

F. Homes Dudden, *Henry Fielding: His Life, Works, and Times*,
Pages 337-9

...Parson Adams is obviously modelled on Cervantes' hero. For years it had been Fielding's ambition to display the essential spirit of Quixotism in an English form.... In the beautifully drawn figure of the English country parson we are presented with a thoroughly English incarnation or embodiment of the idea of Cervantic Quixotism.

The close resemblance between Quixote and Adams cannot fail to be remarked. Each is an honourable, high-minded simple-hearted Christian gentleman, ardently devoted to ideals which are entirely unintelligible to the commonplace people round him. Each is a student of ancient books, interprets the world in the light of a bygone age, and is incapable of seeing contemporary persons and things as they really are. Each is accordingly scoffed at and victimized by the worldly-wise. Each again is animated by an abounding charity, and generously constitutes himself the champion of the weak and oppressed; each is indomitably brave and fearless, delights in fighting (in the literal sense) for a good cause, and is tough enough to stand drubbings; each has a pronounced taste for adventure, and meets with strange experiences in the course of his wanderings. Each, also, though often placed in ridiculous situations and subjected to unseemly usage, wonderfully retains his native dignity, and never for an instant forfeits our respect and sympathy. The resemblance is preserved even in numerous details. Each of these heroes, for instance, is fifty years of age; each is long-legged and physically wiry; and each is associated in his travels with a humble companion. Even the knight's wretched steed, Rozinante, is matched by the weak-kneed horse borrowed by the parson from his clerk, which 'had so violent a propensity for kneeling, that one would have thought it had been his, trade, as well as his master's'.¹ Of

course, there are differences as well as similarities. Don Quixote views the world and human life in the light of the romances of chivalry; Parson Adams, in the light of Homer and the classical poets. Don Quixote is crazy; Parson Adams, though absent-minded and very eccentric in his habits, is sturdily sane. Don Quixote is melancholy and ascetic; Parson Adams, though he can be serious on occasion, is the most cheery of men, eats and drinks prodigiously, and adores his pipe. Don Quixote is proud of his knightly prowess; Parson Adams is proud of his learning and preaching. Don Quixote, once more, is a devout, Catholic layman, and unmarried; Parson Adams is a latitudinarian clergyman of the Church of England, with a wife and six children. These differences, however, do not affect the fundamental resemblance between the natures of the two men. Adams, in all essentials, is another Quixote; and the spectacle of his idealistic personality on a world that has no knowledge of or interest in ideals is essentially the same spectacle that diverts us in Cervantes' masterpiece

Besides borrowing from *Don Quixote* the original conception of his hero, Fielding imitated Cervantes in several particulars—in the division of his novel into books and chapters, with appropriate chapter-headings; in the interpolation of digressive stories into the principal narrative; and in the description of tough-and-tumble, horse-play scenes. From Cervantes, too—though likewise from Scarron and Lesage—he took the general idea of an epic of the road, or sort of a journey with curious adventures. Indeed, nothing could be plainer than that Fielding, throughout the composition of *Joseph Andrews*, was following the lead of the great Spanish Author. It was not without reason that he himself was designated by one of his contemporaries as 'the English Cervantes'.²

¹ *Joseph Andrews*, ii. 5.

² Scott, *Lives of the Novelists*.