

Social Realism in Henry Fielding's "The History of Tom Jones a Foundling"

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Abstract:

Henry fielding was born at Sharpham Park, Glastonbury. His father was a third son of John Fielding and he was the fifth son of an earl of Desmond. The Desmond were a younger branch of the family of Denbigh. The house of fielding claimed kindred with that of Hapsburg. It had ranked among English gentry since the twelfth century and in the century before the novelist birth. It had been ennobled by two peerages, the Earldom of Denbigh in England and of Desmond in Ireland. Henry fielding was the great grandson of the first earl of Desmond of this creation but the course unconnected with the great Geraldines. They came to an end when they rebelled against Elizabeth. Henry Fiending wassent to a school at Elon. There he made friends with George. In the school Fielding acquired the knowledge classics. Then he went to Leydon to continue his studies. At the age of eighteen, Fielding fell in love with the daughter of a local merchant. Henry Fielding expressed his feelings in verse which later revised and published in his Miscellanies. Fielding's first play was produced in 1728. It was followed by his second play. For the next ten years he produced a large number of plays, of which 'Tom Thumb' a burlesque tragedy is the best. Fielding married Miss Charlotte Cradock of Salisbury. As his theatrical enterprises were interfered by a new legislation in 1737, Fielding turned to the law and was called to the bar in 1740. After the publication of the *Mscellanies* she devoted himself to law. In 1744, his wife died and in 1747 he married

her maid, Mary Daniel, who proved to be a very good wife to him .In 1745 he started a paper and continued his career as a journalist. In 1747 he was made the Justice of Peace and in writing his novels *Tom Jones* and *Amelia*, Fielding who was well read and well educated has written poems and essays but in the history of English literature, he is well Known as a novelist and and dramatist. The Apology for *Mrs. Shamela Andrew* was his first novel. It was not successful. Fielding's four famous novels are *Joseph Andrew's Jonathan Wild*, *Tom Jones* and *Amelia*.

The eighteenth century saw the development of the British empire in America and in India. Pitt became Prime Minister in 1751, and took a strong imperialistic attitude. Clive laid the foundation of the British Empire in India by his victory at Plassey in 1757. But American struggled for freedom gained momentum and finally America achieved freedom in 1783. As the century drew to a close England had to deal with the French revolution, a mighty upheaval in human affairs.

According to Scott, Fielding considered his works as an experiment in British literature and therefore he chose to prefix a preliminary chapter to each book, explanatory of his own views and of the rules attached to this mode of composition. In the opinion of these comments brings us into the charmed circle of Fielding's friends and of his favorites among the poets and moralists of the poet, in addition to the fictional character. Fielding's intrusions have a distancing effect.

The readers are kept avert for the action and its significance. They also import reality of presentation to the novelist: they bring us into contact with Fielding's wisdom about human affairs which plays upon the deeds and characters of the novel. These incidental comments further introduce the readers to Fielding observant, reflective, humorous, tolerant, and humane mind. Fielding is considered the Father of the English Novel because his works for the first time reveal all those qualities and characters traits which we generally associate with the novel. It is true that some of these character traits appeared in the story writings of some of his predecessors, but never before Fielding do we find their deliberate and full expression at one place and in one significance, and make their proper use in his writings. In brief, Fielding gave to the novel a larger, wider, higher, and deeper range. He made it a piece of epic, of drama and of history besides romance which it had hitherto been. Saintsbury aptly remarks, "Almost every kind of novels exists potentially in his four Pritchett remarks. In Fielding we are haunted by almost the whole of the English novel. Page of Dickens, Thackeray, Meredith, even incongruously of Kipling, Galsworthy and Wodehouse, become confused in the general panorama". Digeon is of the view that "upto the time of Meredith and our most recent contemporaries, the English Novel has followed Fielding's law". The plot of Tom Jones has evoked the admiration of practically all critics. "What a master of composition Fielding was"! Exclaimed Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "Upon my word I think the Oedipus Tyramus, the Alchemist, and Tom Jones, the three most perfect plots ever planned." In Walter Scott's opinion Tom Jones, was "the most masterly example of an artful and well told novel." Thackeray pronounced the novel as "as work of construction, quite a wonder." There is a cause and effect relationship between incidents. They seem to happen in the most

causal way, following one another, or arising out of one another, just as incidents do in real life. Yet at the end of the book it is discovered that almost every one of these seemingly trivial incidents—even such a detail as that of a guide mistaking the road to Bristol has a necessary place in the train of events. The whole of Tom Jones is full of suspense. The way the secret of Tom's parentage is preserved until the moment ordained by the author for its revelation shows how Fielding is a master of suspense. All that is related to the early part of the novel concerning Partridges, and Jenny Jones, and the prudish Miss Bridget Allworthy, is admirably calculated to mystify the reader and those who are willing to have suspense find a great deal of it in these events. The story of Tom Jones is winded up artistically by the writer. All the problems here are solved. All the actions are consummated. All the chief characters, good and bad received appropriate rewards or punishments. Nothing is left unaccounted for or undermined. There are no loose ends. The drama is played out and the curtain at last falls on a perfectly finished performance. The novelist winds up the story in the novel artistically. At the end of the novel all the actions come to an end. All the characters whether good or bad receive appropriate rewards or punishments and all the problems are solved. Nothing is left undetermined and there are no loose ends. The plot of Tom Jones is closely knit with a unity of design. Though there are digressions, still there is compactness and there is no split in the plot, The plot in the novel is known for its marked clarity and astute sense of craftsmanship. Her character is 'lily white' She is as Lord Fellamar asked Lady Bellaston, "Who is this blazing star which you have produced among us all of a sudden. she is an angel. maid of the inn said about her, If ever there was an angel upon earth, she was now above-stairs." "She is a sweet creature."

Speaking of Sophia's amazing brightness and purity.

Introduction.

Tom Jones is one of the earliest English novel. It was hugely popular when it was first published in 1749. It tells the story of the foundling Tom and his journey towards adulthood and marriage. This journey is the complicated one. Tom falls in love with neighbor's daughter, Discovers that he has a rival for his love in the shape of the unpleasant Master Blifil and he is expelled from MrAllworthy's house after a series of misadventures. His picaresque journey leads him to encounter a vivid cast of characters including robbers, soldiers, gypsies and untrustworthy lawyers. Latter perhaps an arch nod to fielding's own legal career.

Tom Jones was written in a mock-epic style in which Tom's adventures are paralleled with those of the heroes of classical mythology. Whole all chapter are given up to seemingly irrelevant digression and the story is frequently underscored with a bawdy humour that led Samuel Johnson to comment that he scarcely knew a more corrupt work. Fielding's influence can be seen on a number of later writers, most notably the great nineteenth century novelists Charles Dickens. The distinguished country gentleman Allworthy. He lives in Somersetshire there lived a widower, Allworthyhas a rival for his love in the shape of the by name who had been greatly favored by both Nature and Fortune. Generous and pious in his person, he resided in the country with his amiable and discreet sister, Bridget, with whom he shared the amenities of a fine house, garden, and loyal retainers. One night just after returning from London, where he had been on business a full quarter of a year, Mr. Allworthy was about to retire when he noted something in his bed. Upon lifting the covers he discovered a tiny infant in a deep sleep. When the astonishment which this event inevitably

caused in the normally undisturbed and well-regulated household had died down, Mr. Allworthy decided to Keep the baby boy, but not without giving proper and lengthy admonitions to the suspected mother, a young domestic, Jeny Jones. Not long after this amazing discovery, Miss Bridget was finally married to Captain Blifil and promptly became the mother of a son destined to inherit Mr. Allworthy's estate. She was almost as promptly widowed when her husband suffered an attack of apoplexy, and the rearing of the two children became her responsibility. Not long after this amazing discovery, Miss Bridget was finally married to CapatainBlifil and promptly became the mother of a son destined to inherit Mr. Allworthy's estate. Even before she left home, indeed, as soon as he learned of their attachment, the Squire had sworn to disinherit her and see her dead before he would consent to her union with such a penniless scoundrel. As for Tom, many temptations were cast in his way to wean his from his single minded devotion to Sophia, but through these all he never lost sight of his goal. Even against such odds, the couple remained steadfast, and their constancy was finally rewarded by a most surprising disclosure made by Mrs. Waters, formerly Jenny son of Bridget Allworthy. Furthermore her claim was supported by a letter, written by Mr. Allworthy's sister on her death-bed-a letter which had been concealed all these years by Blifil. Thus the real scoundrel was unmasked and Tom took his right-full place as the heir to the Allworthy's fortune. With his changed circumstances, of courses, he had no trouble in securing the approbation of his father-in law to be and re-admission to Sophia's long going as well as to her heart. Impatient after so long a delay, he fled with her to set an early wedding date. Allworthy, a rich widower lived in Somersetshire with his sister Bridget, Pen night when he returned home from his bed. Jenny jones, a young domestic was suspected

to be the mother of the child. Through Allworthy admonished her, he decided to bring up the boy. After this event, Miss Bridget was married to Captain Blifil and she gave birth to a son. Captain Blifil had an attack of apoplexy and died leaving Bridget, a widow. Though the two boys were brought up by Bridget, they developed different dispositions. Tom Jones, the foundling was gay and carefree while Master Blifil was serious, prudent and sober. After Bridget's untimely death, the tutors Mr. Waskom and Mr. Square, took the responsibility of training the boys. The tutors preferred Master Blifil to Tom Jones. Tom grew up to be a robust merry and handsome young man and Master Blifil became more reserved and sagacious. Young, handsome Tom attracted the young ladies of the local shire and he was attracted by two local young women, Molly, the daughter of a gamekeeper and Sophia, the beautiful daughter of the neighbor, Squire Western. Tom Jones spent many hours with the Squire in riding to hounds. So he had little time to see Molly. Meanwhile, Allworthy fell ill.

After his recovery Blifil complained to him about the behavior of Tom Jones, who spent all his time in drinking and winching during his illness. Allworthy who did not want to keep such an ungrateful person in his household asked Tom Jones to leave to leave and Tom Jones decided to go to sea. Squire Western decided to marry his daughter Sophia to Blifil. Sophia who did not like this, when she heard about Tom Jones's departure from home, ran away from home. She decided to go to London where a great, noble lady, her distant relation, lived. After many adventures and a few narrow escapes they reached London. Though they happened to spend a night at the same inn, the lovers did not see

each other. When Tom found Sophia's muff, which she had purposely left behind, decided to dedicate himself to her service. Squire Western who started chasing his daughter, Sophia, returned in the middle as the search seemed to be unfruitful. After much strain Tom had found out the whereabouts of Sophia in London. But the lady with whom Sophia was staying was not a good lady. She made it difficult for Tom to see her. Moreover, she had arranged marriage for Sophia with some one else as she herself was attracted by Tom.

CONCLUSION:

Finally Blifil was now at the mercy of Tom, who pitied him and requested Allworthy to pardon Blifil. Thus the real scoundrel was exposed and Tom became the heir of Allworthy's estate and he also won back the love of Sophia and was impatient to fix the marriage date. The novelist winds up the story in the novel artistically. At the end of the novel all the action comes to an end. All the characters whether good or bad receive appropriate rewards or punishments and all the problems are solved. Nothing is left undetermined and there are no loose ends. The plot of 'Tom Jones' is closely knit with a unity of design.

Reference:

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