Tom Jones Study Guide

Tom Jones by Henry Fielding

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Contents

Introduction

Tom Jones, Henry Fielding's third novel, was first published in England in 1749 and was an immediate best-seller. It is a comedy in both senses of the formal definition: it is amusing and all ends well.

Originally entitled *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, the book tells the story of the title character from infancy through his marriage to the beautiful and virtuous Sophia Western, the pursuit of whom takes up much of the tale. Along the way, Fielding relentlessly satirizes the hypocrisy and vanity of most of his supporting cast. He shows that the lusty rascal Tom is, in fact, an infinitely better human being than the vicious pretenders who surround him and scheme against him while camouflaged in a thin veneer of artificial virtue. The hero overcomes not only all external plots and obstacles but, most importantly, his own weaknesses of character, to win both love and fortune.

Author Biography

Henry Fielding was born April 22, 1707, at his grandparents' estate in Somerset, England. He was the first of seven children born to Edmund Fielding, a career military officer, and Sarah Gould Fielding, daughter of a wealthy judge.

Fielding spent his childhood on his parents' large farm in Dorset and was tutored at home. His mother died when he was ten, and his father sent the children to live with their maternal grandmother, Lady Gould. Edmund Fielding soon married a widow and set about squandering his children's inheritance. Lady Gould filed suit for legal custody of the children and won. In the course of these events, Henry became willful and defiant. His father sent him to Eton in 1719, where he studied Greek, Latin, and the classics. He remained there until 1724 and later briefly attended the University of Leyden in Holland.

Fielding began his writing career as a playwright; his first play, *Love in Several Masques*, was performed in London in 1728. He soon became a successful playwright and also published poems and essays.

In 1734, Fielding married Charlotte Cradock, a beautiful woman who would later be the inspiration for Sophia Western in *Tom Jones*. They had five children, four of whom would die quite young, before Charlotte died in 1744.

Fielding's play *The Historical Register*, performed in 1737, satirized Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole so acutely that the government shut down the theater where Fielding was working. It became impossible for him to earn a living writing plays, so he went to law school and was admitted to the bar in 1740. In addition to practicing law, Fielding cofounded a political and cultural journal called *Champion*.

The year 1740 also saw the publication of *Pamela*, a novel by Samuel Richardson that soon became the first bestseller of all time. Fielding felt so strongly that the novel was overrated that he wrote a parody of it, *Shamela*. This launched his fiction career. Another, more ambitious parody of the same novel, *Joseph Andrews*, appeared in 1742.

In 1747, Fielding married Mary Daniel, who had been his first wife's maid and who was pregnant with Fielding's child. They would have five children together.

Fielding continued a successful law career as he also continued to write popular novels. He was appointed magistrate (a government position similar to that of judge) for Middlesex in 1749, the year *Tom Jones* was published and became a bestseller. His last novel, *Amelia*, was published in 1751, but he continued to write for a daily newspaper and nonfiction treatises such as *Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor* (1753).

In early 1754, Fielding became very ill, resigned as magistrate, and sailed for Portugal, where he hoped to recover. Although he did seem to be regaining his health and began planning to write a history of Portugal, he died in Lisbon on October 8,1754.

Plot Summary

Book I

The narrator introduces Squire Allworthy, telling readers that he "once lived (and perhaps lives still)" in Somerset and that he was not only one of the richest men in England but also kind and intelligent. His wife had died, and their three children had all died as infants, so the squire lived with his sister, Bridget, who had never married.

The narrator further relates that on one occasion the squire was away from his estate on business for three months and, on the day he returned, found a baby in his bed. Squire Allworthy had a servant, Deborah Wilkins, take care of the baby. The next morning, he told his household that he would rear the foundling as his son. He put Bridget in charge of the baby boy and sent Mrs. Wilkins out to find out the identity of his mother.

A servant named Jenny Jones, who had recently worked both for the local schoolmaster and as a nurse to Bridget, is quickly accused and admits to being the child's mother. Squire Allworthy, who is the local magistrate, lives up to his reputation for kindness. Instead of sending her to jail, as he could do, he arranges for her to move away to a place where no one will know of her past. He even accepts her refusal to name the baby's father. She does tell him that someday he will know the father's identity. Allworthy names the baby Tom Jones.

The local physician, Dr. Blifil, introduces Bridget to his brother, Captain Blifil. Since Bridget is desperate to marry and the captain is eager to be rich, the two marry within a month. The doctor would have married her himself—for both love and money—but is already married. The Blifil brothers begin to antagonize each other, and the doctor goes off to London and dies "of a broken heart."

Book II

Bridget gives birth to a son eight months after her marriage. This boy, Master Blifil, is Allworthy's heir. Master Blifil and Tom Jones are to grow up together, in spite of Captain Blifil's objections to his son growing up with a bastard.

Mrs. Wilkins becomes convinced, through local gossip, that the schoolmaster, Mr. Partridge, is Tom's father. When Partridge is tried on the charge, his own wife testifies against him, as she is ever suspicious of him. Found guilty, Partridge loses his job. His wife soon dies of smallpox, and Partridge leaves the area.

Bridget and Captain Blifil begin to argue about everything. As Blifil dislikes Tom, Bridget shows him more and more affection just to irritate her husband. Then Blifil dies suddenly of apoplexy. Allworthy builds a monument to his virtues, which were well hidden in life.

Book III

Years have passed; Tom is in his early teens. Tom is something of a rogue and has lost the affection of all in the household. While Tom has been caught stealing three times, two of these crimes involved taking food for the family of the estate's gamekeeper, who is Tom's one ally. When the gamekeeper, Black George, joins Tom in some mischief at Tom's insistence, Master Blifil eventually reports this (although Tom has steadfastly refused to do so), and Black George is fired.

The boys' tutors, Thwackum and Square, are always ready to punish Tom but are fond of Master Blifil, who curries their favor shamelessly. In addition, both tutors have designs on marrying Bridget (for her money) and assume that favoring her son will help their cause. Not only does she have no intention of marrying either of them, Bridget actually hates her son (because she hated his father) and loves Tom.

Tom nearly prevails upon Allworthy to rehire Black George, but Master Blifil ruins things by revealing that George killed a rabbit on the estate of a neighbor, Squire Western. Tom has warm friendships with the squire and his daughter Sophia, and he is determined to try to get George a job on their estate in spite of his poaching.

Book IV

At Tom's request, Sophia persuades her doting father to hire George.

Tom falls in love with George's daughter, Molly, and Molly is soon pregnant. When this is discovered, Allworthy, the magistrate, sentences her to prison. Before she is imprisoned, Tom admits that he is the baby's father and begs Allworthy to commute her sentence, which he does.

Sophia, though distressed by all this, still loves Tom. It happens one day that Tom is on the scene when Sophia's horse bucks, and he saves her, breaking his arm in the process. He convalesces at the Western estate, where he is something of a hero.

Book V

During his recovery, Tom and Sophia's love is kindled. Tom, feeling sorry for Molly, decides to offer her money in place of his love, but when he goes to her house, he discovers the tutor Square in her bedroom with her. He later discovers, also, that Molly's baby is most likely not his. He is happy to be free to pursue Sophia.

Allworthy becomes very ill and is expected to die. He tells the assembled household that Master Blifil will inherit most of his estate, but he leaves Tom an annuity. Tom is more than satisfied; all the others complain about what they have been given.

A messenger arrives with the news that Bridget has died in transit from Salisbury. In spite of this sad news, Allworthy makes a sudden recovery. Tom is so happy that he goes out and gets drunk. Blifil is offended at this behavior in the face of his mother's death, and the two fight. Afterward, Tom meets Molly on the road. The two make love in the bushes and are discovered by not only Blifil and Thwackum but also Squire Western and Sophia.

Book VI

Squire Western 's sister realizes that Sophia is in love and,genuinely mistaken,tells her brother that Blifil is the object of Sophia's affections. He is happy, and the two squires, consulting Blifil but not Sophia, agree that their offspring will marry. Blifil agrees only because of Sophia's wealth and because he knows that the marriage will make Tom miserable.

When Sophia protests her match with Blifil, her father asks Tom to persuade her to marry Blifil. Tom agrees, but of course does just the opposite. When Squire Western learns that Sophia loves Tom, he explodes; Tom, a bastard, is no match for his beloved daughter. Western tells Allworthy to keep Tom away from Sophia, and Blifil takes the opportunity to tell Allworthy about Tom's recent meeting with Molly.

Allworthy gives Tom five hundred pounds and tells him to leave the house and never return. Tom loses the money on the road and then meets Black George, who helps him search for it. George, however, has found and pocketed the money.

Tom writes Sophia a love letter, which is delivered by her servant, and Sophia responds by sending Tom all the money she has.

Book VII

Tom decides to go to sea but longs for Sophia.

The squires decide that their children will wed immediately. When Sophia is told, she and her maid, Honour, conspire to run away to the home of an understanding relative in London.

Tom, meanwhile, meets up with some soldiers fighting in a rebellion against the king and joins them. At dinner, he toasts Sophia, but one of his comrades, Northerton, says that he knows her and that she is a tramp. Tom and the soldier fight, and Tom receives a gash to his head. Northerton is imprisoned but escapes.

Book VIII

The barber who is called to dress Tom's wound is none other than Partridge, the schoolmaster convicted of fathering Tom. Partridge, who has changed his name to Little Benjamin, tells Tom that he is not his father. The two decide to travel together.

At a home where they plan to spend the night, robbers attack the man of the house, and Tom fights them off. This man, known as The Man of the Hill, tells Tom his life story.

Book IX

Out for a walk,Tom and The Man of the Hill hear a woman screaming.Tom rescues her from the violent advances of a man who turns out to be Northerton. He tries to capture Northerton, who escapes again.

Tom takes the woman, Lady Waters, to an inn to recover. There, she seduces him.

Book X

While Tom is with Lady Waters, Sophia and Honour arrive at the inn. Sophia finds out that Tom is, once again, with another woman and swears that she is finished with him. She has the inn's maid leave her muff on Tom's (unoccupied) bed and leaves.

Tom finds the muff and plans to pursue Sophia. Squire Western arrives at the inn, and he, as well as Tom and Partridge, sets off to find Sophia.

Book XI

On the road, Sophia meets her cousin, Harriet Fitzpatrick, and her maid. The two women once lived together with their aunt and are happy to see each other. They go to an inn and begin to tell each other why they are traveling. A gentleman arrives at the inn and offers Sophia and Harriet his coach to complete their trip to London. This gentleman is the same man who, as Harriet had just been telling Sophia, recently helped her escape from her tyrannical husband.

In London, Sophia stays with a distant relative, Lady Bellaston. Harriet stays in rented quarters paid for by her gentleman benefactor.

Book XII

Squire Western is diverted from his pursuit of his daughter by the sound of a pack of hunting dogs. He joins the hunt and gives up the idea of finding Sophia.

Tom and Partridge meet a beggar who offers to sell them a book he has found. It turns out to be Sophia's. The book contains her signature, and later a one hundred-pound note falls out of it. In spite of this evidence that he is on Sophia's trail, Tom soon gives up on Sophia and decides to join the army. But he then meets a boy who has seen Sophia and sets out after her again. He and Partridge pursue her from town to town, never quite catching up.

Book XIII

Tom has had reports of Sophia's traveling companions and her destination. In London, he finds Harriet Fitzpatrick, who refuses to tell him where Sophia is. Lady Bellaston has heard so much about Tom that she is eager to meet him, and Harriet introduces her to Tom the next time he calls on her.

While at his rooms, rented from a widow named Mrs. Miller, Tom rescues a gentleman, Mr. Nightingale, who is being attacked by his footman. Tom and Mr. Nightingale become friends.

Tom receives a package containing a mask and an invitation to a masquerade party. Tom thinks this is from Harriet. At the party, he finds a person who he thinks is Harriet and asks her to tell him where Sophia is. Instead, the lady leads him to a private room, where she reveals that she is Lady Bellaston and seduces him. Tom and Lady Bellaston have frequent assignations in the coming days, and the lady provides Tom with generous financial favors.

Upon arriving at Lady Bellaston's home one evening, Tom meets Sophia there. She had returned earlier than expected from a play. Tom and Sophia are both speechless at seeing each other. When Lady Bellaston arrives, she pretends not to know Tom, and Tom pretends that he is there to return Sophia's book and money.

Book XIV

Lady Bellaston goes to Tom's lodgings late that night to let him know that she wants to continue their affair. Sophia, meanwhile, sends Tom a letter saying that he should not come to Lady Bellaston's house again as it might cause suspicion.

The next day, Mrs. Miller tells Tom that he must not have female visitors late at night. Tom agrees not to repeat the offense. Mr. Nightingale tells Tom that his father has arranged a marriage for him and that he is leaving, even though he loves Mrs. Miller's daughter, Nancy.

The following day, Mrs. Miller tells Tom that Nancy is pregnant and has tried to kill herself and that Nightingale has disappeared. Tom, of course, says he will try to help. He finds Nightingale, who says he wants to marry Nancy but cannot displease his father. Tom goes to see Nightingale's father and tells him that his son has already

married Nancy. He meets Nightingale's uncle, who returns with him to see Nightingale. The uncle tries to dissuade Nightingale from marrying Nancy.

Book XV

Lady Bellaston schemes to have her acquaintance Lord Fellamar rape Sophia, whom he loves. She thinks that Sophia will feel obliged to marry Fellamar, leaving Tom for herself. The deed is prevented when Squire Western, directed by Harriet Fitzpatrick, arrives. He demands that Sophia return home and marry Blifil, which suits Lady Bellaston as well as her original plan. Honour goes to Tom's lodgings to tell him these things.

The next day, Nancy Miller and Nightingale are married. Nightingale, having seen Lady Bellaston at Tom's rooms the night before, tells Tom that she is dishonorable in every way. Tom decides to end their affair, and Nightingale says that the best way to do this is to propose marriage. Tom sends the lady a letter proposing marriage and gets the desired result.

Mrs. Miller receives a letter from Squire Allworthy stating that he and Blifil are on their way to London and would like to lodge with her. Tom, Nightingale, and Nancy move to new lodgings to make room for them.

Mrs.Arabella Hunt,a wealthy neighbor of Mrs. Miller 's,has gotten to know Tom and now proposes marriage. Tom declines, although he is tempted by her money. Although Squire Western has locked up Sophia, Tom manages to get a letter to her, vowing his love. It is Black George, whom Squire Western has brought to London, who delivers this letter.

Book XVI

When Sophia's aunt, Mrs. Western, arrives to take charge of her, Sophia is able to respond to Tom's letter.

Allworthy and Blifil arrive in London. They talk with Squire Western about how to bring about the marriage of their children.

Lady Bellaston, meanwhile, tells Mrs. Western of Lord Fellamar's love for Sophia, and Mrs. Western agrees to support this match. Further, Lady Bellaston takes two actions against Tom. First, she asks Lord Fellamar to have Tom conscripted into the navy. Second, she gives Mrs. Western the letter containing Tom's marriage proposal, knowing that Mrs. Western will show it to Sophia.

Tom goes to visit Harriet Fitzpatrick, and, as he is leaving, Mr. Fitzpatrick arrives and assumes the worst. Mr. Fitzpatrick demands a duel. Tom lands a blow that all assume will be the death of Mr. Fitzpatrick, and as a result he is jailed. In jail, he receives a letter

from Sophia in which she tells him that she knows about his proposal to Lady Bellaston and never wants to hear his name again.

Book XVII

The next morning, Blifil tells Allworthy that Tom is in jail, and why. Mrs. Miller jumps in to defend Tom, relating all the kindness and good character she has seen in him. Squire Western comes in and says that he will force Sophia to marry Blifil immediately. Allworthy rejects this idea and prefers to call off the entire affair.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Western, now a strong supporter of Lord Fellamar, urges Sophia to see him.

Mrs. Miller visits Tom in jail and takes a letter from Tom to Sophia. Mrs. Miller also sings Tom's praises to Sophia.

Tom learns that Fitzpatrick has not died after all and that he has admitted demanding the duel in which Tom wounded him. He learns this from Mrs. Waters, the woman he first rescued from Northerton and then slept with at the inn en route to London. Mrs. Waters is now Fitzpatrick's mistress.

Partridge visits Tom and tells him in horrified tones that Mrs. Waters is Tom's mother, Jenny Jones. Tom immediately sends for her.

Allworthy discovers, through some information innocently shared with him by a third party, Black George's theft of the bank notes Allworthy gave to Tom on the night he left the estate. Allworthy consults a lawyer, Dowling, about taking action against George. Allworthy knows Dowling because the latter was with Bridget when she died and was in charge of settling her estate.

Mrs. Miller tells Allworthy that Tom committed no wrong in his duel with Fitzpatrick. The same day, Allworthy gets a letter from the tutor Square. Near death, Square repents of all the bad things he said about Tom, admitting that much of it was exaggeration and outright lies.

Allworthy decides to ask Partridge what happened during his travels with Tom. Patridge tells Allworthy that he is not Tom's father but that Tom has slept with his own mother, Jenny Jones, who is now known as Mrs. Waters. Mrs. Waters arrives and tells Allworthy that his sister, Bridget, was actually Tom's mother. Tom's father, she says, was a clergyman's son who died before the baby was born. Mrs. Waters agreed to say she was Tom's mother in return for money that Bridget gave her. Allworthy accepts her word.

Allworthy learns that Blifil is a villain. Dowling tells Allworthy that Blifil has been scheming against Tom in various ways. For one thing, Blifil bribed the police to charge Tom in connection with the duel with Fitzpatrick. Dowling tells Allworthy of other schemes, as well, including Blifil's interception of a letter Bridget wrote to him on her deathbed.

Allworthy visits Sophia and tells her that he is glad she refused to marry Blifil. The squire hopes she will favor Tom, but Sophia refuses to consider it. Western arrives, learns that Allworthy has turned against Blifil, and realizes that Tom will be his heir. Immediately, he wants Sophia to marry Tom.

Tom and Allworthy meet and are reconciled to each other.

Mrs. Miller tells Tom that Nightingale has talked to Sophia, explaining to her that Tom's proposal to Lady Bellaston was only a scheme to get rid of her. Sophia, though, does not soften toward Tom.

Allworthy to show them both mercy, and Allworthy is astounded.

Tom and Allworthy go to visit the Westerns. Sophia is persuaded to marry Tom, and the wedding takes place the next day.

The narrator tells the fates of all. All are happy except the villain, Blifil, and even he, though he was expelled from the family, was granted an annuity to live on. Tom had overcome his vices at last. He and Sophia had children, to whom Squire Western was a devoted grandfather.

Characters

Bridget Allworthy

Squire Allworthy's sister, Bridget, takes care of the infant Tom at her brother's direction. She is unmarried when the story opens but later marries Captain Blifil and has a son, Master Blifil.

At the end of the story, long after Bridget has died, it is revealed that Bridget was not as virtuous as she appeared. In fact, she was Tom's mother; to hide her shame, she bribed Jenny Jones to say the child was hers.

Squire Allworthy

Squire Allworthy's kindness extends to all, from Tom's supposed mother, Jenny Jones (to whom he, in his role as magistrate, gives the lightest possible sentence) to Sophia, whom he is unwilling to force into a marriage she does not want.

When all is said and done, Allworthy chooses to make Tom his heir over the villainous Master Blifil in spite of Tom's illegitimate birth. In doing so, he gives more weight to individual character than to the strictures of society.

Lady Bellaston

Lady Bellaston is a relative of the Western family to whom Sophia flees when she runs away from home. While Sophia is staying at Lady Bellaston's London home, the lady seduces Tom, and the two have an affair.

Lady Bellaston is self-centered and vindictive, as well as promiscuous. When her affair with Tom ends, she goes to great lengths to bring about his unhappiness, from trying to have him drafted into the navy to trying to make Sophia marry someone else.

Little Benjamin

See Mr.Partridge

Mrs. Honour Blackmore

Honour is Sophia's servant. When Sophia decides to run away on the eve of her forced wedding to Blifil, Honour is loyal enough to purposely get herself fired so that she can pack Sophia's belongings along with her own. She then accompanies Sophia on her flight and is a dependable servant and messenger to Sophia throughout the tale.

Captain Blifil

The captain is a self-serving hypocrite who marries Bridget for her money and fathers one son, Master Blifil, before he dies suddenly of apoplexy.

Master Blifil

The son of Bridget and Captain Blifil, Master Blifil is hypocrisy personified. He takes great pains to pretend to be virtuous and shamelessly curries favor with anyone who is in a position to do him good. In reality, however, he is completely unprincipled. Most of his villainy is directed at Tom. He lies about Tom to cause him trouble and often bribes others to join him. He will do anything to keep Tom out of Allworthy's favor and to keep him from becoming the squire's heir. He wants to marry Sophia for two reasons: first, because he knows that she and Tom love each other; and second, for her money.

At the end of the story, readers learn that Master Blifil has known for a long time that Tom is his half-brother. When Bridget was dying, she sent a letter to Allworthy telling him the truth about Tom's parentage, but Blifil intercepted this letter and kept it from the squire. The knowledge that Tom actually had some legitimate claim to Allworthy's fortune made Blifil all the more determined to ruin Tom.

All of Blifil's schemes fail in the end, when Allworthy sees the truth about him as well as about Tom. Allworthy makes Tom his heir and exiles Blifil from the manor, giving him a small annuity to live on.

Mr. Dowling

Dowling is a lawyer. He is with Bridget Allworthy when she dies and is responsible for settling her estate. Bridget gives Dowling a letter for Allworthy revealing that Bridget is Tom's mother. Master Blifil intercepts the letter, however, so that Allworthy does not discover Tom's true parentage until the end of the novel.

Master Blifil on several occasions engages Dowling to cause difficulty for Tom, making Dowling believe that the orders to do so are originating with Squire Allworthy.

Lord Fellamar

Lord Fellamar is a friend of Lady Bellaston. He falls in love with Sophia and tries to rape her as a way of forcing her to consent to marry him. At Lady Bellaston's request, he tries to have Tom drafted into the navy to keep him away from Sophia.

Mrs. Harriet Fitzpatrick

Harriet is Sophia's cousin; the two spent some part of their childhood together in the care of Mrs. Western. They meet en route to London when Sophia is running away from her father and Harriet is running from her abusive husband.

Mr. Fitzpatrick

Mr. Fitzpatrick is Harriet's husband. He acts the part of a loving suitor but marries her for her money and, as soon as the marriage is made, becomes so harsh toward her that she takes flight.

Fitzpatrick is suspicious and rash, and when he arrives one day at his home (to which his wife has returned) and finds Tom leaving his house, he insists on a duel. Tom wounds him gravely and is sent to jail. Fitzpatrick is not all bad, however, because when he recovers, he admits that he was the one who forced Tom to duel. This information brings about Tom's release from jail.

Mrs. Arabella Hunt

Mrs. Hunt is a wealthy widow who lives next door to Mrs. Miller and comes to know something about Tom as he comes and goes there. She sends Tom a formal letter proposing marriage, and Tom is briefly tempted to accept because the woman's fortune would be a help to him. When he turns down her proposal, Tom is highly pleased with his virtue.

Jenny Jones

As the novel opens, Jenny works as a servant for the schoolmaster and his wife and also has recently been a nurse to Bridget during an illness. Jenny is very smart, and the schoolmaster has taught her Latin and other subjects. The schoolmaster's wife and others in the village are very jealous of Jenny because of her education.

When Mrs. Wilkins sets out to find out who is Tom's mother, the schoolmaster's wife accuses Jenny, and others are happy to see Jenny brought low. Jenny admits that she is Tom's mother, and Squire Allworthy metes out a light punishment: He arranges for her to go away to a place where she can get a new start.

At the end of the book, it is revealed that Jenny is not, in fact, Tom's mother. She was willing to say she was in return for money paid to her by Bridget, the child's real mother. In her new identity as Mrs. Waters, she has an affair with Tom and, ultimately, reveals to Squire Allworthy Tom's true parentage.

Tom Jones

The novel's hero, Tom first appears as an infant left on Squire Allworthy's bed. He begins life with the good fortune to be taken in by the wealthy and kind squire, who develops real affection for Tom. The boy becomes something of a rascal, though. Not only is he imprudent and mischievous, he is, unfortunately, surrounded by people who are eager to magnify his failings and bring about his downfall.

All in all, Tom's vices, while they cause him substantial trouble and nearly cost him his beloved Sophia, are not equal to his virtues. He is several times caught stealing, but more often than not it turns out that he stole food for the family of his friend Black George. He is always ready to help anyone in any kind of trouble; many episodes feature some hapless person screaming and Tom leaping to his or her aid. When his landlady is distraught because her pregnant daughter, Nancy, has attempted suicide and Nancy's lover has absconded, Tom, as always, saves the day.

Tom is also forgiving to a rare degree. After Master Blifil has spent his entire life trying to ruin Tom, Allworthy finally sees Blifil for what he is and sends him away. Tom's response is to urge Allworthy not to be too harsh with Blifil, and he even secretly increases the annuity that Allworthy gives Blifil.

Throughout the novel, Squire Allworthy, usually with great patience and kindness, admonishes Tom that he must be more prudent and wise in his actions. It takes years and many misadventures for Tom to learn the lesson, but he does learn it.

Mrs. Miller

Mrs. Miller is a kind widow who runs the London boardinghouse where Tom stays. Tom goes to her house because Allworthy has stayed there on his own visits to London.

Tom is compassionate toward Mrs. Miller and her daughter, Nancy. When Tom's friend Nightingale is about to abandon the pregnant Nancy for a marriage arranged by Nightingale's father, Tom talks Nightingale into marrying Nancy and even tries to reconcile Nightingale's father to the marriage. In return, Mrs. Miller is a true friend to Tom. At crucial moments she comes to his defense and corrects others' mistaken views of him. She has occasion to intercede for Tom with both Sophia and Allworthy.

Nancy Miller

Nancy is the daughter of Mrs. Miller. She falls in love with her mother's boarder Mr. Nightingale. Eventually, with Tom's help in overcoming obstacles, the two marry.

Northerton

Northerton is one of the soldiers in the group of rebels Tom joins briefly. When Tom gives a toast to Sophia, Northerton, insisting that he knows her, assaults her character. In the ensuing fight, Northerton gashes Tom's head with a wine bottle. He then escapes from the guard assigned to hold him. Later, when Tom hears a woman screaming in the woods and goes to her rescue, he finds Northerton assaulting Mrs. Waters and rescues her. Tom assumes that he has interrupted a rape, but it is later revealed that Mrs. Waters had regular assignations with Northerton and was screaming because on that occasion he was trying to rob her.

Mr. Partridge

Mr. Partridge is the local schoolmaster at the beginning of the novel. Once Jenny is accused of being Tom's mother, Mr. Partridge, who is her employer, is accused of being the father. Mr. Partridge's wife testifies against him, and he is ruined. He leaves the area, changes his name to Little Benjamin, and becomes a barber.

Tom meets Little Benjamin after being ejected from Allworthy's home. The two discover each other's identities and decide to travel together. Partridge remains with Tom throughout the story, and the narrator tells readers in his epilogue that Tom has given Partridge an annuity to allow him to start another school and that Sophia is engineering Partridge's marriage to Molly Seagrim.

Mrs. Partridge

Mrs. Partridge is the schoolmaster's suspicious, mean-spirited wife. She testifies against him when he is accused of being Tom's father, although she has no real evidence of his guilt. As a result of this, she and her husband are both reduced to poverty, and she soon dies of smallpox.

Black George Seagrim

Called Black George because he has a black beard, George begins the story as the gamekeeper at Allworthy's estate. When all the other members of Allworthy's household turn against Tom, Black George is his only friend. Tom, in turn, is a friend to George, going so far as to steal food for his family.

George loses his job with Allworthy because of some mischief that Tom had encouraged him in. Tom takes all the blame himself and begs Allworthy to retain George, but fails to help his friend. Later, though, Tom succeeds in getting Squire Western to hire George, and George accompanies Western to London.

George rewards Tom's loyalty by stealing the money Squire Allworthy gives Tom the night he leaves Allworthy's house. When Tom discovers this near the end of the novel, George flees, and Tom allows George's family to keep the money.

Molly Seagrim

Molly is Black George's daughter. Tom sleeps with her and considers abandoning Sophia for her when Molly becomes pregnant and Tom thinks the child is his. He decides, finally, to give Molly money instead of his love. When he goes to her house to tell her this, he finds the tutor Square in her bedroom and then learns from her sister that Molly's pregnancy is most likely the result of her encounter with yet another man. Tom finds all of this amusing and is relieved to be free of obligation to Molly.

At the end of the novel, the narrator relates that Sophia is doing her best to arrange Molly's marriage to Mr. Partridge.

Mr. Thomas Square

Square is one of Tom and Master Blifil's two tutors. Like his counterpart, Thwackum, Square is an adversary of Tom and an ally of Master Blifil in all things. Near the end of the novel, Square, on his deathbed, writes a letter to Allworthy in which he repents of his ill treatment of Tom and even details some occasions on which Tom was falsely blamed.

Square is a deist, while Thwackum is an Anglican, and the two are constantly engaged in philosophical and theological debate. This ongoing debate mirrors that which was occurring throughout England at the time Fielding wrote.

Rev. Roger Thwackum

Thwackum, one of Tom and Master Blifil's tutors, is also an Anglican clergyman and a self-righteous bigot. Like his fellow tutor, Mr. Square, Thwackum looks for any excuse to punish or denigrate Tom (he has a special fondness for corporal punishment), while he favors Master Blifil, who appears to be Allworthy's heir.

Mrs. Waters

See Jenny Jones

Mrs. Western

Mrs. Western is Squire Western's sister, Lady Bellaston's cousin, and Sophia's aunt. She is not married and acts as a surrogate mother to Sophia and in some ways as a surrogate wife to the squire. She is more concerned with appearances and social status

than with Sophia's happiness, and, in the brawl over whom Sophia will marry, Mrs. Western supports the lewd Lord Fellamar.

Sophia Western

Sophia is the beautiful daughter of Squire Western and a friend of Tom's from childhood. Tom's pursuit of her is the central thread of the story. Sophia loves him but is understandably put off by his lusty adventures. Although she cuts him off more than once, she is finally convinced of his readiness to love only her. When all other obstacles to their union have been overcome, Sophia finally agrees to marry Tom.

Scholars generally believe that Fielding based Sophia on his own beloved and beautiful wife, who died before he wrote the book.

Squire Western

Western is Allworthy's neighbor and Sophia's father. While he loves his daughter, he shows that he loves other things more, especially money and hunting, and quite possibly liquor. When Sophia runs away from home to avoid marrying Blifil, Western goes after her but gives up his search for her when he runs across a hunting party and decides that it is too nice a day to forgo a hunt. He is determined to marry Sophia off to Master Blifil as long as Blifil is Allworthy's heir, in spite of her understandable dislike for him. As soon as Tom becomes the heir, Western changes his alliance.

In the end, Western gives his estate to Sophia so that she and Tom can live there, and he himself moves to a place where the hunting is better. He is, however, a doting grandfather to Sophia and Tom's children. It is Deborah whom Allworthy sends out into the village to discover the identity of Tom's mother, and Deborah wastes no time in catching up on the local gossip and in using it to reach a conclusion about Tom's parentage.

Themes

Virtue and Vice

The overarching theme of *Tom Jones* is virtue and vice. The highlighted virtue is prudence, and the featured vices are hypocrisy and vanity.

Prudence, one of the time-honored cardinal virtues of Western culture, essentially means thinking ahead, considering the likely consequences of one's actions, and acting accordingly. The failure to do this is Tom's downfall over and over, until the very end of the story. Although Tom has many virtues—he is kind, good-hearted, generous, brave, loyal, and forgiving—his lack of prudence gives his adversaries opportunities to harm him and drives away his beloved Sophia, nearly for good.

Tom's imprudence often manifests in his behavior with women. In spite of his love for Sophia, he falls into one dalliance after another with unsavory women. He continues this pattern of behavior even though he knows that it is hurtful to Sophia and counterproductive to what he really wants, which is to be with her.

The standard-bearers of hypocrisy and vanity are Captain Blifil and his son, Master Blifil, but they lead a large army of followers. Bridget Allworthy, Squire and Mrs. Western, the tutors Thwackum and Square, Black George, Lady Bellaston, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Lord Fellamar, and others portray the twin vices in many different forms. They all engage in misrepresentation, outright lies, disloyalty, slander, and more in attempting to get what they want, which is money and social status. By displaying these vices in so many characters, Fielding makes clear that he imputes them to the entire society he depicts; they are the rule, not the exception.

Fielding also deals with the relative seriousness of various vices. His hero is far from perfect. Tom is blatantly promiscuous and lets his enthusiasm for fun lead him beyond the borders of good behavior and even beyond the law, as when he talks Black George into joining him in poaching on a neighbor's land. At intervals throughout the novel, Squire Allworthy is often distressed by Tom's behavior and talks to him about the need for prudence and morality. Yet, until the end, Tom goes away from these talks and returns to his old ways.

In spite of the fact that Allworthy knows Tom's faults very well, he concludes at the end of the novel that Tom is a good man, whereas Blifil is a hopelessly bad one. The kinds of obvious, public vices Tom has—the very ones that society often judges most harshly—are really less serious than the hidden vices of vanity, hypocrisy, selfishness, and greed that lie at the core of Blifil's character.

Redemption

Proceeding from Allworthy's judgment that Tom's vices are less damning than Blifil's is the idea that Tom is redeemable, whereas Blifil is not. In fact, Tom is redeemed at the end of the novel. He finally sees the error of his ways and changes them. As a result, his "sins" are forgiven, and Tom is granted Allworthy's fortune and the love of both Allworthy and Sophia. Blifil, on the other hand, is cast out of the family.

The idea that Fielding is making a point about redemption that applies beyond the scope of his story is bolstered by the fact that Allworthy's character is God-like. He is a father figure to both Tom and Blifil. He is also a magistrate and therefore is in a position to pass judgment on people and their failings. Throughout the book, he exercises this authority with compassion and restraint. He shows mercy to the powerless (such as Jenny Jones) and forgiveness to the repentant. It is easy to conclude that through Allworthy, Tom, and Blifil, Fielding is declaring that those who are good at heart will be forgiven normal human weaknesses if they are willing to learn from their mistakes.

Style

Epic, Picaresque, and Epistolary

Fielding melds elements of several traditional literary forms in *Tom Jones*. First, the novel borrows some elements of epic poems, such as Homer's *Odyssey*. In fact, in the novel itself, Fielding, as narrator, calls the book a "prosaicomiepic," meaning a comic epic written in prose.

An epic has a strong protagonist who does heroic deeds and has a broad scope of action; that is, the events take place over a wide range of time and place. *Tom Jones* fulfills all these requirements of an epic.

Second, *Tom Jones* incorporates elements of the picaresque novel, which originated in Spain. A picaresque features a roguish hero (*picaro* in Spanish) and is episodic and more loosely structured than an epic. A picaresque is literally "one thing after another," and the only unifying thread may be that all events befall the central character. Many picaresques center on a journey, and most satirize the society in which the story takes place.Tom is certainly a roguish character, and *Tom Jones* certainly satirizes the society in which he moves. The section of the novel that relates Tom's trip to London is the most strongly rooted in the picaresque tradition.

Finally, *Tom Jones*, to a lesser extent, borrows the form of the epistolary novel, or novel of letters. Fielding's first novel, *Shamela*, was written entirely in the epistolary form, as was the novel it parodied, *Pamela*. The form was popular throughout the eighteenth century. In *Tom Jones*, Fielding has many opportunities to advance his story through letters written by his characters, who are often separated by geography, intrigue, or both.

Allegory

An allegory is a story with a double meaning; each character or event represents some other person or occurrence. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is a very well-known allegory in which the main character, Christian, represents "every-man," and his journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City represents the journey from a worldly existence to heaven.

Some scholars see *Tom Jones* as an allegory of everyman's quest to attain wisdom. This view is bolstered by the fact that the name Sophia is the Greek word for wisdom. Tom's long and difficult quest for Sophia, therefore, can be seen as the quest for wisdom, which he wins at last.

Historical Context

The Enlightenment

The Age of Enlightenment dawned in the late seventeenth century and strongly colored the entire eighteenth century in Europe and America. The era was so named because the intellectuals who nurtured it believed that the ideas it promoted were bringing humanity out of a period of darkness in which it had been bound by superstition and ignorance. The most prominent of these ideas was that human reason—not blind faith in religious doctrines or authorities—was the path to wisdom in all areas of life.

The Age of Enlightenment, or Age of Reason, as it was sometimes called, was sparked by new scientific discoveries (Newton's law of gravity, for example) and by new directions in philosophy as set out by John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and others. Human reason was penetrating the mysteries of the physical world and imagining new kinds of societies. It seemed, therefore, that reason, freed from age-old superstitions, could lead humanity to a new golden age.

The shift from faith to reason was a major turning point that affected not just religion and philosophy but science, politics, economics, and other disciplines. The new philosophy was that understanding and knowledge, rather than being inborn or handed down from the past, emerge from observation and experience. This meant that every person had the ability to learn and was a strong argument for universal education. The idea that all could attain knowledge and wisdom led to the idea of equality. If all had the potential to learn and to act wisely, then all should have the opportunity to vote, to improve themselves socially and economically, to govern themselves, and so on. Not surprisingly, the Age of Reason led directly to the Age of Revolution in Europe and America.

By the time Fielding wrote *Tom Jones*, the Enlightenment was more than half a century old. Its ideas can be clearly seen in Fielding's handling of his story. Tom's maturity and his understanding of how to live are not imposed upon him by religious teachings or by religious or secular authorities; instead, they come through Tom's own experiences and his observations of the law of cause and effect in his life. While Squire Allworthy often urges Tom to be more prudent, Tom does not really understand what this means, or why it is so important, until he has broken the law of prudence many times and has seen the results. He wins wisdom through his own experiments.

Similarly, the fact that Tom becomes Allworthy's heir is a sign of the times. In former times, the heir would have been chosen according to societal rules, without regard for the individual traits of the persons involved. Blifil, though despicable, would have been Allworthy's heir without question because he was Bridget's only legitimate son. Tom's illegitimate birth would have put him out of contention. The individualism of the Enlightenment meant that social classes gradually became less rigid and that social conventions were more often broken. Of course, the change was not absolute. Fielding

shows the ongoing conflict between the old ways and the new through characters such as Squire Western, who only consents to Sophia's marrying Tom after it is known that at least one of Tom's parents was from the upper class and that he will inherit Allworthy's money.

The Jacobite Rebellions

The Jacobites were British citizens who sought to restore the exiled Catholic Stuart dynasty to the British throne. Their name is from the Latin for "James"; their original goal was to make James Stuart, half-brother of Queen Anne (who ruled from 1702 to 1714), the ruler of Britain in place of the Protestant George I. The unsuccessful First Jacobite Rebellion took place in 1715, after Queen Anne died and George I ascended the throne.

In the 1740s, Britain was at war with France on several fronts—in Europe, in America, in India, and at sea. The Jacobites saw the government's distractions as an opportunity to try again to recapture the British throne for the Stuarts. Prince Charles Edward, who was the grandson of Queen Anne's predecessor, James II, and who was known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, led Scottish soldiers in the capture of Edinburgh and marched south toward London. He hoped to gather enough English support to place his father on the throne in place of George I. He did not win widespread support in England, however, and was soon defeated.

It is the Second Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 that Tom briefly joins in book VII of *Tom Jones*, when he has been ejected from Allworthy's home and despairs of finding Sophia.

Critical Overview

Tom Jones was an immediate success with readers. Periodicals and, therefore, published critics, were far fewer in number then than they are now, but most who wrote about the novel, for publication or in private letters, received it with some enthusiasm. One exception was Samuel Richardson, author of the recent best-seller *Pamela*, which Fielding had twice parodied. In a letter to the daughters of a friend, Richardson panned *Tom Jones* while admitting that he had not read it. Claiming that he had been warned by "judicious friends" not to do so, Richardson continued:

I had reason to think that the author intended . . . to whiten a vicious character and to make morality bend to his practices. What reason has he to make this Tom illegitimate? Why did he make him . . . the lowest of all fellows? Why did he draw his heroine so fond, so foolish, and so insipid? But perhaps I think the worse of the piece because I know the writer and dislike his principles, both public and private.

The recipients of the letter,Astraea and Minerva Hill,disagreed with their correspondent."We went through the whole six volumes," they wrote, "and found much merit in 'em all: a double merit, both of head and heart." The sisters were impressed at the way Fielding tied up all the loose ends of the plot "in an extremely moving close, where lines that seem'd to wander and run in different ways meet, all in an instructive center." Contradicting Samuelson's presumption that the novel must elevate immorality, the sisters wrote, "Its events reward sincerity and punish and expose hypocrisy; show pity and benevolence in amiable lights, and avarice and brutality in very despicable ones."

Although some critics (notably William Forsyth, writing in 1871) have continued to object to *Tom Jones* on moral grounds, few have found fault with it on literary ones. Later opinion has been more with the sisters and less with Richardson. In 1836, the author Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote:

What a master of composition Fielding was! Upon my word, I think *The Oedipus Tyrannus*, *The Alchemist*, and *Tom Jones* the three most perfect plots every planned. And how charming, how wholesome, Fielding always is! To take him up after Richardson is like emerging from a sickroom . . . into an open lawn on a breezy day in May.

In his preface to the Norton Critical Edition of *Tom Jones*, Sheridan Baker wrote of the novel, "It "and makes the English novel thoroughly literate for the first time.It marries comedy and romance,by the grace of the classics,to produce a peculiarly fresh and ironic wisdom."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6
- Critical Essay #7
- Critical Essay #8
- Critical Essay #9

Critical Essay #1

Norvell is an independent educational writer who specializes in English and literature and holds degrees in linguistics and journalism. In this essay, Norvell examines Fielding's portrayal of teachers in Tom Jones*.*

Among the significant characters in *Tom Jones*, three are teachers. In a story of multi-layered and intertwined ironies, these characters, individually and collectively, are especially rich. While Fielding makes clear that all of his characters point beyond themselves, he draws the teachers in such a way that they point obviously—and unflatteringly—to certain groups. This is especially true of the tutors Thwackum and Square.

Teachers, of course, are supposed to be wiser than most, since they are entrusted to instruct others. Fielding's teachers, however, are not wise, nor are they ethical. Therein lies one of the book's many ironies.

Mr. Partridge, the wrongly accused schoolmaster, is the first of the three to appear. He is no worse a person than the average man or woman, but he is no better and no smarter. In fact, his lack of mental sharpness is his downfall. Fielding tells readers that Jenny Jones, the servant whom Partridge instructs in Latin, soon has more facility with the language than he does. This is certainly a clue to his limited intellect. On the other hand, the fact that he teaches her is to his credit; not only is she a mere servant, but she is a woman. She is not even an attractive woman, which would have given Partridge a selfish motive to spend time with her. He seems to have taught her purely out of recognition of her abilities.

If teaching Jenny was kind, though, it was not wise. Partridge's mean, suspicious wife objects to it. When the schoolmaster is foolish enough to exchange words with Jenny in Latin while she is serving dinner, Mrs. Partridge jumps to conclusions about what has passed between them and soon uses these conclusions as an excuse to destroy her husband.

Partridge also does not excel in morality. When he takes up with Tom en route to London, he does so because he hopes for an opportunity to clear his name and re-establish his reputation. Therefore, while he, unlike many others, has no desire to harm Tom, if Tom is harmed in Partridge's effort to redeem himself, Partridge will not mind and may not even notice. When Squire Allworthy approaches Partridge near the end of the book to find out what all transpired as Tom and Partridge traveled together to London, Partridge, if he thought for a moment, would realize that what he says may be critical in determining Tom's fate. Partridge thinks only of himself, however; he takes the occasion to tell Allworthy not only that he is not Tom's father but also that Tom has just committed incest with his mother. This added information (which turns out to be wrong) does not help Partridge's cause, but it certainly hurts Tom's until it is corrected. That Partridge speaks out of foolishness rather than hatred does not change the impact of his words.

The schoolmaster, then, is often either foolish or incorrect and is master of nothing—not even of himself. The best that can be said about him is that he is the least reprehensible of the three educators.

Thwackum and Square, the two men who tutor Tom and Master Blifil, seem to have more knowledge than does Partridge—although not enough to get what they want—but they definitely have even less moral fiber. Like Partridge, they are self-serving; unlike him, they are purposely destructive and just plain mean.

The tutors are in many ways twin characters; they share many attributes and goals. Both are pretentious and self-righteous, always eager to punish Tom (on a trumped-up charge, if necessary) while indulging themselves in hypocrisy and lies. Both eagerly absorb Master Blifil's flattery; his kind of artificial virtue is exactly their cup of tea. Both covet Allworthy's fortune, and both scheme to marry his sister, Bridget, to get their hands on it. To that end, they are doubly happy to conspire with her son, Master Blifil, against Tom at every turn. This is where their understanding, if not their villainy, falls short, however. In the first place, Bridget sees through them and has no intention of marrying either of them. In the second place, they have miscalculated in thinking that fawning over her son will endear her to them. They have failed to notice that Bridget despises her son, just as she despised his father.

Fielding writes of Thwackum that it is his practice to "regard all virtue as a matter of theory only." This is a good summation and applies equally to Square. The only difference between the two men is that they fail to practice opposite theories of virtue. Fielding uses this difference to ridicule both of the two leading philosophies of his time.

Thwackum is the traditionalist of the two, an Anglican reverend who starts from the premise that all humans are evil at the core and need to have their badness quite literally beaten out of them. Square takes the newer view, popularized by the Enlightenment, that people are inherently good and that when they do evil, they have merely strayed off their normal course and need to be helped back onto the straight and narrow. While he does not share Thwackum's enthusiasm for corporal punishment, he is not opposed to placing blame and accusation wherever he thinks it will further his own interests, justice be damned.

These two men spend much more time and energy arguing philosophy with each other than they do attending to their students. Both are pompous, verbose, and ridiculous, and both are deeply immoral. Through them, Fielding skewers Christian and deist alike. The message personified in Thwackum and Square is clear: actions, not words, constitute true morality.

If Fielding thinks that one camp is less depraved or less silly than the other, he does not give himself away. He brings both Thwackum and Square back onto the stage at the end of the book, allowing them to demonstrate that, unlike Tom, they have not been improved by time and experience. Each man sends a letter to Allworthy. Square is on his deathbed and, to his credit, does repent of the wrongs he did to Tom. However, he also proves to be a coward, confiding to Allworthy that, in fear of death and subsequent

"utter darkness forever," he has abandoned his former philosophy and has become "in earnest a Christian." In short, everything in Square's letter adds up to one final attempt to ensure his own eternal comfort. He is incapable of loyalty, even to the beliefs for which he argued all his life.

Thwackum, in his letter, regrets only that he did not whip Tom enough to whip the devil out of him, calls Square an atheist, chastises Allworthy for being too easy on Tom, and, finally, says that if the local vicar should die ("as we hear he is in a declining way"), he hopes that Allworthy will appoint him as successor. Thwackum is self-righteous and self-serving to the end.

Partridge, too, receives his final dispensation from the author's hand; the reader learns that Sophia is working to arrange a marriage between Partridge and the slatternly Molly Seagram. The match is a fair one, as neither is dastardly, but both are fools.

And so, while the young student Tom has gained wisdom and corrected his course, those who should have been to him a font of wisdom continue in their folly.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Drake examines the manners of Fielding's characters in Tom Jones*.*

History remembers places as well as times, and the space of history is profoundly social rather than purely phenomenal or material. It is not produced wholly by individual psychology and yet cannot be reduced to abstract or natural space. Literary realism tends to be measured by one or the other of these extremes, as psychological realism or realism of naturalistic detail. Thus placing Fielding in the realist pantheon requires considerable exertion, if not outright violence. His scenes are starkly devoid of naturalistic detail, and he is far less concerned with accumulating the minutiae of psychological response than is his rival Richardson. But Fielding makes no claim to be a realist: his aim is to describe "not Men, but Manners." And yet it is precisely by describing manners—by turning to the realm of the *social* rather than the psychological or the natural—that Fielding is able to represent historical space. In what follows, I will look at Fielding's construction of scenes, and at the theory of history that informs his representation of manners. Ultimately, Fielding's conception of *scene*—and of space—is a function of his theory of history: he rejects both the great man theory of history that relies on individual psychology, and the naturalistic detail of "mere topographers." For Fielding, history is best explained by the social structures and strategies that constitute manners.

Critical Essay #3

At what is very nearly the precise textual center of *The History of Tom Jones* (Book 9, chap. 2), Jones and the Man of the Hill view the prospect from "Mazard-Hill," a fictitious peak of the Malverns. Rather than admiring "one of the most noble prospects in the World"—which Fielding coyly declines to describe—Jones is instead "endeavouring to trace out [his] own Journey hither." By omitting a description, Fielding foregrounds the responses of Jones and the Man of the Hill to the prospect. The Man of the Hill, who has seen the "wondrous Variety of Prospects" in Europe and its "Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Insects, and Vegetables," but almost nothing of its cultures and people, is interested only in the prospect itself, and indeed will shortly show his indifference to the screams of Mrs. Waters. Jones, on the other hand, invests the prospect with personal meaning by reading his own history in the landscape and measuring his distance from Sophia. By responding instantly to Mrs. Waters's screams, he gives priority to social space over natural or psychological space, whereas the Man of the Hill, though armed with a gun, observes the struggle with the dispassionate interest of a natural historian. What becomes clear is that while the two share a physical location, and, to a considerable extent, occupy similar social positions, they inhabit wholly different kinds of space.

The prospect from Mazard-Hill merges three kinds of history: the novel itself as a history; Jones's personal history; and, through the Man of the Hill's recital of his part in Monmouth's rebellion, the history of the Stuarts leading to the 1745 rebellion. It is a particularly revealing example of Fielding's representation of space. Despite the "noble prospect," the scene follows his typical construction—it is short on description, contains only significant characters, and is shaped primarily by the attitudes and actions of those characters. Such a scenic economy is by no means unique to Fielding—the very solid walls of *Clarissa's* rooms are not shaped by the density of Richardson's descriptions, but by Clarissa's fears, by the oppression of Lovelace and her parents, and by the very limited possibilities for free action possessed by a minor female. What is unique to Fielding is his play with the possibilities of representing space through his own self-conscious theatricality. For example, he opens the prospect scene with a parody of heroic landscape description:

Aurora now first opened her Casement, *anglicè*, the Day began to break, when *Jones* walked forth in Company with the Stranger, and mounted *Mazard-Hill*; of which they had no sooner gained the Summit, than one of the most noble Prospects in the World presented itself to their View, and which we would likewise present to the Reader; but for two Reasons. *First*, We despair of making those who have seen this Prospect, admire our Description. *Secondly*, We very much doubt whether those, who have not seen it, would understand it.

While not as dramatic a reminder of the difference between representation and reality as his mock concern about "how to get thee down without breaking thy neck" after raising the reader to the height of the prospect from Allworthy's estate, Fielding's translation and apology serve a similar purpose: revealing the literary prospect as a convention.

At the same time, he suggests that the prospect itself—not just its literary representation—is a construction, and not simply an *individual* construction shaped wholly by Tom Jones or the Man of the Hill. It is, in Henri Lefebvre's terms, a *representational space*, a space with both symbolic and real dimensions that exist for more than the individual consciousness. At first, it appears curious that Fielding chooses a fictitious hill to make a point about imposing conventions on the landscape, especially as it seems, according to Martin Battestin's footnote, to be based on a real peak, the Worcestershire Beacon. Since Fielding does not hesitate to introduce other very real places like the Bell Inn into his narrative, it might be assumed that he has a purpose for disguising this one. While he may simply want to avoid too specific a location for the Man of the Hill's residence, it seems more likely that he wants to preclude the possibility that readers who *have* seen the prospect from the Worcestershire Beacon will too quickly write their own prospect, and thus miss his point.

Fielding was well aware that landscapes are mentally constructed, though he does not regard them as purely subjective. The few landscapes he describes appear to be collectively constructed, as a matter of previous convention, rather than created by an individual consciousness. The *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* provides a useful gloss on the prospects of *Tom Jones*. Fielding writes:

Here we past that cliff of Dover, which makes so tremendous a figure in Shakespear, [sic] and which, whoever reads without being giddy, must according to Mr. Addison's observation, have either a very good head, or a very bad one; but, which, whoever contracts any such ideas from the sight of, must have, at least, a poetic, if not a Shakespearian genius. In truth, mountains, rivers, heroes and gods owe great part of their existence to the poets; and Greece and Italy do so plentifully abound in the former, because they furnished so glorious a number of the latter; who, while they bestowed immortality on every little hillock and blind stream left the noblest rivers and mountains in the world to share the same obscurity with the eastern and western poets, in which they are celebrated.

Poets half create not only what they see, but what their culture sees. Fielding is not simply concerned with the perception of the poet in Wordsworthian solitude, but with the shaping influence of poetry. By classing "heroes and gods" with mountains and rivers, Fielding makes landscape description into a kind of myth-making, though his comparison of "little hillock and blind stream" with "the noblest rivers and mountains in the world" suggests that landscape features possess qualities like nobility prior to being poeticized. And yet those noble rivers remain blind streams precisely because they are celebrated by poets obscured from sight. The perception of nobility, then, derives from the poets.

But Fielding was nonetheless able to gesture toward the ineffable real in his own description of natural scenes. Later in the *Voyage* he describes a sunset:

We were entertained with a scene which as no one can behold without going to sea, so no one can form an idea of any thing equal to it on shore. We were seated on the deck, women and all, in the serenest evening that can be imagined. Not a single cloud

presented itself to our view, and the sun himself was the only object which engrossed our whole attention. He did indeed set with a majesty which is incapable of description, with which while the horizon was yet blazing with glory, our eyes were called off to the opposite part to survey the moon . . . Compared to these the pageantry of theatres, or splendor of courts, are sights almost below the regard of children.

Fielding invokes the sublime by suggesting the scene is unrepresentable. And yet it is closer to what Marshall Brown has called the "urbane sublime" than the Burkean sublime. He carefully situates the conditions of observation: he is not a solitary poet, but among a group, "women and all"—when the women had been seasick, Fielding found his hours of solitude "the most disagreeable" that had ever "haunted" him. The weather is so pleasant "that even my old distemper perceived the alteration of the climate," and after weeks of waiting for a wind they have "flown" at ten knots an hour, and see a prospect of reaching Lisbon soon. Had a favorable wind not preceded, had the company been worse, had Fielding been less comfortable, the sunset would surely have been less majestic. In the passage on the cliffs of Dover, Fielding comments explicitly on the construction of landscape; in the second passage, he merely notes the coincidence of mood, circumstance, and natural setting without having to resolve whether the sunset is real. In both cases, however, the social predominates. The cliffs of Dover are not so much created by Shakespeare as by the cultural impact of Shakespeare. And Fielding is only able to experience the sunset fully among reunited company.

In *Tom Jones*, Fielding suggests that different perceptions of landscape correspond to particular groups within society, defined not so much by social rank as by sensibility. He contrasts "Taste and Imagination," which can see beauty even in "objects of far inferior note," with business travelers who simply measure abstract space:

Not so travels the Money-meditating Tradesman, the sagacious Justice, the dignified Doctor, the warm-clad Grazier, with all the numerous Offspring of Wealth and Dulness. On they jogg, with equal Pace, through the verdant Meadows, or over the barren Health, their Horses measuring four Miles and a half *per* Hour with the utmost Exactness; the Eyes of the Beast and of his Master being alike directed forwards, and employed in contemplating the same Objects in the same manner.

"Taste and Imagination" can be taken to personify an imaginary community of sensibility typified by Lord Lyttleton (one of the models for Squire Allworthy), a community of which the family-proud but inheritance-poor Fielding could feel himself a member, but from which he could exclude a fellow "sagacious Justice."

Socioeconomic class alone, then, does not determine how Fielding's characters respond to the landscape; it is determined as well by a hierarchy of taste and judgment. Both Jones and the Man of the Hill are dispossessed country sons, exiled in the sense of being removed from their proper places, their family land. To be sure, there are important differences—the Man of the Hill is merely a younger son while Jones is a bastard; the Man of the Hill is a hermit by choice whereas Jones is only by necessity a wanderer. Yet we are clearly to see parallels: the Man of the Hill is what Jones could

become; he represents, in J. Paul Hunter's words, "roads not taken, analogues in a different tone." Both are in a situation where, as Pierre Bourdieu observes of the bastard and the younger son, "minimum objective distance in social space can coincide with maximum subjective distance." Indeed, what both read in the landscape is precisely their own distance: while the Man in some sense owns the prospect from his hill, he has no living connection to it, and while Jones may trace his journey in the landscape, he reads only his distance from Sophia and Paradise Hall. But the Man of the Hill has generalized his own distance from humanity by severing humanity from the natural world. His habitual strategy is not avoidance but detachment; as a frequent traveller he has not so much been a hermit as a solitary. Echoing Defoe's *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*, the Man of the Hill claims that he "could hardly have enjoyed a more absolute Solitude in the Deserts of the *Thebais*, than here in the midst of this populous Kingdom." Jones, on the other hand, sees his separation as merely a local rupture; he is as averse to solitude as Fielding himself.

The difference between Tom Jones's and the Man of the Hill's constructions of the world is not simply a matter of temperament or life choices. The Man of the Hill is, after all, a kind of time traveller: he says that his own "History is little better than a Blank" since the time of the Glorious Revolution, and knows nothing of subsequent public history, including both Jacobite rebellions. He is a product of another time, believing in the possibility of a fully rational world with a certainty that was becoming more tenuous in Fielding's time. He invokes the Great Chain of Being as evidence of rational order in the universe, but like the post-Houyhnhnm Gulliver, regards humanity as the one irrational link—for him "Human Nature is everywhere the same, everywhere the Object of Detestation and scorn." Both his rationalism and his misanthropy stem from the same period, the age of Locke and the Royal Society, when a more rational form of government and a scientifically ordered world seemed possible, but stymied by human failings. His misanthropy, he tells Jones, arises from the contrast between his hopes for humanity and his observations of human beings. Indeed, he claims his solitude is a result of "great philanthropy":

For however it may seem a Paradox, or even a Contradiction, certain it is that great Philanthropy chiefly inclines us to avoid and detest Mankind; not on Account so much of their private and selfish Vices, but for those of a relative Kind; such as Envy, Malice, Treachery, Cruelty, with every other Species of Malevolence.

Unlike Thwackum and Square, the Mail of the Hill is well versed in both philosophy and scripture, but the mixture has not produced the balance Fielding thought those characters lacked. His failure to act when Mrs. Waters screams stems not so much from hypocrisy or quietism as from a kind of paralysis brought on by contradiction.

When the Man of the Hill refuses to be "imposed upon to credit so foolish a Tale" as Jones's report of the Jacobite rebellions, Fielding seems to be using him as a conventional wanderer from afar to sharpen the anti-Jacobite satire. But the Man of the Hill's misanthropy is too particular for a stock character. Personal vices do not trouble him, but vices "of a relative Kind" do, a distinction which suggests a kind of extreme individualism for which only active malevolence toward others is vicious. Yet in his own

story, the two kinds of vice are inextricably entwined. His education is marked by extremes; he is either completely withdrawn in study or completely abandoned to personal vices that lead to relative vices like theft. No doubt Fielding has in mind here a moral lesson in moderation, and yet it is worth pursuing the Man's own explanation and excuses. He speaks, for example, of the "Contagion" that he avoids by living alone, and clearly regards Oxford and London, the sites of his own crimes, as places of disease. While he does not explicitly blame others, like his corrupt friend Sir George Gresham, for his failings, neither does he see them as arising from himself, and his detestation of human nature reflects this inverted causality. But he has in fact never lived *in* the world, he has only found alternate modes of self-absorption. His inability to negotiate social space has left him in an abstract space of *things*—indeed, he has no name but the Man *of the Hill*.

During the Man of the Hill episode Partridge constructs the world in yet another way, and through him Fielding invokes an even earlier historical period. Partridge is the only Jacobite we really see in *Tom Jones* (Squire Western, despite toasting the "King over the Water," is more properly an anti-Hanoverian than a Jacobite rebel, not willing, like Partridge, to join the rebellion), and what distinguishes him is his superstitiousness and credulity in interpreting events. He suspects witchcraft from the beginning, interrupts the Man of the Hill's life history twice with supernatural stories, and finally runs from the hill in fear. While representing Jacobites as superstitious was commonplace, Fielding explores Partridge's superstition at greater depth than might be expected. Partridge is associated not just with the Stuarts, but specifically with James I: when Partridge fears that the Man of the Hill's servant is a witch, Fielding observes that "if this Woman had lived in the Reign of *James* the First, her Appearance alone would have hanged her, almost without any Evidence." By implication, Partridge's superstition places him in that earlier epoch. If the Man of the Hill sees a landscape in which people are insignificant, and Jones a landscape only made significant by the people in it, Partridge sees a world permeated with spirits. Paradoxically, the material is for him evidence of the spiritual: he asserts that a story about the devil carrying off an adulterer must be true because "I've seen the very house where it was done," as if the reality of the setting were proof of the event. Partridge is an empiricist of sorts; when he hears of the Man of the Hill's "slight wound" during Monmouth's rebellion, he wants to know where the wound was. But his relationship to visible objects is different from the Man of the Hill's. His fixing on an insignificant detail like the location of the wound emphasizes his inability to understand narrative, to understand a history (indeed, he sleeps through much of the Man's story). Partridge's understanding of the world is essentially emblematic; what he sees in the wound and the house is not physical evidence but signs and portents. Confusion in telling and understanding narratives is a typical class marker throughout eighteenth-century literature, but Partridge's particular confusion is a historical marker as well.

We have, then, not simply three ways of constructing the world, but three sedimented layers of history. Partridge's superstition is not simply the result of ignorance—however imperfect his Latin, he does possess some education—but of an outlook constructed in an earlier period. The Man of the Hill dates from a time when a rational world might have looked more possible than it does for Fielding in 1745. Whether Jones represents a thoroughly modern individual whose space is historical is not yet clear, but before

answering that question, and analyzing Jones's encounter with another time traveler, the King of the Gypsies, it will be helpful to look more closely at Fielding's use of space and his theory of history....

Critical Essay #4

Fielding's two interpolated episodes—the visit to the Gypsy camp and to the Man of the Hill—have close parallels. Both precede examples of Jones's imprudence—the incidents at Upton and his entanglement with Lady Bellaston—but also, more immediately, incidents of his benevolence—the rescue of Mrs. Waters and his assistance to the would-be thief. Both occur when Jones and Partridge are lost, and both are marked, through Partridge's fear, by a sense of the uncanny; just as the light from the Man of the Hill's house had seemed to him supernatural, Partridge sees the light of the gypsy camp as a certain sign of "Ghosts or Witches." In the first episode, Fielding associates superstitious fear with the reign of James I, and in the second reminds us again that such superstition belongs to the past:

Had this History been writ in the Days of Superstition, I should have had too much Compassion for the Reader to have left him so long in Suspence, whether *Beelzebub* or *Satan* was about actually to appear in Person, with all his Hellish Retinue; but as these Doctrines are at present very unfortunate, and have but few if any Believers, I have not been much aware of conveying any such Terrors. To say Truth, the whole Furniture of the infernal Regions hath long been appropriated by the Managers of Playhouses, who seem lately to have lain them by as Rubbish, capable only of affecting the Upper Gallery; a Place in which few of our Readers ever sit.

That such theatrics do continue to affect the Upper Gallery is clear from Partridge's subsequent reaction to a staging of *Hamlet*, when he believes the ghost is real. Fielding's digression on superstition before introducing the gypsies does more than mock the foolishness of the past, or of such survivals as Partridge. It suggests that manners change unevenly, moving from society in general to a few holdouts in the upper gallery. Before introducing another kind of survival, then, Fielding is at considerable pains to remind us of history's sedimentation.

Peter Carlton has observed that "the utopian nature of the gypsy Kingdom is matched by its geographical setting: Jones and Partridge . . . stumble across the gypsy camp in the middle of nowhere." Indeed, Jones and Partridge seem to cross a threshold by entering the camp, entering another kind of space, which Fielding's delaying digression emphasizes. But while Fielding's gypsies are without a home, they are not without a history; he traces their lineage to Egypt. As Battestin has shown, Fielding's use of Egyptian history, his presentation of a rogue society as utopian, and even his comparison of Egyptian absolutism to Jacobitism have analogues among his contemporaries. But Fielding's choice of a gypsy camp in particular, given the theme of homelessness and exile throughout the work, must surely have a larger purpose than a conventional inversion of social norms.

Fielding's Gypsy King would seem to be the epitome of wise governance. He judges Partridge not by his act—adultery—but by the circumstances of the act—the husband's apparent desire to trick Partridge into paying amends. And yet, having opened up the possibility of an ideal absolute monarchy, Fielding appears anxious to close it down.

First, in an uncharacteristically hortatory tone, he suggests that only "two or three" monarchs have ever had sufficient moderation, wisdom, and goodness to rule absolutely, and traces the origin of *jus divinum* to the "original Grant to the Prince of Darkness." Then, as if realizing that the apparent success of the gypsy monarchy for "a tousand or two tousand Year" contradicts his argument, he relegates the gypsy utopia to nowhere because the gypsies differ in a "material respect":

Nor can the Example of the Gypsies, tho' possibly they may have long been happy under this Form of Government, be here urged; since we must remember the very material Respect in which they differ from all other People, and to which perhaps this their Happiness is entirely owing, namely, that they have no false Honours among them; and that they look on Shame as the most grievous Punishment in the World.

In the first instance, Fielding's tone may derive from his model, a sermon by Bishop Hoadly. In the second instance, however, Fielding reverts to irony and his usual form of causality. Whereas Hoadly's argument locates the problem of *jus divinum* in the corruptibility of the Great Man who becomes a tyrant, Fielding's afterthought attributes it to "false Honours" in general. The "material Respect" in which the gypsies differ, then, is largely a question of *manners*. But Fielding's apparent discomfort with giving the gypsy utopia any real historical existence is evident in his need to provide two different—and not entirely consonant—arguments against absolutism. He does not appear to be fully in control of his materials.

But Fielding's discomfort may arise from more than the spectre of absolutism. If Fielding's "useful and uncommon doctrine" is the necessity of judging a *situation*, then the Gypsy King would seem to have applied it in his judgment of Partridge. That kind of judgment, perhaps, seems unattainable to him; it is certainly questionable whether Tom Jones has attained that level. Fielding's ambiguous use of the word "prudence" may reflect his ambivalence about the real possibilities of true prudence and judgment, as would his coyness in enunciating the doctrine. Prudence and judgment seem to be limited by the existing state of *manners*; thus he argues that the Gypsy King's perfection is owing to the absence of "false Honours" and the efficacy of "Shame." The "nowhere" of the Gypsy utopia is essentially outside of historical space; the Gypsy King has no need of calculating the effects of changing manners. But Prudence for Tom Jones must be both the art of life and the art of thriving because his actions take place within real and changing historical spaces.

While it is not altogether clear whether Tom is a more moral character at the end of the novel than when he first falls in love with Sophia, and this has been the subject of much critical debate, he is certainly more experienced and better able to thrive. He is now a fully modern individual—and he had not been one on Mazard-Hill—precisely because he now has a competent understanding of manners and the space of modernity. His "feel for the game" has improved to the point that, rather than being subject to Blifil's machinations, he is ultimately able—though not without setbacks—to manipulate the outcome of Nightingale's romance with Nancy, and to turn the tables on Lady Bellaston. But his moral improvement we have only on self-report. He informs Allworthy near the end of the work that his "Punishment hath not been thrown away upon me" and that he

will make it "the whole Business of my future Life to deserve that Happiness you now bestow on me." But this declaration bears a striking resemblance to earlier repentances, both to Allworthy and to Sophia. It suggests no remarkable insight into his own actions; his basic moral outlook is little altered from the time that he attempted to protect Black George for illegally shooting a partridge. He remains essentially good hearted, only somewhat less impetuous.

But his manners have changed. He has gained, in Fielding's terms, experience, and if he has also gained prudence, it is as a result of becoming acquainted with the manners of others. His teachers as a youth were Square and Thwackum, and the also good hearted but easily manipulated Allworthy, and if his education was limited, it was not so much by Square and Thwackum's hypocrisy, or even by their one-sidedness toward religion or philosophy, but instead by their excessive theoretical bias. Even Allworthy is unable to give him the lessons of experience, since Allworthy seems not to have learned them himself. Tom's worldly teachers then, are characters like Partridge and Lady Bellaston, who teach him how to negotiate unfamiliar territory. As a child, for example, his failure to observe polite deference had gotten him into trouble, but Lady Bellaston teaches him how to dissemble politely. The Man of the Hill and the Gypsy King teach him largely negative lessons—they teach him what is not possible in the modern world. However, such moral lessons are not inconsistent with a view of morality that is less concerned with individual actions than with the larger chain of circumstances surrounding social interactions. Jones's moral education, then, consists not simply in learning *how* to act, but to recognize *where he is acting*.

Source: George A. Drake, "Historical Space in the 'History of': Between Public and Private in *Tom Jones*," in *ELH*, Vol. 66, No. 3, Fall 1999, pp. 707-37.

Critical Essay #5

In the following essay, Brooks-Davies discusses the intersections of the character of Tom Jones, the political context of the work, and the development of the novel by Fielding.

The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling is generally acclaimed as Henry Fielding's masterpiece in its combination of dazzlingly virtuoso plot (Coleridge described it as one of "the three most perfect ever planned"), comic range, irony, variety of moods, and emotional and psychological intensity. It was Fielding's third major novel, born of mature reconsideration of the formula of the "comic epic poem in prose" which he had pioneered in *Joseph Andrews* and of deeply disturbing experiences, both public and domestic. The public experience was the threat to the Hanoverian monarchy and the constitution that it represented by the Jacobite rebellion of 1745; the domestic one was the death of his wife, Charlotte, whom he remembers explicitly in the opening chapter of Book 13 and upon whom the character of the novel's heroine, Sophia Western, is loosely based.

Brilliant intricacy of plot is matched in *Tom Jones* by corresponding intricacy of formal structure, for Fielding still believed, along with such conservative contemporaries as Pope, in the symbolic value of literary structure as a model of providential order (a notion inherited from Renaissance neo-Platonism). Its 18 books—the total alludes to the number of books in the first edition of Archbishop Fénelon's influential prose epic *Télémaque* (1699), a moralised "continuation" of Homer's *Odyssey*, and thus marks Fielding's novel, too, as a journey novel in the Odysseyan tradition—are arranged in a system of complex symmetries in accordance with ancient epic practice: three sets of six books deal respectively with Tom's upbringing in the country and expulsion by his Uncle Allworthy; his journey to London; and his experiences in London and return home. Within this broad symmetrical array the reader is led to detect further symmetries: the first and last books both have 13 chapters, and there are explicit cross-references between them; the most complicated (and celebrated) episode in the novel in which all the travellers' paths cross, that at the Upton inn, occupies the centre of the novel (Books 9 and 10); interpolated stories correspond to each other exactly: the Man of the Hill's long tale in Book 8 (the second book of the central section of six books) is answered by Mrs. Fitzpatrick's in Book 11 (second from the end of the central block); this block opens with the Quaker's tale of his daughter (Book 7, chapter 10) and concludes with the thematically relevant puppet show (Book 12, chapter 5).

Such elaborateness marks a refinement on the structural complexities of *Joseph Andrews* and *Jonathan Wild*; but whereas in *Joseph Andrews* especially structure had obviously reinforced the work's comic affirmation of an essentially benevolent universe, in *Tom Jones* it seems, in its hectic over-determinateness, to be almost as mocking as the symmetries and coincidences of a late Hardy novel. For it is a curiously dark and anxious work. Unlike any other novel of its century which claims to be about lost, foundling, or wandering heroes, it explores loss and displacement in an almost existential way. Tom's foundling status isn't just a plot *motif* but, rather, the *meaning* of

the novel; and it isn't merely a device for exploring human benevolence (or lack of it) in relation to the underprivileged (something Fielding was deeply committed to): it is, instead, a way into areas of considerable psychological complexity. For one thing, the novel generates a double for Tom in the form of the legitimate child Blifil, whose father soon dies and who is, in fact, Tom's half-brother. He is born in Book 2 and spends the rest of the novel blighting Tom's life. The question the novel raises is, who (or what), exactly, *is* Blifil? Is he metaphysical evil? Is he a psychological double for Tom? For it is clear that he is no mere rogue, and the prefatory essays to each of the novel's books in which Fielding discusses his theory and practice of writing are designed to implicate us as readers in the varieties of the novel's self-questioning.

Then again, Tom is offered various reputed and symbolic fathers and mothers (Allworthy himself, Partridge, Jenny Jones, Lady Bellaston), so that the question the novel raises seems to be not so much who are (or were) Tom's parents? but, rather, what is the significance of parents for the child's sense of identity? The incest motif—Tom jumps into bed at Upton with Jenny Jones (now known as Jenny Waters) and is later told that he has made love to his own mother—suggests, as do several plot parallels, that we are in the territory of Sophocles's *Oedipus*: like Sophocles, Fielding suggests that there is some necessary relationship between paternal absence and the discovery of maternal identity through sexual knowledge.

The profundity of the novel's questioning of the foundling's status (its working title had been simply *The Foundling*) is evident even from names. Blifil is known by his father's surname: he has nominal legitimacy but is morally illegitimate. Tom is always known by his supposed mother's surname, Jones. But in fact his mother was Bridget Allworthy, and his father was a passing visitor called Will Summer. His is a haunting name, but he, described in a couple of sentences only, turns out to be the non-discovery of the book. For it is the psychological journey to the parent (or so this text tells us) that is more important than parental identity itself. And why should Tom retain his mother's name? At the very least, this fact questions the status of inherited patronymics.

And it is here that the psychological plot implicates political discourse. For while Tom quests for his parents, Bonny Prince Charlie has invaded and the constitutional monarchy is threatened. Tom enlists on the side of the Hanoverians; his companion Partridge is a Jacobite, believing firmly in the divine right of the ejected Stuarts. The constitutional monarch is a benevolent father; the Stuarts, accused of tyranny by their opponents, regarded themselves as the fathers of their country. Tom's quest for his father raises questions about our perception and acceptance of kingship in the realm. The Man of the Hill irrupts into the action in Books 8 and 9 to tell of the expulsion of James II in 1688 and to draw the parallel with the invasion of 1745.

Tom's persecution and quest are paralleled by Sophia Western's. She, daughter of Allworthy's Jacobite neighbour Squire Western, is intended for Blifil but loves Tom. Imprisoned by her father (Fielding is influenced here by Richardson's monumental text of female persecution, *Clarissa*, 1747-48), she escapes, and their journeys shadow each other until, finally, misunderstandings cleared away, they marry. The significance of her name (Sophia = Wisdom in Greek) is relevant but not primary; for as her cousin

and travelling companion Harriet Fitzpatrick reveals in her autobiographical tale in Book 11, woman's (and women's) history is to a large extent a story of domestic persecution, oppression, violence, and loneliness. Its message is, do not marry if you wish to remain in control of your destiny. Her tale, too, reveals parallels between domestic and constitutional politics. Sophia's part of *Tom Jones* conveys clear signals of female freedom: Tom cannot marry her until he recognises the woman's right to freedom from male hegemony; the Stuarts cannot reinherit the realm because they refused to negotiate their absolutist hegemony. It is in its working out of such perceptions that *Tom Jones*'s brilliance lies.

Source: Douglas Brooks-Davies, "*Tom Jones*: Novel by Henry Fielding, 1749," in *Reference Guide to English Literature*, 2d ed., edited by D. L. Kirkpatrick, Vol. 3, St. James Press, 1991, pp. 1893-94.

Critical Essay #6

In the following essay, Knight looks at the structure of Fielding's Tom Jones*.*

Mingled admiration and bewilderment at the plot of *Tom Jones* is a recurrent motif in the history of criticism on that novel, and one returns from reading each critical essay to the novel itself with a sense that the insights one has gathered, however valuable, remain inadequate to the rich texture that the novel possesses. Perhaps one of the criteria of a masterpiece is its refusal to be pinned down by any critical formulation of it, yet that same sense of wonder and joy at the work itself leads critics again to attempt to account for their perception of its richness and coherence. A similar motif in *Tom Jones* criticism has been complaint at precisely the failure, despite numerous and notable attempts, to explain the role of the plot in unifying the novel. At times the blame for this has been thrown on Fielding himself, at times on his critics. Even those who share Coleridge's famous view of the perfection of plot in *Tom Jones* have either dismissed it with a mechanical nod to its excellence or have tended to find it, in one way or another, insignificant.

The critique is variously articulated: for some the plot seems contrived and mechanical; the events fall into place too neatly, and a balanced sense of realism is lost. Thus David Goldknopf has recently claimed that the digressive elements of the novel and the author's intervening role as a commentator "as a *systematic procedure* for upgrading the applicability and stature of his work, . . . signalize his failure to integrate intelligence and imagination." Similarly, Irvin Ehrenpreis suggests that such repeated appearances as those of Sophia's pocket book and muff, or the attorney Dowling "imply that the main line of action has insufficient energy of its own to contain the numerous episodes of the story." Because of the symmetrical structure of the book, Ehrenpreis suggests, "one stops expecting development and tries to feel satisfied with a line of action that does not, in a cause and effect sense, lead anywhere." Ehrenpreis attempts to account for the plot by suggesting that it be regarded not in terms of "physical deeds" but in terms of "insight." "As in *Clarissa*, the dramatic moments in *Tom Jones* are moments of sudden understanding." The revelation of Tom's ancestry is, of course, the culmination of this process. I find this argument unconvincing, for unlike *Clarissa, Tom Jones* does not work through internal dramatization or psychological analysis of discovery, and the process of discovery itself merely throws us back to the patterns of coincidence, parallel, and symmetry that result in the discovery. Even Ehrenpreis finally suggests that "one can properly handle the complete design of *Tom Jones* as a fable illustrating the author's views of hypocrisy and candour, malice and benevolence." Plot, in *Tom Jones*, is not, then, Goldknopf and Ehrenpreis imply, satisfying in itself, but sustained by the lively mind and healthy morals of the author. Robert Alter, to cite another critic who writes incisively about Fielding, sees "virtually all of the action and dialogue, as well as the authorial comment" as referring to "one or another of a set of interrelated moral themes." Here again, the appreciation of plot, despite Alter's excellent discussion of the novel's structure, seems basically to come through an escape from the plot itself—not, in this case, through projecting the plot upon a person (the narrator) but through abstracting from it its thematic content and explaining it in terms of these abstractions.

Though it would be inaccurate to deny the importance of theme in *Tom Jones*, such an explanation of plot does not seem entirely to answer the charge that it is too circumscribed, too confined to action or manners, too intent, to use Dr. Johnson's analogy, on showing us the brilliance of the dial rather than the true springs and inner workings of the watch itself. "Perfect for what," Ian Watt asks of the plot, and answers, "Not, certainly, for the exploration of character and personal relations, since . . . the emphasis falls on the author's skillfully contrived revelation of an external and deterministic scheme."

This essay is an attempt to suggest that a way of accounting for the coherence of *Tom Jones*, particularly in the complex middle or "journey" books of the novel, lies in seeing and responding to multiple structures, distinguishable in their principles of organization, rather than viewing the novel through an Aristotelian concept of action, reading the novel in terms of a single concept of plot, or explaining it in terms of a moral view so large that, however well it may serve an abstract consideration of the novel, it fails to serve our specific sense of the novel itself.

In considering structure in *Tom Jones*, I shall be concerned primarily with the arrangement of events, rather than with such aspects as the narrator's role, verbal structures, and irony, aspects which can in themselves be considered intrinsic to structure but which have been the subjects of much previous study. In developing the notion of multiple structures in the arrangement of events and their significance for the perception of *Tom Jones*, it will be necessary to review some aspects of the structure of the first and last sections of the novel and then to concentrate in more detail on the middle section. I recognize that this survey covers some territory that has been explored, but some important elements of structure have been overlooked, others inadequately emphasized, and my conclusions depend upon what can be uncovered.

Critical Essay #7

At the outset Fielding describes the clear structure of the novel in terms of basic locale and its moral implications: the novel, Fielding claims, is based on a Horatian country-city antithesis, with the values of wholesomeness and honesty seated in Somerset, in contrast to the "French and Italian seasoning of affectation and vice which courts and cities afford." But the context for this moral categorization lies in the narrator's concern for human nature as his subject (it is human nature itself which is thus "dressed" by the setting) and in his emphasis on providing a description of the relation of his subject to the interests of his reader. He thus leaves out of his "Bill of Fare" the central third of his novel, the journey from Somerset to London. His description itself implies the more static nature of the beginning and end of the novel, and this is, in fact, the kind of structure we find—a structure which analyzes a specific environment, like a microcosm, in terms of its salient moral characteristics.

Yet one of the major jokes of Fielding's initial description is that its antithesis is really not true. Affectation and vice are no more a characteristic of the town than of the country, and natural goodness is no more easily discovered by a country justice than a city magistrate. Fielding thus compares two life-styles in order to reveal their basic unity, and it is ironically in the city rather than the country that the ultimate discoveries of the novel take place.

Fielding's basic technique of structure is also similar in the first and last thirds of the novel. Fielding develops his characters, as most critics have empasized, through contrast—Jones against Nightingale, Jones against Blifil; Sophia and Lady Bellaston, Sophia and Molly Seagrim; Western and Nightingale's father, Western and Allworthy. The list can be prodigiously extended, but Fielding's method of comparison is more complicated than this. His primary comparisons are not directly between characters so much as between ideas of or attitudes towards a pair of characters in the mind of a third who must work out his relation to them both. Thus Tom's great choice in the first third of the novel, a choice that perhaps does more to determine his identity and station than any further choice, is between Molly and Sophia, while Allworthy's choice is between Jones and Blifil. And in the last section, Sophia, who loves and fears she cannot have Tom, is rescued from Lord Fellamar only to be subjected to Blifil (and her father, who rescues her from Fellamar, continues to reject him for reasons of political prejudice rather than parental solicitude). Such comparisons and their implicit value thus become dramatized in terms of choice, though there are other specific kinds of comparison, such as that between Old Nightingale and Western, which do not derive meaning primarily from dramatic choice so much as from large parallel movements of action. One of the major characteristics of this device of structure is that it is self-extending: the reader becomes aware of its importance as a dominant organizing device of the novel and thus begins to read character and incident in terms of comparison. As he does so, the reader becomes himself an organizer of the plot of the novel. The importance of Fielding's "bill of fare" approach becomes evident, for the relationship between the reader and the material becomes woven into the structure of the novel as a unifying device.

In the first and last sections of the novel, Fielding develops his larger contrasts and his causal plot through the judicious introduction of character. Thus in the first book he introduces Allworthy's household, moving towards the marriage of Bridget and Captain Blifil, which he develops further in the second. In book III he develops the contrast between Tom and Blifil, as well as the secondary contrast between Thwackum and Square. Book IV begins with the introduction of Sophia and continues with the contrasting introduction of Molly Seagrim. Tom's choice between the two is resolved in book V, but book VI begins with the introduction of Mrs. Western, whose presence complicates the relationship between Sophia and Jones. The introduction of these characters is an element of the author's manipulation of the action, but the plot of the novel develops naurally in relation to their appearance.

The last third of the novel follows a similar pattern, in which the arrival of characters in London is a central organizing element. Tom arrives at the beginning of book XIII, and his attempts to deal with Mrs. Fitzpatrick and, through her, to find Sophia, put him in touch with Lady Bellaston, while at the same time his friendship with Nightingale and the Millers develops. The movement of this plot, through Tom's chance meeting with Sophia and Lady Bellaston's jealousy of her, is natural until Chapter 5 of Book XV, when Lord Fellamar's attempts upon Sophia are interrupted by the sudden introduction of Western, whose presence is explained, in terms of the plot which has developed in London, in the following chapter. Western's arrival reshapes the plot (as, to a lesser degree, does the arrival of his sister in Book XVI), but the action intensifies towards the apparent ruin of Jones as, in book XVI, Blifil and Allworthy arrive. By Book XVII, all the characters who know something of Tom's history are in London, and the plot moves to unravel his past. Thus the last books of the novel are based on the comic entanglement of a plot whose essential features are changed in their basic relation to one another by the arrival of further important characters. To a far greater degree than in the first section, the natural development of the plot through entrances is complicated by Fielding's use of coincidence in resolving the novel. But in this context, coincidence is itself appropriate and revealing, for each of the characters brings to his role at a given time in the course of the novel everything we know (and much we do not know) about him and his relation to Jones. Thus the activity of the reader in making connections, observing points of comparison, and drawing conclusions, is paralleled by the activity of the narrator in bringing his plot to a conclusion, and both stand as moral observers of the comic scene.

If the beginning and end of the novel are thus tightly organized in clear and natural ways, the same cannot be so immediately said for the middle. Instead of analyzing the moral implications of a static environment which connotes, however deceptively, a definite meaning, the scene shifts, both in time and place. While in the rest of the novel, the major events move clearly from the previous events, from the introduction of characters, and from the relationships between them, the middle third of the novel seems anecdotal and digressive. Events are not so clearly related to each other. It seems to make no difference that Tom meets the soldiers after his meeting with the Quaker rather than before. Moreover, comparisons of the sort that, earlier or later in the novel, are resplendent with potential meaning seem on the surface to be specious. Thus the reader can do little with much of the material, for its derivation from causal relations in plot or from the thematic development of character is unclear—and anyway, who

really cares about the Quaker, or Northerton, or the much discussed Man of the Hill? They appear and disappear without doing much more than revealing Jones as a reactor to external events and advancing him appropriately further towards London. The problem of explaining coherence in *Tom Jones* becomes largely, then, the problem of explaining structure in books VII through XII.

Critical Essay #8

In terms of Fielding's initial explanation of the novel, the middle third clearly acts, as most critics have noted, as a bridge between the Somerset and London scenes. The road section is loaded with comic incidents involving mistaken identity—scenes which, though not clearly related to one another, develop the novel's early concern for the perception of virtue and the relation between virtue and prudence. Indeed, they provide an expansion of this thematic material, for instead of the limited world of Somersetshire, Tom is perceived by and in turn perceives a number of quite different characters. As the scope of his perception and judgment widens, Tom's experience broadens and his character develops. Thus, in fact, the development of comparable events tends to move from Tom's Somersetshire experience towards anticipation of London. This arch-like structure itself focuses, as Digeon first noted, on the Inn at Upton as its keystone, the central event of the middle books which provides the "turn" given to the plot of the novel.

The analogy of an arch is both important and exact as a description of the middle books, for it implies several dimensions of movement that proceed simultaneously to arrive at a point that is different in distance but similar in height. In order to perceive more clearly the function of different structures in the middle third of *Tom Jones*, it is necessary to examine them separately within the general notion of this archlike structure.

Most obviously, perhaps, the structure of the middle books is geographically organized. We are aware at all times that the characters are "on the road," and both their actual and intended geographical positions are an index to their status as characters. But looked at more immediately, the geographical movement of the central books is not as orderly as the "arch" image implies. Tom's initial intention on leaving Allworthy's is to go to sea but his intention is thwarted by the ignorance of his guide, who takes him away from, rather than towards Bristol. Tom then meets the company of soldiers and changes his plans, thus setting his course more clearly on land but not towards London. He thus arrives at Gloucester and then at Upton. From Upton on, his purpose becomes clear: he sets forth "in quest of his lovely Sophia, whom he now resolved never to abandon the pursuit of." Sophia's arrival at Upton is, of course, the result of her determination to follow Jones. The geographical progression of the middle books thus depends on a basic definition of purpose in the travelers, and as the motives of each in approaching London become clearer, the resultant adventures in London begin to take shape. Thus the path to London represents, both internally and externally, a linear movement in the novel, from one point to another. The geographical movement of the novel is, then, a close analogue to the causal development of the plot (though distinguishable from it) and tends to focus, from among the complex of long-range and hidden relations, on the linear element of causality, in which the immediate cause leads to certain actions which themselves cause still further effects.

But once this linear emphasis is recognized, it becomes apparent that it cannot account for many of the events of the middle books. Certainly one can trace various links leading

from the novel's central chain of events and essential to it, but there are also events, particularly in Book XII, that do not fit into a causal pattern, even the long-range pattern that is resolved at the end of the novel, but which gather meaning from other kinds of pattern governing the novel.

The linear progression—both geographical and causal—is nonetheless so dominant a feature of the middle books that it tends to veil the fact that the temporal progression of the novel and the focus of its point of view are not linear, not moving in a continuous way towards a specific point. Thus the first two chapters of Book VII (after the introductory chapter) focus on Tom's predicament after leaving Allworthy's, while the next seven chapters turn to Sophia and bring her to the point of leaving her father's. The story then takes up Jones's journey and stays with him. Yet there are frequent interpolations: the story of the Lieutenant in VII, xii; the mutual self-revelations of Jones and Partridge in VIII, v and vi; the story of the Man of the Hill in VIII, xi-xv; and the account of how Mrs. Waters came to be attacked by Northerton in XI, vii. After the scene at the Upton Inn (during which Jones is seldom the center of revelation), the narrative moves backward in time for a summary of the events bringing Sophia to Upton (X, viii-ix), and the narrative then stays with Sophia through Book XI and the interpolated story of Mrs. Fitzpatrick. After XII, ii, where Western goes hunting, the story again turns to Jones and brings him to London. The general narrative movement of the central books is not, then, progressive and linear but follows instead a balanced pattern, alternating from Sophia to Tom and

set around the Upton scene. This pattern is itself mingled not only with the progressive pattern of causation and geography but also with the reversal of roles that takes place at Upton. Before Upton, Sophia was the pursuer of Tom, but after she leaves the inn, he becomes her pursuer, and the nature of the switch is ironically reinforced by Western's insistence on hunting (an example, in the Upton section, of imagistic patterns emerging onto the level of plot—further examples include the dinner of Tom and Mrs. Waters, as well as Sophia's leaving of her muff on Tom's bed). The overwhelming patterns of what I would call external symmetry (that is, symmetry of events) organized around the Upton scenes has been well summarized by other critics. It is important, in an analysis of multiple structures, to emphasize that mathematically there are two such patterns of symmetry. The book is divided into halves by the Upton section and into thirds according to geographical locale, and symmetrical repetition gains complexity by its appearance within these two systems. But the relation of such external symmetry to patterns in the handling of time and in the use of both Sophia and Tom as centers of revelation has not, I think, been sufficiently noted.

Such critics as Dorothy Van Ghent and V. S. Pritchett have made much of Fielding's use of summary and his ability to achieve dramatic immediacy of scene. In that respect the narrative of the middle books provides brilliant focus on the Upton scene. In Book VII, for example, the reader is sufficiently informed of Sophia's intentions to understand her sudden appearance at Upton, and at the end of Book X Fielding adds information from the past, in two summary chapters, which puts in perspective her behavior at Upton and focuses on her progress, the subject of Book XI.

The relation of the past to the present is perhaps the major comic feature of the scene at Upton. Jones is involved in an affair of the present when his real love emerges from the past (a past recent in time but remote in terms of events). The situation is complicated by the comic mistakes of Mr. Fitzpatrick and Squire Western, and these lead coincidentally to the revelation to Sophia of still another figure from her own past, Mrs. Fitzpatrick. But these interrelationships of past and present are themselves ironic in terms of later revelation—Partridge's misapprehension that Mrs. Waters, or Jenny Jones, is Tom's mother, and the final unravelling of Tom's birth. The past forms an almost inexhaustible pattern, enveloping the characters and their actions, and at the inside of this Chinese box arrangement of discovery rests Tom's true heritage. Thus one general element of the symmetry of the novel is its progressive movement both forward and backward in time. But this balancing of past and present rests upon a rather different sense of movement than a causal sequence of events, for behind these events rest their analogues in the past, as well as their hidden causes, and these reveal, once they are known, the true significance of the present. But these analogues are not the only kind of comparison focused by Fielding's use of symmetry in the middle section of the novel.

One element of this symmetry is the parallel development of Tom and Sophia. Indeed, the accidents of chance that throw their paths together—such as Sophia's encounter with Jones's guide and Jones's discovery of Sophia's wallet (two happenstances which themselves balance symmetrically at either end of the middle section)—ultimately work in the structure of the novel as they reflect on one level comparisons that are valid at deeper levels. Similar balances on either side of the Upton fulcrum are clear in focusing attention on similar aspects of Tom and Sophia: the comparable stories of the Man of the Hill and Mrs. Fitzpatrick have been frequently noted and analyzed, but in addition Sophia's incomplete revelation to Mrs. Fitzpatrick recalls Jones's similar revelation to Partridge; the landlord's supposition that Sophia is Jenny Cameron echoes Partridge's false impression of Jones's politics; and Sophia's loss of 100 pounds corresponds to Jones's loss of Allworthy's gift (and Jones's supposed honesty contrasts with Black George's supposed dishonesty, just as his purposelessness at finding himself virtually penniless contrasts to the purpose he finds along with Sophia's pocketbook). In themselves these and other such parallels have different values: some merely suggest interesting similarities, others can be analyzed in detail. Taken together, they reveal the richness of texture in the central books, and a single chapter, looked at in some detail, can indicate the pervasiveness of these parallels and their functions in relating the stories of Tom and Sophia to each other.

Chapter viii of Book XI, for example, deals with two major events—Mrs. Honour's violent reaction to the discovery that her landlord has mistaken Sophia for Jenny Cameron ("that nasty stinking wh—re that runs around the country with the Pretender") and the arrival of a "noble peer," a friend of Mrs. Fitzpatrick who offers room in his coach to take the ladies to London. Both of these episodes have slight significance in the causal sequence of the novel, but both strongly recall Sophia's relation to Jones. Honour's language to the landlord (" 'My lady!' says I," . . . is meat for no Pretenders. She is a young lady of as good fashion, and family, and fortune as any in Somersetshire," . . .) is reminiscent of her anger at the landlady who had earlier carried on about Tom's

proclaimed love for Sophia (" 'What saucy fellow,' cries Honour, 'told you anything of my lady?' 'No saucy fellow,' answered the landlady, 'but the young gentleman you enquired after, and a very pretty young gentleman he is, and he loves Madam Sophia Western to the bottom of his soul.' 'He love my lady! I'd have you know, woman, she is meat for his master.' " . . .). Fielding extends this comparison by explaining Honour's motives in terms of a footman who fought for the honor of Nell Gwynn, but the analogy has reference to Sophia as well as Honour because the comparison to Jenny Cameron is symbolically appropriate to Sophia. Like Jenny Cameron, she is beautiful and ladylike, but furtive and fearful of discovery; and Jones is a metaphoric equivalent to the Pretender, at least insofar as he is a pretender to the love of Sophia and all that means in terms of social position and moral rectitude. But the reader learns, from the arrival of the "noble peer," that the landlord's suspicion of the ladies' romantic situation, though inaccurate in specific detail, is accurate in other respects which Sophia is unaware of. Harriet's description of her relationship to this gentleman echoes Sophia's incomplete account of her escape from her father, as well as the similar Jones-Partridge exchange in VIII, v and vi, while the peer's conclusion that Sophia, like Mrs. Fitzpatrick, is also escaping the tyranny of a husband recalls both the landlord's mistake and the several mistakes at Upton. The culmination of the chapter comes in Harriet's comment that the peer, a married man, is

entirely constant to the marriage bed. "Indeed," added she, "my dear Sophy, that is a very rare virtue amongst men of condition. Never expect it when you marry; for, believe me, if you do, you will certainly be deceived."

A gentle sigh stole from Sophia at these words, which perhaps contributed to form a dream of no very pleasant kind; but as she never revealed this dream to anyone, so the reader cannot expect to see it here.

The chapter ends, then, by reinforcing Tom's relevance to the incidents of the chapter, themselves parallel in nature, by the strongest parallel in Sophia's mind.

Such a specific analysis reveals two essential kinds of comparison. Fielding's approach to character, here as elsewhere, is indirect in revealing the inner life of his characters. Thus he playfully does not "tell" us what Sophia's dream is, though the context makes its nature fairly clear. Some of the comparisons focus indirectly on the inner life of character, revealing what the narrator conceals or the characters do not wish to articulate. Other comparisons fill the more conventional function of providing frames of reference in terms of which we can perceive the moral situations of the characters at given points in the novel. Thus the Jenny Cameron-Sophia comparison broadens to include Nell Gwynn and Mrs. Fitzpatrick until Mrs. Fitzpatrick's mendacious remarks on male chastity bring both Tom's and Sophia's intentions into clearer focus, both in Sophia's mind and the reader's.

But beyond this specific sense of the richness of texture in the comparisons of the novel, the larger symmetrical comparisons that arch across the Upton scenes suggest the significance of Sophia's development as a secondary narrative line, parallel to Tom's

development. The external parallels of Jones and Sophia in the central books are fairly straightforward elements of the novel's plot, and both characters move, in parallel fashions shaped by Fielding's handling of his centers of revelation, from country to city —both books XI and XII pointing towards the London episodes. But both Jones and Sophia journey as well towards their own marriage and ultimate return to Somersetshire. For both characters the journey embodies the problem of learning to express their inner feelings in a world of convention dominated by quite different values than those associated with these feelings. The journeys of both involve encounters with this world of convention, both personally and vicariously. Moreover, Sophia is accompanied by Honour, Jones by Partridge, and both companions distort the nature and motives of their masters.

Thus both face a double problem of perception and action—of how to behave in a corrupt society and how to perceive and reveal their own goodness within the conventions of that society. Their eventual accommodation to these conventions, particularly in terms of sexual and family life, makes possible their marriage and the conclusion of the novel. (Sophia's final acceptance of Jones is a satisfying example of her ability to use convention in order to express her own feeling. In the fashion of a prudent heroine of romance, guarded by "Daunger," she tentatively accepts Jones, but only after insisting on a year's period of probation and good conduct. When her father insists on her marrying immediately, however, she happily gives way to the convention of filial duty.) Fielding's symmetrical handling of point of view in the middle books of the novel and his use of comparable incidents on either side of the Upton scene thus widen the significance of Tom's moral progress to include that of Sophia and thereby to achieve a clearer picture of both.

The preceding discussion of structures in the middle section of *Tom Jones* reveals, then, four distinguishable patterns: 1) the linear pattern of causal sequence, analogous to the geographical movement of characters in the central books; 2) a non-linear pattern of causation, concerning the hidden causes of events, implicit in the enveloping pattern of time, and resolved, finally, as the various characters emerge in London to reveal Tom's story; 3) a symmetrical pattern of narration, based on the alteration of Tom and Sophia as central characters and on the reversal of hunter-hunted roles after the inn at Upton; 4) a symmetrical pattern of corresponding events, arranged around the Upton scenes and pointing backwards and forwards towards the Somerset and London scenes. These methods are in themselves controlled and ordered within the general structure of the novel. But an accurate view of the complexities of the middle books must recognize further kinds of structure as well. Among these are a number of *adhoc* parallels which focus on specific aspects of character without functioning structurally in the large movements of the novel. Some of the comparisons I noted in XI, viii work this way, and in this way we can regard the Northerton-Jones parallel. (Tom replaces Northerton as Mrs. Waters' lover, and, although Northerton's jesting about Sophia is the initial cause of their fight, Tom's own indiscreet use of her name is also improper and injurious to her reputation. Thus Tom, the novel's sympathetic hero, is briefly seen to share qualities with one of its least sympathetic characters.)

In addition to *adhoc* parallels are such devices of "rhythm" (in E. M. Forster's sense) as Sophia's muff, which are important single patterns but do not otherwise fit into an ordered arrangement of parts (playing, therefore, an intermittent rather than regular role in the structure of the novel); important also are the similar recurrent patterns of imagery —such as those of eating, clothing, and hunting—and recurrent literary allusions, particularly to epic and chivalric works. The importance of the developing relation of the narrator to the reader as an element of structure in the novel has frequently been commented upon.

Thus, in addition to the four major structuring patterns I have noted, there are a variety of different subsidiary devices of structure to which the reader must respond. Taken together, as I have suggested in my analysis of XI, viii, they constitute a rich texture of allusions—forward and backward in time, back and forth in the linear structure of the novel, towards the inner state of characters, towards external judgments by the author and reader, and towards the novel itself as a literary type analogous in structure and purpose to other literary types. Though these allusions may point, as Alter, Sacks, and others have suggested, towards theme, the complexity of structure is not echoed in an analogous complexity of theme.

Critical Essay #9

One attempt to explain the complexity of these structures has been to speak of *Tom Jones* as a battleground for conflicting forces of literary mode or literary history. David Goldknopf claims that "Fielding was trying to bring both the picaresque exuberance which was his natural bent and the new, aggressive empiricism of his age under a discipline fundamentally unsympathetic to both, the neoclassical canon." But if we see the picaresque and empiricist elements of the novel as reflected in its dynamic, linear movement and the neo-classical elements as functioning in its symmetry—admittedly a somewhat simplified account of the middle books—the primary conclusion to be drawn is not that this conflict is a failure on the author's part but that it is a tension that is itself structured into the novel, an aspect of conscious design rather than unconscious impropriety. Nor is it, I think, valuable to consider "the neo-classical canon" as implying a sterile and rigid order. Seen as an aspect of structural technique, it is a method of putting certain elements of experience into particular kinds of relationship to one another. But rather than providing merely a static form, such juxtaposition of events insists, as I have suggested in the case of Fielding's comparisons, on the active participation of the reader in discovering and puzzling over the connections. The "narrator" is not, then, in total control of the novel as perceived by the reader, for he remains silent about, and ostensibly unaware of, a variety of these connections.

If the novel is regarded as a thing to be read, the common architectural, Palladian image of *Tom Jones* becomes insignificant: the reader of a novel, unlike the viewer of a building, must make his connections in the medium of time, depending not only upon observation but upon memory and his ability to generalize and hence to perceive the basis of comparison. The reader is thus left with a variety of structural devices which he must perceive and classify, and to which he must respond, always revising his perceptions and responses as new evidence in the novel comes into play. In this respect the process of reading *Tom Jones* never ends, for new possibilities become apparent on each rereading. One of the delights, then, of the diverse multiple structures of *Tom Jones* lies in the reader's sense of his own paradoxical position: he is engulfed in the formal structures of the novel, yet these formal structures are so diverse that they are beyond his ability to control at any one point in time; he repeatedly encounters balanced configurations, yet the stasis of these balances continually works against elements of surprise and the progressive movement of causality in the plot itself. The reader is thus perpetually in the process of discovering a form that extends beyond him, and his progress in achieving that discovery parallels the discoveries of the characters and the ordering of the author. Thus, though the novel ends, one's reading of the novel does not, and unity, in this context, becomes not something the novel "has" in the sense that a picture "has" composition, but a quality that is always in the process of creation.

The concept of unity thus seems less important than the experience of totality. Fielding's use of multiple structures enabled him to create a kind of novel unusually broad in scope; and in terms of the history of the novel, *Tom Jones* was a remarkable achievement. Fielding's concerns for the nature of social morality, for the experience of maturation, for the relation of sex to love, for the way people think and draw conclusions

or make judgments, for the relation of motive to act, of appearance to reality, of art to human nature—all these are encompassed in the novel and viewed complexly, often in relation to one another, through an encompassing multiplicity of structures. As Sheridan Baker has pointed out, the effect of the contrived aspects of plot in *Tom Jones* is to distance us from the material, thereby achieving a comic, even ironic detachment. But the comic view plays against our involvement in the novel as process and mingles with the richness of the fictive world revealed in the novel and embodied in the brilliant, multi-faceted movement of its form.

Source: Charles A. Knight, "Multiple Structures and the Unity of *Tom Jones*," in *Criticism*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, Summer 1972, pp. 227-42.

Adaptations

Three film versions of *Tom Jones* have been made in Britain. A silent film made in 1917 was directed by Edwin J. Collins and starred Langhorn Burton as Tom. A 1963 version was directed by Tony Richardson and starred Albert Finney as Tom and Susannah York as Sophia; it is available on videotape. A 1976 film entitled *The Bawdy Adventures of Tom Jones* was directed by Cliff Owen and starred Nicky Henson as Tom and Madeline Smith as Sophia; it, too, is available on video.

A television miniseries entitled *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, also made in Britain, appeared in 1997. It was directed by Metin Hüseyin and starred Max Beesley as Tom and Samantha Morton as Sophia. This version is also available on video.

Penguin Books released an unabridged audio version of the novel in 1997, with Robert Lindsay as reader. Abridged versions are available from Highbridge Classics (1998, John L. Sessions, reader) and Media Books (1999, Edward Fox, reader).

Topics for Further Study

Make a list of Tom's virtues and vices. Do you think that virtue or vice is dominant in his character? Does this change in the course of the story? Explain your answers.

In what ways is Tom like young people today? In what ways is he different? What similar challenges does he face, and what challenges of his are very different from today's?

Do some research to learn about country life and life in London in the mid-1700s. Then decide how realistic *Tom Jones* is in its portrayal of life in England. Write an essay in which you discuss some realistic aspects of the novel and some aspects that are not historically accurate.

Do you think that Sophia made a good choice in marrying Tom? Why or why not?

Choose the names of ten characters in *Tom Jones* and tell why each one is appropriate. Consider such things as the meanings and the sounds of the names and how these relate to the characters' traits.

Compare and Contrast

Mid-1700s: England is a largely agricultural nation and is making great advances in agricultural productivity. Farmers are discovering the value of crop rotation, and better farming tools, such as ploughs and seed drills, are being developed.

Today: England is largely industrial and commercial and imports most of its food. The economy is based on transportation, communications, and the production of steel, petroleum, coal, and electricity.

Mid-1700s: England is ruled by King George II and his appointed prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole. The king rules a farflung empire that includes not only colonies in America, India, and elsewhere but also parts of Germany, where he spends much of his time. Walpole, therefore, has great power and authority in England.

Today: England is ruled by Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair, leader of the Labour Party. The role of the monarch has shrunk over the centuries, and England's prime minister is effectively the country's leader.

Mid-1700s: With the spread of the Enlightenment, many people question religious teachings that had long been considered above question. Increasingly, people believe that reason is a better guide than blindly accepted doctrines. Some reject Roman Catholicism and other forms of organized religion in favor of deism, a doctrine that God exists but that organized religion is not a source of truth. In *Tom Jones*, the two tutors personify the division between traditional religion and deism: Thwackum is an Anglican, whereas Square is a deist.

Today: In September 2001, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the Roman Catholic cardinal for England and Wales, tells the National Conference of Priests that Christianity is nearly a dead religion in Britain, having been replaced by materialism, sensuality, selfishness, and "New Age" beliefs.

What Do I Read Next?

Pamela (1740), by Samuel Richardson, is said to have been the first best-selling novel in history. It is the story of a virtuous servant girl and her valiant efforts to escape the relentless advances of her employer. The story is told through the girl's letters. Fielding thought the novel was highly overrated, and his first two novels were parodies of it.

Shamela (1741) is the first of Fielding's parodies of *Pamela*. Fielding, too, structured his story as a series of letters, but his heroine, far from being an innocent, is lusty and manipulative.

Joseph Andrews (1742) is another, more ambitious, parody of *Pamela*. This time, Fielding has changed the protagonist to a male servant—the brother of Pamela—and the predatory employer is Lady Booby. This novel is considered the forerunner of *Tom Jones*.

Don Quixote de la Mancha, by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, was first published in Spanish in two parts in 1605 and 1615 and in English in 1612 and 1620. The hilarious tale is one of the most loved novels of all time. *Tom Jones* shares some of its picaresque elements, and its plot centered on a symbolic journey.

Moll Flanders (1722), another picaresque novel, was written by Daniel Defoe, who, along with Fielding, is considered one of the important originators of the English novel. Defoe's novel, too, is the story of a character who grows up without parents. Defoe's Moll Flanders, though, is handed very different circumstances than is Tom Jones and takes a very different route in life.

Vanity Fair, by William Makepeace Thackeray, was published almost exactly one hundred years after *Tom Jones*, in 1848. Thackeray's classic novel deals with some of the same issues and human vices as Fielding's—vanity and hypocrisy, especially as they are encouraged by society—but his characters are more reprehensible and his novel is darker, though far from humorless.

Twentieth-Century Interpretations of "Tom Jones" (1968), edited by Martin Battestin, is a collection of essays by modern critics who have differing views of the novel.

Further Study

Battestin, Martin C., and Ruth E. Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life*, Routledge, 1990.

This book is considered the definitive biography of Fielding.

Dudden, Homes, *Henry Fielding: His Life, Work, and Times*, Oxford University Press, 1952.

A comprehensive two-volume work, this book examines Fielding's writing in the contexts of his society and his personal life.

Waller, Maureen, *1700: Scenes from London Life*, Four Walls, Eight Windows, 2000.

This book presents a huge amount of detail about daily life (and death) in eighteenth-century London, focusing on where people lived and worked, how they behaved, what they wore and ate, and how they suffered from illness and injury. The book is made up of vignettes drawn from the author's research and by excerpts from contemporary diarists, novelists, and commentators.

Watt, Ian, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, University of California Press, 1957.

This volume looks at the early development of the novel and the roles played by Fielding and his contemporaries Defoe and Richardson.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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