

# “Tom Jones is a Proverb”

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Words, words, words ...

These words are simply, just words, but are they really? Wrong! Along with the endless possibilities of what you can create with just words, you can gain numerous perceptions from just a few words. Every word, no matter how big or small, has a history which can affect our understanding of that word and the text in which it is used. By analyzing Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, we perceive the characters as demonstrating proverbs found in William Shakespeare's Sonnets and Geoffrey Chaucer's "Wyf of Bath's Prologue," even though they don't quote these proverbs. Considering some of the terms used in these proverbs and their definitions that have changed through time, we gain multiple perceptions of the proverbs and of the characters demonstrating them.

First, we are going on a time traveling trip, but instead of using a time machine, we are using the Oxford English Dictionary. On this trip, we will learn about the evolution of certain terms used in these proverbs and how these terms developed more meanings as time passed. For example, the term "scoundrel" possesses numerous meanings deriving from different types of literature and time periods. So, what is a scoundrel?

Throughout time, the term "scoundrel" gained different but similar meanings. For example, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, Definition 1a. states, " 'A mean rascal, a low petty villain' ... An audacious rascal, one destitute of all moral scruple" (OED). The OED also notes that this meaning first appears in 1589, about two hundred years after Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was written in about 1375 (OED). By describing scoundrels as "mean" or "audacious [rascals]" with no "moral scruple," and "low petty [villains]," this definition portrays scoundrels as people who possess not one good, "moral" thing about them. It's quite harsh to

describe someone like this, for a real villain would possess these traits. This meaning could be perceived as the hard core meaning of all or most other meanings.

On the other hand, some other definitions are shorter, not as severe and contain fewer details. For example, Definition 2 states, “Pertaining to or characteristic of a scoundrel. Of conduct: Mean, unprincipled” (OED). This meaning appears in 1681 in Francis Fullwood’s *A Dialogue Betwixt Philautus & Timotheus* (OED). Since this meaning appears about hundred years after Definition 1a, a part of it might partially come from Definition 1a. With Definition 2, you can say someone possesses the “characteristics of a scoundrel” without calling him or her a scoundrel. You could also say that someone shares some of the “characteristics of a scoundrel” but is not exactly a scoundrel. People who aren’t called or known as scoundrels could secretly be scoundrels and could share traits with those who are known as scoundrels. Since the term “mean” sounds like something middle school kids use to describe bullies, a person could say that a scoundrel can be just as “mean” as or worse than a bully. The characteristic of “unprincipled” conduct portrays scoundrels as people who don’t care about how they act or the consequences of their actions. Definitions 1a and 2 both describe human characteristics, but could the term “scoundrel” be applied to objects as well?

The term “scoundrel” can be applied to objects, not just people. For example, Definition 3 states, “Of a thing: Base, degraded in character or type. *Obsolete. Rare*” (OED). This meaning appears in 1700 in James Astry’s translation of Diego de Saavedra Fajardo’s *The Royal Politician Represented in One Hundred Emblems* (OED). Since this meaning appears about a hundred years after Definition 1a, people probably started calling objects “scoundrels” if those objects remind them of scoundrels in some way. It is quite surprising that the term “scoundrel” does not have to refer to a type of person but “a thing.” Well, if your old, “[b]ase, degraded”

coffee machine is giving you trouble early in the morning, you might be annoyed or angry enough to call it a scoundrel. If you are comparing someone to a “[b]ase, degraded” object, you are indirectly calling him or her a scoundrel. However, objects do not have principles or morals as humans do. Although a scoundrel is supposed to be “unprincipled,” would he or she have any beliefs at all? At least one? Would he or she follow or believe any proverbs? If so, what would they be? Wait, what exactly is a proverb?

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Now we are going on another time traveling trip to see the history of the term “proverb.” For example, Definition 1a states, “A short, traditional, and pithy saying; a concise sentence, typically metaphorical or alliterative in form, stating a general truth or piece of advice; an adage or maxim” (OED). This meaning first appears in about 1375 in Chaucer’s “Monk’s Tale” (OED). Since this meaning comes from Chaucer’s work, then his work uses the term “proverb” and would contain examples of “short, traditional, and pithy saying[s],” “metaphorical or alliterative in form,” “adage[s] or maxim[s].” This meaning could have been the most popular meaning that writers or people used or referred to while writing or speaking about “a general truth or piece of advice” or “an adage or maxim.” Definition 1a could be the core meaning of all or most other meanings for the term “proverb” as the Definition 1a might be for the term “scoundrel.”

Pit Stop! The Oxford University Press and James A. H. Murray started writing the “*New English Dictionary* (as the *Oxford English Dictionary* was then known)” in 1879 (OED). Perhaps the Oxford University Press and James Murray thought the various other meanings of “scoundrel” and “proverb” were inspired mostly by Chaucer’s work. Maybe they noticed a certain trend or meaning that most writers used or agreed on while writing their works. Since other meanings of the term “scoundrel” and “proverb” came years during or after Chaucer’s time, perhaps the

writers during and after Chaucer's time used his work as inspiration while writing their works. Although many people would probably use these terms everyday back then, some works were considered the best or prime examples. Some meanings are alterations of the core meanings probably because of time, culture, concept, or the writer. Whatever the reason is, all these different meanings can expand our understanding and perspective of the texts in which they are used. Now back to the OED Machine!

Other types of literature use slightly different but similar meanings for the term "proverb" and some works solely contain prime examples of proverbs. For example, Definition 1b states, "(the Book of) Proverbs *n.* a book of the Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures comprising several collections of maxims and instructive sayings in poetic form, attributed to Solomon or other authors" (OED). Although this definition describes a certain book found in the Wycliffite Bible from about 1382, it describes a book containing proverbs which are "sayings" and "maxims" (OED). Since this book was written shortly after Chaucer's "Monk's Tale," this book could contain "sayings" and "maxims" similar to the types of proverbs found in Chaucer's "Wyf of Bath's Prologue." Both writers probably had this meaning of "proverb" in mind while writing their works.

The term "scoundrel" can be used to describe other terms as well as people and objects. Definition 2a states, "A general term of contempt or reproach; (also) a person who or thing which is the object of scorn" (OED). This meaning also appears in about 1382 in the Wycliffite Bible (OED). Since this appears shortly after Chaucer's work, the perhaps after reading Chaucer's work, one might see his work as things of "contempt or reproach" or "scorn," and things in which people should be warned about. One might expect a biblical proverb to be beautiful, written in "poetic form" and "attributed to Solomon or other[s]" who supported the

faith, but one not might expect a proverb to be something of “contempt, reproach, or scorn.” Since Chaucer’s work was written before or about the same time as religious works, Chaucer could have influenced religious writers on how they perceive and use the term “proverb.”

Proverbs can be non-religious and don’t have to be dedicated to a certain faith. For example, Definition 3 states, “A mysterious or ambiguous saying that requires interpretation; an allegory, a parable” (OED). This meaning also appears in about 1384 in the Wycliffite Bible (OED). Although the Wycliffite Bible appears to be popular for containing the meaning of “proverb” and examples of proverbs, proverbs can be found in other types of literature that are “mysterious or ambiguous” and that require “interpretation.” Non-religious works also use “[allegories]” or include non-religious “parable[s].” Proverbs, religious or not, could be just as “mysterious or ambiguous” as God is.

These definitions can influence one’s understanding of the “scoundrel’s proverb” and other proverbs in Chaucer’s “Wyf of Bath’s Prologue.” People, religious or not, live by their own beliefs, and these different meanings can support how these beliefs can be proverbs.

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Keeping these definitions in mind, we will now analyze the proverbs, which illustrate different conceptions about men, women, and marriage, in Chaucer’s “Wyf of Bath’s Prologue.” For example, the Wife of Bath says, “ ‘You say that all we wives our vices hide / Till we are married, then we show them well: / That is a scoundrel’s proverb, let me tell!” (Wyf of Bath’s Prologue, 282-284). When she says, “You say,” she is addressing men and calling them out on this proverb that they believe. Referring to Definition 1a of “proverb,” these three words, “a scoundrel’s proverb,” alone are not a proverb because they do not construct “a concise sentence,” “an adage or maxim.” However, these three words, especially the keyword “a,” hint that this

proverb is one out of many just like it. By saying, “You say that all we wives our vices hide / Till we are married,” she is “stating a general truth or piece of advice” that men, particularly scoundrels, hold about women and marriage. Rewriting this passage as a proverb, this would be the scoundrel’s proverb: wives hide their vices until they are married and then show their vices very well.

Since the Wife of Bath is addressing men, the term “scoundrel” could be a gendered term, in which it refers only to men. Referring to Definition 1a of “scoundrel,” the Wife of Bath calls men “low petty villain[s]” and “audacious rascal[s]” with no “moral scruple” for saying women hide their vices when they have vices too. Referring to Definition 2, a woman could share the “characteristics of a scoundrel,” but calling a woman a scoundrel sounds a bit off. A woman can be a “mean, unprincipled” villain, but calling her something else, such as witch, would sound better. Not only does the Wife of Bath address men, she addresses the conceptions and value of marriage itself.

Not only does the Wife of Bath address the conceptions and value of marriage which result in the “scoundrel’s proverb,” she demonstrates the “scoundrel’s proverb” in her actions. Referring to Definition 2a of “proverb,” her actions of using marriage to her own advantage demonstrate why men refer to marriage as “[a] general term or contempt or reproach” or an “object of scorn.” For example, the Wife of Bath says,

Of whom I did pick out and choose the best  
Both for their nether purse and for their chest  
Different schools make divers perfect clerks,  
Different methods learned in Sunday works  
Make the good workman perfect, certainly.  
Of full five husbands tutoring am I.  
Welcome the sixth whenever come he shall.  
Forsooth, I’ll not keep chaste for good and all. (Wyf of Bath’s  
Prologue, 44-46)

Realizing that “[d]ifferent schools make divers perfect clerks” and “[d]ifferent methods learned in Sunday works / [m]ake the good workman perfect,” the Wife of Bath picks her “husbands” carefully. By picking men “for their nether purse and for their chest,” she demonstrates how wives can be deceptive and “hide their vices.” She is “tutoring” her “full five husbands” and “the sixth whenever come he shall” that wives like her will not always be “chaste for good and all.” Although she discriminates men for thinking lowly about wives, she’s not exactly the best role model of a wife herself. After seeing someone being married to a wife like her, we could see why some men see marriage as a curse, a commitment of “contempt or reproach.” Another thing, she says,

For, masters, since I was twelve years of age,  
Thanks be to God Who is for aye alive,  
Of husbands at church door have I had five  
...  
But someone told me not so long ago  
That since Our Lord, save once, would never go  
To wedding (that at Cana in Galilee),  
Thus, by this example, showed He me  
I never should have married more than once. (Wyf of Bath’s  
Prologue, 4-6, 9-13)

Although “someone told” her that “Our Lord” said that you “never should have married more than once,” the Wife of Bath had five “husbands at church door,” showing a lack of respect for marriage. She demonstrates that marriage has become “[b]ase, degraded in character” or value to men and women. The “scoundrel’s proverb” may not be holy or worthy of praise, but it could still teach us something.

The Wife of Bath discusses other proverbs about women, love, and marriage. For example, the Wife of Bath says, “A woman wise will strive continually / To get herself loved, when she’s not, you see” (Wyf of Bath’s Prologue, 209-210). This could be proverb because it is a “piece of advice” for women about finding love. When this passage is rewritten as a proverb, it

would state: a smart woman “will strive continually / To get herself loved,” even when she has no one to love her. Smart women will never give up on finding love for they know love can open up door. If a woman doesn’t pursue love, then she would be stupid. When she finally does find love and gets married, what does the husband say about it?

The Wife of Bath states a proverb about marrying certain types of women. For example, the Wife of Bath says, “You tell me it’s a great misfortune, too, / To wed a girl who costs more than she’s worth” (Wyf of Bath’s Prologue, 248-249). The Wife of Bath here states a proverb that men might hold about marrying certain types of women. “[A] girl who costs more than she’s worth” could be a girl who’s “worth” is her dowry which indicates her status, wealth, and pride. Thus, “it’s a great misfortune,” or difficulty, to love someone who is worth more than her dowry. She could be so prideful that it would be a pain in the neck to please her or to live up to her standards. Sounds like one would be a fool to fall in love and get married. Wait, what exactly is a fool?

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Let’s take a trip to see the evolution of the term “fool” using the OED machine.

The term “fool” possesses several meanings, some of which might surprise you. For example, according to the OED, Definition 1a states, “One deficient in judgement or sense, one who acts or behaves stupidly, a silly person, a simpleton. (In Biblical use applied to vicious or impious persons.)” (OED). The OED notes this meaning was current around 1275 (OED). Since this was composed a hundred years before Chaucer and Shakespeare, perhaps they had this meaning in mind when writing their works. This meaning contains two parts to it: how the term “fool” is commonly used to describe a person and how it is used to describe a person biblically. Calling one a fool indicates to others his or her state of mind and actions, being “deficient in

judgement or sense, one who acts or behaves stupidly, a silly person, a simpleton.” Fool is just another title for the village idiot! One may be surprised to hear that in a “Biblical” sense, a fool could be a “vicious or impious [person].” Can an idiot also be “vicious or impious?” Wouldn’t a fool be too stupid or simple minded to know how to be vicious or impious? Perhaps the definition means that you would be a fool to be a “vicious or impious” person for it makes you “deficient in judgement or sense.”

The term “fool” can used to describe someone’s inferiority to another. For example, Definition 1b states, “*to be a fool to*: to be every way inferior to, to be as nothing compared to” (OED). This meaning appears in about 1616 in Shakespeare’s *Taming of Shrew* (OED). Perhaps Shakespeare got the idea that if some “lacks sense or judgement,” then others would use that flaw to feel better about themselves, calling others fools. Perhaps it’s a bit of a class thing. Someone could refer to someone else as “inferior to” them by calling him or her “a fool.” Perhaps a person feels better about himself or herself by calling another a fool.

Do you know the saying, “The poor fool?” Well, you can use the term “fool” when you feel pity for someone. For example, Definition 1c states, “Used as a term of endearment or pity. *Obsolete*” (OED). This meaning appears in about 1530 and can be found in William Carew Hazlitt’s *A Select Collection of Old English Plays, Originally Published by Robert Dodsley in the Year 1744* (OED). Wow, really, a term for “pity?” Well, perhaps someone would say call a person a fool if that person was “[duped]” and it was his or her own fault. An observer would “pity” that person, calling that person a poor fool, not to be malicious but because he or she feels “endearment or pity” for that person. That fool might become the prime example of what you should *not* to do.

The term “fool” can be found in proverbs. As Definition 1d. states, “In various proverbial expressions,” the example comes from *Roman Rose* from about 1400 (OED). For works that don’t involve or that are dedicated to a certain faith, then one could still use the term fool in something similar to a proverb. So, it would be a common term “in various proverbial expressions,” probably describing what makes a fool or who is a fool.

The term “fool” can also be one’s title for his or her occupation. For example, Definition 2a states, “One who professionally counterfeits folly for the entertainment of others, a jester, clown” (OED). This meaning appears in about 1370 (OED). This reuse appears around the same time as Chaucer. So, the fool can be the modern comedian’s ancestor. Everyone would agree that someone making a fool of himself or herself can be entertaining, especially if it’s “professionally” done. Just because you act like a fool for a profession, it doesn’t mean that you mentally are a fool.

The term “fool” can apply to someone whom is made to look like a fool by others and being the object of a joke or scheme. For example, Definition 3 states, “One who is made to appear a fool; one who is imposed on by others; a dupe. Now somewhat *archaic*, except in phrases *to make a fool of* (formerly also †*to put the fool on*), *to dupe*, *befool*; *to be a fool for one’s pains*, *to have one’s labour for nothing*” (OED). This sense appears around 1450 (OED). When a person is made the butt end of a joke “imposed on by others,” he or she becomes “a dupe.” Although it might be easy to make a fool look like a bigger fool, smart people can become fools too, even just for a moment by others. Someone who “labour[s] for nothing” could also be a fool for the unnecessary “pains” he or she gives himself or herself.

One can easily become a fool for he or she is already mentally a fool. For example, Definition 4 states, “One who is deficient in, or destitute of reason or intellect; a weak-minded or

idiotic person. *Obsolete* except in *natural* (also *born*) *fool*, a born idiot (now *rare* exc. as a mere term of abuse). *to beg* (a person) *for a fool*" (OED). This meaning appears in 1540 (OED). This definition sounds similar to definition 1a for not only is a fool "deficient in judgement or sense," a fool is also "destitute of reason or intellect." "A weak-minded or idiotic person" would "[act or behave] stupidly, [like] a silly person, a simpleton." This definition also hints that someone could be "a born idiot," born as a fool to be a fool. If people can make fools out of others, can love make a fool out of someone?

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After learning about the evolution of these terms, we will now learn how they affect our understanding of proverbs found in Shakespeare's Sonnets.

First, we will extract proverbs about love and fools from Shakespeare's Sonnets and will use the definitions to show how they are proverbs. For example, Sonnet 116 says,

Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove. (Sonnet 116: 2-4).

These 3 verses could actually be one proverb about Love for it can be a "[maxim and instructive saying] in poetic form." When we rewrite these verses as a proverb, we get something similar to this: if Love "alters when" there is "alteration" or "bends" if the "remover" wants "to remove" something, then it "is not love." This proverb tells the reader what love is not. Since Love does not alter, bend, or remove, love is unchangeable. Love is fixed. Later on, Sonnet 116 also states,

Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom. (Sonnet 116: 9-12)

These 4 verses could be another proverb for it is "A mysterious or ambiguous saying that requires interpretation." By saying, "Love's not time's fool," perhaps he is contradicting another

proverb that people say about love. Some people might say, “Love is time’s fool,” an affirmative statement. Shakespeare could be flipping a well-known proverb from his time. If “Love” *IS* “time’s fool,” then one might be saying that love wastes your time or time has a way of messing up with love. Shakespeare doesn’t see it that way. Instead he could be saying that “time” has no control over “Love,” so “Love’s not time’s fool.” Since “Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, / But bears it out even to the edge of doom,” Love could just as powerful and eternal as time itself. Love lives just as long as time. Love will never leave a person, even at their “edge of doom.” Love could be a guide to people, directing one’s “bending sickle’s compass” with “rosy lips and cheeks.” Love could create something beautiful such as “rosy lips and cheeks” within anyone’s life. Referring back to the definitions of fool, time cannot call Love a fool for Love is not inferior to time. Love is never time’s “dupe.”

Love can turn people into fools without them realizing it. For example, Sonnet 57 says, “So true a fool is love that in your will / Though you do anything, he thinks no ill” (Sonnet 57: 13-14). If love is a person who is “[s]o true a fool,” then people would be careful around love as they would with a sick person. Love’s illness could be contagious. When one is in love and has become a fool, he or she might not think of himself or herself as “ill.” No matter how much you “will” or “anything” that “you do” to stop it, love cannot be cured. As scientists say that there is no cure for the common cold, Shakespeare says there is no cure for the illness of love. What are the side effects of love then?

Love can turn people into a certain type of fool. For example, Sonnet 137 says, “Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes, That they behold and see not what they see?” (Sonnet 137: 1-2). When one is in “Love,” not only is he or she a fool, but he or she is also a “blind fool.” Love alters what “mine eyes” “behold,” making one see things that they actually

don't see. Love doesn't literally blind someone but it changes how they see and perceive things. Referring to Definitions 1a and 4 of fool, since Love blinds a person, love could make "One deficient in judgement or sense," "[act or behave] stupidly," "destitute of reason or intellect; a weak-minded." Someone in love might not realize his or her foolish actions until it's too late. When a person is "ill" or "blinded" from Love, someone else would feel "pity" for him or her, calling him or her a fool acting without self-control.

Shakespeare's Sonnets contain proverbs about love, the side effects of love, and how love turns people into fools. For example, Sonnet 147 says,

My love is as a fever, longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease,  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please. (Sonnet 147: 1-4)

If one is ill from Love, then love could be described as a "disease." As a disease, love gives a person a "fever" and "[feeds] on that which doth preserve the ill." The more in love a person is, the sicker they become. Love gives one an "uncertain sickly appetite" for something or someone else. Perhaps one gets pleasure being under the fever of love. Perhaps this is where we get the saying, "Love-sick fool," for one of the side effects of this disease is making one act like a fool. Since a fever might make one delusional and love is described as a fever, then love can make a person delusional. A person delusional from this illness could become "deficient in judgement or sense" and "[act or behave] stupidly." Perhaps the person that a someone loves "longer nurseth the disease" for a person "[longs] still" for that person like an antidote. With these side effects, love sounds scary. It makes one fear the Love-Bug. Who will fall victim to it?

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Although the characters in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones, a Foundling* do not quote proverbs from Shakespeare's Sonnets and Chaucer's "Wyf of Bath's Prologue," they

demonstrate these proverbs and other similar proverbs. Their actions and thoughts can be reduced to proverbs.

Referring to the proverbs in Sonnet 147 illustrating love as an illness, Sophia demonstrates the side effects of her love towards Tom. For example,

Notwithstanding the nicest Guard which Sophia endeavoured to set on her Behaviour, she could not avoid letting some Appearances now and then slip forth: For Love may again be likened to a Disease in this, that when it is denied a Vent in one Part, it will certainly break out in another. What her Lips therefore concealed, her Eyes, her Blushes, and many little involuntary Actions, betrayed.  
(Tom Jones, V. II)

Fielding's perception that "Love may again be likened to a Disease" mirrors the proverbs in Sonnet 147 that portray love as a "fever" with a "sickly appetite." Referring to Definition 1a of "proverb," Shakespeare and Fielding both describe love in a "metaphorical or alliterative" way by calling it a disease which results in a "fever" or "[breaks] out" everywhere. If "it is denied a Vent in one Part, it will certainly break out in another," and there's nothing you can do to hide it. Even if "her Lips," "her Eyes, her Blushes," are concealed, "many little involuntary Actions" will 'betray' or "break out" instead. Since these are the symptoms of love and Sophia "endeavoured" to hide her illness, "she could not avoid letting some Appearances now and then slip forth." Referring to Definition 1a again, one could rewrite this passage as a proverb by rewriting it as "[a] short, traditional, and pithy saying; a concise sentence," or "maxim" about Love. This proverb would also explain Sophia's behavior. This proverb would state: Love is a Disease, in which when you try to hide in one part, it will break out in another part.

Tom's actions demonstrate proverbs describing the side effects of love and how it makes people blind. For example,

... the Squire came into the Room, crying, "There, Tom, I have had a Battle for thee below Stairs with thick Parson Thwackum—He hath been telling Allworthy, before my Face, that the broken Bone was a judgement upon thee ... Indeed, Sir,"

says Jones, "I have no Reason for either; but if it preserved Miss Western, I shall always think it the happiest Accident of my Life." (Tom Jones, V. II)

Referring to Sonnet 147, the love "fever" has made Tom delirious, mistaking a broken bone as a "[happy] Accident." While others, such as the Squire, Thwackum, and Allworthy, think that "broken Bone was a judgement," love has blinded Jones to see it otherwise. Referring to Sonnet 137, love has turned Jones into a "blind fool" for he "[beholds] and see not" a broken arm but "the happiest Accident of [his] Life." Since his love for Sophia made him want to "[preserve]" her, the pain was worth it. Although love has already turned Tom into a fool, Tom must think about what she means to him.

Although Tom Jones doesn't quote the Wife of Bath's proverbs, his actions demonstrate them. If he turned his thoughts and beliefs as proverbs, they probably would be similar to the Wife of Bath's proverbs. For example,

He was truly sensible of the great Worth of Sophia. He extremely liked her Person, no less admired her Accomplishments, and tenderly loved her Goodness. In reality, as he had never once entertained any Thought of possessing her, nor had ever given the least voluntary Indulgence of his Inclinations, he had a much stronger Passion for her than himself was acquainted with. His Heart now brought forth the full Secret, at the same Time that it assured him the adorable Object returned his Affection. (Tom Jones, V. III)

One proverb from the Wife of Bath says, "You tell me it's a great misfortune, too, / To wed a girl who costs more than she's worth." Although Tom doesn't quote this proverb, he does think about a woman's worth, for Tom "was truly sensible of the great Worth of Sophia." Her worth in Tom's terms could be what he likes about her: "her Person," "Accomplishments," and "Goodness." However, in this case, he doesn't think "it's a great misfortune" to marry her for "she's worth" more than she costs. Since "he had never once entertained any Thought of possessing her, nor had ever given the least voluntary Indulgence of his Inclinations," he only has "Passion for her" and not her status. The only thing that concerns him is Sophia "[returning]"

his Affection.” If he did turn his thoughts into a proverb, it would state: A Woman’s Worth is her Person, Accomplishments, Goodness, and if her Worth is great, then see if she’ll return your affection. What if there are other women involved?

If Tom Jones has feelings for another woman as well, would this make him a scoundrel? Would he see himself as a scoundrel for loving two women? Would he see himself as a scoundrel in other ways too?

Tom Jones uses the term “scoundrel” while reflecting on his actions and thoughts concerning a man whom he calls a rascal. For example, Tom Jones says,

Very well ... in what Cause do I venture my Life? Why, in that of my Honour. And who is this human Being? A Rascal who hath injured and insulted me without Provocation. But is not Revenge forbidden by Heavens?—Yes, but it is enjoined by the World. Well, but shall I obey the World in Opposition to the express Commands of Heaven? Shall I incur the divine Displeasure rather than be called—Ha—Coward—Scoundrel?—I’ll think no more; I am resolved, and must fight him. (Tom Jones, VII. XIV)

Tom wonders if he would be a “Scoundrel” for wanting “Revenge” against this “Rascal who hath injured and insulted [him] without Provocation.” Referring to Definition 1a of “scoundrel,” Tom would call this man a scoundrel for being “[a] mean rascal” and “a low petty villain.” Although his revenge might be “enjoined by the World,” Tom wonders if he’ll be considered a scoundrel by the Heavens if he goes against his “moral scruple” and “the express Commands of Heaven.” Although Tom might not completely be “[a]n audacious rascal” and “destitute of all moral scruple” for resolving to “fight” the rascal, Tom worries of acting like a scoundrel, even for just a moment. Referring to Definition 2 of “scoundrel,” Tom doesn’t want to take any “unprincipled” action, a “characteristic of a scoundrel,” such as fighting. Since others would call him a “Coward” or “Scoundrel” for refusing to “fight him,” Tom resolves to act in “Honour” over “divine Displeasure.” Who is more of a scoundrel? The one who asks himself if he’s a

scoundrel and calls another a scoundrel, or the one who is already known as scoundrel and who is a scoundrel? Does one's actions or thoughts make him or her more or less a scoundrel?

Although other characters don't use the term "scoundrel" and "fool," they illustrate the definitions of "scoundrel" and "fool." For example, Mrs. Fitzpatrick says,

For my own Part, I confess, I made no doubt but that his designs were strictly honourable, as the phrase is; that is, to rob a Lady of her fortune by way of Marriage. My aunt was, I conceived, neither young enough nor handsome enough, to attract much wicked inclination; but she had matrimonial Charms in Abundance. (Tom Jones, XI. IV)

If a man's designs are to "rob a lady of her fortune," wouldn't "his designs" be one of the "characteristics of a scoundrel?" Actually, that would definitely make him a scoundrel because "a petty villain" "destitute of all moral scruple" would do such a thing. Referring to Definition 1a of "fool," only a foolish lady might be so "deficient in judgement or sense" to marry a scoundrel and to not see his true intentions. Referring Definition 1c, one might also call her a fool out "of endearment or pity," if she is "neither young enough nor handsome enough" but "had matrimonial Charms in abundance." A lady like her would have been very lucky and grateful to have a husband. A man who is not a scoundrel would marry her for her "Charms," not her wealth. Although he probably didn't act "mean" or "unprincipled" in public as some scoundrels would do, he had the intentions of a scoundrel. Some of the best scoundrels are probably so good at hiding their true intentions, that they make fools out of other people.

Tom Jones could be as a fool and a scoundrel for loving two women and treating them differently. For example,

The idea of lovely Molly now intruded itself before him. He had sworn eternal Constancy in her Arms, and she had as often vowed never to outlive his deserting her. He now saw her in all the most shocking Postures of Death; nay, he considered all the Miseries of Prostitution to which she would be liable, and of which he would be doubly the Occasion; first by seducing, and then by deserting her. (Tom Jones, V. III)

Since “He had sworn eternal Constancy” to “lovely Molly” and “she had as often vowed never to outlive his deserting her,” now he feels guilty of loving two women. He needs to choose one over the other. If he chooses Sophia, he would feel guilty of putting Molly in the “most shocking Postures of Death” and forcing Molly into “the Miseries of Prostitution to which she would be liable.” If she did go into prostitution, he “would be doubly the Occasion” her client. If he “[deserted] her” after “seducing” her, he would be a scoundrel for his “audacious” actions and who be seen as “destitute of all moral scruple.” Although he’s practically a two-timing scoundrel right now, he is a fool for lacking good “judgement or sense” and for getting himself into such a situation.

Although loving two girls portrays Tom as a scoundrel, his emotional struggles make him less of a scoundrel or not at all. One might call him a fool instead out of pity. For example, “In this virtuous Resolution he continued all the next Day till the Evening, cherishing the Idea of Molly, and driving Sophia from his Thoughts” (Tom Jones, V. III). A girl would see a man as “A mean rascal” and “a low petty villain” if he ruins her future by “first by seducing, and then by deserting her.” Since scoundrels are “destitute of all moral scruple,” Tom does not appear as a scoundrel by making the “virtuous Resolution” of “cherishing the Idea of Molly, and driving Sophia from his Thoughts.” Another thing,

The superior Merit of Sophia totally eclipsed, or rather extinguished all the Beauties of the poor Girl; but Compassion instead of Contempt succeeded to Love. He was convinced the Girl had placed all her Affections, and all her Prospect of future Happiness in him only. (Tom Jones, V.V)

Since his “Compassion” for Molly was stronger than his feelings of being “Contempt” with Sophia, his love for Molly wanted him to do his best to help her, even though Sophia was out of her league. Since “The superior Merit of Sophia totally eclipsed, or rather extinguished all the

Beauties of the poor Girl,” Sophia is way out of Molly’s league and makes Molly look like nothing. Although Sophia was everything he could ever want, Tom was concerned that Molly “had placed all her Affections, and all her Prospect of future Happiness in him only.” Although Tom tries to be virtuous and do the right thing, his love for both makes him appear slightly immoral. Not only Tom is a fool for getting himself into such a situation, hopefully he’s not foolish to make more bad decisions.

Molly illustrates the Wife of Bath’s proverbs even though she doesn’t quote them. For example, Molly says,

And this is your Love for me, to forsake me in this manner, now you have ruined me? How often, when I have told you that all Men are false and Perjury alike, and grow tired of us as soon as ever they have had their wicked Wills of us, how often have you sworn you would never forsake me? And can you be such a perjury Man after all? What signifies all the Riches in the World to me without you, now you have gained my Heart, so you have—you have—? Why do you mention another Man to me? I can never love any other Man as long as I live ... No, I shall always hate and despise the whole Sex for your sake’ — (Tom Jones, V.V)

Although Molly doesn’t use the word “scoundrel,” she expresses that Tom possesses traits of a scoundrel. As the Wife of Bath calls men scoundrels for believing that wives hide their vices, Molly portrays Tom as an “audacious rascal, one destitute of all moral scruple” for “[forsaking her] in this manner” and “[ruining]” her. He’s now a “petty villain” for gaining her “Heart” and then telling her to go find “another man.” If Molly turned her thoughts and feelings into a proverb, it would state: “all Men are false and Perjury alike, and grow tired of us as soon as ever they have had their wicked Wills of us.” This would be “a general truth” about men and a warning to women. Tom reaffirms this, turning all men into scoundrels, “unprincipled” and “base, degraded in character.” Now Molly is calling out men as the Wife of Bath does. Despite Tom’s emotional struggles and attempts to be a good man, Molly will now “always hate and

despise the whole Sex.” If Tom could make himself a fool and a scoundrel on his own accord, others will not have a problem making him look even more like a fool.

Tom Jones is made a fool purposely by others, and his foolishness is contagious like a disease. Tom Jones could be a fool for being the dupe of other’s plans which involve love. For example, after Ms. Fitzpatrick received “many scurvy Compellations” from Mr. Western and her Aunt Western “treated her ... with Rudeness in another way,” “From this Moment Desire of Revenge only filled her Mind; and in this Temper meeting Jones at the Play, an Opportunity seemed to her to occur of effecting this Purpose” (Tom Jones, XVI. IX). Referring to Definition 3 of “fool,” Tom will be more of a fool for he will be “imposed on by” Ms. Fitzpatrick and will become “a dupe” for her plan. She will use Tom as an “Opportunity” to perform her “Desire of Revenge” and will use his “labour” and give him “nothing” in return. Tom is made into a fool by being the “Purpose” of her scheme. Another example,

... but besides intimating some Diffidence of Success from the Lady’s Knowledge of his Love to her Niece, which had not been her Case in Regard to Mr. Fitzpatrick, he said, he was afraid Miss Western would never agree to an Inposition of this Kind, as well from her utter Detestation of all Fallacy, as from her avowed Duty to her Aunt. Mrs. Fitzpatrick was a little nettled at this ... Jones now clearly saw the Error he had committed, and exerted his utmost Power to rectify it; but he only faltered and stuttered into Nonsense and Contradiction. (Tom Jones, XVI. IX)

Referring to Definition 1a of “fool,” Tom’s lack of “judgement or sense” about asking Mrs. Fitzpatrick for help about the “Diffidence of Success from the Lady’s Knowledge of his Love to her Niece” probably hinted to Ms. Fitzgerald that he was already a fool. Although he realizes the “Error he had committed” towards her and “that Mrs. Fitzpatrick was a little nettled at this,” his foolishness makes him speak with “Nonsense and Contradiction,” making him appear more as “a simpleton.” Another thing,

To these Ladies a Man often recommends himself while he is commending another Woman; and while he is expressing Ardour and generous Sentiments for his Mistress, they are considering what a charming Lover this Man would make to them, who can feel all this Tenderness for an inferior Degree of Merit. Of this, strange as it may seem, I have seen many Instances besides Mrs. Fitzpatrick, to whom all this really happened, and who now began to feel a Somewhat for Mr. Jones, the Symptoms of which she much sooner understood than poor Sophia had formerly done. (Tom Jones, XVI. IX)

Now she is experiencing the symptoms of love after learning about his “Ardour and generous Sentiments for his Mistress,” seeing him now as a “charming Lover” instead. Since Love is a disease, it can be contagious since Mrs. Fitzpatrick “now began to feel a Somewhat for Mr. Jones, the Symptoms of which she much sooner understood than poor Sophia had formerly done.” Her plan to use Tom ends up with her falling in love with Tom. Referring to definition 3, she made herself “appear a fool” and became “a dupe” of her own plan. Referring to Sophia’s proverb about love as a disease, Mrs. Fitzpatrick caught the Love disease from Tom. Tom could be perceived as a carrier of the love disease.

Tom Jones and other characters demonstrate that even the best people can be undone by fools are and can become fools. For example, “It raises my Indignation to the highest Pitch, to reflect on the Numbers of Women of Sense who have been undone by Fools” (Tom Jones XI. IV). Mrs. Fitzpatrick is a woman of sense undone by a fool, Tom Jones. Referring to definition 2, perhaps she feels higher about herself, higher “Indignation,” by calling “Women of Sense” fools by being undone by fools. If she turned her situation into a proverb, it would state: Many “Women of Sense who have been undone by Fools” become fools themselves.

§ § § § §

By analyzing Tom Jones and other characters in Henry Fielding’s *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, we perceive these characters as demonstrating proverbs in Chaucer’s *The Wife of Bath* and Shakespeare’s Sonnets, even though they don’t quote these proverbs. It’s

amazing learning about the history and evolution of a word and its role in different types of literature. From now on, whenever you look up a word you don't know or for clarification, don't just look at the first definition that pops up. Look at the entire list for it will expand your world. Departing from this time traveling trip, you will see words in different, many lights!

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