

This is the accepted version (AAM) of the following article:

Sterne's Influence on Fielding: The Case of One German Review of J. J. Ch. Bode's Translation of *Tom Jones*

, which will be published in final form at https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/loi/shandean. This article may be used in accordance with the Liverpool University Press Self Archiving Policy.

The concept of anachronistic influence, which this note will discuss with reference to Laurence Sterne, Henry Fielding and the German afterlives of the two authors, merits some broader contextualisation. In David Lodge's *Small World*, Persse McGarrigle aspires to have his master's thesis on Shakespeare's influence on T.S Eliot published by an academic press. At one point, to increase his chances of success, he reframes his argument:

> "You could quantify the influence of Shakespeare on T. S. Eliot" [said Dempsey with reference to computerisation and stylistics]
> "But my thesis isn't about that," said Persse. "It's about the influence of T. S. Eliot on Shakespeare."
> "That sounds rather Irish, if I may say so," said Dempsey […]
> "Well, what I try to show," said Persse, "is that we can't avoid reading Shakespeare through the lens of T. S. Eliot's poetry. I mean, who can read *Hamlet* today without thinking of Prufrock? Who can hear the speeches of Ferdinand in *The Tempest* without being reminded of 'The Fire Sermon' section of *The Waste Land*."[1]

Persee immediately secures a publisher, as well as signing up for writing an entirely new manuscript.

Lodge's funny dialogue, in a novel published in 1984, stages a critical tension that was gathering momentum at the time. Lodge's own playful use of structuralist poetics as represented by the form of *Small World* and its fictionalisation of literary-critical debate in academia is a double-edged parody, targeted both at the creative writing process and the then prevalent discourses of literary criticism. In particular, Lodge dramatises the gradual shift from text-

oriented formalisms towards post-structuralist openness and the growing impact of reception theory. As a representative of the new generation, Persse conceals the real, highly traditional topic of his dissertation – 'The Influence of Shakespeare on T. S. Eliot' – and, on spur of the moment, conceptualises a new idea; one that is both innovative, by critical standards, and absurd, by commonsensical standards – thus making up a perfect David Lodge combination.

The innovativeness, as well as absurdity, of Persse witty idea is not as glaring today as it would have been in the 1980s. Scholars of reception and adaptation studies need not much persuasion in that respect, and Persse's justification of the idea is now taken for granted.[2] Indeed, when studying the relationship between the source and any kind of adaptation we are well aware of the fact that the chronological line of so-called 'influence' may be just as important as the achronological line: for example, when we are first familiarised with an adaptation, and only later with the source text, or when we get back to the source text after seeing or reading an adaptation. If we accept that meaning is, at least to some extent, generated by the recipient, at the moment of reception, then achronological influence as a concept seems less paradoxical than it may at first glance.[3]

The case of Laurence Sterne is particularly well-suited for a discussion of such varying platforms and contexts of temporality in generating meaning. After all, we are considering an author whose method depended, among other things, on meandering temporal lines; whose characters may die and then go on a journey or recall their consciousness at the moment of conception, or even earlier than that; whose opening metaphor for disrupted narrative to come is a clock that needs winding.[4] At the same time, the critical history of Sterne's reception has also revealed an analogical predilection for temporal playfulness. Melvyn New's classic comparative reading of Sterne and Proust was provocatively titled 'Proust's Influence on Sterne: Remembrance of Things to Come'.[5] New reasserted Persse McGarrigle's claim that it is the chronology of reading rather than writing that is crucial for how we make sense of literature. Additionally, the comparative reading of Sterne and Proust's intricate sense of struggle with isolation, selfhood and desire purposely obscured the obvious temporal distance, at times even suggesting that both authors, rather than just Proust after Sterne, were elaborating on each other's scenes and concepts.

Following in Melvyn New's footsteps, Peter de Voogd argued in an analogically conceived essay about James Joyce's influence on Sterne.[6] De Voogd's point, beyond a number of comparatively discussed aspects, mostly humorous, of *Tristram Shandy* and *Ulysses*, is that it is impossible to read Sterne in an unbiased way after reading Joyce, a sentiment again

reminiscent of McGarrigle's remark about T.S Eliot and Shakespeare. More importantly, we can join De Voogd in speculating what Sterne's position in literary criticism would have been if it had not been for the modernist moment, and for both Joyce and Virginia Woolf's directing their readers' attention to Sterne, whom they read, discussed and promoted as sharing their own modernist spirit.

The case of Sterne's influence of Fielding, which I would like to ponder here may well be approached in the same manner as the modernist examples discussed. It is also a case that reverts the well-established critical narrative of influence: just as Sterne is typically read as a source of inspiration for early twentieth-century modernists, so is Fielding's metafictional experimentation understood as one of Sterne's points of reference in *Tristram Shandy*. Just as New and De Voogd changed the chronology, so is it possible to argue for Sterne's influence on Fielding, even though the latter had already passed away before clergyman Sterne turned to fiction writing in the late 1750s.

Rather than being a critical concept, the line of influence thus established has a specific textual context in the transnational afterlives of the two authors. I am thinking specifically of Johann Joachim Christoph Bode's translation of Fielding's *Tom Jones* as *Geschichte des Thomas Jones eines Findelkindes* from 1786. Bode's translation came out at a time of the peak of sentimental fashions in Germany, and was preceded by this translator's own, very well-received renditions of Sterne: his immediate 1768 translation of *A Sentimental Journey* was reissued 5 times in the century, and used the game-changing notion of *Empfindsamkeit* for 'sentimental', which sparked off a movement of imitations.[7] In 1774 Bode's *Tristram Shandy* started to appear, and accumulated a list of no fewer than 650 subscribers.[8]

My textual prompt for this case of achronological influence is a piece of German Sterneana, Johann Gottwerth Müller's review of Bode's *Tom Jones* that was published in *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* in 1791.[9] This review's unique value lies in how it conceives of the translation as a hybrid literary text that is testimony to how the interweaving lines of adaptation and transnational afterlives in the period produced their own textual tradition. Müller is in fact critical of Bode, unlike, for example, an anonymous reviewer for *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* for 18 January 1787, who noted that Bode deserves praise for being a versatile translator capable of assuming the style of such diverse authors as Fielding, Goldsmith, Sterne without confusing them and imposing his own identity as a writer.[10]

Müller, a novelist himself, labelled 'the German Fielding',[11] argues to the contrary:

> we suppose that the translator of *Tristram Shandy* has altogether conveyed a bit too much of Yorick's mood, which he himself has adopted, into the German translation of *Tom Jones*. For one who only reads to pass the time the novel may gain this way, but hardly for the class of readers who are familiar with the original. For those and for the future novelist who chooses *Tom Jones* in order to study the masterly and most exquisite novel of all nations, as well as for the literary critic and theorist who does not so much want to read an amusing book but rather wishes to learn exactly what and how Fielding wrote – for all of those people faithfulness, not only in respect to thought, but also in tone, in manner, in nuances of style, and in everything particular to Fielding, is the most indispensable of all requirements for its translation. Fielding's mood and Yorick's mood are too different to form a uniform whole, after being mixed.[12]

The reviewer is not specific about what constituted 'Yorick's mood' and how it would have imprinted itself on Bode's translation. When his *Tom Jones* was published, Bode was in a friendly relationship with German poet and traveller Elisa von Recke (1754-1833), and the dedication of his version of Fielding's novel to 'Elisa' was one way of mixing 'Yorick's mood' with Fielding's. Then, Fielding's metaphor of the tortoise as containing various kinds of food, much like human nature, is annotated with a reference to a similar metaphor of turtle's meat in *Yoricks Empfindsame Reise*.[13] The fact that this metaphor and this annotation can be found in the very first chapter of the novel makes it a significant framing device, imposing, as it were, the Sternean perspective on the reader. Bode refers to the chapter on 'The Common-Council Man and the Turtle' in volume 4, but this is not Sterne, but a continuation of *A Sentimental Journey* written by 'Eugenius', often misattributed to Sterne's friend John Hall Stevenson.[14] This further complicates our attempts at clarifying what 'Yorick's mood' is: is this Sterne's Yorick or a Sternean Yorick?

Bode also inserted sentimental signatures of sorts, making use of the notion of 'Empfindsamkeit' that he used for Sterne's title in his translation of *A Sentimental Journey*, and which became a generic label ever since.[15] For example, in a conversation with Tom Jones, the puppet master talks about 'improv[ing] the Morals of young People';[16] in Bode's version, the master claims to be improving people's 'Empfindsamkeit'.[17] Accordingly, mentions of 'empfindsamen Gefühls' (sensible/sentimental feelings) recur in the translated narrative with some frequency, and even the scene of Tom and Mrs. Water's meeting at an inn is couched in a style that differs from Fielding's mockery of seduction. Mrs. Water's two 'bright Orbs' (i.e. eyes) become 'glanzvollen Sterne' ('sparkling stars'), and the choice for the German equivalent

for ‘stars’ may not have been accidental. Then ‘a Volley of small Charms’ discharged at Jones becomes a ‘Generalsalve von kleinern Reizen’, a volley of small stimuli that both irritate and tempt. The military metaphor is preserved, but the conventional charm is substituted with a concept that is indicative of the language of sensibility, capturing the often evasive doings of sensual stimuli. It is not surprising, then, that in Bode’s version, Mrs. Water’s ‘Smile of Affection’ becomes ‘ein Lächeln empfindsamen Gefühls’ – a smile of sensible/sentimental feelings.[18] Elsewhere, Fielding’s account of Tom marvelling at the beauty of a moonlit evening, is complemented in Bode’s version with an observation that such sentiments were typical of ‘aller empfindsamen Verliebten’ (all sentimental lovers), while the moon is conveniently substituted with stars, allowing for another ‘Sterne’ name tag to appear.[19]

Such sentimental signatures indeed make Fielding’s text appear in ‘Yorick’s mood’, corroborating Müller’s observation in his review. More importantly, however, the review draws attention to something larger than the hybrid nature of Bode’s translation: the potential of literary magazines in the period to integrate, and indeed, complicate the meandering lines of reception and adaptation,[20] documenting a conceptual shift from understanding adaptations as part of a historical process, with chronological lines of sequence and connection established between a source text and its adaptations, to a network perspective, with adaptations synchronically adding to an achronological, transnational literary system consisting of multi-directional lines of connection. This holds true especially of literary translation, which constructs its own timeframe dependent on the order of appearance in the new reception context, often obfuscating the original chronology. Such networks generate meaning in ways that are elusive for conventional author-oriented histories of fiction and its afterlives. Hybrid textuality, as in the case of Bode’s Sternean *Tom Jones*, documents these processes in a tangible manner that allows us understand the dynamics of the creative process: Bode was a translator, who worked on Sterne first and then endowed his subsequent rendering of *Tom Jones* with a tinge of what he himself codified as Sternean aesthetic in German literature.

Jakub Lipski

Kazimierz Wielki University

Acknowledgement



This research is part of the project No. 2021/43/P/HS2/01182 co-funded by the National Science Centre and the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 945339. For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a CC-BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) version arising from this submission.

Notes

[1] David Lodge, *Small World* (1984; London: Vintage, 2011), pp. 51-52.
[2] The same might be said about comparative literary studies, and Lodge's dialogue has been used to illustrate the dynamic of comparative reading in general. See César Domínguez, Haun Saussy, Darío Villanueva, *Introducing Comparative Literature: New Trends and Applications* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. ix-x.
[3] What I call achronological line of influence may also been seen in the broader context of research on anachronism in adaptation studies. See, for example, Mieke Bal, 'Intership: Anachronism beyond Loyalty and the Case', *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas Leitch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 179-196.
[4] The question of time in *Tristram Shandy* has naturally generated a very rich critical discussion. See, for example, Jean-Jacques Mayoux, 'Variations on the Time-Sense in *Tristram Shandy*', *The Winged Skull*, ed. Arthur H. Cash and John M. Stedmont (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 1-20; Jo Alyson Parker, *Narrative Form and Chaos Theory in Sterne, Proust, Woolf, and Faulkner* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 31-59; Amit S. Yahav, *Feeling Time: Duration, the Novel, and Eighteenth-Century Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), pp. 82-115.
[5] Melvyn New, 'Proust's Influence on Sterne: Remembrance of Things to Come', *MLN*, Vol. 103, No. 5 (1988): 1031-1055. New revisits the merits of anachronism in a more recent collection that includes his dispersed essays, now underpinned by notions of conversation and proximity of thought. See Melvyn New, *Textual and Critical Intersections: Conversations with Laurence Sterne and Others* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2023). A similar perspective is adopted in Robert Kiely, *Reverse Tradition: Postmodern Fictions and the Nineteenth Century Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[6] Peter Jan de Voogd, *De invloed van Joyce op Sterne* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 1991).
[7] Duncan Large, '"Sterne-Bilder": Sterne in the German-Speaking World', *The Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe*, ed. Peter de Voogd and John Neubauer (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 73.
[8] Large, pp. 71-72.
[9] *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 1791, LIII-LXXXVI, Vol. V, pp. 2611–2614, *Bielefeld University Library*, accessed 20 November 2024, https://ds.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/viewer/image/2002572_165/1/LOG_0003/.
[10] *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, no 16, 18 January 1787, pp. 137-142, *Journals@UrMEL*, accessed 20 November 2024, https://zs.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/jportal_jparticle_00022768.
[11] Gerald Bär, '"Treue Natur" in Fiction and Film: The Realism Debate in the Critical Reception of Fielding in Germany', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (2008): 584-587.
[12] English translation quoted after Bär, p. 588.
[13] Henry Fielding, *Geschichte des Thomas Jones eines Findelkindes*, trans. Johann Joachim Christoph Bode, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Leipzig: Georg Joachim Göschen, 1786), p. 6. See Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, vol. 1 (London: A. Millar, 1749), pp. 2-3.
[14] *Yorick's Sentimental Journey Continued*, Vol. 4 (London: S. Bladon, 1769), p. 21.
[15] Laurence Sterne, *Yoricks empfindsame Reise durch Frankreich und Italien*, 2 vols, trans. Johann Joachim Christoph Bode (Hamburg: Cramer, 1768-70).
[16] Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*, vol. 3, p. 157.
[17] Fielding, *Geschichte des Thomas Jones*, vol. 4, p. 371.
[18] Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*, vol. 2, p. 315-317; Fielding, *Geschichte des Thomas Jones*, vol. 3, p. 577.
[19] Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*, vol. 2, p. 218-220; Fielding, *Geschichte des Thomas Jones*, vol. 3, p. 341.
[20] See Mary Newbould, *Networks of Reception in the Eighteenth-Century British Press and Laurence Sterne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025).