

Introduction

In 2010 a new publisher, Visual Editions, launched its first book, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. The volume, by London-based graphic design studio A Practice for Everyday Life (APFEL), was shortlisted for 'Designs of the Year 2010' in the graphics category, securing for Visual Editions a reputation for stylish experimentation. In their version of *Tristram Shandy*, APFEL pinpoint Sterne's innovations in the first edition (1759–67) and then reconceptualise them.¹ They expand one paragraph of dashes representing Tristram's skim-reading to ten pages of orange lines; the fading cries of Amandus and Amanda literally become fainter through being represented in paler ink; pointing hands gesture boldly from the very edge of the paper; and the 'T' of 'to a T' looms large and fluorescent beneath the rest of the text on the page.² APFEL also treat Sterne's nine duodecimo volumes as three-dimensional artefacts, much as he did ('do, Sir, sit down upon a set').³ The designers have changed the shape and the feel of the petite volumes, making their own weighty tome distinctive by carving into its contours. The point at which Tristram demands that the reader

—————Shut the door—————

is perhaps the most arresting, as APFEL print this line in orange, on a folded-down edge of paper, creating a physical divide in the volume between those pages addressed to simply anyone and those that remain reserved for the privileged readers admitted into Tristram's confidence.⁴ APFEL tear out Sterne's 'torn-out' pages, leaving a toothy gap in the

¹ For the Visual Editions' *Tristram Shandy* as an experimental text in its own right, see Alison Gibbons, 'Multimodal Literature and Experimentation', in Joe Bray, Alison Gibbons and Brian McHale (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 427.

² Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London: Visual Editions, 2010), 7.544–54; 7.536; 2.116; 6.443; 2.99.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.426. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.19.

codex and a margin-width stump with a perforated edge in the place of each page.⁵ In response to Tristram's invitation to the reader to 'paint' widow Wadman 'to your own mind', they overlay Sterne's blank page with a mirror created from a smooth, reflective oval of varnish, thereby coproducing with each reader a self-portrait.⁶ These pages surprise, and they cry out to be touched.

APFEL's methods are wide-ranging, as, indeed, were Sterne's. And like Sterne, who exploited the range of technologies available to him and his contemporaries in the print shop, in the Visual Editions version of the novel the designers have similarly used widely available print and graphic technologies in innovative and surprising ways.⁷ In an interview they revealed that 'it was key that (like the original) all our interventions would only use the graphic language and existing "tools" of a book: typography, symbols, line, figures, paper, plates, printing ink'.⁸ The mirror is made from a varnish commonly used in book production and printing, while the marbled page is lithographic whereby the moiré of dots created through the superimposition of the printing plates mimic the random design Sterne's marbling technique.⁹ Through APFEL's innovation with existing tools and processes, their *Tristram Shandy* is in keeping with the author's legacy of innovation. Their edition of Sterne's novel reminds us what seemed original about it, despite being created using existing and even traditional print practices, when it appeared in 1759. Like Sterne APFEL use punctuation, typography and illustrations in surprising ways while also adding new visual pages and graphic devices, such as a frontispiece to Sterne's interpolated text, Slawkenbergius's Tale.¹⁰

It was impossible, however, for APFEL to recreate the delight that the earliest readers of *Tristram Shandy* must have felt in finding themselves in the unusual position of perusing a first edition novel featuring a number of visual effects. In this period, the most common graphic elements of eighteenth-century fiction tended to be illustrations, often produced by copperplate printing which required use of a different press, and such

⁵ Ibid., 4.321–33. ⁶ Ibid., 6.485.

⁷ In this study of book design elements in Sterne's fiction, I will not be addressing the issue of whether or not *Tristram Shandy* is a novel, and I use the term throughout in the modern sense. The latest word on the subject is by Tim Parnell in an article which also historicises the problem: 'Sterne's Fiction and the Mid-Century Novel: The "Vast Empire of Biographical Freebooters" and the "Crying Volume"', in Alan Downie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 264–81.

⁸ APFEL, cited in Helen Williams, "Looking and Reading Simultaneously": APFEL on *Tristram Shandy*, *The Shandean*, 23 (2012), 134.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 131–2. ¹⁰ Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (Visual Editions), 3.275.

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productions being therefore appended to literary texts after the fact. Illustrations were most often commissioned for reissues rather than first edition works, as they inevitably required extra investment on the part of publishers.¹¹ *Tristram Shandy* is rich in visuals, including illustrations by William Hogarth in the second (first London) edition of volume 1 (1760) and the first edition of volume 3 (1761). But it also includes graphic features anchored within the book, such as woodcut engravings printed within the line of type. Purchasers of the first edition of *Tristram Shandy* would not have known about the engravings, or the marbled page; these unusual and potentially saleable features of the books were not included in the newspaper advertisements for the novel or on its various title pages.¹² The novel's graphic features, therefore, were surprising to readers, even to those approaching later volumes accustomed to the visual experimentation of earlier instalments. Sterne's consistent inclusion in *Tristram Shandy* of visual effects rewards readers loyal to the serial publication of the novel at the same time as it demonstrates his capacity to continue innovating and surprising his audience within a work which had been experimental from its very beginning. Sterne's lavish investment in four coloured inks for the marbled page, for example, at a time when books sold with colour illustrations were luxury collectables,¹³ enhances the value of his work and presents the novel as a design product with integral visual qualities. Woodcut engravings, page design and idiosyncratic typesetting are central to the very concept of *Tristram Shandy*, with the latter rendering troublesome any straightforward definition of 'accidentals' in historical bibliography.

In treating the history of print as central to the development of the eighteenth-century novel, this study joins a scholarly tradition inspired by David McKitterick's influential claim, in *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order* (2003), that authors of this period were the earliest to shape the appearance of their books.¹⁴ James McLaverty was perhaps the first to undertake an author-length study combining book-historical research with

¹¹ See, for example, Sandro Jung, 'The Other *Pamela*: Readership and the Illustrated Chapbook Abridgement', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39 (2016), Special Issue: *Picturing the Eighteenth-Century Novel through Time*, Christina Ionescu and Ann Lewis (eds.), 513–31.

¹² Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, M-C. Newbould and Helen Williams, 'Advertising Sterne's Novels in Eighteenth-Century Newspapers', *The Shandean*, 27 (2016), 27–58.

¹³ Sarah Lowengard, 'Colour Printed Illustrations in Eighteenth-Century Periodicals', in Christina Ionescu (ed.), *Book Illustration in the Long Eighteenth Century: Reconfiguring the Visual Periphery of the Text* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 58.

¹⁴ David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

close reading, in *Pope, Print and Meaning* (2001). Paddy Bullard and McLaverty's edited collection, *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book* (2013), undertook a similar project for Pope's companion, contextualising Swift's productions through their source genres: miscellanies, epistolary fiction and mock editions. Janine Barchas was pioneering in her analysis of the graphic qualities of this period's prose fiction in *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (2003). There, she reads the novel's design history as integral to its production of meaning, using such case studies as Swift's frontispieces, Sarah Fielding's dashes and Samuel Richardson's fleurons. Christopher Flint's *The Appearance of Print in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (2011) was one of the foremost fruits of what Barchas rightly identified as a burgeoning field. The manner in which novels confront their own materiality, Flint suggests, shaped the way that readers thought about print. However, these print-historical treatments of eighteenth-century authors largely ignore non-fiction intertexts, and genres other than fiction also have an important role to play in understanding a printed work's meaning. Analysing a broader range of source materials opens up new avenues for critical inquiry and for better understanding the meaning that arises from print devices in mid-century literature. And there must be no other author in that century who more explicitly, and more creatively, engages with print than Laurence Sterne. In designing a best-selling novel renowned for its visuality, which helped establish as it simultaneously overturned the printed appearance of the developing genre, Sterne is overdue a book-length study of his graphic and typographic ingenuity. As an author cum book designer, he theorised and criticised print production even as he manipulated and commented upon it, always drawing it to the attention of his readers.

Despite regularly referencing the process of book design, Sterne is notorious for rarely citing his sources. Nevertheless, the range of intertexts from which Sterne directly quoted and borrowed is nowhere better documented than in the Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne, under the general editorship of Melvyn New. The third volume of the Works, *The Notes* (1984), co-edited with Richard Davies and W.G. Day, demonstrates the astonishing degree of *Tristram Shandy's* intertextuality, identifying a huge range of source texts, including literary, religious, philosophical and scientific works.¹⁵ But the Florida annotations are

¹⁵ *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman: The Notes*, Melvyn New, Richard A. Davies and W.G. Day (eds.), *The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1984), vol. 3.

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unusually patchy in their coverage when we expand our search for literary allusion to include not just textual but also visual echoes. One exception is their treatment of Yorick's death, where the editors refer readers of the epitaph, 'Alas, poor Yorick!', to the anonymous novel, *Life and Memoirs of Ephraim Tristram Bates* (1756), first identified as a source by Hester Thrale Piozzi: when Bates dies, the anonymous author centres the line, 'Alas! poor Bates'. We get the sense, however, that the verbal echo, rather than the visual emphasis, is of most interest here. The editors omit any mention of the black leadings surrounding Yorick's epitaph, but they do remark upon early seventeenth-century visual sources for the black page.¹⁶ The apparatus fails to record any visual precursors of the marbled page or the diagrammatic plotlines in volume 6; and the visual innovations of the ninth volume, including the blank chapters and Trim's flourish, do not attract comment. Most surprising of all is that the image of Yorick's handwriting (his annotation of his sermon with the term 'BRAVO', as discussed in Chapter 1) remains unglossed, despite the editors' obvious efforts to approximate this visual effect.¹⁷ Given the justified influence of the Florida apparatus, the effect of these omissions has been to obscure Sterne's true contribution to book design, with the immediate print context from which his innovation emerged being under-represented both here and further afield. Only by investigating the wider context of book production in the eighteenth century, including the book's graphic qualities, can Sterne's engagement with the novel form and the print culture of his day be fully appreciated.

This is the first monograph devoted to Sterne's creative manipulation of the eighteenth-century book. It draws upon a long history of scholarship exploring the meaning of Sterne's visuals, especially in articles of the 1970s and 1980s by Peter de Voogd, W.G. Day and Roger Moss, and by

¹⁶ Robert Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technical historia* (Oppenheimii: de Bry, 1617), and Joshua Sylvester's commemorative volume, *Lachrimæ Lachrimarum, or the Distillation of Teares Shede for the Untimely Death of the Incomparable Prince Panaretus* (London: Lowndes, 1612). I explore these precursors in more detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁷ *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman: The Text*, Joan New and Melvyn New (eds.), *The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1978), vol. 2. The strikethrough effect appears at 6.11.516 of the Florida Edition; there is no corresponding note. The note on the marbled page refers readers to W.G. Day's bibliographical essay on its creation ('*Tristram Shandy: The Marbled Leaf*', *Library*, 27 (1972), 143–5) and to Eric Rothstein's discussion of an earlier textual reference to a marbled page: Rothstein, *Systems of Order and Inquiry in Later Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 66. The signatures beneath the plotlines, i.e. their being '*invenit*' and '*sculpsit*' by Tristram, come in for commentary, but not the lines themselves.

Christopher Fanning in 1998.¹⁸ Longer Sterne studies, with the notable exception of W.B. Gerard's *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (2006), tend to treat *Tristram Shandy's* graphic elements only briefly. Gerard analyses the art of Sterne's illustrators, however, while I limit my study to first edition graphics. In fact, many – if not most – of the monographs that have emerged in recent years are more concerned with what Sterne's imitators and adaptors can tell us about Sterne's works, than with his own print context, as his distinctive graphic-narrative style and experimentation with typography would go on to inspire the cultural phenomenon of Sterneana, vibrant from 1760 through to the nineteenth century.¹⁹ This study is concerned with identifying the intertexts for Sterne's work which would have been available to his earliest readers. In focusing mainly on the period in which *Tristram Shandy* was serially published and the decade preceding its appearance, this book follows on from the work of Thomas Keymer, who has positioned Sterne squarely within the literary marketplace of the 1760s. His monumental study, *Sterne, the Moderns, and the Novel* (2002), is one of few to read *Tristram Shandy* within its own print cultural moment, foregrounding mid-century literary works as potential source texts for Sterne's experimentation. Some of Keymer's sources also feature in my own work, such as William Toldervy's *Two Orphans* (1756), Thomas Amory's *John Bunce* (1756) and the works of Samuel Richardson, the novelist and master printer. But Keymer's study, like Bullard and McLaverty's treatments of Swift and Pope, is limited to literary texts, whereas my own approach is deliberately broader. I explore the print-production circumstances which gave rise to the startling originality of *Tristram Shandy*, through a detailed focus on the print history of the first editions of Sterne's works.

Sterne's innovative novel was produced in a cultural moment characterised by a paradox: this was a period of relative stability in the development of print technology and yet it witnessed increasing demand for books of all kinds of designs and formats, and ever more elaborate and surprising

¹⁸ Peter de Voogd, 'Laurence Sterne, the Marbled Page, and the "Use of Accidents"', *Word and Image*, 1 (1985), 279–87; Day, 'The Marbled Leaf', 143–5; Roger B. Moss, 'Sterne's Punctuation', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15 (1981–82), 179–200. These influential articles were followed by one much later by Christopher Fanning: 'On Sterne's Page: Spatial Layout, Spatial Form, and Social Spaces in *Tristram Shandy*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 10 (1998), 429–50.

¹⁹ Studies of Sterne's visuals in regards to *Tristram Shandy's* reception history include: René Bosch, *Labyrinth of Digressions: Tristram Shandy as Perceived and Influenced by Sterne's Early Imitators* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007); Warren L. Oakley, *A Culture of Mimicry: Laurence Sterne, His Readers and the Art of Bodysnatching* (London: MHRA, 2010); and M-C. Newbould, *Adaptations of Laurence Sterne's Fiction: Sterneana, 1760–1840* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013).

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visuals. Novel readers, including Sterne, were well versed in the print conventions of a wide range of books, and Sterne not only borrowed from those books when designing his own novel but also self-consciously commented upon the publishing trends in which he was participating. His method of selecting interesting graphic techniques strikes the modern reader as unusual in the pages of an eighteenth-century novel, but would not have appeared unusual in other print genres of the period. The central questions addressed here will be: where did Sterne get the inspiration for his idiosyncratic printed pages, and what does exploring his potential source material contribute to our understanding of *Tristram Shandy*? As well as novels and poetry, the sources explored here include dance manuals, closet drama, letter-writing handbooks, newspaper advertisements, medical pamphlets and disposable packaging. Much of this matter has evaded critical analysis in relation to fiction and challenges existing preconceptions of the eighteenth-century novel as an artefact which developed in isolation from other media. Within such a diverse body of work, *Tristram Shandy* emerges as a hybrid product of the eighteenth-century print shop, and the innovation of its author lies in importing into the novel sometimes standard printing practices from other popular and widespread genres, bringing with them their own varied associations.

This study is organised around Sterne's major visual innovations, many of which would have been (and still are) perceived to be 'firsts' within the context of the novel: printed strikethrough; a performed sermon; a suite of mourning iconography; the marbled leaf; wholesale disruption of the order and packaging of the book as a physical artefact; and engraved diagrammatic lines. The book is largely chronological, dealing with each print element as it appeared in Sterne's serial publication of *Tristram Shandy*, charting Sterne's literary interventions in a fast-developing, and historicised, print market. So, to be clear, Chapter 2 deals with the black page (vol. 1; 1759), Chapter 3 with the sermon (vol. 2; 1759), Chapter 4 with the marbled page (vol. 3; 1761), Chapter 5 with footnotes and catchwords (mostly in vols. 4 and 9; 1763 and 1765) and Chapter 6 with engraved lines (vols. 6 and 9; 1765 and 1767). Each chapter takes one of Sterne's iconic visual experiments and analyses its associated meanings through tracing its production history. This involves the treatment of largely printed sources from a wide variety of disciplines, the vast majority of which were produced during Sterne's lifetime but before (or during) the publication of *Tristram Shandy*, though there are some which date from earlier periods. The chapters often offer combinations of source materials which may seem perverse to modern readers (such as

wrapping paper and anatomical drawings, in the case of the marbled page). But this seeming incongruity is one of the fruits of this study, which elucidates the wide field of visual reference that Sterne shared with his contemporaries and the associated meanings these visual elements may have brought with them to early readers of the novel. Modish visual effects often emerge from unusual, multiple and sometimes contradictory sources. In its assortment of source material, this study reveals a whole host of resources that the eighteenth-century book trade offered to an author looking to create a text with graphic and material qualities which not only help facilitate meaning and humour but which also frequently become (integral to) the message itself.

The first chapter, on hands and handwriting, provides a historical and theoretical framework for reading Sterne's visual effects. In practical terms, this is a reading of the six instances of printed manicules in *Tristram Shandy* and a bespoke woodcut of Yorick's handwriting. It aims to demonstrate Sterne's attempts to control every aspect of book production and his engagement with the copyright debates of his day. This chapter establishes Sterne's position in the print shop, his desire for his own works to have idiosyncratic visual attributes, and identifies beneath that desire his anxiety over the potential invasion of his copyright. It establishes my argument which will develop across the rest of the volume, that Sterne's book design manifests both creative and anxious responses to the borrowing of print practices and therefore the idea of originality more broadly. The chapter sets up this study as one which positions Sterne as a book designer well versed in codices from multiple disciplines – handwriting manuals, newspapers and fiction (Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* [1748]) – and their varied experiments in the printed presentation of data. The ingenuity of the woodcut, the first instance of printed strikethrough that I have encountered, along with Sterne's time-investment in signing each copy of the first and second edition of volume 5, and of the first editions of 7 and 9, reveal the efforts in which Sterne engaged to inscribe *Tristram Shandy* with examples of real and fictional handwriting to set apart his own work from that of his precursors and secure his literary ownership.

Chapter 2 explores the black page commemorating the death of parson Yorick, often perceived as the pre-eminent symbol of Sterne's experimentation. I suggest that with the black page Sterne participates in a long-standing tradition of woodcut ornaments and mourning typography in funeral publications from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. He comments on how far this form of typographic commemoration had by

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this time become clichéd, by referring to two recent typesetting trends: the representation of major funeral processions in national newspapers and gravestone-like pages in the mid-century novel, as evidenced in *Tom Jones* (1749), *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and William Toldervy's *Two Orphans* (1756). Through considering the rarely studied mourning borders around Yorick's epitaph alongside the black page's double-sided covering of black ink, this chapter sees Sterne engaging with past and contemporary print practices of commemoration while playing upon – and pushing to its limits – the novelistic epitaph's self-conscious manipulation of the printed page.

Reviewers and imitators immediately hit upon the subject of chapter three, Sterne's 'Abuses of Conscience' sermon in *Tristram Shandy*, as a remarkably innovative formal device. In spanning forty-eight pages, it is certainly his most sustained visual effect. Sterne's sermon had been in print for almost a decade before it featured in *Tristram Shandy*. The sermon, read aloud by Corporal Trim to a disruptive congregation of Walter, Toby and Dr Slop, is reprinted in full, but appears interwoven with and fragmented by parentheses indicating the varying reactions of its Shandean auditors. Printed sermons had long featured square brackets for emphasis, where they sought to fix the meaning of potentially blasphemous words. But in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne uses the marker in ways much more in keeping with the print history of drama in order to highlight the origins of his own dramatic style. This chapter analyses the 'Abuses of Conscience' sermon, whose pages depend for their graphic distinctiveness as well as their comprehensibility on innovative typesetting, as a melange of print genres. When Sterne (unsuccessfully) pitched to Robert Dodsley the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, which include the 'Abuses of Conscience' sermon, he was directing his novel to the very man whose career had been built on writing and publishing texts which sat on generic boundaries. Dodsley's high-profile play, *The Toy-Shop* (1735), was much more successful in print than performance, and worked best as a reading text. This chapter contextualises Sterne's experimentation with *mise en page* in the 'Abuses of Conscience' episode within a wider mid-century fascination with hybrid print forms. As well as Dodsley's play and closet drama, it explores experimental precursors such as Jane Collier and Sarah Fielding's *The Cry: A Dramatic Fable*, published by Dodsley in 1754, and Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), which imported dramatic devices into mid-century prose. By analysing Sterne's sermonic punctuation and linking it to his development of a mid-century aesthetics of typesetting the novel, I suggest that sermonic

printing is central to the plot and construction of *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne drew from Anglican works published from within his professional context, which themselves had a theatrical heritage, while responding to a 1750s fashion for printing closet drama and dramatic novels.

Sterne inserts his most startling innovation, the marbled page, into the third volume of *Tristram Shandy*. This volume is almost entirely concerned with the publication and collection of medical books: Tristram uses his father's library, the contents of which theorise the value of large noses, to explain Walter Shandy's distress when baby Tristram's nose is broken by forceps delivery. Chapter 4 situates Sterne's remarkable visual device within a history of colour book illustration dominated by scientific works of the kind treasured by Walter. It also recounts the history of marbled paper, commonly recognised as bookbinding material but less well known as medical packaging for nostrums prescribed to treat wounds and ailments. As a colour illustration in the instalment of *Tristram Shandy* addressing a wounded nose, the marbled leaf would have been surprising, but such imagery was more familiar in colour-illustrated medical books and distinctively packaged branded remedies. The marbled page, therefore, references a full range of paper materials seeking to theorise, diagnose and treat malfunctioning bodies. The field of reference for Sterne's graphic ingenuity is, perhaps unsurprisingly, at its widest and most inventive when we consider his most dazzling contribution to book history.

Chapter 5 takes as its subject the more functional face of book history. By mid-century, the novel had inherited from other book genres a certain printed appearance. Readers began to expect a printed framework for reading prose narrative consisting of cues such as page numbers, catchwords, chapter divisions and notes. These navigational elements aimed to facilitate reading while remaining in the background; they were simultaneously visible and invisible, read and unread. But navigational elements in Sterne's works rarely remain invisible for long. This chapter tells the backstory of the navigational framework of the eighteenth-century novel which Sterne disrupts, before analysing his experimentation with the *mise en page* of the novel in a manner that foregrounds those elements of book production rarely scrutinised. This study of Sterne's manipulation of seemingly untouchable conventions of the printed page, such as pagination and catchwords, complements an approach to his more widely recognised interference with footnotes and chapters, and reveals the full extent of his pioneering disruption to the format of the eighteenth-century book. Sterne's innovations with footnotes, catchwords, chapters and pagination combine aspects of Scriblerian satire with more recent but perhaps lesser-