

Staging Henry Fielding: The Author-Narrator in *Tom Jones* on Screen

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Abstract: As recent adaptation theory has shown, classic-novel adaptation typically sets issues connected to authorship and literal and figurative ownership into play. This key feature of such adaptations is also central to the screen versions of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749). In much of Fielding's fiction, the narrator, typically understood as an embodiment of Fielding himself, is a particularly prominent presence. The author-narrator in *Tom Jones* is no exception: not only is his presence strongly felt throughout the novel, but through a variety of means, 'The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling' is also distinctly marked as being under his control and ownership. The two adaptations of Fielding's novel, a 1963 film and a 1997 television series, both retain the figure of the author-narrator, but differ greatly in their handling of this device and its consequent thematic ramifications. Although the 1963 film de-emphasises Henry Fielding's status as proprietor of the story, the author-narrator as represented in the film's voiceover commentary is a figure of authority and authorial control. In contrast, the 1997 adaptation emphasises Fielding's ownership of the narrative and even includes the author-narrator as a character in the series, but this ownership is undermined by the irreverent treatment to which he is consistently subjected. The representations of Henry Fielding in the form of the author-narrator in both adaptations are not only indicative of shifting conceptions of authorship, but also of the important interplay between authorship, ownership and adaptation more generally.

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Modern audiences often encounter old novels as viewers rather than readers. Indeed, for many, film and television adaptations are their first and sometimes only source of knowledge of a given work. Adaptation of literary texts has always been loaded with questions of authorship, ownership and cultural legitimacy. Individual adaptations often become arenas where such interconnected issues are negotiated and brought to the fore, and adaptations of canonical literature are especially fecund fields for reaping insights into how authorship is performed, contested and rearticulated in different contexts. As Robert Stam has shown, an adaptation is 'a work of reaccentuation, whereby a source work is reinterpreted through new grids and discourses', and studying adaptations can make structures and discourses then and now more accessible: 'By revealing the prisms and grids and discourses through which the novel has been reimagined,' he argues,

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'adaptations grant a kind of objective materiality to the discourses themselves, giving them visible, audible, and perceptible form' (2005a, 45). This is also the case for various discourses of authorship. In analysing adaptations, however, it is important not to limit the attention to the relationship between novel and adaptation and their various cultural contexts. As recent theoretical work on adaptations has demonstrated, adaptations do not only create meaning through their relationship with source texts and source and target cultures, but also in relation to their own generic habitat: the adaptation itself. Linda Hutcheon's concept of '*adaptation as adaptation*', Thomas Leitch's identification of adaptation as a separate genre and Sarah Cardwell's work on the specific properties of what she terms 'classic-novel adaptations' offer a framework for expanding the scope of analytical attention to incorporate this important aspect of any adaptation.

Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) has been adapted for the screen twice: in Tony Richardson's 1963 film and Metin Hüseyin's 1997 television series for the BBC. These adaptations provide a particularly compelling case for investigation based on such a theoretical framework, since Fielding was working in a period where the role of authors was much debated, and was constantly seeking to legitimate his own cultural enterprise in a time when the novel was yet to settle into the conventions typically associated with the genre. His novel thus grew out of a period which witnessed the emergence of new and sometimes conflicting ways of understanding authorship and ownership of literary works (Bennet 2005, 54; Cook 2015, 22). Henry Fielding was a vocal participant in eighteenth-century debates concerning such issues, and addressed them explicitly and indirectly in his literary works. Ian Bell has noted how Fielding's novels include extensive commentary on the role of the author which should be seen in the light of the struggle for 'social standing and cultural authority at a moment of radical social change', as authors witnessed their social status diminishing with the emergence of the construct of the professional writer (1994, 2). The discourse on authorship in Fielding's novels is also related to his desire to position not only himself, but also his work, in the eighteenth-century literary world. In much of his fiction, including *Tom Jones*, Fielding was also highly self-conscious and eager to map out his notions of what literature should do, and his rhetoric on authorship was intrinsically related to his aesthetics. As Ansgar Nünning has argued, 'the extensive use of metanarration in Fielding serves as a literary means of staging authorship and poetological self-reflection, reflecting Fielding's attempt to establish the novel in the neoclassicist system of genres and to formulate a theory of the novel' (2005, 41-2). One of the most striking ways in which Henry Fielding positions himself and his work in *Tom Jones* is through the use of a vocal author-narrator. As will be discussed, this author-narrator is often seen as a stand-in for Fielding himself, thus functioning as a 'staged author' long before the concept was ever imagined, and the way in which the author-narrator is represented in adaptations of the novel is therefore very revealing of how conceptions of authorship may shift and change in different periods. In a similar fashion, the varying representation of the author-narrator of the original novel in the film version of *Tom Jones* from 1963 and the television version from 1997 arguably gives discourses of authorship, ownership and

cultural authority ‘visible, audible, and perceptible form’ in the manner that Robert Stam suggests.

Authorship and Ownership in Adaptation

It is ironic that while Fielding and other eighteenth-century writers gained increased control and ownership of their works via copyright legislation and other means, modern adaptation to the screen of their texts accentuates the tenuous nature of such ownership. One of the reasons why adaptation of old texts is so appealing to filmmakers is the fact that they are now out of copyright and that the original owners are no longer present to contest the reworking of their intellectual property. A striking paradox emerges as a result: adaptations need to borrow authority and commercial appeal from the original author’s name while still asserting their own stake in the new artistic enterprise (Andrew 2004, 190). The paratexts of opening and end credits of adaptations are important loci for the negotiation of this paradox, and the two adaptations of *Tom Jones* handle it differently. The 1963 film version, produced and directed by Tony Richardson, does not award Fielding pole position as far as authorship is concerned. This adaptation is not ‘Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones*'; it is ‘*Tom Jones* [...] Based on the novel by Henry Fielding’. In fact, to be precise, Henry Fielding is pushed even further into the margins than this ellipsis indicates. In the opening credits to Richardson’s 1963 film, ‘senior’ cast members are listed before the title ‘TOM JONES’ appears in capital letters. More cast members are then listed, before the following appears on the screen:

‘Narration spoken by MICHEÁL MAC LIAMMÓIR
Screenplay by JOHN OSBORNE
Based on the novel by HENRY FIELDING’

In addition, Henry Fielding’s name is not only shown after that of the adapter of the novel into the screenplay, but it is also written in smaller type than is John Osborne’s name. At first glance, such distinctions may seem insignificant, but they prove indicative of the overall view presented of the position of the author, both in terms of his or her function as main producer and proprietor of artistic content and as potential marketing tool for the new film version. As Kamilla Elliott remarks in this regard, ‘size matters’ (2012, 187-8). In Richardson’s (and Osborne’s) 1963 adaptation of *Tom Jones*, Henry Fielding is, if not altogether side-lined, at least warily side-stepped as the exclusive source of origin, yielding place to John Osborne the adapter, Tom Jones the character, and *Tom Jones* the novel.

In Metin Hüseyin’s 1997 adaptation of *Tom Jones* as a television series for the BBC, the case is very different. A foregrounding of Fielding starts already in the opening vignette of the series, signalling his ownership of the work. In the vignette appears what looks like a reproduction of an eighteenth-century title page, stating that this is ‘THE HISTORY OF | TOM JONES | A FOUNDLING | BRISTOL LONDON’, emphasising the source text as

the point of origin. Fielding's name may not be included already here, but it is given pride of place and much space in the opening credits which state that the series is 'WRITTEN & INTRODUCED | BY | HENRY FIELDING'. The screenwriter and director only appear in the end credits, which open with 'Screenplay by SIMON BURKE' and close with 'Director METIN HÜSEYİN', and their names are reproduced in smaller type than Fielding's. It is Henry Fielding who is presented to own the story of *Tom Jones*; it is his version that we are about to see. Or that is what we are led to think. For one thing, it is patently not he who has written this particular version of the story, as is almost suggested by stating that he has 'written & introduced' it. Unlike what the opening and end credits imply, the ownership of *Tom Jones* is at the very least shared between the author of the novel and its adapters.

The two adaptations' differing representations of intellectual ownership of the material can also be seen in relation to varying conceptions of filmic authorship. Tony Richardson has attained the exclusive rank of 'auteur' – the filmmaker whose personal style and ability to assert control over the material ensures a special status. In contrast, Metin Hüseyin can be regarded as a classic 'metteur-en-scène', the anonymous craftsman for whom the room for individual expression and personal recognition is much more limited, and whose interests are subordinated to those of the studio or corporation he or she works for (Leitch 2005, 107-8). This type of distinction is perhaps particularly fitting for adapters of an eighteenth-century novel, given that period's similar distinction between the gentleman author and the hack writer, the evaluative tendency of such appellations notwithstanding (Berensmeyer, Guttzeit, and Jameson 2015). Seen as representatives of two different types of filmic authors, it is not surprising that they should position themselves differently in relation to the author of the original novel.

The Author-Narrator in the Adaptations as Adaptations

In her seminal *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Linda Hutcheon convincingly argues for the need to incorporate an understanding of 'adaptations as adaptations' in studies of such works. By this, she refers to their special status as 'deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works' in contrast to 'autonomous works' (2006, xvi). For Hutcheon, understanding adaptations as adaptations has further consequences for how adaptations should be discussed: her conceptualisation involves the recognition of a particular form of reception of such works, which in turn should inform the academic study of them. 'If we know the adapted work, there will be a constant oscillation between it and the new adaptation we are experiencing; if we do not, we will not experience the work as an adaptation', she argues (2006, xvii). The oscillation between source and adaptation that Hutcheon identifies is a natural component of studies of individual adaptations (Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hansen 2013, 5). In addition, as Julie Sanders has shown, the overt signalling of the relationship with an original or source text is a feature which distinguishes adaptations from other forms of appropriative or

intertextual practices, and this of course informs the reception of adaptations too (2006, 26). Adaptations may be reaccentuations as described by Robert Stam above, but they are tied to their sources nonetheless, as ‘a series of verbal cues which the adapting film text can then selectively take up, amplify, ignore, subvert, or transform’ (2005a, 46). In order to acknowledge the nature of adaptations as inherently tied to other texts, then, some degree of comparison is necessary, not from the dated position of ‘what is lost’ from original to adaptation, but from a point of view of ‘what is done’ with the material as it is moved from page to screen.

The feature of *Tom Jones* the novel which most prominently deals with notions of authorship, ownership and authority is its vocal author-narrator. Where the paratexts of the film and television series dealt with such issues in a literal form, the construct of the author-narrator and its representation on screen brings a different form of negotiation and expression of them to the fore. On the one hand, it stages the author in a very concrete sense, but on the other, the notions of ownership expressed are of a much more metaphorical nature. There are three aspects of the author-narrator as accentuated in Fielding’s novel and reaccentuated in its adaptations that are worthy of particular note in this regard: he is often understood as an embodiment of Fielding himself (thus warranting a ‘he’ rather than an ‘it’), his presence is unusually strong, and exertions of authority over the narrative are consistently thematised.

Henry Fielding is among those writers whose presence in the literary work has been noted in critical commentary, and whose literary, personal and professional identities seem to have merged for many specialist and general readers, and *Tom Jones* is no exception. As Martin C. Battestin comments: ‘It has been remarked that the most important “character” in Fielding’s novel is the author-narrator himself, whose genial and judicious spirit pervades the work, presiding providentially over the world of the novel, reminding us that the creation we behold is his own’ (2002, 92). Similarly, Eric Rothstein emphasises both the conflation of the narrator and the author and the sense of ownership of the narrator when he argues that ‘the narrator—“Fielding,” as I shall call him, on my axiomatic assumption that he represents Henry Fielding—flaunts his authority and wields a powerful irony, setting “good” readers, who practice what he preaches, apart from aesthetic and moral reptiles’ (1998, 141). Whether the author-narrator should be regarded as a simple manifestation of Fielding himself has been a matter of some scholarly debate (Birke 2015, 99-100; Power 2010, 249; Skinner 2001, 117; Hutchings 2007, 25; Richetti 1999, 131; Bell 1994, 8). However, the tendency to do so is still strong, and many who profess not to conflate the two tend to do so in practice in their discussions of his work (e.g. Pagliaro 1998, 169). Philip Stevick offers a persuasive list of appellative options to the author-narrator’s voice as being Fielding’s when he parenthetically interjects ‘(or, if one wishes, not Fielding but Fielding’s narrator, Fielding’s “Fielding”)’ in his discussion of the issue (1974, 19).

It is also relevant here that Henry Fielding wrote his novel in a period when neither the conventions of the realist novel nor the distinction between author and narrator were yet established, making the difference between ‘Fielding’ and “Fielding” a semantic rather than a substantial one. Moreover, the representation of the author-

narrator in the novel has often been seen in relation to the now unfashionable but still present notion of an author's 'voice'. Jill Campbell notes how this, for readers, especially of Fielding's novel, tends to be grounded in 'the individual, and specifically in the individual as an embodied person'. 'It seems right to us, somehow, to imagine an author's written style as the textual equivalent of a person's spoken voice, its unique total effect created by the combination of physiological features and a personal history of experiences of language, which, together, give it its distinctive accents and inflections as well as timbre, pitch and tone', she continues (2005, 412). And, as Philip Stevick furthermore argues, 'it is the narrator's commentary that must largely occupy the observer of Fielding's voice' (1974, 19). The most central concern to the owner of this voice appears to be the desire to mark the narrative as being under *his* control and ownership. He owns the narrative by controlling it, shaping it, and shaping readers' responses to it. He flaunts his learning and exerts his authority, and his irony becomes an effective power tool that is not completely blunted by his constant insistence that we are his 'dear reader'. He may be Fielding's avatar swordsman in his battle for cultural authority in the eighteenth-century literary marketplace, and that is in part accomplished by exerting power over the narrative itself (Pagliaro 1998, 169).

In Richardson's 1963 film adaptation, the author-narrator is less prominent than in either the original novel or the later television adaptation, in line with the partial usurpation of Fielding's authorship of the novel in the film's credits. The author-narrator is nonetheless strongly present in the film: he comes into existence in voiceover commentary to an unusual, and unusually successful, extent. As Martin Battestin argues, his voice is 'the first we hear in the film' and it will 'accompany us throughout as an invisible guide'. In addition, as he further remarks, 'Osborne's commentator is a clever adaptation of Fielding's "omniscient" narrator, whose presence is constantly felt in *Tom Jones*, describing the action, remarking on the characters' motives and deeds, entertaining us with his wit and learning, controlling our attitudes and responses' (2002, 92; Osborne 1964). The recurring voiceover commentary constitutes a form of incarnation of the figure of the author-narrator which on the one hand is concrete and readable as a character of sorts, but which also remains elusive and intangible. It resembles a particular kind of voiceover commentator from documentaries that Bill Nichols discusses: the 'unseen voice of God, who delivers commentary on behalf of the film and is external to the events depicted' that is authoritative since it is 'not one voice among many but a guiding voice' (2010, 114-15). Importantly, the cultured accent and confident and commanding notes of this guiding voice is presented as being Fielding's. Judith Bailey and Robert Holtzclaw state that it is consistently spoken 'in the spirit of Fielding', although not all comments are taken directly from the novel (Bailey Slagle and Holtzclaw 1999, 194, 199). In addition, it has been noted that the voiceover in Richardson's film reproduces the style of narration in the novel in a voice that shares a 'urbane, tolerant, sophisticated, ironic' tone and a propensity to exercise 'editorial control' with its precursor as well (Stam 2005b, 112). The casting of the well-known Shakespearean actor Micheál MacLiammóir, so strongly advertised in the opening

credits, also carries with it connotations of gravitas and high culture that serve to emphasize such characteristics further.

For the purposes of an adaptation, whether the commentary consists of verbatim reproduction of statements from the narrator of the novel, new inventions, or reworked passages that only retain the gist of the attitudes presented elsewhere is actually irrelevant: the voice is presented as the voice of Fielding, and no evidence to the contrary is given in either the style or the content of the commentary. The film adaptation's reaccentuation of the author-narrator's discussion of issues of morality is a case in point. For viewers who are able to oscillate between the novel and the film in the manner Hutcheon suggests, a great proportion of the comments made in the voiceover can be said to be recognisable as Fieldingesque sound bites. Similarly, the multidirectional nature of the humour and tongue-in-cheek criticism of any extreme point of view are also features commonly associated with Fielding that are retained and reworked in the 1963 adaptation. Both Fielding himself and especially his novel *Tom Jones* were seen as morally ambiguous (if not scandalous) in their own time, and this reputation has stuck with author and work alike. Robert D. Hume, for instance, points to the paradox of Fielding's being a celebrated, but not a respectable figure in eighteenth-century society, and Albert J. Rivero notes the 'long-standing debate between those who regard Fielding's morality as beyond dispute and those who see it as always suspect' (Hume 2010, 227; Rivero 1998, 1). It is a common tendency in the 1963 film that the voice of the author-narrator vacillates between severe moralism and light-hearted mockery of moral concerns, making the tone as a whole unsettled and multi-faceted. This works by condensation and juxtaposition: by including remarks by the narrator at various stages in the film that are sometimes condemnatory and sometimes morally lenient. The voiceover comments offer viewers' guides to one scene that can be interpreted as a uniform message when the respective scene is seen in isolation, but that are self-contradictory when the film seen as a whole. The oscillation between condensed and uniform statements to opposite effects becomes a way to retain and reaccentuate the complexity of the moral message and the at times, by eighteenth-century standards, unusually permissive tone in Fielding's novel.

The author-narrator who is conjured from the pages of the novel and heard in background voiceover in 1963 is quite literally embodied in the 1997 BBC series. Here, he appears as an on-screen presence, as a character easily recognizable as Henry Fielding. The author-narrator is played by actor and comedian John Sessions, known and acclaimed for combining erudition and comedy in much of his work. The Fielding character is the first character shown, and he appears throughout the series to introduce, structure and comment on the narrative. The disembodied voice of the author-narrator from Richardson's film is thus given a notable and physical manifestation in this adaptation, and this representation of the author-narrator is perhaps the most striking and original aspect of the series. Although he also appears in the form of voiceover commentary at various instances, it is the author-narrator as character who takes the limelight and who becomes the entity to which the voiceover commentary is tied, thus giving the author-narrator a very different function than in

Richardson's film. The character contributes much of the humour of the 1997 series. The fourth wall is often broken, and the character interacts with viewers through explanation, commentary, nods and winks. These features function as equivalents to the novel's author-narrator's frequent asides to his 'dear reader', signalling a similar attempt at establishing a relationship of intimacy and equality. In addition, the author-narrator in Hüseyin's adaptation also interacts with characters and, although not directly part of the core narrative, is at times a participant in the narrative world of the series.

The disembodied voice of authority may have found a body in the television adaptation, but significantly, it is at times a fallible and undignified one. This leads to a very different relationship between the author-narrator and the viewer than those instigated by both the authoritative voiceover of 1963 and the narrator of the novel, who always keeps the upper hand in his exchange with his 'dear reader', who in turn can only keep that status at the narrator's will. It also establishes a different relationship with the narrative itself: the author-narrator in the 1997 adaptation is often thrown out from the narrative world when he tries to engage with it, and the characters he interacts with tend to push him to the side and refuse to listen. The author-narrator also appears unable or unwilling to intervene in the core narrative, which disrupts the notion that it is under his control and ownership. As such examples indicate, there is a distinct contrast at work in the representation of the author-narrator in Hüseyin's adaptation. On the one hand, he is given extensive space and attention and is forefronted in the same way that Fielding is in the opening credits, and this signals a sense of importance and worth. On the other, this extensive space is not wholly imbued with authority and pathos in the manner one might expect. Rather, Henry Fielding, here in the guise of the author-narrator, is often represented in a strikingly irreverent manner. He is continually interrupted and stopped by characters when he tries to say something, and he is also interrupted by the filmmakers by sudden cross-cuts and edits, suggesting that it is they who are the actual structurers of the material, and not him, and is even sent down a trap-door in a theatre floor as he attempts to have his say. Exchanges with viewers and characters often end in a less than dignified manner. As reaccentuations go, this is a reworking of the novel which leaves limited room for the performance of gravitas of the staged author in *Tom Jones*.

The Author-Narrator in the Adaptations as Genre

Although the explicitly signalled relationship between a source and target work is a key feature of adaptations which needs to be taken into account, focussing solely on the interpretive oscillation between source and adaptation in the manner Linda Hutcheon proposes does pose certain problems. Her emphasis on reception in this context is particularly problematic: not all viewers are acquainted with the original text, but may still be very much attuned to the fact that they are watching an adaptation and approach it accordingly (Musser 2004, 235). Interpretations of adaptations of canonical literary

texts that incorporate a strong awareness of them as *adaptations* is often even less dependent on an audience's ability to move between source and adaptation. As Christine Geraghty has noted, such an adaptation 'has the status of an adaptation but must make sense to those who have not read the original; it might be heavily trailed and advertised as an adaptation, but it does not require exegesis or explanation' (2008, 47). A scholarly reading of an adaptation can never mimic that of all general audience members completely, but if it is to take to heart this important aspect, it needs to expand its own interpretive framework to incorporate features which serve to mark the adaptation as an adaptation that lie beyond the original-to-adaptation nexus.

Adapters cannot rely on their potential audience's familiarity with eighteenth-century fiction. Quite the contrary, John Skinner identifies 'the most significant feature of English eighteenth-century fiction' to be the fact that 'ever fewer people actually read it' (2001, ix). Others have also remarked on, or begrudgingly admitted to, this tendency, along with the notion of eighteenth-century literature as being boring and/or difficult (Macdonald and Macdonald 2003, 1; Hume 2010, 223-5). This emphasises that knowledge of the literary text should not be considered the sole interpretive frame for its adaptation. It also means that viewers who are not acquainted with the original novel may interpret aspects of the adaptations differently than those who are, and this adds to the complexity of otherwise seemingly straightforward features. The interruptions of the Fielding character in the BBC series is an illustrative example: exactly where the author-narrator is interrupted and cut off is both significant and telling, and might mean different things for viewers who are not acquainted with the novel than for those who are. For instance, in the trapdoor scene, it is just after he has entered the stage and delivered learned and authoritative comments into the camera that he is effectively silenced by the trapdoor opening from under his feet. Throughout the series, the author-narrator is most often cut off at similar points; he is typically silenced when he invokes classical authors and tries to guide the viewer by explicating the moral and philosophical lessons to be learned from the events unfolding on the small screen.

For viewers who do not know the novel well, or are not particularly positively inclined towards eighteenth-century novels or authors, this may reinforce the perception of an author like Fielding as rather lacking in readerly appeal, and it is the sections of the novel that a general modern reader may be expected to dislike that the author-narrator is not allowed to include and that are edited out by the filmmakers on their behalf. For the viewer who is familiar with the novel, the forceful silencing of the author-narrator works as an in-joke, where ellipses can be filled in, cementing their status as being in the know. Moreover, each type of viewer is given the possibility to make fun of the other: aficionados of those who will not appreciate the finer points, and sceptics of those who would want to hear more. And, importantly, both types of viewers can enjoy the humour of the scene, regardless of its direction. Moreover, for both knowing and unknowing viewers, the interruptions call attention to and thematise issues like metatheatre, metafiction, irony and intertextual play, and by combining this with good-humoured ridicule of the author figure, questions of literary authority and power over the narrative are brought to the fore for all.

Thomas Leitch has provided a compelling perspective which recognises both the need to view adaptations as adaptations and the awareness of the complexities of their reception. He argues that adaptations in themselves constitute a genre that can be recognised as such by knowing and unknowing audiences alike through a specific set of genre markers (2008, 108, 111). Genre functions in part as a signification system, and the various ways in which adaptations relate to, rely on, and rearticulate genre markers may complement comparative and other analyses that focus exclusively on the relationship between the text and the adaptation. Leitch identifies four such genre markers: 'a period setting', an 'honorific conflation of literature and history', an 'obsession with authors, books, and words', and the 'specific' and 'utterly distinctive' 'intertitles of avowed adaptations' (2008, 111-14).

The features Leitch identifies are particularly central to what may be termed a sub-genre of adaptations, namely classic-novel adaptations. This sub-genre shares features with other, similar forms, such as period pieces, costume dramas, heritage films and biopics (Higson 2013, 106; Higson 1993; Buchanan 2013; Voigts-Virchow 2007). Still, classic-novel adaptations 'form a striking and coherent generic group, and their collective identity has been recognized in a concentrated range of academic writing that tends to highlight continuities and similarities across the texts', as Sarah Cardwell argues (2007, 183, 190). Since classic-novel adaptations can be identified to form a distinctly separate genre, a special set of generic expectations and forms of signification is activated in their reception. One of the distinguishing features of this type of adaptation is of course the kind of literary text it takes as its source, namely 'well-known literature of the nineteenth century, and sometimes of the eighteenth and early twentieth century' (2007, 183). Moreover, as the word 'classic' indicates, these literary works have a canonical status and tend to be 'strongly linked to a previous source not only by title but also by drawing on the author's name, the use of the original's illustrations, and often by an image of the book or pages from it appearing in the opening sequence' (Geraghty 2008, 15). Both Richardson's and Hüseyin's adaptations clearly belong within the recognisable genre of classic-novel adaptation, and both contain all the typical attributes, and, given this straightforward identification with a specific genre, will be able to activate certain expectations and meaning potentials for viewers. In this context, it is especially the central status of the author in classic-novel adaptations that is noteworthy. By virtue of the adaptations' generic identity alone, the position of the author is brought to the forefront, whether it be in the guise of a nameless author or of Henry Fielding as a historical figure.

The 1963 film adaptation does not focus much on Henry Fielding as an individual. To some extent, this was superfluous: at the time, Fielding was a famous author, whose position as one of the 'Big Five' of eighteenth-century literature, together with Defoe, Richardson, Smollett and Sterne was uncontested (Hume 2010, 224-5). A well-known author of a well-known novel tends to be intrinsically bound to his or her product, so that even the mention of *Tom Jones* would often automatically evoke 'by Henry Fielding' for many viewers in this period. Just as in the eighteenth-century, Fielding was among those writers whose names and novel titles were 'folded in together' (Vareschi 2015, 2).

This notwithstanding, the author-narrator as portrayed in Richardson's film is more of a type than a specific individual. The author-narrator as presented in Micheál MacLiammóir's voiceover commentary becomes a manifestation of the author (or, given his then still uncontested status, *The Author*), rather than necessarily of Henry Fielding the historical author. The voiceover represents a particularly active and outspoken authorial voice that is not afraid to assert his metaphorical ownership of the narrative, and the film's inclusion of the narration of the events that unfold on the screen contributes to the author's power and authority. He thus exerts his power and control over the narrative by structuring it and by guiding viewers' responses to it. The disembodied voice may mirror the small type of Fielding's name in the film's opening credits and refer to the author in an abstract rather than concrete form, but when presented under the auspices of the genre of classic-novel adaptation, it becomes the voice of *The Author of The Work*. The generic affiliation renders the problematisation of the conflation of author and author-narrator more or less obsolete, and insists on an authorship denied elsewhere.

The irreverence of the representation of Fielding as a character in the 1997 television adaptation, by contrast, suggests a fall from power as compared with the authoritative voice of the voiceover from Richardson's 1963 film and the mode of self-presentation occurring in the original novel. Overall, the character appears more as a storytelling device and butt of jokes than as an attitude-shaper and teller of jokes in this adaptation; this is a lower-case author at best. The eager attribution of ownership of the original novel in the opening vignette, title page and credits to Henry Fielding stands in stark contrast to the manner in which he is portrayed as a character in the series. The sense of authorial authority suggested by devoting so much space to the Fielding character is moreover undermined by the irreverent treatment to which he is consistently subjected. Still, Henry Fielding's authoritative status has to be given for this to be funny, and there is a constant backdrop of affection and veneration for the eighteenth-century author in Hüseyin's adaptation. The conclusion of the series is symptomatic in this regard: at the end of the final episode, Fielding starts presenting a moral and philosophical conclusion of the tale into the camera, but checks himself, turns away, and starts walking into the distance, while a series of intertitles are superimposed on the images:

'In his lifetime, HENRY FIELDING was a journalist, author, dramatist, satirist, barrister, editor, publisher, theatre manager and, finally, a Justice of the Peace who helped found the modern police force.'

'He died in 1754, five years after the scandalous publication of TOM JONES.'

'To his memory, this film is affectionately dedicated.'

It is an equal, of adapters and viewers alike, who is given this dedication. The postscript returns the attention to Fielding, but to Fielding as someone who inspires affection rather than awe and as someone who is on a level with the rest of us (although the rest

of us can usually not boast similar achievements to those listed). And, unsurprisingly, such a representation of the author is completely in line with modern representations of classic-novel authors within the genre, and, to borrow the words of Judith Buchanan, attests to two ‘conflicting impulses: to declare special and to render ordinary; to endorse, even sometimes to sanctify the received readings of a writer’s professional life and personal aura on the one hand and, on the other, to puncture these things systematically, unsparingly and/or humorously’ (2013, 15).

Adaptations will always posit a certain hierarchy into which the original author, the audience and the adapters are placed. Power and authority, literary and otherwise, are not constituted in isolation, but relationally. Here, it is in relation to the reader or the viewer and the adapters of the material that these are defined, and the author-narrator is an important vehicle for expressing such power relations. In the novel, it is clearly the author-narrator who presents himself as the grand master of the proceedings, constantly playing with his ‘dear reader’. In Richardson’s 1963 adaptation, the author-narrator retains his ownership of the narrative and is represented as the authority to which viewers should subjugate their opinions, but is only present as a disembodied voice in the background. Hüseyin’s 1997 adaptation, on the other hand, foregrounds the author-narrator throughout, but also displaces him from the classic-author pedestal of former periods. Henry Fielding may be granted ownership of *Tom Jones* in this adaptation, but the author-narrator is no longer in control of his own narrative. The genre of classic-novel adaptation no longer allows for such a staging of an eighteenth-century author.

The varying representation of the author-narrator in the 1749, 1963 and 1997 versions of *Tom Jones*, then, puts issues connected to authorship, ownership and authority into play – issues that are central to and accentuated by the genre of classic-novel adaptation in equal measure. They can be articulated through concrete signals of intellectual ownership through credits, titles and the like or through more metaphorical ownership being constituted in on-screen representations of the author and filmmakers’ various degrees of appropriation of the source material. The representations of the author-narrator, articulated in Fielding’s novel and reaccentuated in the two adaptations, are all powerful performances of authorship. The stagings of the same author in the three versions of *Tom Jones* reveal the extent to which each period has its own conceptions of authorship, and how adaptations in general and classic-novel adaptations in particular provide much material for investigating such conceptions.¹

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