

FIELDING'S BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Henry Fielding was born on April 22, 1707. He had aristocratic connections as a kinsman of the earl of Denbigh and the second cousin of Lady Wortley Montagu. His mother's family belongs to the wealthy country gentlemen. His first play was Love in Several Masques which was acted at Drury Lane in 1728. Four plays were written afterwards. The Author's Farce; and the Pleasures of the Town consists of two parts; the first part describes about the bad luck of a young writer about town and the second part is concerned with many of the absurdities of the day. Tom Thumb is an amusing parody of the heroic play. The Miser, although it is greatly influenced by Molière's L'Avare, has its own originality.

When he was 27, Fielding married Charlotte Craddock, who was the inspiration of Fielding's character Amelia. At that time he was a famous playwright who had written sixteen plays; some of them were highly successful. Then, he stopped writing plays because of Walpole's Licensing act which prevented him developing satiric and topical comedy. However, his dramatic career was greatly useful to his novel writing later. He became the editor of The Champion, a periodical which published some good writing.

The main cause of Fielding's start in writing novels was Richardson's Pamela which was published in 1740. Pamela's success annoyed him greatly because he was against Richardson's moral teaching and literary technique in that book. Although Fielding did not admit that he was the author of An Apology for the life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, there is no doubt that he was. Shemela is an

amusing parody of Pamela; it is not a great piece of literary work but it is interesting as a parody. So also was The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams which was written in 1742. Joseph Andrews begins as a parody of Pamela answering to Richardson's literary point of view and morality. Fielding also invented a new genre of literature "comic epic in prose" which partly resulted from his experience as a comic playwright. This new genre is similar to comedy. In 1743, Fielding published his Miscellanies, a collection of three volumes in prose and verse. The most interesting are two prose satires: A Journey From This World to the Next and The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great. The later is a mock-heroic biography of Wild, a notorious thief. Fielding's satire goes beyond Wild, including the great people of his time.

His wife died in 1744 and in 1747 he married his first wife's maid, Mary Daniel, who gave him a son shortly afterward. In 1749, The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling appeared to the public. Like Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones is written with a romantic plot. Tom, who does not know his real parentage, loves the beautiful Sophia Western and through various adventures and difficulties is able to marry her. In this novel, Fielding gives a vivid picture of England in the mid-eighteenth century. It is a great piece of art well-known for its perfect plot.

Just before Tom Jones was published, Fielding was appointed a Justice of the peace at the Bow Street Court. He earned only a small sum of money from his position because he was honest and refused to

get money by trading in justice. He highly respected justice and worked seriously; this can be seen in his Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury in which he portrays a dark picture of London morals. His Enquiry Into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers is interesting and emphasizes Fielding's serious desire to reform the social conditions of London. He helped reorganize the undeveloped police force and put an end to the night attacks and highway robberies. He became more interested in religion and his literary taste also changed. His letter written to Richardson congratulating him on his Clarissa proves Fielding's honesty and generosity as a critic.

Fielding became less lighthearted when he wrote Amelia in 1751. The heroine, Amelia, is the perfect wife of a good but weak young man, Booth. Booth cannot resist any temptation, such as women, gambling and dueling. Amelia lacks the cheerfulness of Fielding's early works but it is the first novel of reform. After Amalia, Fielding published The Covent-Garden Journal, which was a series of periodical essays emphasizing Fielding's reforming intentions. The revised version of The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great and the Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon described Fielding's last and hopeless search for health. He died in Lisbon on October 8, 1754 at the age of forty-seven.

NOTES



PART I

1. George Saintsbury, The English Novel (London, 1913), pp. 86-87.
2. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (London: Chatto & Windus Co., 1963), p. 173.
3. Ibid., p. 219.
4. Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (London: Ginn Press, 1954), I, 71.
5. Dr. Samuel Johnson, Johnsonian Miscellanies, ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), II, 190, 251.
6. Watt, op. cit., p. 219.

PART II

1. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (London: Chatto & Windus Co., 1963), p. 251.
2. Maynard Mack, "Joseph Andrews and Pamela," Fielding, ed. Ronald Paulson (Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 54.

3. Ibid., p. 56.
4. Ibid., p. 57.
5. Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 76.
6. Ibid., p. 80.
7. Samuel Richardson, Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, IV, 286: probably written late in 1749.

PART III

1. An English comic actor, dramatist and theater manager. He was attacked on grounds of morality and indecency by Jeremy Collier, in his famous Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, and, on literary and artistic grounds by Fielding. In 1730, he was made poet laureate, an appointment that was severely attacked by his fellow writer, Pope in the Dunciad (where he is enthroned as King of Dullness), being only one of many who belittle him.
2. Eleanor N. Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1967), p. 68.

3. Supporter of James II of England after his abdication in 1688, or of his son.

PART IV

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Miscellanies, aesthetic and Literary (London, 1885), p. 339.

2. Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (London: Gainsborough Press, 1954), I, 51.

3. Samuel Richardson, Correspondence, ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld (London: Richard Phillips, 1804), VI, 154.

4. John S. Coolidge, Fielding and 'Conservation of Character,' p. 250.

5. Andrew Wright, Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast (London: Chatto & Windus Co., 1965), p. 56.

PART V

1. 'Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility,' originally published in ELH reprinted in James L. Clifford, ed., Eighteenth Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism (New York, 1959), p. 312.

2. Irvin Ehrenpreis, Fielding: Tom Jones (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1964), pp. 47f.
3. Frederic T. Blanchard, Fielding the Novelist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), pp. 320-321.
4. Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 138.

PART VI

1. Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (London: Gainsborough Press, 1954), I, 76.
2. Samuel Coleridge, Works, ed. W.G.T. Shedd (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), IV, 381.

PART VII

1. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (London: Chatto & Windus Co., 1963), p. 287.
2. Andrew Wright, Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast (London: Chatto & Windus Co., 1965), p. 43.

3. Frederic T. Blanchard, Fielding the Novelist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), p. 453.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 491.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 500.

6. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

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244-246.

