



## ANALYZING THE CLASS DISTINCTIONS AND SOCIETAL CONFLICTS IN HENRY FIELDING'S JOSEPH ANDREWS

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### ABSTRACT

The main focus of this research paper is to describe the tussle between an upper and lower class that Henry Fielding has mentioned in his novel *Joseph Andrews*. From the beginning, conflicts between these classes badly influence the wellness of society. So, it is necessary to manipulate this process in literature, naturally through the theories that are manifesting in the reality. According to critics, Marxism is the appropriate term in literary criticism to deal with such a complicated subject. Two main Marxist postulates that have been mentioned in the paper are Class tussle in society and the idea of base and superstructure. Base means forces that provide things according to the needs of society whereas superstructure involves the beliefs that people possess. Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews* deals with the idea of the superstructure that works on the struggles between the upper and lower class. This work gives closure to the concept that Fielding describes the system that already exists in the society but he also tried to make a better structure of upper and lower classes, so he criticizes the elite class ideologies and their faiths that create many hurdles in the progress of the lower class in different ways.

Keywords: Classes, Society, Distinction, Ideologies, Marxism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Henry Fielding, one of the greatest British novelists and dramatists, was born in 1707 and died in 1754. He belongs to the *neoclassical period* (also considered as the Age of Enlightenment, Age of reason, and Era of logic) (1660-1785), the *Age of Sensibility* (1745-1785), and the *Augustan age* (1700-1744). *Joseph Andrews* is a "comic epic poem in prose" that was a new genre introduced by Henry Fielding in English literature. In this novel, Fielding demonstrates the history of struggles and experiences that Joseph and his friend Parson Abraham Adam faced in their journey toward home. Hazlitt illustrates him "as a painter of real life and also that he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was a little bit inferior to Shakespeare" because Fielding was a realistic poet and he keenly observed his society. This novel is considered "a masterpiece of sustained irony and social criticism". This novel "manifests with all the doctrine of the Augustan Age". Class and Birth are the major motives in *Joseph Andrew* and the novel describes the division of classes and struggles that correspond to lower standard living and higher standard living. So,

Marxism is the appropriate school of literary criticism that handles the class content. Joseph Andrew and Marxist criticism are learned by many researchers separately during their BA program. This is a chance for many researchers to analyze and study the field of critical review. The affair of this paper has never been discussed before any paper applying Marxism.

The basic purpose of this paper is to mention the strife between the upper and lower class in *Joseph Andrew's* novel by applying the Marxist approach of base and superstructure. Conflicts of classes are present in this world from the very beginning so that's why every person is very conscious about his status. So, it is necessary to explore the remarks of other authors in the context of equality and social justice and analyze many of their important questions. This paper answers the main questions by applying Marxist theory through the analysis of *Joseph Andrews*. Does the favor of the ongoing situation deny the lower class moral values? Is Fielding trying to make society equal to everyone through his work? Is he wants status differences concerning some reasonable changes? The study of the Marxist postulates in the context of equality and

Justice fulfills many gaps in knowledge that have never been studied before.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Literature Review

McCrea, R. R. (1984) threatens *Joseph Andrews* that it "stands as a kind of literary endangered species---a text that critics have dared to 'close" (p. 137). Even, Hudson (2015) says that analysis of these classes in our society is very important for the study of literature between 1660 and 1800. The concept of conflict between classes in *Joseph Andrews* is not only being examined by scholars, but this novel has also gathered many reactions from numerous critics who have worked on it as "a microcosm of Augustan beliefs and principles". Fielding depicts, in this novel, "human nature as it existed in all levels of society" and it also reveals the reality of every class prevailing in our society.

William Hazlitt says:

"I should be at a loss where to find in any authentic documents of the same period so satisfactory an account of the general state of society, and of moral, political, and religious feeling in the reign of George II as we meet with in the Adventures of *Joseph Andrews* and his friend Mr. Abraham Adams." (Wu, 1998, p. 401)

Fielding accomplished in portraying "an entertaining and intellectually stimulating story that closely resembles reality". Ideological aspects of Marxism give importance to reality so, that's why it has been selected to throw some light on what is prevailing in our society.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Research Questions

1. How has the novel manifested upper-class notions and their curiosities?
2. How has the writer projected the societal issues in the novel?

### 3.2 Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study employed a qualitative methodology. The research about the class problem in the novel consists of three parts that are: the first Part involves the overview of the methods by which the upper class uses the proletariat to expand their property and to accomplish their demands at the loss of others; the second part considers the behavior of the lower class towards this ill-treatment; the third part shows the consequences of the class strife by analyzing the existence and generation of new sequences in the society. The fourth part concerns arguments of a person who endures social categorization, specifically Mrs. Slipslop. The partition of the research paper which is discussed above followed the other Marxist rule that is a rhetorical trio: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. This trio indicates the development of three ideas respectively in which the first one, thesis, and second, antithesis is related to each other and are opposite while the hurdles are solved by the third, synthesis (Schnitker, 2013). These three points are further explained in this paper.

This research paper deals with two major postulates of the Marxian theory: "conflicts between classes and the idea of base and superstructure, former deals with the progress in society because of conflicts between upper and lower classes. From history, we see

how the elite class (Feudal, Bourgeoisie, upper class) creates hurdles in the progress of the working class (lower, the proletariat, peasants, and poor) due to discrimination" (Mambrol, 2016).

How come this conflict related to literature? The second key postulate of Marxism is that our society comprises two fragments: a base and a superstructure. Conflicts between classes are part of the first postulate of Marxist theory that "shapes the superstructure". This idea of the superstructure in literature is an element of organization that "maintains and legitimizes the base" and it results in different conflicts between the upper and lower classes. The connection of the two parts is different but the influence of the idea of the base on the superstructure is do

## 4. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Textual Analysis and Finding

Mrs. Slipslop, who belongs to the highest rank of the servant class and previously worked as an attendant at Lady Booby's home, has taken on positive as well as negative characteristics from the higher classes, making it difficult to place herself in society. She is described by Fielding as a haughty waitress. Although she does not entirely give up on her old coworker Fanny Goodwill, he claims that she must overlook her to demonstrate her class superiority over others. The distinctions between "Upper class" and "Lower class," or "People of Fashion" and "People of No Fashion," are described in his analysis. When Adam stops at the inn for a rest, she strives to display her altruistic side by spending for his lodging. She stands up for Joseph, showing surprise that any "Christian Woman" could refuse to like him. In addition, Slipslop strongly rejects the idea that Joseph is "coarse" and expresses her desire to change him into an elegant man so that she can tie the knot with him.

However, as Mr. Adams observes, she also appears to be mentally insane maintaining the mindset and the opposing side. When Mrs. Slipslop was asked, she snubs the question with contempt. The inn's hostess is attacked by her. Like Lady Booby, Mrs. Slipslop develops an intimate connection with Joseph. With "Tea, Sweetmeats, Wine, and Many Other Delicacies," she attempts to lure him. She even springs at him in an attempt to fulfill her desires. She is described by Fielding as a potential rapist. She charges Joseph with being arrogant and unappreciative after he rejects her approach.

Mrs. Slipslop is despised by Lady Booby, as she belongs to the ruling class. She exits, shutting the door behind her after her boss chooses to discharge her. As soon as Lady Booby worries that she could spill her secrets, she summons her again and puts her again in charge. Hudson asserts that "Marxist interpretations of class conflict between the aristocracy and emerging middle class are unhelpful in describing the political situation in eighteenth-century Britain and its literary works," but *Joseph Andrews'* study using the concept of Marxism of the superstructure and base has been successful. According to *Joseph Andrews*, the higher class oppresses, abuses, and condemns those with fewer resources. The working class rebels amiably and sometimes violently. The result is not quite definitive. In certain instances, it appears like both the top and lower classes are working to keep things as they are and thwart societal progress. On other occasions, the higher class starts to exhibit mental and economic sympathy for those who are impoverished and the middle class moves one step closer to adopting high-class ideals and ethics, leading to a mutually

beneficial interaction. The perfect without-distinction society envisioned by Marxists cannot be achieved through that interaction or by reducing the distinctions between groups.

#### **4.2 Thesis: Exploitation by top class**

This section examines how superiors misuse inferiors to accumulate their riches and to please their longings at the cost of others. It comprises further three parts: Abuse, contempt, and suffering.

##### **4.2.1 Abuse**

In *Joseph Andrews*, it is mentioned that the upper class takes, both physically and psychologically, the advantage of the lower.

##### **4.2.1.1 Physical Abuse**

Physical Abuse expresses itself in two parts: 1) the additional load of work and duties demanded from the breadwinners and 2) the reduction in payment to the minimum attainable amount.

##### **4.2.1.2 Augmentation of Labor**

The acquisitive always aims to achieve the lion's share out of the proletariat. For the sake of their objectives, they suppress the powerless. Sir Thomas Booby takes Fanny from gypsies when she was just three or four years old so that he can get full advantage from her work till last. As a footman, Joseph's job suggests that he must have to follow Lady Booby's orders wherever she goes.

##### **4.2.1.3 Insufficient Reward**

Another side of materialistic abuse is the limited salary the peasants obtain for their extra work. It later appears that Peter Pounce, Lady Booby's administrator, managed to create a profit by withholding the salaries of servants, giving them the amount that he has withheld, and demanding a great deal of repayment on cash he has granted when he sends for Joseph to pay him his salary. Adams assists Sir Thomas Booby to succeed in his campaign and get elected to the House of Commons, but he does not provide Adams what he had vowed because Lady Booby decided to offer it to a different person.

##### **4.2.1.4 Psychological Abuse**

In addition to physical abuse, the upper class takes one more step by attacking sexually and psychologically exploiting those who are poor. While attending church, Lady Booby consumes a longer time fervently glancing at Joseph than listening to Parson Adams' preaching. When Joseph is gone, Lady Booby reportedly starts to behave "like a Madwoman," according to Mrs. Slipslop. Leonora performs with the affluent Bellarmine in absence of Horatio. But when the former learns that he is unable to obtain Leonora's dowry payments, he completely abandons her, fleeing to France.

#### **4.2.2 Disrespect**

Along with physical and psychological misuse, there is higher disrespect for the "poor" that is noticeable in their viewpoints along with their moves concerning them.

##### **4.2.2.1 Insolent Demeanor**

In the story, wealthy society doesn't consider laborers as humans. The Squire claims that his parson views his poor followers as belonging to a different species. They "believe that a mere acquaintance with those lower to them constitutes workers and if they choose to go further humiliation." The lower classes are considered inferior because of their looks. Thomas Booby's family frequently forbids Mr. Adams from visiting them because Lady

Booby "did not think [his] Dress good enough for the Gentry at her Table." Moreover, the upper class even thinks that those who should receive alms originally—the poor—are unworthy of receiving them. Mrs. Tow-Wouse was advised by Betty that Joseph might be "a greater Man than they took him for," which makes her think comfortable about assisting him.

##### **4.2.2.2 Remedy**

The lower class is subjected to prejudice, arrogance, evasion, mistrust, mistreatment, harshness, and violence as a result of the elite's discriminatory behaviors toward them. The roughness of their skin makes them "lower-born" easily identifiable. Because of his excellent skin, Betty thinks Joseph is a gentleman. When dealing with the impoverished, the wealthy only act hypocritically. The Squire falsely states, "I esteem Riches only as they give me the opportunity of doing Good," to the destitute Mr. Adams who is charitable and kind. Furthermore, the rich and famous make every effort to keep a distance from the lower class. Joseph is referred to by Lady Booby as a "Vagabond" who "brings a Nest of Beggars" into her community and fails to have a right to "settle" there. When it is later discovered that he was originally a member of the high class, Mr. Booby returns him to Lady Booby with the expectation that she will treat him respectfully as a part of her household to which she agrees happily. Before the disclosure, Lady Booby forces Joseph and Fanny to eat in the kitchen while berating Mr. Adams for developing a friendship with a footman.

On top of that, members of the higher class frequently make fun of and mock those who are poorly born. The wealthy passengers start criticizing arrogant Mrs. Grave-airs for trying to behave beyond her class as the coachman reveals that her father was a lowborn who served as a postilion. The invasive Mrs. Slipslop is described as "a comical creature" by Lady Booby. The Adams family is then visited unexpectedly by her friends so they may enjoy seeing a huge family struggling to survive on meager salaries. Mrs. Adams is surprised and embarrassed about being visited by her wealthy guests without being notified.

##### **4.2.3 Suffering**

It seems that hatred and mistreatment are insufficient. Regardless of how unfair it may be when people from the working class fail to comply with the standards established by those in the upper strata, the response is swift, harsh, and demeaning. It includes anything from unlawful custody to being prosecuted. Adams, Fanny, and Joseph are unable to leave the inn because of an amount they are unable to pay. The Hostler holds Joseph in the inn because he is incapable of providing for the horse's needs. Betty gets fired by Mrs. Tow-Wouse for catering to her spouse's erotic cravings instead of merely getting her spouse fully within the command. However, Lady Booby decides to fire her footman from employment since he declines to satisfy her sexual impulses. She calls Attorney Scout and orders him to provide legal support for her decision "to have no discarded Servants of mine settled here." For the sake of trying to increase their money and fulfill their own demands at the expense of the powerless, the rich and powerful abuse, disrespect, and threatens the lower class. What response would they have?

#### **4.3 Antithesis: Lower Class Response**

Since the mistreatment of those who are poor by the rich causes the former to experience hardships, it exposes their truthfulness and throws light on how they have resisted the labor's dishonesty and



insisted on getting what they wanted mostly using substantial effort and sometimes by employing methods of force.

#### **4.3.1 Proletariat distress**

The Christian virtues of tolerance and obedience are the main response to injustice and an inadequate supply of resources. We discover that the majority of the impoverished lead precarious lives. Mr. Abraham Adams quietly continues despite his meager salary which is hardly enough to support his married life. Joseph invites Mr. Adams to deliver an address on tolerance and submit it shortly after Fanny is kidnapped. Adams also connects that, "No Accident happens to us without the Divine Permission, and that a Man and a Christian must submit."

#### **4.3.2 Loyalty towards the Riches**

Workers of the low-born class perform their responsibilities honestly and professionally without complaining, even though they are the sufferers of acts of violence committed by those from the higher class. Joseph is characterized to have had "an Air, which to those who have not seen many Noblemen, would give an Idea of Nobility" at the young age of twenty-one. One of Joseph's responsibilities was to run Sir Thomas' horses, which he did admirably well thanks to his power, careful planning, and lack of mismanagement or dishonesty. Additionally, ignoring Lady Booby's overt attempts to seduce him, he naively says, "If it had not been such a great Lady, I should have thought she had a mind to me."

#### **4.3.3 Objection**

The working class nevertheless opposes their dishonesty in all of its forms notwithstanding their sincerity as they interact with the wealthy. In response to criticism, Joseph justifies his behavior. Despite potential consequences to his materialistic interests, Adams "persist[s] in doing his Duty." Mr. Adams gets out of the coach to maintain his honor after Pounce calls him a "shabby Fellow."

In addition to defending their well-being, poor people stand up for one another when the rich attack them. Joseph steps in to guide the person hosting to treat Mr. Adams with respect. Following Lady Booby's advice to fire him, Parson Adams persists in committing the marriage of Joseph and Fanny. "Being poor is no Reason against their getting married," he claims.

Additionally, the underprivileged strongly oppose any type of sexual violence carried out by the wealthy. Joseph tells Lady Booby about how he'd ultimately "rather die a thousand Deaths" than engage in erotic activity with her outside of marriage, despite the possibility that he could get fired. If she continues to mistreat him, he has no interest in staying in his position with her. He is unable to understand "why my Virtue should be subservient to [a lady's] Pleasure, because I am a Man, or because I am Poor." In addition, Joseph praises his sister Pamela Andrews for standing up to her boss's advances to have sex with her while she was a housekeeper in his home. Mr. Adams further criticizes Mr. Wilson's "Course of Life," calling it "below the Life of an Animal, hardly above Vegetation" as he tries to "Intrigue" some of "the finest Women in Town."

#### **4.3.4 Emphasis on virtues:**

Mr. Adams responds, "[S]uppose I am not a Clergyman, I am nevertheless thy Brother, and thou, as a Christian, much more as a Clergyman, art obliged to relieve my Distress," to Parson Trulliber claim that he is posing as a priest just to demand money. He

maintains that "deeds speak louder than words" and declares that "anyone lacking in charity is not a Christian without hesitation". Following the encounter, Joseph remarks how "those Masters who promise the most perform the least," according to a proverb from Footmen. Mr. Adams condemns horrible people but has faith in their potential for change. Mr. Adams then makes a charitable request to the parish, but his efforts were unsuccessful, and he returns disheartened by the lack of emphasis placed on charitable giving in the nation. Fortunately, Mr. Adams and Joseph quickly find help when a beggar gives them what they require to settle their past-due bill. "These poor People, who could not engage the Compassion of Riches and Piety, were finally delivered out of their Distress by the Charity of a poor Pedlar," the author writes. Instead of accumulating wealth and other possessions, Joseph believes that the virtues of generosity serve as a man's mark of honor.

#### **4.3.5 Conscientiousness**

On the other hand, poor people do not permit themselves to be wholly dependent on alms from those who are rich; instead, they try passionately to improve their situation. Horatio works hard to amass "a very considerable Fortune."

#### **4.3.6 Violence:**

Violence could likewise be used as a reaction to the Bourgeoisie. Gypsies kidnap the kids of wealthy people for profit or hold them for money. When Bellarmine attempted Horatio's fiancée, Leonora, "the former was run through the Body by Horatio," and the "Surgeons had declared the Wound mortal." Similarly, Joseph hits Beau Didapper to protect Fanny.

To enhance themselves and fulfill their ambitions, the rich and famous utilize the benefit of the poor, take advantage of them, treat them disrespectfully, and condemn them. In return, the lower class faces violence, humiliation, and contemptuous from the bourgeoisie that results in their depression and agony. Will there be an alternate scenario as a result, and if so, how different?

#### **4.4 Synthesis: Solution: Changed circumstances**

In Fielding's story, there are indications that the wealthy, as well as the poor, are committed to preserving their relative isolation from one another, supporting the rank currently, and opposing changes in society. Fielding speaks out against several elitist customs. He asks the audience to empathize with Lady Booby by stating that Joseph's attractive appearance is what causes her to develop desires for him. She experiences a fit of fury, which is why she fires Joseph. By pointing out "the different Operations of this Passion of Love in the gentle and cultivated Mind of the Lady Booby, from those which it affected in the less polished and coarser Disposition of Mrs. Slipslop," the author of the novel strengthens his defense.

#### **4.4.1 Maintaining the current status**

As a result of this, Fielding supports Lady Booby's sophisticated methods instead of Mrs. Slipslop's less sophisticated techniques, despite the fact they both long for Joseph. The laborers-Doctor, who ridicules whatever Mr. Adams speaks in favour of kindness, also has contempt for the lower classes. According to Fielding, assessing someone is primarily personal because it is based on their own experiences. When two travelers have contrasting views regarding an elitist landlord named Justice, it becomes out that this is because they were on opposite sides of a case from the past that Justice ruled. Those of the working class are also eager to separate themselves from the rich and famous. "He would own no relation to anyone who was an enemy to her [Fanny], whom he loved more

than all the world," says Joseph. The significance of treating the working class properly is emphasized by this stance.

#### 4.4.2 Value of minors

Henry Fielding appears to empathize with the lower classes, which the upper class typically despises, in his work. He explains his decision to write a "comic Epic-Poem in Prose" as opposed to a "serious Romance" from the very beginning by pointing out that it has figures from lower social classes. Even though, as the Pedlar affirms, "His Parents were Persons of much greater Circumstances than those he had hitherto mistaken for such," Joseph, the protagonist of the story, at first appears as the child of poor Andrews.

#### 4.4.3 Level settlement

Fielding mocks the widely held belief that only generations of wealthy qualify as "families" in the actual meaning of the term; as a result, someone lacking an eminent pedigree is thought to have no forebears at all and doesn't qualify as a hero in any way. But Fielding insists that Joseph is heroically capable: "Would it not be hard to render a Man without Ancestors incapable of acquiring Honor, when we see so many who have no Virtues, enjoying the Honor of their Forefathers?"

##### 4.4.3.1 Forward Settlement:

The wealthy starts to demonstrate psychological and economic pity for those who are less fortunate. On an economic scale, for example, Fielding tells us that Sir Thomas might have proven more charitable to the needy if it weren't for his spouse's frugal nature. Fanny receives £2,000 from Mr. Booby to ensure Joseph can purchase a property. The Wilsons' generosity for their neighbors is also praised by visitors, as Wilsons provide needy travelers with supplies, particularly a piece of gold, to help them escape difficulties during the trip. According to Mr. Adams, "This was the way the People had lived in the Golden Age."

Particular members of the upper class tend to adopt the high standards of morality of the working class. When Wilson learns of the dishonesty and haughtiness of the group's individuals, he decides to quit because he is persuaded that "Vanity is the worst of Passions, and more apt to contaminate the Mind than any other." He is aware of:

"The Pleasures of the World are chiefly Folly, and the Business of it mostly Knavery; and both, nothing better than Vanity: The Men of Pleasure tearing one another to Pieces, from the Emulation of spending Money, and the Men of Business from Envy in getting it".

##### 4.4.3.2 Backward Settlement:

Consequently, the lower class advances in learning high-class ideals and behaviors. To help Joseph "be qualified for a higher Station than that of Footman," Mr. Adams offers the opportunity to teach him Latin. With her simple attractiveness, good nature, and "a natural Gentility, superior to the Acquisition of Art, which surprised all who beheld her," Fanny charms society's elite. However, we also discover that Mrs. Slipslop and Joseph are actually "her Servants" as well as her "dear Reputation" is "in the power of Lady's Servants." Rich people are making use of the less fortunate. The latter battle back but without success. Even if there are early indications of some sort of agreement, the present state is upheld. However, a single character doesn't appear in any way strong enough to be classified to fit into a particular group of people.

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Conclusion

Analyzing the conflict between the upper and lower classes in *Joseph Andrews*, a novel by Henry Fielding, has been verified successfully through the base and superstructure ideas of Marxism. As an idea of the superstructure, this novel explicitly reviews processing-level disputes appearing at the base between the upper and lower class. Here we found answers to three main questions:

1. Is this novel a simple conservation of bourgeoisie beliefs and their regards?
2. Is this a revolt against those ideals and regards?
3. Does this novel manifest a preservation of dominant society while criticizing the bad side of the prominent beliefs?

This review concludes that as Fielding takes the side of an already surviving community and its beliefs, he, nevertheless, extends harsh analysis of many elite class ideals and manners that create hurdles in the prosperity of a lower class. Fielding dislikes bourgeoisie misuse and hatred for poor people. He explains poor people as a sound to show their dismissal of being examined unjustly. The elite class expresses signs of empathy with the lower class both physically and honestly; the poor, in turn, aims to gain upper-class behaviors and etiquette. The bi-facial settlement association, however, is a long way from dominant to the Marxist furthest belief of an ideal society where there are no classes at all.

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