The distinctive element in impressionism is imagination, which distinguishes, for example, a piece of painting from a photograph. Impressionism is suggestion, as contrasted with description. Impressionism evokes an atmosphere; description appeals to reason and understanding. Impressionism appeals to our imagination, and awakens emotive and aesthetic response. It arouses our feelings appropriate to a certain idea, rather than representing the idea objectively. Subjectivity is the key-note of impressionism.

Both Fielding and Sterne, for example, have described the beauty of a charming woman. Fielding builds up the appeal of the beautiful Sophia Western by describing the details of her physical appearance. He thus refers to 'the nice proportion of her arms', the 'symmetry in her limbs'. He refers to her black hair,

"so luxuriant that it reached her middle"¹,

and gracefully curled in her neck, to her 'full', even eyebrows, her lustrous 'black eyes', her 'exactly regular' nose, her mouth and teeth('two rows of ivory'), her rosy lips, her 'long' and 'finely turned' neck, and so on. Sterne has nothing to do with this method of descriptive detailing. He seems to mock at such methods, in his asking his reader to

"paint her (widow Wadman) to your own mind"² and leaving a blank page for that reason. Later, when the author has to 'paint her' himself, he says nothing of her physical appearance. He only refers to her left eye - the eye that
had 'but one lambent delicious fire', and was

"full of gentle salutations - and soft responses - speaking - not like the trumpet stop of some ill-made organ, in which many an eye I talk to, holds coarse converse - but whispering soft - like the last low accents of an expiring saint".

Sterne's 'last low accents of an expiring saint' is no less beautiful than Shelley's 'last cloud of an expiring storm'. Instead of describing the object of beauty, Sterne evokes a romantic atmosphere. His language is charged with feeling, and throbs with his fine sensibility. It is impressionistic, for it gives the tone and effect, without elaborate detail. It does not describe an object or an idea; it 'renders' a subjective experience, by recalling the moment or moments of that experience with all its associated feeling.

The nature of Sterne's impressionistic genius:

Sterne's artistic sensibility, as revealed in his love of music and painting, which are the chief impressionistic arts, was something unique among the great novelists of his age. Richardson, the specialist of the heart - particularly the female heart, is preoccupied with the minute study of mental states and feelings. There is rarely any occasion, or hint, in Richardson, of the appreciation of the fine arts. Fielding swears by conformity to nature or real life, which, he says, is the true province of the comic; for "life everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous".

Observation of manners and human character, rather than beauty of art, fascinates Fielding. Smollett was rarely moved by
artistic beauty. Even the best pieces of Raphael and Michael Angola left him cold and critical. Raphael's Madonna, for example, he finds 'defective in dignity and sentiment'. Michael Angola - according to him -

"seems to have had very little idea of grace".9

Sterne's creative inspiration as an author, on the other hand, is derived, in a considerable measure, from contemplation of artistic beauty - particularly of music and painting.

(a) Music and Sterne's art:

In his brief autobiographical fragment Sterne mentions 'Books, painting, fiddling' among his amusements, as a clergyman. So Tristram says that he is

"both fiddler and painter, according as the fly stings".10

These personal accounts are supplemented by Sterne's inspired descriptions of musical atmosphere in his novel. The 'lame youth' must play his pipe and tabourin while Nannette dances in joyful abandon, and his sister,

"who had stolen her voice from heaven"11, sings alternately with him.

"...'twas a Gascoigne roundelay. ... The nymphs joined in unison, and their swains an octave below them -".12

Traveller Tristram's heart beats to music as he contemplates the joyous celebration of Virgin Mary's Nativity by the French people. In the sermon on the Prodigal Son, we again find Sterne emphasizing the vital part played by music in evoking joy and the kindly passions. Here, while he preserves the religious
spirit of the Scripture, the impressionist Sterne adds to it a rich sensuousness and a modern humanistic significance (see ante, Chap. VII, pp. 136-7).

Sterne equates his art of writing to that of a musician —

"... to write a book is for all the world like humming a song — be but in tune with yourself, ... 'tis no matter how high or how low you take it".16

Dull writings he calls 'the lowest and flattest compositions'.

Preacher Homenas's sermon-notes were read by Tristram as the notes of music; he found the 'modulation' 'very well' and the 'tune' 'tolerable'. In course of narrating his 'Life and Opinions', Tristram indulges in a musical digression — in which, in a relaxed mood, he evokes through words the joyful notes of a musical instrument. He imagines himself playing on a fiddle and changing the key to bring the tune in harmony with his relaxed, happy mood. Sterne was no mere lover of music; he constantly interweaves its charms into his pages.

We find him frequently expressing his ideas through music and the use of musical terms. Parson Yorick in the novel rates his sermons in musical terms. One (sermon) is 'l'octava alta' (i.e., in the high octave), another 'Con strepito' (i.e., uproariously), and so on. These musical metaphors bring into Yorick's mind 'very distinct ideas' of the several sermons. Referring to the conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Shandy on the amorous attack of widow Wadman on Toby, the author says that he would report it fully later; it "shall be thumbed over by Posterity in a chapter apart —".20
As a musician thumbs over, or plays with fingers, the piano-keys, and enjoys music, so— the author hopes— his book will be enjoyed by posterity.

The musical quality of Sterne's art is no less evident in his characterization. Sterne describes his characters—their feelings, voice, and even their moods, in musical terms. Parson Yorick is 'a musical man'. The power of music in restoring the serenity of spirit threatened by the blind arrogance of reason is quaintly illustrated in Uncle Toby's silently withdrawing to himself and whistling 'Lillabullero' in the midst of polemical discussions; this he does to regain his spiritual tranquillity, whenever his simple faith in the values of life is assailed by the dry polemics of reason. He does it, for example, at the Visitation Dinner, when the Church scholars, after much argumentation and quoting of chapter and verse, arrive at the strange conclusion that

"the mother is not of kin to her child".

We find Toby whistling 'Lillabullero' again, when the Catholic Dr. Slop reads the long list of curses from Ernulphus. As Slop reads—

"May he (i.e., Obadiah) be cursed in living, in dying";

Uncle Toby

"kept whistling one continued note to the end of the sentence";

in blissful indifference to Slop, a castigator of humanity. Uncle Toby, whistling his 'Lillabullero', is not a mere comic figure. He is a symbol of the re-assertion of human spirit over blind reason and dead tradition; and it is fitting that this
is done through the agency of music.

Sterne makes us recognize his characters in various ways, by the use of musical terms. The slow accents of love are 'slow, low, dry chat, five notes below the natural tone'; and the stirring of feelings within Tristram at this idea is 'a vibration in the strings, about the region of the heart'.

The representation of feeling in terms of musical vibration is even better revealed in one of Sterne's letters to a charming lady-friend, whose beauty and grace of form had inspired him to describe her as 'a System of harmonic vibrations ... the sweetest and best tuned of all instruments'. After the author bids adieu to the fille de chambre after a two-hour 'sentimental' meeting with her in his room, he stays at the gate for some time. To go back instantly - he says - would spoil the sensation of a warmed-up heart, which(sensation) he loved to enjoy quietly, like the after-effects of a piece of music. Going back would be

"like touching a cold key with a flat third to it, upon the close of a piece of music, which had call'd forth my affections".26

Sometimes, even the moods of Sterne's characters are rendered in musical terms. As Walter Shandy holds his wig with his right hand, his left hand tries to reach his low right coat-pocket for the India handkerchief; he is extremely agitated in the effort - which is evident from the violent knitting of his brows and the extravagant contortion of his body. Anyone seeing him would be agitated likewise; his spirits would flare up to keep concord, as between two musical instruments;
Sterne — we see — conceives a scene of disturbance in different terms from Fielding. While Fielding would describe it in the 'classical' mock-heroic manner — as, for instance, in the brawl-scene in *Tom Jones*, Sterne conceives it as an impressionist.

Another impressionistic device of Sterne's in his characterization is seen in his equating of human voice to musical sound. Uncle Toby's response to Obadiah in the latter's own words — namely, 'Poor creature!' (Obadiah had referred to the coach-horse of the Shandy family, who was unshod), is described as 'vibrating the note back again, like a string in unison'. As the high vigorous tone of corporal Trim, who was narrating his brother Tom's love-story to his master Toby, slows down, the author says —

"...he had lost the sportable key of his voice, which gave sense and spirit to his tale".31

Then, in his effort to recapture it Trim

"...he had lost the sportable key of his voice, which gave sense and spirit to his tale".31

As the Shandy couple talk, the novelist uses the word 'piano' to indicate the soft voice of Mrs. Shandy, and 'fortissimo' to indicate the strong, loud voice of Mr. Shandy. Uncle Toby does not 'read' the letter (conveying the news of Bobby's death); he "hummed over the letter". The expression suggests the slow, soft voice of Toby, and his gentle manner of reading.32
(b) Painting and Sterne's art:

The aim of both literature and painting is to give aesthetic pleasure. Dryden quotes du Fresnoy, the French author of De arte graphica (The Art of Painting) as saying that

"the chief end of painting is, to please the eyes; and 'tis one great end of poetry to please the mind." 34

Though Dryden points out that the chief end of painting "is to please", and that of poetry "is to instruct", he concedes that

"if we consider the artists themselves on both sides, certainly their aims are the very same: they would both make sure of pleasing, and that in preference to instruction" 34

Both aim at beauty; for

"that which is the most beautiful is the most noble subject" 35

Sterne, likewise, regards 'beauty' (that conveys 'true pleasure') as higher than 'truth' (i.e., mere physical truth, or presentation of facts) -

"Writers of my stamp have one principle in common with painters. Where an exact copying makes our pictures less striking, we choose the less evil; deeming it even more pardonable to trespass against truth, than beauty." 36

"... the insensible more or less, determine the precise line of beauty in the sentence, as well as in the statue! How do the slight touches of the chisel, the pencil, the pen, the fiddle-stick et caetera, et caetera, give the true swell, which gives the true pleasure!" 37

In an age of reason and predominant understanding, Sterne stands as the solitary exponent of literary impressionism, 38 at least in fiction. He hates 'set dissertations'; -
"... 'tis one of the silliest things in one of them, to darken your hypothesis by placing a number of tall, opaque words, one before another, in a right line, betwixt your own and your reader's conception — when in all likelihood, if you had looked about, you might have seen something standing, or hanging up, which would have cleared the point at once —."

Sterne, thus, often conceives beauty of form in terms of painting. In a love-letter to his friend, Catherine de Fourmantel, he conjures up her beauty in terms of a "picture in black, which best becomes you".

Sometimes we find him appreciating even beauty of nature in terms of the laws of painting. Reaching Paris at night, Tristram cannot see its full beauty on account of the insufficiency and uncertainty of the candle light. Confessing, however, to the beauty of the candle light dimly shining in the darkness of the night, he describes it in terms of the artistic beauty produced by the effect of light and shade in a picture.

Sterne thinks in pictures and images. In his portrayal of characters, he reveals his exquisite artistry in word-painting. The head of the begging monk, in S.J., "was one of those heads which Guido has often painted; and his "thin spare form ... was the attitude of Entreaty."

The red countenance of Walter Shandy, caused by excitement and mental agitation, at once reminds the author of a red print. As Mrs. Shandy stands eavesdropping at the parlour door, listening to the conversation of the Shandy brothers, Sterne says that
"the listening slave, with the Goddess of Silence at his back, could not have given a finer thought for an intaglio".43

Not characters only; situations, too, are tendered in terms of colour and drawing. Many of the scenes in the novel(T.S.) are fine specimens of word-painting. The Nannette scene, the scene of the distracted Maria, the death scene of Le Fever, may be cited as examples. Sterne has the artist's sense of colour. Nannette's hair "was a dark chestnut approaching rather to a black". Sometimes, Sterne's art turns even insignificant drab details into a very feast of the eyes. While writing an account of his travels in France, narrator Tristram brings in the story of the Abbess of Andouillets and Margarita, his purpose being to indulge in a dig at the Roman Catholics for their religious fetishes. But his pictorial imagination for a while plays truant to his comic purpose, and stays lovingly with the scenic set-up. As the Abbess and Margarita get ready for their journey, we see the old calesh lined with the green frieze, drawn out in the morning sun; we see the gardener, who will drive the carriage, leading out the two mules; we see a couple of lay sisters 'busied in darning the lining, on and ... in sewing/the shreds of yellow binding'; we see the under-gardener dressing the muleteer's hat, the tailor assorting four dozens of bells for the harness - whistling to each bell as he ties it to the harness; we see the double row of beggars standing ready on the road to receive alms; we see the entry of the Abbess and Margarita into the calesh, the nuns bidding farewell to them beautifully - each
streaming out the end of her veil in the air, the Abbess and Margarita looking up to heaven and then to the nuns (as a silent invocation of God's blessings on them). These details are of little significance to the story; but they are of vital importance to the impressionist art of our author.

Sterne's presentation of ideas in visual terms is as subtle as it is interesting. He thinks of flattery, for example; and the picture of a man kneeling in the dirt at once comes to his mind. The idea of disproportionate excellence is represented by the sudden rise of a perpendicular precipice from the wide-spread vale below. Sterne, no doubt, takes the idea from Montaigne, whom he mentions too; but its pictorial vivification is our author's own.

(c) Impressionism in his travel accounts:

Sterne's travel accounts (Sentimental Journey, and Tristram Shandy, Bk. VII) bear the same impress of his impressionistic art. Fielding (Voyage to Lisbon, 1755), Goldsmith (The Traveller, 1764), Smollett (Travels through France and Italy, 1766) - all wrote as observers of manners and institutions, as social commentators. Fielding, for example, writes his Voyage as a reformer at large; he misses no occasion to point a moral from his observation of 'the customs and manners'. He sets up 'public utility' as the aim of his work. It is interesting to note that he finds this instructional 'motif' even in the Greek epics. In his Voyage, Fielding stresses, among other things, the need of his country's naval superiority, suggests the punishment of England's 'fish-mongers'. 
who trade on the poverty of thousands, and so on. Observation of manners of God's wonderful and varied creation, which gives us both amusement and instruction, is the aim of travel, according to Fielding—as we can see from the Man of the Hill's account of Europe given to Tom Jones. Smollett's aim in his Travels is best brought out in the full title of his work—namely, Travels through France and Italy, containing Observations on Character, Customs, Religion, Government, Police, Commerce, Arts and Antiquities, with a particular description of the town, territory, and climate of Nice: to which is added a register of the Weather, kept during a residence of eighteen months in that city. Goldsmith's Traveller is a string of socio-moral observations.

Sterne is not an observer or moralist of manners. It is true that his design in the Sentimental Journey was a moral one—namely,

"to teach us to love the world and our fellow-creatures better than we do", 60

But the principal interest in S.J. lies in his analysis of "those gentler passions and affections which aid so much" 61 to the advancement of humanity. Sterne, above everything, is an artist, and derives a kind of aesthetic pleasure from his study of the minutiae of feelings and mental states of whoever he comes across on the way. To traveller Tristram, Jamatone, the inn-keeper's daughter, is interesting, not because of her simple beauty, but because she is a human being, glowing in the present moment of her existence in sensation and feeling. In the Sentimental Journey, there is a fine
record of silent play of feelings between the author and the Grisset in her shop, where he has come to purchase gloves. The Grisset measured them one by one across his hand, but they would not fit. She requests him to try one pair.

"She held it open; my hand slipped into it at once. It will not do, said I, shaking my head a little. No, said she, doing the same thing. There are certain combined looks of simple subtility, where whim, and sense, and seriousness, and nonsense, are so blended, that all the languages of Babel set loose together could not express them: they are communicated and caught so instantaneously, that you can scarce say which party is the infector".63

Another fine example of how Sterne conveys the meaning by suggestion, rather than by description, is provided by the Temptation scene in S.J. The 'sentimental traveller' meets the fille de chambre in his room, 'one fine still evening' in May; the setting sun reflects through the 'crimson window-curtain' a 'warm tint' into the fair face of the fille. She blushes; so does he. Then the traveller, analyzing the delicate sensation that brought forth the blush, says -

"There is a sort of a pleasing half-guilty blush, where the blood is more in fault than the man: 'tis sent impetuous from the heart, and virtue flies after it - not to call it back, but to make the sensation of it more delicious to the nerves - 'tis associated. But I'll not describe it".65

Subjectivity rules Sterne's experience as a traveller. In his account of his visit to Paris, Sterne - as Tristram - does not describe as a chronicler or diarist how or when he reached Paris. He renders in words those moments of his psychological and sensitive reaction to what he heard, saw and felt. As he arrives in the city, he notes, of course,
'Ten cooks' shops and twice the number of barbers'; but these facts of objective experience by themselves are of little importance to him; they are important only insofar as they awaken his subjective and sensitive response to them. He relives those moments of his first acquaintance with Paris. They become real to him in the sound of the whip of the coach-driver, in the good look and nasty smell of the faintly lit streets, the coachman's curses on the lean horse, and so on.

Sterne's vital spirits, and his intense feeling overflow into his language. About the happy family of the French peasant, in whose house the author received a most heartwarming and informal welcome, he says -

"The family consisted of an old grey-headed man and his wife, with five or six sons and sons-in-law, and their several wives, and a joyous genealogy out of them. They were all sitting down together to their lentil-soup; a large wheaten loaf was in the middle of the table; and a flaggon of wine at each end of it, promised joy through the stages of the repast - 'twas a feast of love." Expressions, like 'a joyous genealogy' and 'promised joy through the stages of the repast - 'twas a feast of love', throb with the sensation of the traveller's joy felt on the occasion, and recall the moments of his subjective experience. How a father's kind and troubled spirit is expressed in his opportunities to his Prodigal Son, as the latter prepares to leave, can be seen in these words of Sterne's -

"Poor inconsiderate youth! From whose arms art thou flying? From what a shelter art thou going forth into the storm? Art thou weary of a father's affection, of a father's care? or, Hopest thou to find a warmer interest, a truer counsellor, or a kinder friend in a land of strangers, where youth is made a prey, and so many thousands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their spoils?"
Sterne's subjectivity owes to the Lockean concept of sensation, and is fortified by his own experience. Locke, whom Sterne considered as his master, and whom he read throughout his life, traced all knowledge to sensation and reflection. Locke set up sensation as the primary source of all ideas. Through this sensation Sterne apprehended all experience. His *Sentimental Journey* is a record of his delicious and fine sensations of all his experiences as a traveller. Sterne's psychology had a physiological basis too. He was extremely sensitive, and felt the pulsation of life, at almost every moment of his existence. His kindly feeling towards the French people is a heart-warming physical sensation with him -

"I felt every vessel in my frame dilate, the arteries beat all cheerily together".72

As he writes the sad story of Maria of Moulines, he feels his pulse "beat languid". Sterne's impressionism thus acquires an intensity from his faith in sensation and his own psychological experience.

(d) **Impressionism in his treatment of Nature:**

Nature, or the world of natural phenomena, figured poorly in 18th century fiction. That age was pre-eminently an age of urbanity. In the novel, wherever there are any references to Nature, it is mostly interpreted in terms of urban values. Even Crusoe, who had the greatest opportunity and time to study and love Nature, is rather indifferent in this respect. He notes, of course, the natural phenomena, but his
mind is set on calculating economic gains and losses. Indeed, *Robinson Crusoe* may be aptly called the manifesto of the rising commercialism of the age. *Richardson*, the analyst of emotion, is more or less concerned with domestic problems—chiefly, marriage. *Fielding*, the great novelist of manners, takes us out in the wide world, but he is rarely inspired by Nature. Indeed, Nature to him has no glory of its own.

"In truth"—Fielding says—"mountains, rivers, heroes and gods, owe great part of their existence to the poets".74

Fielding's awareness of natural phenomena is conditioned by his urban culture; Nature is interpreted in terms of the values of urban social life. The morning, for example, enchants him only as a symbol of a beautiful young lady with a countenance beaming with fresh youth. The sun is a gallant, stealing from his wife's chamber, and paying court to Lady 75

*Goldsmith*’s *Vicar of Wakefield*, a fine story of English country life, contains few hints of appreciation of natural phenomena. And *Smollett*, even in inspiring surroundings of Nature, remains blissfully inane to its appeal. As he passes through the Burgundian hills, he notices the vines 'from top, to bottom', but his spirit does not wake up to the overwhelming scenic beauty of the place. His personal adventures on the road, his 'petty disputes with landladies, postmasters, and postillions', fill his mind all through.

Nature does not figure much in Sterne's novel, which is pre-eminently a discussion novel, nor in his *Sentimental Journey*, which is a study of the minutiae of the heart.
But there are occasional references to Nature and her work, in his novel, which are significant, as they bear the stamp of impressionism. We notice the vital principle of impressionism, namely, subjectivity and imaginative quality, in Sterne's treatment of Nature. The bracing atmosphere of the Burgundian hills, laden with vines, informs the spirit of the muleteer, 'a son of Adam' -

"The day had been sultry - the evening was delicious - the Burgundian hill on which it grew was steep - a little tempting bush over the door of a cool cottage at the foot of it, hung vibrating in full harmony with the passions - a gentle air rustled distinctly through the leaves - 'Come - come, thirsty muleteer - come in'."

Perhaps, alone of all English novelists of his time, Sterne conceived of Nature as a moulding force. Nature has a hand in the making of human character, and in influencing human spirit. The lack of vitality in Yorick's character is explained in terms of Nature's exaltation. The intimate affinity between Nature and man's spirit is revealed beautifully in the scene, where we find Tristram in rapture over the prospect of a boat-journey on the Rhone -

"... what a fresh spring in the blood! to behold upon the banks advancing and retiring, the castles of romance, whence courteous knights have whilome rescued the distressed - and see vertiginous, the rocks, the mountains, the cataracts, and all the hurry which Nature is in with all her great works about her".79

Nature awakens his creative spirit too. As he travels through these sportive plains, and under this genial sun (of South France), where at this instant all flesh is running out piping, fiddling, and dancing to the vintage, and every step that's taken the judgment is surprised by the imagination"80.

Sterne - as Tristram - says that he will give free reins to
his imagination and not be bound by the set rules of composition. His imagination takes wing in these beautiful and bracing surroundings of Nature, and inspires him to write now the account of Uncle Toby's amours - 'the choicest morsel of my whole story!', breaking his earlier promise of writing his story 'in a tolerable straight line'. In his subjective and imaginative appraisal of Nature, Sterne reminds us of the coming Romantics. He traces Nature's impress on human emotions, moods, and creative spirit.

(e) Lyricism:

The impressionistic character of Sterne's writing, heightened by his own sensibility, imparts to his work a lyrical grace. Sterne's prose carries the impress of a spontaneous poetic spirit, that vibrates with feeling. Two typical examples of this are provided by Sterne's treatment of the ideas of love and death. Speaking of the redemptive power of love, he says -

"The fire caught, and the whole city, like the heart of one man, open'd itself to Love".83

The idea of death, away from home and friends, Sterne takes from Montaigne; but he renders it his own way, poetically.

Montaigne:

"Let us live, laugh and be merry amongst our friends, but die and yield up the ghost amongst strangers, and such as we know not. He who hath money in his purse, shall ever find some ready to turn his head, make his bed, rub his feet, attend him, and that will trouble and importune him no longer than he list; and will ever shew him an indifferent and well-composed countenance, and without
grumbling or grudging give a man leave to do what he please, and complain as he list. I daily endea­vour by discourse to shake off this childish humo­ur and inhuman conceit, which causeth, that by our griefs and pains we ever desire to move our friends to compassion and sorrow for us, and with a kind of sympathy to condole our miseries and passions".84

And Sterne:

"Was I in a condition to stipulate with Death, ... I should certainly declare against submitting to it before my friends; ... the Disposer of all things may so order it, that it happens not to me in my own house — but rather in some decent inn — at ho­me, I know it,— the concern of my friends, and the last services of wiping my brows, and smoothing my pillow, which the quivering hand of pale affection shall pay me, will so crucify my soul, that I shall die of a distemper which my physician is not aware of: but in an inn the few cold offices I wanted, would be purchased with a few guineas, and paid me with an undisturbed, but punctual attention".85

The 'sympathy to condole our miseries' in Montaigne(in Flori­o's translation) becomes 'the quivering hand of pale affect­ion' in Sterne. Sterne has rendered the idea poetically, and imparted to it an imaginative intensity. Sterne's expression is alive with feeling and suggestion.

Cadence. Sterne often uses words with a sweet musical so­und. His poetic fancy sometimes leads him to coin a word to create a musical effect. Thus he will say 'journier' for tra­veller, 'compursion'('compusions of the mouth') in the sen­se of 'a pursing together', 'Decemberly'('Decemberly nights of a seven years' widowhood') to mean 'resembling December in dreariness and darkness', and so on. His musical effect is at times produced by the sounds, 'r' and 'n' — often exist­ing in combination. He says 'caravanseras of rest' for inns. Tristram would give his shirt 'off my back to be burned into
Tinder'. Obadiah's report of Bobby's death first brought into Susannah's mind the idea of possessing the 'green satin night-gown' of Mrs. Shandy. But perhaps, Sterne's finest line — one of the best in all English prose — is that which he puts in the mouth of Maria of Moulines, in S.J. Poor Maria, asked how she bore all her travails, says —

"God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb".92

This is what our author made of an outlandish proverb —

"To a close-shorn sheep, God gives wind by measure".93

Sterne gives it a most beautiful poetic turn, by not only compressing the sentence, but by working a magic of euphony with the letters, 'm', 'r', 'n'. Sterne's sentence reminds us of the Authorized Version. Indeed, when Sterne warms up to a tender sentiment, his utterance often catches the cadence of the Bible. This is how he expresses his feelings for poor Maria —

"... and wast thou in my own land, where I have a cottage, I would take thee to it and shelter thee: thou shouldst eat of my own bread and drink of my own cup; I would be kind to thy Sylvio (Maria's dog); in all thy weaknesses and wanderings I would seek after thee and bring thee back. When the sun went down I would say my prayers; and when I had done thou shouldst play thy evening song upon thy pipe, nor would the incense of my sacrifice be worse accepted for entering heaven along with that of a broken heart".94

Conclusion:

Sterne's prose style gains richness from his poetic sensibility, his feeling and subjectivity, from his frequent drawing upon the fine arts, like music and painting, for self-expression. English literary impressionism did not
originate with Sterne. In the Authorized Version there are lyrical appeals to the inner life of feeling. Donne's poetry is distinguished no less by its subjective note than by his metaphysical conceits. But, for England's first impressionist in fiction, we have to come to 18th century, to Laurence Sterne.