

Characterization in Joseph Andrews

Parson Adams

Joseph Andrews is a panoramic novel, and the reader is introduced to the world of the eighteenth century, from the highest to the lowest social planes. Every new page introduces a new character as the novel moves from the Booby parish to London and back again. All the characters, no matter how small their appearance, are vital, and serve to complement the progress of the main action and the principal characters. Fielding's experience in the field of drama helped him to delineate the characters as also to dramatize the action. The novel essentially revolves around five characters: Parson Adams, Joseph Andrews, Fanny Goodwill, Mrs. Slipslop, and Lady Booby. Parson Abraham Adams is undoubtedly the character whose fortunes the reader follows with the most interest. He is a bundle of contradictions, a delightful mixture of scholarship and simplicity, and pedantry and credulity. He is a scholar with a perfect knowledge of Greek and Latin and of such modern and European languages as French and Italian. He often uses Latin expressions, and during the novel he journeys with a manuscript of Aeschylus's plays in Greek. He gives irreproachable advice to Joseph about fortitude and resignation, but he is overwhelmed with grief when his child is reported to be drowned. When he speaks on discipline, marriage, or faith, he is very sensible, but he is deceived by every rogue he meets, and believes in the principles of Peter Pounce and the humanity of Parson Trulliber. Brave, friendly and without malice or envy, he is a man of good sense and good nature, but ignorant of the ways of this world. He is about fifty years old and has a wife and six children whom he can barely support on his very small income as a curate. Adams enjoys drinking beer. He considers all his parishioners, especially Joseph and Fanny, as his children. He is eccentric and forgetful; he often leaves his hat and his sermons (which he intends to sell) behind, and has to return for them. Adams at first appears to be a stock character - the typical absent-minded scholar familiar in literature. But Fielding takes this stock figure and gives it individuality. He lands into misadventure after misadventure - he wanders from inn to inn without the means to pay his bills, he is beaten, swindled and mocked at, he is involved in nightly adventures -but he never loses his innate dignity and goodness.

Joseph

Joseph Andrews is supposedly the only son of Gaffar and Gammer Andrews and the brother of Pamela. In fact he is the son of Mr. Wilson. Joseph was stolen by gypsies as a child and left with Mrs. Andrews who brought him up as her own son. Mr. Andrews recognises him by a strawberry mark on his breast. At the early age of ten he is made an apprentice to Sir Thomas Booby and at seventeen becomes Lady Booby's footman. He has a very musical voice, and instead of scaring the birds, his cries attract them, and the hounds turn from the huntsman and his horn to follow the boy's tuneful notes. He is virtuous and handsome, and being well read in the Bible and influenced by Parson Adams, he preserves his purity in the midst of temptations. At the time of the novel he is twenty-one years old. He has nut-brown, curly hair and dark eyes. When in danger, he is ready to fight courageously, and never hesitates his to risk his life for Adams or Fanny. Though for the most part, he is nothing more than the amusing figure of a young lover, simple and frank, both morally and physically vigorous, a few weeks of life on the

roads develops the boy into a man - the boy who wrote timid letters to his sister changes into the young man who defends his beloved Fanny when she is chided by Adams.

The Women Characters

Fanny Goodwill is the child of Mr. and Mrs. Andrews and the sister of Pamela. She was stolen by gypsies in her infancy. At the age of three she was sold to Sir Thomas Booby and raised as a servant in Lady Booby's family. She is nineteen years old, beautiful and plump, and very modest. She is also poor, and can neither read nor write. Mrs. Slipslop, Lady Booby's companion, is one of the most delightful characters in the novel. She is forty-five years old, short, heavy-set, red-faced, large-nosed and pimpled, and not at all attractive. She is of gentle birth, the daughter of a curate. She believes herself to be learned and argues on theology with Adams. She often mispronounces what she intends to say or uses the wrong words (malapropisms), and her dignity, servility, insolence and her sensuality, all give her a life-like reality. Lady Booby, the wife of Sir Thomas Booby, takes Joseph with her to London as her servant, attempts to seduce him & when unsuccessful dismisses him from service. Later, still desiring him, she tries to prevent his marriage to Fanny. She is very conscious of her social superiority, and is torn between her passion for Joseph and her humiliation at loving her servant. Lady Booby reveals herself almost completely through her actions e.g. in her attempted seduction of Joseph, and her attempts to thwart his proposed marriage. She is portrayed as a proud, ruthless, vain, selfish, hypocritical and immoral woman.

Other Minor Characters

Pamela Andrews is based on the heroine of Richardson's Pamela, who, as a servant, protects her chastity from her rich employer, Mr. B - who fails to seduce her, and marries her. In Joseph Andrews, she is the supposed sister of Joseph and, unknown to her, the sister of Fanny. Joseph looks upon her as a model of chastity. Fielding amuses himself by showing her as a young wife who preaches and moralizes without end and does not want to have any connection with Fanny as she regards her as socially inferior. Fielding's minor characters are also vividly portrayed and have a distinct identity of their own. Peter Pounce who holds back the salaries of servants and charges high interest on loans, Parson Trulliber with his greediness, shrewish Mrs. Tow-ouse who scolds her erring husband, Beau Didapper the typical 18th century dandy, all serve to make a colourful gallery of characters. All these individual types are clearly characterized e.g. a traveller in a coach, a post-boy, an innkeeper, appear for one instant, yet they remain firmly engraved upon the mind.