

Class Conflict in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews***Bechir Saoudi**

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Abstract

The basis of this paper is a research project that studies the struggle between classes in Henry Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews*. It has been carried out during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020 at the College of Science and Humanities, Hotat Bani Tamim, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Since the issue of classes and class struggle dominates almost all aspects of life, it is natural to consider the importance of this phenomenon in literature, especially through theories that view literature as a reflection of real life. The most suitable school of literary criticism to tackle such a subject, according to the authors, is that of Marxism. Two basic Marxist principles are at the center of the study: class conflict and the notion of base and superstructure. The novel is studied as part of the superstructure which is a reflection of the ongoing class conflict occurring at the base mainly between feudal landlords and peasants. Three main questions have been addressed: 1) Is the novel a mere perpetuation of the upper class ideology and interests? 2) Is it a subversion of that ideology? or 3) Does it signify both a perpetuation of a class-structured society while condemning the negative aspects of the dominant ideology? The study reaches the conclusion that while Fielding favors a perpetuation of the already existing social order, he, nevertheless, levels bitter criticism at various upper class beliefs and practices that hinder the advancement of poor class causes.

Keywords: Base and superstructure, class conflict, *Joseph Andrews*, Marxist criticism

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Introduction

Henry Fielding is a British novelist and dramatist who lived between 1707 and 1754, which places him in the neoclassical period (1660-1785), the Augustan period (1700-1744) and the Age of Sensibility (1745-1785). *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, simply referred to as *Joseph Andrews*, is a 1742 "comic epic poem in prose" by novelist and dramatist Henry Fielding, "one of the greatest writers of his time" (Aiken, n.d.). Hazlitt describes him "as a painter of real life," and says "he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakespeare" (Mundra & Mundra, 2016, p. 233). With Samuel Richardson, Fielding is considered a founder of the English novel (Allen, 2019). The novel itself is "a masterpiece of sustained irony and social criticism" (The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2018, para. 2). It is distinguished for its use of "everyday reality of character and action as opposed to the fables of the past" ("Henry Fielding Facts", n.d., para. 7). It "embodies all of the principles of the Augustan Age" (Aiken, n.d. para. 1). Among the interesting themes in *Joseph Andrews* is class and birth as the novel abounds in various class divisions and issues related to high and low birth. The most suitable school of literary criticism to tackle class conflicts is that of Marxism. The researchers studied both *Joseph Andrews* and Marxist criticism in separate courses during our BA process. This is a great opportunity for us to explore and experiment with the field of literary criticism. To the best knowledge of the authors, the topic of the paper has so far never been dealt with applying Marxism.

The paper aims at studying the conflicts between classes in *Joseph Andrews* using the Marxist notions of base and superstructure, where class conflict, as part of the base, is reflected in the novel, being part of the superstructure. It is important to investigate the views of great writers especially when it comes to equality and social justice, and explore a number of key questions. The study seeks to answer important questions posed in Marxist literary criticism through an investigation of *Joseph Andrews*. Is Fielding in favor of the existing situation being built on exploitation of the lower class? Does he advance the cause of the latter in pursuit of a more equal and just society? Is he in favor of keeping the status quo but with a certain type of modification? This literary study is very beneficial in that it fills a gap in knowledge that has not been dealt with previously, namely the application of Marxist criticism to *Joseph Andrews* in the pursuit of the universal principles of equality and justice in the world. It aims at scrutinizing the work in order to find out where it stands in this respect. The study is also extremely significant in that it deals with literature, one of the three main disciplines studied at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, the other two being linguistics and translation. In fact, most research projects have so far dealt with education sciences and language teaching issues to the detriment of the other disciplines. This study will encourage more students to opt for literary research projects in order to address the imbalance.

Literature Review

McCrea (1984) warns that *Joseph Andrews* "stands as a kind of literary endangered species—a text that critics have dared to 'close'" (p. 137). Yet, Hudson (2015) maintains that the study of social class is crucial to the analysis of literature between 1660 and 1800. *For an overview of literature and social class in the eighteenth century, refer to Hudson, 2015. Even though the theme*

of class conflict in Joseph Andrews has not, to the best knowledge of the authors, been thoroughly explored by academics, the novel has stimulated numerous reactions from many critics who have studied it as "a microcosm of Augustan beliefs and principles" (Aiken, n.d., para. 2). In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding portrays "human nature as it existed in all levels of society" and shows the nature of all social classes (Aiken, n.d., para. 3).

In addition to accurately depicting the nature of people, readers found that Fielding also enabled them to acquire knowledge on the customs and culture of English society through clear descriptions of its inhabitants and circumstances. Hazlitt writes:

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 succeeds in creating "an entertaining and intellectually stimulating story that closely resembles reality" (Aiken, n.d., para. 7). The prominent theoretical framework of Marxism has been chosen to shed light on that reality.

Theoretical Framework

The present study concerns itself with two fundamental principles of Marxism: class struggle and the base and superstructure relationship. The first one concerns the evolution of society through a struggle between conflicting forces, resulting in social transformation. History teaches us that class conflict emanates from the exploitation of the lower class (peasants, proletariat, working class...) by the upper class (feudal lords, bourgeoisie, capitalists...) (Mambrol, 2016).

But what relation does this conflict have to literature? The second major principle in traditional Marxist theory is that society is made up of two parts: a base and a superstructure. Class conflict, the first principle, is part of the base which "shapes the superstructure." The superstructure includes literature which, in turn, is part of the system that "maintains and legitimizes the base," where class conflict takes place. The relation of the two parts is bi-directional but the impact of the base on the superstructure is prominent.

Marxist criticism considers literary works as reverberations of the ongoing social struggles at the base. Therefore one of the aims of Marxist literary criticism is to analyze class struggle in literary texts by answering questions about whether the text serves 1) to preserve and maintain the ruling class ideology, 2) to disrupt and destabilize that ideology, or 3) to suggest both a perpetuation of a class-structured society while condemning the negative aspects of the existing state of affairs.

Research Design

The study of class conflict in the novel is divided into three main parts followed by a discussion: Part one concerns the study of the ways the bourgeoisie takes advantage of the proletariat to enrich themselves and fulfill their own desires at the expense of others; Part two studies the reaction of

the proletariat towards this exploitation; Part three concerns the result of the class struggle by studying the possibility of a new social order. The three parts are followed by a fourth part consisting in a discussion of a character who resists social classification, namely Mrs. Slipslop. The division of the study into the three main parts mentioned above follows another Marxist principle, that of the dialectical triplet: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. The triplet signifies an evolution of three notions in which the first one, thesis, is followed by a second one, antithesis, that contradicts it, and the conflict is resolved by the third notion of synthesis (Schnitker, 2013). The triplet is dealt with in the following data analysis components.

Part I- Thesis: Upper Class Abuse

This part explores how the upper class takes advantage of the lower in order to augment their wealth and satisfy their desires at the expense of others. It is divided into three sections: Exploitation, Disrespect and Punishment.

Exploitation

As reflected in *Joseph Andrews*, exploitation of the lower class by the upper is both material and emotional.

Material Exploitation

How do the rich exploit the poor materially? Material exploitation manifests itself in two components: 1) the increase in the amount of work and services required from the proletariat and 2) the decrease of wages to the lowest possible level.

Maximization of Work

The bourgeoisie always endeavors to get the most out of the working class. In order to achieve their goal, they literally enslave the weak. When the Hunter sets out for an educational tour of Europe, he is interested in acquiring more servants (Fielding, 1742). Sir Thomas buys Fanny from a traveling woman when Fanny is three or four in order to fully benefit from her services for the rest of her life (Fielding, 1742). Joseph's job as a footman means he must attend Lady Booby wherever she goes (Fielding, 1742).

Meager Wages

Another manifestation of material exploitation is the meager wages the working class gets for maximum labor. When Mr. Peter Pounce, Lady Booby's steward, sends for Joseph to give him his wages, it turns out that Pounce has made a profitable task out of holding back the servants' wages, lending them the wages he has held back, and charging a very high interest on the money he has lent (Fielding, 1742). Adams helps Sir Thomas Booby win the election and become a Member of Parliament, but Thomas never delivers a living he had promised him because Lady Booby wanted to grant it to someone else (Fielding, 1742).

The wealthy also consider the lower class unworthy even of charity. While the parish poor totally depend on the charity of Lady Booby (Fielding, 1742), Pounce considers charity a "mean"

quality and “the Distresses of Mankind [...] mostly imaginary” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. XIII). The Hunter and his friends even go as far as stealing Wilson’s gold piece offered to Joseph and Adams (Fielding, 1742). The Host tells of the false-promises the Squire makes to the poor without keeping his word to the frustration of the expectations of his victims (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XVII). And although the Catholic Priest denounces the pride related to riches, claiming, “I have a Contempt for nothing so much as for Gold,” he soon asks poor Mr. Adams for eighteen pence to pay for reckoning (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. VIII).

Emotional Exploitation

Apart from material exploitation, the bourgeoisie takes a further step towards taking advantage of the lower class emotionally and abusing them sexually. When Lady Booby goes to church, she spends more time passionately staring at Joseph than attending to Parson Adams's sermons (Fielding, 1742). Mrs. Slipslop reports that Lady Booby starts acting “like a Madwoman” when Joseph is away (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. III). While poor Horatio is away Leonora dances with the wealthy Bellarmine (Fielding, 1742). Yet when the latter discovers that he cannot get Leonora's dowry, he leaves her and the country altogether, returning to France (Fielding, 1742).

When Fanny is abducted by the Hunter's men, Adams warns Joseph, “You have not only lost her, but have reason to fear the utmost Violence which Lust and Power can inflict upon her” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. XI). On their way to the Hunter’s house, the Captain tries to convince Fanny that the Hunter's luxury is far better for her than a miserable life with Joseph. He then threatens Fanny that the Hunter will deprive her of her virginity by force if she does not willingly surrender (Fielding, 1742, III, Ch. XII).

Contempt

In addition to material and emotional exploitation, there is an upper class contempt for the “low-born” that is perceptible in their attitudes as well as in their actions towards them.

Contemptuous Attitude

The upper class do not consider the low born as human beings in the novel. The Squire says his parson considers the poor parishioners as people of another species (Fielding, 1742). They “think the least Familiarity with the Persons below them a Condescension, and if they were to go one Step farther, a Degradation” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XIII). They judge the lower class by their appearance. Mr. Adams is often denied contact with the Booby family because Lady Booby “did not think [his] Dress good enough for the Gentry at her Table” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. VIII). Furthermore, the bourgeoisie even considers that the poor, for whom charity ought to be extended in the first place, are actually unworthy of it. Betty tells Mrs. Tow-wouse that Joseph may be “a greater Man than they took him for”; as a result, Mrs. Tow-wouse begins to feel better about having extended charity to him (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. XV).

The poor are also unworthy of being loved. The lustful Lady Booby, Mr. Booby, and Pamela claim that the virtuous Fanny actually has no virtue and that marrying her would shame the family (Fielding, 1742). Poor suitors are looked down upon. Leonora's reason for exchanging

poor Horatio for the rich Bellarmine as a fiancé is mainly financial: “How vast is the difference between being the Wife of a poor Counsellor, and the Wife of one of Bellarmine’s Fortune!” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. IV). Mrs. Slipslop discusses the degradation of Lady Booby's attraction to Joseph (Fielding, 1742). Lady Booby even converses with herself about her demeaning lust and the irrationality of Joseph's inclination towards poor Fanny rather than herself (Fielding, 1742). And even though she feels ashamed of her sexual desire for Joseph, she abhors him for having stimulated it (Fielding, 1742).

Treatment

The upper class negative attitudes towards the low-born is translated into actions of discrimination, hypocrisy, avoidance, distrust, ill-treatment, ridicule, cruelty and abuse. The "lower-born" are recognized by the coarseness of their skin. Betty believes Joseph to be a gentleman on the basis of his fine skin (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. XIV). If the rich have to deal with the poor, they only do it in a hypocritical way. The Squire, who makes a fake show of generosity to poor Mr. Adams, who is really generous and compassionate, deceitfully insists “I esteem Riches only as they give me an opportunity of doing Good” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XVI). Otherwise, the upper class do their best to avoid mingling with the working class. Lady Booby describes Joseph as a “Vagabond” who does not deserve to “settle” in her parish and “bring a Nest of Beggars” into it (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. II). Later, when it turns out that he is initially an upper class member, Mr. Booby brings him back to Lady Booby expecting her to treat him with respect as a member of the family. Lady Booby complies delightedly, but she refuses to receive his fiancée Fanny whose real identity as a member of the upper class has not yet been unveiled at this stage (Fielding, 1742). Before the revelation, Joseph and Fanny are made to dine in the kitchen with Lady Booby criticizing Mr. Adams for befriending a footman (Fielding, 1742).

The low born are not worthy of trust in financial matters even when they deal with the clergy. The well-off clergyman of the parish refuses to when Adams asks to borrow a desperately needed amount of money (Fielding, 1742). When Joseph and Mr. Adams ask the Hostess to trust them to postpone the payment of their bill, she accepts to their surprise because she thinks Adams and the frightening Parson Trulliber are biological brothers, not just brothers in religion. When she learns the truth, she goes back on her word to delay the payment (Fielding, 1742). To the rich, the low born are unworthy of the basic necessities of survival. When the Surgeon learns that the injured Joseph is “a poor foot Passenger” and not a gentleman, he refrains from treating him and simply goes back to bed (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. XII). When the rude Host at the inn finds his wife tending to the injured footman, he insults her and asks her to attend the more refined guests (Fielding, 1742). After their hounds attacked Joseph and Mr. Adams, the hunters are worried about the injuries the hounds have suffered, blaming Joseph for assaulting the dogs! (Fielding, 1742).

Even in issues related to love between men and women, the upper class tends to show no mercy. When Bellarmine proposes to Horatio's fiancée, Leonora, she immediately refers him to her father, not paying much attention to the feelings of Horatio because, as she rationalizes, “Bellarmine may be as miserable for me too” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. IV). Her Aunt further

advises her to go for Bellarmine because, for her, “there is not anything worth our Regard besides Money” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. IV). Then she simply informs Horatio of “a small Alteration in the Affections of Leonora” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. IV).

In addition, the low born are constantly used by the upper class as subjects of amusement and ridicule. The Coachman discloses that the father of pompous Mrs. Grave-airs is actually a low-born who worked as a postilion, the well-off passengers begin to denigrate her for trying to act above her station (Fielding, 1742). Instead of running for their rescue, the hunters are entertained by the sight of Joseph and Mr. Adams struggling with the unleashed dogs (Fielding, 1742). Lady Booby tells the intrusive Mrs. Slipslop that she is “a comical Creature” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. VI). She then takes her guests on a surprise visit to the Adams family in order to enjoy seeing a large family who could barely make ends meet, surviving on scanty wages. Taken aback, Mrs. Adams feels humiliated to receive her upper-class visitors without prior notification (Fielding, 1742).

Meanness towards the lower class seems to have no limits. The Hunter’s weird guests commit cruel hoaxes against Mr. Adams (Fielding, 1742). The landlady of the inn, Mrs. Tow-wouse, accuses her husband of “abus[ing] my Bed, my own Bed, with my own Servant,” Betty, against whom she threatens to use violence calling her a “She Dog” while sparing her husband (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. XVII). She does not hesitate to dash blood in Mr. Adams’s face (Fielding, 1742). Punishment could reach laying off as Lady Booby dismisses Joseph from her service for not tending to her sexual desires (Fielding, 1742).

Punishment

Contempt and ill-treatment do not seem to suffice. If members of the lower class do not abide by the rules and limits set by the upper class, no matter how unjust they may be, the reaction is immediate, decisive and disparaging. It ranges from unlawful detention to legal action. When Adams, Fanny, and Joseph prepare to set out from the inn, they are prevented because of a bill they cannot pay (Fielding, 1742). The Hostler detains Joseph at the inn for being unable to pay for the horse’s sustenance (Fielding, 1742). Mrs. Tow-wouse discharges Betty for tending to her husband’s sexual whims while simply bringing her husband back under control (Fielding, 1742). Yet, Lady Booby decides to dismiss Joseph from her service because he refuses to tend to her lustful desires (Fielding, 1742). She summons Lawyer Scout and demands that he supply the legal justification for her resolution “to have no discarded Servants of mine settled here” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. III).

Thus, the upper class takes advantage of the lower, exploits, disrespects and punishes them in order to augment their wealth and satisfy their own desires to the detriment of the weak. How would the latter react?

Part II- Antithesis: Lower Class Response

The upper class exploitation of the lower class results in the latter's misery and suffering, brings their honesty to the fore, and sheds light on their resistance of the corruption of the bourgeoisie

and insistence on their own rights mainly through hard work and occasionally via the use of violence.

Lower Class Wretchedness

The primary reaction to exploitation and the lack of means is recourse to the religious qualities of patience and submission. We learn that the poor generally live a hand-to-mouth existence. Mr. Abraham Adams's meager income can barely cover the expenses of his wife and six children, but he patiently perseveres (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. III). When Fanny is abducted, Joseph asks Mr. Adams to tell him a sermon about patience and submission (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. XI). Adams adds that Joseph must remember that "no Accident happens to us without the Divine Permission, and that it is the Duty of a Man and a Christian to submit" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. XI).

Honesty towards the Upper Class

Even though they are victims to upper class atrocities, members of the supposedly low born class carry out their duties in an honestly professional manner without complaint. At the age of twenty-one, Joseph appears possessed of "an Air, which to those who have not seen many Noblemen, would give an Idea of Nobility" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. VIII). One of the jobs of Joseph was to ride Sir Thomas's horses in races, which he accomplished perfectly well with the necessary strength and diligence and without susceptibility to corruption or crookedness (Fielding, 1742). Besides, despite the fact that Lady Booby makes a clear attempt to sexually allure him, he innocently remarks that "if it had not been so great a Lady, I should have thought she had had a mind to me" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. VI). Mr. Adams also expresses his regret over her decline (Fielding, 1742). When Parson Trulliber threatens him with his fist, he chooses to leave with a smile (Fielding, 1742). On seeing the landscape, Mr. Adams values it for its natural beauty when Peter Pounce calculates its material worth (Fielding, 1742).

Resistance

Their honesty in dealing with the bourgeoisie does not prevent the proletariat from resisting their corruption in all its forms. Joseph defends his actions against abuse (Fielding, 1742). Adams "persist[s] in doing his Duty without regarding the Consequence it might have on his worldly Interest" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. III). When Pounce describes him as a "shabby Fellow," Mr. Adams leaves the carriage to preserve his dignity (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. XIII).

The poor do not only defend themselves, they also defend each other against the aggressions of the wealthy. Joseph gets involved to advise the Host to observe reverence towards Mr. Adams (Fielding, 1742). The latter insists on marrying Joseph and Fanny despite Lady Booby's warning to dismiss him. "Being poor," he declares, "is no Reason against their marrying" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. II).

In addition, the poor stand firmly against any form of sexual abuse committed by the upper class. Even though he runs the risk of being dismissed, Joseph makes it clear to Lady Booby that he would "rather die a thousand Deaths" than have sex out of wedlock with her (Fielding, 1742,

Bk. I, Ch. V). He does not desire to keep his job with her if she insists on her abuse (Fielding, 1742). He cannot see “why, because I am a Man, or because I am poor, my Virtue should be subservient to [a lady’s] Pleasure” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. VIII). Joseph also refers to the virtue of his sister, Pamela Andrews, who has resisted attempts of sexual abuse by her master when she was a maid-servant in his household (Fielding, 1742). Mr. Adams also condemns the “Course of Life” of Mr. Wilson, who attempts to “Intrigue[s]” a number of “the finest Women in Town,” as “below the Life of an Animal, hardly above Vegetation” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. III).

Insistence on Rights

When Parson Trulliber alleges that Mr. Adams is acting like a clergyman in order to beg for money, the latter answers, “[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” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XIV). He insists that actions must speak louder than words and “Whoever therefore is void of Charity, I make no scruple of pronouncing that he is no Christian” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XIV). Later, Joseph comments on the incident with a common saying among footmen that “those Masters who promise the most perform the least” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XVI). Mr. Adams regrets bad characters but keeps hope in the possibility of their improvement (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XVII). Mr. Adams then appeals to the parish for charity, but his effort came to no avail; he comes back disappointed in the absence of the value of charity in the country (Fielding, 1742). Relief, however, soon comes from a poor Pedlar who lends Mr. Adams and Joseph the money they need to pay for their due debt (Fielding, 1742). “[T]hese poor People, who could not engage the Compassion of Riches and Piety, were at length delivered out of their Distress by the Charity of a poor Pedlar” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XV). Joseph insists on the benefits of charity as a sign of a man’s honor rather than the accumulation of wealth and worldly items (Fielding, 1742).

Diligence

The poor, however, do not allow themselves to be totally reliant on charity from the mean rich; they work hard to ameliorate their status. Horatio does his utmost to acquire “a very considerable Fortune” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. VI).

Violence

Response to the Bourgeoisie could also turn violent. Gypsies abduct the children of the rich to sell them or ask for ransom (Fielding, 1742). “Bellarmine was run through the Body by Horatio” because the former made a move on his fiancée, Leonora, and the “Surgeons had declared the Wound mortal” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. IV). Joseph boxes Beau Didapper for the same reason in order to defend Fanny (Fielding, 1742).

The upper class takes advantage of the lower, exploits, disrespects and punishes them in order to enrich themselves and satisfy their desires. The situation results in lower class misery and suffering, their resistance of the corruption of the bourgeoisie and insistence on their own rights peacefully or violently. Will the outcome be a different situation? And how different?

Part III- Synthesis: Result: A New Situation***Preserving the Status Quo***

There are signs in Fielding's narrative that both the upper and the lower classes are in for maintaining the distance that separates them and, by extension, defending the status quo and resisting social change. Fielding himself stands up for some upper class practices. Justifying Lady Booby's lust after Joseph, he calls on the reader to sympathize with her for the simple reason that Joseph's physical beauty is irresistible (Fielding, 1742). When she dismisses Joseph, it is because of the state rage she undergoes (Fielding, 1742). The novelist further justifies his defense by drawing the reader's attention to "the different Operations of this Passion of Love in the gentle and cultivated Mind of the Lady Booby, from those which it effected in the less polished and coarser Disposition of Mrs. Slipslop" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. VII).

Thus, even though both women lust after Joseph, Fielding sides with Lady Booby's refined ways at the expense of lower class Mrs. Slipslop. Disdain of the lower class also comes from the Quack-Doctor who mocks everything that Mr. Adams says in favor of civility (Fielding, 1742). Judging people, claims Fielding, is mostly subjective as it depends on personal experiences. When two travelers express their contradictory opinions about a gentleman landowner Justice, it turned out to emanate from the fact that they were opposing parties in a recent cause he has decided (Fielding, 1742). Lower class members also are keen on being distanced from the upper class. Joseph "[swears] he would own no Relation to anyone who was an Enemy to her [Fanny] he loved more than all the World" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. XI). This tone stresses the importance of taking the lower class seriously.

Importance of Lower Class

The lower class, usually looked down upon by the upper class, seems to gain the sympathy of Henry Fielding in the novel. Right from the preface, he justifies his choice of writing a "comic Epic-Poem in Prose" because, contrary to the "serious Romance", it includes lower-class characters (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Preface) Joey, or Joseph, the hero of the narrative, is first introduced as the son of the low-born Mr. and Mrs. Andrews even though, as the Pedlar confirms, "his Parents were Persons of much greater Circumstances than those he had hitherto mistaken for such" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. XV).

Class Rapprochement

Fielding derides the socially accepted contract that only families of the higher class are considered to be "families" in the proper sense of the word; thus, a person without a noble lineage is considered to have no ancestors at all, and therefore cannot be a hero. Fielding, however, maintains that Joseph is fully fit to be a hero: "Would it not be hard, that a Man who hath no Ancestors should therefore be render'd incapable of acquiring Honour, when we see so many who have no Virtues, enjoying the Honour of their Forefathers?" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. II).

Top-Down Rapprochement

The upper class begins to show signs of sympathizing with the poor both materially and morally. On the material level, for instance, Fielding informs us that were it not for his wife's stinginess,

Sir Thomas would have been more generous to the poor (Fielding, 1742). Mr. Booby awards Fanny £2,000 so that Joseph can buy an estate (Fielding, 1742). Besides, the guests praise the Wilsons' charity towards their neighbors as Mr. and Mrs. Wilson give the poor travellers provisions, including a gold piece, so that they can avoid trouble along the way (Fielding, 1742). Mr. Adams declares "that this was the Manner in which the People had lived in the Golden Age" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. IV)

On the moral level, some upper class members tend to embrace the high moral qualities of the lower class. Wilson leaves the club of Freethinkers when he discovers the hypocrisy and arrogance of its members, being convinced that "Vanity is the worst of Passions, and more apt to contaminate the Mind than any other" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. III). He realizes that:

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. (Fielding, 1742, Bk. III, Ch. III)

Bottom-Up Rapprochement: Climbing the Social Ladder

The lower class, in turn, makes a further step towards acquiring high class attitudes and manners. Mr. Adams volunteers to teach Joseph Latin, "by which means he might be qualified for a higher Station than that of Footman" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. III). Fanny impresses high people with her unsophisticated beauty, innocent manners and "a natural Gentility, superior to the Acquisition of Art, which surprised all who beheld her" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XII). On the other hand, we also learn that Lady Booby's "dear Reputation" is in fact "in the power of her Servants," Mrs. Slipslop and Joseph (Fielding, 1742, Bk. I, Ch. IX).

The upper class takes advantage of the lower class. The latter fights back but with no decisive outcome. The status quo is maintained even though signs of compromise between classes begin to show. Yet, one character seems to show no signs of being as stable as to be socially categorized as belonging to a specific class.

Part IV- Discussion: Class Evasion

Having lived as a servant at Lady Booby's household, Mrs. Slipslop who is at the top of the servant class acquires the attitudes and practices of the upper class, both positive and negative, which makes her social classification hard to identify (Fielding, 1742). Fielding describes her as a pompous waiting-gentlewoman (Fielding, 1742). He tells us that while she does not totally forget about her former workmate Fanny Goodwill, she, however, has to affirm her social superiority in disregarding her. He explains the social differences between "High People" and "Low People," or "People of Fashion" and "People of No Fashion" (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. XIII). She tries showing off a charitable behavior towards the poor, paying for Adams's stay during a stopover at the inn (Fielding, 1742). She defends Joseph, expressing her astonishment at the possibility for any "Christian Woman" to reject admiring him (Fielding, 1742, Bk. II, Ch. V). Slipslop also

zealously defends Joseph against the claim that he is “coarse” and wishes she could turn him into a gentleman and marry him (Fielding, 1742, Bk. IV, Ch. VI).

Like her mistress, however, she also seems to be schizophrenically holding the attitude and its opposite, as Mr. Adams remarks (Fielding, 1742). When greeted, Mrs. Slipslop disdainfully refuses to answer (Fielding, 1742). She even assaults the Hostess at the inn (Fielding, 1742). Mrs. Slipslop becomes sexually attracted to Joseph, just like Lady Booby. She tries to seduce him with “Tea, Sweetmeats, Wine, and many other Delicacies” (Fielding, 1742, Bk. 1, Ch. VI). She goes as far as springing at him to satisfy her lust (Fielding, 1742, Bk. 1, Ch. VI). Fielding describes her as a would-be rapist (Fielding, 1742). When Joseph refuses her advances, she accuses him of being ungrateful (Fielding, 1742).

Like high class people, Mrs. Slipslop is dreaded by Lady Booby herself. When the latter decides to fire her, she leaves, slamming the door behind her. Soon Lady Booby begins to worry about her revealing her secrets; she calls her back and restores her to her position (Fielding, 1742). Contrary to Hudson's claim that "Marxist interpretations of class conflict between the aristocracy and emergent middle class are unhelpful in describing the political situation in eighteenth-century Britain and its literary works" (2015, p.1), the analysis of Joseph Andrews using the Marxist notions of base and superstructure has proven fruitful. In *Joseph Andrews*, the upper class takes advantage of the lower, exploits, disrespects and punishes them. The lower class resists peacefully and occasionally in violence. The outcome is not totally conclusive. Both the upper and the lower classes sometimes seem to be in for maintaining the status quo and resisting social change. At other times, the upper class begins to show signs of sympathizing with the poor both materially and morally; the lower class, in turn, makes a further step towards acquiring high class attitudes and manners, ending up in a bi-directional rapprochement relationship. That relationship does not amount to blurring the differences between classes or creating the ideal Marxist classless society.

Conclusion

Studying the struggle between social classes in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* has proven effective through the use of the Marxist principles of base and superstructure. As part of the superstructure, the novel accurately reflects the ongoing class conflict occurring at the base between feudal landlords and poor peasants. Three main questions have been addressed: 1) Is the novel a mere preservation of the upper class ideology and interests? 2) Is it a rebellion against that ideology? Or 3) Does it signify both a perpetuation of a class-structured society while condemning the negative aspects of the dominant ideology? The study reaches the conclusion that while Fielding favors a perpetuation of the already existing social order, he, nevertheless, levels bitter criticism at various upper class beliefs and practices that hinder the advancement of poor class causes. Fielding disapproves of upper class exploitation and disdain of the lower class. He gives the latter a voice to express their rejection of being treated unfairly. The upper class shows signs of sympathizing with the poor both materially and morally; the lower class, in turn, endeavors to acquire high class attitudes and manners. The bi-directional rapprochement relationship, however, is far from leading to the Marxist ultimate principle of an ideal classless society.

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