

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910815767303321
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Titolo	Embattled reason, principled sentiment and political radicalism : quixotism in English novels, 1742-1801 // Dragos Ivana ; cover design, Aart Jan Bergshoeff
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Amsterdam, Netherlands ; ; New York, New York : , : Rodopi, , 2014 ©2014
ISBN	94-012-1022-5
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (307 p.)
Collana	Costerus New Series ; ; 209
Disciplina	823.509
Soggetti	English fiction - 18th century - History and criticism
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Preliminary material / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- INTRODUCTION / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- HENRY FIELDING AND THE RHETORIC OF QUIXOTIC BENEVOLENCE: DON QUIXOTE IN ENGLAND / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A NEW GENRE BASED ON A PRODUCTIVE TAUTOLOGY: HENRY FIELDING'S COMIC ROMANCE AND QUIXOTISM / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- FROM DON QUIXOTE'S LANCE TO PARSON ADAMS' QUIXOTIC BENEVOLENCE / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- QUIXOTISM, MORAL SENTIMENT AND MANDEVILLIAN ECONOMICS IN SARAH FIELDING'S THE ADVENTURES OF DAVID SIMPLE AND VOLUME THE LAST / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- THE BAD EFFECTS OF SENTIMENTAL QUIXOTISM: UNPRINCIPLED SENTIMENT AS VIRTUE IN HENRY MACKENZIE'S THE MAN OF FEELING / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- FEMINIZING QUIXOTISM: THE POLITICS OF GENRE AND GENDER IN CHARLOTTE LENNOX'S THE FEMALE QUIXOTE / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- A TALE OF FAITH AND LOVE: RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND NATURAL AFFECTION IN RICHARD GRAVES' THE SPIRITUAL QUIXOTE / Editors Embattled Reason,

Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- CODA: CHARLES LUCAS' THE INFERNAL QUIXOTE, RADICALISM AND THE COMIC SENSE OF MORAL REFORM / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- BIBLIOGRAPHY / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism -- INDEX / Editors Embattled Reason, Principled Sentiment and Political Radicalism.

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.
