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Sommario/riassunto

Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism: Quixotism in English Novels, 1742-1801 proposes a new understanding of eighteenth-century Quixotism in English thought and literary production. The honourable and reform-oriented envisaging of the world displayed by eighteenth-century English Quixotes reveals a strain of lament and criticism aimed at the rise of commercialism and the pre-eminence of self-interest, patriarchy, political economy, religious conformism and imperial designs. Chapters on Henry Fielding, Sarah Fielding, Henry Mackenzie, Charlotte Lennox, Richard Graves and Charles Lucas exemplify the period's marketplace diversity while convincingly claiming intellectual common ground. Quixotism appears as a discourse serving ethic-political ends, in which its very formulation as a genteel, though eccentric, assembly of principled sentiments enables social intervention and a political critique upheld by comedy and Whiggish sympathetic laughter.