

**From the ‘disenchantment of the world’  
to the enchantment of the interiorness:  
An interpretative reading on the shaping of the subject  
and the transformation  
of the world in *Don Quixote of La Mancha***

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Speaking about *Don Quixote of La Mancha* implies to evoke one of the most intimate and transcendental aesthetic experiences that humankind has ever enjoyed. It is intimate to the extent it represents, above all, an encounter with a sort of one’s echo, a sort of affinity with a supposed ‘anything’ that transcends the conventional world. It is transcendental because such experience is nearly archetypical, as we all seem to have something like *Don Quixote*, *Dulcinea*, *Sancho Panza*, or like any of those characters appearing and disappearing throughout the story.

Thus, when reading *Don Quixote* we are unavoidably transported to an essential part of ourselves. It is a part that usually materializes an idea both disturbing and elementary: I, I am not me. “I am another one”, as Rimbaud said in his ‘*Lettres du voyant*’ or *Letters of the Seer*. It is another one because is crossed by the social agreement, by the never-ending demand of conventions, by the divisive line between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’ or between what is right and what is wrong; a universe of experiences and relationships that transcend the spirit shared in an epoch and a social context. It is the emergence of an-other subject capable to build ideas and materialize

them without any restraints other than those lying in one's interior universe. But, how does this phenomenon of building and strengthen the being occur? How is *Don Quixote* shaped as a subject and how does he transform the world around him, drawing upon such world to then build his own world without any apparent limits or any predisposition to limit the essential in the experience?

This paper is driven by questions like these, in order to do an interpretative reading on the shaping of the subject and the transformation of the world in *Don Quixote of La Mancha*. This reading is based on the development and accomplishment of four basic concepts: Weber's disenchantment of the world, Thomas Pavel's enchantment of the interiority, and the subject and foreclosure in psychoanalysis. These concepts, beyond their theoretical or conceptual stance, are trying to interpret or setting a relationship of sense with regard to what might be named as the accomplishment of a contending and resisting stance, which embodies a universal voice and represents one of the most significant contributions ever made to humankind by the language arts.

Well-known to all of us, at its early times the novel represented a genre in which "the man grew bigger" because, as noted by Luckács (1970), before the inception of the novel, both the epic and dramatic genres were based on stories already determined by the will of the Gods, or arranged by the destiny. Such will and arrangement were not questioned but, quite opposite, represented the splendour of some characters who undertook the greatest journeys and usually managed to succeed, thus embodying either a beacon or some benchmark behaviours and expressions within the personal and social sphere. They conformed to the conventional modes and dialogued with the structures typical to the social tensions in that time and the cultural codes representing it. The novel hero, at the beginnings, was still echoing the epic hero and his Apollonian traits.

His ways of being had not much to do with the Dionysian, obscure, resisting, troubling figure and had still a marked influence from the Middle Ages, fairly adhered to the social convention of that time.

However, this situation began to change over the time. Amidst the evolutionary process of the novel, under a social and literary view, the hero's image and position not only began to get transformed but some critical positions began to rise about the cultural, political, socio-economic, and personal contexts, among others, thus leading to the emergence of what is known nowadays as a "problematic hero"<sup>1</sup>, a nomad, an explorer of the context and the instant, just like the one who is shaped in *Don Quixote of La Mancha*, because there he develops precisely a subversive or contending position regarding the world around us:

[...] gave himself up to reading books of chivalry with such ardour and avidity that he almost entirely neglected the pursuit of his field-sports, and even the management of his property; and to such a pitch did his eagerness and infatuation go that he sold many an acre of tillageland to buy books of chivalry to read, and brought home as many of them as he could get.

(*Don Quixote*, Chapter I; translation by John Ormsby)

In *Don Quixote*, the system of characters is shaped from the deployment of diverse human models situated each one in a specific role in the society. Little by little, these models account for something that is instituted as the principle articulating the central element of the work: the need to build, expose and embody new values from a

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<sup>1</sup> The hero that Luckàcs spoke of in his books, *Soul and Form* and *Theory of the Novel*, distinguishes from the epic poem hero as his essential characteristic is the experience of dissatisfaction with the world around him and the nonconformist unceasing pursuit of anything allowing him to make sense of that structured and "defined" world he resides in.

conception of human happiness, from the enjoyment of the elementary, providing us with the life, and the conception of the intimate experience as the utmost expression of enjoyment. *Don Quixote* is not interested in managing his estate and risks his material and financial status in order to get the chivalry books that represent nothing but a possibility: A possibility to gain access to other times and spaces breaking the tightness of the quotidian and logic time. It is the chivalric romances that swell the ingenious nobleman's 'soul', which 'inspires' and transports him to the essential of the experience.

Each character in the novel is defined from another one. There is an interconnection enabling not only the formation of the text fabric, but also the making of sense that –by using technical elements like suddenly going from one space to another, or from one time to another, without any relationship seemingly occurring between them– brings about a masterly effect of mobility and, above all, of opening. It is a possibility to access in a more plausible way to the character's consciousness where, in most of the cases –though bearing the weight of the narrator's mediation– the expression of the character's subjectivity and interiority is highlighted, especially the case of the main character who, as previously told, represents the very existence of the man under the reading herein.

Under this viewpoint, to assert such existence means a need to risk it all, to surrender oneself to the latent drive of desire and vitality. Insofar as the world is not enough, the "unreality" of the books seizes the surrounding reality and then these "other realities" become a relief valve leading to oneself, a gradual distancing from the everyday routine, from the must be, and from the self's absence, amidst a social system based on the advent of the scientific-technical, materialistic, and positivist thought. This

thought was characteristic to the era just after the Dark Ages and gradually led to a sort of ‘disenchantment of the world’ –as Weber called it– that consisted in a kind of no place or non-recognition in the middle of all those things surrounding and supporting the experience, which had resulted vacuous and dissatisfying to the subject.

Under Weber’s conception, disenchantment of the world (*Entzauberung der Welt*) is that point we reach when embedded in a reified and marginalized world. A world where things get their value because of their superficiality and not their meaning or making of sense. This is a ‘machine-like’ world governed by the reason and the use of the power.

Therefore, the human being “is marked by a titanic struggle between the scientific and ‘objective’ analysis of the reality of a technical-oriented and bureaucratized civilization based on the mass democracy and capitalism, on one hand, and, the ethic efforts intended to ‘save’ the individual from the impersonal forces subjugating him/her, on the other hand. Giving back the existence its sense and protecting the values of personal creativity vis-à-vis the bureaucratization and the collectivism” (Romero 1) become the main challenge to be taken by the human being embedded in the system. Although by the time of *Don Quixote* neither Marx nor his philosophical insights had been brought to be, the foundations were being laid for something that gradually morphed into consumption-driven societies, into human beings sandwiched between the technical and material mobility and the drowsiness of their spirit. The consequence: that alienation and derangement from which, in the case herein, the ingenious nobleman Don Quixote is seeking for himself a time and space provided with coordinates, guidelines and elements on its own:

In short, he became so absorbed in his books that he spent his nights from sunset to sunrise, and his days from dawn to dark,

poring over them; and what with little sleep and much reading his brains got so dry that he lost his wits. His fancy grew full of what he used to read about in his books, enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooings, loves, agonies, and all sorts of impossible nonsense; and it so possessed his mind that the whole fabric of invention and fancy he read of was true, that to him no history in the world had more reality in it.

(*Don Quixote*, Chapter I; translation by John Ormsby)

By means of the critic, the irony, the fantasy and making up of stories, the only thing *Don Quixote* does is to try potential worlds, to move away from the quotidian, to persecute the human being subjugated by the “materialism” and the scientific thought proper to that time. Our hero embodies the need to start up the vital drive that the system had turned off. His primary purpose is to captivate again the world he resides in, to enchant it, to make it cosy. In doing so, however, there is a need to assume a radical position and ‘reject’ the world that begins to become finite, predictable and controllable. It is then necessary to turn the eye inwards in order to find the subject, that divided being, hiding under the image of individual<sup>2</sup> and the social agreement.

This way, *Don Quixote* experiences what Thomas Pavel calls ‘the enchantment of the interiority’ in his book “*Representing the existence*” (2005), because the character gets apart from that referred to as “a sticky dough proclaimed as a world” by Cortázar (2) and from the distance rejects the conventional environment so as to build his own reality. It is a reality where the subject manages to be and, from himself with

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<sup>2</sup> The word ‘individual’ comes from the expression *indivise* and refers to the unit, the independent, what cannot be divided. For many years, this expression was used by both the science and some theoretical discourses, which was later replaced with ‘subject’ that, opposed to the former, means something like *tied up* or *be subject to*; though with such restraint the subject is an “actor of his/her acts” by exerting his/her will and decision-making.

his own categories, he comes up with situations, names the things, and shapes himself around his deepest and most basic impulses and wishes. It is an-other reality where, based on the enchantment of a singular experience, he writes his own story. Such rejection of ‘the other’ and the already given, some centuries later would be named as ‘forclusion’ by the psychoanalysis. In fact, it is a kind of defence mechanism used by the subject to revert his position within a world manipulated by the rules and dominated by the father’s name function (the ‘logic’ of the time, space and reality shared with the social group): *«There is a sort of defence much more vehement and efficient consisting in the self that rejects (verwirft) the unbearable representation at the same time with his affection and behaves as if the representation had never reached the self»* (Laplanche J. and Pontalis J.B. 327.). Certainly, we can see it in many other passages from *Don Quixote*, among which we feature below that of the windmills – much celebrated and eventually becoming a landmark of this work:

“Fortune is arranging matters for us better than we could have shaped our desires ourselves, for look there, friend Sancho Panza, where thirty or more monstrous giants present themselves, all of whom I mean to engage in battle and slay, and with whose spoils we shall begin to make our fortunes; for this is righteous warfare, and it is God’s good service to sweep so evil a breed from off the face of the earth.”

“What giants?” said Sancho Panza.

“Those thou seest there,” answered his master, “with the long arms, and some have them nearly two leagues long.”

“Look, your worship,” said Sancho; “what we see there are not giants but windmills, and what seem to be their arms are the sails that turned by the wind make the millstone go.”

“It is easy to see,” replied Don Quixote, “that thou art not used to this business of adventures; those are giants; and if thou art

afraid, away with thee out of this and betake thyself to prayer while I engage them in fierce and unequal combat.”

So saying, he gave the spur to his steed Rocinante, heedless of the cries his squire Sancho sent after him, warning him that most certainly they were windmills and not giants he was going to attack.

(*Don Quixote*, Chapter VIII; translation by John Ormsby)

Reality is build therein from the blossoming of the most splendid, vivid, and experiential subjectivity. It is from inside the object that the object itself gets transformed. Out of the more undreamt-of and unusual feeling or idea, the subject is made and re-made by himself from inside, and re-experiences the spaces, thus making them his *locus amoenus*<sup>3</sup>. This is his favourite place for being, for feeling, and for making himself in and from the subjective experience of the instant, thus rejecting anything that may restrain and exceed him:

“I cannot understand, Senor Don Quixote,” remarked the cousin here, “how it is that your worship, in such a short space of time as you have been below there, could have seen so many things, and said and answered so much.”

“How long is it since I went down?” asked Don Quixote.

“Little better than an hour,” replied Sancho.

“That cannot be,” returned Don Quixote, “because night overtook me while I was there, and day came, and it was night

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<sup>3</sup> This word comes from the Latin ‘*amoenus*’ that means enjoyable, pleasant, charming, and that refers to, in literature, an idyllic place where the hero reaches his satisfaction level and feels right in his place, a space he owns and/or takes possession of. Here, I do relate this expression to the satisfaction experience, ‘the realization’ that each situation created and experienced by the hero means to himself – in this case, Don Quixote.



again and day again three times; so that, by my reckoning, I  
have been three days in those remote regions beyond our ken.”  
(*Don Quixote*, Chapter XXIII; translation by John Ormsby)

Here, the perception of time plays a pivotal role for the main character as well as for the system of characters intertwined with him and the reciprocal relationships between all of them because, based on the way the time is assimilated, is how the experience of feeling is to be made possible. Such experience is only achieved by ‘playing’ or ‘dreaming’, as stated by Freud in his text “*Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*” (1995 *O.C.* Volume IX). According to Freud, just like the way the child resorts to the play so as to invent other worlds in the middle of what surrounds and characterizes the established universe that regulates the child’s socializing process, the adult employs the dreaming (either while asleep or awake) and ends up doing –in dreams– things impossible or unlikely to be done in his everyday life, or his life crossed by an schematic, normative, regulated reality. Both the child and the adult materialize through the playing and dreaming, respectively, their deepest, most elusive and most veiled wishes. The adult does not invent objects any more like in his childhood. Rather, he draws on what is known as the underpinning of the world, an inclination to make feasible what seems as unfeasible under the rational judgement:

The adult then stops playing, seemingly waiving to earn the pleasure he got from playing. [...] Certainly, we cannot waive to anything. [...] Thus, the adult, when stops playing, is just declining the underpinning in the real objects; rather than playing, now he fantasizes, builds castles on the air, creates what is called day-dreaming.

(Freud, 1907-1908)

According to this reasoning, the literary creator, his characters (and, in this case, the literature in general with all its resources) do nothing more than resort to the

fantasizing in order to build other realities, to construct out of the deconstruction, and to underpin with their fantasy, the subjectivity that uses to be scattered or flattened by the objective and external elements. The one who fantasizes, Freud states, is unsatisfied with the objects, the schemes and the characteristics of the world around him –just like the ingenious nobleman– because ‘happy’ and satisfied people do not tend, or are not in need, to do so and, instead, conform to the circumstances and elements shaping their context. The unsatisfied subject then rejects, removes, brings, transforms, infringes, proposes, tries, and builds his own space and his own reality.

At this point, the conception of time becomes highly valuable in the novel *Don Quixote* as it embraces a dichotomy: on one hand, the time course poses limits, divides the events of both the life and the experience, objectively, into present, past and future tenses; on the other hand, it represents the unknown, some arbitrariness that accounts for the advent of ‘an-other logic’ and, above all, of the singularity to be able to experience such a time in a singular and subjective way. Just like in the excerpt above that portrays an event from Don Quixote’s adventure in the cave of Montesinos where, according to him, several days and nights passed by, before meeting again with his squire, when, according to Sancho Panza, he actually spent there no more than some hours.

In the novel, time is a means articulating both the way of telling the story (passing from one time to another) and the making of sense and shaping for the utterance place, which is expressed through the arrangement of the characters. It means that the writer, in turn, together with his character unavoidably faces the strictness of the objective time and makes a decision about the time experience. In the case of Don Quixote, the writer does an axiological approach in which the time functions as a

‘liberating space’ or, even better, as a space through which the liberation is to be carried out, as from the present tense articulated and defined in his time structure, he experiences a sequence of disillusionment regarding his possibilities to perceive. And with the feeling of the time as well as a sort of opening of the time, he finds the possibility to unfold over himself, to evoke from the present a feeling similar to that of the past, or the future, and to be transported with that feeling, in order to render it more intense and full:

By stages as already described or left undescribed, two days after quitting the grove Don Quixote and Sancho reached the river Ebro, and the sight of it was a great delight to Don Quixote as he contemplated and gazed upon the charms of its banks, the clearness of its stream, the gentleness of its current and the abundance of its crystal waters; and the pleasant view revived a thousand tender thoughts in his mind. Above all, he dwelt upon what he had seen in the cave of Montesinos; for though Master Pedro’s ape had told him that of those things part was true, part false, he clung more to their truth than to their falsehood, the very reverse of Sancho, who held them all to be downright lies.

(*Don Quixote*, Chapter XXIX; translation by John Ormsby)

This way the deep sense of the things is not caught by the present or, better said, it is caught but based on an effect linking it to another experience that is free of imperfections, not made material, not objectified, not seen from the outside. And it gets some deep senses and, from its subjectivity, provides the subject with some certainties about that represented by what is being observed or, rather, what is experienced from the observation and that is to be lived from the interiority and what is thus evoked.

Based on this assumption, it is suggested a possibility to appoint the time and the experience as the ‘other logic’, an opening that embraces contradictions and that, based

on an ambivalent and ambiguous sense of the things, endows the individual experience itself, the artistic production and the literary text with a polysemic property.

At this point, it is important to evoke the concept of '*Zeitlos*' coined by Freud and resumed by Kristeva in *Intimate Revolt* (2001), as with this concept it is possible to understand something about that 'other logic' that is brought about by the particular experience and perception of the time.

The concept *Zeitlos* refers to a time outside the time, an un-linked time, a time that opposed to the linear time of consciousness (like the one described from Saint Augustine to Hegel) appears inside the former (the consciousness time) making a gap that accounts for "an unconscious time that not only is not the conscious time, but goes over a pre-psychic time and reaches the somatic" (Kristeva, 2009, 49), i.e., reaches the sensing.

The *Zeitlos* is firstly expressed as a pleasure beginning intended to make the wishes a reality, then it displays the repetition<sup>4</sup> and, finally, turns back to the archaic, to what has been. It is about a unique experience that, starting from the intimate, transports the creator to his own universe, brings him to a parallel system where he has to evoke and connect the 'current' experience with other experiences from the past, in his singularity.

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<sup>4</sup> It is what repeats the action automatically from the psyche. It is something unconscious, although for the case Proust and the literary creator in general, is non-conscious.

Consequently, a liberating effect is produced and results in the creation. This all is about the need to create one's own time, the 'other time' that –similarly to what Cervantes proposes with *Don Quixote* and that this work has related to the *Zeitlos*– allows the experience of a unique, personal, intimate and individual time, like in the stories lived by Don Quixote from the literary experience with his chivalry books. And it is a reply opposite to those books (even though inspired by themselves) that allowed our ingenious nobleman to be and to do with his most genuine wishes and impulses within the context and social system he belonged to.

Therefore Cervantes, with his novel, reclaims the 'insanity' (so much demonized by the religions and societies from a long time ago to nowadays), reclaims all that falls outside the schemes, creates possible worlds, and makes up his own experiences out the reality. He institutes a kind of *kahiros*, the right and ideal moment for the encounter with oneself. He gets rid of the ordinary time to take refuge in the time outside the formerly mentioned time, causing a gap in the ordinary time to then surrender himself to the genuine experience and let the subject be a process, instead of a product; a process stemming from inside him that ongoingly asserts and shapes himself.

Based on the foregoing, *Don Quixote of La Mancha* is that kind of inner voice that the world tries to quell; it is a sort of constant call to a subject hiding under the grounds of the conventional reality and then breaks out with the construction of his own universes. This construction is made out of the deconstruction, it is another order of the things supported by the chaos. It is the blossoming of the 'subjective reason' preceded and supported by the liberating emergence and splendour of the 'nonsense'.

Don Quixote is clearly the accomplishment of what each one of us, in essence, wants to be.

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