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***THE PROTRACTED PORTRAIT OF A LADY:
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CARICATURE
PORTRAIT NEGOTIATIONS¹***

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Abstract: Commonly regarded in the literature as the 'unhappy' result of the break-up of a primitive artistic unity, genres and generic differences have fared with other such 'splits' in the modernity boat on the river of time. 'Literature' itself is the historic(ised)/al effect of a *longue durée* whose head is hard to spot, whose tail no less so. Even our vision of literary history is undissociable from historicity, that phenomenon preceding history proper, as Heidegger reputedly asserts. 'Antiquity' and the 'Middle Ages', the 'Renaissance' and 'Neo-Classicism', and 'Romanticism' itself are as many badges attached via *negativa* to our Western point zero of reference left- and right-wards of which we have inherited 'our tradition' – a comforting and useful metanarrative. Recent critical stances (mainly Period Studies) have replaced these 'dated' period names with such ones as 'Early Modernity', 'Classic Modernity', 'High Modernity' and, indeed, 'Late or Post-Modernity' (as part of Modernity Studies).

In Klee's famous *Angelus Novus* drawing we read the haunting lesson of history pressed by historicity: the 'Angel of History' – a contradiction in terms – is pushed on into the unknown by a violent storm, while his head looks back, his eyes searching the support of the known. This secular(ised) angel kept in check by time is *novus* in no less significant measure than the modern genre par excellence, the novel. His, like its own agenda, is a postlapsarean one, an assessment put forth by names of reference in the field (Lukács 1920, Anderson 1983, McKeon 1987, Kelley 2002). 'Human, too human', the novel features as a prosthesis of our own fallen condition, sensitive to our and its own historicity.

This paper looks at the novel and/as historicity as illustration of the modernity agenda, pursuing various forms of 'modern narrative' as at once forms of vision and of expression at a time of hurried history.

Of the numberless gnomic sayings craving to capture the meaning and worth of history, some arrest our attention more than others. Such, 'Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward'. From our unavoidable *hic et nunc* this phrasing by Kierkegaard echoes Friedrich von Schlegel's 'Der Historiker ist ein rückwärts

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gekehrter Prophet' in the *Athenaeum*: 'The historian is a prophet looking backwards'. It also does Madame du Deffand's observation about Voltaire: 'Que voulez-vous de plus? Il a inventé l'histoire', 'What do you expect? He has invented history'. It does Carlyle, whose 'History, a distillation of rumour' (*French Revolution*, I, VI, v) anticipates the *École des Annales* view of a humming humanity finding their hopes and worries laid down in at the time a newly promoted '*histoire totale*'. And it does Carlyle, again, in his essay 'On History': 'In a certain sense all men are historians'. This last statement could be said to pave the way to Hayden White's *Metahistory* and its conviction that 'the has been' will be tropologized into the 'might be or could be'. We read Aristotle historicized as we had already in Fielding's metatextual plea about the 'kind of Writing, which I do not remember to have seen hitherto attempted in our language' (*Preface to Joseph Andrews*), something called the novel.

We have historicized ourselves unwillingly, like some academic Mr. Jourdain – a recent occupational type, it seems. We have admitted that, as a race, we are selective, that we are historically embedded, or, in my own culturalist vocabulary, that we cannot escape a cultural *deixis*, which Bakhtin calls the chronotope. Interestingly, by *Historismus* eighteenth-century German thinkers meant 'concrete temporal-spatiality' (Iggers 129). But, most of all, we have behaved like narrators telling their histories, or so many judges (*ιστωρ*) ready to share their accumulated knowledge. Ready, too, to provide stories of fulfillment, like so many Augustinians engaged in a fulfilled dream of Whiggish history, looking at 'the has been' analeptically, judging it proleptically.

As in anything human – Vico's *factum* of history – there is the safe and healthy reverse. Of this we have also taken a note and the Kierkegaardian, like the Schlegelian *topoi* work as Western *topoi* of cultural identity. For here is Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* glossed upon by Benjamin in his indictment of historicism and periodization: 'Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet'. A mediator between the skies and earth, the angel would like to curb this downturn (*καταστροφή*),

[b]ut a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward'. Pathetic, the angel must admit that he is overwhelmed. 'This storm is what we call progress. (Bernstein 188)

Here is the received *isomorphic model* (terminology mine): God on top of the Angels, who order the world underneath, with man in the middle and animals, plants and stones occupying the rest of the nether half of the line. The Divine, the Angelic, the worldly or macrocosmic, the human or microcosmic, and then the lower creation, in this order, can read upwards, too, to indicate their last-instance origin. This is the Platonic 'great chain of being' investigated by Lovejoy and Tillyard which provides the foundation for the *donna angelicata* trope of Western cultural identity. From the Dolce

Stil Nuovo prototypical lady to Pre-Raphaelite embodiments, there extends a consistent model. Don Quixote's Dulcinea is none but a last projection of the same ideal, albeit one written to be read in the ironic key. In the 1755 English rendition of the Cervantean masterpiece, which we owe to Tobias Smollett, the illustrations by Hayman show on the frontispiece (*III. 1*) an Enlightenment and enlightened female St. George as valiant Comedy slaughtering the dragon of fantastic literature, that is, the very foundation of Don Quixote's status. Was that meant as a Protestant reading *en biais* of the Catholic narrative, an echolalia of English revenge for 'invincibila' Spanish pride? Very likely both of these imagological *σπαραγμοί* 'rendings, tearings to pieces', yet, more than either, this is the modern penchant. A brilliant anticipation – we shall say with proleptic might – of the Kantian definition of the Enlightenment as man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity, indulgence in superstition, and lack of courage.

III. 1. Comedy defeating the dragon of fantastic literature and Truth dispelling the forces of superstition with the light of reason (frontispiece to Smollett's 1755 translation of Don Quixote)



An embodiment of the received literary genre of the low mimetic mode, to use Fryean wording, Comedy stands secure, her brow adorned by the classic laurel wreath. She wears an identity mask on her mythical zone, under which mythical draped clothing leaves bare a pair of legs as firm as a male warrior's. Her sword hoisted up by a sinewy arm parallels her upturned face. Both their target, a battered knightly shield hangs from under a leaning house façade. Herself an anthropomorphic inheritance of the isomorphic model, she calls into question the isomorphic model, whose collapse she precipitates. Here is the 'comic epic poem in prose' in the historic/ist perspective. To give it more perspective, another mythical figure completes the modern operation of annihilating the dark ages and their offspring. Truth in the goddess Britannia's hypostasis holds, by contradistinction, a perfectly preserved shield tilted upwards, to project blinding beams onto apparitions frightened away. The *nuda veritas* topos reads in the background spectacle: the mirror-shield held up to nature dispels the very forces of spell-casting known as superstition, the power standing over immature humans (*super* 'over', *stare* 'to stand'). The cure is the light of reason following the Enlightenment prescription.

The adventures of the Quixotic and novelistic genre can be historicized analeptically across the Romantic lens. ‘A world of disorderly notions picked out of his books crowned into his imagination’ is Gustave Doré’s perspectivized irony in a painting of 1863, with a Quixote stifled by his own fabrications, hands up in unvoiced, yet visible despair. Spanish engravers of the rationalistic late 1700s had taken to pieces the spell enveloping Dulcinea. So did the English illustrator presenting a kneeling hidalgo in front of a miserable Dulcinea outside her cottage, a child by her side (a detail dispelling the guarantee of her flawless virginity), her distaff in her left armpit, the fingers on her right hand busily spinning the wool that will keep both of them, but not the errant knight, warm in the winter. This must have put paid to the chivalrous declaration of eternal love.



III. 2. *The ascending vs. the descending line of the isomorphic model*

The *donna angelicata* foundational text of West. Civ. is thus read backwards, unreading the received tradition. To this, the last man of the classic episteme and the first of the modern one (Foucault 62) clings for his identity. The ‘ingenioso hidalgo’ keeps telling Sancho that the giants he sees only appear as windmills to him because, nothing but a servant, Sancho is not into adventure books, so not in adventures at all. As he pertains to the isomorphic model, Don Quixote is blind to *the collapse of the isomorphic model*, to which Sancho has intuitive and commonsensical access. This condition is what we read between the lines of Benjamin’s interpretation of the ‘new angel’ as the ‘angel of history’. As he opposes historicizers like Ranke and, of course, Hegel, Benjamin promotes a sense of the present (*Jetztzeit*), and provides a deliberate contradiction in terms – *the angel of history*. (III. 2)

From a historian of ideas perspective, Benjamin reinforces the *historical givenness* of matters human: ideas have a history, so does this angel. I take this as a reading *à rebours* of tradition: the *donna angelicata* hypostasis is rooted in the ennobling

angel-like status conferred upon the lady, whose mission is to save a fallen humanity by symbolic ascent; un-read as an *angelus homini similis*, it entails the opposite condition, in which we find the apprehensive angel thrown into the world. As the former endorses the upward-pointing isomorphic model, so the latter subscribes to the collapse of this century-old pattern. Human, too human is not only the fear of the known which dilates the angel's pupils as he looks the past obliquely in the eye. Human, too human is his incapacity to fight the unknown into which he is being whirled. Human too human his own vague condition: a fallen angel, a chronotopically devised one, an angel of spatio-temporal condition, instead of the very 'vector of certainty uniting the spatial with the temporal interval' (Pleșu 65). Where, in observance of tradition, 'paradisiacal *ισαγγελία*' raises the beloved lady to a superhuman status, 'modern *συνανθρωπία*' brings angels down among people (Pleșu 103, 105).

The priority of historicity over history – a current trope of our modern condition – is laid as a fundamental thesis in Heidegger's thought on the premise that we are but a happening caught up in history. Our fallenness is the very key to the question of Being being forgotten. Instead, our situatedness accounts for why history appears to us as a flow in which historical agents constantly reinterpret the meaning of the 'has been' with a view to a modally inflected future, the 'will be' as 'might be or could be'. On this preminent historicity of understanding rises the awareness of the transience and contextualization of all human endeavours. Heidegger welcomes this as an eye-opener. Not only can we reinterpret, reassess and reconceptualize basic notions, e.g. *ἦθος*, *αλήθεια*, *λόγος*. Basic assumptions that seem obvious to common sense can themselves be perceived as the effect of recent revaluations in Western thought. Such the separation of the disciplines from 'Literature'. Such the establishment of modern genres 'as infringement on the classic generic separation' (White 598). My postlapsarian view of the novel *qua* modern genre *par excellence* comes in the track of the early Lukács (1914), for whom the novel is 'the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God' (88), whose protagonist is 'the product of estrangement from the outside world' (66), 'a problematic individual [...] journeying towards himself' (80), assuming his 'virile maturity' (85). This explicit insertion in history combining Hegelian with Nietzschean elements makes not only of the novel, but of all literary genres historical objects of scrutiny according to our Modern Studies agenda: *Genres and historicity*.

I intend to address the issue of the novel as the modern genre *par excellence* by regarding it as a new messenger, an ambassador of modernity, an *angelus novus* of literary history. Caught in historicity, like Icarus, or like the *Dasein* configuring them, the Angel of history has difficulty finding a transcendental horizon to ground his ontology. And here is another mythical experiencer of the dramatic collapse occurring in modernity, to which the novel stands as uncontested witness: Pieter Brueghel the Elder's Icarus losing not his mythical status, but, literally his minimal physical identity as he recedes behind the median line separating the fore from the backstage of history. He is, appositely, one ingredient of *genre painting* or *petit genre*, but a minuscule character in a work entitled *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*. Auden's words for the event, in *Musée des Beaux Arts* of 1940, convey a graphical message: 'everything turns away/ Quite

leisurely from the disaster', making light of grave things. The ploughman 'may have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,/ But for him it was not an important failure'. His indifference to the catastrophe is downright somatic: the 'may have heard' attenuates the event to flat happening. Routine has worn out of sumptuous order even the great cosmic rhythms, the sun shining 'As it had to', and it has reduced the bold superhero to a prankish boy whose drowning fails to impress the expensive ship which 'had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on'. The land tiller's horse shows its back insouciantly, for it treads on firm land and helps increase its firm fruitfulness. Icarus, instead, shows a helpless leg in a last attempt to wriggle his body out of the sea that engulfs him. Brueghel's pictorial commentaries on Biblical scenes are typically bathetic: horses and dogs do abound in *The Massacre of the Innocents*, as 'the dreadful martyrdom must run its course/ Anyhow in a corner', and the rebel angels fall into a world of thick multiplication of hideous forms.

The *triumph of mimesis* as conscious reduplication of reality out there, rather than of the classics is the *victory of the everyday*. It deals with routine concerns, handy tools, and Mr. and Mrs. Ordinary. They are the actors of genre painting and still-lives inundating the *ἐργον* of pictures where they had previously been a discreet *πάρεργον* behind Christ and Christ-related figures. All of this confirms the historicity of the novel as the angelus novus of the genres. 'La vérité humaine de Rembrandt', the substance of the novel *qua* genre, will serve our cause. It takes up the foreground to display the works and days of the year turning the barren (*ἀνεργον*) into the richly yielding (*ἐνεργον*) land. Brueghel's pictorial commendation of human labour makes of crude landscape agricultural property. The fall of Icarus is a mere attachment technically forming the *πάρεργον*. It is what we take in, saturated to intoxication, from Dutch painting: Willem van Aelst's *Still Life with a Watch* (1665) and *Still Life with Flowers* (1666) or Jan van Huysum's *Fruits, Flowers, and Insects* (1735), for instance, a kind of copious harvest of this world's dappled beauty. The *ἐργον* displays nature brought into the human, too human interior, to immortalize it with no paucity of means. The old master's hand is not shy of measuring its transience with a watch or insects by the side of flowers, of which quite a profusion of carnations. Instead, 'l'idéalité poétique' of the Italian school allots nature the secondary function required by its derived status, behind the allegorical scene of the *ἐργον*. Take, for instance, Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* (Louvre, 1483-1486; London, 1495-1508) and his *Madonna of the Carnation* (1478-1480), in which Mary stands in telling contrast to the carnation symphony of van Aelst's or van Huysum's floral abundance suspended out of time, if ephemeral like its mechanical or organic timers.

Like genres, genre painting has porous borders and circulates outside its acquiesced territory. None but Italian painting itself cultivates it against its own grain. A Rembrandtian air of realism breathes in contemporaneous Bergamo masters' still-lives. Both Evaristo Baschenis (1617-1677) in *Musical Instruments with Clock* and *Musical Instruments with Apples* of the 1650s, and his disciple Bartolomeo Bettera (1639-1699), in *Musical Instruments, Score and Books* of the 1660s, depict no end of lutes, violins and guitars laid on their strings in a symbolic arrest of time, since, as Lessing teaches us,

music is a temporal art. Unheard melodies are sweeter than heard ones. Scores with rolled up edges, books in semi-deranged piles, clocks and fruit, all betray the transience of the world stilled on tables covered with costly Persian rugs, too expensive to lay on floors and walk on, cultural historians tell us. But they do betray the human, too human insertion, as do the curving drapery and the half opened drawer. This is the domestic space of the novel. Most of all, apples sitting on the instrument-inundated tables take the music of the spheres and Edenic primordially down into this fallen world of objects. Human, too human.

A culture cherishing material wealth transpires from Frans II Francken's *Collector's Cabinet* of the 1630s. (**III. 3**) This assertive institution of classic modernity claims monopoly on the world's inventory after the collapse of the isomorphic model. The literature has referred to it as 'the rehearsal of culture' with samples of the strange and the exotic 'woven into the pattern of European belief' (Mullaney 42). The world on a small scale amassed as objects and *objets* as so many things selected, collected and brought together populates the three-dimension space of the trader-collector's *Wunderkammer*: the wall facing the viewer lined up with pictures, the table joining it where mostly pieces other than pictures are laid or stood, and the *trompe-l'oeil* scene on the right in which merchants from a previous age hold negotiations in a trading space doubling the forestage of our view. This generous (< Lat. *generosus* 'noble' < *genus* designating a category superior to a species!) ambiance invites to thorough inspection.



III. 3. Frans II
Francken's *Collector's
Cabinet* (the 1630s)

Landscape as such shares the collector's and the potential purchaser's visual field with moral-allegorical space. The one is more of the mimetic (*μίμησις* 'imitation'), the other of the diegetic order (*διήγησις* 'narrative, statement'). The one aims to hold the mirror up to nature, the other sees in the Book of Nature the Book of God, with moral teachings and religious consequences following suit: the world was not created indifferently, but rather with an overt ethical lesson underlying its showy narrative. Pits, gaps, and valleys, like mounds, hills, and mountains are not mere samples of unevenness

on earth's surface. They are as many punishments inflicted by God on a sinful humanity. Human, too human. Christ falling under the burden of his cross, one of the deeply allegorical stations, stands as paradigmatic fulfillment on top of the nativity to which the three magi are paradigmatic eye-witnesses, as a matter of metaphysical necessity.

The merchant-collector casts a well-controlled spying look at his customer outside the frame and his professional space. The ring lifted by his index and middle finger remains an ever saleable, never sold piece of jewelry. At the other end of the table a statuette featuring a classic male hero and a more neoclassic female figure legitimate his intention. Art turned trade, beauty metamorphosed as capital do justice to the commercial scene receding in the *mise-en-abyme* background. Antiques, religious and aristocratic insignia are the merchant-collector's pride. The eighteenth-century novel will bring this to a further consequence, with the novelist negotiating his products on a publicly acknowledged market, conducting dialogues with his customer-readers and taking their advice and criticism in all seriousness, if he is to make more profit.

The painting shows in the foreground a counter-like table pleasing the customer-viewer's eye and surreptitiously protruding into the latter's reality (see the notebook on the left and the shell on the right, both overboard as if for the taking). This willing confusion of planes makes the case of *historicity* complete: still-life as/as if nature, humanly produced reality as/as if God-created nature, the collector's as/as if the Creator's universe – this is the clue to the whole painting. Here is, in Pope's words, 'nature methodiz'd', set in fine order by a careful hand and a vigilant eye whose pragmatic intent underlies its/his intellectual inquisitiveness. The world is much too comprehensive, the ways of God much too hard to inspect, it is time the collector provided a blueprint inventory like the Linnaean classification of kingdoms ordering classes, in their turn setting orders right, the latter ordering *genera*, these last ones giving coherence to species (Simon 172). This small chain of being sets the *genus* in due relation to the *species*, like the lock and the amulet secured by a key of sorts each, the magnifying glasses at their left and right extreme, or the quails on the spit, the partridges and hen by the basket full to the brim with fresh white and red grapes. The triumph of the domestic everyday has been achieved, with culinary and mechanic deftness competing to make the household comfortable. This is the brave new world of a new genre for which the royalty, the high priesthood and the high aristocracy are history. Suffice it to recall so many kitchen scenes pushing the spectacle of domesticity into the forefront of history. Fielding's meticulous reading of the bill of fare and cooking recipes, his taste for huge pints of ale in the company of the new Muse Criticism, his delight in pantomime and masque performances and vulgar speech in the upper galleries of the theatre, his overt preference for charged novelistic instead of effeminate romance language, all this partakes of the same culture of the low mimetic. In Joakim Beuchelaer's 1566 illustration of Jesus's parabolic halt in the house of Martha and Mary the Gospel episode dwindles in the background hardly discernible between human figures and the slaughtered animals hanging from hooks in the kitchen proper. Vincenzo Campi's resolution for the same scene (the 1680s) shows a buxom lass in the middle of all kinds of flesh, fish, fowl, and fruits, and, in more than one

sense, a miniature-like image of Jesus and the two sisters. ‘The one thing needed’ which Jesus reproaches Martha with appears as minuscule. Underlying both is the Hogarthian lesson of the ‘roast beef of old England’, the one legitimizing protocol once the traveller has crossed the threshold from the Continent and France – a full-fledged exercise in imagology.

At the level of royalty we find the same modern collapse, in the face of worldly stories, of the metaphysically relevant allegorical narrative. Of the king’s two bodies the body symbolic can feature as merely his body human, the latter subject to worldly diminution itself. We have it in Jan Davidsz de Heem (1606-1684) (*III. 4*) showing the Prince of Orange some two decades before his proclamation as William III of England and Ireland, and William II of Scotland. Under the brush of the still-life painter William turns into an item of still-life. Like Brueghel’s *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* or Buechelaer’s *Well Stocked Kitchen*, which could also read as *Jesus in the House of Mary and Martha*, this painting, too, offers an ironic subtitle: *Garland of Flowers and Fruit with the Portrait of William III of Orange* (ca. 1670).



III. 4. Jan Davidsz de Heem, Garland of Flowers and Fruit with the Portrait of William III of Orange (ca. 1670)

A comparative reading of *The Five Senses* (1636) by Jacques Linard and of *Still Life with Stag Beetle* (1635) by Flegel in parallel with it may help. The allegory of the senses, like that of the four seasons, in visual narrative, is a favourite of still-lives. Linard’s materializes sight in the bitten pomegranate reflected in a mirror, hearing in the musical scores laid by, smell in flowers, mostly carnations, stuck in a vase, taste in ripe peaches and grapes mounting out of a Chinese bowl, and touch in playing cards and coins, behind all of which a landscape suggests that nature has been filtered and raised to a special order. Flegel’s is basically a symphony of orange and orangey yellow with a

discrete Biblical reference to the ichthyological insignium, and the Eucharistic presence of bread and wine diluted domestically by the kitchen knife, spring onions, and, most obviously the beetle ready to attack its prey.

De Heem's painting acquires coherence through Orange as orange. There is no denying the allegorical nature of the image, with symbols of royalty abounding: the Netherlands lion, the dynastic orange in his hold, the orange scarf adorning William of Orange, and eagles on either side of the central figure reduplicated by a cornucopia and laurel each. They make up a triple close-in onto the princely face whose luminosity is equalled by white flowers in an otherwise orange-orangey vegetable crown. Sovereignty, opulence and assuredness beam out of this composite portrait with religious intertwined with still-life ingredients. The chiaroscuro is exploited for a public purpose, but the modern *call of the real* and *realia* is there in its full unfolding. The huge garland catches the eye so compulsively as to stand out as the only image on display: a garland with the portrait of William III of Orange. Cut out and darkened, the princely portrait passes as a by-the-by supplement. The still-life is all. Deprived of its majestic insignia, the domesticized natural reality that remains for the view is a spectacle of transience: insects crawling or flying among flowers, leaves and fruits appear to be in possession of it.

Within one year of the publication of Smollett's *Don Quixote* and of the devastating Lisbon earthquake, an Englishman of huge historic/ized literary repute, almost unanimously acknowledged now as the father cum theorizer of the English novel had decided to travel to the royal Portuguese capital in hope of recovering from dropsy, gout and a lung disease. He died soon after his arrival and was laid to rest in the Cemitério dos Inglesinhos, where his funeral monument can be visited. His name was Henry Fielding. *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* had gone to the print in 1749 and enjoyed a readership of less and less prudish gentlemen and ladies. It advertised that weird word *history* in its title: irony of ironies – the history of a foundling! In 1742 *The History and the Adventures of Joseph Andrews And of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams* had come out. Its *Preface* admitted this history-novel to be so novel as to prompt the statement: 'this kind of Writing (...) I do not remember to have seen hitherto attempted in our Language'. Under Fielding's text lies the Miltonian hypotext 'Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme' (*Paradise Lost*, I, 16). The parallel between these bulky *cotexts* of the *context* of English letters seems to have hardly been analysed, to the best of my knowledge. This does not make the comparison any less provocative.

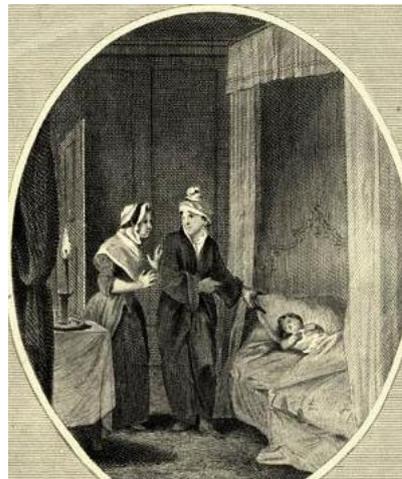
In their climactic structuralist years, both Todorov and Genette operated with a table of unmistakably Aristotelian conception. This showed under the narrative genre of the high mode – the epic – an empty box which should have been filled by its low mode equivalent, *the most historicized genre* lost in, by, or maybe to, the Classic Antiquity – *the novel*. Nor do (re)constructions of genres astonish. Relay-points establishing the contact between an individual work and the universe of literature, genres were regarded as coextensive with texts of similar make, their hidden or manifest relation with other texts featuring as transtextuality. The question of *transgenericity* (Ferreira Duarte 23) has been debated in the Modernity agenda as the passage from Neoclassic imitation to

Romantic invention. In generic terms, from true-to-lifeness kept in the clasp of received rules to what Hegel calls the prose of social relations. If you will, from broadly structuralist *text* and *cotext*, to broadly poststructuralist *context*, or what Michael McKeon, in *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (1987), gracefully calls ‘questions of truth’ in “‘literary’ devolution’ and ‘questions of virtue’ in “‘historical’ evolution’ (6).

Still, to Fielding’s own text and metatext! An orphan among the genres, of loose structure and ‘arriviste snootiness’ (Hunter 1990: 29), the novel cannot help suffering from an ‘inferiority complex’ as an ‘upstart species’, matter for ‘a poetics of embarrassment’, but also carrier of ‘a critical mandate with enormous implications for literary history’ (Hunter 1988: 480). Which is as much as emphasizing the ‘*historicity of literary production*’ (Guillory 485, emphasis mine). Different from romance, different from the epic, the novel looks back in anger to take a categorical leave from its ancestry, while it cannot avoid their generic relatedness. ‘Of all the major genres [...] younger than writing and the book’, ‘the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it’ (Bakhtin 3, 7), the novel is also the ‘most full-throated of genres’, like, once, the epic, ‘pivoted on what it is able to take in’ (Dimock 92), and able to take in quite a lot. It is juvenile hunger that drives it, as well as the flexibility of not depending on any generic canon of its own.

Providing at times ‘desultory and unconnected reading’ (Hawley 225), it plays into the hands of fragmentary and short texts (letters, essays, diaries, abridgements, anthologies, collections of ‘beauties’ of literature, tea-table talks) which become an eighteenth-century leisurely delight. And that brings in the question of loneliness and privacy, the condition of the novel and the novel only in our Long Modernity. It is our bedtime reading, whether in written form or, increasingly more in surrogate and by all means rapid substitutes. Fielding is not unaware of this foundling of a genre’s status, the status of a new offspring without pedigree which he metonymically comes across in the bed of an all-worthy landed aristocrat called the Epic. *Tom Jones as Tom Jones*. (III. 5)

III. 5. *Tom Jones as Tom Jones*



Tom Jones is, let us remember, ‘the history of a foundling’. The *historicity of history* requires a final remark: as it replaced poetry in the Renaissance, history itself was replaced by the novella, to be further supplanted by histories of all kinds, or else fiction (MacPhail 15) in the eighteenth century. This is the time when the watershed between antiquarianism and history in our modern sense of the word becomes established. The former designates a body of writing for philosophical, literary, topographical and other concerns in order to focus on private matters, the latter narrates public events in linear evolution (Salber Phillips 297). These two types of history converge in the eighteenth century, when private life takes over from official history and legitimates itself as the one history of utmost enjoyment. In Ian Watt’s vocabulary, the formal realism of the eighteenth-century novel accounts for its interest in ordinary human type, circumstances, language. Other views have seen in the *Gospels* the best prefiguration of the novel, with their focus on a humble central hero and moral teachings as a basic ingredient. According to Arnaldo Momigliano (1966), the reversal of the public and the private and the combination of antiquities and narrative that the century’s novel was unveiled Herodotean ethnography and Weberian sociology at work. More recently (2005) Karen O’Brien has analysed the interplay in the mid-eighteenth century between history and the novel, with history insulated by its antiquity and the novel approximating the thematic preoccupations and representational norms of history. The ‘rise’ of the novel she regards as a process of ‘increasing re-historicization’ of ‘fanciful narrative and myth’ into ‘factual probability’ (397). The interval 1700-1740, it has been observed (Beck 405), witnessed the replacement of the term romance, deemed decadent and an illusory form of ‘wish-fulfilment literature’ (Beer 2) and the use of history instead. After 1740, the novel started being considered a genre in its own right (Williams 1970). This strategy reminds us of the so many defences of poetry aiming at putting an end to the Platonic indictment of poetry (or else, literature in general, before its *historic/ised generic separation*). In the eighteenth century the novel took some time to be accepted as serious and moral, and it was by calling it history that novelists could defend it and secure its credibility.

A recent invention, like Foucault’s ‘*homme des droits de l’homme*’, the novel opts for the future, instead of letting itself mesmerized by the past. But, like Klee’s *Angelus Novus*, the novel can be caught in the whirlpool of history and show reticence to look the future in the eye. The Library of Congress, a late eighteenth-century project, displays on its grand staircase a frieze with bas-relief cherubs as literary genres. Comedy and Tragedy are personified as mask-owners, while the Epic, in the middle, holds a scroll to which her eyes are lowered. The former two are mimetic, the latter one genre is diegetic. And it has no sibling to accompany her. The missing cherub, the novel, was felt too novel to be given a local habitation and a name in a late-eighteenth century project.

When Fielding arrived in Lisbon, Portugal was replete with architecture of imposing style, yet insufficient solidity. The ornate Catholic palaces he most likely visited must have set him thinking. In his ‘Dedication to the Public’ attached to his *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1753), Fielding declares himself displeased with writers wasting their time to ‘fill their pages with monsters which nobody hath ever seen, and

with adventures which never have, nor could possibly have, happened to them'. And he goes on to say of Homer, of all poets, that he would have 'honoured and loved Homer more, had he written a true story of his own times in humble prose than those noble poems that have so justly collected the praise of all ages'. This discarding of *fiction* in favour of *fact*, of fabulations in favour of history/ies is blatant in his conclusion: 'I still read Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon with more amusement and more satisfaction'.

There is no evidence that Henry Fielding spent any time in Sintra. Even if he had, he would not have seen the chapel erected as part of the Marquês de Pombal's reconstruction work after 1755. We can now. And we can historicize the cosmic vista on the baroque ceiling cheating the eye with its sky-blue background and its cloud-white shapes, of which some clouds, others armillary spheres and putti. Like the Library of Congress cherubs, these too are *rationalized*. They are also modernized and hold in their arms compasses, squares and other such tools of masonic use. For, unlike Boucher's decorative and completely useless putti, the marquess's were pragmatically involved in melioristic projects, and as Fielding sided with factual history, which he had poured into his novels, Pombal unfolded his sweeping modernization reforms unabatedly. Both their memorials are part of modern Lisbon's pride.

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