



NAXOS

AudioBooks

COMPLETE
CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED



Henry
Fielding

Tom Jones

Read by **Bill Homewood**

CD 1

1	Book One , Chapter One	6:45
2	Book One , Chapter Two	5:06
3	Book One , Chapter Three	4:44
4	When Mrs Deborah returned into the room...	4:16
5	Book One , Chapter Four	7:51
6	Book One , Chapter Five	3:41
7	Book One , Chapter Six	5:16
8	Their envy did not, however, display itself openly...	4:52
9	Book One , Chapter Seven	4:00
10	'Can any pleasure compensate these evils?'	4:47
11	Jenny now lifted her eyes from the ground...	3:55
12	Book One , Chapter Eight	6:24
13	Book One , Chapter Nine	5:25
14	Book One , Chapter Ten	5:04
15	As sympathies of all kinds are apt to beget love...	4:50

Total time on CD 1: 77:04

CD 2

1	Book One , Chapter Eleven	6:13
2	To deal plainly with the reader...	5:03
3	Book One , Chapter Twelve	3:32
4	The doctor accused Mr Allworthy of too great lenity...	5:11
5	Book One , Chapter Thirteen	7:07
6	Book Two , Chapter One	5:19
7	Book Two , Chapter Two	5:15
8	Book Two , Chapter Three	4:44
9	Thus it happened to Mrs Partridge...	4:29
10	Book Two , Chapter Four	5:51
11	Nothing can be so quick and sudden as the operations of the mind...	5:48
12	Book Two , Chapter Five	4:23
13	I have thought it somewhat strange, upon reflection...	4:42
14	Mr Allworthy answered, 'He could not dispute with the captain...'	4:48
15	Book Two , Chapter Six	6:52

Total time on CD 2: 79:24

CD 3

1	Here, reader, I beg your patience a moment...	4:34
2	Whether Partridge repented or not...	4:06
3	Book Two , Chapter Seven	4:56
4	One situation only of the married state...	5:52
5	Book Two , Chapter Eight	4:25
6	Book Two , Chapter Nine	5:09
7	These two doctors, whom, to avoid any malicious applications...	6:01
8	Book Three , Chapter One	4:54
9	Book Three , Chapter Two	3:33
10	To say the truth, some of that atrocious wickedness in Jones...	4:34
11	At his return home, Tom was presently convened before Mr Allworthy.	5:54
12	Book Three , Chapter Three	7:03
13	Book Three , Chapter Four	7:29
14	Book Three , Chapter Five	3:59
15	When this story became public...	5:20

Total time on CD 3: 77:55

CD 4

1	Having, therefore, determined to commit these boys...	3:27
2	Book Three , Chapter Six	5:41
3	Whether Mrs Blifil had been surfeited...	4:11
4	Book Three , Chapter Seven	4:48
5	Book Three , Chapter Eight	5:25
6	Book Three , Chapter Nine	6:45
7	Book Three , Chapter Ten	6:46
8	Book Four , Chapter One	7:46
9	Book Four , Chapter Two	4:59
10	Her cheeks were of the oval kind...	3:28
11	Book Four , Chapter Three	6:40
12	Book Four , Chapter Four	3:51
13	'And if they had been hanged...'	4:24
14	Book Four , Chapter Five	4:56
15	Sophia, with the highest degree of innocence and modesty...	5:50

Total time on CD 4: 79:04

CD 5

1	It was Mr Western's custom every afternoon...	3:49
2	Book Four , Chapter Six	5:42
3	That the reader may be no longer in suspense...	6:17
4	Book Four , Chapter Seven	2:40
5	Book Four , Chapter Eight	6:59
6	But now Fortune, fearing she had acted out of character...	6:51
7	Book Four , Chapter Nine	7:32
8	Book Four , Chapter Ten	4:45
9	Tom begged to be excused...	6:47
10	Book Four , Chapter Eleven	6:32
11	But whatever detestation Mr Allworthy had...	5:19
12	Book Four , Chapter Twelve	7:30
13	Book Four , Chapter Thirteen	7:58

Total time on CD 5: 78:47

CD 6

1	Book Four , Chapter Fourteen	7:40
2	Perhaps Sophia might have suffered her maid...	6:16
3	Book Five , Chapter One	5:40
4	And here we shall of necessity...	5:33
5	Book Five , Chapter Two	6:13
6	As to Squire Western...	6:07
7	Book Five , Chapter Three	6:38
8	Book Five , Chapter Four	8:01
9	Book Five , Chapter Five	7:35
10	She was proceeding thus...	6:12
11	The reader will be mistaken...	7:53
12	Book Five , Chapter Six	5:06

Total time on CD 6: 79:00

CD 7

1	It may, perhaps, be a question...	4:31
2	One day this young couple accidentally met in the garden...	6:18
3	Book Five , Chapter Seven	7:38
4	'Grieve, therefore, no more, my dear child...'	7:29
5	Book Five , Chapter Eight	7:02
6	The physician now arrived...	6:03
7	Book Five , Chapter Nine	4:58
8	The doctor now interposed...	6:23
9	Book Five , Chapter Ten	4:07
10	Here ensued a parley...	5:01
11	Book Five , Chapter Eleven	4:00
12	Jones now finding himself engaged with two...	4:31
13	Book Five , Chapter Twelve	4:54
14	All fears for Sophia being now removed...	6:10

Total time on CD 7: 79:13

CD 8

1	Book Six , Chapter One	7:44
2	Book Six , Chapter Two	7:26
3	'Sister,' cries the squire...	7:33
4	Book Six , Chapter Three	5:00
5	Mr Allworthy was not one of those men...	6:06
6	Book Six , Chapter Four	5:10
7	Book Six , Chapter Five	6:47
8	Mrs Western now stood a few moments silent...	5:43
9	Book Six , Chapter Six	7:09
10	Book Six , Chapter Seven	6:00
11	Mr Western took care to way-lay the lover...	6:04
12	Book Six , Chapter Eight	5:13
13	Book Six , Chapter Nine	3:40

Total time on CD 8: 79:40

CD 9

1	So trembled poor Sophia...	3:57
2	It may likewise seem surprising...	4:11
3	Book Six , Chapter Ten	4:53
4	When Allworthy and Blifil were again left together...	6:52
5	Book Six , Chapter Eleven	5:51
6	Book Six , Chapter Twelve	5:03
7	He was now searching his pockets for his wax...	5:38
8	Book Six , Chapter Thirteen	4:59
9	'Name not his detested name,' cries Sophia...	4:50
10	Book Six , Chapter Fourteen	4:08
11	Book Seven , Chapter One	4:25
12	But as Nature often exhibits some of her best performances...	5:27
13	Book Seven , Chapter Two	5:17
14	Book Seven , Chapter Three	4:33
15	'Indeed, madam,' replied Sophia...	6:40

Total time on CD 9: 76:49

CD 10

1	'Brother,' said Mrs Western...	3:17
2	Book Seven , Chapter Four	5:35
3	Book Seven , Chapter Five	7:08
4	Book Seven , Chapter Six	7:28
5	Though Mr Blifil was not of the complexion of Jones...	7:31
6	Book Seven , Chapter Seven	5:07
7	'I would not have your la'ship too confident of that,' cries Honour...	5:23
8	Book Seven , Chapter Eight	4:12
9	In this humour, which was none of the sweetest...	4:56
10	Book Seven , Chapter Nine	5:12
11	Honour acted her part to the utmost perfection.	5:31
12	Book Seven , Chapter Ten	5:54
13	Here the Quaker ended with a deep sigh...	6:52
14	Book Seven , Chapter Eleven	5:08

Total time on CD 10: 79:19

CD 11

1	The gentleman who had been all night tippling at the alehouse...	4:23
2	Book Seven , Chapter Twelve	5:47
3	Mr Adderly, which was the name of the other ensign...	3:57
4	The tenderness of lovers...	7:13
5	Book Seven , Chapter Thirteen	7:18
6	'Well, sir,' said the surgeon...	8:01
7	Book Seven , Chapter Fourteen	6:36
8	As soon as the serjeant was departed...	4:21
9	Perceiving the bird was flown...	4:30
10	Book Seven , Chapter Fifteen	4:42
11	The reader may perhaps expect...	5:10
12	Book Eight , Chapter One	5:41
13	Man therefore is the highest subject...	4:46
14	Thus we may, perhaps, with little danger, relate the history of Fisher...	6:08

Total time on CD 11: 78:41

CD 12

1	Our modern authors of comedy...	2:56
2	Book Eight , Chapter Two	4:35
3	'And could I ever have imagined...'	3:57
4	Book Eight , Chapter Three	6:16
5	Book Eight , Chapter Four	4:24
6	'Indeed,' says Jones...	5:31
7	Book Eight , Chapter Five	5:46
8	Little Benjamin, who had been all attention...	5:10
9	Book Eight , Chapter Six	4:51
10	Jones was a little startled at this sudden declaration.	5:01
11	Book Eight , Chapter Seven	5:16
12	In the evening, when Jones retired to his room...	3:55
13	Book Eight , Chapter Eight	5:04
14	Jones had no sooner quitted the room...	7:18
15	Book Eight , Chapter Nine	4:40
16	They now travelled some miles without speaking to each other...	4:18

Total time on CD 12: 79:05

CD 13

1	'A popish priest!' cries Jones...	5:45
2	Book Eight , Chapter Ten	7:23
3	'Pray, sir,' says Partridge...	5:10
4	The old woman was distracted...	7:30
5	Book Eight , Chapter Eleven	6:20
6	'It was my misfortune...'	6:55
7	'Timorous thieves, by extreme caution...'	6:25
8	'Perhaps,' cries Partridge...	6:36
9	Book Eight , Chapter Twelve	7:42
10	'This declaration a little relieved my abashment...'	7:40
11	Book Eight , Chapter Thirteen	5:51
12	'Most of those present seemed affected by this scene...'	5:35

Total time on CD 13: 78:58

CD 14

1	'I began now to think all the time I had spent...'	4:37
2	'In short, we soon separated...'	3:32
3	Book Eight , Chapter Fourteen	5:48
4	'We were prevented from any further discourse...'	6:22
5	'The unfortunate event of this enterprise...'	6:01
6	Book Eight , Chapter Fifteen	4:45
7	'Thus, sir, I have ended the history of my life...'	5:27
8	'In the former part of what you said,' replied Jones...	4:55
9	Book Nine , Chapter One	5:53
10	To prevent therefore, for the future...	3:17
11	Again, there is another sort of knowledge...	5:01
12	Book Nine , Chapter Two	4:56
13	Jones helped Northerton upon his legs...	5:24
14	Book Nine , Chapter Three	5:22
15	My landlady, though a very good-tempered woman...	6:06

Total Time on CD 14: 77:34

CD 15

1	Now the dogs of war being let loose, began to lick their bloody lips...	2:44
2	Book Nine , Chapter Four	5:34
3	My landlord was likewise beginning his oration to Jones...	4:31
4	Book Nine , Chapter Five	6:27
5	The contrary happens in that love which operates...	6:36
6	Book Nine , Chapter Six	7:01
7	'Those officers,' says Partridge...	5:51
8	Book Nine , Chapter Seven	4:38
9	After much consultation on this matter...	5:26
10	Book Ten , Chapter One	7:02
11	Book Ten , Chapter Two	6:18
12	Next to the lady's chamber...	7:10
13	Book Ten , Chapter Three	4:56
14	This gentleman then being well tired...	3:26

Total time on CD 15: 77:46

CD 16

1	The lady earnestly desired Partridge to return to his seat...	4:51
2	Book Ten , Chapter Four	6:56
3	Book Ten , Chapter Five	5:11
4	To say the truth, this behaviour of Partridge was a little inexcusable...	6:35
5	Book Ten , Chapter Six	5:20
6	The behaviour of Jones on this occasion...	4:44
7	Book Ten , Chapter Seven	4:46
8	So much more tenderly do women value their reputation...	5:28
9	Book Ten , Chapter Eight	4:48
10	The squire himself now sallied forth...	5:48
11	Book Ten , Chapter Nine	6:16
12	Sophia, finding all her persuasions had no effect...	6:35
13	The landlady finding Sophia intended to stay no longer...	4:38
14	Book Eleven , Chapter One	7:16

Total time on CD 16: 79:18

CD 17

1	Now, however ludicrous all this may appear to some...	4:54
2	Book Eleven , Chapter Two	6:06
3	The conversation which passed between these ladies...	6:48
4	This polite person, now taking his wife aside...	5:53
5	Book Eleven , Chapter Three	4:59
6	Book Eleven , Chapter Four	8:05
7	'But, what may seem astonishing...'	6:34
8	Book Eleven , Chapter Five	6:33
9	'This seat, then, is an ancient mansion-house...'	6:21
10	Book Eleven , Chapter Six	4:50
11	'What news, pray?' says Sophia, something eagerly.	4:10
12	Book Eleven , Chapter Seven	6:51
13	Thus, then, Mrs Fitzpatrick resumed her narrative...	7:05

Total time on CD 17: 79:15

CD 18

1	'Mr Fitzpatrick seemed a little thunderstruck with this...'	6:18
2	Book Eleven , Chapter Eight	5:39
3	On this subject, reader, I must stop a moment, to tell thee a story.	5:56
4	Sophia was very soon eased of her causeless fright...	4:40
5	Book Eleven , Chapter Nine	5:50
6	His wife, however, was far from drawing this conclusion...	6:05
7	Book Eleven , Chapter Ten	6:12
8	The case, it seems, was this...	5:06
9	Book Twelve , Chapter One	7:03
10	Book Twelve , Chapter Two	4:42
11	The hounds ran very hard, as it is called...	4:18
12	Book Twelve , Chapter Three	6:05
13	At length, Jones, being weary of soliloquy...	6:36
14	Book Twelve , Chapter Four	3:22

Total time on CD 18: 78:00

CD 19

1	The pocket-book was a late present from Mrs Western to her niece...	6:13
2	Book Twelve , Chapter Five	5:37
3	Before our travellers had finished their dinner...	5:18
4	Book Twelve , Chapter Six	7:28
5	Book Twelve , Chapter Seven	6:52
6	The attorney's clerk likewise declared...	6:14
7	Book Twelve , Chapter Eight	4:49
8	Their meal being over, Jones was again preparing to sally...	5:11
9	Book Twelve , Chapter Nine	4:08
10	The clock had just struck three when they arrived...	4:08
11	Book Twelve , Chapter Ten	6:49
12	Jones, as the reader knows...	5:33
13	Book Twelve , Chapter Eleven	6:29
14	Book Twelve , Chapter Twelve	4:32

Total time on CD 19: 79:27

CD 20

1	Had this history been writ in the days of superstition...	6:11
2	'About a thousand or two thousand year ago...'	6:06
3	Jones greatly applauded the justice of the sentence...	5:24
4	Book Twelve , Chapter Thirteen	5:09
5	'Undoubtedly,' cries Partridge...	7:12
6	Book Twelve , Chapter Fourteen	5:14
7	Jones at first pretended that he would take the fellow at his word...	3:43
8	Book Thirteen , Chapter One	4:42
9	And now, this ill-yoked pair...	4:59
10	Book Thirteen , Chapter Two	7:04
11	Jones, who more than once already...	6:12
12	Book Thirteen , Chapter Three	7:58
13	Book Thirteen , Chapter Four	6:03

Total time on CD 20: 76:03

CD 21

1	Book Thirteen , Chapter Five	6:45
2	The footman, having now recovered his legs...	7:17
3	Book Thirteen , Chapter Six	6:28
4	Mr Jones having now determined to go to the masquerade...	8:26
5	Book Thirteen , Chapter Seven	6:46
6	Jones had never less inclination to an amour than at present...	6:26
7	Book Thirteen , Chapter Eight	6:01
8	'This was a love-match, as they call it, on both sides...'	5:11
9	Book Thirteen , Chapter Nine	4:33
10	Though Jones saw all these discouragements on the one side...	4:53
11	Book Thirteen , Chapter Ten	6:41
12	Book Thirteen , Chapter Eleven	4:33
13	Sophia stood trembling all this while.	5:46

Total time on CD 21: 79:53

CD 22

1	Having advanced a few steps...	6:38
2	Book Thirteen , Chapter Twelve	6:25
3	Book Fourteen , Chapter One	5:25
4	Now it happens that this higher order of mortals is not to be seen...	4:44
5	Book Fourteen , Chapter Two	5:45
6	Jones begged her only to whisper...	6:25
7	Book Fourteen , Chapter Three	6:37
8	As soon as Partridge arrived...	4:27
9	Book Fourteen , Chapter Four	5:14
10	'Lookee, Mr Nightingale,' said Jones...	3:56
11	Book Fourteen , Chapter Five	5:31
12	'This letter, sir, I received within a fortnight...'	4:49
13	Book Fourteen , Chapter Six	6:43
14	When Jones had read this letter...	6:28

Total time on CD 22: 79:13

CD 23

1	Book Fourteen , Chapter Seven	5:51
2	'Common sense, indeed,' said Nightingale...	6:44
3	Book Fourteen , Chapter Eight	5:16
4	There is scarce anything which so happily introduces men...	7:13
5	The young lady whom Mr Nightingale had intended for his son...	5:55
6	Book Fourteen , Chapter Nine	3:45
7	'How, sir?' replies young Nightingale...	4:23
8	Book Fourteen , Chapter Ten	3:52
9	Book Fifteen , Chapter One	3:27
10	Book Fifteen , Chapter Two	6:17
11	'Nay, my lord,' said she...	6:42
12	Book Fifteen , Chapter Three	4:45
13	There was no farther evidence necessary...	5:24
14	Book Fifteen , Chapter Four	4:42
15	Book Fifteen , Chapter Five	4:48

Total time on CD 23: 79:10

CD 24

1	But a more lucky circumstance happened for poor Sophia...	7:02
2	As Lord Fellamar was very well assured...	5:19
3	Book Fifteen , Chapter Six	4:25
4	The squire had no sooner read the letter...	6:13
5	Book Fifteen , Chapter Seven	6:02
6	Nothing could equal the dilemma to which Jones was now reduced.	5:38
7	And now Jones was unwillingly obliged to return to his own apartment...	4:31
8	Book Fifteen , Chapter Eight	5:54
9	Book Fifteen , Chapter Nine	4:37
10	Jones, having very attentively heard all that Nightingale had to say...	4:51
11	After some hesitation, Jones, upon the strength of this assurance...	5:42
12	Book Fifteen , Chapter Ten	4:55
13	In the situation that he and his mistress were in at this time...	5:12
14	Book Fifteen , Chapter Eleven	5:59

Total time on CD 24: 76:26

CD 25

1	Book Fifteen , Chapter Twelve	7:00
2	Book Sixteen , Chapter One	4:11
3	Book Sixteen , Chapter Two	6:07
4	Upon these words the gentleman returned a very short verbal rebuke...	6:29
5	Here the squire began to look wild...	4:35
6	Book Sixteen , Chapter Three	4:41
7	Sophia, notwithstanding her long fast...	4:33
8	Book Sixteen , Chapter Four	6:23
9	'Why, you are to blame, brother,' answered she.	5:47
10	Book Sixteen , Chapter Five	5:30
11	Mr Jones having spent three hours in reading...	5:24
12	During the second act, Partridge made very few remarks.	5:49
13	Book Sixteen , Chapter Six	7:33
14	Book Sixteen , Chapter Seven	3:04

Total time on CD 25: 77:13

CD 26

1	'I am very sorry, madam,' cried Blifil...	3:03
2	Book Sixteen , Chapter Eight	4:55
3	In the progress of their conversation...	4:53
4	Book Sixteen , Chapter Nine	7:06
5	There are some fine women...	4:49
6	Book Sixteen , Chapter Ten	7:26
7	Book Seventeen , Chapter One	4:03
8	Book Seventeen , Chapter Two	4:56
9	'Indeed, Mrs Miller,' said Allworthy...	3:23
10	Book Seventeen , Chapter Three	6:52
11	'Thwackum and Square, who both alike...'	5:49
12	Blifil now desired to be permitted to speak a few words.	5:56
13	Book Seventeen , Chapter Four	4:48
14	'No, no, miss,' cries the aunt...	6:39
15	Book Seventeen , Chapter Five	3:30

Total time on CD 26: 78:14

CD 27

1	'Come, come, Mr Jones,' says Mrs Miller...	4:30
2	Book Seventeen , Chapter Six	5:10
3	Though Sophia read the letter twice over with great attention...	3:31
4	Book Seventeen , Chapter Seven	6:54
5	Book Seventeen , Chapter Eight	7:40
6	This last speech was made in the absence of Sophia...	7:42
7	Book Seventeen , Chapter Nine	5:07
8	A very mournful scene now past between the prisoner and his friends...	3:58
9	She now entered the room with an air of gaiety...	4:51
10	Book Eighteen , Chapter One	3:46
11	Book Eighteen , Chapter Two	6:14
12	As sights of horror were not so usual to George...	6:04
13	Book Eighteen , Chapter Three	6:29
14	When Dowling attended...	5:00

Total time on CD 27: 77:04

CD 28

1	Book Eighteen , Chapter Four	6:40
2	The reader will, after this...	3:56
3	Book Eighteen , Chapter Five	6:18
4	Mr Allworthy sharply rebuked her for this impetuosity...	7:27
5	Book Eighteen , Chapter Six	5:05
6	'Pray,' said Allworthy, 'do not be so particular...'	4:28
7	Book Eighteen , Chapter Seven	6:42
8	'It was then contrived...'	6:24
9	Book Eighteen , Chapter Eight	7:49
10	Mrs Waters fell now upon her knees before him...	7:20
11	Allworthy stood a minute silent, lifting up his eyes...	6:44
12	Book Eighteen , Chapter Nine	4:30
13	'Nothing but truth,' says Sophia...	4:49

Total time on CD 28: 78:17

CD 29

1	'I sincerely wish you joy, sir...'	4:54
2	Western had been long impatient...	5:57
3	Book Eighteen , Chapter Ten	3:55
4	'Prudence is indeed the duty which we owe to ourselves...'	5:38
5	A servant now acquainted them that Mr Western was below-stairs...	5:41
6	Book Eighteen , Chapter Eleven	4:32
7	Jones expressed great astonishment...	5:32
8	Jones went up to Blifil's room...	6:54
9	Book Eighteen , Chapter Twelve	6:21
10	'Name any proof in my power,' answered Jones eagerly.	5:35
11	At this instant Western, who had stood some time listening...	6:21
12	Book Eighteen , Chapter The Last	7:11
13	Thus, reader, we have at length brought our history to a conclusion...	7:05

Total time on CD 29: 75:43

Total time on CDs 1–29: 37:51:35

Henry Fielding

(1707–1754)

Tom Jones

Henry Fielding's novel is full of comical mishaps and coincidences, boisterous fights, ripe dialogue and enjoyably bawdy scenes. Considered by some to be the first English novel, and in any case respected as one of the greatest, it is certainly one of the funniest. Essentially a morality tale of hypocrisy, heresy and honour, it is set within the context of religious ferment and revolution in eighteenth-century Britain.

Here we have a warts-and-all picture of the morals and manners of eighteenth-century country society, with its squires and gamekeepers, its village wenches, its young gentry and all those ordinary folk caught up in the shenanigans of loving, hunting, partying and surviving. Our hero Tom, a lovable foundling, is adopted by a wealthy landowner, Squire Allworthy. As Tom grows into manhood, he falls hopelessly in love with the beautiful

Sophia, daughter of a neighbouring squire. He soon finds himself the victim of jealousy and misfortune, and embarks on a merry-go-round of doomed love affairs. He ventures into courtly society in London and Bath, where the preoccupations, as in the countryside, are wenching, drinking, fighting and the niceties of public display.

Though we generally sympathise with the various hapless women who fall in love with Tom, and for the most part find ourselves able to pardon him for his joyous promiscuity, we nevertheless feel very sorry for his adored Sophia, who loves Tom with all her heart. She is a kindly, forgiving soul, and, of course, extraordinarily beautiful. Fielding is at great pains throughout to remind us enthusiastically of this fact:

*Her cheeks were of the oval kind;
and in her right she had a dimple,*

*which the least smile discovered.
Her chin had certainly its share in
forming the beauty of her face... Her
neck was long and finely turned...
Here was whiteness which no lilies,
ivory, nor alabaster could match.*

It seems inevitable that one day Tom and Sophia will find happiness together, but we despair for them, as our author introduces some surprising and brutal turns of fortune: 'There are a set of religious, or rather moral writers,' he informs us, 'who teach that virtue is the certain road to happiness, and vice to misery, in this world. A very wholesome and comfortable doctrine, and to which we have but one objection, namely, that it is not true.'

Satire is the author's tool, and, as in the work of other great satirists in literature – for example Richard Sheridan, Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, Noël Coward – the satire is not angry or political, but rather affectionate, and even apologetic, for the forgivable foibles and weakness of the human condition. Characters are drawn without hatred, briefly, simplistically but truthfully, with broad strokes of the pen,

as in the magnificent satirical cartoons of William Hogarth, James Gillray, and, in our own time, Robert Crumb. At one point in the novel, struggling for descriptive powers, Fielding writes: 'O, Shakespeare! Had I thy pen! O, Hogarth! Had I thy pencil!'

Fielding pays only lip service to the literary styles of his time; his book breaks new ground with its bawdy, its rich vernacular, its compassion for the wicked, its wit and its honesty. As readers or listeners, we find ourselves drawn into an intimate relationship with the author, rather as if we had met this urbane and brilliant social observer at a cocktail party: 'Reader, it is impossible we should know what sort of person thou wilt be; for, perhaps, thou may'st be as learned in human nature as Shakespeare himself was, and, perhaps, thou may'st be no wiser than some of his editors...'

Once in his company, champagne in hand as it were, we are much entertained by Fielding's witty anthropological generalisations: 'In Italy the landlords are very silent. In France they are more talkative, but yet civil. In Germany and Holland they are generally very impertinent...'

Sometimes the generalisations are refreshingly honest antidotes to the fulsome style of some authors of the day:

Heroes, notwithstanding the high ideas which, by the means of flatterers, they may entertain of themselves... have certainly more of mortal than divine about them. However elevated their minds may be, their bodies at least (which is much the major part of most) are liable to the worst infirmities, and subject to the vilest offices of human nature. Among these latter, the act of eating... must be performed by the greatest prince, hero or philosopher on earth...

When it comes to eating, of course, Fielding dishes up the most celebrated table scene in English literature, immortalised in Tony Richardson's film of the book, starring Albert Finney and Susannah York. The scene is to be found in Book IX, Chapter V, where the lovers' dinner is described as 'a battle of the amorous kind':

First, from two lovely blue eyes, whose bright orbs flashed lightning at their discharge, flew forth two pointed ogles; but, happily for our hero, hit only a vast piece of beef which he was then conveying into his plate, and harmless spent their force. The fair warrior perceived their miscarriage, and immediately from her fair bosom drew forth a deadly sigh... so soft, so sweet, so tender, that the insinuating air must have found its subtle way to the heart of our hero, had it not been driven from his ears by the coarse bubbling of some bottled ale...

Fielding wins all the prizes for euphemism and metaphor. The hilarious scene ends: '...no sooner had the amorous parley ended and the lady had unmasked her royal battery, by carelessly letting her handkerchief drop from her neck, than the heart of Mr. Jones was entirely taken, and the fair conqueror enjoyed the usual fruits of her victory.'

Notes by Bill Homewood



Henry Fielding was born in 1707 and educated at Eton. He wrote both novels and plays, though *Tom Jones* is considered his greatest and most ambitious work. He is as much remembered for the fact that, in his capacity as a Man of Law, he founded the Bow Street Runners, precursors of the Metropolitan Police, as for his writing. He also wrote the song *The Roast Beef of Old England*.

Eventually he went blind, though he continued to work as a magistrate. He was known as the Blind Beak of Bow Street. His health deteriorated, and he left London for Portugal in a vain search for a cure. He died in Lisbon, where he was buried, in 1754.



Bill Homewood's West End credits include leads in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Grand Hotel*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Boys From Syracuse*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Hollow Crown* (Royal Shakespeare Company). His innumerable television series include *The Professionals*, *Berkeley Square*, *A Wing and a Prayer*, *The Renford Rejects*, *London's Burning*, *Casualty*, *Coronation Street*, *Crocodile Shoes*, *The Bill* and *Spy Trap*. Bill also directs theatre in the USA, the UK, and France, where he runs a ranch with his wife Estelle Kohler. His recordings for Naxos AudioBooks include *Les Misérables*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *She*.

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