
**“... purchase the commodity you want”, or Quixote goes English in the Public Sphere:
A Case in Canonical Revalorization**

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Heraldry is a symbolic and symbolizing extension of bellicose enterprises in early modernity. It is a fundamental component of the medieval world implying a systematic *hereditary* use of identitary insignia on the knightly shield, for instance charges or similar devices. Equipped with a lance and shield, a member of the massed *cavalry* is to display, promote, and defend, quite often at the cost of his life, the values of *chivalry*. As a cultural institution, heraldry becomes a distinct mark of chivalrous identity, conferring increased pomp upon adjacent institutions, such as the tournament. For the latter the arms painted on the knight's shield are a physical recognition of identity. *Hereditary succession* can operate with less visible signs, if to produce the same effect.

The roots of heraldry are to be found in the practice of noble seals, themselves resorting to conspicuous signs. Their impression on various cultural objects is an acknowledgment of identity. Pride of place is held by identity claiming its origin in worldly *and* celestial hierarchies, as part and parcel of the *isomorphic model* of cosmic consistency: whatever is done in this world of ours is worthwhile doing and carries significance if, and only if, it is legitimated in the divine world. Thus, “the symbolic devices of [Charlemagne's] court [...] included the sun and the moon, the fleur-de-lis, which later became the symbol of royalty in France, and the symbols of the Evangelists: St. Mark's lion and St. John's eagle” (Woodcock 5).

Heraldic semiosis imposes the rigour of correspondence between nobility of blood and armorial bearings, so that, at the height of fighting, images thus represented be a sure and immediate metonym of the mounted aristocrat. Bearings are literally images *borne* on shields and other pieces of weaponry and armour, as charges are *loaded* on them. They can show birds (especially falcons), beasts (especially lions), or fabulous creatures (especially griffons). In some way or another, these are associated with violence, toughness, cruelty, at once in the name of the knight defended by them, *and* as forms of aggression at the expense of the knight fought against.

Insignia of recognition or various *ensigns* performing the same function are also inscribed on banners and seals, an indication that the shield is more than a physical defence tool. It is a *signiferous* utensil, which, like the banner (Fr. *étandard* E. standard) or the seal (L. *sigillum*, small picture, dim. of *signum*, sign), carries a *standardized sign* whereby its carrier is legitimated in physical, and, most importantly, in symbolic confrontation. To multiply insignia of recognition, *narratives of identity* are also circulated as images representing arms, pictorial scenes, or landscapes. On aristocratic or royal blazons, they *seal up* identity at work in various situations or hypostases. Spanish heraldry, for example, condenses scenes of the colonial epic in a *sui generis* combination of Columbian praise, monarchic encomium and Catholic symbology: the León lion and the Castile castle, like the literal *Ave Maria Gratiae*

Plena insignium, are deemed 'incorrect' in the European North, rather inattentive to baroque ornateness.

Heraldry functions as a means of symbolic ciphering / deciphering. Once coupled, the two halves of the ancient classic *σύμβολον* retrieve the image of the whole. Hidden in his armour, protected behind his shield, head covered in helmet, and eyes behind visor, the medieval knight is, as it were, half absent from the fight. Yet, his physical is supplemented by his spiritual presence. The symbolic gesture thus accomplished is an *έμβλημα*, an impressing the insignia of identity on the body that carries them to legitimate itself in the world.

The *chevalier* astride his *cheval* and equipped with *chivalrous* instruments and symbols is in the service of a noble *seigneur* and of the lady of his heart, who is the embodiment in the world down here of the Holy Virgin, 'the' bearer of Christian identity. The knight's spirit is fed on the spirit of emblematic chivalrous literature. His other identity card, the banner, is a *standard*, i.e. a paragon, model, or example. In minting, for instance, a standard designates the right proportion of basic metal and added alloy that go into the making of coins. It establishes the fair proportion between what is essential and what is supplementary. Likewise, the knight's military standard requires that, if he is physically destroyed, his spiritual presence stay as symbolic endurance, carried by his standard. A matter of standard, indeed!

Man and horse – centaur-like – are one in battle and their functional motivation is undeniable. But could a knight be imagined without his shield, that *sine qua non* piece of weaponry standing in a metonymic relationship to heraldry? Replete with images that are a repository of natural history and myth, boasting floral and vegetal motifs by the side of aristocratic scenes, in a special poetic logic, the medieval shield is a display of onomastic valour and noble dignity.

The shield can assume different guises and visual appearances, depending on the moral rearrangements imposed by the knight's behaviour. Nine augmentations of honour are added to his arms, by the Court of Chivalry, for noble deeds. Of these, the so-called *escutcheon of pretence*, or *inescutcheon*, is a charge shaped as a small shield, borne on top of the shield proper. Hence also the name of *harmony* given it, by way of underlining the matching of the weapon shield and this ornamental one, the one physical presence, this other symbolic representation.

Counterbalancing the nine augmentations, there are nine abatements of honour. As the former raise chivalrous valour to higher levels (L. *augere*, to increase), so the latter bring it down, because they bring themselves down (OF *abatre*, to beat down) through base conduct. According to medieval practice, a stain applied to the knight's shield was an indication of behaviour falling short of the requirements of impeccable dignity. Hence the idea of 'tinged honour'.

From outside (Figure 1), the medieval shield offers the look its right vertical third, followed by its middle, then by its left third, in a reading *à rebours*, that is, from left to right. A horizontal section displays a capital (*chief*) third, a middle one, with its highly symbolic centre flanked by the right and the left area, and a bottom third. By crossing the vertical with

the horizontal line, the paradigmatic with the syntagmatic axis, there obtain nine divisions, each with precise attributes of its own. The central division, the one covering the area of the knight's heart, has a special status (see Figure 2).

Figure 1.

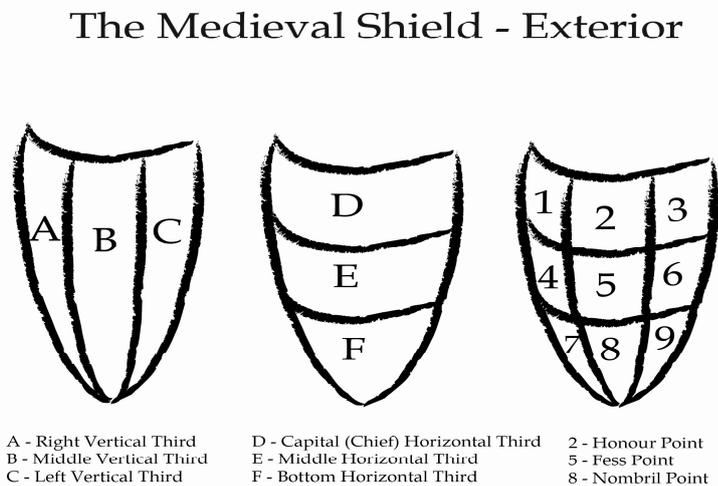
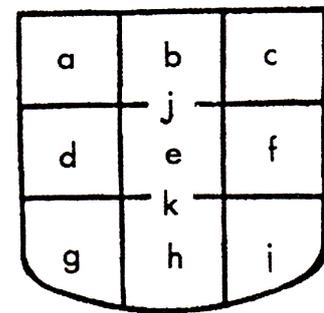


Figure 2.



ESCUTCHEON
Divisions of shield:

- a. Dexter chief.
- b. Middle chief.
- c. Sinister chief.
- d. Dexter flank.
- e. Fess point.
- f. Sinister flank.
- g. Dexter base.
- h. Middle base.
- i. Sinister base.
- j. Honor point.
- k. Nombriil point.

Its punctual centre – *fess point* – is placed under the *honour point* corresponding to the area of the head, and above the *nombriil point* corresponding to the knight's navel. They stand in a consistent relationship of body grammar, which can also be retrieved from the canonical portrait of the *donna angelicata*. The shield points to the virtuous half in conjunction with the sinful one, which is united in the region of the heart as a battlefield of earthly and divine love.

As a man, the knight will suffer physical aggression with pain. But the overall emblematic charge of his heraldic protection will have a say. If hit in the nombriil point, he will be less degraded than if hit in the honour point, no matter the somatic pain. Knights suffer symbolic pains. Likewise, a blow dealt at the enemy in his honour point will make the aggressor happier than one directed at the enemy's nombriil point. Knights enjoy symbolic happiness.

Seen from inside, the shield will show the inspector the sight of metal bars keeping firm the arm holding the shield. In the classic Greek antiquity, these bars were called *κανόνες*. Canonical itself is the Latin term *scutum*, from which, later on, the Italian *scudo*, the coin minted in sixteenth-century Florence and Venice and representing a heraldic shield on its reverse. In late sixteenth-century Piacenza *lo scudo di marchi* was circulated as the standard coin. It was a standard itself, itself a defender of cultural identity, not dissimilar from the shield defending the knight's identity in a tournament or during a crusade.

Accompanied by a squire, the aristocrat engaged in a bellicose relationship with the world was expected to have no problem handling the canonical shield. To sum up, there is

also the cultural institution of the *herald*, a messenger breaking the news to a certain community as a *courrier* of information for the community from which he comes. As a foregoer of his own cultural community, the herald is invested with distinct and distinctive insignia, himself engaged in a heraldic business, in other words. His mission is accomplished with a view to marking the body collective which he serves.

And now to the symbolic interplay of reality and fiction in *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, and on to the emblematic *heraldic-hereditary* trajectory of the Cervantean personage on the eighteenth-century English scene. This process is one of canonical revision in English and, more largely, European letters.

An heir to the Platonic-Christian background of chivalrous Europe, Don Quixote conforms to the commandments of medieval knightly honour. In Part II, Ch. iii, he urges his squire never to forsake his trust in the divine scheme of the world, for not one single leaf will hang on one single tree other than by the will of God. The *principle of plenitude* governs all through and nothing can go wrong.¹⁴ For Quixote, the *confusion* between the real and the ideal, between the world down here and the world up there is, indeed, a *con-fusion*, a symbolic melting of the two split halves reunited to make up a perfect whole, 'the' whole of cosmic symmetry. The Augustinian differentiation between "the land of unlikeness" (L. *regio dissimilitudinis*, Gr. *ανομοιότητος τόπος*) and "the world of likeness" (L. *regio similitudinis*, Gr. *νομοιότητος τόπος*) (Dahlberg 5) is ineffectual for Quixote, who rejects any proof of maladjustment to the ordering scheme signed by God.¹⁵ Betraying it would mean leaving a blot on his untinged honour, as big as the world. This would be a cosmic overthrow of things, chaos instead of order. The Quixotic mental map is in-scribed with Adamic language, the unifying *symbolon*. Quixote privileges the tropes of his experience, which makes him unaware of reality getting swallowed up in their generous alphabet. This is his symbolic shield, behind which he feels at home, in a state of prelapsarian harmony. For the modern and fatalistic Jacques, as for the self-confident Tom Jones, in exchange, *les mots* of the world's fallen language order *les choses* (Foucault: 1970) in a way that Sancho knows by instinct. For him his master's hidalgo shield, like his hidalgo spear and hidalgo helmet, are worn-out inventory, equally useless and laughable matter.

For an eighteenth-century, like for a contemporary English person, an *escutcheon* (derived from the same weapon of defence called *scutum*) is the plate on his or her entrance

¹⁴ This is the essence of Arthur O. Lovejoy's demonstration in *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of Ideas*. Of much the same substance is Leo Spitzer's *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: An Interpretation of the Word "Stimmung"*. Both historians of ideas focus on what I call the *isomorphic model*, or else the systematic set of correspondences between the happenings of our fallen world and the patterns governing them in the world of ideality. A similar type of study is, in the British context, E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture*.

¹⁵ In *Literature of Unlikeness*, Charles Dahlberg looks into the Augustinian theory of the image of God in created man, in terms of the spatial reference that the word 'land' implies: man can achieve the project of harmonious tuning with the divine project, through and only through belief. Hence the principled differentiation between *scientia*, or else mere knowledge, and *sapientia*, wisdom. The former can satisfy the human spirit, but it is only the latter that secures full self-accomplishment. By performing this latter operation, the 'land' of likeness to God can be touched in one's self-improvement.

door, for the visitor to take note of the identity of those inside. Once the protocol accomplished, the Other will decide whether to knock on the 'shield-door' or refrain from doing so. This ceremony is an everyday equivalent of starting out on an expedition in search of otherness. Fielding's England produced such items of domestic use, her 'dark Satanic mills' already discernible in Pope's translation of the *Iliad* (1715-20). In 1738 the Birmingham *Book of Trades or Library of Useful Arts* circulated a text for professional training in blacksmithery in which Pope's salon-gear diction and imagery were put to pragmatic rather than aesthetic use by a guild readership. Industrial artisans reading Homeric texts Augustanized by Pope and further bourgeoisified for collective consumption – this is the victory of modernity on the medieval *Weltanschauung*: the collapse of the cosmic scheme of harmony, the de-sacralization of the shield of honour, its humble serialization as escutcheons forged in the workshops of mechanical reproducibility.

Itself a product of mechanical reproducibility in and for the public sphere, the eighteenth-century novel rises on the modern concept of history as investigation and story. *Tom Jones* is the history of a foundling in what Koselleck calls the new regime of historicity based on the discontinuity of the past from the present. Theory divorced from events and the historian's narrative from real facts – this is the responsibility assumed by modernity in a disenchanted world. The novel assumes the task of restoring the balance of things in the face of such a collapse. As Becker has it, the *philosophes*, and the novelists of the day, let us add, "demolished the Heavenly City of St. Augustine only to rebuild it with more up-to-date materials" (31). An erudite classicist by education and cultivation of the mind, Fielding is engaged in the modern enterprise of police law-enforcement and does not refrain from writing comic librettos for low extraction audiences simply to make a living. His is reduplicated in Tom Jones' career of a self-made man who only eventually discovers, he discovers his aristocratic origin. This occurs when he has already made good in life through personal performance.

Quixote is a late comer to the feast of this world, which is why he cannot decipher the alphabet of the contingent. He cannot be Quijada 'jaw', 'jawbone', nor can he be Quesada (< Sp. *queso*, cheese), or Quejana (< Sp. *queja*, complaint, moan, groan). Such barbarous identity would offend the poetic legitimation of his attachment to supreme truth. In Weberian, if not downright in Nietzschean-Heideggerian terms, Quixote is the victim of an *ingenio* cruelly watered down as mere *ingenierias*. The more tragic will look to us the final reduction of the hero – his banal death in his bed – a typically middle class denouement scene, while, according to the normal knightly ethos and its aristocratic bent, he should have been expected to die on the battlefield, and die a very ritualistic death. Quixote's existence is eventually topicalized *in* this world, *in* the modern episteme, pursuing the tragic course of disillusionment, loss and death. Tom's is the comic trajectory of enjoyment, gain and fulfillment. It is the lesson that Sancho had sucked at his mother's breast.

As it demolishes the chivalrous imaginary, the novel rebuilds it with the more up-to-date materials of the bourgeois imaginary. The novel as a *satura* of genres, a *tutti frutti* for the general taste, for an audience of Sanchos, here is the message of the new spirit. By absorbing and digesting the gothic and the arabesque, and by metabolizing them via the rough joke called *burla*, the novel drops the chimeras of the heroic mode, in which it sees *only* chimeras,

and displays its preference for down-to-earth life. It sacrifices Don Quixote, with his shield and spear, and salutes Sancho, with his bag, hat, and stick. Quite naturally Sancho relocates the knightly helmet in everyday business as *baciyelmo*, a Cervantean coinage meant to modernize the outmoded past and push it into the pragmatic present.

Skinny and bony, Quixote inhabits the “high mimetic” mode and his painful fall from the height of the hierarchy which defines him is a case in romantic irony – tragedy *à la moderne*. Against the rationale of knighthood, he looks like Quijada, while, plump and robust, Sancho is Panza inhabiting the “low mimetic” mode (Frye 34). He performs the “comedic” role (Prince 4) of the marriage of word and thing. As the master is the main actor of the cosmic wedding officiated by the Word, the servant is a secondary *yet* very lively actor in the transient spectacle down here. The show does justice to the Bakhtinian logic of the lower strata of the body, as it does to the Hegelian master-slave relationship with the modern victory of the servant, on which the master depends. Hegelian is the realization that modern man reads his morning paper to keep abreast of ephemeral history – news. Hegelian, too, is the understanding of the novel, ‘the’ genre of novelty as prose of social relations in a world ruled by the bourgeois quotidian.

The text called *Don Quixote* contains formulas marking *incipit* passages of the classic epic, such as the invocation of Apollo and Aurora, with the latter’s rosy fingers tearing apart cosmic darkness to let paradigmatic light in under the name of *Λόγος*. The modern reduction of *Λόγος* to *λόγος* on to *λογική τέχνη*, to Heideggerianize with intent, decapitates the comedic scenario of symbolic union and institutes the tragic scenario of separation. We abandon Don Quixote’s enchanted world in order to enter the boring world of endless *quejas*, all so many voices in the fallen chorus to be heard after the death of the hero.

Among the cacophonous earthly voices there, here is the narrator’s. It speaks under a different name than Quixote’s. Yet the *hidalgo* has the experience of his own identity dichotomized and circulated as existential and fictitious ‘*and at the same time*’, to bring in a Sternean note. This other narrator is the Other, Cide Hamete Benengeli. He holds conversations with the writing quill and acknowledges to it and to us that Quixote was born for him, as he was born for Quixote, that the knight has been good at heroic deeds, as he has been good at phrasing them in masterly words. The time has come though for him to lay bare those mendacious chivalrous stories and display, in exchange, Quixote’s real story. Those lies will die a final irreversible death out of our memory. Farewell!¹⁶

The text called *Tom Jones* reiteratedly ushers in the history–myth opposition in terms of the truth–falsity opposition. We witness Fielding’s irritation with “a swarm of foolish novels, and monstrous romances [...] produced either to the great impoverishment of booksellers, or to the great loss of time, and deprivation of morals in the reader” (IX, i). This *modern* revision *and* revisionism of classic precepts (*utile dulci*) and, more gravely, of classic vision (*το καλοκαγαθόν*) deserves some attention. The axiological focus is commercially geared: the novelist is only too alert to the call of the market and warns those interested

¹⁶ This is the *modern* passage from enchanting romances to realistic *novels* (Miller 1981, Motooka 1998, Petrucci 1993).

about the risk of poor salability. Likewise, in *Tristram Shandy* (I, xii) Sterne brings the cultural institution called mortgager to side with that called jester, a comparison better than “some of the best of *Homer’s*”, by establishing a zeugmatic metaphoric link: “the one raises a sum, the other a laugh at your expense”, both functioning as interest and credit. The reader-customer is engaged in a transaction in which the merchandise provided is professionally controlled. *Tom Jones* is more assertive still, when the “bright love of fame” is invoked as a modern muse, leaving miles behind the Homeric-Cervantean Apollo cum Aurora. Fielding’s is no godly messenger descending upon a story-teller ready to transcribe the divine voice. She is a “much plumper dame” who will not be clothed in “airy forms [of] phantoms of imagination”. Her discourse is Sancho’s, not Quixote’s. Her food is “the well-seasoned beef, and pudding richly stained with plums delight”, very much in the Hogarthian vein.

A definition of realism of 1835 opposes Neoclassic painting reordered by “*l’idéalité poétique*” to Rembrandt’s “*vérité humaine*” (Watt 10). Fielding depicts his plump muse as “impregnated by a jolly merchant of Amsterdam” and having sucked in the “elements of [her] erudition” in the Grub Street “school”, according to which poetry is to tickle not the fancy, but “the pride of the patron”, tragedy is to storm the popular stage and comedy to put on a solemn air, *and* at the same time. Wearied by slumber, his muse will be soothed by “Alderman History” and awakened by “Monsieur Romance”, *and* at the same time. And the “well-fed bookseller” will obey her influence and take her advice as to what “heavy, unread, folio lump, which long had dozed on the dusty shelf, piece-mealed into numbers, runs nimbly through the nation” (XIII, i).

This is the mechanical reproducibility that smites Quixote out of his senses in a scene of schizophrenic realization. Is he the don of la Mancha or is he the donned character multiplied in books piling up to the ceiling of the printing house, in two volumes *and* at the same time? Like Velásquez’s in *Las Meninas*, like Montaigne’s in ‘Des cannibales’, Cervantes’s authorial detachment, whether narrator-character, author-editor, or editor-publisher, betrays the modern separation of power(s), the specialization of professional might and right, the rise of the secular vision also known as the Scientific Revolution. The Cervantean text’s “centre of gravity is situated in the historically possible”, its revision of the comic romance being born of “a humanistic concern for the sacredness of historical truth” (Riley 223, 224). Emerging at a time of epistemic shift, it oozes off the critical spirit burgeoning from the disenchantment of the world, inquisitive and descriptive, rather than acquiescing and prescriptive.

Between canonical incipit and prosaic ending, there remains the kernel of a hybrid text, neither an epic, nor a novel, *both* an epic and a novel, a painful marriage of contraries, a daring violation of the canon and an identity asserted at the cost of death melting into birth as one indistinct state. In the literature *Don Quixote* features as a wise mingling of “l’ancien et le nouveau” just because it is “une oeuvre moderne, produit complexe et émouvant dans sa précarité, mais terre-à-terre, hybride, douteux” (Robert 123). To observe the semiotic logic of the *shield*, here meet the *honour point* of the *chivalrous incipit* and the *nombril point* of the *novelistic ending*. The high mode of a symbolic marriage opposes the low mode of a rambling symbol. As a modern genre, the novel hosts “a world of details, the long-feared *labyrinth*, with no trusty guide, no disembodied authority to assign inevitability to choice. Characters

[...] must make their own way [...]; talent, the negotiation of complex social predicaments, becomes the hermeneutic facility the conversational novel hopes to teach". (Prince 226-227). Between the two points of asserted *or* suppressed identity lies the strip (*fascia*) running all along the central line of the noble *fess point* corresponding to the classic *anima* – heart and soul, at the same time.

The sacrificial course of the novel, which the literature has accepted as the overnight exorcization of "the baneful magic of the last age by a harmless, essentially comic power of common sense" (Duncan 11), follows a descending line from the epic, itself degraded from tragedy, from, that is, Achilles with his solid battlefield shield able to contain the pattern of the cosmos, to Don Quixote with his fragile shield and on to Tom Jones with his problematic *escutcheon of pretence*, as long as he is a foundling. This course marks off distinct anthropological types: the hero of divine extraction, the aristocrat left as guarantee in a world more and more indifferent to his values, and, as a last category, the so-called *self-made man*, whose aristocratic descent is unveiled at the end of a *Bildungsroman* as more of a nostalgic narrative artifice, "the 'symbolic form' of modernity" (Moretti 5). Cervantes's masterpiece has been seen as "the collapse of the poetic" (Beer 42), and the novel as genre as "desacralización de la violencia" and "agotamiento histórico del modelo épico tradicional" (Bandera 19), with the mythico-legendary hero reduced to the modern antihero. As *Don Quixote* is "[una] humilde historia" couched in the language of the *sermo humilis*, bereft of the clothing "de la filosofía, teología, de la retórica o cualquier otra ciencia que tenga a que ver con la verdad del mundo real" (46), *Tom Jones* is downright the birth certificate and *curriculum vitae* of the modern Everyman who leaves behind an 'allworthy' identity to start a new life behind his escutcheon on his London door and become a citizen of the modern world.

The offspring of Protestant capitalism and middle-class thinking,¹⁷ revisited or haunted by the ghosts of the classic epic, like Hamlet Jr. by Hamlet Sr., the novel lets itself be haunted by the isomorphism holding between the real and the ideal world, developing "from the self-criticism of romance, to the naïve empiricism of 'true history'" (McKeon 273). It is a *modern theodicy* explaining God's impenetrable ways to the fallen human race. The novel is "the revenge of eschatology against temporality" (Prince 264), a *hic et nunc* theodicy. Flanked by the borders of contingency, it tries to escape contingency not by following the onetime ascending line, but rather by progressive meliorism and this secular meliorism leads, horizontally, to a comedic resolution. This is the famous definition provided by Fielding, the imitator "in the manner of Cervantes".¹⁸

The father of the modern English novel and architect of the cult of Cervantes in Britain establishes a model taxonomy. For Fielding, 'true history', that is, biography, is the most

¹⁷ This is the canonical thesis about the novel in the literature, under the signature of Ian Watt (1957), for whom 'the' modern genre has a distinct authorship and clear guidelines in the English-speaking world. Watt's dated theory has been superseded by recent reconsiderations, among which Doody's (1997) and Price's (2000).

¹⁸ João Ferreira Duarte (1986) pursues a similar line of demonstration: the fourth *and* missing case of Aristotle's paradigm is the impure space of *hybrid categories* hosting what Fielding calls *romance* and we, moderns, call *the novel*.

persuasive portrait of human nature – inscribings of life in the domain of literature (βίος γραφή). His extensive metatext makes it clear that for him the novel is the true *locus geometricus* of the only truth that counts from the aesthetic point of view. It is the *topos* of probable impossibilities defined by the Stagirite. What makes these improbabilities probable is the ‘history’ with which they peacefully coexist. Romances are the victims of impossible probabilities, according to the same definition in the *Poetics*. They are, we shall conclude, inscribings of the heroic (βίος γραφή). In classic Greek, βίος was the warrior’s bow – a condition and test for the shield. Opting for βίος, instead of βίος, Fielding parts company with Quixote to mind the way of the world in Sancho’s company.

In 1612, *Don Quixote* could already be read in English, in the first complete translation by Shelton. Philips translated Cervantes’s masterpiece again in 1687 *adapting* characters, places, and circumstances – Anglicizing rival Spain. In the early 1700’s *Don Quixote* enjoyed enormous popularity across the English Channel. A vehicle for both sides of the epistemological controversy between the *ancients* and the *moderns*, it could be claimed by the *conservative* Swift and by the *innovative* spirit Addison. For the former, Quixote’s madness was the due recompense for the fury of wanting to change the world – mere hybris. For the latter, author of an aesthetics of laughter and the literary father of Sir Roger Coverley, *the modern English Quixote*, it was a praise of joy much applauded in *The Spectator*. We owe Addison and his friend Steele the modern cultural institution called *newspaper*, the one-day lived story (or *ephemeral* tale) for which *absolute novelty* snatched for a short while from the perishable world is a *novel* in a nutshell.

And here is Fielding in *Tom Jones* siding with the “learend reader”. In the course of “this mighty work”, the reader will have noticed that he, the modern writer, the *novelist*, “ha[s] often translated passages out of the best antient authors, without quoting the original”. He further quotes “the ingenious Abbé Bannier”, translator of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, as some, extremely few of us now, will be willing to learn. In the *Preface* to his own *Mythologie*, the French erudite opines that suppressing learned quotations is as much as paying “a considerable compliment” to the modern reader, not prepared for such burdensome stuff. Thus Fielding. The “learned world”, he states, will be “imposed upon to buy a second time in fragments and by retail what they have already in gross, if not in their memories, upon their shelves”. More than this, “the illiterate” will feel a deeper offence still, “drawn in to pay for what is of no manner of use to them”. The “antients”, he carries on, are “so many wealthy squires”, “we moderns”, instead, “are to the antients what the poor are to the rich”. Conclusion: let the modern writer act not like the auctioneer obliging his purchasers to buy what is useful and what is of no service to themselves! Let him treat his reader with ease and pleasure and speak to him accordingly: “... purchase the commodity you want”! (XII, i)

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The Poetry pRO Project

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The MA Programme for the Translation of the Contemporary Literary Text (MTTLC), which I founded within the English Department of Bucharest University (mttlc.ro) five years ago, has grown from 15 to 250 students. It began with contemporary literature, and has gradually zeroed in on contemporary British poetry. This is how the *poetry pRO* project was born. It all began with my website (lidiavianu.scriptmania.com/). After initiating a series of interviews with contemporary British authors (David Lodge, Julian Barnes, Peter Ackroyd, Alan Brownjohn, George Szirtes, and others), I found I was receiving e-mails from many poets who were willing to be interviewed. At that point I began reading recent poetry extensively, and soon the idea came up to translate it into Romanian, with my MA students.

Translating poetry does not usually make students happy. To make the activity more appealing, I started a literary translation e-zine, which published my MA and PhD students' translations, *Translation Café* (revista.mttlc.ro/). In several years we have completed almost a hundred issues, and the speed keeps increasing. The e-zine relies heavily on a living online dictionary (groups.yahoo.com/group/translationcafe/), which includes almost 500 members today – among them, British, American, Romanian poets, novelists, and translators. Whenever my students cannot understand a word or a context, they post it there, and get numerous answers, some from the authors themselves.

Two years ago I was approached by Anne Stewart (www.poetrypf.co.uk/), a highly resourceful and enthusiastic literary agent for some 260 British poets. This is how *poetry pRO*