

CRITICS' COMMENTS ON FIELDING AND *JOSEPH ANDREWS*

Walter Allen:

“Fielding’s work was, with that of his friend Hogarth, the most powerful artistic expression of the social conscience of the age.”

“... it is Adams, with his simple belief that Christianity is to be practiced as well as preached, who is the measuring rod for all the other characters...”

Martin C. Battestin:

Adams is the Christian hero, “the representative of good nature and charity, which form the heart of morality.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

Fielding is “the moralist of the Good Heart.”

Wilbur L. Cross:

“In ‘Joseph Andrews’ more than in ‘Don Quixote,’ it is the man practised in the ways of the world, not the idealist, who is satirized. Adams remains to the end one of the glories of human nature. His experience on the road in no wise altered his views on what men should be; but it enlarged his knowledge on what they actually are.”

F. Homes Dudden:

“Even in humiliating situations Adams himself is not humiliated. From his testing adventures and experiences he emerges with his sweet temper unsoured, his honourable character unsullied, and his innate dignity unimpaired.”

Judith Hawley:

“Adams is not able to learn from his experience because he lacks self-knowledge; he does not reflect on his behaviour, or on his inner self. *Joseph Andrews* functions like a parable in which the lessons enforced by the narrator are to be learnt by the reader, not by the characters.”

Ronald Paulson suggests Fielding used irony to depict rhetorical meaning, psychological meaning, and metaphysical meaning:

“As a rhetorical device, irony influences an audience in order to convey a moral, presenting the reader with the discrepancy between what he is and what he ought to be. As a psychological device, it presents the discrepancy between what a character thinks he is and what he is. And as a metaphysical device, it presents the discrepancy between the apparent and the real for the purpose of establishing the real (as opposed to the rhetorical purpose of proving a point).”

“Action alone can be relied on as tests of men’s character or inner being.”

Martin Price:

“The subject is the problematic nature of human goodness.”

“His characters’ inability to foresee the malice of others is both worldly folly and the wisdom of charity.”

Mark Spilka:

“Fielding always attempted to show that virtue can be a successful way of life.”

“... three virtuous, good natured persons—Joseph, Fanny, and Adams—must be thrust through every level of society as exemplars or as touchstones and instruments for exposing vanity and hypocrisy, and, just as important, goodness and kindness, in whomever they meet. Adams will be the foremost touchstone, since his religious position and his personal traits—innocence, simplicity, bravery, compassion, haste, pedantry, forgetfulness—will always pitch him into a good deal of trouble; yet, once in trouble, his virtues will make him stand out in complete contrast to those who take advantage of him. Finally, in his perfect innocence, he will always be the main instrument for exposing his own mild affectations.”

Simon Varey:

“Although he promoted the cause of virtue in *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, his undercutting irony ultimately compromised his position in those novels by making concessions to his readers’ scorn.”

James A. Work:

Fielding’s novels “recommend goodness and innocence” and “promote the cause of virtue.”

Andrew Wright:

“In *Joseph Andrews* the narrator masquerading as an author is the player who by his opening fanfares as well as by his preliminary gambits and interruptions reminds us that what he is telling is a story, that what he fabricates is for all its fidelity to nature ultimately and deliberately faithless to mere fact, that what he is offering is not a guide to life but the transfiguration of life which is his art. Fielding the comic observer and Fielding the moralist are united—that is to say, reconciled—in Fielding the narrator: Fielding’s ‘second self.’”

GOOD NATURE VS. GOOD HUMOR

Henry Fielding:

“Good-Nature is that benevolent and amiable Temper of Mind which disposes ut to feel the Misfortunes, and enjoy the Happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter, and prevent the former; and that without any abstract Contemplation on the Beauty of Virtue, and without the Allurements or Terrors of Religion. Now Good-Humour is nothing more than the Triumph of the Mind, when reflecting on its own Happiness, and that perhaps from having compared it with the inferior Happiness of others.”

THE COMIC VERSUS THE TRAGIC POINT OF VIEW

Maynard Mack:

“If we are usually aware with comic characters that we are looking around them as well as at them, the reason seems to be that comedy presents us with life apprehended in the form of spectacle rather than in the form of experience. In the tragic mode, since the meaning lies in the protagonist’s

consciousness of the uniqueness of this moment, this choice, this irreversible event for him, our consciousness must be continuous with his, and we are given a point of view inside that consciousness, or at any rate inside the consciousness of some other character who can interpret it for us. But in comedy the case is different because there the consciousness that matters most is ours and is a consciousness of the typicality of all moments, choices, and events. Again and again in life-as-spectacle (through only once in life-as-experience), the same moments, choices, and events recur.... For this kind of vision we must be not inside the character but outside him, in a position that compels us to observe discrepancies between the persuasive surfaces of personalities as they see themselves and these personalities as they are. Thus the point of view that ours must be continuous with in comedy is not the character's but the author's. Laughter, Bergson says, implies a complicity with other laughers. This is only another way of saying that the comic artist subordinates the presentation of life as experience, where the relationship between ourselves and the characters experiencing it is the primary one, to the presentation of life as spectacle, where the primary relationship is between himself and us as onlookers. The imposed plot, the static character are among the comic writer's surest means of establishing this rapport, and these are implemented in Fielding's case by devices of comic irony and mock-heroic, which always imply complicity, by serious essays and reflections, which poise him and us outside the action, and by the formality of his highly articulated prose, whose elegant surface keeps us coolly separated from the violences, grotesqueries, and postures that it mirrors."