

ADAPTING *TRISTRAM SHANDY*

by

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For Sterne.

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ABSTRACT

Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, has been noted as an unconventional eighteenth-century novel and it has long been considered unadaptable and unfilmable. In the last decade, however, two popular adaptations of *Tristram Shandy* have appeared in new media forms: Martin Rowson's 1996 graphic novel and Michael Winterbottom's 2005 film. Since Sterne's text denies the kind of transfer typical of literary adaptations, Rowson and Winterbottom adapt the conceptual elements. Through adaptation and media theory, this thesis defines the Shandean elements of Sterne's novel and locates the qualities of the text retained in adaptation. Rowson and Winterbottom adapt the conceptual properties of *Tristram Shandy*, 'the spirit of the text,' into two distinct mediums. In an exploration of the conventions of each medium, this thesis argues that the adaptations of *Tristram Shandy* are true to its spirit, and both successfully adapt the unadaptable novel.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Given its reputation as an “unreadable” book, as the novel “most hated” by undergraduate English students (Gow 14), and as a text that needs a manual on how to teach it,¹ figuring out the attraction and execution of adapting Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* is a tough (chest)-nut to crack. Since the publication of the first two volumes in 1759, and the publication of the subsequent volumes over most of the 1760s, Sterne’s non-linear, digressive, satirical, bawdy, frustrating novel has been transferred to various forms of materials and media. In its own time, it was the subject of many imitations, doggerel poems, “poetical epistles,”² and curio trinkets like porcelain dishes, playing cards, statuettes, and “sentimental” fans.³ Under the auspices of Patrick Wildgust, the curator of Shandy Hall, in partnership with the University of York, and with the support of the Laurence Sterne Trust, various kinds of Shandean adaptations have appeared in different media over the past decade: a radio drama produced by BBC Radio 4, an orchestral arrangement as part of the Practical Project 2009, and a theatrical comedy piece by HC Productions, performed around the UK and in Coxwold village. There have also been woodcut reproductions, exhibits, auctions, and many other “ornamentations” of the graphic and artistic elements of the novel.⁴ *Tristram Shandy* is also the subject of Martin Rowson’s 1996 graphic novel adaptation, which came back into print in 2011, and director Michael Winterbottom’s 2005 feature film, *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*, starring Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon. All this is to say that Sterne’s novel is a mine of gems that sparkle in new formats. And yet, the novel is still criticized for its structure, subject, and style; if not

criticized, its anomalous status as an eighteenth-century text is sometimes excused as an early figuration of modern and postmodern aesthetics.⁵ Even with all of the recent interest in adapting Sterne's 'life' work, it is still an "unread classic" (New "Review" 579), and the adaptations have been considered failures (580). Regardless of public opinion, the "unfilmable" has been filmed (Voigts-Virchow 149); the un-adaptable has been adapted.

Underlying the criticism about *Tristram Shandy*'s transfer to new media is the concept of representation, a central point around which adaptation studies orbit. For the most part, critical discussion of literary adaptations has been focused on the "fidelity" of the adaptation (McFarlane 8). Only in the last few years has this approach been challenged; it has been deemed narrow, "unilluminating" (McFarlane 8), and leads to evaluation based upon personal tastes. Indeed, some assert that "infidelity" is a much more enlightening framework (Newell 79). The infidelity approach frees the new work from an explicit dependence on the original. We see this more often, however, in remakes (a form of adaptation) of already made films rather than literary adaptations.⁶ The infidelity approach, however, is almost *too* liberating; the generative text becomes only a referent, which raises questions about the extent to which an unfaithful adaptation *is* an adaptation.⁷ Other theorists have replaced "fidelity" with a much more ethereal, indeterminate, and enigmatic approach: adaptation as a rendering of the "spirit of the text" (MacCabe 7). This concept of the "spirit," while it widens the ways in which adaptations can be critically investigated, has yet to be defined as a concept that encapsulates or represents the nature of adaptations across genres and media in a widely applicable or determinable way. It is helpful as a metaphor, but it is also a scapegoat. Colin MacCabe argues that the notion of "spirit" avoids "in its very formulation any

notion of a literal fidelity” (7) to the text; that is, it is vague enough to dodge the blows of fidelity criticism, and can validate even the freest of adaptations. In addition, spirit “demonstrates a much greater sophistication in the general culture” (MacCabe 7), whatever *that* means. In recognition of this lack of general definition that “spirit” holds (or does not hold), each usage in adaptation criticism has to be particularized to the specific, original source of the adaptation, which can take on various meanings, depending on the theorist. Spirit can account for the “themes” that have been adapted (Hutcheon 20), for instance. But this ‘spiritual’ approach only works for films that *conceptually* adapt the original text.

In recognition of the fairly conceptual and abstract applications of “spirit,” it becomes clear that there are gradations of adaptations. There is the first level of adaptation that attempts the direct text-to-screen transfer. Then, there is the modernized or reworked adaptation. And, finally, there is the kind of adaptation that is true to the spirit of the text. If spirit is abstract, on the third level, then fidelity, at the ground floor, is literal. The fidelity approach as a critical tool is thus relegated to the first level of adaptations that attempt direct text-to-screen transfers. The “heritage film” (Mayer 1), for instance, is a genre within which the primary aim is to recreate the text and its contexts, historical or social, to the word, like the BBC Films versions of the novels of Jane Austen, for example. Other recent and notable “faithful” literary adaptations include Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* (Forster 2007), Cormac MacCarthy’s *The Road* (Hillcoat 2009), and the ten film and television versions of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, with the most recent version by Cary Fukunaga (2011). Really, this list of direct adaptation films is endless; there is significant interest in adaptations that attempt the

direct transfer, as they confirm or deny the reader's perception of the original work. Moreover, they are "familiar" and "novel" (Hutcheon 114). Like literary adaptations, film adaptations of comic books and graphic novels can also be appropriated to the fidelity camp because these original texts essentially provide film-makers with an already drafted storyboard to replicate, especially in the transfer to animation.⁸ And, graphic novel adaptations of literary texts often have the same objective: replication (Hutcheon 7). Even if these kinds of adaptations encourage the fidelity approach, the fidelity approach is still the "umbilical cord that nourishes the judgments" of critics, viewers, and readers, who prefer to comment upon "what are effectively aesthetic and moral values" (Andrew 27). The fidelity approach is thus too subjective and too personal as an approach for some films that attempt to modernize or capture the spirit of a text; unless, that is, we might treat fidelity as broadly applicable to any adaptation that attempts to remain true to the spirit, if not necessarily the letter, of an original. Spirit is thus a metaphor for the qualities of a text that are recognized in the adaptation, and spirit is what is retained in the transfer to a new format. Moreover, the notion of spirit is conceptual in a way that modernized or reworked adaptations are not.

Modernized and reworked versions of literary texts have different aims than direct text-to-screen transfers. The goal of a modernized or reworked adaptation is to create a film that is at once reminiscent of the original, but is a "good movie" in its own right (Hutcheon 121). This is not to say that direct transfers are not "good" on their own, but there is more room for broad interpretation and artistic distinction in reworked classics. Films that fit this bill include *Clueless* (Heckerling 1995), *Romeo + Juliet* (Luhrmann 1996), *Great Expectations* (Cuaron 1998), *Ten Things I Hate About You* (Junger 1999),

Cruel Intentions (Kumble 1999), and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Burton 2005). All of these films update the plots and characters of their source text in contemporary settings and situations, with the exception of *Romeo + Juliet*, which retains the Elizabethan dialogue. This style of adaptation removes the literature from its original context and centralizes the continuities between the historical and the contemporary. In the case of *Cruel Intentions*, for instance, an upper-class Manhattan-version of *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, the audience is reminded that, even in the 1990s, dirty deeds do not go unpunished, especially amongst the most powerful. And while the source text and the adaptation are in dialogue, the film is far enough removed from its original context that it neither alienates the uninitiated, nor relies upon the original for its cinematic success. While the “appeal” of direct transfers lies in the audience’s relationship with the original text, what Hutcheon calls the “pleasure of accessibility” (117), modernized adaptations have the ability to be viewed in isolation from their sources, and, in most cases, do not explicitly acknowledge their sources, like *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola 1979).

Not all adaptations adhere to either of these formulae. There are some source texts that evade these types of re-presentations. *Tristram Shandy* is a peculiar, unusual novelistic text, and the only way it can be adapted is conceptually. The conceptual level of adaptation is appropriate for original sources whose qualities make the transfer to new media difficult. And, since *Tristram Shandy* is a particularly unique kind of text, one that denies a linear narrative, is highly intertextual, and obfuscates identities, a direct transfer or even modernized adaptation would be seemingly impossible. *Tristram Shandy* is also a text that calls attention to its own process of becoming a text; Jonathan Romney writes that a “Sternean” adaptation “should reflect its own fabrication” (36). The novel also

manipulates the conventions within which it functions. To adapt *Tristram Shandy*, then, all of these elements of the text have to be retained to make the transfer to new media identifiably Shandean. The Shandean elements of the text operate on the conceptual level of adaptation, because it is the “spirit” of the work that is recognizable in the adaptation, and not always the work itself. Thus, for a text that is apparently impossible to adapt, there are two successful adaptations of *Tristram Shandy* that adhere to this method of adaptation because it is the only way to represent the spirit of the text. To adapt *Tristram Shandy* is to remediate the original qualities of the novel into a new medium. Thus, the unadaptable and “unfilmable” (Voigts-Virchow 149) experimental novel is adapted into a graphic novel and film in the conceptual, Shandean way.

In the first chapter, I pursue a definition of the Shandean, which, I suggest, is a series of combined qualities that convey the Shandean sense of things: experimentation, conversation, and titillation. Sterne's play with conventions, identities, and criticisms, the convergence of the visual and the textual, and the good humour at the heart of Tristram's jokes are elements of *Tristram Shandy* that make the text exuberantly unique. These qualities *can* be adapted into a new medium, and indeed, only in a new medium would a Shandean adaptation succeed. By situating Shandyism as the spirit of the text, we can see how the graphic novel adaptation and the film adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* are true to that Shandean spirit of artistic creation.

In the second chapter, I explore the ways that Rowson adapts *Tristram Shandy* as a graphic novel. Since the conventions of the genre prohibit a direct transfer, Rowson experiments with comic book conventions to recreate the Shandean sense of self-reflexivity and self-awareness. Rowson manipulates the conventions of comic book

narrative in the same way that Sterne manipulates the conventions of novel narrative. Rowson also incorporates the text and intertext of *Tristram Shandy* through visual icons and signifiers, rather than through the word, which captures Sterne's attention to the convergence of media forms and the multimodality of the text. Because the graphic novel as a medium offers the same kind of reading experience as *Tristram Shandy*, Rowson's adaptation prioritizes the image over the word, and remediates the textuality with visuality. While Rowson's graphic novel is its own work, it enacts the spirit of the text through its incorporation of the elements of the text that are uniquely Shandean.

In the third chapter, the principles of film adaptation are challenged by Winterbottom's cinematic version of *Tristram Shandy*. Through a mixture of cinematic genres and their respective conventions, which all relate in some way to the Shandean elements of the text, Winterbottom presents an adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* that, like the novel, calls attention to the process of its creation. The Shandean elements are retained in the adaptation to remediate the novel's properties into a new format, which, given its contemporaneous setting, makes the text recognizable. Interestingly, Melvyn New argues that “everything bad” about *Tristram Shandy* “seems to have been retained” in *A Cock and Bull Story* (New 580). And, while New's criticisms about the film's “lack of execution” (581) are meant to chastise Winterbottom's efforts, New accidentally acknowledges that there are certain elements of the text that survive the transfer; even if those elements are the 'worst' ones, we still sense the spirit of Sterne through the screen.

What we have, then, is a theory of adaptation that privileges the conceptual elements of the original source. In these two adaptations of Sterne's novel, the Shandean elements of the text are remediates, and the spirit of the text is retained to make the

adaptations true to the novel. *Tristram Shandy* is a unique text because of its construction, style, and self-consciousness. The adaptations are thus unique as a graphic novel and as a film in their own genres because of the ways in which they both command this Shandean sense of presentation. The results are two adaptations of the ‘unadaptable’ text that are faithful to the spirit of *Tristram Shandy*.

CHAPTER 2: ADAPTING THE SHANDEAN

Of all the several ways of beginning a book which are now in practice throughout the known world, I am confident my own way of doing it is the best ----- I'm sure it is the most religious ----- for I begin with writing the first sentence ----- and trusting to Almighty God for the second (490).

Laurence Sterne opens Volume VIII of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, by acknowledging his (now) infamous narrative method. What some call an early experiment in “stream of consciousness” (Bell 43), others (here, Horace Walpole) call an “insipid and tedious performance” (Howes 55). But, Sterne’s narrative style, his “master stroke of digressive skill” (Sterne 63), which he lifts in part from Swift and Fielding (New 616), not to mention his “Cervantik” influence (Sterne, *Letters*, 121), is an element of what scholars, and even Sterne, consider a particularly “Shandean” method. But what exactly does Shandean mean? Is it a tone? A digression? A penis joke? All three? Two contemporary adaptations of Sterne’s novel, Martin Rowson’s graphic novel and Michael Winterbottom’s film, transfer these Shandean elements of the text to new media. Since a “faithful” adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* is bound to fail, the text is remediated on the conceptual level of adaptation: the Shandean “spirit” of the text (Hutcheon 5). The thing about Shandyism, it seems, is that it is hard, if not impossible, to define with a singular meaning. Indeed, much of the text itself gives the reader only half meanings, “amicably” of course.⁹ So if an adaptation purports to retain, even celebrate, the “spirit” of *Tristram Shandy*, or if an adaptation is praised for providing “the spirit of Sterne throughout” (Gow 10), what has been adapted? The “spirit” of the text, or the concept of Shandyism, is thus a metaphor for the qualities that are recognized as

particular to the text: the Shandean way of showing, or telling, or omitting, or innovating. Rather than label it a tone, or spirit, or style, Shandyism should be considered a method, as tempting as it is to call it an anti-method.¹⁰ But I call it a method because of the elements that must combine to result in a final, recognizable Shandean product.¹¹ In this chapter, I will discuss the qualities of the novel that, when brought together, create what we recognize as Shandean, and which is retained in adaptation. A direct text transfer, which is the first level of adaptation, and which has generated an entire discourse community about its “faithful” execution, is denied by Sterne’s text. So, at the forefront of the Shandean method is Sterne’s style of narrative. And part of this style is Sterne’s attention to the medium within which the narrative is presented, the book. Further, the attention to the material and visual qualities of the medium runs against and parodies the conventions of the eighteenth-century novel. The other elements of Shandyism are matters of genre: fictional autobiography, bawdiness, comedy, and satire, with a healthy dash of whatever is lying around, like travel writing, romance, and sentimental fiction. The point here is generic convergence and experimentations with conventions. As an appeal to the epistemological concerns of self-knowledge, layered characterizations inform the shape and structure of personality, and, within that, there is an awareness of and attention to one’s critics (and, at times, an outright rebuttal of their opinions). Even while donning the most serious of robes, however, we must remember the Shandean grin that betrays them.¹² By exploring and defining the Shandean, we can see how adaptations of *Tristram Shandy* are true to the spirit of Sterne.

I. A Shandean Definition

The critical tradition surrounding Shandyism and all things Shandean, including the annual journal *The Shandean*, devoted to all things Sterne, bandy around the terms “Shandy” and “Shandean” quite freely and with implicit meanings. It appears that these can refer and apply to any number of qualities that have some conceptual connection to the novel. Indeed, if I were to list all of the adjectival uses of Shandean, I would reach my word count. Tempting. But a short survey will suffice. As examples, I have come across the following: “Shandean exactness” (Scott in Brewer 811), “Shandean postscript” (Merton 1), “Shandean influence” (Gosse 1), “Shandean mixtures” (Rocha 100), “Shandean elements” (Mallon 144), and “Shandean dialectic” (McNeil 150), all of which call upon a specific quality of the text. In *Shandyism and the Character of Romantic Irony*, Peter Conrad aims for a more substantial definition of the term, and argues that Shandyism refers to “a character and a form: to an inspirationally erratic individual and the chaotic structure he inhabits” (vii). While Conrad’s definition gives a bit of breadth to the moniker, it is still a generalized understanding. But to be fair, Sterne himself was vague in his use of the term. In the novel, we hear of Walters “*Shandean System*” (61), the “*Shandean hypothesis*” (132), and “*Shandean people*” (145). And I am certain Sterne created this Shandean label so that his work could follow the “Quixotic” and “Cervantic.” Following the novel’s success, Sterne’s contemporaries also employed the term. In 1767, Sterne received a “Shandean” walking stick (a Shandy-cane, if you will) from an admirer of the novel in North Carolina, called so because it had “*more handles than one*” (Howes 169);¹³ the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1773 praised Sterne’s “Shandean manner” (Howes 303); and the “Shandean tone” is a conversation subject in William Hill Brown’s

The Power of Sympathy in 1789 (Howes 275). All of these Shandean designations, however, still neglect a particular, comprehensive definition of Shandyism, which suggests that a singular, unified definition just cannot exist. Indeed, as Katherine Turner notes, *Tristram Shandy* resists assimilation to any models proposed” for it (Turner 21), and Dennis W. Allen calls it “part” of this and “part” of that, and “something of a hybrid” (Allen 651). Thus, Shandyism will be considered an umbrella term for what the novel represents conceptually, as an amalgamation of various elements that all contribute to the Shandean *sense* of things. Perhaps it is helpful to think of Shandyism as a genre, of sorts. What are the conventions of the Shandean genre, and how do we recognize them?

Above all else, Sterne’s novel is recognized for its peculiar narrative style, which, we are told, is his intention: “For in writing what I have set about I shall confine myself neither to [Horace’s] rules, nor to any man’s rules that ever lived” (Sterne 8). Described as a “collection of fragments” (Howes 1), with the “whole narration always going backwards” (Howes 55), *Tristram* storytelling is cognitively and conventionally demanding. Working against conventions of eighteenth-century narrative, which range from the first-person autobiography to the epistolary novel, *Tristram* tells his “Life and Opinions” in no particular order except disorder. Just as a tale gets going, the chapter breaks, or the page is ripped out, or the narrator returns to his original thought. As Jeffrey Williams argues, “not only [is *Tristram Shandy*] told out of order,” but the segments “are frequently cut off and fragmentary” (1032). *Tristram* even includes a narrative fragment: in Volume IX, we get the “ninth” segment of the “tenth decad” (Sterne 219) of “Slawkenbergius’s Tale” (Sterne 220-244). And, despite *Tristram*’s promises, to some anecdotes we never return. *Tristram* himself describes his work thus: “my work is

digressive, and it is progressive, too, -- and at the same time” (Sterne 64). There is a sense in which Sterne’s narration, digressive and regressive and yet progressive, works towards a refusal of the conventional structures of narrativity through simultaneity (Williams 1036). “The machinery of my work,” Tristram writes, “is of a species by itself; two contrary motions are introduced into it” (Sterne 63-4) to operate together. While the digressions appear to be subsidiary of the main narrative, the digressions are part of the narrative “as a whole” (Williams 1035). That is, the digressions “inscribe the narrative function” as simultaneous with, as part of, the narrative itself (Williams 1036). To digress *is to* narrate, in the Shandean order of things. Robert Folkenflik suggests that Sterne’s project arose from an “awareness of reigning conventions and their growing staleness” (53), in the eighteenth-century novel. Breaking conventions or making new ones is a feature of the Shandean method.

Until 1759, when the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* hit the market, narratives attempted to create, and then conform to, the developing conventions of the novel, which came to be mainly linear in structure. Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, certain works of Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson, and Johnson’s *Rasselas*, all offer examples of linear narrativity. And most of these examples operate as (attempts at) cohesive representations of human experience. Further, this attention to personal experience grew out of the popularity of biography and autobiography by mid-century due, in large part, to the successes of Johnson’s various *Lives*. But, because of these texts, the conventions of the novel by mid-century “had stabilized enough to be ridiculed” (Barchas 48). *Tristram Shandy* “calls attention to the fictional nature of its text” (Williams 1038), and, moreover, to the fictional nature of linearity as accurate representation. This is not to say, however,

that Sterne is wholly unique in his use and construction of the “self-conscious” narrator;” Wayne C. Booth provides a study of this narrative trend up until the 1750s and places Sterne within an experimental tradition.¹⁴ But what is unique about Sterne’s self-conscious narrativity is the force with which the reader is reminded of the narration, and the act of reading. And Tristram is aware of the extent to which his style makes it difficult for the reader to follow along; “I fear the reader,” Tristram writes, “will immediately throw the book,” but if the reader is “mercurial,” then he will “laugh most heartily at it” (Sterne 46). Basically, the reader is to take Tristram’s experimentations in jest. And although the reader is the butt of the joke, so too is Tristram. Michael Hart writes that Tristram is “a participant and observer, a writer and reader, in his own life and opinions” (71). The distinction is that Tristram controls what we perceive. And, as Christopher Fanning notes, the “unifying principle” is Tristram’s constant presence (429).

Careful attention to and conversation with the reader are features of the Shandean method. Sterne paid a great deal of attention to the reader’s attention, and this is exhibited in many forms. The narrative style is not only interruptive and self-reflexive (we can almost hear Tristram cough), but it includes other forms of the arts and their narrative styles: law, science, religion, history, psychology. That is, *Tristram Shandy* is highly intertextual and appeals to a long list of authors, philosophical works, genres, historical events, locations, current physiological theories, and music, for starters. Unlike Swift, one of Sterne’s greatest influences who found the seriousness of these disciplines “a waste of time” (Ricks xx), Sterne found that they are “more genially comic” (Ricks xx), and are juxtaposed in the novel to show all the ways human experience is represented and understood. Moreover, these disciplinary narratives are often removed from their original

contexts and manipulated to a great degree. The marriage contract of Walter and Elizabeth (Sterne 35-38), for instance, mocks the legal ethos: the verbosity of legalese is contrasted to the colloquial and conversational features of Tristram's speech. And various Latin prayers are only partial in relation to the English 'translations' that face them on the recto (Sterne 154-163). While these textual features of the novel speak to Sterne's interest in textual manipulation, a more tangible element of Sterne's narrative control is the convergence of media forms, especially the visual arts. Sterne's interest in the medium of the book, and the possibilities of manipulation within that format, is part of the Shandean narrative.

Sterne blends elements from other forms of media with his digressive narrative. As Shaun Regan argues, *Tristram Shandy* is the eighteenth-century novel that is "most concerned with, and most dependent upon, the material conditions of its production" (289). Sterne was very interested in the graphic and visual arts, and even tried his hand at amateur painting (Gerard 20). He was certainly an expert doodler. The graphic and visual elements of the text are not only an integral feature of Shandean narrativity, but sometimes replace the textual narrative with a visual one. Peter Jan De Voogd writes that "the text of *Tristram Shandy* is characterized by the highly unusual nature of its many non-verbal features" ("Aesthetic" 383). These non-verbal features take many forms, and it is important to remember that the overall function of the graphic elements, their Shandean quality, is the convergence of many forms of media within the particular medium of the book. The graphic element that we first encounter is the woodcut of Trim reading the sermon, by William Hogarth (and, later, an illustration of Tristram's christening), which Sterne solicited for the London/Dodsley reprint of the first two

volumes.¹⁵ With Hogarth's help, Sterne appeals to the trend of novel illustration in the period,¹⁶ and also to the merger of the visual and the textual. De Voogd observes that Hogarth's plates "fixed the visual features of Shandy Hall's inhabitants until the present day" and remain the main influence for subsequent illustrations" (De Voogd 143). In this case, the visual supplements the textual. But there are many instances in *Tristram Shandy* where the visual replaces the textual.

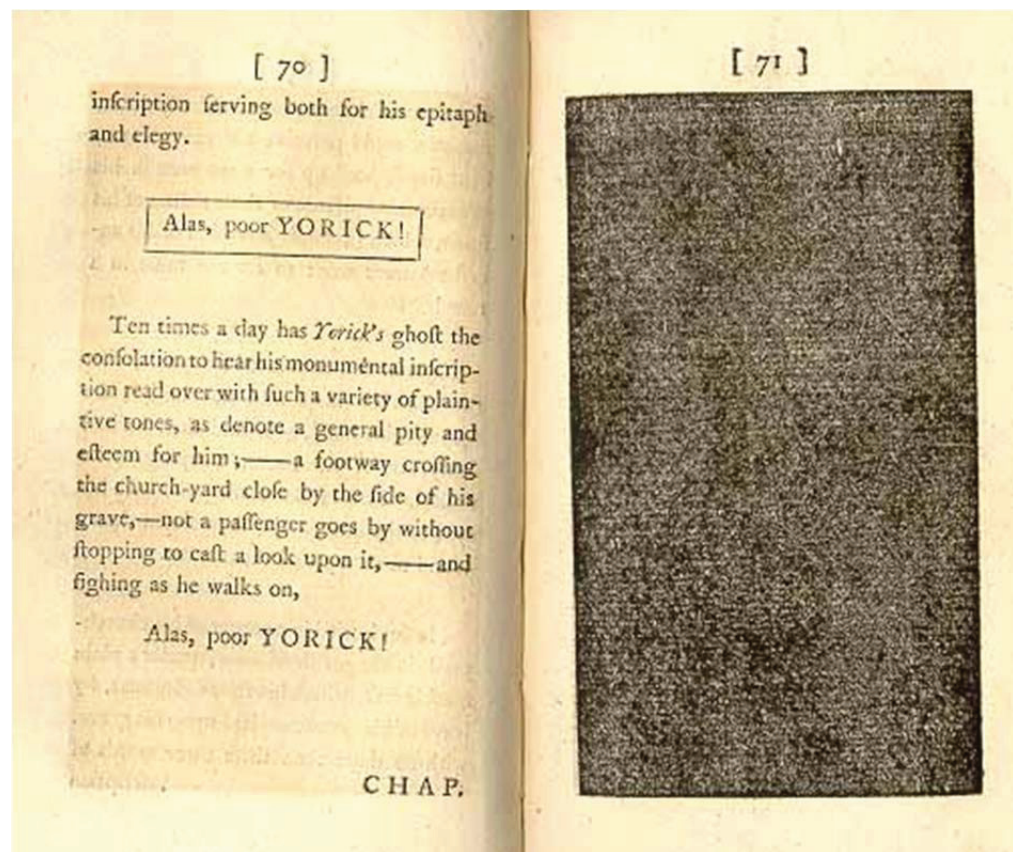


Figure 1: The Black Page.

There are visual elements of the novel that are, in their application, particularly

Shandean, and are hitherto unseen to the “excess” with which Sterne employs them (De Voogd “Aesthetic” 383). The double-sided black page, fit between the margins of the text, follows the death of Parson Yorick in Volume I (Figure 1). There are many interpretations of the black page; among them, Hart remarks that the “inky depths of the page are, *quite literally*, a sign of the grave” (73, emphasis mine). This *literal* visual image substitutes for any text that might capture the sentiment attached to Yorick’s death. The scene that precedes the black page is chock-full of the kind of sentimental writing that Sterne would later perfect in *A Sentimental Journey* (1768). But, in the Shandean context, it serves as a replacement of text, and moreover, interrupts the narrative in a confrontational way. By Sterne's control, we are forced to stare into the blackness of the page, which breaks the harmony of the textual continuity of the narrative, and the material continuity of the book. The same can be said of the marbled page in Volume III. The marbled page manipulates the organizational form of the novel; marbled paste-downs usually appear on the inside covers, not in the middle of chapters. Not only are these kinds of graphic inclusions particularly challenging for printers,¹⁷ but they assault a sense of narrative progress by requiring narrative stasis. The graphics force meditation upon the visual image; as De Voogd writes, “the picture *is* the text, the text the picture” (“Aesthetic” 384). Indeed, the illustration of Corporal Trim's flourish in Volume IX says more than “a thousand of my father's most subtle syllogisms” (Sterne 550). The blank page in Volume VI, however, is particularly interesting as a graphic inclusion because it is, indeed, blank; it is a negation of the visual. It is the space where the reader can draw in their imagined portrait of the beautiful Widow Wadman, “as like your mistress as you can ---- as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you” (Sterne 422). This is an

example of what W.B. Gerard calls the “visual imperative” (8) in Sterne's text, which is the “repeated emphasis on the faculty of the reader's imagination” (18), and which centralizes the particularly Shandean relationship that Sterne has with his readers. The plot-lines in Volume VI (Sterne 425-426), the “excessive attention to matters of typographical detail” (De Voogd, “Aesthetic,” 383), and incorrect pagination (De Voogd, “Aesthetic,” 385) all contribute to the overwhelming importance of visual signification as part of the narrative.

The nature of Shandean narrative, then, is digressive, regressive, and thus progressive, through both the textual structure of the narrative and the visual interruptions on the page; ultimately, the narrative moves towards the completion of the story, even if it never really gets there.¹⁸ And these are all particularly Shandean qualities, and thus help to define the concept of Shandyism as something we can sense and see in adaptations of Sterne's text. There are, however, other functions of the narrative that contribute to this sense of Shandyism and operate as properties of the narrative.

II. “The Life and Opinions”

Tristram Shandy is a novel full of various literary tropes and novelistic conventions, but their (dis)organization is the recognizably Shandean method that survives the transfer in adaptation. “In the post-Richardson and Fielding era,” Regan and Brean Hammond argue, “it was Sterne's work preeminently that was responsible for revitalizing the [novel]” (165). The novel, it should be noted, “represents a rather modest part of the history of publishing” in the eighteenth century (Flint 343), and its production

and sale occupied less than five per cent of the print market (Flint 344).¹⁹ Indeed, the novel had its fair share of critics and detractors and, for much of the century, “was considered a 'low' form of literature” (Bowen 12). Because the novel was still in development, and because its forms and features were in flux, Sterne experimented with what was available within the genre; and although most novels in the period functioned with specific narrative styles, there still were intersections between (what we now consider) genres and conventions. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), for instance, is a satire of both travel-writing and exploratory fiction. Likewise, Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1748) is written in epistolary form with erotic content. And, despite the 'rise of the novel' in the 1740s, there was still significant and entertaining lampooning of particular conventions, as in *Shamela* (1741).²⁰ In this culture of experimentation with forms and conventions, Sterne was definitely no slouch.²¹ But Sterne's overwhelming patchwork and parody outweigh his contemporaries and thus becomes something particularly Shandean, which adds to the disorder of the narrative style.²² In Volume VII of *Tristram Shandy*, however, Sterne quashes the reader's expectations of a travel narrative as he describes his trip across Europe. Referencing Joseph Addison in particular, he writes, “Now before I quit Calais, 'a travel writer would say, 'it would not be amiss to give some account of it.' ---- Now I think it very much amiss – that a man cannot go quietly through a town, and let it alone” (Sterne 434). He then goes on to describe the town of Calais, its cathedral, and the townhouses in very ordinary terms (Sterne 435-437), and also satirizes the travel writer's attention to detail; he counts the number of “cook's shops” on one lane, for instance (Sterne 449), and lists the number of streets in Paris per *arrondissement* (Sterne 449-451).²³ Eventually, we get back to Toby's military battlement and the story of

Widow Wadman; then, in Volume IX, we return to Moulins, France, for a taste of sentimentalism. The character of Maria, who Tristram finds with her goat, is meant to illicit feelings of sympathy, “the love and pity of all the villages” (Sterne 573), as she plays her pipe “so perfectly in tune to a feeling heart” (Sterne 573). As an appeal to the developing conventions of the sentimental novel, this character of sentiment appears again in *A Sentimental Journey*, which Sterne was soon to publish. Although Sterne, as one of the progenitors of sentimentalist discourse, inspired, rather than copied, tracts of sentimentalist fiction, the odd placement of sentimentalism in *Tristram Shandy* speaks to his interest in generic convergence.²⁴ The scene in Volume II, when Uncle Toby lets a fly out the window rather than hurt “a hair on [its] head” as the “world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me” (Sterne 100), sets Tristram's “frame into one vibration of most pleasurable sensation” (Sterne 100), which is later considered the feeling of sensibility.²⁵ And, Thomas Keymer considers these passages in *Tristram Shandy* satires on “the pathetic novel in general” (70). But it does not stop there.

The romance between Widow Wadman and Uncle Toby plays with the conventions of the courtship novel; we expect a genuine romance narrative, but instead, insincere gems subtly sneak onto the page. Amidst Trim's telling of the “King of Bohemia” (Sterne 514), which calls upon the Renaissance-romance settings,²⁶ Toby looks into the Widow's eye, “with as much innocency of heart, as ever a child look'd into a raree-shew-box” (Sterne 523), which is a peep-show, as Johnson defines it (*Dictionary* 753), and it holds as many connotations in the period as it does now.²⁷ Moreover, the Widow's concern with Toby's groin injury, that is, her attempts to make sure his penis works, is a concern from which she receives no satisfaction: “Unhappy Mrs. Wadman!”

(Sterne 580). Neither do *we* receive satisfaction with a romantic ending; Toby is just too innocent, I suppose. The novel also satirizes the tradition of “learned wit” (Jefferson 225),²⁸ the “encyclopedic” tradition and the systematization of knowledge, represented by Walter (Lynch 1-2), and medical discourses, represented by Dr. Slop and based on the works of John Burton (Bosch 209). As for the military themes, David McNeil finds that it is a “grotesque” rather than a “satire,” (151) which better accounts for the “yoking of the vulgar and heroic” throughout (160). But the convention that is most recognizable, the most prominent theme in the novel, and the basis of the narrative style, is the fictionalized autobiography.

From the title, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, Sterne sets up the novel as a fictional autobiography, which was a popular genre in literature by mid-century. Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* is recognized as one of the first novels to give a narrative shape to the genre.²⁹ The progresses of the *Rake* and the *Harlot*, by Hogarth, also contributed to this narrative arc, even with their satirical moral subtexts. Kieran More describes the fictional autobiography as a “retrospective attempt to find meaning and pattern” in the subject’s life (148). There are thus two narrative modes at play: the recollection of events and the reflection upon their meanings. And, Tristram’s digressive and disorganized nature claims those “meaning[s] and pattern[s]” to be “chaotic,” (Uphaus 112) and inconsistent, which suggests that anything else is total fiction, even though Tristram’s story is also (mostly) fiction. Regardless, *Tristram Shandy* sets up all of the trappings of this genre and satirizes its conventions. Tristram starts the narration earlier than his own birth, for instance, as the story begins at the moment of his conception, famously “*ab ovo*” (Sterne 8). And, we are given many more “opinions” that we receive of the “life,”

and then most of the “life” recounts Tristram’s “misfortunes, failures, and sorrows” (Sinding 119) without the positive reinforcement of a ‘happy’ or resolved ending.³⁰ We are, however, expected to correlate the sorrows of young Tristram with the manner of his conception; “I wish either my father or my mother,” Tristram opens, “had minded what they were about when they begot me” (Sterne 1). Thus, the squishing of his nose by Dr. Slop’s forceps during his birth directly correlates to the mutilation of his penis by the widow sash.³¹ While there are many relationships between the circumstances and outcomes of Tristram’s “life,” there are elements of the novel that defy the conventions of the genre: the confusion of fact and fiction, the union of Sterne and Tristram.

If a fictional autobiography is supposed to be *fictional*, what happens if the details of the “life” are quite obviously based on the author’s own? Shandyism. Hart observes that Tristram’s narrative is inflected by his concern with “multiple identities [that are] at the heart of self-identity” (71), since locating and defining “self-identity” is oftentimes the purpose of autobiography. But, in Shandean fashion, we are presented with the kind of autobiography that defers the security of self-knowledge in order to assert the inability of ever grasping that kind of knowledge. This is done through the blending of Sterne’s biography with Tristram’s autobiography, and more generally, through the many ways that Sterne self-fashioned his public and print personas. Within the novel in particular, there are many intersections between Sterne’s biography and Tristram’s that surpass what might be typical of any novelist.³² As far as minute details go, Tristram and Sterne were both born in November, almost exactly five years apart.³³ The story is set in Yorkshire, where Sterne lived and preached.³⁴ Tristram suffers from consumption, and he tells us about his “milk coffee” that he drinks to ease his malady (Sterne 467), just as Sterne

himself was dying of, and died from, consumption. Digging deeper, McNeil suggests, for instance, that the “creation of uncle Toby was inspired by Sterne’s acquaintance with a soldier he knew through his father, or by Roger Shandy himself” (144); Sterne’s father, from whom he was estranged as a child, was an ensign in Chudleigh’s Foot Regiment, which perhaps “charmed” (McNeil 144) him into the creation of a hobby-horsical war-fanatic. Further, Sterne’s troubled relationship with his own uncle, Jacques Sterne, is compensated by Tristram’s admirable relationship with Toby.³⁵ Also, the “Grand Tour” that Tristram takes in Volume VII (Turner 19) was extracted from the details of Sterne’s trip to the continent in an attempt to improve the condition of his consumption; both Tristram *and* Sterne try to escape death in that volume. And, the masculinist nature of the text, which is widely remarked upon,³⁶ peaks to Sterne’s own (sometimes, and alleged) relationships with women.³⁷ Sterne’s inclusion and use of fake documents throughout the text, like legal tracts and meta-fictions, also contribute to his satire on the in-credibility of fictionalized autobiographies, and, also, fictionalized identities.

Sterne put a great deal of effort into creating various identities that demonstrate the impossibility of sound self-identification and self-understanding. Tristram’s misnaming by Susannah is one moment of this. But it begins in *Tristram Shandy* with the character of Parson Yorick. A quixotic comedian with a saggy ass, Yorick is the author of the sermon in Volume II (one of Sterne’s own sermons). And even though we are told of his death in Volume I, he reappears throughout the rest of the novel as much a part of the Shandy family as Trim. Moreover, Yorick’s lineage is associated with Hamlet’s jester; we are told he is of “*Danish* extraction” (Sterne 23), which creates a fictional link between *Hamlet* and Sterne and makes an intertextual gesture a pseudo-fact. In 2009, the

Laurence Sterne Trust even commissioned a marble tablet that lies upon Sterne's grave, reading "Alas, Poor Yorick," just as Yorick's gravestone in the novel (Sterne 30), showing the endurance of these identities.³⁸ The most peculiar use of this character, however, is that Sterne published his *Sermons* under the title "Mr. Yorick" in 1760. Even weirder, the frontispiece of the collection shows a portrait of Sterne. While frontispiece portraits carried from the seventeenth century into the eighteenth, the "bulk of frontispiece portraits in early novels do not, however, depict the work's genuine author" (Barchas 27). We are met with Captain Lemuel Gulliver in the 1726 edition of *Gulliver's Travels*, for instance (Barchas 28-9). But, here is the Shandean twist: in Sterne's case, the non-fictional work is given a fictional author with a frontispiece of the genuine author whose non-fictional work appears in a fiction. It is not until later in the 1760s that frontispiece portraits of "celebrated novelists begin to grace the reprinting of their fictions with some frequency and authority" (Barchas 24). But Sterne's use of the frontispiece points to the "triangulated relationship between the reader, the author, and the work's narrative persona" (Barchas 28), and also adds to the Shandean sense of layered characterization; more bull than cock. After the initial successes of the first two volumes of the novel, Sterne began to go by 'Tristram' in correspondence; critics also conflated these identities and called Sterne 'Tristram' and 'Yorick' in reviews. Yorick reappears as the traveller in *A Sentimental Journey*, a thinly veiled Sterne, and makes reference to the characters or storylines in *Tristram Shandy*. These intertextual connections do away with any firm sense of the author's identity; it destabilizes the genre of fictional autobiography and satirizes the Enlightenment pursuit of knowledge. Louis Cazamian writes that the "increase" of self-knowledge" for the eighteenth-century "man [sic]" gives humour a

“new depth” and it was Sterne who extended the scope of humour to the “subconscious personality” (Cazamian 109). No other author in Sterne’s time pulled these kinds of pranks with his level of enthusiasm (notorious literary plagiarisms notwithstanding), and these Shandean shenanigans should be recognized as humorous.

Humour, while not a genre or convention *per se*, can be considered a mode, and it is definitely the overwhelming ethos of Sterne’s work. In his dedication to Mr. Pitt, Sterne writes, “I live in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill-health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles, -- but much more so, when he laughs, that it adds something to this Fragment of Life” (3). Even if lost on modern readers, and even with the breadth of footnotes that accompany the text, *Tristram Shandy* is full of humour. Reflecting on the tradition of learned wit that Sterne is said to channel, Henry Duff Traill remarks that “it is not so much the wit he has infused into his talk, so much as by the humour which he has delineated the character” (144). And, while we are to be amused by Tristram’s non-linear storytelling, and the force by which his opinions are all over the map, the humour is primarily of a certain kind: the bawdy/body kind. And the humour and bawdiness is an element of Sterne’s work, along with his narrative style and play with convention, which survive the transfer from the novel to other forms of media, like graphic novel or film.

III. Cocks and Critics

To situate and define the Shandean way of things, which are the elements of Sterne’s text that are recognizable in adaptations, the bawdiness of the text requires

recognition, and in the absence of bawdiness, we must still recognize the humour. But, since it is a “cock and bull story” (Sterne 588), let us start at the tip. There are many intertexts and subtexts in the novel, but penises are a dominant theme throughout. Sterne’s greatest influences in this vein were, of course, Rabelais and Swift, both known for the bawdy and scatological nature of their works. And, Sterne as author also was known for his (perhaps) inappropriate sense of humour. At a dinner at Sir Joshua Reynolds’ in 1760, for instance, Sterne allegedly showed the room “a drawing too indecently gross to have delighted even in a brothel” (Johnson, quoted in De Voogd, “The Object,” 66). No accounts of what that drawing was, however and unfortunately, survive. But, the fact remains that Sterne’s text is full of allusions and jokes to penises, penis sizes, and other “unholy” subjects.³⁹ Among the many is the emphasis on the size and shape of the penis disguised under a nasal rhetoric; the eighteenth-century saw a development of philosophy that aligned the nose with penis and the penis with intelligence. So, we have Walter’s anxieties over the size of Tristram’s nose (squished during birth, then mutilated by the window sash), which, for Walter (a man of the Enlightenment quite rightly) correlates to Tristram’s intelligence and virility: “for three generations at least, this *tenet* in favour of long noses had gradually taken root in our family” (Sterne 199). Thus, Tristram’s grandfather estimates that *his* nose was “a full inch longer” than his father’s nose (Sterne 198). And this sentiment or preoccupation with noses-cum-penises keeps returning to Tristram’s conversation. There are even allusions to masturbation when Tristram “spurts” his “ink” about the room while writing (Sterne 193-4). Then, of course, we have the lurid sex scene between Walter and Elizabeth, which faults Elizabeth’s (shall we say) *aridity* for Tristram’s misfortunes,

Widow Wadman's preoccupation with Toby's groin injury and his genital area in general, and Tristram's and Walter's concern with nose sizes. We also cannot forget the chestnut scene, the window sash scene, and the constant word-play with the "hobbyhorse," which, as Frank Brady notes, is "a slang term for a whore" (41-2). Brady also points out that there are "at least fifteen" references to "fingers and thumbs," which suggest "either sexual intercourse or masturbation" (42-3), and also to "whiskers," which are euphemisms for either pubic hair or testicles (44). Indeed, while all of these allusions are present in the text, Sterne's method of delivery is euphemistic and, at times, ambiguous, which he achieves through his use of the asterisk. As Paul Goring argues, Sterne's use of ellipses fills in for explicit language (189). For instance, while discussing Mr. Slop's presence at Tristram's birth, Toby asserts, "My sister, I dare say, added he, does not care to let a man come so near her * * * *" (Sterne 89). Goring argues that the use of the asterisk (of which there are many) creates a "narrative pose of innocence" and readers are "nudged into producing their own bawdy interpretations of what is not explicitly bawdy" (189). This is one way that Sterne is able to defend his work against his critics, which come in an onslaught after the publication of the first two volumes. "In books of strict morality and close reasoning, such as this" Tristram writes, "the world has revenged itself upon me for leaving so many openings to equivocal strictures, -- and for depending so much as I have done, all along, upon the cleanliness of my reader's imaginations" (Sterne 196). Just as penis jokes and sexual innuendo fill the novel,⁴⁰ Sterne's anticipation of criticism and rebuttals of it are definitively Shandean qualities.

The critical history surrounding Sterne's novel is both celebratory and

condemning. Sterne's office as cleric complicated his humorous attention to the bawdy, sexual, and perverse. "Must obscenity," asked *The Monthly Review* in 1760, "then be the handmaiden to Religion – and must the exordium to a sermon, be a smutty tale?" (Howes 77). Offended by Walter and Elizabeth's sex scene and its relationship to the hall clock, the clockmakers of England rallied together to publish a statement that the "pernicious author" Sterne "is to be looked at with horror and detestation" (Howes 68). One author in the *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure* quoted Alexander Pope: "Immodest Words admit of No Defence, / For Want of Decency is Want of Sense" (Howes 62). And onward it could go. But, the main thrust of the criticism was that a priest was responsible for the bawdiness; it was not necessarily the bawdiness itself. Turner notes that "readers and reviewers submerged the writer's identity in that of his fictive narrator" (12), and even though Sterne contributed to this submersion, it was not an easy load for his reading public to swallow (or spit, as it were).⁴¹

Sterne's answer was to write his responses into subsequent volumes, which admits an interest in the critical reputation of the novel, and furthers the sense of Shandean self-awareness. By Volume IV, Tristram defends his work; quoting his critics, he speaks of Tristram in the third-person, "he's now riding like a madcap full tilt through a whole crowd of painters, fiddlers, poets, biographers, physicians, lawyers, logicians, players, schoolmen, churchmen, statesmen, soldiers, casuists, connoisseurs, prelates, popes, and engineers" (Sterne 268), which self-reflexively gestures to the intertextual nature of Sterne's work (since he calls upon all of these traditions at some point), and also to the breadth of his offences, which, he says, "I deny" (Sterne 268). In Volume VII, Tristram leaves the value of a digression to the "REVIEWERS of MY BREECHES"

(Sterne 472), alluding to both the donkey tale and Toby's pant-seat, to which his reviewers respond in kind: "Tristram, your wit and humour, we are afraid, will very soon be in the same predicament with uncle Toby's red breeches" signed by "THE REVIEWERS of BREECHES" (Howes 160). The conversations throughout the text between Tristram/Sterne and his reviewers create more intertext between the novel and its historical and social position. Sterne's attention to his critics, and his awareness of his critical history, is thus another element of Shandyism that can be recognized as particularly Shandean.

IV. ----- * * * * !

The elements of Sterne's text that are innovative, particular, and unique to Sterne when they appeared in the 1760s gives Sterne's work a quality that is hard to define and yet instantly identifiable as Shandean. Turner argues that the "generic indeterminacy" of *Tristram Shandy* "questions the ability of any single literary form to convey the reality of human experience" (24) or, at least, that human experience cannot be scripted, patterned, or predictable. And this is, to some extent, the best definition of the Shandean that Sterne's text allows. When it comes to literary adaptation then, and the fidelity to which adaptors remediate Sterne's work into new mediums, what can we say (with confidence) are the elements of Sterne's work that represent the 'spirit' of the text? Sterne's narrative style of digressive, regressive, and progressive fragments are thus fundamental to a Shandean definition. The play with conventions, modes, and genres is a large part of this narrativity, since it helps to organize the many ways that Sterne tells Tristram's story.

The convergence of media forms within a particular medium is also remarkably Shandean, and thus makes remediation an easily accomplished task. The fictionalized autobiography, however, is the most dominant mode under which Sterne operates, and allows the author/narrator to be the centralized figure in the narrative. But, within this autobiographical framework, we have a conflation and confusion of identities and voices as a satire on the tradition of self-knowledge, which leads us to the conclusion, along with Booth, that “in the end, everybody is unknowable” (xviii). And, of course, we do this all with a laugh, since humour and the privileging of the bawdy are also Shandean attitudes, tones, and reference bases. We can laugh at a penis joke as much as we can laugh at Smelfungus. Finally, a textual dialogue, or the appeal to intertexts, supports Sterne’s attention to his critics. These elements of the text are what adaptation critics would call the ‘spirit’ of the text, and what I consider particularly Shandean. This is the spirit that Rowson and Winterbottom remediate into graphic novel and film.

Rowson’s and Winterbottom’s adaptations operate on the conceptual level of adaptation since *Tristram Shandy* is experimental, distinct, and unlike most other literary sources. A direct-transfer or modernization of the text would be disingenuous to the spirit of Sterne, and, moreover, almost impossible given the chosen mediums. The experimental, self-reflexive, and highly referential nature of *Tristram Shandy* can be remediated into new mediums because these qualities function as representative of the spirit of the text, and make the adaptations Shandean in their conceptual replication. By defining a sense of the Shandean, we can see how Rowson and Winterbottom adapt these qualities to stay true to the spirit of Sterne while both remediate the Shandean qualities into new formats. *Tristram Shandy* is only ‘unadaptable’ if the conventional approaches

to adaptation are the method or the evaluative principle. But, since Sterne is deliberately unconventional, Rowson and Winterbottom retain the spirit of *Tristram Shandy* and create two new versions of the text by presenting the Shandean in new ways, and by challenging the conventions of the new mediums just as Sterne does with the novel. Rowson and Winterbottom recognize the Shandean elements of the text that can be successfully adapted, and by doing so, both adaptations are true to the spirit of *Tristram Shandy*.

CHAPTER 3: STERNE AND ROWSON

It would seem like the adaptation of a text like *Tristram Shandy* could present a few problems in its transfer to new media. But, with its conventions based on the convergence of media, the graphic novel is, surprisingly, a format for a successful Shandean adaptation. With its blending and violation of the medium's conventions, Martin Rowson's 1996 graphic novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* recalls the Shandean sense of things, while it also presents a new Shandean text. That is, Rowson's graphic novel adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* is conceptually faithful to the original. In Hutcheon's words, "the spirit of the work needs to be captured to succeed" (10), and succeed Rowson's adaptation does. Rowson's incorporation of the contexts and intertexts of *Tristram Shandy*, the attention to the medium, and visual digressions in place of textual ones puts the adaptation in "dialogue with the original" (Vanderbeke 107). Rowson captures the Shandean spirit in the graphic novel format, and like Sterne, he challenges its conventions. Despite the transfer to a new medium, and the problematical potential of adapting a text like *Tristram Shandy*, Rowson retains the conceptual elements of the original text. Rather than attempt a direct transfer, or rework and modernize the text, Rowson's *Tristram Shandy* instead captures and remediates the Shandean spirit.

This kind of adaptation, Linda Hutcheon writes, is "repetition, but repetition without replication" (7). Hutcheon's theory of adaptation illuminates the ways in which Sterne's text is adapted and remediated into a new medium.⁴² In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon views adaptation as an interpretive and creative process (Hutcheon 20).

Hutcheon's theory effectively situates Rowson's version as a work that does both. Moreover, Hutcheon values the process of adaptation that reinterprets and re-presents an original text in a new format. Similarly, Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's theory of "remediation" (47) explains how media in adaptations interact; Bolter and Grusin's view of media as interdependent and intermedial offers a mode of analysis that allows for Hutcheon's "double process" of adaptation, while it also regards the material aspects of the remediated text (20). "The very act of remediation," Bolter and Grusin write, "ensures that the older medium cannot be entirely effaced; the new medium remains dependent on the older one in acknowledged or unacknowledged ways" (47). Both Hutcheon's principles of adaptation, and Bolter and Grusin's understanding of media, offer modes of analysis that account for the qualities of Rowson's adaptation, and how those qualities interact with the original novel.

Rather than focus on the fidelity of the text-to-text transfer, Hutcheon's theory of adaptation broadens the terms for evaluating the success of literary adaptations. Rowson adapts *Tristram Shandy* in an interpretive and creative way. By challenging the conventions of the graphic novel, and incorporating the intertexts and contexts of *Tristram Shandy*, Rowson re-presents *Tristram Shandy* in a new medium through his retention of the qualities of Shandyism. Despite the inability to adapt *Tristram Shandy* as a direct-transfer or modernization, Rowson's version is a recognizable adaptation because the spirit of the text, its conceptual elements, are presented in a new medium.

I. The Medium

Sterne experiments with the narrative conventions of the novel, and so Rowson experiments with the visual-narrative conventions of the graphic novel. Comic books, like novels, operate on a linear narrative plane, and the material aspect of the text, the codex, supports this type of narrative motion. Most graphic novel literary adaptations follow the typical comic book conventions. *Tristram Shandy*, however, is famously non-linear, and has long been considered an un-adaptable work for this reason.⁴³ In the creation of his adaptation of the novel, Rowson remarks that “the apparent impossibility of the project” was the most attractive feature (Rowson 64). An adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* should interpret the text in a way that makes adaptation possible. As *Tristram Shandy* fails to “adhere to the kind of sequential narrative structure which the comic book exemplifies,” Rowson believes that a ‘faithful’ adaptation should subvert the “accepted structures of comic book narrative and design as effectively as Sterne had originally subverted the structure of the novel” (64). Rowson’s interpretation of *Tristram Shandy* relates to what we call Shandyism, or the Shandean way of things. If, for Rowson, Sterne’s text is an experiment in its own medium, then a graphic novel rendition should follow suit; conventions become departure points, not boundaries. Rowson, a political cartoonist for *The Guardian*, adapted T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* into a graphic novel when he began to draft *Tristram Shandy*.⁴⁴ Although Eliot’s poem is completely fragmentary and highly intertextual, and Rowson reworks the poem into a *film-noir* murder mystery, it is sequential in its narrative order and is conventional in its layout. Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, however, deliberately denies linear narrative. As this format is demanded by the comic book, Rowson interprets Sterne’s novel to make representation in this medium possible: as much as *Tristram Shandy* is about the act of *writing* the novel, so it also

about the act of *reading* the novel.⁴⁵ Rowson uses visual digressions, self-reflexivity, and critical engagement to channel the Shandean spirit. Rowson stays true to Sterne by denying the genre's conventions.

The conventions of the comic book have developed since the eighteenth century. Like the novel's earliest reputation as a "low form of literature" (Bowen 12), the comic book has struggled to overcome its designation as juvenile, smutty, and even corruptible medium, for much of its popular history. Since its acceptance as a "literary form" in the 1930s, the comic book has been considered "suspect by mainstream culture" (Weiner 25).⁴⁶ Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) claimed that reading comic books influenced negative social behaviour on its young readers, as its primary audience was an adolescent one.⁴⁷ While his findings were alarmist, comics were still "dismissed as cheap entertainment for kids" (Eisener ix). And some comics rightfully deserved this kind of criticism. The *Classics Illustrated* enterprise, with almost 250 titles, presents young readers with illustrated versions of canonical literature, but the storyline, complexity, and context of the originals are diluted in the process of adaptation.⁴⁸ The *Classics Illustrated: Gulliver's Travels*, for instance, which was released in 1943, whittles down Jonathan Swift's critical satire to fifty illustrated pages of a cutesy hero-adventure narrative (Figure 2). The literary value

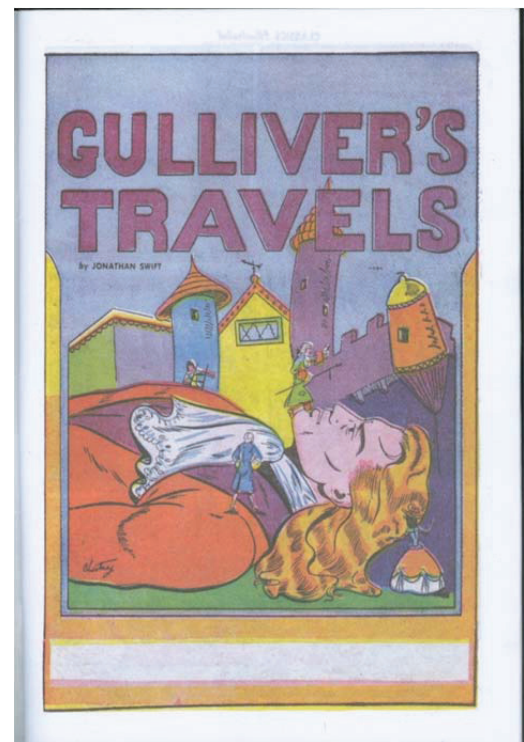


Figure 2.

that comics commanded was compromised by derivative and simplistic style. Moreover, the vulgarity and social satire of political cartoons, and the potential of comics to be used as a vehicle of smut, kept them low-brow.⁴⁹ Only in the last two decades has the comic book received positive critical attention. In the 2000s, the explosion of graphic novels and graphic novel film adaptations raised the “medium’s profile” above its newsprint status (Weiner 59).⁵⁰ Critical engagements with comics continue to increase and literary adaptations continue to grow in popularity. Recent adaptations of Jane Austen, Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde, and Herman Melville novels, along with the long list published by *SelfMadeHero*, *Marvel Comics*, and other British and American presses, show the marketable appeal of literary adaptations.⁵¹ *SelfMadeHero* recently announced a new print edition of Rowson’s *Tristram Shandy* this year (Rowson np).



Figure 3: *Archie Comics*, an example of conventional panels.

Despite that comics have occupied a marginal position in print culture creators have significantly widened its *Archie Comics* demographic. By the 1990s, illustrators, writers, and readers of the “bastard child of the print medium” (Gordon 185) began to explore and formulate comic book conventions. This interest encouraged “serious” considerations of comic books as culturally significant and culturally reflective media

(Weiner 17). Critics began to value the intermediality and interactivity of comics by understanding how comics work, and how comic adaptations can renew the original text through interpretation and creation. With the mandate to “support experiments using the comic book format” (Weiner 47), Tundra Publishing released Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* in 1993, which features a cartoon McCloud exegetically moving through panels of illustrated comic book theory. Joyce Goggin observes that McCloud “venture[s] his own theory of comics” (11) with arguments that, while contested by scholars and critics, continue to supply the terminology for critical discussion.

Understanding Comics is a comic book about comic books. McCloud first defines “comics” as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud 9). This distinction, “deliberate sequence,” is an important one; Rowson illustrates *Tristram Shandy* out of sequence. In place of Sterne’s narrative digressions, Rowson uses visual digressions: the panels are crowded, non-uniform, and filled with visual icons that represent elements of the text. Sequence is a major feature and convention of graphic novels, but Rowson challenges the construction of the visual text; in one panel, we are in the bowling green, for example, and in another we are in a void. As in *Tristram Shandy*, the notion of sequence is mocked; Rowson uses illustrated signposts throughout the panels that ‘direct’ the reader’s sense of narrative direction. These signposts, however, marked, “Ye Olde Narrative,” point in the wrong direction or to nowhere at all.⁵² At times, too, the words “narrative” scroll around frames. And, while the history of visual art and visual narrative ranges from classical frescoes to illuminated manuscripts, the visual

sequence of images that operate as a continuous and complete narrative originates in the eighteenth century. Rowson incorporates this history as part of the novel's intertext through the work of William Hogarth. Although every stained glass window in every church in England tells a visual story, Hogarth's "progresses" present visual narratives in a secular-social context. His influence is widely acknowledged, and his panels inform how comics continue to operate.⁵³

Hogarth's visual narratives often consist of a single-panel action in a series of five or six panels. The cognitive transitions between Hogarth's panels function by what McCloud coins as "closure" (McCloud 63). "Closure" is the process by which the reader views two separate images that are divided by the "gutter," or the space between frames, and "transforms them into a single idea" (McCloud 66). The passing of time, the change in plot, and the connotations of images are all processed by this process. More than the reader of a novel, "the audience" of a comic, McCloud writes, "is a willing and conscious collaborator" in the narrative action (McCloud 65). And, comics are also different from film media where "closure takes place continuously" (McCloud 65). Closure in comics is achieved by the reader's mental connection between images. In the first plate of Hogarth's *Marriage a-la-Mode*, for instance, we are provided all the visual cues of the plotline; dull coins, greasy barristers, and bored faces reveal a marriage of economic and social convenience. This prepares the viewer for the second plate that shows the newly betrothed reuniting after a night of separate, illicit upper-class trysts. The "closure" occurs when the reader recognizes that the fidelity of the marriage is compromised by the unfaithful terms under which it is negotiated. David Carrier acknowledges that "the successive images are connected only when the reader connects them" (Carrier 56).

— so that sometimes for NEAR 50 YEARS together there is very WIT or JUDGMENT, either to be seen or heard of amongst us —



Figure 4. Rowson's homage to *Gin Lane*.

The visual narrative, even if staggered, is still a narrative that depends upon the reader's participation to be realized. Like *Tristram Shandy*, Rowson's disordered visual narrative demands a high level of reader participation. And, while Hogarth's panels are not comics as we now recognize them, the space between the pages and frames are as much a part of the visual narration as the visual images. Closure animates the medium; cognitive association is exactly how comics work.⁵⁴ This process of closure is the "agent of change, time, and motion" in comics (McCloud 65), which depends upon the reader's transition

between panels and the level to which the reader is engaged.

Because comics function as discrete panels that are unified by the reader's mental "closure" (that is, connection) of the sequence, reader participation is a dominant feature of the medium. Reader participation increases when the panel to panel transitions make greater cognitive demands on the reader's sense of time and place. Moment to moment transition, for instance, (imagine film cells) provides the reader with exact cues of time's passing (McCloud 71). Aspect to aspect transition, like images on jigsaw puzzle pieces, "bypasses time" (McCloud 72) as the reader has to imagine the completed puzzle, the full image, to make sense of each piece. Hogarth's panels tend toward scene-to-scene transition. Non-sequitur transitions, however, especially "the most jarring combinations" (McCloud 73), require the greatest amount of reader participation, as connections can be made temporally, thematically, technically, in any number of ways; but, the reader can always find enough "meaning or resonance" in visual disparity to unify the fragments conceptually (McCloud 73). This operational principle of comic books provides the level of engagement that Sterne's text requires. Rowson employs all the types of transitions, but often, and most appropriately, the panels are non-sequiturs. The narrative thus depends upon the viewer's association between the images, which are, at times, fragmentary and isolated. Rowson's visual rendering of Sterne's fragmented narrative is left to the reader's performance of closure, which is achieved through deliberate and conscious connection. Narrative movement within comics is represented by the relationship between the text and the visual image; the more complex the relationship, the greater the level of reader participation. Rowson uses the most participatory panel transition to reflect Shandean narrativity; the reader is responsible for the cohesion of the

work, aided by the relationship between visual cues and textual information.

Visual cues in comic books usually range from the iconic to the textual. McCloud sees the text and image relationship as an “imitation” of earlier forms of textual communication (151), and comics incorporate a range of symbolic language extracted from various other forms of the visual and textual arts.⁵⁵ That is, comic books operate in a multimodal and intermedial way by virtue of the convergence between text and image, all mediated on the page. “Comics,” McCloud writes, act as an “intermediary between storyteller and audience” in a way that promotes an “awareness of [the] form” (172) of the medium. Like *Tristram Shandy*’s deliberate attention to the material elements of the text, and Sterne’s inclusion of graphic signifiers, Rowson’s version creates the same sense of awareness about its form, and role of visual images in narration. In most comic books, McCloud notes, the “words and images are kept separate” (144). Often, the text that relates to the action is distinct from the image, much like a Hogarthian panel where the text supplements the image. McCloud calls this an “interdependent” text to image relationship (155), which is the most commonly used method in comic book design. There are a number of other ways that text and image interact, however, like “duo-specific,” when the same message is conveyed from the text and the image, or “additive,” when the text “amplifies or elaborates” upon the image, or “montage,” when “parts of words or images” are used (154-55). Rowson’s comic book, however, employs all three of these styles, sometimes simultaneously. Multiple dialogues within panels, which are meant to relate to multiple actions, confuse the priority and order of the text and visual image. In many panels, there are several conversations going on while the text is visually recreated. The narrative is not divided as in conventional graphic novels and comics; it is

instead Shandean in its disorder. The text of *Tristram Shandy* is incorporated into the frame in a way that speaks to the arrangement of the visual images, but ultimately Rowson prioritizes the image.

Closure, panel to panel transition, and the relationship between text and image operate as comic book conventions, and are the properties and distinct qualities of the comic book medium. The comic book as a medium for adaptation enhances the cognitive experience of the reader. By establishing the conventions of comic books, we can see how Rowson remediates the unconventional *Tristram Shandy* by challenging the conventions of the medium. Through interpretation and creation, Rowson presents a remediation of Sterne's text that is conceptually faithful to the original. What this means in terms of adaptation theory is that, because *Tristram Shandy* flouts and mocks convention, then an adaptation that mirrors this defiance in its own medium is faithful to the spirit of the novel; the Shandean sense of invention is replicated.⁵⁶ Moreover, Rowson interprets the text beyond the text to also include its various critical contexts.

As *Tristram Shandy* makes the reader aware of the act of reading, Rowson remediates the aspects of Sterne's text that call attention to the reader's position as a reader. *Tristram Shandy* is self-reflexive and conversational, and it has a varied and long-standing critical history because of these qualities; the novel's narrative and thematic complexity have been critical subjects since its appearance in 1759. And because the format of Sterne's novel makes the transfer to a linearly styled medium complicated, Rowson interprets the text so that the experience of the text can be re-presented and re-created. In the final chapter, ironically, a devil tells Rowson that "the damn thing is unadaptable" (Rowson np). Hutcheon argues that the "appeal" of

adaptation is in the “mixture of repetition and difference” (114), both of which derive from an interpreted understanding of the text. And the critical history surrounding *Tristram Shandy* is essentially its various textual interpretations, which also appear within the novel. So, rather than present an illustrated version of the novel that attempts to modernize the characters, cohere all of the fragmented narratives, or order and illustrate scenes of the novel in an act of replication, Rowson interprets the critical history surrounding the text.

The adaptation incorporates the critical and metacritical elements of Shandyism. Even when Rowson illustrates particular segments, there are still visual interruptions in the frame. Richard Macksey observes that “by recognizing the complex conventions of ‘the book,’” that Sterne presents in *Tristram Shandy*, “we are thus invited to understand how we are unwittingly manipulated” (xxi) by the contexts. Rowson achieves this same manipulation within the comic book format. A large part of *Tristram Shandy*’s context is its critical reputation, either as an inappropriate text, anomalous text, modernist text, post-modernist text, the “freest” text (New 1), even “the dregs of nonsense,” as Horace Walpole called it (Howes 55). Although Rowson jokes about the “pre-post-post-pre-modern” (Rowson 69) contexts that surround *Tristram Shandy*, like Sterne, he interprets and incorporates these critical and contextual elements.

Rowson interprets and incorporates the intertexts and contexts of Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* on the visual and iconic levels. He also includes his own reflections of the text that act as what we might call metacriticism.⁵⁷The “splash page,” or opening panel of the comic (which follows Rowson’s personalized mimicry of Sterne’s original dedication) is used to “establish context [and] mood” (Duncan 319) for the whole comic

book. Using chiaroscuro, “a stark contrast of light and dark” (Duncan 315), Rowson begins *Tristram Shandy* in a Piranesian vault that represents Walter Shandy’s scrotum, since the story famously begins *ab ovo*.⁵⁸ Caricatures of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce stand with Tristram as he begins his narrative. In her 1932 collection of essays, *The Common Reader*, Woolf claims that, because Sterne’s novels are “as close to life as we can be,” he is “of our own age” (Woolf np). The psychological realism of the Modernist era is indebted to the fragmented, self-reflexive narrativity practiced by Sterne.⁵⁹ However, Rowson inverts this opinion by illustrating Woolf and Joyce in full eighteenth-century dress (Figure 5); in this version, that is, they are of Sterne’s age, and uncomfortably so, as Tristram soon puts bullrings through their noses and pulls them along with reins.

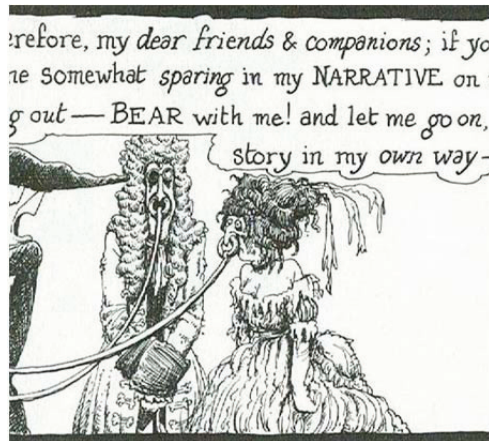


Figure 5: Joyce and Woolf.

Woolf’s appeal to the ‘real-ness’ of Sterne’s text also speaks to Bolter and Grusin’s sense of remediation as an attempt to “achieve the real” through media forms (53). This is accomplished through the play with conventions, the convergence of media, and the self-awareness of the text. Woolf and Joyce speak indialogue confusedly through Tristram’s narrative. Eventually, Joyce calls the story a “STREAM of CONSCIOUSNESS”

(Rowson np), as a reference to Joyce's literary influence, and the inexhaustible critical relationship between Joyce and Sterne.⁶⁰ Along with Joyce and Woolf, Rowson includes dialogues between himself and his dog, Pete, in the middle of the volumes, the “caesura[s] in the narrative” (Rowson np), to add commentary on the progression of the story so far, which never really achieves completion because Rowson overlays his own narrative interruptions atop of Tristram’s. Even still, Rowson’s cartoon critical commentary to the reader or to the other characters in Sterne’s text mirrors Tristram’s engagements with his critics. As is typical of adaptations (Hutcheon 19), the text from *Tristram Shandy* is excised, reworked, and reordered, further fragmenting the already fragmented storyline.⁶¹ This reconstruction of Sterne’s text causes the reader to “fill in any gaps” (Hutcheon 121) that may be present in the adapted product.⁶² Rowson’s critical interruptions show his interpretation of Sterne’s text as an exercise in exposing the reader’s expectations and calling attention to convention. When the black page appears in Volume I (Figure 6), Rowson and Pete emerge from the blackness; Pete shouts, “Why’s it so dark in here?” Rowson replies, “IT’S ANOTHER STYLISTIC DEVICE! OUCH! Y’KNOW, SUBVERTING THE READER’S MATERIAL HARMONY WITH THE CONVENTIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF WRITTEN NARRATIVE! OW! MY TOE!!” (Rowson np). Critical engagement is a Shandean element of the adaptation. Rowson’s version is not a presentation of Sterne’s critical engagements, but a conceptual remediation of the Shandean style.



Figure 6. Rowson's black page.

Commentary about *Tristram Shandy* mirrors the commentary within *Tristram Shandy*; the intertexts of the novel are adapted into this “comic book about the writing of a comic book about the writing of a novel about the writing of a novel” (Rowson 69), which makes Rowson’s version both critical and metacritical. The reader is made aware of the difficulties of reading Sterne’s narrative in an imitation of the difficulty Trim encounters reading Sterne’s sermon paralleled by Pete’s interruption in the graphic novel narrative. Just as Walter and Toby interrupt the reading of Yorick’s sermon in Volume II, Pete interrupts the interruptions: as Pete walks out of the eighteenth-century panel and into a desert, he yells, “I’m not spending another minute listening to those old twats sitting around talking a load of old cock” (Rowson np). Rowson’s engagement with the reader, as interpretative of Sterne’s text and interpretive through commentary, renegotiates the conventions of narrativity, and interacts with the contexts of the original source text. Rowson’s unflattering caricature of Samuel Johnson, for example, (Figure 7) who holds a book under one arm and spouts off his famous opinion of the novel, gestures to the “Anti-Shandean” criticism Sterne received for the novel’s unconventional and difficult structure.⁶³ Part of Shandyism is the difficulty inherent in processing the convergence of media.

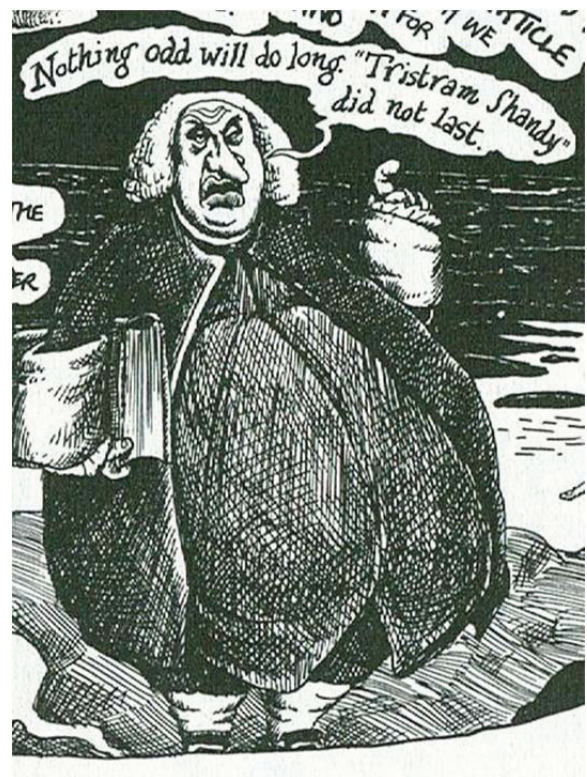


Figure 7. Dr. Johnson.

II. Is the Message

A certain amount of repetition is necessary in adaptations. For Bolter and Grusin, all media are intermedial and multimodal (55). By intermediality, Bolter and Grusin mean that in every form of media, several other forms and qualities of media are incorporated into the new form, while multimodality accounts for the various ways in which the media is constructed and how the story is retold. Rowson's *Tristram Shandy* uses various modes to adapt and recreate the novel, which places his adaptation outside of typical comic book conventions, and which gives his version its Shandean 'experimental' qualities.⁶⁴ Indeed, McCloud notes that every medium "begins its life by imitating its predecessors" (McCloud 151); like Bolter and Grusin's concept, one could say that all media is adaptation, either of earlier media forms or particular ideas within media. Rowson incorporates and imitates media forms in the graphic novel to gesture toward this aspect of remediation and the Shandean method of visual and textual unification.

So, how does Rowson's adaptation incorporate various media? Comic books are, by nature, intermedial and multimodal in the use of both text and image to convey information. At times, Rowson uses Sterne's text to guide the reader's impression and understanding of the image "interdependent[ly]" (McCloud 155). At other times, the text relates directly to the image or panel-scene,



Figure 8. Parson Yorick.

or does not relate at all; however, the text is also simultaneously presented as a “montage” (McCloud 155) because Rowson disorders the already disordered original. In most cases, the images within the panels go beyond the meaning of the text. And, Rowson’s graphic novel only loosely follows the Volumes of *Tristram Shandy*. Unlike most other graphic novels, Rowson’s is not paginated, which suggests that there is no direct correlative to the original text, but instead a textual and visual system of symbolic expression that operates through closure; as Carrier suggests, “even when the words do not seem to fit the image, we [make] some connection between them” (32). Because there are critical interruptions beside, over, under, and between Sterne’s text, each page is a series of dialogues between various caricatures contained within speech balloons, which act as participatory “element[s] in the visual field” (Carrier 44) and are visual components of the panel. Because comics use “text and picture to tell one story” (Carrier 72), however, the intertexts, contexts, and paratexts of *Tristram Shandy* are mainly represented by visual icons. The text-to-image transfer in Rowson’s graphic novel incorporates “semiotic modality” through both convention, the “symbolic signs,” and resemblance, “the iconic signs” (Ellestrom 22-23). But the text is secondary to the image. In most comic books, the text and image cooperate interdependently, and are of equal importance in the panel. The conventional balance of text and image, Carrier notes, achieves the “ideal unity” of the comic strip (67). Rowson’s version relies more on the visual, the “received” information, than the textual, the “perceived” information (McCloud 49) to visually represent ideological signifiers.

In this convergence, Rowson uses the comic book format to include the intertexts and contexts of *Tristram Shandy*. To be more specific, symbols and images from the

history of visual art are used as self-referential gestures to the development of the medium, and also to Sterne's place within that history. At various points, Tristram narrates over or through select Hogarthian panels (Figure 4), reproduced either in full or in part, which include *Gin Lane* (1751), *Beer Street* (1751), and *The Reward of Cruelty* (1751). These panels signify the aesthetic relationship between Sterne and Hogarth, and also Hogarth's status as an earlier practitioner of visual-sequential storytelling and its role as critical commentary.⁶⁵ An angulated matrix is imposed over the illustration of Trim reading the sermon (Figure 16), the posture of which is modeled on Hogarth's aesthetic principle, the "line of beauty" (Hogarth 37).⁶⁶ This nod to the 'line' also references the conventions of comic books, which are, by design, reliant on lines to communicate sequence, part of the "visual vocabulary" of graphic movement (McCloud 131). Lines that make up the panels indicate individual stasis; the lines between the panels act as both the moment of closure and the passing of time. Rather than a linear line, however, Hogarth's line is serpentine, and its emphasis here shows the interrelatedness of narrativity and visuality. Rowson does not use the typical panel structure (equal-sized boxes balanced evenly on the page) but instead, full-pages, triangles, and so on. There is no uniform pattern that the visual narrative follows, so we can receive as much as perceive that the story (and the graphic novel) is non-linear through visual cues like this one. Conventions need not apply. We receive the contexts through visual resemblance and iconic allusion. Text and image are thus unified conceptually, for the benefit of the concept of the novel, by the iconography in Rowson's Shandean adaptation.

Rowson's use of icons range from the baroque to the modern, and all refer in some way to the history of *Tristram Shandy*. Just as Woolf describes Sterne's *A*

Sentimental Journey as a textual “series of portraits” (Woolf np), Rowson illustrates a visual series of portraits that reflect the text’s relationship to its contexts. Among them is a grotesque of Gainsborough’s picturesque *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (1750) in Volume I (Figure 9). The cranky-looking wife, who holds her pregnant stomach, stands in for the woman with whom Parson Yorick had an affair, while the husband, a rather ugly fellow, holds a bag of money over his groin. The dog in the portrait is replaced by Pete. Rowson uses the original, which connotes the rise in status of the middle-class

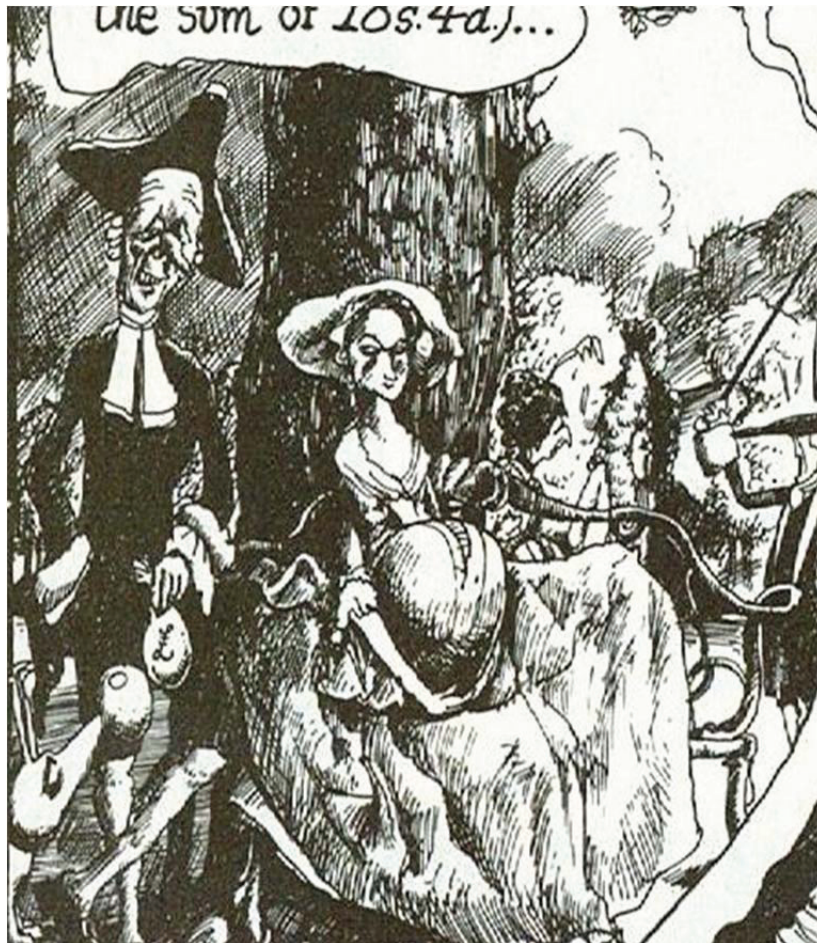


Figure 9. Rowson’s appeal to *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*.

by the mid-century, to pay homage to the history of visual narrative, and to allude to Sterne's audience; the novel as a form of literature was increasingly consumed by middle-class readers, especially by the 1760s (Bowen 4).⁶⁷ And, the portraits continue. In the final volume of the graphic novel, Rowson and Pete walk through a Piraensian-inspired *Inferno* (the Italian scrolled throughout stays true to Piranesi and Dante), until they come across Sterne (whose image is based on the marble busts by Joseph Nollekens), a recognizable Jonathan Swift, and François Rabelais playing strip poker.



Figure 10: Swift, Rabelais, and Sterne (with Pete and Rowson).

Sterne just lost the hand, and he pulls off his sock (his last item of clothing) with a grimace (Figure 10). Rabelais, it must be noted, is fully clothed. In what is considered the genealogy of bawdy satire, Rabelais to Swift to Sterne, neither Sterne nor Swift have cards to play against their greatest influence. The cards with which they play feature the characters of *Tristram Shandy*, a subtle joke on the popularity of novels and their marketable trinkets. The cards also signify the graphic novel's current place in the volume.⁶⁸ Rowson appeals to the contexts and intertexts through iconic resemblance;

Yorick is drawn as the likeness of Sterne from Thomas Patch's 1768 engraving, of which there have been many replicas.

While the novel is full of icons and symbols of the context, Rowson also visually adapts the bawdiness of *Tristram Shandy*. It is no secret that *Tristram Shandy* is a story about "a Cock and a Bull" (Sterne 588). The novel is full of allusions and jokes about penises, genitals, pubic hair, and groins, often coded in eighteenth-century vernacular and double-entendres. But in a graphic novel

adaptation, how is such wordplay visually represented? This aspect of adaptation, the text-to-image transfer, is one way in which the visuality subordinates the textuality. What would take pages of text to describe, or an arsenal of clever puns to execute, can be represented by a single image. Moreover, the bawdiness and vulgarity for which the novel was abhorred is represented by the image: in one panel, Joyce and Tristram piss on the panels while Joyce lets out a fart (Figure 11).

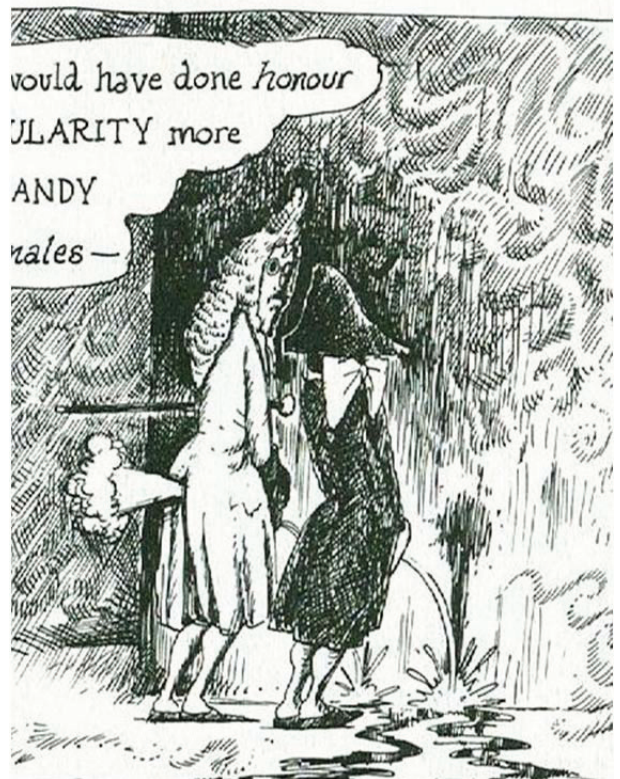


Figure 11: Joyce and Tristram on a break.

But, let us stick with the penises. In Sterne's text and time, sexual representation became more phallogentric than ever, and the size and shape of penises represented not only sexual fertility but intellectual virility (Harvey 133). Moreover, semen was considered the creative life force of the British nation.⁶⁹ With changing conceptions of the male image and sexuality, the nose came to correspond to

the shape and size of the penis, creating a tripartite relationship between cock, nose, and brain. And while Tristram “declares” that his journey of the “nose” is on “the clean road,” by which he means, “nothing more, or less” by it (Sterne 3.31), Walter’s obsession with noses as representative of character, Tristram’s subsequent nose-crushing by Dr. Slop’s forceps, and noses as one of the primary subjects of Volume III all betray Tristram’s promise. The correlation between noses and penises is evidenced by story itself: Tristram’s unfortunate nose accident at birth explains his later circumcision by window sash, since the manner of conception (“Have you not forgot to wind up the clock!?”), birth, and the “homunculus” determine the development of the individual.⁷⁰ It can also be argued that Uncle Toby’s simplicity is the result of his groin injury at Namur.

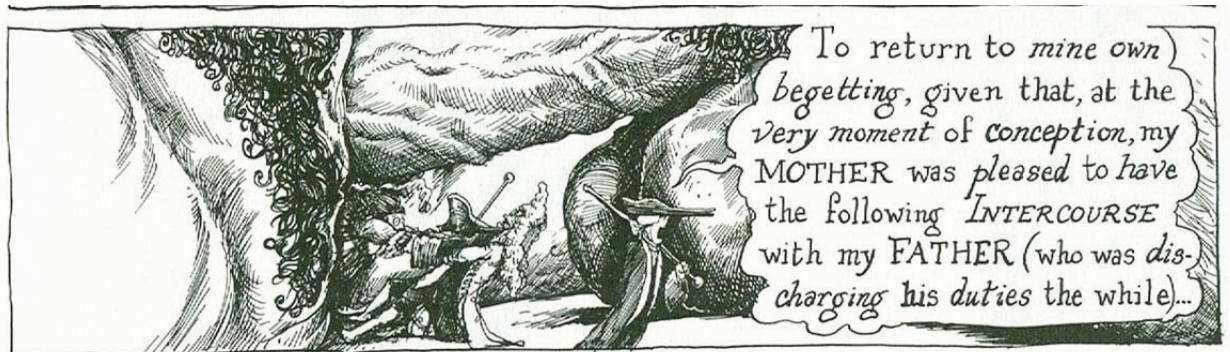


Figure 12: The not-so-subtle visual bawdiness.

While Rowson illustrates some moments of the narrative that relate to Tristram’s discussion of his conception, and other penis-related tales, Rowson incorporates penile icons in place of penile text. In one scene, for instance, Rowson illustrates Elizabeth Shandy imagining a penis-cum-grandfather clock that ejaculates cogs and nuts just as Walter himself is about to ejaculate, used to signify what is on Elizabeth’s mind at the time of Tristram’s conception, which consequently “scattered and dispersed the animal

spirits” (Sterne 1.1), and thus affected penile-nasal difficulties for the rest of Tristram's life. In one panel, it takes a moment to realize that the “polyptych” (McCloud 115), or continuous background, behind Tristram and his gang is an explicit shunga-like grotesque (Figure 12) of sexual intercourse, as shocking in this medium visually as it was in Sterne's medium textually.⁷¹ Other iconic penises throughout the graphic novel include penis hot-air balloons, penis-shaped noses, penis-shaped medical equipment, penis road-signs, utensils, and military weaponry, even a penis hat! Likewise, noses in the graphic novel continually get squished, caught in books, cut off, or fall off, and almost every character or portraiture has an obnoxious, protruding beak, unless replaced by a throbbing, cartoonish penis. The narrative lines that Sterne draws in Volume 4 are replicated, but we will notice in Rowson's version that there are semen stains, or “splodges” (Rowson np), throughout the narrative lines, as another contextual icon: not only has Sterne “squirted full in the face” of his critics,⁷² the creative process is akin to masturbation, and in Sterne's case, it is messy (Figure 13).

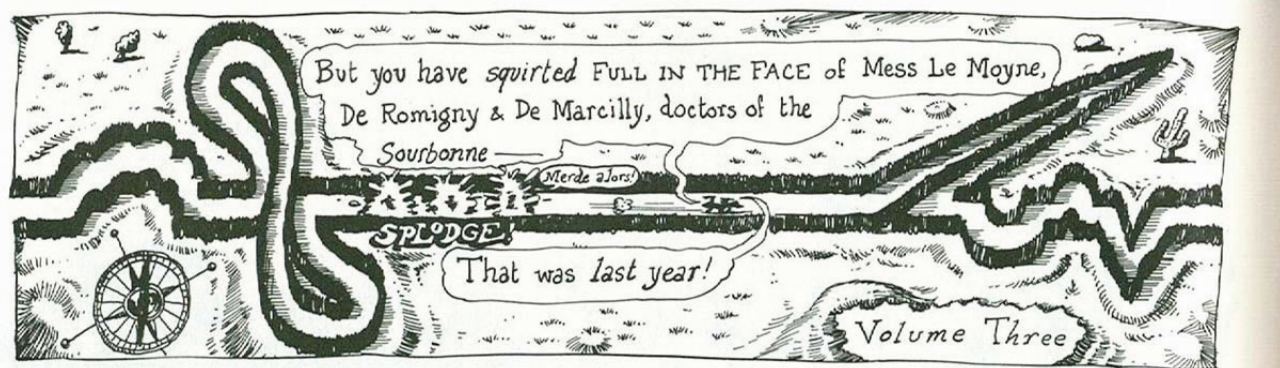


Figure 13: The narrative line with semen marks.

McCloud writes that in comics, “art approaches language” (McCloud 195), and there are two particular instances in the graphic novel that reveal the extent to which Rowson remediates and even recreates *Tristram Shandy* with such visual language. At the end of Volume 6, just after we see Tristram's foreskin fenestration, Rowson makes a jump to Volume 7 (“what happened to the rest of volumes 5 & 6?!”), and yet (surprisingly) picks up the narrative at a moment when Tristram returns to describe the reason for the window sash's falling. But, Volume 7 is a chapter noted for its subtext: Tristram's/Sterne's “flight from death.”⁷³ Rather than illustrate the characters moving through Europe in a metaphorical dash, Rowson shows Tristram obliviously narrating in a white oblivion while Death creeps up behind him and taps him on the shoulder. When Death finally “got [him] by the throat,” an allusion to Sterne's consumption that Rowson indicates by drawing Death throttling Tristram's neck, Tristram knees Death in the groin and takes off in a post-chaise (Figure 14), which concludes that volume. Especially here, but also elsewhere, the text is signified by the image.



Figure 14. Tristram knees Death in the groin.

Rowson also illustrates context via Slawkenbergius. “Slawkenbergius's Tale,” is one of Sterne's fictional textual injections at the beginning of Volume 4. From the text that is an “institute of all that [is] necessary to be known of noses,” (Sterne 217), Slawkenbergius's chapter is but a fragment that Tristram translates from Latin and includes as a prologue to the volume, continued from Volume 3, which is a moment of closure for the reader, to be sure. As an incomplete fictionalized explanation of Walter's love of noses, Rowson creates a visual-contextual commentary on the tale's presence in the text. He includes a mock-critical editor's note to explain that he includes “adaptations” of the tale to illustrate “what Slawkenbergius's 9th tale might *actually* be about” (Rowson np). Five successive panels follow that imitate the art of Albrecht Durer, Hogarth, Aubrey Beardsley, and George Grosz. Rowson gestures towards the history of his own medium and the visual arts; he refashions iconic images in the context of the nose-penis relationship. Rowson remarks that, because the ninth tale is about, “um, how big is his cock?” Rowson uses Beardsley in particular because he “did those famously obscene pictures of people with huge cocks” (Rowson, *TS*). The remade panels feature characters with large noses, and the Hogarthian panel is a pastiche drawn from many of his panels and reworked to centralize and signify noses. These adaptations within the adaptation call particular attention to the medium itself, its mode as adaptation, and the intermediality of the graphic

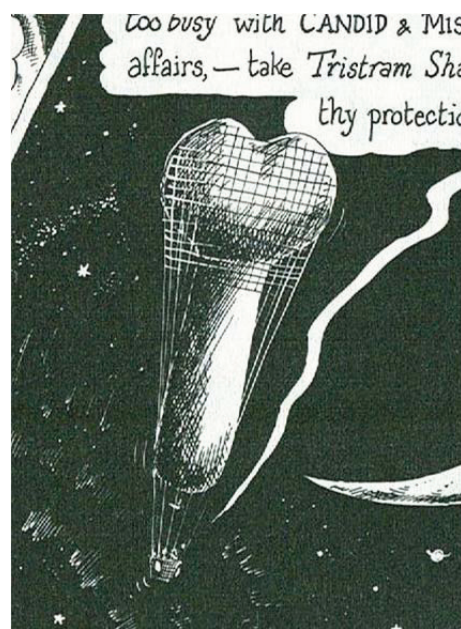


Figure 15: Penis balloon.

novel (iconic art and text reworked in a graphic novel that reworks its original). The visual advantage of the graphic novel helps to show “important ambiguities that are central to the told [textual] version” (Hutcheon 28), which are, in this case, Sterne's puns on noses. In Rowson's version, it is unambiguous that noses signify penises because all we see are penises! (Figure 15)⁷⁴Rowson creates a metacritical version that answers the text of *Tristram Shandy* with the image. The more we are reminded that we are reading a graphic novel, the more the text recreates the Shandean reading experience: “Read, read, read, read, my unlearned reader! read” (Sterne 203-4). Rowson disrupts the “priority and authority” of the original (Hutcheon 174) to create his own version of the text in a new format. The graphic novel format offers a way for the text to be re-created and can thus be critical of both the original text and mode of its re-presentation.

III. Closure

In his review of the graphic novel, Rowson remarks that the graphic novel medium is the exact medium where he could stick to the “spirit” of *Tristram Shandy*, “while abandoning the thousand letters” of it (Rowson 75). His adaptation of the text is a remediated version, which provides the sense of immediacy that Sterne's original accomplishes, and critically engages with *Tristram Shandy*'s various contexts and intertexts. By elevating the iconic over the textual, Rowson signifies panel-by-panel what the text signifies word-by-word. The incomplete nature of Rowson's adaptation follows the “incomplete” original, and comments on the novel's particular defiance of the typical properties of its genre. In the final panel, Joyce and Woolf walk out into oblivion,

and Rowson and Pete are drawn in a picture frame that Tristram sits in front of: “Fuck it, Boss,” Pete says, “Let’s turn it into a musical” (Figure 20). Rowson ends the graphic novel under the assumption that his adaptation has failed; but this sense of failure, and incompleteness and fragmentation, along with the self-reflexivity and critical engagement throughout, actually make the adaptation true to the Shandean spirit; these elements are part of the Shandean method. Rowson’s adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* is thus conceptually faithful to the spirit of Sterne.

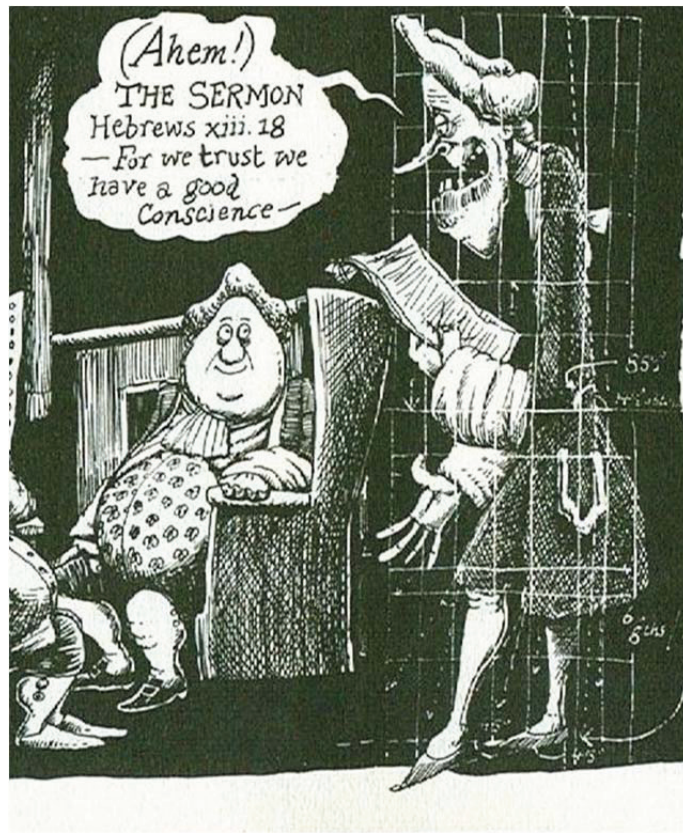


Figure 16: Trim reads the sermon.

CHAPTER 4: STERNE AND WINTERBOTTOM

TRISTRAM: When I said this was a cock and bull story,
it was *my* cock I was talking about.

Director Michael Winterbottom and screenwriter Frank Cottrell Boyce's 2005 film, *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*, is the first attempt at a film adaptation of Laurence Sterne's nine-volume novel. But this film is no ordinary literary adaptation.⁷⁵ In *A Cock and Bull Story*, Winterbottom's styles and conventions of the cinema range from drama to mockumentary, and all converge in his adaptation of a text within which styles and conventions of the print medium also converge.⁷⁶ While it received mixed reviews, *A Cock and Bull Story* comedically presents the notoriously "unfilmable" novel. Yet, Ekart Voigts-Virchow holds that there are "no unfilmable texts" (141), which is true if we accept definitions of 'film-ability' that embrace the interpretive and creative opportunities of the adaptation process, instead of viewing films through typical frameworks like "fidelity criticism" (McFarlane 8). Fidelity, and thus 'film-ability,' needs to be re-imagined; the transfer of "themes," or the spirit of the text, is the best transfer for film adaptation (Hutcheon 15). Like Rowson's graphic novel version of *Tristram Shandy*, the spirit of the text is interpreted and re-presented in *A Cock and Bull Story*. For some filmmakers, the fidelity approach presents a smooth transition from text to screen. *Tristram Shandy*, however, plays with and interrupts the usual structure of the novel and the linear narrative. A recreation of the text has to thus mediate the narrative disorder in an unconventional way; so, how? Winterbottom captures the chaotic spirit of *Tristram Shandy* through a mixture of narrative modes and conventions. Like the novel, the film operates through narrative stasis: moments when the wheels turn in the mud and

we are aware that we are watching a film adaptation, just as Tristram consistently reminds us that we are reading his book. According to Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin in *Remediation*, these moments in *A Cock and Bull Story* are hypermedial, and draw attention to the relationships between the novel and the film. *A Cock and Bull Story* challenges the conventions of cinema and appeals to various conventions and characterizations. The film is a “refashioning” of the original (Bolter and Grusin 15); the “interpretive” aspect of the adaptation (Hutcheon 20) transfers the spirit of the text to film in intertextual and contextual ways. In line with Hutcheon’s principles of adaptation, *A Cock and Bull Story*, both interpretive and creative, is thus faithful to the spirit of *Tristram Shandy*.

I. High Fidelity

It may seem contradictory to toss fidelity criticism out of the window (much like Tristram's foreskin), and then assert that an adaptation is faithful to its source text. The idea of fidelity is a subject of debate among adaptation theorists. But the popularity of literary adaptations in the cinema warrants such debates. As of 2002, roughly 30 per cent of films were based on novels (Mayer 2) and it can be safely assumed that this number has increased since then.⁷⁷ When it comes to eighteenth-century literary adaptations in particular, there is a habit of producing the “heritage film,” the kind of film where filmmakers “revel in the opportunity to represent the long eighteenth-century” (Mayer 1) through elaborate set design, costume, and film locations, like Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006).⁷⁸ Often, literary adaptations focus on the direct text-to-screen

transfers, or streamline the text for the purpose of a cohesive, conventional dramatic narrative. This approach is common of most literary adaptations, regardless of the period, which ranges from TV versions of Homer's *Odyssey* to *Sense and Sensibility* (Lee 1995).

Adaptations like these encourage the fidelity approach in adaptation criticism because of the extent to which they are concerned with recreating the text and its historical contexts as closely as possible. When film-makers take this approach, both film-makers and critics privilege the literature over the cinematic work (Mayer 4), and consequently ignore the innovations made to the text through film. Imelda Whelehan argues that “heritage films” attempt to present “historical veracity and authenticity” first and foremost, and often focus on the portrayal and development of characters rather than themes (8); *The Duchess* (2008) based on Amanda Foreman's biography of Georgiana Cavendish is an apt example. The critical result is an evaluation of the film based on subjective taste: to what extent did the film represent *my interpretation* of the text? How successful was the adaptation in capturing *my understanding* of the characters? Because of this, Brian McFarlane argues, fidelity criticism is a “doomed enterprise” and an “unilluminating” theoretical approach (9). Moreover, fidelity criticism depends upon a “notion” of the text as holding a “single, correct 'meaning,' which the film-maker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with” (McFarlane 8). And this sense of 'violation' or 'tampering,' which Hutcheon notes are common terms used to describe literary adaptations (Hutcheon 3), devalue a film's attempt to interpret a new understanding and create a re-presentation of the text that goes beyond (Kenneth Branagh's many Shakespearean) literary reproductions.⁷⁹ By that I mean: fidelity criticism as an evaluative principle limits the ways in which a film adaptation can be

critically approached.

Fidelity as a concept must be re-imagined to account for the Shandean level of adaptation, and the ways that an adaptation re-presents the spirit of the text *beyond the actual text*. Fidelity needs fixing. Hutcheon's fairly recent principles of adaptation offer a corrective to this concept. Indeed, the debate has almost become a sub-genre in adaptation studies; many adaptation theorists recognize fidelity criticism's theoretical limitations. To renegotiate the terms of fidelity criticism, Hutcheon offers a "double process" (Hutcheon 20) of evaluation that first values the "interpretive" process of the adaptation, and then the "creative" process of re-presentation (Hutcheon 20). This widens the scope of adaptation criticism to include adaptations that go beyond the "heritage film" blueprint. Moreover, adaptations have generally been considered "secondary" or "derivative" (Hutcheon 2) of the original since there is often excision or manipulation of the text, but Hutcheon's theory appreciates the creative decisions and liberties of filmmakers when re-presenting literary texts on film. The focus then becomes on how a film adds to, rather than takes away from, our understanding of the text through and because of its appearance in new media forms. Hutcheon broadens the criteria of adaptation evaluation to incorporate elements of adaptations, like the transfer to new media or the intermedial properties of films, which are otherwise disregarded in the name of fidelity. Hutcheon's guidelines accommodate the role that the medium plays in the adaptation process.

We are able to account for much more than the fidelity of an adaptation if fidelity is redefined as a representation of the spirit of the text, rather than a replication of the text, that is transferred on a conceptual (rather than literal) level; much more about the

medium and its conventions can be considered. And this is an important element to consider in the exploration of a Shandean adaptation, since Sterne's text is aware and interested in the actual medium within which it appears. Bolter and Grusin use the term "hypermedia," which branches off from their concept of remediation, to label media that is hyperaware and self-referential (Bolter and Grusin 53). Hypermedia make "constant references to other media and their contents" (Bolter and Grusin 54) within the particular remediation, since all media is a convergence of other, earlier media; the power of hypermedia is in its attention to its medial properties, which provides an "authentic" experience for the viewer (Bolter and Grusin 53).⁸⁰ That is, hypermedia self-references as media and identifies all the other media properties within the remediation, as in, "Hey, look at me! I'm an adaptation movie based on a book!" This is because, Bolter and Grusin argue, no medium "function[s] independently" (Bolter and Grusin 55). Since remediation necessarily adds to the properties of the original text, what results is an art object that re-presents the meaning and themes of the text in a new way. This renders the fidelity approach insufficient and irrelevant. If, however, fidelity is re-understood to capture the spirit of the text, the intermedial aspects of the adaptation become remarkable and included.

The recognition of intermediality works well with Hutcheon's theory of adaptation as an interpretive and creative process (and thus product) because adaptation necessarily incorporates and mediates different media forms, beginning with the text.⁸¹ There are choices made in the production of a film about how to incorporate the various forms of media within the film adaptation. The "heritage film," for instance, privileges the text-to-screen transfer (should there be internal monologue or voice-over?) rather than

critical interpretation (what ideological and social forces influence Elizabeth Bennet? How can we portray them?). *A Cock and Bull Story* is a demonstration of the interrelatedness of media in the convergence and clash of film conventions in a movie about the making of a movie based on a novel about the writing of a novel.⁸² *A Cock and Bull Story* is faithful to the spirit of its original text because it is also intermedial and self-referential.⁸³ The traditional notion of fidelity for text-to-screen transfers is displaced in favour of a kind of fidelity that lays claim to the original but also interprets and “refashion[s]” it (Bolter and Grusin 56) by adapting the spirit, the conceptual elements, of the text. Fidelity to the spirit creates a new, revitalized work of art.

II. “A Womb with a View”

For the most part, North American audiences were slow to catch the inventiveness and “metadaptation” (Voigts-Virchow 137) of *A Cock and Bull Story*. The 94-minute film flips back and forth between eighteenth-century historical recreations of Namur, the neurosis of the film’s actors, the competitive dynamic between Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon, the film’s financial woes, Coogan’s flashbacks, a sultry affair, and moments of the text recreated. The film ends anticlimactically in the screening room with a deflated cast and crew who are disappointed with the film’s final cut, mirroring the closing of *Tristram Shandy* in the dining parlour: “what is all this story about?” (Sterne 588). Aside from the consistency of Coogan’s ego-maniacal and self-absorbed persona, or a portrait of a “foolish man stumbling toward maturity” (Lyon np), there is little offered by way of a narrative arc, and only a few earnest “heritage” moments. It is as digressive and non-

linear as the original; at least, as much as it can be in a particularly linear medium. Reviews of the film consistently referenced the novel's "unfilmable" status (Ebert np). Even within the film, we see Coogan in a press interview; the interviewer asks why Coogan would tackle the "unfilmable" novel and he answers by repeating Winterbottom: "that's the attraction."⁸⁴ But, by and large, the film received criticism for its execution.⁸⁵ Moreover, it made almost as much money in theatres as it cost to produce (Ebert np), which is considered a 'flop' in the film-making business. In *Rolling Stone*, Peter Travers not only comments on the "unfilmable" quality of the novel, but also the "unreadable" quality of the novel (Travers np), which, accidentally, speaks to the film's success as an adaptation of the textual *spirit* of *Tristram Shandy*. But reviewers still missed Winterbottom's point. "The notion of turning [the novel] into [a film]," Richard Corliss reviews, "raises two stubborn questions: How? and Why?" (Corliss np). In *The New Yorker*, Shauna Lyon critiques the "lack of formula" in Winterbottom's "meta-film" that soon becomes "another, linear, film about the making of a film" (Lyon np).⁸⁶ Yet, Roger Ebert finds it "just as well" that the novel is "unfilmable" since it makes for an art that is "endearingly shabby" (Ebert np). Only those in the know (academics) praised the film's meta-relationship to the text, even if viewed through a postmodern, Lyotardian lens.⁸⁷ Because the film attempts to re-create the reading experience of *Tristram Shandy* in a visual medium, film narrativity and film conventions are challenged or manipulated just as written narrative and print conventions are challenged by Sterne's novel, even if those challenges were largely unperceived by modern audiences; the connection between the original and adaptation is up to the viewer.⁸⁸

Because intertextuality and intermediality function through a series of cognitive

associations and recognitions made by the reader/viewer, this process, the connection-making, relies upon a prior knowledge of the text.⁸⁹ Yet, not even Coogan, the “leading man” and self-proclaimed “star,” has read the whole book, which comments upon the cognitive demands of the narrative (Coogan falls asleep when he tries to read the book) and gestures towards its critical reputation as an “unreadable” text.⁹⁰ We are left on our own to associate between the novel, the film, and its contexts, just as we are left to connect the narrative fragments and material manipulations of *Tristram Shandy*. And this attempt is guided by our expectations of narrative cohesion, especially as a cinematic convention. But these expectations are challenged by the narrative stasis within the film. David H. Richter defines narrative stasis as the “opposite of narrativity” (Richter 70).⁹¹ We experience narrative stasis in the moments when the narrative “comes to a dead stop” and we are filled with a sense of “*being* somewhere as opposed to *getting* anywhere” (Richter 70). This is accomplished in the film through the merger of generic and cinematic conventions that operate in a hypermedial way: “Look at me! I'm a movie! Don't forget you're watching a movie!” The moments of narrative stasis, which are the various story fragments and scenes of the film that merely pass time rather than action, are cognitively joined together by the viewer to impose a linear progression toward a resolved end. But an audience seeking this pattern will be disappointed because what the film really provides is a series of multi-conventional episodes that shows the viewer that the cinematic experience of *Tristram Shandy* must be as hodge-podge as the novel; it must be as Shandean. By the end of the movie, we are reminded that the 'unfinished' film is an adaptation of an 'unfinished' novel.⁹² Unlike most other literary adaptations, the viewer is denied typical cinematic satisfactions like a complete story or even a firm genre. Instead,

the narratives we receive are the dialogues between the text and the adaptation, between textual conventions and cinematic conventions, and between the interpretation and the creation of a new Shandean text. Winterbottom employs the conventions of the heritage film, the documentary/mockumentary, the historical re-creation film, the biopic-drama, the ‘movie’ movie, and the realist film, which relate to specific elements of the Shandean method, especially the play with conventions that *Tristram Shandy* exemplifies.

The Heritage Film

Just as *Tristram Shandy*'s initial readers likely expected a fictionalized autobiography of an eighteenth-century gentleman, Winterbottom misleads the audience's expectations for the direct text-to-screen transfer adaptation. Amidst the opening credits, we see Coogan and Brydon improvising wit about the colour of Brydon's teeth while in make-up chairs.⁹³ This introduction precedes the “heritage film” literary adaptation, which we then receive somewhat earnestly for the first 26 minutes. In a mix between voice-over and direct-address, Coogan as Tristram talks and walks us through scenes mostly from the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*: Tristram's conception, Dr. Slop's forceps, the Battle of Namur, the window circumcision, the mistaken christening, his mother's labour(s), and Tristram's birth. The “heritage film” feel is reinforced by elaborate eighteenth-century-era sets (much grander than the real Shandy Hall),⁹⁴ and detailed period costuming, with the dialogue taken directly from the text. The scenes are carried out *as though* the movie will be a conventional heritage film, as much as the text itself allows this kind of re-creation. That is, the story jumps around

between chapters and volumes (just as the original) to tell these period-drama fragments. As in the novel, Tristram cuts scenes short because he “keeps getting ahead of [himself].” But, these first 26 minutes are a deceptive foil, since, at this point, the only clues that the film will not be a “heritage film” are Brydon’s “barley meadow” teeth. Instead, this segment primarily violates “heritage film” conventions. Coogan flips between Coogan-as-Tristram and Coogan-as-Coogan, which disrupts the coherence of the literary adaptation. During the window sash scene, Coogan interrupts and stops the action to comment that the child actor is the “best of a bad bunch,” and then instructs the child how to best capture the pain of the scene; the child runs back onto spot and the scene resumes. At another point, Coogan freezes a scene in which he plays Walter Shandy, and he (as Tristram) is superimposed in the foreground to narrate. What at first appears to be a “heritage film” adaptation is really a set-up for the remediation of the hypermedial and multimodal themes of the novel. Winterbottom uses the “heritage film” backdrop to experiment with the Shandean style of narrative in the novel: Coogan-as-Tristram controls the visual action in a way that mimics the intrusive and direct control Tristram asserts over the novel. *A Cock and Bull Story* at first anticipates but then violates the conventions of “heritage films,” just like the novel.

The Documentary/Mockumentary

Despite arguments that deny *A Cock and Bull Story's* use of documentary and mockumentary conventions, there is enough evidence to suggest that the film borrows from this film-narrative style. In his review, Ebert claims that *A Cock and Bull*

Story reminds him of the 1984 cult-classic *This is Spinal Tap* (Ebert np).⁹⁵ This is appropriate because it is also very much like Winterbottom's rockumentary *24 Hour Party People* (2002).⁹⁶ *A Cock and Bull Story* uses both the technical and conceptual elements of the genre. The visual effects include shaky, hand-held-style camera-work, evident dollying, and stock shots like a video of Pavlov's dog (subbing in for John Locke's association of ideas) and a series of portraits of men with large noses (Dante, Newton, Alexander the Great et. al.), all typical technical elements of documentary films (Aufderheide 10). The cuts between episodes are distinguished, rather than "invisible," with various types of "wipes" (Brady 215), like camera-shutters or irises in and out.⁹⁷ Some of the episodes throughout the film are documentary-style interviews, which are examples of the film's intermediality (as in, the incorporation of other media forms), and a method that documentaries use to "convey truth," since the principle aim of documentaries is the documentation of "life" (Aufderheide 3). This "life" of Tristram Shandy is supplemented with an informative segment by "Patrick" (Wildgust, curator of Shandy Hall, as performed by Stephen Fry) who explains the themes of the novel, and a segment of an interview in which Brydon gushes over Coogan (Coogan later remarks, "I think he's obsessed with me"). And the film's perspective is documentary: the camera follows Coogan around on-set. Even though it is unacknowledged and given omniscient perspective, the characters constantly acknowledge the concept of film-making and its technical aspects. At times, we see the film crew beyond the camera view. The audience also sees scenes-behind-the-scenes, like wardrobe and makeup and even suites. Finally, at one point, Coogan's voice-over tells the audience to check out the DVD's special features for more. The documentary/mockumentary genre has very close associations with the

fictionalized autobiography, and Winterbottom uses this genre to provide the kind of introspective and personal style of narration that *Tristram Shandy* promises to its readers; fooled again, however.



Figure 17: On set.

The Historical Recreation Film

There is a tension in *A Cock and Bull Story* between historical re-creation and adaptation. There are many elements of the film that are concerned with the veracity of historical re-creation alongside the adaptation's attempt at a historical re-enactment film. For one thing, the map of Namur is digitally rendered and full-screen as the voice-over describes the various battles, indicated by special effect explosions, which is a common visual cue in historical documentaries and re-creation films. Voigts-Virchow argues that the map is the “equivalent of the special-effects that Sterne created for the book” (148). Moreover, the elaborate battle scenes interspersed throughout the film are subjects of

contention among the film's producers and financiers. The meta-commentary that such scenes provide is whether the historical scenes are even convincing. While the cast and crew watch the filmed battle scenes, Coogan says "Mel Gibson's not going to lose any sleep" (a joke, since the scenes *are not* convincing). Brydon remarks, "I'm leading literally *tens* of men." And comments on the historical inaccuracy of the costumes, which are "out of period, about 50 years out of date," cause the costume designer to cry. Foley-Dawson argues that the film "shuns any pretence of historical accuracy" (150) by parodying the conventions of historical dramas and the concern for authenticity. David Ingoldsby, played by Mark Williams, the low-paid "historical accuracy adviser" on the film, satirizes the "obsession with 'superficial' historical accuracy" in adaptations (Foley-Dawson 150). He is shown adjusting tricorne hats and commenting on the wardrobe. Later, he cries out that, "We wouldn't be interested in participating in a pantomime." And yet, the film itself is a pantomime of these kinds of historical representations on film. Coogan obsesses over the height of his shoes in relation to Brydon's shoes (since Coogan should appear taller on screen as the "leading man") but the costume designer is unable to modify the wardrobe on account of historicity. And, because the financiers are concerned about the film's overall marketability as an adaptation, the deliberation over whether to film the expensive and elaborate battle scenes because they will come across as "contrived and awkward" instead of accurate (Gow 10) mocks the entire premise of historical re-enactment films at their core. What the film accomplishes through its participation with these generic expectations are moments of hypermedial awareness: we are watching an adaptation about an adaptation, and it is made to be trivial since historical accuracy is of course impossible. In the end, the battle scenes wind up on the

cutting room floor (even though we have seen them).



Figure 18: Brydon and Coogan compare heights.

The Biopic Drama

The rise of popular interest in biography in the second half of the eighteenth-century informs Sterne's novelistic design.⁹⁸ Likewise, the popularity of the biopic and doc-drama, or documentary-drama, appropriately informs *A Cock and Bull Story*.⁹⁹ The film adapts *Tristram Shandy* to mirror the idiosyncratic, domineering whims of Tristram as subject and narrator through Coogan as subject and narrator. Borrowing elements from biographical films, including Winterbottom's *24 Hour Party People*, *A Cock and Bull Story* follows Coogan on-set as he deals with various personal and professional issues: he is blackmailed into a tabloid interview, he convinces the screenwriter to include the love-story with Widow Wadman, he drinks with the cast after a day's filming. But the real appeal to biopic and doc-drama convention is the dramatization of his fleeting infidelity

with his personal assistant, Jennie.¹⁰⁰ Because we expect to see the slimy, adulterous Coogan of his public persona, we expect his flirtations with Jennie to result in an awkward affair, despite that Coogan's partner, Jenny, and his son, are visiting him on-set, and maybe almost *because* Jenny and son are there. This appeal to the real-ness of Coogan's life-narrative, and the anticipated romantic conflict, along with the various other snafus in Coogan's life, all speak to the biopic film conventions that are used to create a dialogue with the original text. The narrative authority of Tristram is re-created through the narrative authority of Coogan in the film; it is *his* story as much as Tristram's story that we watch. And the privileging of his story and his experience re-presents the same control that Tristram holds over the novel. The Shandean psychological and social individualism is remediated through the use of biopic and doc-drama film conventions. Since the film takes place over the course of a few days, however, few of Coogan's personal dilemmas contribute to the film's narrative development, or resolution, for that matter; the action circulates around Coogan's insecure, competitive neurosis.

The 'Movie' Movie

The most hypermedial mode of the film is the film's reminder to itself (and the audience) that it is an adaptation: the movie about a movie, the metamovie, the "metadaptation" (Voigts-Virchow 137). For the first half of the film, Coogan tries to convince the director and screenwriter to include Walter in the birth scenes (that is, Coogan wants more screen-time). The screenwriter reminds him that, "it's the eighteenth century, men just didn't do that," and Coogan replies in frustration, "[Walter] *talks* to the

fucking camera! He can be *emotional*.” This comment overtly recognizes the play with conventions in the “heritage film” part of the adaptation. Even within the adaptation's parameters, the narrative nature of *Tristram Shandy* permits Walter, Tristram, and Coogan (all Coogan) to directly address the audience, which consistently draws the attention to the film's status as an adaptation, the conventions of which Coogan here mocks.

Another hypermedial moment is when the crew discusses the black page. The scene cuts to a black screen for five silent seconds, until the screenwriter remarks in voice-over, “I don't know how interesting a black screen is going to be for an audience.” The black screen functions as a moment of awareness for the audience; a black screen is the direct transfer, or remediation, of the black page. Unlike the textual document, the black page fills the entire screen, which amplifies the page's meaning as a complete (instead of marginal) black-out. Voigts-Virchow remarks that the black screen is “a negation of film's mediality,” because the medium is “defined by its ability to show something” (146). With the black screen, we become aware of the technical aspects of the adaptation. Some elements of the novel cannot be transferred successfully, even though they, in fact, are (portraits, for example). Indeed, after the first 26 minutes, the film is a series of moments of narrative stasis: we are just *there* with the cast and crew as they discuss the production of the film and its various complications. The adaptation becomes a “metadaptation” because of this stasis. But the spirit of this narrative style is an attempt to stay true to Sterne. “A fidelity critic,” Voigts- Virchow writes, might “point out that [these] scene[s] cannot be found in *Tristram Shandy*,” which would then constitute a fundamental flaw with the film (143), but the film is not concerned with replication. It

also goes beyond modernization because it is concerned with re-creating the Shandean spirit through adaptation, an awareness of the process, and “the process may be more important than the final product” (Voigts-Virchow 146). And thus the process of making the film adaptation, just like the concept of writing a novel in *Tristram Shandy*, is constantly harpooned in *A Cock and Bull Story*.

The Realist Film

Sharing many qualities with the biopic and biography, the realist film, as Colin MacCabe defines it, is a cinematic representation of many narratives held together by a central privileged character, and the genre is interested in true and accurate representation (Montgomery 263). Interestingly, the conventions of realist films are adopted from the conventions of realist novels (Montgomery 263); retrospectively, *Tristram Shandy*'s realist elements (in terms of the eighteenth-century novel) have been considerably acknowledged.¹⁰¹ “Trivial events,” “everyday life,” and “psychological realism” are elements of this film genre (Hallam 16-17), and all three qualities are ripe in *A Cock and Bull Story*, just as they are in *Tristram Shandy*. Indeed, literary adaptations of realist texts obviously replicate this experience. But the film, of course, also mocks these conventions. Coogan walks on-set to find a prop of a man-sized uterus with a glass window (“a womb with a view”) from which he will narrate the adaptation.¹⁰² When Coogan has trouble being held upside down, he asks a crewmember if they can film the scene right-side-up. The crewmember replies that it would disrupt the director's attempt

at “realism.” Coogan replies, “He wants realism? Realism? I’m a grown man talking to the camera in a fucking womb!”



Figure 19: "A womb with a view"

These film conventions, and thus the film's methods of narrativity, all contribute to the feeling of the Shandean narrative method, precisely because all five operate simultaneously, or even as a blend of two or more, at various times throughout the film. This creates a narrative stasis because the confusion of convention stills any sense of action. We are merely *there* while the cast and crew sort out what it is they are doing with the adaptation in these various modes. We are made aware of these various genre conventions because they are repeatedly broken, ridiculed, or poorly executed, much like the battle scenes. Moreover, the blend of convention, which constantly challenges audience expectations of film narrativity, is true to the spirit of Sterne, who also challenged the conventions of the novel. *In absentia* of a linear narrative, the film operates in the Shandean intertextual way, which creates a dialogue between the original text and the film, and historical and literary contexts of the novel. We can sense the Shandean spirit throughout the film through Winterbottom's remediation of Shandean intertextuality.¹⁰³

III. Intertexts and Contexts

A Cock and Bull Story captures the spirit of *Tristram Shandy* by interpreting and re-creating the contexts and intertexts of the novel to create a dialogue with the original text. Various contemporaneous allusions substitute Sterne's original, obscure, eighteenth-century intertextual and contextual gestures. Gow writes that these modernizations "encourage viewers to appreciate the wealth of reference in Sterne" (11).¹⁰⁴ Thus, the theory of Pavlov's dog substitutes John Locke's association of ideas, dirty Groucho Marx jokes take the place of allusions to François Rabelais and Swift, and "Roger Moore and

[Al] Pacino stand in for [David] Garrick” (Gow 11).¹⁰⁵ At one point, Brydon quotes Samuel Johnson (“Every man thinks less of himself for not having been a soldier”) while being fitted for his military costume; this is one reference that we see in both *Tristram Shandy* and the film, even though it is of a different kind. Moreover, that reference is doubled when we see Coogan perform the chestnut scene. Although Sterne writes that, “there is no chaste word throughout all *Johnson's* dictionary” (4.27) for what *Phutatorius* yells when the smoldering chestnut gets into his breeches, Coogan uses the most common expletives while his personal assistant fishes around in his pants.¹⁰⁶ We also have the various conventions themselves that substitute for the various narrative modes that Sterne uses in *Tristram Shandy*: biography, dramatic romance, satire, travel writing, and so on. Moreover, the commercial interests of the film, represented by the financiers and producers who need constant reminders that this film is *worth* funding, are in keeping with Sterne’s anxieties about the production and sale of the novel.¹⁰⁷ But on the fictional level, of which all boundaries are blurred, the characterizations of the actors in the film reflect the intertexts of *Tristram Shandy*.

Because *A Cock and Bull Story* is a documentary/mockumentary/biopic, the actors we see in the film play exaggerated and satirical portraits of themselves. We should remember that Sterne’s various identities are all meshed within *Tristram Shandy*; Parson Yorick is a veiled portrait of Sterne-as-preacher (since he used his own sermon as Yorick’s for Volume II), and Sterne also took on Tristram’s persona; after the publication of the novel, he received and signed letters by that name (Sterne, *Letters*). Not to mention the Yorick of *A Sentimental Journey*, and his role as Bramin in the *Journal to Eliza*. Likewise, in the film, Coogan’s ‘character’ is a conflation of his various

identities.¹⁰⁸ Throughout the film, there are references to Coogan's character, "Alan Partridge," from his 1994-1995 BBC radio and television series *Knowing Me, Knowing You*, which annoys him immensely. Coogan also plays up the "unflattering caricature [of himself] taken from the British tabloids: a self-absorbed, arrogant, insecure womanizer" (Foley-Dawson 149). As in, we see him cheat on his partner, we watch him have anxiety over Brydon's (ultimately larger) role in the film, and we see him stand in front of the mirror wondering if he should get a nose job.¹⁰⁹ But it is not just Coogan who imitates the spirit of Sterne; "no personality" in the movie, Gow writes, "has just one handle" (11).¹¹⁰ Gillian Anderson, who is called upon to fill the role of Widow Wadman, also plays a desperate-actress who is more than eager to do the film. Stephen Fry appears as both Patrick Wildgust and as Yorick in the closing scene of the "heritage film." "Jennie" and "Jenny," likewise.¹¹¹ In the DVD liner notes, Patrick Wildgust writes that we recognize these actors and comedians as themselves, even though they are "employed to impersonate themselves impersonating people impersonating characters in a book" (Gow 11). Under the guise of all of the film conventions at work in *A Cock and Bull Story*, the notion of 'reality' under which the film operates is confused by attributions and assumptions that the characters/actors take or make. And, also, what the audience perceives. In the spirit of Sterne, who spent a decade self-fashioning his many identities, the film interprets these intertextual and contextual elements and transfers them to film. The result is a remediation of the novel that presents adaptation as an intermedial and multimodal practice.

While the concepts of intermediality and remediation are tied to the qualities of the medium itself, these terms can be widened to account for the ways in which the

properties of different media make their way into the film (the blending of various conventions is but one way). Voigts-Virchow sees the relationship between the text and the film as “intermedial,” which is one way to describe the qualities of Shandean method. There are moments when the medium of film explicitly uses elements of the codex. *A Cock and Bull Story* substitutes the chapters and volumes of *Tristram Shandy* for different kinds of cuts between scenes, but in the DVD production, “titled chapters” are used to indicate different scenes, which remediate the “mediality of the book” (Voigts-Virchow 148). The black page interruption is another example. But for the most part, the film’s intermediality can be found in the themes of the novel, which are lifted from the text and transferred into visual action. The actors interpret and then intimate the text, rather than recreate it. When we watch the relationship between Coogan and Brydon, we should be reminded of the relationship between Walter and Toby (who they each play, respectively). We should also feel alienated, or misled, or confused by the film’s development, just as we should feel when we read *Tristram Shandy*. The experience of the text is mediated from the novel into the film; its success as a transfer is signified by the characters, conventions, and concepts that we see on screen, all in the spirit of the original novel. It is through an appeal to the Shandean spirit of the text that the “unfilmable” novel is adapted into a film, which makes *A Cock and Bull Story* a conceptual adaptation and is thus ever more Shandean in its execution. ‘



Figure 20. Coogan and Brydon

IV. Credits

Since the novel is nine volumes, and since the film has to (by necessity) reduce the text to some extent, we are able to view the adaptation of *Tristram Shandy* as a film that faithfully captures the spirit of the novel, even if it “tampers” with the original (Hutcheon 2). Following Hutcheon, we can see how the film interprets and then re-creates a new art object that is based upon, but does not replicate, the original document. By using various conventions and methods of film-narrativity, *A Cock and Bull Story* transfers the elements of the text into a new medium. These moments indicate the hypermedial experience: we are constantly reminded of the medium of film, and the other mediums that are remediated into the movie. The various film conventions that are at play within the film channel the spirit of Sterne and his experimentation with various

modes and conventions. On the abstract level, *Winterbottom* presents the spirit of the text in a new format, which makes the adaptation true to the spirit of Sterne. We also have a hard time forgetting that we are watching the making of a movie about the making of a movie about a novel about the writing of a novel. These meta-layers are also embodied in the film's characters and actors who play versions of themselves who are playing versions of themselves. Because *A Cock and Bull Story* gives us various manipulations of film-making, through the appeal to many conventions, and ultimately leaves us with an unfinished yet finished product, it is indeed a faithful adaptation. It is the very same bunch of "cock and bull" that we experience from Sterne.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is a text that is known for its inherent difficulty, its narratological manipulations, its experimentation with conventions, its layered characterizations, and its humour, penis jokes included. Since these Shandean qualities make the text's transfer from the novel to new media difficult in terms of the usual processes of adaptation, another method of adaptation is at work here. Recognizing that a direct text-to-screen transfer is denied by the text itself, and that a modernized adaptation would seem artificial, *Tristram Shandy* is adapted on the conceptual level of adaptation: the spirit of the text, its Shandean-ness, is what is captured and remediated by Rowson and Winterbottom. The Shandean sense of things is a quality of the text that supersedes the text on the page; the Shandean sense of things is the way that the text is constructed, the way it appeals to its contexts, and the way that it challenges the reader's expectations. Because these are all *ways* of doing things, rather than *things* spelled out in the text itself, I recognize the Shandean as a method, and this method is the spirit of the text.

The qualities of the Shandean as defined in Chapter I make it difficult for an adaptation to adhere to the usual processes of adaptation. *Tristram Shandy* is concerned with the convergence of media, as Sterne brings together the textual and the visual to disrupt the narrative, which thus gives the visual as much narratological power as the textual. The narrative, however, is already disrupted, since the Shandean method of narration is digressive and progressive and thus simultaneously moving and still. The convergence of narrative conventions, modes, and genres helps accomplish this sense of *being in the moment* with Tristram. We jump between a romance tale, a travel story, a

fictional autobiography, a military history, and so on. And readers remain cognizant of the demands that this text requires because of these continuous movements, juxtapositions, and parodies. Sterne extends these challenges to conventions by presenting us with a narrator who challenges the notions of self-identity and self-knowledge through fictive identities disguised as real. Moreover, between the bawdiness and humour, *Tristram Shandy* is aware of its critical contexts and also answers its critics, as a feature of its self-reflexivity. All of these qualities locate the Shandean spirit that can be successfully remediated into new media.

Rowson's *Tristram Shandy* picks up these Shandean qualities to present into the graphic novel format, as Chapter II discusses. The spirit of Sterne's text is replicated by Rowson. That is, Rowson deliberately challenges the visual and structural conventions of the graphic novel. He retains the self-conscious narrator (even layering narrations atop each other), and makes the critical history, intertexts, and contexts of *Tristram Shandy* major elements of the adaptation, which remediates Sterne's own attention to his critics. Moreover, Rowson incorporates the visual elements of the text to unify the text and the word, and he also uses visual imagery and icons to replace the textual, and prioritize the image, staying true to Sterne's interest in media convergence. Rowson also retains the humour and bawdiness of *Tristram Shandy* but adapts the textual language to visual language, and thus symbolizes what Sterne's text implies. Like *Tristram Shandy*, Rowson's text makes us aware of the act of reading the text, and stays true to the spirit of Sterne by adapting the elements of the text that are recognizably Shandean. A faithful adaptation is thus accomplished by remediating Sterne's text into a new format.

Like Rowson, Winterbottom films the 'unfilmable' novel by capturing the

Shandean elements of the text. If, according to Hutcheon, an adaptation should “interpret” and “create” (Hutcheon 20) a new text from its original source, then Winterbottom’s film adaptation, like Rowson’s graphic novel, makes the same kinds of challenges to the viewer’s sense of narrativity and thematic continuity by interpreting Sterne’s text, and thus presenting the Shandean in a new medium, effectively creating an adaptation that is true to the textual spirit. By layering the characters and actors in the film, Winterbottom recreates Sterne’s play with self-identity and self-perception. The generic and media convergence within the film, and the many film conventions that are reworked, manipulated, or satirized, also represent Sterne’s challenges to stable genres and narrative methods. The intertexts and contexts of novel writing are repeated by the intertexts and contexts of film-making. Winterbottom’s adaptation thus stays true to Sterne and captures the spirit of Sterne by remediating the Shandean qualities of *Tristram Shandy*.

By operating on the conceptual level of adaptation, Rowson’s and Winterbottom’s remediations of *Tristram Shandy* retain the qualities of Shandyism that are unique to the text and recognizably Shandean. By repositioning fidelity in adaptation theory from word-to-word replication to, instead, the faithful rendering of the spirit of the text in a new medium, Rowson and Winterbottom faithfully adapt *Tristram Shandy*; both capture the concept of the text and what it represents. *Tristram Shandy* is a text that exposes the reader’s assumptions about the medium within which it is presented. Rowson and Winterbottom accomplish this same sense of exposure in the graphic novel and film mediums. What we are left with, then, are two adaptations of *Tristram Shandy* that, in their invention and innovation, stay true to the spirit of Sterne.

FINIS

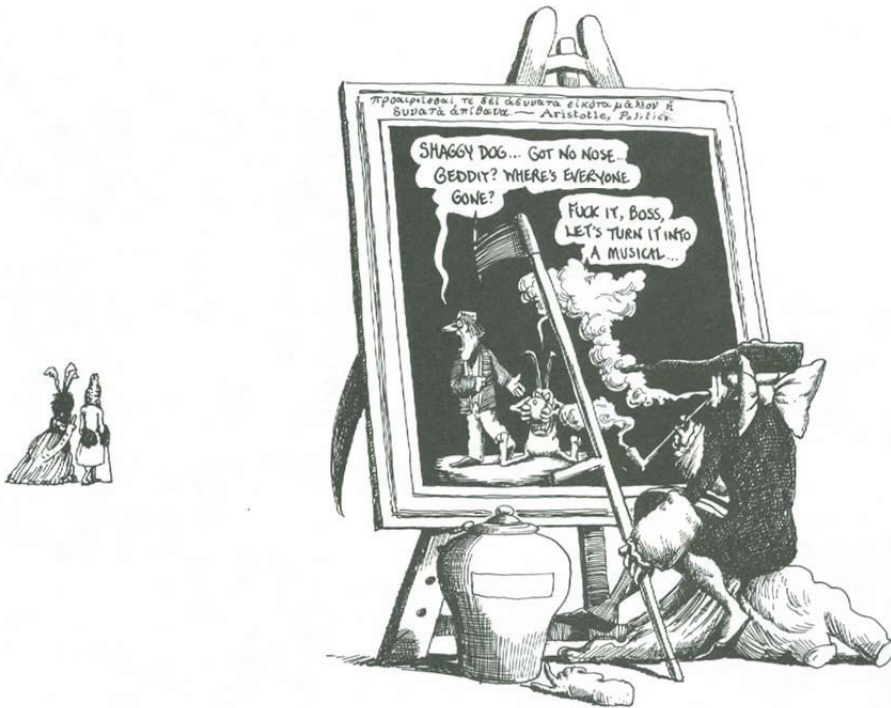


Figure 21: The final page of Rowson's adaptation.

¹ See *Approaches to Teaching Tristram Shandy*. Ed. Melvyn New. New York, MLA (1989).

² The cutest example is James Boswell's "A Poetical Epistle to Doctor Sterne [sic], Parson Yorick, and Tristram Shandy," which he wrote after meeting Sterne in 1760. It can be found, in parts, in Alan B. Howes. *Laurence Sterne: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 1971): 80-85, and in Frederick Pottle. "Bozzy and Yorick" *Blackwood's Magazine* 207(1925): 297-313. Howe notes that after 1760, "the paths of the two men never crossed again" (80).

³ See Peter Jan De Voogd. "Sterne All the Fashion: A Sentimental Fan" *The Shandean* 8 (1996): 133-136. Print.

⁴ "The Black Page," organized by Shandy Hall, invited well-known artists and authors to re-illustrate Sterne's black page. The productions were then auctioned off online in support of The Laurence Sterne Trust. The Marbled Page will have its own season this year (2011). There was also an exhibit of wood engravings inspired by the novel and William Hogarth's illustrations. And John Baldessari did a very limited edition of illustrations of the novel in 1988 in San Francisco. See Melvyn New. "William Hogarth and John Baldessari: Ornamenting Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*" *Word & Image*, 11.2 (1995): 182-195. Print.

⁵ See Michael Bell. "Laurence Sterne and the Twentieth Century" *Sterne in Modernism and Postmodernism*. Eds. David Pierce, Peter Jan de Voogd (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996): 39-54, to start; the collection pursues this argument.

⁶ Remakes often try to overcome the technological or social strictures of the original film, for better or worse.

⁷ I am thinking of Will Gluck's *Easy A* (2010), which stars Emma Stone and Stanley Tucci. The film is loosely based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), but merely as a reference, although the main character (Stone) is aware of the text's relationship to the situation in the film in a way that metacritically jabs at the concept of adaptation. But, as far as adaptation criticism goes, this film could be considered an unfaithful adaptation.

⁸ Frank Miller's *300* and *Sin City*, and the subsequent films, are good examples.

⁹ "The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself" (Sterne 96).

¹⁰ And by 'method', I mean method. To extend this concept to a 'system' would be a gross misrepresentation of Sterne, even though it, too, is tempting, since Tristram calls his father's philosophical methods the "Shandean system" (61). For the reason why I defer to method instead, see Arthur H. Cash. "The Sermon in *Tristram Shandy*" *ELH* 31.4 (1964): 395-417. Also, my understanding and use of 'method' is indebted to T.S. Eliot's "mythic method," which is a slightly ethereal concept, but has a formed process and a distinct purpose. See T.S. Eliot. "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975): 175-178.

¹¹ Even this is tricky, and potentially problematic. As Henry Duff Traill writes in 1882, “To talk of ‘the style’ of Sterne is almost to play one of those tricks with language of which he was so fond. For there is hardly any definition of the word to describe him as having any style at all . . . He was determined to be uniformly eccentric, regularly irregular . . . [He is] a perfect marvel of literary slipshod” (142). There is something slightly ineffable about Shandyism.

¹² The portrait of Sterne by Sir Joshua Reynolds, done in 1760, shows Sterne in his clerical robes with a smirk.

¹³ See Chapter III, 17.

¹⁴ Wayne C. Booth. “The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction Before *Tristram Shandy*” *PMLA* (1952): 163-185.

¹⁵ Sterne sent a letter to an acquaintance of Hogarth claiming how wonderful it would be to have Hogarth illustrate the first two volumes; Hogarth did it. See Arthur H. Cash. *Laurence Sterne: The Later Years* (New York: Routledge, 1992):10-12. Also see Laurence Sterne. *Letters*. Ed. Lewis P. Curtis (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1935) 99.

¹⁶ Sterne was not the first to include illustrations in his work, but they show his investment in the conventions of the novel, and his awareness of the marketplace and marketability. For more on novel illustration, see Thomas Keymer, Peter Sabor. “*Pamela* Illustrations and the Visual Culture of the Novel” *'Pamela' In the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005): 143-176. For more on the ties between Hogarth and Sterne, see William Holtz. “The Journey and the Picture: The Art of Sterne and Hogarth” *A History of Book Illustration: 29 Points of View*. Ed. Bill Katz (Methuen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1994): 315-332.

¹⁷ “Each marbled leaf in the first edition of *Tristram Shandy* was prepared individually” (Day 144). For details on the page, see W.G. Day. “*Tristram Shandy*: The Marbled Leaf” *Library* 27 (1972): 143-145. Also, De Voogd discusses the magnitude of this inclusion as representative of Sterne's interest in materiality: “each page hand-marbled, each side different and unique, each side hand-stamped, each leaf stuck in, the sheer scope of the undertaking a tell-tale indication of the extent to which Sterne was prepared to go in turning his book into an aesthetic object” (384).

¹⁸ See Wayne C. Booth. “Did Sterne Complete *Tristram Shandy*?” *Modern Philology* 48.3 (1951): 172-183.

¹⁹ Between 1720 and 1729, book and pamphlet production occupied 1.1% of the market, and by 1770, it had only increased to about 4% (Flint 344); “religious discourse” continued to dominate the market (Flint 348).

²⁰ See Ian Watt. “The Reading Public and the Rise of the Novel” *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957): 35-59.

²¹ Sterne has been charged with plagiarism and defended against plagiarism aplenty, on both counts. Elizabeth Kraft, for instance, calls Sterne's *Sermons* largely “second-hand stuff” (26), and James Gow's dissertation, *The Contexts of Sterne's Sermons*, rebuts Kraft and her critical ilk, locates and identifies Sterne's sources, and also situates Sterne's sermon work in an ecclesiastical context of “borrowing” (1).

²² It can be argued that *A Sentimental Journey* set the genre in motion; after 1768, we see Johnson and Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, various "adventures" including those of Humphrey Clinker, and other titles by Jefferson, Goethe, and Wollstonecraft, and in the nineteenth century, Tocqueville and Stevenson, for example.

²³ For a discussion of Sterne's sources for this volume see Van R. Baker. "Sterne and Piganiol de la Force: The Making of Volume VII of *Tristram Shandy*" *Comparative Literature Studies* 13. 1 (1976): 5-14.

²⁴ While Richardson's novels contain some early sentimentalism, it was only after the publication of *A Sentimental Journey* in 1768 that the ball really started rolling: Henry MacKenzie's *A Man of Feeling* appeared in 1770.

²⁵ Keymer makes a case for Toby as "embodying a satire on false sensibility" (595), and also remarks on the "studious irony" of the Maria scene (596), both in *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, and while both interpretations are possible, I am not sure I want to agree with Keymer here. I think these are particularly genuine passages, but, then again, it is Sterne, and I suppose it could be both. See Thomas Keymer. "Sentimental Fiction: Ethics, Social Critique, and Philanthropy" *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780*. Ed. John Richetti. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005): 572-601.

²⁶ Like Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, for instance, and the works of John Dryden.

²⁷ This scene was the subject of a painting by Charles Robert Leslie in 1848, which generated many replicas and other versions, and was transferred to other forms, like porcelain dishes, statues, and miniatures.

²⁸ For a more recent discussion, see Judith Hawley "Tristram Shandy, Learned Wit, and Enlightenment Knowledge" *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*. Ed. Thomas Keymer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009): 34-48.

²⁹ See Kieran More. "The Fictional Autobiography: The Art of Non-Fiction in *Moll Flanders*" *Doğuş Üniversitesi Dergisi* 12.1 (2011): 147-154.

³⁰ Cleland's *Fanny Hill* is an excellent example of this narrative arc; despite that Fanny loses her true love, Charles, and gets ousted from her several positions as a kept woman, and despite her experiences in whoredom and pleasure, she is reunited with her true love and lives happily ever after, as it were, thus providing the contexts for her "pleasurable" experiences. We do not get this same narrative arc in *Tristram Shandy*, by any means.

³¹ See Chapter II.

³² It is observed by Overton Philip James that this relationship cannot be extended throughout the entire novel, but their identification informs a great deal of Tristram's character; James argues this in *The Relation of Tristram Shandy to the Life of Sterne*. Volume 22 (The Hague: Mouton, 1966): 13, 55.

³³ Tristram's birthday is 5 November 1718 (Sterne 10), while Sterne's was 24 November 1713 (Ross 5). Tristram's birthday is also Guy Fawkes Day, of course (Sterne n. 1, 601).

³⁴ (Sterne 92).

³⁵ See Richard Forrester. "Uncle Jacques Sterne" *The Shandean* 4 (1992): 216-222.

³⁶ See Melvyn New. "Job's Wife and Sterne's Other Women" *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism*. Eds. Laura Claridge, Elizabeth Langland (Boston: University of Massachusetts, 1990): 55-74. Also see Martha F. Bowden "The Interdependence of Women in *Tristram Shandy*: A Chapter of Eyes, Sausages, and Sciatica." *English Language Notes* 31.4 (1994): 40-47, and Elizabeth Harries. "Words, Sex, and Gender in Sterne's Novels" *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*. Ed. Thomas Keymer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009): 111-124.

³⁷ "Although capable of generous acts of private charity, Sterne was widely considered by strait-laced neighbours as ill-suited to the cloth, not only for occasional neglect of his clerical duties but, above all, for his ill-concealed and eventually notorious sexual liaisons with servants (his wife once discovered him in bed with their maid) and prostitutes in York" (Ross 8). Not to get Freudian, but Sterne also had a strained relationship with his mother (8).

³⁸ Unfortunately, the online exhibit of this piece by sculptor Peter Coates has been removed. Those interested will have to go to the churchyard of St. Michael's in Coxwold to see it from henceforth.

³⁹ See E.S. Turner. *Unholy Pursuits: The Wayward Parsons of Grub Street* (Sussex: Book Guild Ltd., 1998): 80-83.

⁴⁰ For more, see Dennis W. Allen. "Sexuality and Textuality in *Tristram Shandy*" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 25. 3 (1985): 651-670.

⁴¹ See Chapter III.

⁴² Even though Hutcheon theorizes film adaptation, I am extending it to include the graphic novel in the discussion. Dirk Vanderbeke also recognizes Hutcheon's "blind eye to sequential art" (105), and in his words, "it will therefore be necessary to do some adapting of my own" (105). It should also be noted that I try to provide as many examples from the graphic novel as I can, but it is overwhelmingly jam-packed full of the critical history and contexts of the novel; many conservatory efforts were thus made in the selection and presentation of evidence.

⁴³ Cf. Chapter 3: criticism and reflections on the film adaptation all remark on the "unfilmability" of the text.

⁴⁴ Rowson does make significant changes to Eliot's text, but the concerns and transfers are much different than what he does with Sterne's text a decade later. See Martin Rowson. *The Waste Land* (London: Penguin, 1990).

⁴⁵ Richter also observes this quality; he writes, "*Tristram Shandy* is an antinovel not about WRITING but about READING Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*" (np).

⁴⁶ This study focuses on Western comics; all references to the history of comics are within a North American and European context. As Scott McCloud demonstrates in *Understanding Comics*, the East has an extensively rich tradition and history in the visual arts, comics, graphic novels, but much different styles, conventions, and functions (81). Storytelling methods and narrative patterns are also culturally inflected (81).

⁴⁷ Wertham set up a study that tried to connect the actions of delinquent adolescents to their enjoyment of comic books and show the negative "influence of comic books" (61). He did focus on comics that were particularly violent or aggressive, but his conclusions influenced mass perceptions of the medium (61).

⁴⁸ While planning the graphic novel version, Rowson immediately dismissed, nay “rejected,” the “pointless ‘Classics Illustrated’” type of “straight narrative” style; “equally, however, Tristram wouldn’t let me do that” (Rowson 65).

⁴⁹ For a visual history of smut, see Maurice Horn. *Sex in the Comics* (New York: Chelsea House, 1985). In the 1960s, franchises like *DC Comics* re-popularized super-hero stories (Weiner 8), and the establishment of comic book stores, or “headshops,” in the 1970s gave comic book sellers and readers a marketplace (Weiner 13). Popular comic books, plots, and their characters have been remediated into campy and colourful live-action versions on television and in film since the 1960s.

⁵⁰ A succession of graphic novels in the 1990s led to the production of film adaptations in the 2000s, which exploded the market and increased the sales of both mediums and often enabled reprints of the graphic novels. *Dark Horse Comics*, in particular, has been very successful. A few examples of graphic novels (that were adapted to film in the 2000s) include, but are not limited to Frank Miller. *300* (Portland: Dark Horse Comics, 1998); Alan Moore, David Gibbons. *The Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, 1987); Alan Moore. *From Hell*. Illus. Eddie Campbell. (London: Knockabout Comics, 1999); John Wagner. *A History of Violence*. Illus. Vince Lock. (New York: Paradox Press, 1997); and Max Allan Collins. *Road to Perdition* (New York: Paradox Press, 1998).

⁵¹ For instance, Weiner notes that one-fifth of all novels sold in France are graphic novels (59).

⁵² Comics that attempt the highest level of reader participation, however, are considered “experimental” (McCloud 77) because of the cognitive demands that challenge both the participatory and narratological aspects of visual storytelling. For the most part, then, comics should provide an easily navigable narrative pattern signified by visual cues. Sterne’s text, however, does not. This is satirized by the signposts.

⁵³ Goggin (6-7); McCloud (16-17); Duncan and Smith (20).

⁵⁴ “Between panels, none of our sense are required at all, which is why all of our senses are engaged” (McCloud 89).

⁵⁵ By way of comparison, McCloud’s sense of comics as “imitating” an earlier media form is similar to how Hutcheon views adaptation as an imitation of the original text; she cites the classical sense of “imitatio” as ‘making new’ (20).

⁵⁶ In his analysis of the graphic novel, David H. Richter praises Rowson’s “parodic inventiveness” (np).

⁵⁷ Because of this, McFarlane would consider Rowson’s adaptation a commentary, or even “deconstruction,” of the original text (McFarlane 22), and this would be an interesting thought to pursue if Rowson’s adaptation was not as multimodal as it is, even within a particular medial format; I hold it is more than commentarial. Leanne Davis Asplough, however, undertakes a ‘deconstructionist’ approach to the graphic novel using post-modern theory in “Treading upon the Shroud: Martin Rowson’s Graphic Novel Version of *Tristram Shandy*,” *The Shandean* (2009).

⁵⁸ McCloud notes that when graphic novels that use black and white format, “the ideas behind the art are communicated more directly” (McCloud 195). Also, it should be noted that Piranesi was extremely popular in the eighteenth century, and was a “graphic artist of technical brilliance” (Wilton-Ely 7).

⁵⁹ Sterne had many Modern and Postmodern admirers (see note 58). Also see Michael Bell. "Laurence Sterne and the Twentieth Century" *Sterne in Modernism and Postmodernism*. Ed. David J. Peirce, Peter Jan de Voogd. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996): 39-54.

⁶⁰ Much has been said about Sterne's relationship to Joyce, and Sterne's influence on Modernism. See John M. Warner. *Joyce's Grandfathers: Myth and History in Defoe, Smollett, Sterne, and Joyce* (Georgia: University of Athens, 1993). See also Michael Hart. "'Many Planes of Narrative': A Comparative Perspective on Sterne and Joyce" *Laurence Sterne in Modernism and Postmodernism*. Eds. David Pierce, Peter Jan de Voogd. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996): 65-80. The whole collection speaks to Sterne and Modernism. And Melvyn New. "Sterne and the Modernist Moment" *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*. Ed. Thomas Keymer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 160-173); this list could be much longer to reflect this critical tradition.

⁶¹ The obvious compression of the text is due, for the most part, to the material restrictions of the comic book. Rowson argues that textual amendments and compressions were done "where necessary" (Rowson 69).

⁶² As Dirk Vanderbeke notes, "the picture does not make sense unless the reader relates [it] to the text" (109).

⁶³ "Nothing odd will do long. *Tristram Shandy* did not last" (Rowson np).

⁶⁴ On a very immediate level, Rowson's adaptation of Sterne's text, especially the re-working of the original plotline (which is already jumbled), is the first and most prominent offense against comic book conventions. The frames and panels, which are usually in sequential order, vary in size and shape across the pages.

⁶⁵ See Chapter I.

⁶⁶ In practice, Hogarth's line of beauty can be seen by the posture of the sign-painter in *Beer Street*, and Hogarth did, after all, illustrate the frontispiece showing Trim reading the sermon in that posture, as well.

⁶⁷ Robert Mayer elaborates: "the individuals who produced and presented texts [in the 1700s] and about whose reading of texts we have knowledge were mostly members of the middling sort" (8).

⁶⁸ At this point in the novel, Widow Wadman, we are told, is "determined to play her cards herself" in her pursuit of Uncle Toby (Volume I, Chapter 23; fill in appropriate Penguin Edition page).

⁶⁹ Karen Harvey makes an argument for the politicization of the male body in the eighteenth-century through an exploration of eighteenth-century texts: "the future of the new nation lay in the male body" (145).

⁷⁰ Rowson notes that in designing the cartoon illustration of Tristram, which follows the Mickey Mouse principle (i.e. using an easily replicable cartoon because of its ubiquity throughout) hides Tristram's nose under his tricorne hat, as we are to assume it has been crushed beyond its original structure (Rowson np). Moreover, the bust of Joseph Nollekens, based on the measurements of Sterne's face, show Sterne himself had quite the honker; the relationship between Sterne's own nose and nose anxiety in the text is the matter of another paper.

⁷¹ Shunga is the Japanese term for erotic art, and vividly illustrates detailed sexual acts and functions, and especially features the qualities of both male and female genitals. Because it takes up the entire panel, the image of Walter's penis penetrating Elizabeth's vaginal cavity is, at first, hard to recognize because of the acute focus. Once it is recognized, however, it is quite visually explicit and as true to life as erotic comics get.

⁷² See Chapter 1.

⁷³ Sterne was dying of consumption while he wrote *Tristram Shandy*, and actually took a trip to Europe (as the men do in the novel) in an attempt to improve his condition. This same trip forms the basis for *A Sentimental Journey* (1768).

⁷⁴ At least that's all I see, anyway.

⁷⁵ In an account of the pre-screening of *A Cock and Bull Story* at Shandy Hall on 17 June 2005, set up by Winterbottom in conjunction with the Laurence Sterne Trust, James Gow remarks that the film "is no conventional adaptation" (Gow 10).

⁷⁶ While not a reliable source, since its author is uncited, the Wikipedia entry on the film claims that it is often "mislabeled" as a "mockumentary" since conventions of even documentary are not present in the film. I will show why, along with its place on Wikipedia, this claim is unsubstantiated. There are certainly "mockumentary" elements in the film.

⁷⁷ The sci-fi and fantasy genres have done particularly well in the last decade; the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the works of C.S. Lewis, and the *Twilight* series are all recent examples of text-to-screen adaptations. Some adaptation styles extract the plot and modernize the story; *Cruel Intentions* (1999) takes up *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), and several versions of *Gulliver's Travels* exist (starring Ted Danson, or Jack Black).

⁷⁸ Even though *Marie Antoinette* isn't necessarily a literary adaptation, it still "revels" in the eighteenth century.

⁷⁹ Branagh's adaptation of *Hamlet*, for instance, presents the text entire, for a complete run-time. For the most part, Branagh loosely adapts the contexts of Shakespeare's plays; *Much Ado about Nothing*, for instance, is set in an Italian winery, paying tribute Shakespeare's original sources for the plot. But, the text is generally kept intact. There may also be considerable stylistic differences between a novel adaptation and a play adaptation.

⁸⁰ Bolter and Grusin understand "authentic" experience to be the recognition of the media.

⁸¹ Hutcheon writes that we use the same word for both the process and the product (Hutcheon 8).

⁸² In an interview with Richard Porton, Winterbottom says that, "we started ... with the idea that filmmaking was analogous to Sterne's preoccupation with writing and playfulness" (Porton 29).

⁸³ See Chapter 1.

⁸⁴ This is the same sentiment that Winterbottom expresses in the DVD Commentary about the film.

⁸⁵ There are, of course, exceptions. A number of reviews do praise the film's ingenuity or postmodern renderings, but such reviews are often from Film Festival or literary crowds (Gow 15-17). General viewers and audiences be damned.

⁸⁶ That is, the “lack of formula” is actually the point, and I am still not sure how the film “turns into” a “linear” story, except that the material properties of the medium (film) require at least technical linearity.

⁸⁷ See D’Arcy Foley-Dawson. “24 Hour Party People and *A Cock and Bull Story*: Exemplary Postmodern Texts?” *The Shandean* 18 (2007): 145-155. And, James Gow. “Observations on the First Public Screenings of Michael Winterbottom’s *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*” *The Shandean* 16 (2005): 8-17.

⁸⁸ Hutcheon does remark that adaptations are more successful when the audience knows the original text; in this way, adaptations are “familiar” and can be compared to the original (Hutcheon); Gow argues, however, that “it is not incumbent upon the viewer to catch every allusion, nudge and wink. The film still works” (11).

⁸⁹ The film is a “highly intertextual work” blended with “self-reflexivity and parody” (Foley-Dawson 149).

⁹⁰ After admitting he has read the novel twice (and Coogan “less than once”), Winterbottom remarks that, “we are relying on the fact that no one else has read it [either]” (Gow 14).

⁹¹ Even though Richter discusses narrative stasis in the context of the graphic novel, it also applies to the film.

⁹² Whether or not Sterne ‘finished’ *Tristram Shandy* has been a debate among Sterne scholars for several decades. Sterne died in 1768, after the release of Volume IX. He also died before ‘completing’ *A Sentimental Journey*, which is presumed because the Second Volume ends mid-sentence: “He took hold of the fille de chambre’s -----” (Sterne). But, the intent is at the heart of the debate. There are some who believe that it is completely appropriate that the text is left without resolution.

⁹³ For more witty and hilarious repartee between Coogan and Brydon, watch *The Trip* (2010). It is pretty much a full-length feature film of this scene.

⁹⁴ The Shandy Hall scenes were filmed at Blickling Hall in Norfolk, Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk, and Kirby Hall in Northamptonshire (also the set of a *Mansfield Park* adaptation). For details on the actual (much more modest) Shandy Hall, see A. Michael Minim. “Shandy Hall, Coxwold” *The Shandean* 4 (1992).

⁹⁵ *This is Spinal Tap* is a classic mockumentary/rockumentary; this genre is often satiric and comedic.

⁹⁶ *24 Hour Party People*, starring Steve Coogan, is more of a rockumentary/documentary; it follows the 1980s New Wave scene and there are many principles of adaptation at play (being, as it is, a biopic of Ian Curtis and Joy Division). *A Cock and Bull Story* obviously shares qualities with this film. See: Foley-Dawson, D’Arcy. “24 Hour Party People and *A Cock and Bull Story*: Two Exemplary Postmodern Texts?” *The Shandean* 18 (2007) 145-155.

⁹⁷ An iris wipe transitions through the enlargement or reduction of a circle focused on a point in the screen.

⁹⁸ See John Dudley Browning. *Biography in the 18th Century* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980).

⁹⁹ In the last decade, a slew of biopic films have popularized this genre: *Erin Brockovich* (2000), *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), *Hitler: The Rise of Evil* (2003), *Ray* (2004), *Walk the Line* (2005), *Factory Girl* (2006), *I'm Not There* (2007), *La Vie en Rose* (2007), *Frost/Nixon* (2008), *The Young Victoria* (2009), *The King's Speech* (2010), and *The Social Network* (2010) only scratch the surface of this film genre's popularity in North America and the UK. This is not to say that it hasn't been a popular genre since the invention of film, either.

¹⁰⁰ Both the personal assistant and Coogan's spouse are named Jennie, an allusion to the addressee of many of Sterne's chapters.

¹⁰¹ See Ita Mary Gibley. *Realism in Laurence Sterne*. Diss. (MacMaster University, 1975).

¹⁰² An allusion to the story beginning *ab ovo* and carrying on before Tristram is even born.

¹⁰³ (Gow 10).

¹⁰⁴ The obscurity of Sterne's references (at times) is evidenced by the Florida editions of Sterne's works. Edited by Melvyn New and Joan New, the Florida editions are the most comprehensive annotations.

¹⁰⁵ It is probably a stretch to say that the Marx references are gestures towards the influence Sterne had over a young Karl Marx (see Karl Marx. *Selected Writings*. Ed. Hugh Griffith (London: CRW Publishing, 2009):15), but either way, my favourite Marx joke in the film is when Coogan speaks to the screenwriter, who just had his seventh child; he says, "You know there's a Groucho Marx story about that; he meets a woman with seven children and says, 'why have you got seven kids?' And she says, 'because I love my husband.' And he says, 'Well, I love my cigar but I take it out now and again.'" Everyone chuckles, and the scene moves on.

¹⁰⁶ Another of my favourite moments: as the personal assistant rummages through Coogan's pants for the chestnut, Coogan shrieks at him to get his hand out of there. Once the chestnut is out, we see Coogan crumpled up on the floor in pain; he looks to the personal assistant and says, "You had your fingers in me arsehole . . . at least buy me a drink first." The film's modernized comedic moments speak to the original comedy of the text.

¹⁰⁷ In Volume VIII, Tristram writes, "It is not enough that thou art in debt, and that, thou hast ten cartloads of the fifth and sixth volumes still – still unsold, and art almost at thy wit's end how to get them off thy hands" (8.6).

¹⁰⁸ Voigts-Virchow also argues that this "blurring of dimensions" parallels "Sterne's own play on his author identity (variously, as Anonymous, Yorick, Tristram and Bramin" (150).

¹⁰⁹ Voigts-Virchow pushes this as a subtextual reference to the obsession with penises in the novel (143).

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 1.

¹¹¹ See n. 28.

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