

“IMPOSING FRONT”: EXPLORING THE FRONTISPIECE AUTHOR PORTRAITS IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NOVELS

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Abstract:

The eighteenth century novel integrated a number of visual devices in its material presentation. The inclusion of these visual paratexts made it feasible for this new genre to achieve socio-cultural legitimacy and caste status rapidly. The narrative text along with the visual co-text facilitated a dialogic platform for the literary and visual artists who worked together to provide the readers with multiple layers of meaning of the novel they encountered. Contemporary concerns like the issues of gender, truth, identity were addressed and problematized by this verbal-visual space of the novelistic production. This paper will try to look into these issues through the frontispiece author-portraits in select early eighteenth century novels.

Keywords: *Frontispiece author portrait, Early Novel, Visual text, Paratext, Veracity, Dialogism.*

The eighteenth century novelistic space was an interactive and dynamic space where both the literary and visual artists found a scope of experimentation and permutation on the formal and stylistic elements of the genre. The ideological inclination of the era for a natural and realistic representation corroborated certain visual strategies of representation within the physical body of the novel. Of all the visual features the frontispiece played the most pivotal part in the graphic stylization of the early novel, since it not only accelerated the popularization of the genre but helped to add a visual co-text to bring out the intended reading by providing sufficient interpretive clues. The authors like Defoe, Swift, and Haywood used this visual /non-verbal space as an alternative mode of representation in order to play with the complex issues of identity, veracity, gender and ideology that their novels dealt with. This paper will try to explore how the frontispieces of the early novels addressed these issues through the portrayal of the authors of the novels and thereby inserted a special interpretive dimension to the textual body of the novels, it accompanied.

The frontispiece is the illustration that fronts a work preceding even the title page. Attaching a frontispiece-portrait was a feature of the British book production from the seventeenth century. By the mid seventeenth century, the “frontispiece was the firmly enough established convention ... to be played about with” (Barchas, Prefiguring Genre 261). For Annie Ravenhill-Johnson the frontispiece developed from the Medieval and Renaissance tradition of attaching 'emblems' to writings. She argues that the frontispiece grew

[as]... an emblematic title page comprising visual symbols that expressed the meaning of the whole book. These symbols are probably chosen by the author in order to provide him a second language in which to reinforce his message. A front or façade to a book, the frontispiece acts as a formal entrance to a work an elaborate allegorical and emblematical visual introduction to its contents. (27)

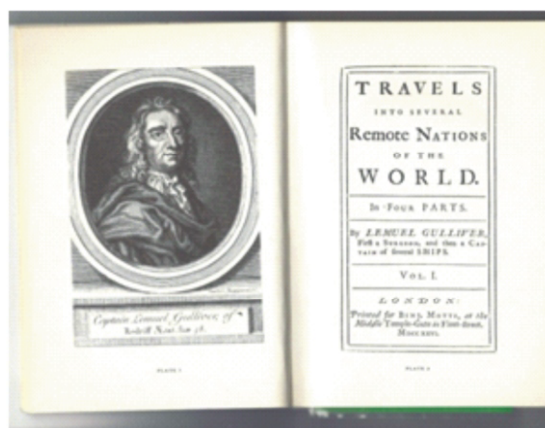
The frontispieces in the eighteenth century appeared with a variety of styles, subjects and shapes (Barchas 20). It depicted either the thematic elements of the work or the image of its author or narrator. The eighteenth century vogue of anonymity and pseudonymity prevented the authors to come out with his/her real identity through attaching a real author portrait (with a few notable exceptions which I will discuss

later in this paper). The frontispiece portraits assumed the form of an engraved portrait of the book's author within a masonry frame, often accompanied by a classical inscription. The engraving might be a derivative of a previous painting. In keeping with the demands of the narrative it accompanied, the frontispiece portraits were decorated with diverse designs in the frame of the portrait, the costume, posture or the look of the sitter, and the props, used in the scene as 'iconographic embellishments'. The seventeenth century frontispieces which usually faced the collections of the established authors and only occasionally, the high profile biographies, histories, or travel narratives (due to the high price issue of a copper plate engraving) was regarded a mark of reputation for the work it attended (Barchas 22). This was why the cheap publications of the age did not carry any frontispieces. But in the eighteenth century many cheap and popular publications based on sensational and experimental themes were observed to be carrying the frontispieces as a marketing device to attract the attention of the book-buying public; such as Hannah Snell's *The Female Soldier* (1750) which played on the gender indeterminacy by deploying two frontispiece portraits of its (female) author clad in a man's attire.

McKeon, in his work *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740*, analyzed the categorical instability to be traced in the eighteenth-century fiction due to the ideological transformation in the epistemological and socio-ethical spheres(4). The question of truth generating the epistemological crisis may be related parallel to the question of virtue engendering socio ethical crisis, both of which were reflected in the artistic representation of the period. McKeon pointed out that both the questions of truth and virtue posed problems of signification (McKeon "Generic Transformation" 266). The cultural agents were involved in defining the concept of truth and virtue that would get social acceptability and legitimacy (McKeon Generic Transformation 161). The tripartite formula of McKeon put where the aristocratic ideology was parodied and subverted by the progressive ideology, as the conservative ideology parodying the preceding two, indicates that parody and parodic stylization was an important mode of representation in the period. Parody, a self-reflexive literary form, signifies "a form of indirect as well as double-voiced discourse.... In transmuting or remodelling previous texts, it points to the differential but mutual dependence of parody and parodied texts. Its two voices neither merge nor cancel each other out; they work together, while remaining distinct in their defining difference" (Hutchinson xiv). The eighteenth century novel parodied both the fictional 'romances' and 'non-fictional histories and while rejecting the two it accommodated many of its thematic and stylistic features; such as the first person narrative strategy, psychological curiosity, empirical documentation etc. Several of the eighteenth century novelistic/ fictional plots were based on the real life incidents (traced in the historical documents) but the novelists fictionalized the facts in their individual way in order to present a better view of life/ reality. Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* was based on the life of a sea-man Alexander Selkirk who lived for four years on the Pacific island, just as *Moll Flanders* was based on the life of the socially- aspirant Mary Clareton. A supporter of progressive ideology Defoe moulded the historical records in his own fashion both as a positive and negative commentary on the possessive ethics. Swift as a critique of progressive ideology and empiricist method of documentation parodied *Robinson Crusoe* and the tradition of writing similar adventure stories through his *Travels*. Later in the century Fielding parodied *Pamela* and Richardson's idea of virtue and respectability through his *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews*. Thus, an oppositional pattern can be observed working behind all the important publications of the era. This dialectical patterning can be traced in the paratextual strategies too. The novelists in a self-critical way parodied the tradition of attaching the visual paratext in the novels by way of composing the graphic content of their own novels. Haywood's attaching a sexually titillating author- portrait as the frontispiece of the collection of her novellas, apart from being a marketing strategy, was a strong commentary on the objectification of female sexuality by the contemporary male authors. Swift's clever utilization of several author portraits fronting various editions of *Travels* helped him to play with and at the same time mock the genre of the author portrait itself.

The eighteenth century novel was intimately involved with the issues of identity and authority. In

the heyday of rationalism and empiricism, cultural products like the novel could not but work on developing some empirical strategies (both textual and paratextual) to grab contemporary reader's attention so that it could gain sustenance competing with the other more popular genres of the period. Jonathan Swift, one of the most celebrated novelists and satirists of the eighteenth century mocked this readerly expectation of authority and veracity of a printed product through the publication of his *Travels*. Swift's project was to build a new kind of readership which would find interest in both the text and paratext and interpret the work as a whole taking cues from both of these spaces. Swift's *Travels* appeared in 1726 with a miniature portrait of its fictional author Lemuel Gulliver with long locks and in a velvet cloak counterfeiting the authority and identity of the real author.



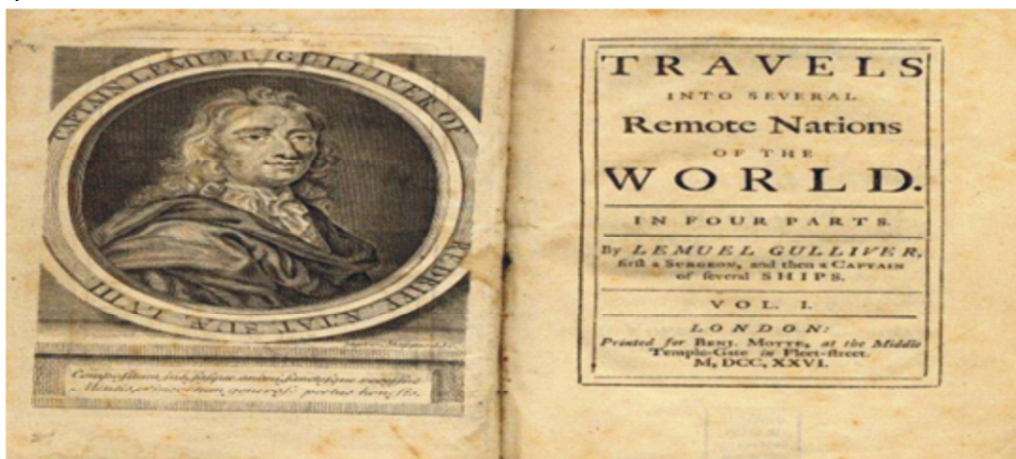
Frontispiece 1. First issue of the first edition of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Motte 1726)

Considered as a microscopic satire¹ where the dwarfs of Lilliput and the giants of Brobdingnag appeared as the versions of optical expansion or contraction, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* concerns with four voyages of Gulliver. Whereas the first three voyages dealt with Gulliver's exploration of a lack of balance or proportion in the culture of the visited lands, the fourth voyage into the land of Houyhnhnm made him aware of the imbalance and discrepancy residing in his own culture. In the land of Lilliput Gulliver was inflated (in size) only to be followed by deflation in the land of Brobdingnag. Thus, there is a constant inversion of perspective/gaze in the lands that he voyaged as there was a constant reversal of roles between Gulliver as a spectator/a viewing subject, and Gulliver a subject to be viewed and scrutinized.

On the whole *Gulliver's Travels* offered a satirical commentary on the enlightenment idea of 'progress' based on the scientific discovery, rational investigation and the commercial ideology that determined the culture of eighteenth century England. *Gulliver's Travels* broke away from the traditional travel narratives where the purpose was to entertain the readers intimating them with the queer (often fictional or imaginary) customs of the distant uncivilized lands, thereby heightening the reader's sense of sophistication as an inhabitant of a cultured and enlightened community. On the contrary, *Gulliver's Travels* exposed the cruelties, injustices and absurdities of the system at home, where both the writer and reader lived. As a self-directed satire, here the author placed himself and the genre he represented at the butt of ridicule just as Gulliver was mocked at as for being the representative of his civilization.

Perhaps, the most crucial aspect of *Gulliver's Travels* about which Swift succeeded to heighten the reader's curiosity and anxiety was regarding Gulliver's identity which raised questions on the narrative veracity and authenticity. As a negative commentary on Crusoe and his Utopian land, the ending of *Gulliver's Travels* was the most undesirable to the readers. Like Crusoe, Gulliver was also shipwrecked but unlike Crusoe who turned a whole uninhabited, barren island into a province of his own, Gulliver became an outsider to his own land/ country. If Gulliver was a paranoid, constructing all the stories in his mind, the novel becomes a form of fiction where the obsessive self-centered narrator narrates his story (Richetti 79, 80). Swift gives us enough hints to that. Despite the claim of veracity made by Gulliver's cousin Sympson

in the preface² (following the convention of travel writings), the mendacity of Gulliver was suggested paradoxically through his repeated claim of veracity throughout the narrative. Gulliver was awarded the post of a 'Nardac' in the land of the Lilliputians. If the sequence of the letters is changed it becomes 'carnad' which means a hoax or joke (Richetti 78-79). In keeping with the narrative elements the extra-narrative components were deployed for the same purpose to enhance the ambiguity of authorial voice. Unlike contemporary fictions Swift's *Travels* came up with separate frontispieces for separate editions and issues, which itself was a commentary on the fluidity, temporality and unreliability of the genre it stood for. The first issue of the first edition differed from the second issue in using the name of Gulliver in capital letter and his age in roman numeric. The Latin inscription an addition in the second issue was an excerpt from the concluding lines of Persius' Second Satire, *Satura* ii, a poem which laments the wants of a pure and genuine heart. The sense that the inscription connotes perfectly matches the objective of the author (as someone exhausted with the hypocrisy and corruption of the human race and culture) behind writing this 'imaginary' travelogue. The mature and sober scholarly look of the author in the frontispiece promoted the authority and reliability of the text and its author.



Frontispiece 2. A later issue of the First edition of *Gulliver's Travels* (Motte 1726)

The authoritative claim that the frontispiece (along with the epigraph) laid, eluded the general readers many of the discrepancies which in turn were evoked by it; such as the inconsistency in the age of Gulliver. When Gulliver started his voyage in 1699 he was 38 years old as per the information set in the novel. Thus in 1726 at the time of publication he should be around 65, not 58 that the frontispiece indicates (within the oval frame). But Swift, the real author of the narrative was 58 at the time of the publication of the first edition of *Travels*. Thus, there was a tendency on the part of the author and visual artist to overlap the identity of the book's real and fictional author. On a different note it might be taken as a clue that the anonymously published socio-political satire left for the readers to grasp the identity of the real author. Both the 1726 frontispieces captured the look of a scholarly middle-aged man with a strong claim on authority and status. But Gulliver who became a misanthrope in the end cannot be expected to get into this Yahoo culture with an ostensible look displayed in the frontispiece portrait (Barchas 30). Thus, this portrayal does not go with the demand of the narrative. Perhaps Swift intentionally maintained this discrepancy in order to project the unreliability of the genre and its strategies of representation. Gerard Genette suggested that the enclosure of the stylistic features of a book was "always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimized by the author" (2). The eighteenth century frontispieces were not directly composed by the author but were 'more or less' sanctioned by him/her. In this space both the visual and literary artists worked together with their individual style and interpretation towards a singular aim to complete the packaging of a work. Thus often the frontispieces told a story of its

own, separate from the main narrative. In case of frontispiece-author portraits the reader were offered a prior idea of the work through looking at the portrayal of the author/ protagonist/ narrator. As Janine Barchas comments, "Every frontispiece portrait offered a miniature surrogate of the book's absent author, a small private fetish that the book buyer could take home along with the text"(22). The octavo and the duodecimo edition of *Travels* (better known as Faulkner edition) contained two different frontispiece portraits of Gulliver.



Frontispiece 3 & 4: Frontispieces of Duodecimo edition & Octavo edition of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Faulkner 1735).

The Octavo portrait was of a youthful energetic Gulliver while the Duodecimo, of a weary, tattered man. Barchas argued:

Instead of projecting the authoritative images of Gulliver as a possible elder statesman or promising sea-bound surgeon, the duodecimo frontispiece confronts the reader with an untidy Yahoo who has just emerged from a sleepless night in the stables of the Houyhnhnms. (31)

Moreover the clouded eyes of the duodecimo portrait in place of the dark lush eyebrows of the octavo one carries certain moral overtones reflecting the end portrayal of Gulliver in the narrative-- almost insane, wild and disheveled. This type of projection of an author in the frontispiece might risk the narrative authority which an author intends to establish through the frontispiece portrait. The misspelling of "Capt. LEMIUEL Gulliver" also questions the print reliability. The Persius epigraph of the 1726 edition was replaced by a more easily decodable phrase *Splendid Mendax* (glittering liar). This phrase, an excerpt from a Horatian ode, implies that speaking 'the thing that is not' for a greater purpose is laudable. Swift's Gulliver might be lying but only to rectify the humans by showing their own absurdities, superficialities. Thus Swift left a possibility of justification for writing this imaginary fiction. The epigraph along with the frontispiece portrait leaves the readers with a dilemma, prior to the reading of the text, as to believe or not to believe what is presented to them. Critiquing the age's strong passion and obsession with narrative veracity and truth telling Swift perhaps intended to make the readers aware of the fact that the only way to represent reality through art is by way of imagination or through using a framework of imaginary, improbable incidents. Barchas says, "ironically then, the inclusion of an author portrait allows Swift to signal the generic authority of his text, while his particular execution of the frontispieces enables him to interrogate the authority" (33). The visual uncertainty created by the frontispieces deconstructed the frontispiece tradition and the air of reliability and authority it attributes the text with. Thus Swift elevated the status of the frontispiece from being merely a decorative constituent of a text to an integrated literary element,

which needs to be interpreted in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the whole work.

The eighteenth century frontispiece portraits were used in the age to assert the generic status, to guide interpretation and to make the readers understand the relationship between text and image. Since the inclusion of a frontispiece associates the possibility of a third-party inclusion, that of the visual artist, except the author and the publisher, the text moves through two levels of encoding before it reaches the potential readers to get decoded first, the author encodes the text and put it forward to the visual artist who decodes (understands and interprets) it from his own strategic position only to add his level of encoding into it. Finally when the reader holds the book and comprehends it she has to take into account all the problematizations that the multiple levels of encoding incorporate into it.

Mikhail Bakhtin viewed the novelistic space as a space of 'dialogic encounter', a site of struggle "between what a given system will admit as literature and those texts that are otherwise excluded from such a definition of literature" (xxxix). The contestation of power and dominance can be observed in the double ideological strains prevailing in the eighteenth century novel writing. Contemporary cultural agents, both male and female supported and upheld the dominant patriarchal ideology where the socially legitimized concept of virtue was circulated through the representation of some formulaic stereotypical portraiture of male-female characters and relationship. But looking at it critically the existence of a subtext can be observed in many of the literary production of the milieu. The writings of several female authors of the period not only subverted the traditional moral and ethical standard but provided a counter tradition to the dominant mode of cultural production. The socio-political condition of England i.e., the lapse of licensing act, unprecedented development in print production, rise of female literacy made it feasible for the woman to participate in the literary- cultural ventures of the era professionally. They formed a subculture with the production of amatory novellas, socio-political satires, criminal-rogue biography etc. Their writings started enjoying immense popularity. Naturally they were considered a threat to the established order by the cultural elite. When Addison and Steele were striving to create a 'taste of polite writing', these women writers continuously upset and subverted their claims and agenda (*Spectator*, no 58, 7 may 1711). Thus, their periodicals condemned the "female politicians... free thinkers, and disputants and preferred 'the best housewife' as 'the most conspicuous woman' (*Tatler* no 42, 16 July 1709, *Spectator* no 57, 5 may 1711).

The women writers chose a writing mode which foregrounded sentimentalism, eroticism, fantasy in contrast to the moral, realistic and rational mode of the male tradition. Bacscheider and Richetti observed that if "social observation" and "psychological depth" are considered the markers of modern novel it was introduced in the prose fictions, long before Richardson and Fielding legitimized it, through the writings of the women amatory novelists such as Aphra Behn, Manley, Haywood, Aubin (x). Dr. Johnson's definition of novel as 'a small tale generally of love' is best suited to the amatory fictions which catered the public demand for fictions which would be 'shorter, less stylized, immediately appealing to a wider range of taste, more practical and affordable' (Bacscheider xi). They introduced the formula of modern mass market fiction. Pointing out to the rivalry between the emerging male novelists and the established female fiction writers of the time, Warner commented:

By claiming to inaugurate an entirely "new" species of writing, Richardson and Fielding both seek to assert the fundamental difference of their own projects from these antagonists the notorious trio of Behn, Manley and Haywood who continue to circulate in the market as threatening rivals in a zero-sum struggle to control a common cultural space and activity. (Bacscheider xiv)

Eliza Haywood, one of the most successful and prolific writers of the first half of the eighteenth century experimented and manipulated this genre to create an alternative discourse of female sexuality and empowerment through her writings. She addressed the issues like female sexuality, desire, their actual position in the patriarchal social structure and offered a form of resistance by questioning the social and moral codes prevailing in contemporary England. Her novel *Fantomina or love in a Maze* is a story of an

unidentified aristocratic young woman who adopted a series of disguises of a prostitute, a maid, a widow, and a masked incognito as a way, at first, to acquire sexual knowledge and then, as a strategy to retain the sexual attention of her inconstant lover. Throughout the novel, Beauplaisir was unaware of the fact, until and unless the young girl herself revealed that he repeatedly enjoyed the same woman who actually befooled him and enjoyed him physically as well. Through this novel Haywood provided a new definition of chastity and virtue in love and commitment which affirms that virtue does not consist in virginity or sexual ignorance but in constancy. In the whole novel Beauplaisir was relegated to the point of a weak, powerless object which could not but submit to the overwhelming passion of Fantomina. Haywood allowed him no agency at all and in the novel he was nothing more than a sexual toy for Fantomina. On a different note we can take this masquerading strategy of the woman as an act of choice over her own body and mind. In the end Fantomina was punished as she was sent to a monastery as a penalty she was meant to pay for her 'transgression'. Haywood was writing in a period when the society was operated with a strict moral code where women were not expected to enjoy moral and sexual freedom. And moreover these fictions were written for a targeted audience for the purpose of marketing and profit making so the writer had to be at least superficially conservative, promoting current ideology and prevailing values. Haywood, in spite of working under this restriction, was able to transcend it revising the traditional masculine construction of the feminine as a state associated with modesty, passivity, chastity, moral elevation and suffering in her fictional space. Her women are characters with self-possession, self-respect, intelligence, and courage. Backscheider and Richetti viewed, "Eliza Haywood is a major contributor to the history of the early novel whose work is a sustained critique of her society, male female relationships and class politics and this should be recognized and integrated into the studies of the eroticism and wild fantasies typical of her texts" (xiii).

Haywood demonstrated defiance not only in the textual content of her novels but in the application of the paratextual strategies too. The sole extant authorial frontispiece of Haywood, by George Vertue fronting her *Works* (1723-24) and her *Secret Histories, Novels, and Poems* (1724-25) reflects a parallel tone of boldness, rebelliousness and self-empowerment. Eliza Haywood, a non-conformist as she was both in life and art, could show the courage of using a genuine author portrait to front her novels, only an emerging genre then. Unlike the other author portraiture of the period this particular authorial representation (frontispiece 4) with the flower tucked behind her hair, the brazen, direct gaze, the plunging neckline, the informality of the dressing gown, and the unfastened locks of hair arranged suggestively over both shoulders "deliberately titillates rather than authoritates" (Barchas 24). Haywood's frontispiece contained a spot on her cheek which is suggestive of syphilis, the mark of an immoral woman. Thus the frontispiece put down the author to the level of a pornographic artist and also intimated the reader the nature of the accompanying text. The oval frame gives the impression of a mirror through which the author is gazing at the readers implying the possibility of a counter gaze that the reader might as well direct to the author, and also to the narrative content of the text. The mirror holds the implication of voyeurism and the informal look of the lady is too appealing for the readers to resist the temptation of looking into what is inside the cover (of the text/work). Janine Barchas pointed out, "the (frontispiece) portrait offers a personification of the accompanying text" and 'the result works as clever advertisement' (24). Haywood-frontispiece which subverted the culture of iconography of contemporary print culture consequently became the object of Pope's ridicule in *The Dunciad*. Haywood was described as the goddess organizing a pissing competition between the dunces. She was "the goddess...with cow like udders, and with ox-like eyes" (Pope, *Dunciad*, Book II, 13). The representation of Haywood in the poem bears resemblances with this Virtue portrait.



Frontispiece 5. A portrait by George Virtue fronting Haywood's *Works* (1723-24).

Haywood's frontispiece worked on three levels; firstly on the class level, that is, traditionally the frontispieces accompanied only the works of the established authors or the classical writings whereas that of Haywood represented the amatory novellas, which was regarded as scandalous writing, a subgenre of the romance/novel; secondly, on issues of identity and anonymity, i.e., by then the experimental writers of grub street did not include the author portraits for the sake of anonymity but Haywood's was the first instance of genuine author portraits used as a frontispiece within the emerging genre; thirdly, on the level of gender, i.e., in place of authoritative male (genuine) author portraits Haywood's portrait was explicit with sexual innuendos as were her novellas. Thus in a proto-feminist way her novels with both the textual and visual elements left a space where a woman could speak for herself, could write her body and thereby escaped the masculine myth of the 'female'.

McKeon observed an oppositional yet complementary relationship between the two strains of writing in the eighteenth century literary space. The male masters, specifically Richardson and Fielding, needed the female producers of fiction even if only to transcend them and to bring fiction to a higher level of development (Paula xiv). The male authors were 'dependent on them for defining their own complexity and thus, they simultaneously cancelled and fulfilled them (McKeon, *Origins* 256-60). Both Richardson and Fielding in order to free the eighteenth century literary/fictional space of "idle romances which are filled with monsters, the productions, not of nature, but of distempered brains" (*Tom Jones* 99) and to 'cultivate the principles of Virtue and religion in the minds of the youth of both sexes' (*Pamela*, title page') took charge of introducing 'a new province of writing' which would be more extended in time and space than that which preceded them. Richetti commented "In refining his method of 'writing to the moment', Richardson invited the reader into the temporal world of process, where all is changeable, nothing is assured" (109). As an established printer himself Richardson with his pragmatic didacticism (a term used by Richetti and Backscheider) took the agency of instilling social and moral codes into contemporary culture through his writings. The psychological turmoil that Pamela went through due to Mr. B's repeated attempts to possess her would not have been better expressed than the private epistolary mode. The conflict of class and the power³ was temporarily resolved through the marriage of Pamela and Mr. B. Pamela was made to feel her love for a man who physically, verbally abused her; in Pamela's own words "What is the matter, with all his ill usage of me, that I cannot hate him?" (237). Instead of bearing a straightforward morality and virtue Richardson's Pamela came out with a certain amount of moral ambiguities where she could not help feeling a growing sexual attraction for her predator.

Richardson was representing an era when possessive ethics began to determine everything in socio-economic life. Honour and respectability became saleable. Woman, children were considered as properties, manipulated by the authoritarian males. Richardson questioned this ethics through Pamela;

Pamela in her argument with Mrs. Jewkes commented:

And pray, said I, walking on, how came I to be his property? What right has he in me, but such as a thief may plead to stolen Goods? Why was ever the like heard, says she! this is downright rebellion, I protest! (II 228)

In the final part of the novel the power hierarchy was restored as Pamela was taught the upper class dynamics by Mr. B., the rules she was expected to abide by as his wife. This is the 'cultural enslavement of woman' (Richetti 110), the code of ideal marriage that the society expects every woman to maintain. The approaching motherhood of Pamela secured her place in the normative mode of socio-cultural space. Thus, through *Pamela* Richardson placed 'virtue' over pleasure, order over chaos, and conformity over resistance. Charles Grignion's engraving of Richardson which fronted many of the posthumous editions of his works was perfectly in keeping with the moral overtones of his novels. The portrait reflects a sober, simple, authoritative man. The austere masonry frame denotes the 'status' of the author and the associated work.



Frontispiece 6. 'A portrait by Grignion from the sixth edition of *The History of Charles Grandison*' (1770)

Thus, the eighteenth century dialogic space was extended beyond the textual to the paratextual/visual space. Fielding, a parodist of Richardson's ethics and aesthetics exploited the space to project his own idea of novelistic discourse based on social realism. Unlike Richardson's inward/psychological enquiry Fielding's novel projected the external complexity in a comic tone. While working on the same theme of upper class seduction and exploitation just as Richardson did in *Pamela*, Fielding in *Shamela* changed the moral character of the heroine and in *Joseph Andrews*, the sex of the protagonist, thereby evoking laughter and contempt in place of sympathy. He made his characters of 'perfect simplicity' encounter the world of hypocrisy, vanity, malice and envy as we find in *Tom Jones*. Fielding's narrative voice is 'witty, playful or earnest, but always genial, assured and knowledgeable' (Goldberg xi). He inaugurated the third person narrative strategy and authorial commentary to guide his reader's response. Fielding's characteristic style of interplaying comic and tragic perhaps evolved from his idea of realism which concerns with the ethics of probability and possibility and the technique of selection and organization in order to project the histories of 'the moment'. Richetti says, "A moral comedian like Fielding, in fact, offers his readers an understanding of character and personality that is founded on generalized moral types, and his universalism produces characters quite distinct from the deeply psychologized and intensely individualized characters Richardson imagined" (8). The traditional meaning of honour as "title of rank" was changed into the "goodness of character" in his novels (Richetti 172). Fielding foregrounded the ethics of "generosity, warmth, good heart" instead of the "rigidity of virtue" of

Richardson (ibid).

Fielding's portrait fronting the posthumous collection of his *Works* (1762) by William Hogarth invites the reader towards a number of issues typical of both Hogarth and Fielding. Except the bust niche, which is a signature style of Hogarth, the two masques lying on the base are suggestive of Fielding's style of interplaying the comic and tragic elements in his novels. The books of various sizes and volumes, the ink pot, pen and a wand remain cluttered though the space indicating the broad range of background and character that Fielding dealt with in the textual body of his novel. The books, the laurel leaves enhances Fielding's status and respectability as a novelist.



Frontispiece 7: An Engraving of Fielding by William Hogarth, fronting Fielding's *Works* (Miller 1762)

Hence, the frontispieces acted as an interpretive guide for the readers by providing “a local visual context for the accompanying text” (Barchas 27). With the novelistic genre acquiring its durability and permanent status towards the second half of the century, the frontispiece portraits of the 'real' authors began to embellish the novels. By 1760s the frontispiece achieved an important place in the graphic stylization of the novels. Barchas commented, “The function of the earlier “fictional” portraits is decidedly different from the later “real” portraits of Fielding and Richardson. While both sets of portraits elide identity an authority, the one (of the real author) confirms a value; the other (of the fictional author) claims it” (27). Richardson was fully aware of the publishing dynamics of the mid eighteenth century England. He commissioned Hogarth to design two frontispieces for the second edition of *Pamela*. Although Richardson never used the design, as he felt, “the engraving part (had)...fallen very short of the spirit of the passages they were intended to represent” (Barchas 35). The complexity arose because the visual (mis) interpretation did not coalesce with the textual one or with the interpretation that the literary artist wanted to convey to his readers. The visual started gaining interpretive control over the text and clashed with the interpretation of the author by creating an individual hermeneutic space independent of the authorial control. Thus the visual sometimes gets upper hand over the textual and influences the interpretation of the viewer/reader.

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End Note:

1. Inspired by Robert Hooke's publication of *Micrographia* and contemporary interest in scientific discovery
2. "There is an air of Truth apparent through the whole; and indeed the author was so distinguished for his veracity, that it became a Sort of Proverb among his Neighbours at Redriff, when any one affirmed a thing, to say, it was as true as if Mr. Gulliver had spoke it"
3. Pamela was vulnerable both as a woman and as a person who belonged to the humble strata of the society.