



COMPLETE
CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED

William Makepeace

THACKERAY

Barry Lyndon

Read by **Jonathan Keeble**



CD 1

1	The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq.	6:57
2	My father was well known to the best circles...	5:55
3	In performing these sad duties...	4:55
4	She fitted up her new abode...	7:59
5	When we left Castle Brady...	5:19
6	This I proved pretty clearly...	4:36
7	I have made acquaintance with the best...	7:30
8	If the truth must be told...	7:19
9	At last, and at morning...	7:21
10	As I got well...	7:36
11	I am not afraid of any man or ghost...	6:42
12	Chapter 2	5:42

Total time on CD 1: 77:59

CD 2

1	I must have sat for several hours...	6:57
2	My uncle now observed that it was getting late...	6:57
3	When I arrived at home...	6:42
4	To Nora I wrote...	7:14
5	Mr. Fagan put my pistol into my hand...	5:53
6	Chapter 3	6:13
7	I told this pack of rascals...	8:12
8	Our supper was seasoned...	6:34
9	I purposely hurry over the description...	6:59
10	In a pretty nest of villains indeed...	6:24
11	Chapter 4	4:02
12	This victory over the cock of the vile dunghill...	5:52

Total time on CD 2: 78:07

CD 3

1	Although I was called Captain Barry...	5:17
2	When I think that I...	9:37
3	Chapter 5	6:27
4	This intimacy did not decrease...	7:51
5	The reader will be able to gather...	8:27
6	'Morgan was taken, then...'	8:07
7	The game was up.	6:13
8	Chapter 6	8:17
9	As the reader knows already my history...	8:19
10	'No sooner was I in the place...'	9:36

Total time on CD 3: 78:16

CD 4

1	This man was drafted into a regiment...	8:03
2	I could tell many more stories...	8:57
3	Chapter 7	7:06
4	Some days afterwards...	7:31
5	No man can suppose...	7:15
6	Although I did not believe a word of this speech...	8:01
7	Chapter 8	9:05
8	I have seen a gentleman and his confederate...	9:37
9	Chapter 9	6:03
10	'Now was my time to act.'	6:45

Total time on CD 4: 78:28

CD 5

1	At first the minister and the gentleman...	8:49
2	At this period my uncle...	9:32
3	Chapter 10	8:38
4	Duke Victor was fifty years of age...	7:21
5	It was strange that the princess Olivia...	8:52
6	When I had put him in such a position...	8:58
7	The manner to be adopted...	9:48
8	Chapter 11	6:31
9	The candour of this statement...	5:01
10	Seeing the young man's recklessness...	5:41

Total time on CD 5: 79:19

CD 6

1	Before a month was passed...	4:25
2	Chapter 12	6:39
3	'I knew of the fact...'	9:10
4	'The prince's master of the horse...'	8:09
5	'At last he said...'	8:14
6	'All her highness's movements...'	7:58
7	'As if fate impelled her to her death...'	6:53
8	'The day on which Weissenborn and Bartenstein...'	4:40
9	Chapter 13	8:49
10	The countess, when I first saw her...	5:33
11	'Has her ladyship a very large income?'	5:28

Total time on CD 6: 76:04

CD 7

1	The notion of such a minerva as this...	5:53
2	I could not go to the play-table for some time...	9:08
3	I thought these speeches...	9:08
4	Chapter 14	6:30
5	As for Castle Brady...	8:03
6	They gave me the best horses...	7:40
7	I soon began to enjoy...	7:34
8	Chapter 15	6:51
9	This caused the quarrel...	8:40
10	As my late antagonist was in no sort of danger...	9:01

Total time on CD 7: 78:35

CD 8

1	The wounded young nobleman...	3:15
2	Lady Lyndon issued from the room...	7:09
3	Chapter 16	6:21
4	I wanted to impress her...	7:17
5	It was three hours past midnight...	9:37
6	Thus it was that I repaid...	8:02
7	With this the old fury...	7:46
8	Chapter 17	6:16
9	The exterior was, when I first arrived...	6:52
10	But the squires ate my dinners very readily...	8:54
11	It is wonderful...	6:53

Total time on CD 8: 78:27

CD 9

1	Mr. Barry Lyndon is not...	9:23
2	This is a chapter devoted to reminiscences...	8:01
3	I hated the Tiptoffs so...	7:43
4	Chapter 18	8:32
5	The striving after this peerage...	8:26
6	I never shall forget...	8:38
7	Young Bullingdon, however...	6:56
8	At this period I made no difficulty...	5:55
9	It was about this time...	7:07
10	It was long before we heard of the fate...	8:00

Total time on CD 9: 78:49

CD 10

1	There was a sleepy coolness...	8:15
2	Chapter 19	7:09
3	When we got home...	7:43
4	Lady Lyndon, always vapourish and nervous...	9:30
5	Mrs. Barry, on the contrary...	8:42
6	You should have seen my mother's fury...	6:33
7	My mother was so enraged...	8:18
8	Then the whole secret flashed upon me...	9:45

Total time on CD 10: 66:00

CD 11

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | I was in a particularly good humour... | 6:21 |
| 2 | I told my wife she was a fool... | 9:28 |
| 3 | I took a lodging in a coffee-house... | 9:19 |

Total time on CD 11: 25:11

Total time on CDs 1–11: 13:15:15

William Makepeace
THACKERAY

Barry Lyndon

The one book which everyone knows by Thackeray is *Vanity Fair*. He entitled his preface to this novel 'Before the Curtain', and in it he compares his role to that of the manager of a theatre – not a serious, elevated or classical sort of theatre, but a low, popular fairground burlesque. Here, he says, and he means both inside the theatre and in the streets outside, 'There is a great quantity of eating and drinking, making love and jilting, laughing and the contrary, smoking, cheating, fighting, dancing and fiddling. There are bullies pushing about, bucks ogling women, knaves picking pockets, policemen on the look-out, quacks bawling in front of their booths, and yokels looking up at the tinselled dancers and poor old rouged tumblers, while light-fingered folk are operating on their pockets behind. Yes, this is Vanity Fair; not a moral place

certainly, nor a merry one, though very noisy'. A better evocation of the world of Thackeray's fiction would be impossible to conceive; then at the end of the novel which constitutes a grand tour through that sordid world, he simply cuts off the narrative abruptly with the words, 'Ah, Vanitas Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? Or having it, is satisfied? Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out'.

Thackeray has given us here the clearest possible clues as to how we should approach and understand his novels: he is obviously both a satirist and a moralist. He dramatises and laughs at the theatrical absurdity and insincerity of a world in which everyone plays a part, everyone is scrambling desperately for money and pleasure, like spoiled children, like

ridiculous and helpless puppets dancing in the hands of forces they cannot see or understand. But mockery of this world must logically imply a standpoint from which it is judged; it requires its opposite, namely a vision of moral truth. Yet a novelist's material is life, not abstract ideas, and the problem for Thackeray the novelist was this: how to expose the follies of this world, how to explore this moral truth, without merely preaching. Thackeray too had scrambled for money and social position, and he had also suffered great personal sorrow in his life. His purpose as a writer was to transmute both these wounding experiences into literature, and the method that he adopted was to let life speak for itself: to immerse himself in the living texture of life in all its richness, absurdity, theatricality, cruelty, self-delusion and lies, so that he did not need to preach, for any perceptive reader would understand what was happening beneath the surface colour and confusion. For Thackeray there was to be no omniscient narrator commenting on the action, telling his readers what they should know and feel

about the characters and their actions. There was to be no carefully constructed plot, no secrets, conspiracies, revelations or dénouements. Above all there were to be no heroes or heroines, only living people, in their magnificent meanness. The cavalcade of life must pass before our eyes, apparently without art, without structure; we must enter it, be part of it, feel for ourselves its flow, its humour, its unpredictability, its hidden sadness.

To write like this is not something one is born with, and Thackeray had to spend many years learning to observe, to master his material, and to place his authorial voice. He began as a humorous sketch-writer for the newspapers, dissecting the foibles and pretensions of his contemporaries, in particular their obsession with rank and possessions, their desperate pursuit of the status of 'lady' or 'gentleman'. His writing method was deeply influenced by the eighteenth century humourists, especially Fielding, whose characters bounce back and forth through picaresque adventures, giving the author an ample canvas on which to paint the society of their time. He was

drawn to the literature of roguery and of outright crime, the Newgate Calendar type of story, in which the criminal is shown to be our own mirror image – the rogue, the deceiver, the traitor, the schemer who happens to have been found out. Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* fascinated Thackeray, as the portrayal of a master criminal and arch-deceiver, who, as everyone knows, was a sly caricature of Sir Robert Walpole, the corrupt Prime Minister, this driving home the message that artifice is everywhere in society, and criminality entrenched, if one can only carry it off with enough magnificence.

This is the essential background of *Barry Lyndon*, an early work in which Thackeray experiments with the point-of-view problem, leading the reader through a story which opens up into several different levels of meaning: at some point before the end, we realise that its surface narrative is completely at odds with the message that the author wishes us to take from it. The central figure is a fighter, roisterer, womaniser, gambler, liar, bully, social climber and con-man. Yet the entire narrative is one long act of self-

glorification, a catalogue of his triumphs. Thackeray's skill is to present Barry Lyndon's story as an autobiographical narrative in which his own corrupt nature emerges from his own lips. As the work progresses there is a deepening dramatic irony, as the reader gradually perceives his true character beneath the lies, the self-deceiving rhetoric. At several points in the narrative, the author draws back the curtain of deceit and we become aware of a very different truth. The first of these comes early, in the German war, when Lyndon laughingly describes the sickening brutality of his conduct. Another comes in the personal credo which he gives while pursuing marriage with a German princess, the credo of a genius, a man triumphant over all evil fortune. A third comes in the thinly-concealed horror of his marriage, where he reveals himself as a bully and a tyrant. A central problem about the novel is to assess whether Thackeray has correctly placed these moments of truth, where we are suddenly alienated from the illusion which the author has carefully built up. But the sordid conclusion of the

book demonstrates the great truth which Thackeray has placed at the heart of the novel – that the person who is most deceived by a con-man is the con-man himself. In its rollicking earlier pages, we think we are embarking on something rather like an Irish *Candide*, but by the time we approach the end, it has turned into something very different, for there is in this novel a terrible depth of bleakness which Thackeray never touched again.

Notes by Peter Whitfield



Jonathan Keeble combines his audio work with a busy theatre and TV career. He has featured in over 500 radio plays for the BBC, from Shakespeare to Sherlock Holmes. An award-winning reader, Jonathan has recorded over 100 audiobooks.

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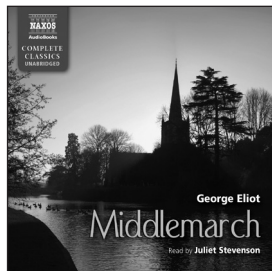
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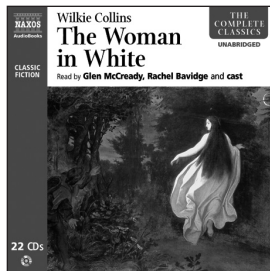
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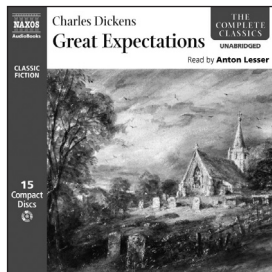
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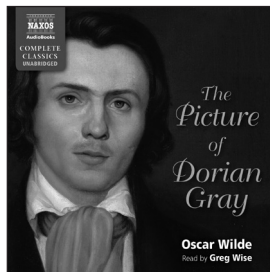
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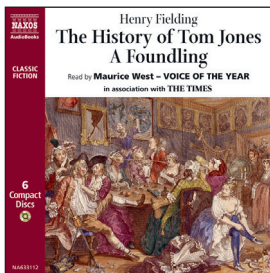
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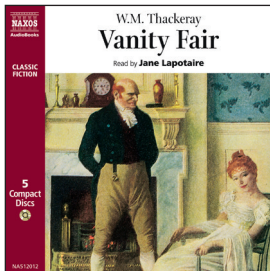
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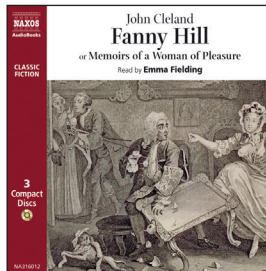
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