



RESEARCH PAPER

Prejudice and True Judgement: Prejudgment and Final Verdict against 18th Century Traditional Morality. A study of Tom Jones from the Perspective of Gadamer's Hermeneutics

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzes Henry Fielding's novel, *The History of Tom Jones*, from the perspective of Gadamer's hermeneutics. Gadamer states that the reader interprets the text according to his prejudices and preconceived experiences which are the outcome of tradition. Reading the initial parts of the text, the reader projects before himself the meanings of the text as a whole and misunderstands, as these fore-projects, fore-meanings, or presuppositions are his unfounded judgements based on prejudices. Reading the text as a whole, these fore-projects are revised and the reader not only understands his prejudices but the text as well. Reading *Tom Jones*, the prejudiced reader interprets it according to traditional morality, classical norms and misunderstands the various characters, situations and events. At the end the reader not only comes to understand the text, he also comes to understand himself better as he recognizes his prejudices and prejudgements. He revises his unfounded judgements and gets rid of the prejudices. The research uses the textual analysis method of Gadamer's hermeneutics to interpret *Tom Jones* to explore fore-meanings and prejudices. This perspective has been used for the first time to investigate *Tom Jones*. Thus it opens the door for researchers to probe further in this area.

KEYWORDS Fore-projection, Fore-meaning, Fore-conception, Prejudice, Prejudgement, Unfounded Judgement, Revision

Introduction

The novel, *Tom Jones*, is very much famous for its architectonic technique and plot construction. It has been analysed in various contexts. The present study is an attempt to examine it from the perspective of Gadamer's concept of prejudices and fore-meanings. Prior to going our textual analysis, we must have an idea about Gadamer's concept of prejudices, prejudgment and fore-meanings.

In his book, *Truth and Method*, Gadamer highlights that the readers study a work according to their fixed ideas and culture. Before Gadamer, Dilthey and Schleiermacher believed that the occupation of the reader of the "texts is to clear his/ her mind of the prejudices and the mental detritus of the present age, so as to be able to enter, with a clean mental slate, the world of the author" (Richter, 2007, p. 719). But Gadamer is of the opinion "such a clean slate the 'reading-degree-zero' that Dilthey postulated- can never exist, because one's consciousness is defined by, and therefore cannot get outside of, the culture one inhabits. Objective truth is therefore impossible" (Richter, 2007, p. 719). Contrary to them Gadamer claims, "all understanding inevitably involve some prejudices" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 272).

Gadamer argues that the reader interprets the text according to his prejudices. Reading the initial parts of the Text, the reader projects before himself the meaning of the text as a whole but this fore-projection, fore-conception or fore-meaning is constantly revised because it is always based on unfounded judgment: "The working out of this fore-project, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 279). Similarly, in the middle of the text, the fore-projections of lesser importance occur and they are revised. Actually these fore-meanings, fore-projections or fore-conceptions are reader's prejudices on the basis of which the reader examines the text and misjudges it. But reading the whole text, the reader not only understands the true meaning of the text but judges his own prejudices as well. So text itself revises the misunderstanding of the reader: "We are unaware [of our prejudice] but it is through the dialogical encounter with the text that our prejudice are made evident to us therefore we must be open or "made open" to having our pre-supposition laid bare" (Zolatova, 2006). Actually prejudice is the outcome of particular historical and culture tradition on the basis of which the reader judges the works: "We share prejudices with tradition" (Gadamer, 2007 p. 731). Gadamer explains prejudice in these words:

Actually "prejudice" means a judgment that is given before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined. In German legal terminology a "prejudice" is a provisional legal verdict before the final verdict is reached..... (And its effect is) adverse. (p. 273)

He further states that prejudice is not a false statement but unfounded judgement based on one's supposition.

Simply, Gadamer opposes judging something from the parts until reading it as a whole. Gadamer claims that true meaning of the text is not possible by reading its single part. To him reading the text is "the first, last and constant task" (p. 269). Reading the initial parts of the text and judging it according to one's own reason is hasty action and source of errors: "Over hastiness is the source of errors that arise in the use of one's own reason" (p. 279).

Gadamer argues that the reader's understanding of the text will also include the reader's correlation to past tradition. If a work is written in the past, the reader will place himself in the situation of that age and "acquires, a connection with the tradition out of which the text speaks", shares it prejudice, and correlates the work in such a way that belongs to his age. Reader should not judge it from historical interpretation but by "placing of [himself] within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused" (p. 728). Our present tradition is the outcome of past. So to judge the past work from tradition is a valid test.

How can one find the true meaning of the text and get rid his prejudice? Gadamer says it is to study the whole text. After completing the text, the reader will understand the whole text in terms of parts and parts in the terms of detail: "We remember here the hermeneutical rule that we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole" (p. 291). After understanding the whole text, the reader will come to know the fore-meanings or prejudices of his tradition (p. 730). After finishing the whole text, the reader not only understands it better but judges his own prejudices and fore-meanings as well. As he puts it, "As a result of our interaction with the text, we as readers not only come to understand the text better, we also come to understand ourselves better" (as cited in Richter, 2007, p. 720).

When viewing *Tom Jones* from the point of view of Gadamer's hermeneutics, we may find all these identical aspects like fore-projections, fore-meanings, prejudices, prejudgments and the revision of fore-meanings in the novel.

Gadamer's hermeneutics, as a science of interpretation of the text, is widely read, and it said to be applicable to the literary text, though not limited to it; but, there is hardly a study available that uses his method to investigate a literary text. This research investigates the applicability of his model on *Tom Jones*. Thus the research fills an important gap by testing his hypothesis in the literary text.

The close reading and analysis of the novel will answer the following questions:

1. Do the readers interpret *Tom Jones* on the basis of preconceived notions or prejudices?
2. How and under what condition the fore-meanings and prejudices occur in *Tom Jones*?
3. How do the readers revise their fore-meanings, prejudices and understand the novel?

Material and Methods

The research makes use of the textual analysis method of Gadamer's hermeneutics to interpret the novel, *Tom Jones*. Hermeneutics itself is the method of interpretation of text to find its true meaning. It is an art of and scientific study of textual interpretation, as Rasool (2018) points out:

In its initial phase, hermeneutics was deemed and defined to be the science or art of interpretation. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, hermeneutics was deemed to be a theory committed to laying out the rules governing the science of interpretation. (p. 211)

Gadamer's hermeneutic is a kind of holistic method of textual interpretation. He theorises that the reader interprets the text according to his prejudices until its ending. In the initial parts, the reader projects before himself the meaning of the text as a whole but this fore-meaning or unfound judgment is constantly revised with proceeding the text: "The working out of this fore-project, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 279). Likewise at the middle of the text, the fore-meaning of the lesser importance arise and are revised. Actually these fore-projections are reader's prejudices on the basis of which the reader examines the text and miscalculates it. But reading the whole text, the reader not only understands the true meaning of the text but judges his own prejudices as well. Thus by applying Gadamer's hermeneutics, the study reads the novel from the beginning to end and finds how the readers reads the various parts with fore-projection based on their prejudices and at the end they find the true meaning of the text as well as revise their prejudices and prejudgements.

The mode of analysis is qualitative as hermeneutics makes use of interpretivist paradigm and interprets a text from multi-perspective vantage point.

Results and Discussion

Reading *Tom Jones* the readers also projects before themselves fore-meanings of the text which are source of misunderstanding and unfounded-judgements. But reading the whole text, the readers revise their misunderstandings: they not only understand the text better but their own prejudices, misunderstandings and prejudgments.

Reading *Tom Jones* the readers also place themselves in the situation of eighteenth century, share the prejudices of the age, the prejudices of eighteenth century morality, and judge wrongly on the basis of traditional morality that judges everything on the basis of appearance: "Though Fielding warns us not to judge on the basis of appearance, most readers fall blindly into his rhetorical trap" (Hall, 1981, p. 5). Gadamer also states, "in fact, we miss the whole truth of the phenomenon—when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 300).

However reading the whole text, the readers understand their prejudgements and revise their fore-conceptions and prejudices based on tradition, the traditional morality of the time.

Fore-projection of Tom and Blifil.

In the novel, Fielding develops two characters, Tom and Blifil, in such a way that the readers misunderstand them completely and judge them opposite to what they are. In the very first chapter, Fielding introduces Tom Jones as a unique kind of protagonist "a foundling" which violates the classical tradition of hero's noble birth and the eighteenth century morality; therefore, the readers and other characters in the novel do not form positive opinion of him. From the very beginning, the characters of the novel form negative opinion of the little child. Whatever they say is based on unfounded judgement, traditional morality and prejudices as told by Gadamer, "[readers] share prejudices with tradition". The readers also judge Tom from the traditional point of views of other characters in the novel. Tom is illegitimate child, therefore, he is declared very bad. Seeing Tom for the first time, the housemaid becomes afraid. She is reluctant to touch him. The little child is criticized by her in these words, "for my own part, it goes against me to touch these misbegotten wretches, whom I don't look upon as my fellow-creatures. Faugh! How it stinks! It doth not smell like a Christian" (Fielding, 1917, p. 30). Captain Blifil dislikes the Allworthy's idea of looking after at Tom in his home on the basis of religious prejudices. He supports his argument from Christianity and disparages the illegitimate child: "the Church consider them [bastard children] as the children of nobody; and that at the best, they ought to be brought up to the lowest and vilest offices of the commonwealth" (p. 51). Most of the characters in the novel deride him with such name: son of whore, bastard, misbegotten, follower of dirty trollops, imprudent, base born infant, villain and ungrateful of all wretches.

The idea of bastard children is against the decency and nobility of eighteenth century morality. Therefore, bastard children are considered impious and criminal from the very birth. It is supposed that bastard children like Tom imitate their parents and in future they are involved in heinous crimes: "it is better for such creatures to die in a state of innocence, than to grow up and imitate their mothers" (p. 30). Secondly it is also supposed that Tom will be hanged in future "and to declare honestly, even at his first appearance, that it was the universal opinion of all Mr. Allworthy's family that he was certainly born to be hanged" (p. 72). These two suppositions develop in the novel in such a way that readers think that Tom will be hanged at the end of the novel due to his impious and imprudent acts.

When Tom is a little child, he is charged of petty crimes as he is "convicted of three robberies, viz., of robbing an orchard, of stealing a duck out of a farmer's yard, and of picking Master Blifil's pocket of a ball" (p.72). When he grows young he is involved in heinous crimes. He maintains illicit relations with the girl, Molly, visits her again and again and even confesses that he has impregnated her. He becomes notorious for sexual bacchanalia in the town. His two teachers, Thwackum, an extremely religious person,

and Square, a moral philosopher, [both forming a complete moral tradition of the eighteenth century] are against him. They praise Master Blifil and often punish Tom severely for his immoral acts. A prejudiced reader like Twackum and Square also declares Tom as immoral and vicious.

No doubt the readers are much impressed of his conduct of “generosity of heart” when he sells his horse, Bible and helps a poor person, Gamekeeper, but this conception is quickly revised when he is involved in sexual affair with his daughter, Molly, “who was esteemed one of the handsomest girls in the whole country” (p. 101). Now the readers share the traditional view of the other characters in the novel that he helps him because of his affair with his daughter. They doubt his generous conduct as hypocrisy.

On the other hand, his rival project, a young boy Blifil, is shown to be the role model of eighteenth century morality. He is considered the most gentle and virtuous boy as he belongs to the noble family and is the nephew of a prosperous gentleman, Mr. Allworthy. As the novel highlights:

The vices of this young man were, moreover, heightened by the disadvantageous light in which they appeared when opposed to the virtues of Master Blifil, his companion; a youth of so different a cast from little Jones, that not only the family but all the neighbourhood resounded his praises. He was, indeed, a lad of a remarkable disposition; sober, discreet, and pious beyond his age; qualities which gained him the love of every one who knew him: while Tom Jones was universally disliked. (p. 72)

In this way from the initial judgement, the readers form positive opinion of Blifil and negative of Tom as they judge them on the basis of prejudices based on the moral tradition of the time.

Tom falls in love with Sofia who also loves him but his father and aunty refuse to let her marry Tom, a bastard. Hearing Sofia’s fall in love with Tom her aunt is dazed and tells her, “And is it possible you can think of disgracing your family by allying yourself to a bastard? Can the blood of the Westerns submit to such contamination?” (p. 161). Instead of Tom, they try to persuade Sofia to marry Blifil who is considered a noble man. The readers also share the idea of Westerns as it is tradition that no one let his children to marry those who are notorious like Tom.

Due to his imprudence he pushes Allworthy’s advice back and meets Molly again. This act is reported to Allworthy by Blifil with a great skill; the result is that Allworthy gives verdict against “Tom to leave the house immediately” (p. 171). This is prejudgment about Tom as Allworthy who is misled by Blifil in such a way that neither he nor does a pre-juiced reader understand his [Blifil] prejudice.

On his way to London he is again seduced by Mrs Water; and later on, in London, he often takes money from lady Bellastoon and is seduced by her. In the book XVII it is shown that Tom will be hanged for his misdeeds at the end of the novel as Fielding promises the readers, “That, notwithstanding any affection which we may be supposed to have for this rogue for we had rather relate that he was hanged at Tyburn” (p. 472). In book XVI, chapter X, Tom is involved in a murder case and Sofia is imprisoned by his father once again. In this perilous situation, he has no friend to help him. Mr. Allworthy is still stuck to the idea that “He (Blifil) is the worthiest and best of men” and Tom is ingratitude and wretch “who had laid a plot to supplant (his) nephew in (his) favour, and to have disinherited him” (p. 485).

The readers are also shocked to hear Partridge's revelation that Tom "has a-bed with (his) own mother," Mrs. Water (Jenny Jones) in Upton inn, as she is supposed to be his mother. Tom is also jolted to hear the new: "O good Heavens! incest— with a mother! To what am I reserved?" He then fell into the most violent and frantic agonies of grief and despair" (p. 494).

Now the readers think that Tom would must suffer for his crime and like the old classical hero, Oedipus, will kill himself very soon or perhaps he be will be hanged and Sofia will be married to Blifil. But it is superficial view ignoring what is truth. As Fielding in his novel tells us, "They (the readers and audience) judge superficially and casually, that is on the isolated scene being played before them" (Preston, 1966, p. 7). To understand human nature is difficult as often hypocrisy and pretence overshadow truth and the readers judge something on the basis of prejudices unfounded judgement. "That is why we must go" behind the scenes of this great theatre of nature "where we shall learn the true character of a man" (p. 7). Near the end of the novel, that is just trial of Tom, it is proved that Jones was innocent and it is Blifil who is villain. Tom has a good and generous heart. He helped Gamekeeper, high-way man, Mrs. Water and Mrs Millar in very difficult situations, which shows his goodness of heart. Mrs. Millar plays for Tom to Mr. Alworthy in such a way which changes his attitude toward Tom. When Blifil accuses Tom as a murderer and villain, Mrs. Millar supports him in these words:

By all that's sacred't is false," cries Mrs. Miller. Mr. Jones is no villain. He is one of the worthiest creatures breathing; and if any other person had called him villain, I would have thrown all this boiling water in his face. (Fielding, 1917, p. 473)

Mr. Allworthy, now a neutral judge, "much amazed at this behaviour". Now he is curious to know something more about Tom and accepts that he has been misled by Blifil and his friend as he says, "you may say whatever you please, you know me too well to think I have a prejudice against any one; and as for that young man" (p. 498). Mr. Western also writes to Alworthy, "I have been guilty of to that poor wretch your adopted son I have, indeed.... and hath basely injured" (p. 500). Probing more into the matter Alworthy comes to know from Mrs. Water that Tom is his own nephew and son of his sister Bridget and Summer. Hence Tom is quitted from the unfounded judgment of "incest with his mother". Mrs. Water also reveals that Blifil through Dowling tried to persuade her to bring severe charge against Tom for his clash with her "temporary husband" Mr. Fitzpatrick. Mr. Dowling not only affirms this but also reveals the villainous scheme of Blifil's hiding the letter of Bridget from Allworthy where she has revealed that Tom is her son. The final verdict is given by Alworthy against Blifil in these words:

Indeed, Mrs. Miller, I am convinced that he hath been wronged, and that I have been abused; abused by one whom you too justly suspected of being a villain. He is, in truth, the worst of villains. (p. 513)

The verdict also reveals that the proponents of traditional morality judge people superficially and they may be easily misled by hypocrite person like Blifil. Allworthy not only declares Tom innocent but along with him the notorious lady, Mrs. Water, is also declared by him a noble creature, "And is this the dear good woman" (p. 51). This is but a severe blow to the proponents of traditional morality.

Our judgment about the end of the novel proves unfounded. As at end Blifil is punished not Tom. Similarly the idea that he will be hanged is proved a prejudgement and Allworthy's first verdict against Tom is also proved unfounded. At the end the

readers not only understand Mr. Jones' good heartedness and Mr. Blifil's hypocrisy but they also get rid of their unfounded judgment about Tom's parentage, his immoral activities and prejudices based on traditional morality. At the end the readers look to the rest of novel and re-examine it. This is what Gadamer claims that after reading and understanding the whole text we will come to know the fore-meaning or prejudices of our tradition (Gadamer, 2007, p. 730).

The successful end for Tom negates the classical notion of hero's noble deeds. Gadamer highlights classists' prejudice which does not evaluate some phenomenon based on originality and quality but declares a thing true on the basis "that has been set as model and 'being historical'" (p. 726). Fielding also introduces new kind of hero which violates the classical norms of hero's noble action and deed. Fielding shows that externally characters may do noble deeds but behind them may hide evils, like Blifil; on the other hand, action of a character may look bad but his motif may be good like Tom's action. Reading *Tom Jones* the readers also say good bye to the prejudiced ideas of the classical tradition of the "noble action of the hero".

It is classical tradition that hero's action should be noble, refined and based on morality. He should avoid entangling in immoral activity like Tom's involvement in sexual affairs. Eighteenth century morality also believes on the principle of noble action. Initially, the prejudiced readers also condemn Tom for his immoral deed as it is not according to the classical norms and established moral order of the days. Dr. Johnson, one of prejudiced readers, also criticises Fielding' heroes and novel on the traditional ground and goes to the extreme by saying that he "scarcely knew a more corrupt work than Tom Jones" (cited in Malik et al., 2015, p. 325). But Fielding wants to show that sex is natural and to deny is hypocrisy. He ridicules the readers who share prejudices with the traditional morality and classical tradition. In this way, fielding "subverted" and "changed" social reality" based on narrow traditions of eighteenth century morality (Stewart, 1990, pp. 212-13). Tom openly involves in this affairs because of his open-heartedness; on the other hand, most of the characters [who are the follower of eighteenth century morality] are criticising it but most of them are somewhere secretly involved in it. Their denial of an important tendency of human nature and involvement in it show their hypocrisy.

Tom's involvement with Molly is a natural urge as she "was esteemed one of the handsomest girls in the whole country" (Fielding, 1917, p. 101). At the age of sixteen "Tom began first to cast the eyes of affection upon her" but "to debauch a young woman, however low her condition was" seemed to him a very heinous crime but "she found means of throwing herself in his way and behaved in such a manner that the youth must have had very much or very little of the heroes if her endeavours had proved unsuccessful" (p. 101).

His involvement for second time with Molly is also natural behest and a psychological substitution. As one fine morning he is in jocund mood while thinking about his beloved Sofia, who is not available, suddenly he sees Molly and "they retired into the thickest part of the grove ... Jones probably thought one woman better than none, and Molly as probably imagined two men to be better than one" (p. 145).

He is young, handsome and can easily be trapped by experienced women like Bellastoon and Mrs. Water who is described to be "extremely white" and possess attractive physique. Besides he is "active, genteel, gay, and good-humoured" and she [Mrs. Water] loves Tom. She is extremely vulgar. To her, sexual act or love is just like other primary desires, like 'wish for food' and yielding to it is like one's "preference

which [he]give[s] to one kind of food rather than to another" (p. 274). So Tom is easily succumbed to Mrs. Water. He is open hearted whatever he thinks, does openly; on the other hand, Mr. Blifil hides and suppresses his instinct like classical hero:

The charms of Sophia had not made the least impression on Blifil; not that his heart was pre-engaged neither was he totally insensible of beauty, or had any aversion to women; but his appetites were by nature so moderate, that he was able, by philosophy, or by study, or by some other method, easily to subdue them. (p. 158)

The readers, after constant interaction with the text, realize that whatever Tom does may be against their expectations, moral tradition and classical norms but is based on human nature: "Some of the author's friends cried, "Look'e, gentlemen, the man is a villain, but it is nature for all that" (p. 180). Judging his character on the basis of human nature is re-vision of reader's prejudices based on traditional morality and classical tradition of the hero's noble action: "As a result of our interaction with the text, we as readers not only come to understand the text better, we also come to understand ourselves better" (as cited in Richter, 2007, p. 720).

Similarly, his initial involvement with women is supported by the writer on the ground that he never forces anyone but rather he is seduced by them. In this way, he is different from traditional ravishers and villains, as he also puts it thus, "I have been guilty with women, I own it; but am not conscious that I have ever injured any. –Nor would I, to procure pleasure to myself, be knowingly the cause of misery to any human being" (Fielding, 1917, p. 405).

To justify Tom's incest, the writer involves most of the characters in sexual affairs [even the characters who are supposed to be noble] to show that sex is natural and not limited to particular person and place. To think that noble people are free from this is traditional thinking based on unfounded judgement and prejudices.

Mr. Thwackum, a moral philosopher, believer of virtue and prudence, often criticises and punishes Tom severely for his small errors and sexual involvement with the girl, Molly. The readers from the very beginning think that he will never involve in vices like sexual affairs because he is a moral philosopher. But later on, in book V, chapter V, he himself violates the idea of prudence as he is found in Molly bed. This act surprises the readers when they find "this wise and grave man in such a place" (p. 130). In this connection, fielding supports the cause of moral philosopher in these words:

But to confess the truth, this inconsistency is rather imaginary than real. Philosophers are composed of flesh and blood as well as other human creatures; and however sublimated and refined the theory of these may be, a little practical frailty is as incident to them as to other mortal. (p. 130)

Here Fielding shows that sexual inclinations are natural and not limited to particular person like Jones but any one may involve in this affair. Both Jones and Square maintain illicit relationship with Molly but the former openly involves in it and the latter hides it. Square's hypocrisy reflects the hypocrisy of traditional morality of the time.

Prejudgments and the final rulings against other Characters

The end of the novel reveals some other issues which are against the reader's fore-meanings, prejudgments and traditional prejudices. It is a tradition that people judge

others from appearance and form opinion from outward action. If someone's action is same to society it is considered noble and if it is opposite is considered bad. Same is the case with the people of eighteenth century. Fielding says it is rather superficial view of judging people from their action and ignoring motif behind an action.

In the initial part of the novel, the readers think that Miss Bridget is extremely prudent, gentle and reserved women "for she was a strict observer of all rules of decorum" (p. 45). She is shown to be austere, deeply religious minded, virtuous and strict follower of morality. She is a strict observer of veil as she utters, "I saw two farmers' daughters at church, the other day, with bare necks. I protest they shocked me" (p. 40). She loves Tom more than Blifil. She "earnestly looked at him.... giving it [baby] hearty kiss". She calls Tom's unknown mother "an impudent slut, a wanton hussy, an audacious harlot, a wicked jade, a vile strumpet" (p. 32). Her fondness for Tom increases when he grows young. Fielding convinces the readers that her affection to poor Jones is to carry out the order of her brother and due to her compassionate nature: "Since it was her brother's whim to adopt the little brat, she supposed little master must be treated with great tenderness (p. 33). But at the end of the novel, the readers surprise to hear that she is the mother of bastard child, Tom. Now the readers revise their fore-conceptions of her compassionate nature, love of brother and her prudence. She loved Tom not to carry out the order of brother but he was her son that is why she often kissed him. She preferred him to Blifil because she knew that Tom was helpless boy. Similarly, her outward adherence to eighteenth century morality shows her hypocrisy and shallowness of the time. Now the readers judge that her love toward Tom was simply out of human nature not idealization and naiveté. So the readers come to the truth of initial part of the novel from the end and similarly judge the end from the beginning and middle. Its proves the holistic nature Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics, as he propounds, "We remember here the hermeneutical rule that we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole" (Gadamer, 2007, p. 730).

Mrs. Millar's daughter, Nancy, is initially shown to be very chaste, innocent and pure girl. In book-XV, chapter VI, her mother and sister are lamenting over her. When Tom asks Partridge the reason behind that, he retorts, "there was a dreadful hurricane below-stairs; that Miss Nancy was in fits; and that the other sister, and the mother, were both crying and lamenting over her" (Fielding, 1917, p. 408). The readers consider her a little innocent creature afraid of whirlwind. But this fore-meaning revises when it is revealed by her mother later on that she has given birth to a bastard child. Now the readers review that her fits was not because of hurricane but actually it was the time of her delivery when her mother and sister were crying and the servant misinformed Partridge as he was hiding the tragic incident from him. The readers revise their prejudices based on traditional morality which judges people on appearances. The readers are further surprised when it is revealed that Nightingale has seduced her, who is considered a gentleman from the beginning.

The reader's beliefs of Tom's parentage are also revised, as at the end completely opposite happens to what they supposed. In book 1, chapter VI, Mrs. Wilkin discovers that Tom's mother is Jenny Jones. When she is brought before JP, she confesses her crime before the magistrate, Mr. Allworthy, and he "admonished her" (p. 36). However, she refuses to tell the name of the bastard's father as she has promised the man not to reveal his name. Mr. Partridge is suspected to be the father of Tom. In book II, chapter VI, he is summoned by Justice of Peace, his own credulous wife gives witness against him, as she has seen him bent upon Jenny Jones during her study and he was using anonymous language. JP Mr. Allwothy gives verdict against Partridge. The readers firmly believe that Tom is the son of Jenny Jones and Partridge. Later on, in book VIII, chapter VI, Partridge

tells Tom that he is not his father: “for I do assure you, you are no son of mine” (p. 230), and he suspects that Allworthy is his father. Now the readers also suppose Allworthy as the father of Jones. But at the end, Mrs. Water (Jenny Jones) reveals that Miss Bridget is Tom’s mother and Summer as father. Here Fielding as a clever magistrate shows that some time a suspect may confess his fault in the court but may not be guilty like Mrs. Water who confesses her crime because she is bribed by Miss Bridget to do so. The readers also revise their pre-judgement and came to know the truth.

Like Mrs. Water, Tom also confesses that he is responsible for the bastard child of Molly and the readers are also convinced because Fielding does not show the indulgence of anyone else with her. But Tom case is different from Mrs. Water’s confession. He is too much open-hearted and does not know the hypocrisy of Molly. He is thinking that she loves him only and her pregnancy is because of his illicit relations with her. In Book V, Chapter V, the readers are also misled by Molly’s hypocrisy and they think that she loves Tom frantically. She weeps and tells Tom, “I can never love any other man as long as I live. All other men are nothing to me” (p. 129). Tom accepts whatever she says, but a little later, the readers and Tom himself amaze to see Square in her chamber. The readers along with Tom also review their prejudgment, misunderstandings and prejudices that Tom is the father of the bastard when Molly sister, Betty, divulges, “one Will Barnes, and not (Tom) had been the first seducer of Molly” (p. 132). This disclosure negates the traditional idea that whatever someone confesses may be considered true or those who weep and say something is a fact; it is misleading judgement merely from appearances. Fielding shows that man some time acknowledges his own fault, but actually he does not know about it. So, readers should wait for detail and conclusion instead of judging something hastily as “Over hastiness is the source of errors that arise in the use of one’s own reason” (Gadamar, 2007, p. 279).

Readers believe that Mr. Allworthy’s initial verdicts against Jenny, Partridge and Tom are judicious but at the end his previous rulings prove unfounded judgements. The readers also form sound opinion of his initial prejudices and their prejudices of relying on the candid person like Allworthy: “In fact his judgments are almost always prejudiced (...) Allworthy is quick to blame, more aware of guilt than innocence” (Hall, 1981, p. 9). Later on he [Allworthy] himself accepts that he has been misled by Blifil, the hypocrite, and he treated Tom unjustly. He says:

Indeed, Mrs. Miller, I am convinced that he hath been wronged, and that I have been abused; abused by one whom you too justly suspected of being a villain. He [Blifil] is, in truth, the worst of villains. (Fielding, 1917, p. 513)

Conclusion

Throughout out his novel Fielding shows that eighteenth century traditional morality judges people on the basis of appearances and prejudices. The traditional morality like the classical belief of “noble deeds” judges people from external actions and ignores the motifs behind action. Reading *Tom Jones*, the readers also share the traditional morality of the days and give verdict on basis of prejudices and unfounded judgments. But the end of novel shows that whatever the readers think is based on unfounded-judgments and superficial morality of the days. Now the table is turned down on those who are shown to be noble and gentle and they are declared hypocrite and against human nature. The readers revise their fore-meanings, prejudgements and prejudices. Now they realise that they have been misled by the hypocrisy and prejudices of traditional morality. At the end, like Allworthy’s final judgement, the readers condemn

superficial morality of the time and give final verdict in favour of Tom an ingenious violator of the conventions of the time.

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