structure, plans and technique that the narrator intends to use. It seems he makes agreement with the reader, discusses and explains his narrative technique, gives directions. Mark Z. Danielewski uses the same techniques of dialogue in his novel "House of Leaves":

"So you see from my perspective, having to decide between old man Z and his story is an artificial, maybe even dangerous choice, and one I'm obviously not comfortable making. The way I figure it, if there's something you find irksome – go ahead and skip it. I couldn't care less how you read any of this. His wandering passages are staying, along with all his oddly canted phrases and even some warped bits in the plot" (Danielewski, 2000:31).

The narrator gives directions to the reader and dictates the rules of reading, realizing the impossibility of proper perception without these prior instructions and permanent dialogue.

The presence of a reader is sometimes not so obvious but seems more obscured, yet it is almost permanently felt. Like it is in case of Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49". Pynchon uses less eye-catching method of acknowledgement of the presence of reader:

"WASTE? Oedipa wondered. Beneath faintly in pencil, was a symbol she'd never seen before, a loop, triangle and trapezoid, thus :

(Pynchon, 2014:38)

Who is "thus" dedicated to? The moment the narrator uses this expression reveals the presence of a reader who is referred to in this hidden dialogue.

The dialogue is often necessary to give some explanations to seemingly chaotic plot that is a destruction of traditional attitudes to linear, logically arranged storytelling. This is one of the important traits of metafictional narrative. The reader's expectations about the story with culmination, emotions, happy or tragic ending are destroyed through the narrative, especially at the end, as the last part of the metafictional novel generally reveals the impossibility of finding answers, since they mean nothing, emphasize absurdity of life or simply do not exist. Like it is in "Slaughterhouse 5", the last phrases of the novel are the demonstration of this absurdity of life and therefore absurdity of logical narrative.

"Birds were talking. One bird 58 said to Billy Pilgrim, 'Poo-tee-weet?'" (Vonnegut, 2000:177).

Despite the fact that from the beginning of the novel the narrator predicts this ending phrase, it is still unexpected because of its absurdity.

Pynchon goes even further and presents the plot that seems to be an adventure, exciting, mysterious crime story, that is being investigated by the main character but in the end he nearly cuts the storytelling and leaves it allegedly unfinished.

"Oedipa sat alone, toward the back of the room, looking at the napes of necks, trying to guess which 19 one was her target, her enemy, perhaps her proof.(…) She heard a lock snap shut; the sound echoed a moment. (…) The auctioneer cleared his throat. Oedipa settled back, to await the crying of lot 49" (Pynchon, 2014:152).

It is a fact that metafiction is an inseparable part of postmodern literature and without its conceptualizing perception the postmodern narrative lacks sense. However, may its origin be assigned to postmodern period? Through the analyses of the literature of previous periods we come to the conclusion that the answer to this question is negative, since the embryo of metafiction can be found in Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales", Miguel de Cervantes's "Don Quixote" and is especially complete in Laurence Sterne's "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman". Sterne's writing technique, his permanent dialogue with a reader, permanent explanations and instructions about novel writing within the storytelling, extraordinary plot without development was unique for his period. Time chronology and dimensions are chaotically disordered, function of graphic details is much more than of simple illustrations.

Dialogue with a reader is an important part of Sterne's narrative. The "dialogue" is not the term chosen accidentally, as reader is not only asked questions, referred to, given explanations, criticized or praised, but he or she gives answers that are meant in the process of the narrative:

„—How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter? I told you in it, that my mother was not a papist.—Papist! You told me no such thing, Sir. —Madam, I beg leave to repeat it over again, that I told you as plain, at least, as words, by direct inference, could tell you such a thing.—Then, Sir, I must have miss'd a page" (Sterne, 2010:97).

Narrator often dictates and explains rules of reading and perception methods of the novel that is also an important trait of metafiction.

"—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" (Sterne, 2010:120).

The use of such dialogues is quite intense in the novel. It alters time and dimensions of narrative permanently, this distracts reader's attention from the plot and the novel that starts with conception of the main character and therefore creates the impression that we will read a story of Tristram Shandy, full of exciting adventures ends with absolutely unexpected ending:

"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" (Sterne, 2010:690).

"A cock and a Bull" expression that originates from French **'coq-a-l'âne'** and is defined as "An incoherent story, passing from one subject to another" is the symbol of Sterne's narrative style as well as metafictional narrative style of postmodern novels.

3.3 Ergodic Narrative Mode in Postmodern Novels

One of the most remarkable innovations of Sterne's narrative style is his extraordinary use of graphic symbols and punctuation that was a destruction of any literal conventions existed before and has much more resemblance with the epoch of television, films and media, than XVIII century literature. So it is not surprising that path from Sterne's typographic narrative leads us even to the XXI century novels.

In 2000, an extraordinary novel of an American writer Mark Danielewski was published. "House of Leaves" is an amazing and eccentric novel that has become a real cult of literature in the beginning of new millennium.

"The Washington Post Book World" wrote about it:

"Any hope or fear that experimental novel was an aberration of the twentieth century is dashed by the appearance of Mark Danielewski's "House of Leaves", the first major experimental novel of the new millennium. And it's a monster. Dazzling"(www.washingtonpost.com).

Along with numerous oddities of the novel, it is prominent with its typography, or to be more detailed, physical image of the text. The novel, that has multiple layers of stories, narrative streams,

references to numerous outside texts many of which do not exist, a story and narrative chronology and dimensions, uses visual part of a text as meaning manipulator and it is metafictional in its concept as plays with a reader and a way he will perceive it. Therefore, like in case of Sterne's typography it loses the function of simple decoration, illustration that can be removed any time without making harmful effect on a text and becomes the meaning itself or precursor of meaning perception.

The structure and physical form of the text imitates mysterious labyrinth of the house. It copies the structure and directions of passages, windows and walls of the house. The lines lean down when the character moves downstairs or words sometimes seem to disappear when the disappearance of the walls are being described.
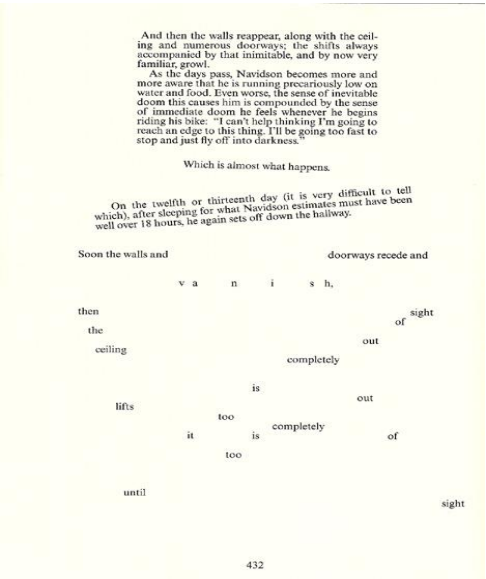
The text controls a reader like a puppeteer, traps him, makes orientation difficult in the horrible, vast maze and even dictates reading pace, since there are some pages that take a lot of time to be read, with overwhelming information from different narrators and storylines. On the other hand, some pages contain only several words:
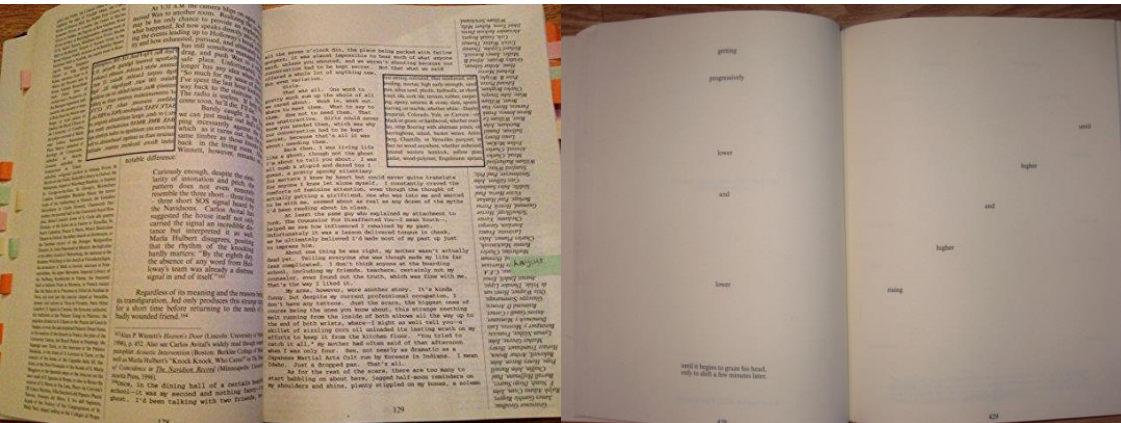
Danielewski uses different fonts for different narrators that helps a reader to identify which narrative line is he following and acts as predisposition to the narrator's inner world; therefore represents his or her characteristic.
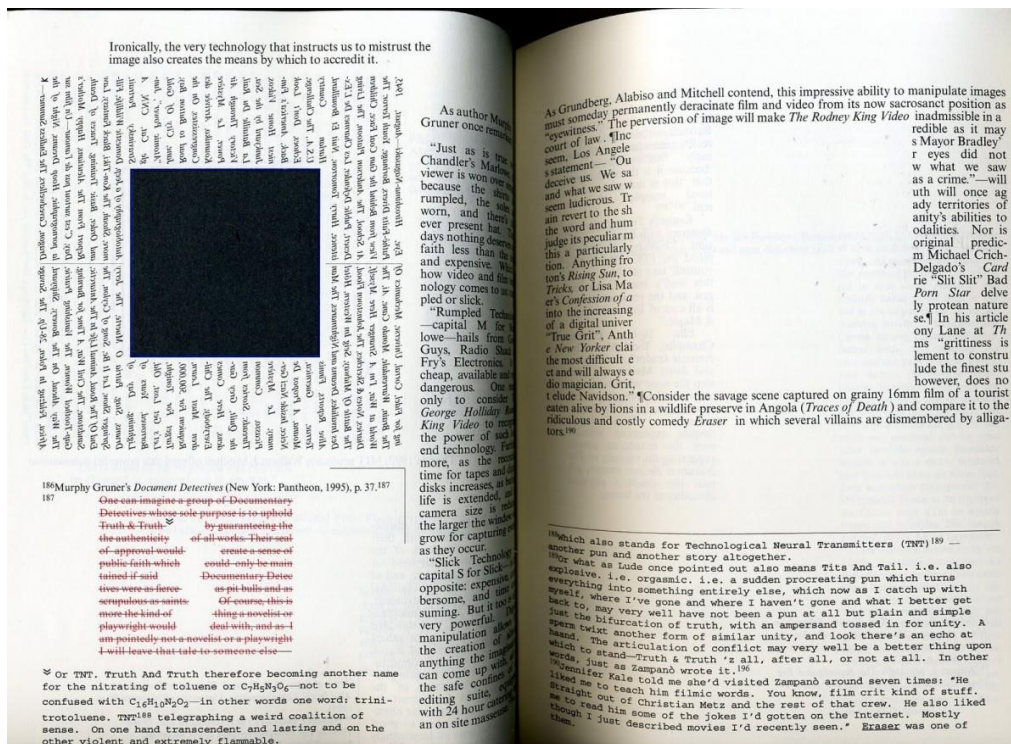
About his cinematographic mode of narrative, Danielewski says: "I had always loved the way certain texts could evoke certain meanings. Part of that was that I grew up on films. […] We talked about the politics of image, the politics of angles and colors, how stories are shaped, all of that. For me, I was always aware of the vitality of the image of the page"(www.avclub.com).

Today, "House of leaves" is often considered as a novel of ergodic literature. Trivial way of reading is impossible taking into consideration all the oddities of the physical form of a text. It requires much more than eye movement from left to right. Some pages even cannot be read without a mirror. Is it a predictor of the future literature? An embryo of the style of XXI century novels? Will the future literature become more and more ergodic? Only the time will answer the fundamental questions about the development of the ergodic literature.

Conclusion

The terms intertextuality, metafiction and ergodic narrative is unambiguously associated with postmodern literature. In spite of the fact that their examples might be found in the literature of early centuries, the emergence of the terms is connected to the XX century, since it was conditioned by the inevitability to coin the names for major elements of postmodern literature and art. They unify almost all the main traits of postmodern literature. Although the terms are relatively new, the roots of the concepts go back to the early centuries. However, genuine postmodern approach can be found in XXVIII century English novelist, Laurence Sterne's ingenious novel "Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman", that predicted the standards of postmodern literature with surprising precision more than two centuries earlier its intense flourish.

Stern's narrative style was unique for the XXVIII century due to several reasons. With the background of the literary traditions of exciting adventures, analysis of feelings and emotions, literary

transformations of historic facts, plot development, homogeneous novels with logical chronology, the emergence of "Tristram Shandy" was a breaking moment in the history of literature. Behind the seemingly traditional title, the novel hid fundamental innovations that predicted postmodernism.

Sterne's narrator involves a reader in the narrative and gives him power to participate in creation of the text, permanently acknowledging his presence and importance of his role as a recipient. A reader stands for a coauthor as he is addressed to discuss methods, reasons and intensions of storytelling. Furthermore, the plot of the novel is unconventional, since it is seemingly plotless. With permanent digressions, exaggerations of less important elements of the plot, disorderliness of the story and narrative chronology, opposition of the plot to the title and accordingly to reader's expectations, Sterne creates the narrative style that has very little in common with the traditions of the XVIII century novel. However, after two centuries from Sterne's period, William Gass coins the term "Metafiction" that becomes crucial mode of the postmodern novel, which is characterized with all the aspects listed above.

Sterne's narrator permanently makes digressions from the main line of narration, distracts reader's attention from the central elements of the plot and discusses the details that seem to be less important or have no connection to the subject. The novel uses numerous references, associations, introduction, themes, characters, names from different fictional or non-fictional texts that effects the way a reader perceives the narrative and controls his impressions, attitudes or mood. In some cases, these references require special knowledge and involvement from the recipient. In spite of the fact that this practice existed in earlier literature, Sterne gave it much more intense use and unconventionally different approach that was considered eccentric for his period... and again history proved him to be the innovator from this point of view too. After two centuries from this bold experiment, XX century literary theory realized the necessity of creation of a new term that would have represented the practice, conquering the whole postmodern literature. Since Julia Kristeva first coined that term "Intertextuality" in 1966 it has become an inseparable part of the main characteristics list of postmodern literature. According to Kristeva, any kind of text may be considered intertextual, since it is constructed on structures that already exist. Postmodern authors believed that it is impossible to create text as an independent, entirely original structure and argued that any kind of text is the form created with the combinations of references, quotations, terms, characters, associations and many other elements of other texts, use of one text for the basis of the other, use of the title of existing text. It is a certitude that everything important have already been thought, written and introduced, and modern authors won't be able to create anything unique. This certitude resulted in postmodern art drenched in intertextuality.

Sterne's approach to the textual combinations and adaptations in his "Tristram Shandy" was a prediction of postmodern intertextuality. Sterne played games with the reader using intertextuality. Following his narrative is a challenge for a reader, since the quality and the mode of perception depends on reader's knowledge of the external texts and his attitude towards them, therefore there are as many alternatives of the perceptions as there are readers that are the recipients of the given text.

One of the most prominent elements of Sterne's narrative style was his punctuation and using unconventional typography. Sterne valued the typography as much as the words, made it the part of the narrative. In "Tristram Shandy" typography loses its function as a mere illustration and becomes

meaning itself, therefore, it is inseparable from the text. The physical form of the "Tristram Shandy" text is contrastive from other texts of XVIII century novels even at the first glance. It is full of various typographic elements, especially dashes. Sterne manipulates with page appearance, numerations, sequences. In some cases he uses typography to demonstrate and explain the narrative line being used, that is interesting metafictional approach towards typography, as it acknowledges the fact that verbal space is not enough for narrative. The nature of this technique has prominent links with the relatively new and still unexplored or, better to say, still un-flourished style in literature, named "Ergodic". That is explained as a text the perception of which requires nontrivial effort from the recipient. Examples of ergodic literature may use unconventional page layouts, blank spaces, different elements of punctuation, cards, letters, maps, etc.

In spite of the fact that literature of this style is still new and requires much more time for development and analysis, we have some interesting examples of ergodic novels and technique originated by their great predecessor Laurence Sterne.

In conclusion, it is worth remarking that one of the less read authors from the XVIII century up to modern era, Laurence Sterne, whose works were highly unconventional of his period, proved himself the genies predictor of the most important traits of postmodern literature. More than two centuries earlier of postmodernism, he experimented the narrative technique that combined almost all the elements of postmodern metafiction, intertextuality and ergodic narrative, accordingly Laurence Sterne was one of the most important creators of postmodern approach to the narrative technique.