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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.*

Written in Leyden in 1728, but never acted or published until 1734, *Don Quixote in England, As it is Acted at the New Theatre in the Hay-Market* is a ballad opera which replicates Peter Motteux's interpretation of Don Quixote as an "exemplary"<sup>2</sup> figure in his

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<sup>2</sup> See François Rigolot, 'The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Oct. 1998), 557-563. Investigating the epistemological nature of examples in the Renaissance, Rigolot views them as culturally and historically embedded in the two Latin terms, "example" and "exemplum", tightly related to rhetoric. Thus, "example" has a less didactic meaning whereas "exemplum" serves a demonstrative purpose. Given the technical transformation of both terms under the pressure of common usage, Renaissance orators, Rigolot contends, made their speeches more appealing by using *exemplars*, i.e. demonstrative models of ancient virtue or moral fortitude, worthy of being imitated in a period of "crisis" characterised by a wide range of *unpredictable* human actions which stemmed from "the new attractiveness of a more 'natural' mimetic discourse that tended to turn the study of models away from duplication" (558-559). Like Fielding, Motteux's reconsideration of the Quixotic paradigm at the dawn of the eighteenth century stands solid proof of these socio-ethical changes, particularly due to his translation of "adventures" as "achievements".

ground-breaking 1700 translation and the universal pattern of Quixotic thought and action with specific application, says Motteux, to politics and religion:

Every man has something of Don Quixote in his Humour, some darling Dulcinea of his Thoughts, that sets him very often upon mad Adventures. What *Quixotes* do[e]s not every Age produce in Politics and Religion, who fancying themselves to be in the right of something, which all the World tells 'em is wrong, make very good sport to the Public, and shew that they themselves need the chiefest Amendment. [...] I have engag'd to rescue the Hero of *Cervantes* out of the hands of his former Translators, and to set him at large *to seek happier Adventures in a more proper Dress*'. (last emphasis mine) (Motteux 1700: 1)

Wilbur Cross informs us that Fielding “met Motteux’s translation as a boy” and read Cervantes and Swift before his departure from Eton in 1724 and his writing of *Love in Several Masques* (1728) (Cross qtd. in Ziolkowski 46). Though there is no evidence that he read Cervantes in Spanish, “he probably read [James] Ozell’s revised version of the one by Motteux, some of whose phrasings he apparently emulated in the 1728 early play, *Don Quixote in England*, which met with considerable success when it opened at the Haymarket in 1734” (Cross qtd. in Ziolkowski 46–47).

Far from needing the “chiefest Amendment” (Motteux 1700: 1) staunchly advocated by Quixotic novels in an effort to reintegrate the eccentric Spaniard into the dominant culture, Don Quixote sniffs out political corruption in England and is thus “tested” as a potential candidate for parliamentary elections. Unmasking Fielding’s bitter anti-Walpolean opposition, the play concentrates on political matters that are to be solved by Don Quixote’s righteous amendments. Though Motteux’s goal was to adapt Don Quixote to “a more proper dress” (Motteux 1700: 1), particularly amplified by the urge to achieve a new translation faithful to the original and to provide a clear understanding of Cervantes’s novel that previous translators had obliterated “thro haste or want of skill” (Motteux 1700: 1), Fielding’s play shows how the happier English adventures retain via comedy the Spanish hero’s “moral dress” that enables him to pour scorn on the venality of English society. Consequently, the *acculturation* of Don Quixote in England was meant to give birth to a “sympathy or contagion of manners among neighbouring nations” that “have a very close communication together” (Hume 1: 198–99).

In the “Dedication to the Right Honourable Philip Lord of Chesterfield, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter”, Fielding translates the “contagion of manners” as “powerful examples” and hastens to declare corruption the central theme of the play:

My Lord,

However unworthy these Scenes may be of your Lordship’s Protection, the Design with which some of them were written, cannot fail of recommending them to ONE who hath so gloriously distinguished Himself in the Cause of Liberty, to which the Corruption I have here endeavoured to expose, may one Day be a very fatal Enemy. [...] The Freedom of the Stage is, perhaps, as well worth contending for as that of the Press. It is the Opinion of an Author well-known to Your LORDSHIP, that Examples work quicker and stronger on the Mind of Men than Precepts.

This will, I believe, my LORD, be found truer with regard to Politicks than to Ethicks: The most ridiculous Exhibitions of Luxury and Avarice may likely have little Effect on the Sensualist or the Miser; but I fancy a lively Representation of the Calamities brought on a Country by general Corruption, might have a sensible and useful Effect on the Spectators. (Fielding 1734: A2)

Notwithstanding the praise for Lord of Chesterfield as a fighter for the “Cause of Liberty”, Fielding’s blunt exposure of the imminent damaging effects of political rather ethical corruption is subtly fuelled by his own political bias. As Thomas R. Cleary has shown, though the political satire against Horace Walpole in the play does not unravel Fielding’s anti-ministerial bias, the 1734 “Dedication” to Chesterfield as a defender of liberty “only referred to his resistance to the Excise Bill, which cost him the lucrative, minor posts that had rewarded his support of the ministry in the Lords, driving him into opposition” (Cleary 69). As a “standard jargon of opposition through the 1730s and 1740s” (Cleary 69), “general corruption” as a natural subject represented on the free stage can easily rival, intimates Fielding, “general corruption” as a topical issue exploited by the free press. The competition between the two fields of representation, the stage and the press, is articulated by the dramatist in order to underline the superiority of the former in terms of powerful visual experimentation, buttressed by Fielding’s implicit political beliefs revealed in the play. The freedom of the stage is a subtle allusion to the Opposition’s vehement reaction against the government’s decision to support the censorial power of Lord Chamberlain, the “Giant Cajanus who deferred the Don’s appearance so long” (Fielding 1734: A). Since the Opposition refused to help Walpole impose new controls in 1735, Sir John Bernard, the London opposition stalwart, introduced a bill to ratify Lord Chamberlain’s powers, thus hoping to curb the immoral influence of London theatres and to reduce their number. Nonetheless, Walpole’s amendment augmented Lord Chamberlain’s censorial powers once with the enforcement of the Licensing Act of 1737, which meant the end of Fielding’s theatrical career mainly foreshadowed by *Pasquin* (1736), notorious for its attack on the Walpole government. This is why the “Dedication”, argues Cleary, “is the most open and loaded hint of willingness to embrace an opposition allegiance in Fielding’s work between 1728 and the opening of *Pasquin* in 1736” (Cleary 69). Unethical politics is just one of the topical matters staged by “Wit” which, “like Hunger”, as Fielding confesses, “will be with great Difficulty restrained from falling on, where there is great Plenty and Variety of Food” (Fielding 1734: not paginated), a metaphor for significant miscellanies later on recorded by his novels.

The political *status quo* criticised in the “Dedication” and adopted as a major theme in the play finds its ethical counterpart in the preface, where Fielding voices his feeling of inferiority to Cervantes and “despair” of being incapable to imitate his model: “The Impossibility of going beyond (i.e. Cervantes), and the extreme Difficulty of keeping pace with him, were sufficient to infuse Despair into a very adventurous Author” (Fielding 1734: not paginated). Like Motteux’s categorical statement that *Don Quixote* “is an Original without a Precedent, and will be a Pattern without a Copy”, which finally proves “to entice any man to an imitation” due to the “many Graces in the Original” (Motteux 1700: 4), Fielding, far from contradicting himself, manages to introduce successfully, though not effortlessly, a topical English Quixote who, despite his recalcitrance, comes across as a

gentleman-like figure – so most noble characters in the play perceive him – who no longer inhabits the world of romance to which his ideals are best suited: “I soon found it infinitely more difficult than I imagined, to vary the Scene, and gave my Knight an Opportunity if displaying himself in a different manner from that wherein he appears in the Romance” (Fielding 1734: not paginated). Initially brought to England for Fielding’s personal amusement, *Don Quixote* gradually defines the dramatist’s politics of imitation by complying with the rules of gentlemanly/gentlewomanly decorum and by getting involved in, and reforming, a bewildering array of issues defining British cultural identity. Though self-ironic with respect to his allegedly unsuccessful play and dramatic plot flimsily inspired by his scarce knowledge of the world and little experience, Fielding cleverly concludes the preface with a reference to the universality of human nature, in spite of specific local customs. The reference reminds us of Motteux’s opening lines of his preface to the new 1700 translation of *Don Quixote*: “Human Nature is every where the same. And the Modes and Habits of particular Nations do not change it enough, sufficiently to distinguish a Quixote in England from a Quixote in Spain” (Fielding 1734: not paginated). The great endeavour to surpass the Spanish model inevitably finds a satirical response and a comic reward in the English “Modes and Habits”, polarising questions of British identity. Implying that human nature is as universally unstable as Quixotic conduct, Fielding transforms Quixotism into a trope specific to sentimentalism in order to prove that English society’s views are as partial as Don Quixote’s and that they “operate more by the force of situation” (Cleary 98). Rational authority, which asserts moral truth without considering empirical evidence, is subverted by the “quixotism of rationalism” (Motooka 75) seen as a sentimental alternative, deriving moral ideas from sensations experienced *hic et nunc*. Thus, in the Introduction, Fielding, the “Author”, juxtaposes the familiar presence of the mad Don with England as a country of mad people: “The Audience, I believe, are all acquainted with the Character of Don Quixote and Sancho. I have brought them over into England, and introduced them at an Inn in the Country, where, I believe, no one will be surpris’d that the Knight finds several People as mad as himself” (Fielding 1734: not paginated). In other words, madness – meant as a variety of *particular* views, opinions or alternatives to the Lockean (unattainable) ideal of universal reason and moral conformity – blurs the difference between “us” and “them”<sup>3</sup> and interprets the real through the lens of a welter of idiosyncrasies. In Motooka’s terms, the Quixote trope is “a critique of empirical method itself, displaying how differing interpretive principles can make one person’s experientially derived probabilities look like another person’s madness” (Motooka 93).

The play begins *in medias res*. The innkeeper Guzzle calls Don Quixote “an arrant Rogue” (Fielding 1734: 1) who runs the risk of being imprisoned because he refuses to pay the bill. The reference to Don Quixote as a satirical type of “Rogue” or villain is counterpoised by Sancho’s firm response which opposes his master’s arbitrary power of doing good as a *Don* who is “above the law” (Fielding 1734: 1) to English venality. Venality is urged by the law of commerce (*Communio mercium*) as “the new form of

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<sup>3</sup> In the Introduction to *The Practice of Quixotism. Postmodern Theory and Eighteenth-Century Women’s Writing* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Scott Paul Gordon defines the Quixote trope as “a depiction of another’s deluded perceptions that implies the objectivity of one’s own—precisely to dismiss others’ beliefs”, thus generating the sheer difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, 1–11 (1, 2).

human community” (Ascham qtd. in McKeon 204): “My Master fears no Warrant, Friend; had you ever been in Spain, you would have known that Men of his Order are above the Law” (Fielding 1734: 1). Rebuking Sancho for his foolish words, Guzzle warns him about the imminent danger of “laying [Don Quixote’s] *Spaniardship* fast in a Place” since “no one is above the Law” in England (Fielding 1734: 2). The clash between Spanish and English cultural identity is amplified by Guzzle’s allusion to the political tension between the two empires at the time: “[...] And if your Master does not pay me, I shall lay his *Spaniardship* fast in a Place, which he shall find it as difficult to get out of, as your Countrymen have found it to get into *Gibraltar*” (Fielding 1734: 2).

The historical indication of the war between England and Spain in 1728–1729 allows Fielding to blast both Walpole’s trade policy and the English law of *Communio mercium* which characterises English commoners like Guzzle. Horace Walpole’s “appeasement on Spain” (Cleary 70) and the dispute over trading regulations between Spain and England and Gibraltar led to the Treaty of Seville in 1729. Conversely, in 1734, when the play was first staged, “the Opposition paper, *The Craftsman*, was calling stridently for renewal of war with Spain to protect British trade with the sugar islands in the Caribbean from the depredations of Spanish ships” (Bannet 556). Guzzle concludes the first scene of Act I on the same note, voicing his animosity towards foreigners, that is, Spanish, like Don Quixote and Sancho, whose familiar Spanish appearance and behaviour become two roguish replicas of their mounts, Rozinante and Dapple:

The *Don* is just such another lean *Ramscallion* as his – what d’ye call him – his *Rozinante*; and thou art such another Squat Bag of Guts as thy *Dapple*. Send my House and my Stable once well emptied of you, and if ever I suffer a *Spaniard* to enter my Doors again, may I have a whole Company of Soldiers quartered on me; for if I must be eaten up, I had rather suffer by my own Country Rogues, than foreign ones. (Fielding 1734: 2)

Guzzle’s invocation of justice, on the one hand, and imperial rivalry, on the other, prepares the ground for the unravelling of various British identity issues, despite Fielding’s initial feeling of frustration with respect to servile imitation. Early on in the play (I, 2), Don Quixote tells Sancho that he “smells an Adventure” (Fielding 1734: 3). As a result of his moral renovation of English manners, he firmly declares that “No Place abounds more with them (i.e. adventures). I was told there was a plenteous Stock of Monsters; nor have I found one less than I expected” (Fielding 1734: 61). In spite of Don Quixote’s wild imagination, Guzzle belongs to this stock because of his rapacity evinced until the last scene of the play. Claiming his financial rights in the name of the English law, Guzzle concurrently proves that, unlike the nobility, common countrymen like him, particularly innkeepers, mistreat Don Quixote in England as much as in Spain. If “the Favours of the Generous *English* always outstrip Merit, and ’tis the Character of the Nobility to be kind to Strangers” (Motteux 1719: A4, A5), Guzzle’s initial demand and menace show that his vehement hostility and xenophobic discourse “have slipped beneath the reach of polite transnational imitations” (Bannet 555) and that the presence of Don Quixote in England “highlights those cultural and political differences between England and Spain upon which jingoism fed” (Bannet 555). Such an interpretation underpins Fielding’s acculturation of the Spanish master and servant as a couple of madmen whose moral noblesse collides with the mad and

“monstrous” greediness and pragmatism of English commoners. In other words, each party perceives its own *forma mentis* as “embattled” reason: ethical judgement vs. the give-and-take scheme as norm and vice-versa. The former makes Don Quixote deplore the base attitude the English adopt towards men, whose “Quality” “cannot defend them when they break the laws” or when they are to be put into prison: “Gaols in all Countries are only Habitations for the Poor, not for Men of Quality” (Fielding 1734: 4). The latter determines Guzzle to “have a Warrant” for Don Quixote because he is taken for “an arrant Rogue”. Fielding’s satire against the rich is rounded out by Don Quixote’s wise social criticism and remarks on virtue, which lays stress on intellectual ability and professional merit and considers honour as “goodness of character” (McKeon 156). They constitute the prerequisites for true nobility or “progressive ideology” (McKeon 150–59), which discredits the idea that virtue and honour are essentially inherited titles of rank or the intrinsic products of what McKeon calls “aristocratic ideology” (McKeon 131–40):

’Tis pity then, that Fortune should contradict the Order of Nature. It was a wise Institution of *Plato* to educate Children according to their Minds, not to their Births; these Squires should sow that Corn which they ride over. *Sancho*, when I see a Gentleman in his own Coach-box, I regret the Loss which some one has had on a Coachman; the Man who toils all Day after a Partridge or a Pheasant, might serve his Country by toiling after a Plough; and when I see a low, mean, tricking Lord, I lament the Loss of an Excellent Attorney. (Fielding 1734: 5)

The crucial point about the education of the mind substantiates the new social ethics and moral pedagogy heralded by progressive ideology. The question of rank inherited by “birth” is a form of external virtue that makes room for internal and secular *virtù*, which is the embodiment of “human will and energy” (McKeon 185),<sup>4</sup> two significant clues as to personal merit resulted from worldly industry. By the same token, it is important to understand Don Quixote only as a mad man deprived of his social condition as a knight,<sub>2</sub> who follows in Amadís of Gaul’s footsteps. His fabricated knightly virtue and honour upheld by the inappropriate title of “don” is no more credible than the world of romance in which he lives. In England,<sub>2</sub> the Quixote has become a “good character” and, above all, a “civil Gentleman” (Fielding 1734: 24),<sub>2</sub> whose worth is unquestioned and internalised because his ethical code, which in Spain is as external – since it is mimetic – as inherited honour, proves its efficiency when applied to mundane matters.

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<sup>4</sup> My argument is informed by McKeon’s excellent discussion on the concepts of “honour” and “virtue” correlated with status inconsistency caused by the passage from Tudor absolutism, which bestows authority upon the sovereign “to order hierarchy” (182) and preserves the genealogical tradition based on royal succession, to “true nobility” favoured by Renaissance humanism. “True nobility”, argues McKeon, relates to the education of a gentleman as a privilege owed to civic responsibility, which considers worth, not birth, as a refined civic conception of gentility. Furthermore, the Machiavellian notion of *virtù* understood as “human will” and “ability” will be highly influential in moulding the capitalist spirit forged by the Calvinist Protestant ethic, according to which earthly works ensure both material success and spiritual salvation. See *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, 176–212.

In spite of the visible practicality of Don Quixote's recommendations and moral sanctions, his madness astonishes both Sancho and the rest of the characters only when knight-errantry is brought into question. The imitation of Cervantes is literal at this point. The inn is taken for a castle, the country gentleman who is staying at the inn with "his Kennel of Fox-Hounds" appears as "Giant *Toglogmoglogog*, Lord of the Island of *Gogmogog* that marches at the Head of his Army" (Fielding 1734: 4) whereas Dorothea, Sir Thomas Loveland's daughter, turns into an unhappy princess "kept invisible" from Don Quixote's eyes by a "cursed Inchanter" (Fielding 1734: 9–10). Reminding of the battle with the wineskins in Cervantes' novel, Don Quixote's attack on the inn's walls and windows leads to the escalation of the conflict with the enraged Guzzle who now accuses him of "beating down the House" (Fielding 1734: 10).

Sancho remains in part the same "proverb-cracking glutton" (Knowles 292) who fears that the blanketing episode occurring in the Spanish original at Palomeque's inn may repeat in England because of the impossibility to pay a thousand English guineas to Guzzle and refuses to go to the Court of Dulcinea del Toboso as a "bassadour" since "I fancy your Bassadours fare but ill at your chanted Courts" (Fielding 1734: 8). However, he realises that his materialistic view of life – broadened by Don Quixote's promise to give him a salary and an island to rule – allows him to sniff better opportunities in England and, consequently, supports its jingoistic remarks. Sancho tells Dorothea that "I am so fond of the English rost Beef and strong Beer, that I don't intend ever to set my Foot in *Spain* again, if I can help it: Give me a Slice of rost Beef before all the Rarities of *Camacho's* Wedding" (Fielding 1734: 14). Air V called "The King's Old Courtier" eulogises "rost Beef" as an emblem of English national identity and urges Britons to refrain from importing foreign delicacies in order to emerge victorious over their 'effeminate' foes: "Then, Britons, from all nice Dainties refrain, / Which effeminate Italy, France and Spain / And mighty Rost Beef shall command on the Main" (Fielding 1734: 14). Though Sancho relishes the idea of governing a little island as utopian as the Island of Barataria in Spain, he confesses that he would feel more comfortable if his master set him up in an inn where he should make a "rare Landlord", which is "a very thriving Trade among the *English*" (Fielding 1734: 20). These main targets naturalise Sancho as a good *connoisseur* of English (imperial) goals rather than Quixotic affairs and transform him from a simple proverb-cracking glutton into a "commoner with an eye to the main chance" (Durfey qtd. in Bannet 556) grabbed in England by both greedy innkeepers like Guzzle and the nobility. Fond of two emblems of British identity – "rost Beef" and "strong Beer" – that also stand for the anti-ministerial election scenes, Sancho confesses that he follows his master into *foreign* errandries in order to gain various advantages that align him with Squire Badger, Thomas Loveland, the Mayor and Mr. Retail, who apply the law of *Communio mercium* whenever money, land acquisition, and political offices are at stake.

Accused by Don Quixote of having robbed Dorothea, Thomas Loveland's daughter, of her jewels and plate in the inn taken for a castle, Guzzle pleads for honest business and makes no bones about revealing that the only jewels in his house "are two Bobs that my Wife wears in her Ears, which were given her by *Sir Thomas Loveland* at his last Election" (Fielding 1734: 11). Guzzle's nonchalant comment on Loveland's bribed election as a leader of the country opposition interest equals Sancho's proverb, "One gets an Estate, another gets a Halter" (Fielding 1734: 13), which metaphorically identifies Squire Badger – initially perceived as a "Giant at the Head of his Army" – with Horace Walpole and "his

dominion over England” (Cleary 70) with a “kennel of Fox-hounds” (Fielding 1734: 4). Such references to political corruption are highly suggestive, according to Eve Tavor Bannet, of the “crisis of individuation and of national character that transnational imitation was perceived now to create” (Bannet 554), which I correlate with the notion of crisis as a “plot of action and a plot of thought” (Hollahan 45) that proposes Don Quixote as a foreign cultural metonymy used to unmask and punish social and political abuses in England.

The English plot of action Don Quixote strongly opposes is triggered by the Mayor and a voter, Mr. Retail, in Act I, scene 8, where the former thinks that the mad Spaniard with “a large Estate” has come to England “to stand for Parliament-man” (Fielding 1734: 17). Bewildered by such a statement, the voter contradicts him and invokes the already hatched plot to choose Sir Thomas Loveland and Mr. Bouncer. Together with Guzzle they take fright of “being sold” and “stolen” by Sir Thomas since he will not represent their country opposition interests. In spite of the insignificant aspect of Don Quixote’s madness “while He’s out of Bedlam” (Fielding 1734: 17), they support him as Loveland’s rival in order for “the other Party to come down handsomely with the Ready” (Fielding 1734: 18) and, therefore, to offer them bribes.

Inserted because the Drury-Lane actors begged Fielding to revise the play with the purpose of serving as a political rather than ethical example, as we learn from the “Dedication”, the election scene instructs the reader by means of its political corruption. Furthermore, politics as a major theme turns into what Fielding ironically calls “pollitricks”, that is, a mixture of Machiavellianism and political chicanery.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Mayor, pollitricks means securing substantial bribes camouflaged by principled duty, judicious decisions and patriotic drives. His wish to be sold “by any but Myself”, which is the “Privilege of a free Briton” (Fielding 1734: 18), ranges from mere personal profit to collective welfare. The Mayor thus betrays a Mandevillean selfish “design” whereby “private vices” become “public benefits”, as *The Fable of the Bees* points out. Self-interest is pursued when the individual satisfies the others’ interests in a rationalised give-and-take relationship which, as the Mayor contends, defines the national ethos:

Ay, ay, *Mr. Guzzle*, I never gave a Vote contrary to my Conscience. I have very earnestly recommended the Country-Interest to all my Brethren: But before that, I recommended the Town-Interest, that is, the Interest of this Corporation; and first of all I recommended to any particular Man to take a particular Care of Himself. And it is with a certain way of Reasoning, That he that serves me best, will serve the Town best; and he that serves the Town best, will serve the Country best. (Fielding 1734: 19)

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<sup>5</sup> I endorse here McKeon’s view on the Machiavellian notion of *virtù* as “human will” and “ability”, corroborated with Thomas Keymer’s insight into the term “pollitricks” in his article entitled “Fielding’s Machiavellian Moment.” *Henry Fielding (1707-1754): Novelist, Playwright, Journalist, Magistrate. A Double Anniversary Tribute*. Ed. Claude Rawson. University of Delaware, Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2008, 58-91. Keymer elaborates on Fielding’s interest in Machiavelli, with particular reference to the *Champion* papers from 1739-1740 and his novels *Shamela* and *Jonathan Wild*, where hypocrisy, corruption, self-determination and vile conduct are camouflaged as “industrious honour”, a mode of conduct to which Fielding refers as ‘pollitricks’ (62).



The Mayor's practice of the *realpolitik* inevitably unleashes Don Quixote's social and political diatribe against the secular *Weltanschauung* of selfishness, power hunger and lack of moral virtue which throw the present mode of action and thought into the crisis of national identity:

Hypocrisy is the Deity they worship. [...] Each Man rises to Admiration by treading on Mankind. Riches and Power accrue to the One, by the Destruction of Thousands. These are the general Objects of the good Opinions of Men; Nay, and that which is profess'd to be paid to Virtue, is seldom more to any thing than a supercilious Contempt of our Neighbour. What is a good-natur'd Man? Why, one, who seeing the Want of his Friend, cries he pities him. [...] *Sancho*, let them call me Mad; I'm not mad enough to court their Approbation. (Fielding 1734: 21)

The Spaniard objectively abhors so dishonest a deal, which entitles him to judge Sir Thomas Loveland as a "Knight of the Long Purse" and to deny his position as a "Patron of a Place so mercenary" (Fielding 1734: 24). He is an uncompromising good-natured man who deems that sympathy – of the Shaftesburian type - is the corollary of collective wellbeing, the spring of all benevolent human actions and the means of defusing the crisis of good practice and moral thought. If Sir Thomas Loveland appears as "good-natured and civil" as Don Quixote, it means that such congenial terms that "express Quixote's code of honour are translated into the shabbiest metaphors for political venality, and his timeless quest to combat injustice is skewed towards specific contemporary conditions" (Hammond 251). It is in this manner that the etymological meaning of "crisis" – "to judge", "to decide" – contributes to the Quixotic resolution of the conflict in England, as a result of the unaltered correspondence between his own plot of action and plot of thought. Similarly, Don Quixote succeeds in easing the tension provoked by Thomas Loveland, who forces his daughter Dorothea into marrying the unprincipled Squire Badger. However, before delivering his speech on what virtuous marriage really means, Don Quixote relishes the adventures plotted in a Cervantine manner by Dorothea and her servant Jezebel. Disguised as Princess Indoccalambria, Dorothea reveals her true love for Fairlove, "her husband to be" (Fielding 1734: 12). She claims to be the counterpart of Cervantes's Dorothea, alias Princess Micomicona, who tried to persuade Don Quixote to leave Sierra Morena. Also, she preserves her exemplary virtue unblemished even after Don Fernando seduced and abandoned her, being finally conducive to their happy reunion at Palomeque's inn. At the same time, she feigns a "romantick" kind of madness as a strategy to test her lover Fairlove and also to protest over her father's imposed contractual marriage and patriarchal society until she is "tamed" by the man she disinterestedly loves. In this way Dorothea's crisis-consciousness, like Don Quixote's, is in fact a "form of self-consciousness" (Hollahan 3) or a decision-making process that underpins female virtue as *constancy* of character. Planning to elope with Fairlove in order to avoid the unfortunate marriage to Badger, Dorothea says:

Oh, *Jezebel!* I wish my Adventure may end as happily as those of my Name-sake Dorothea's did; I am sure they are very near as romantick [...] Well, I'm a mad Girl: Don't you think this Husband of mine, that is to be, will have a delightful Task to tame me? [...] To

confess a Truth to you, while I am still under Apprehensions of the Match my Father intends for me, I have too great Cause to try to divert my Grief (Fielding 1734: 11, 16).

Dorothea takes advantage of the knight of the woeful figure's presence and sets up a comic plot by having Jezebel acting as Dulcinea at the inn. Now fond of "roast Beef and strong Beer", Sancho is thus spared from being sent after her, gets involved in Dorothea's tricks and explains to her the meaning of Don Quixote's madness as shown by his adventures in the hypotext.<sup>6</sup> The result is the re-enactment and adaptation of the Quixotic motif, now suitable for *real* social and love affairs:

Adod! Your Princess-ship has hit it; for he has never seen this *Dulcinea*, nor has any body else that I can hear of; and who my Lady *Dulcinea* should be, I don't know, unless she be One of your chanted Ladies. The Curate of our Parish and Mr. *Nicholas* the Barber, have often told me there was no such Woman, and that my Master was a Madman; and sometimes I am half at a loss to guess whether he be mad or no. (Fielding 1734: 15)

The scene is absorbed in the main plot which mingles unfair elections (Loveland and Badger), electioneering (Guzzle, the Mayor and Mr. Retail), Dorothea's and Jezebel's show – a literal imitation of the Cervatine episode – and, finally, marriage regarded as another means of polltricks that now buttresses Loveland's "landed" honour. For instance, Dorothea excitingly tells Fairlove that "there was something so lucky in your coming hither without having received my Letter" and puts his love to test since he had been a "Rover" until then (Fielding 1734: 44-45). Yet her diversion occasioned by both the ridiculous knight and squire and Fairlove's surreptitious presence at the inn is darkened by the arrival of her father, who learns about his daughter's plot of running away with Fairlove. This thwarts Dorothea's father's plans because Badger's great estate sparks his interest and because he has "no Notion of refusing an Estate, let the Man be what he will" (Fielding 1734: 48).

Ironically enough, the social and political discourse of Don Quixote, who is, in Loveland's terms, a "philosophical pimp", functions as a *deus ex machina* which intervenes to restore harmony and virtue. It is delivered in order to convince Sir Thomas Loveland of his fatal mistake when the whimsical Badger proves to be a drunk and offensive rascal, completely ignorant of Dorothea's worth:

*Sir Tho.* Let me beseech you, Sir, to attack her in no rude manner.

*Badg.* [...] Come on, Madam, since I have promis'd to marry you, since I can't be off with Honour, as they say; why, the sooner it's done, the better; let us send for a Parson and be married, now I'm in the Humour. 'Sbod-likins! I find there's nothing in making Love,

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gérard Genette's definition in *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree* (1982), trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, University of Nebraska Press, 1997: 'Any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (which I shall call the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of the commentary' (5).

when a Man but once got well into't. I never made a Word of Love before in my Life; and yet it is as natural, seemingly, as if I had been bound Prentice to it. [...]

*Quix.* The usual Madness of Mankind! Do you marry your Daughter for her sake or your own? If for her's, sure 'tis something whimsical, to make her miserable in order to make her happy. Money is a Thing well worth considering in these Affairs; but Parents always regard it too much, and Lovers too little. No Match can be happy, which Love and Fortune do not conspire to make so.

*Sir Tho.* What we have here, a Philosophical Pimp! I can't help saying, but the Fellow has some Truth on his Side. (Fielding 1734: 58)

The state of *anagnorisis* undergone by Loveland defuses the crisis of thought and action and fosters the sense of a comic ending. As Raimund Borgmeier rightly points out,

there is a certain irony, of course, in the fact that such important and serious considerations are uttered by a character who is in other respects mad; yet this irony may be necessary to make the otherwise obtrusive moral preaching bearable and entertaining for the audience. (Borgmeier 48)

The resolution of the social conflict *legitimises* the Quixotic chivalric code and proves its practicality in England as an ultimate purpose of good nature. Don Quixote's conclusion that, "Here are the Fruits of Knight-Errantry for you. This is an Instance of what admirable Service we are to Mankind. I find, some Adventures are reserv'd for *Don Quixote de la Mancha*" (Fielding 1734: 61), is doubled by Fielding's definition of "good-nature" as Quixotism formulated by Worthy in the *Coffee-House Politician* (1730) when pondering on the follies of society:

I begin to be of that philosopher's opinion, who said, that whoever will entirely consult his own happiness must be little concerned about the happiness of others. Good-nature is Quixotism, and every Princess Micomicona will lead her deliverer into a cage. What had I to do to interpose? What harm did the misfortunes of an unknown woman bring me, that I should hazard my own happiness and reputation on her account? (Fielding 2004: 460)

Fielding equates good-nature with Quixotism in order to eradicate the crisis of personal and national identity by "inverting the position of foreigner and native" and presenting the "Spaniard as triumphant" (Bannet 555) in his morally judicious endeavour to reshape English identity by creating a "contagion of manners", according to Hume, via the virtues of the chivalric code and by comically curing, via experience, different manifestations of madness coalesced into a hobbyhorsical pool of English commoners and gentry alike.

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