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Transplanting Cervantes onto English Soil; Or, Thematising Cultural Identity Issues in Henry Fielding's Play *Don Quixote* in England

Abstract: My article explores three major aspects revealed by Fielding's comic play Don Quixote in England (1734). First, Don Quixote was a model bluntly imitated by Fielding in order to scrutinise the status quo in England, to compare and negotiate the difference between Spanish and English cultural identity and, consequently, to underline a crisis of English political identity. Second, Fielding buttressed the authority of the English Don Quixote construed as a metonymy of sound judgement and ethical conduct. Third, Fielding's imitation – which markedly denounces Horace Walpole's corrupted political system – capitalises on the politics of comic representation launched by Dryden under the form of utile and dulce, with the latter as the final aim. Strengthened by Shaftesbury's philosophy of good nature and universal benevolence, the Horatian pronouncement of moral didacticism and delight determined Addison and Steele to oppose an amiable Whiggish laughter to a sarcastic, satirical type of laughter proposed by the Tories. Though the new sympathetic laughter of pure comedy encouraged, according to Addison, dulce rather than utile, my argument is that Fielding linked the moral sanction of the Tory satire to the Whiggish new meaning of humour as a sympathetic foible, and of comedy as release.

Key words: *Quixotism, imitation, acculturation, British identity, amiable laughter.*

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