

Fighting Windmills: Quixotism and Old/New Issues Facing Humankind

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The most recent reimagining of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605) —Salman Rushdie's *Quichotte* (2019)— represents the volatile identities in American society under the conditions of blurring a line between fact and fiction. Exploring quixotism as the conflict of *idealism vs realism* elucidates the idea of humans who fight with the windmills in their heads. Against the background of this conflict, topical concerns are vividly highlighted to remain constant throughout the centuries, considering specific historical and sociocultural circumstances. The impact of this binary opposition on the worldview of the people of that time and the modern ones, created by Cervantes and Rushdie correspondingly, is a primary focus of the article. Both novels share a symbolic reflection of the world through the distinct aesthetics of a work of fiction that moves them beyond metafictional narration. A comparative study of the diachronically different stories emphasises a similarity of the strong questions raised about the societies whose ideals quixotes reflect.

Keywords: conflict; reality; idealism; human; quixotic worldview.

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Luchando contra los molinos de viento: el quijotismo y los viejos/nuevos problemas que enfrenta la humanidad

La reinención más reciente del *Don Quijote* (1605) de Miguel de Cervantes —*Quichotte* (2019) de Salman Rushdie— representa las identidades volátiles de la sociedad estadounidense en condiciones de difuminar la línea entre realidad y ficción. Explorar el quijotismo como el conflicto entre *idealismo* y *realismo* aclara la idea de los humanos que luchan contra molinos de viento en sus cabezas. En este contexto, se destacan preocupaciones constantes a lo largo de los siglos, considerando circunstancias históricas y socioculturales. El presente artículo se enfoca en dicha oposición binaria existente en las cosmovisiones de la gente de las épocas de Cervantes y de Rushdie. Ambas novelas comparten un reflejo simbólico del mundo, mediante la estética distintiva de una obra de ficción que trasciende la narración metaficcional. Un estudio comparativo de las historias diacrónicamente diferentes enfatiza la similitud entre las fuertes preguntas planteadas sobre las sociedades cuyos ideales reflejan los Quijotes.

Palabras clave: conflicto; realidad; idealismo; humano; cosmovisión quijotesca.

Lutando contra moinhos de vento: quixotismo e velhos/novos problemas enfrentados pela humanidade

A mais recente reimaginação de *Dom Quixote* (1605) de Miguel de Cervantes —*Quichotte* (2019) de Salman Rushdie— representa as identidades voláteis na sociedade americana sob as condições de confundir a linha entre fato e ficção. Explorar o quixotismo como o conflito entre *idealismo* e *realismo* elucida a ideia de humanos que lutam com moinhos de vento em suas cabeças. No contexto deste conflito, preocupações são vividamente destacadas ao longo dos séculos, tendo em conta certas circunstâncias históricas e socioculturais. O presente artigo foca na oposição binária existente nas visões de mundo das épocas de Cervantes e Rushdie. Ambos os romances compartilham uma reflexão simbólica do mundo, através da estética distinta de uma obra de ficção que transcende a narração metaficcional. Um estudo comparativo das histórias diacronicamente diferentes enfatiza a semelhança das fortes questões levantadas sobre as sociedades cujos ideais os quixotes refletem.

Palavras-chave: conflito; realidade; idealismo; humano; cosmovisão quixotesca.

Maybe this was the human condition, to live inside fictions
created by untruths or the withholding of actual truths.
Maybe human life was truly fictional in this sense,
that those who lived it didn't understand it wasn't real.

Salman Rushdie, *Quichotte*

Introduction

QUIXOTISM EMPHASISES HUMAN BEHAVIOUR WITH an attitude towards the embodiment of a universal ideal which leads to a conflict with reality. At the same time, today's concept of *quixotism* is not adequate to the semantic potential of Cervantes's hero, although he represents the first personified generalisation of this conflict. The image of Don Quixote summarises the characteristic features of human nature, which are manifested at different ages and in different countries. Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) created an image of deep universal meaning that transcended the lines of his era. Quixote has become a symbol of determined properties of the human spirit and an allegory of the human condition (Martinez-Bonati 4), which is why he has been one of the greatest images in the history of literature. Its "timelessness" is due to the features of Quixote that are characteristic of people of different eras.¹ The image of Quixote was perceived by coming generations as an archetype of human nature and interpreted as a psychological category (Pérez-Álvarez 17). However, in the seventeenth century, the success of the novel was not overwhelming, although its sales were considerable (McCrorry 194).

Almost all traditional literary images are separated from their original sources and become the basis for new texts that reflect the original image, endowing it with new meanings, without losing intertextual connections. From this perspective, Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605) belongs to the literary phenomena of transnational nature (Boutcher; Childers; D'haen and Dhondt). As Egginton claims, Cervantes's novel "incorporated, reacted to, and was

1 McCrorry stresses that a study of interpretations of *Don Quixote* would itself require several volumes: "[...] like the Bible, it has a message and a meaning not only for every age but apparently for every reader, too" (194).

shaped by the myriad changes taking place around him and that led to the modern world. The style he invented was the expression of a world in flux, and he helped give that flux a literary shape” (xxii). Inspired by Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, Salman Rushdie (1947-) wrote his novel *Quichotte*² (2019), a metafiction that exists “as a form of parody or a tool to undermine literary conventions and explore the relationship between literature and reality, life, and art” (Imhof 9). Although metafiction is most often associated with postmodernism, it was Cervantes who was at the origin of this form of fiction³ as “a precursor to the postmodern novel” (Shikha 32). So, metafictional *Quichotte* appears to be a reinterpretation of metafictional *Don Quixote*. This reimagining occurs in American society with its social, cultural, and political contrasts. The challenges that humans face throughout their history take on a new form and new meanings.

If the image of the hidalgo from La Mancha is characterised by ambiguity, which is not only unexhausted during its long life in art, but also gets further symbolisation associated with the awareness of the mystery of human existence, then the content of this image remains constant, as evidenced primarily by its multiple transformations in world literature —from direct imitation of a prototype to typological correlation with it (e.g. *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams* (1742) by Henry Fielding, *The Spiritual Quixote* (1773) by R. Graves, *Our Lord Don Quixote* (1914) by M. de Unamuno, *The Return of Don Quixote* (1927) by G. K. Chesterton, *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* (1939) by J. L. Borges, *Silverlock* (1949) by J. M. Myers, *The Order of Things* (1966) by M. Foucault, *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) by G. Greene, *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream* (1986) by K. Acker, *Going Bovine* (2009) by L. Bray, *The Shadow Dragons* (2009) by J. A. Owen). This novel influenced writers from its inception (Durán and Rogg 4). *Don Quixote* has become a myth like *Don Juan* and *La Celestina* in Spanish culture: the meaning of this myth varies in each epoch and depends on the epistemology of a period and the ideals of society (Shikha 33; Watt 48). *Don Quixote* problematises not only

2 *Quichotte* is not the only novel by Rushdie to follow Cervantes. His *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995), with its central themes of the world being remade and reinterpreted, draws inspiration from Cervantes’s work, as well as names and characters.

3 Researchers insist that *Don Quixote* establishes the very discourse of the novel as a linguistic plurality that cannot be reduced to any single form (Cascardi *Don Quixote and the Invention* 64).

the distinction between what is true and not, “real” experience and delusion, but also the very formal means by which such questions can be raised (Hammond 267). The most significant issue is the internal contradiction of Quixote himself, which can be considered one of the structural features of the conflict of universal significance (Quint 86; Paulson 1). It is a conflict between two halves of earthly consciousness: “the world in a human” and “a human in the world” getting a tragicomic intensity in the image of the protagonist. The lack of correlation between, on the one hand, excessive introversion, focused cultivation of dreams, and even more so, proactive attempts to realise them, and on the other hand, reflective self-awareness mediated by the laws of reality, in particular collective life experience, can be considered quixotism in its social-psychological dimension. Quixotism as “a discourse that describes —or establishes— a stark difference between an ‘us’ and a ‘them’” works as “a performative utterance that marks off an ‘other’” (Gordon 2). Johnson sees Quixote’s “madness” as “the expression of all that is new, the future instead of the past, self-creation instead of determinism, liberation instead of conformism, a slap in the face of the established order”, and as “the source of inevitable conflicts he is destined to lose, because he is heterodox and alone” (11). The attitudes towards the phenomenon of quixotism⁴ are variable and can range from apologetic to sarcastic ones, not only in diachronic and synchronic terms of perception but even within one piece, which depends on several factors: the attitude of the author, historical circumstances, and national traditions. Of great significance are the place and the time of the depicted events, provoking the authors to create a special scenario since the sociocultural background dictates the behaviour of the characters.

The most symptomatic conditions for appearing the characters of the quixotic type⁵ are the “transitional” periods of history when the traditional ties between humans and the surrounding world are destroyed, and alienated people find themselves in an existential situation of choosing a life orientation, which gets temporal character: either to adapt to the present, or to develop

4 Hanlon asserts that “the spectre of quixotism takes on multiple forms and makes numerous representations, beckoning us to make some productive sense of it in the end” (*Toward a Counter-Poetics* 141).

5 In literary and extraliterary contexts, the terms *quixote*, *quixotic* and *quixotism* comprise something like a commonsense criticism of idealism (Britt-Arredondo 12).

an attitude to the future, or to be conserved in the past. The phenomenon of the “again-and-again return” of Don Quixote in culture⁶ is related to the archetypal nature of this character. There are many quixotes in world culture, as well as his transformations. It is not only about a literary character or an image. Therefore, quixotism lives as a mode of behaviour, a philosophy, and a principle of human life under cultural contradictions. The choice of life orientation is to one degree or another connected with the ideal.

The ideal of universal significance, attributed to the past, which is generally a property of passionate *quixotism*, is embodied in the “hero of our time” Quichotte, the eponymous protagonist, from Rushdie’s novel. This image perfectly fits into the American context of the twenty-first century, the age of global sociocultural and historical transformations, and in the post-truth world —a hyper-version of the real world that seeks to surpass it (Bezrukov and Bohovyk 206). This bifurcation of the quixotic type is driven by an attempt to implement a “high” ideal into life, ensuring the semantic completeness of the image but leads to connotative changes in the interpretation of the very concept of quixotism.

Sociocultural shifts of quixotes in the post-truth world

Rushdie’s intention is clear: to revive and move Don Quixote into the modern world to show how he survives today, in the post-truth conditions (Majumder and Khuraijam 4). After reading Rushdie’s novel, we concluded: historical and sociocultural landscapes change, but people, albeit with determined transformations, remain the same with their passions, aspirations, and inevitable losses. The style of Rushdie’s *Quichotte* is reminiscent of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, especially in the naming of the chapters, cf.: Chapter One: Quichotte, an Old Man, Falls in Love, Embarks on a Quest, & Becomes a Father (Rushdie 3) —CHAPTER I Which describes the condition and profession of the famous gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha (Cervantes 19). These are not short but accurate titles, that are sometimes perceived as summing up to attract attention and encourage further reading.

The key problem in both novels is the conflict between the ideal and the real. Cervantes’s idealism “is mainly represented by the main character,

6 This may be due to “the plurality of discourses in a work like *Don Quixote*” (Cascardi *The Subject of Modernity* 81).

Quixote, as a lover of and believer in chivalric books” (Saoudi 147), and Rushdie’s one —by “the newly named Mr. Quichotte (he did not feel that he had earned or merited the honorific *Don*)” (Rushdie 8). Cervantes’s realism “is mainly represented by Sancho, the novelist himself and other characters that stand firmly against the version of idealism reflected in chivalry books” (Saoudi et al. 151), and Rushdie’s one —“by a New York-based writer of Indian origin who had previously written eight modestly (un)successful spy fictions under the pen name of Sam Du Champ” (Rushdie 21), and somehow by Quichotte’s imaginary son who is closer to real life than the main character himself. Against the background of this conflict, some old/new issues facing people are highlighted; some problems are implicit, and others are explicit. The impact of the binary opposition of *idealism vs realism* on the worldview of then and modern humans is the focus of the article. This article defines idealism as the desire to create a society where everything is subordinated to the ideal world order. Still, the realism of life makes its corrections.

The modern post-truth world⁷ is a new setting in which the same people exist as in the age of Cervantes. They face new challenges, but in general, they do not try to change anything, but adapt to the circumstances, even if they go against their beliefs. This is the world of “little men” who find it not incomprehensible and do not want to escape into fantasy. But alongside “little men”, idealists try to *fight windmills*, as the protagonists of both novels whose ideology is embodied in the following phrase: “he did not achieve great things, he died in the effort to perform them” (Cervantes 206). We interpret *fighting windmills* not with the meaning of fighting imaginary evils or opponents, but rather define it as futile efforts in the fight against old/new social and personal problems, that, in our opinion, fits into the semantics of the expression *fighting windmills* but not *tilting at windmills*.

When creating a character, authors use their own experience, considering the mistakes made and sometimes giving their own character traits (positive or negative) to their heroes, or an appearance, adding similar details about the origin, age, hobbies, education, etc. that corresponds to the real vision of life. Cervantes wrote the first chapter of his novel at the age of fifty, creating

7 For the concept of the post-truth world in the context of a quixotic worldview, see the article “On the Verge of Moral and Spiritual Collapse: Challenges of a Post-truth World and Hyperreality in Salman Rushdie’s *Quichotte*” (Bezrukov and Bohovyk 205-209).

a main character of the same age, and probably of a build that resembled the writer: “Our gentleman was approximately fifty years old; his complexion was weathered, his flesh scrawny, his face gaunt, and he was a very early riser and a great lover of the hunt” (Cervantes 19). Rushdie’s novel was published in 2019, when the writer turned seventy-two years old, like his hero. The reader learns the age of Quichotte from the thoughts of his imaginary son: “I’m a teenager imagined by a seventy-year-old man” (Rushdie 82). But the appearance was borrowed from the image of Cervantes’s character: “So tall, so skinny, so ancient, and yet you can’t grow anything better than the straggiest of beards” (6). So, there is a some parallel when the authors, identifying themselves with their heroes, entrust the characters with their own innermost thoughts. It is noteworthy that during the age of Cervantes, a fifty-year-old man was considered experienced. The same is true about Rushdie —a modern seventy-year-old man is considered quite experienced too. The origin of fictional characters is the same as their literary “fathers”: the Spaniard Cervantes invents “the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote” (Cervantes 19), when *hidalgo* seems to be a member of the lower nobility in Spain; an Indian-born British-American Rushdie creates “a traveling man of Indian origin” (Rushdie 3).

Origin plays a major role in society’s perception of humans, so the authors provide quite detailed information about the origin of their characters. Cervantes’s hero appears to be an impoverished *hidalgo* to provoke a more positive attitude of society towards him, even though he has lost his fortune: “Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance and ancient shield on a shelf and keeps a skinny nag and a greyhound for racing” (Cervantes 19). The peasant, finding a beaten Don Quixote on the road and realising that he had gone mad, did not abandon him to his will, but accompanied him home:

He managed to lift him from the ground and with a good deal of effort put him on his own donkey, because he thought it a steadier mount. He gathered up his arms, even the broken pieces of the lance, and tied them on Rocinante, and leading the horse by the reins and the jackass by the halter, he began to walk toward his village, very dispirited at hearing the nonsense that Don Quixote was saying. (42)

Rushdie's Mr. Ismail Smile (Quichotte) prided himself in his real life on the fact that "his name was the same as the name of the corporation whose representative he was. The family name. It lent him a certain gravitas, or so he believed" (Rushdie 5). He was a relative of wealthy R. K. Smile, M. D., "a successful entrepreneur, who, after seeing a production of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* on TV, had refused to fire his relative, fearing that to do so would hasten the old fellow's demise" (12). The status of a man close to a wealthy relative allows Quichotte to hold the position of a sales representative in a recognised company for some time.

The problems of humankind, as they are shown in both novels, are interesting to trace through the prism of quixotism. The authors choose idealistic heroes who, blinded by fictional ideals, in pursuit of a ghost, go in search of the unattainable, which leads to vain hopes and an unjustified and futile sacrifice, placed on the altar of their own life and happiness. It is these postulates that are invested in understanding "of quixotes as mad or deluded, as idealists or dreamers, as figures at odds with reason, but this is not the whole story of quixotism. Understanding the difference between the exceptionalism of quixotes and marginalized madness, delusion, or idealism is essential for understanding how the logic of exceptionalism operates to the advantage of quixotic figures" (Hanlon, *A World of Disorderly Notions* 13).

Idealism vs realism: old/new issues through the prism of quixotism

Madness in the air. At the beginning of the novels, the writers identify the primary source of the 'madness' of their main characters, that changes their worldview and pushes them to the impractical pursuit of ideals, lofty and romantic ideas, and extravagant acts of chivalry. In Cervantes's story,⁸ an enemy is a book:

In short, our gentleman became so caught up in reading that he spent his nights reading from dusk till dawn and his days reading from sunrise to

8 In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes "had sketched out the true nature of insanity long before any biologist had done so; with profound insight he had described how our emotions influence our perceptions" (Lepenies 40).

sunset, and so with too little sleep and too much reading his brains dried up, causing him to lose his mind. (Cervantes 21)

Quixote's obsession with books —chivalric romances— becomes “a sign of mental instability” (Shuger 43). For modern readers, this misfortune seems somewhat weird, but it needs to be considered that reading as entertainment in real life of that age was available only to the wealthy and prohibited for plebs. In Rushdie's novel, the hero's mental condition is caused by TV: “a traveling man of Indian origin, advancing years, and retreating mental powers, who, on account of his love for mindless television, had spent far too much of his life in the yellow light of tawdry motel rooms watching an excess of it, and had suffered a peculiar form of brain damage as a result” (Rushdie 3). That quite agrees with Girard's mimetic theory considering human desire a mimetic process where people imitate models who endow objects with value, so sometimes mimetic desire appears to be the core of man's mental activity: “Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others to make up his mind” (Girard 102).

Both characters find themselves in an ideal world built in their heads because of excessive consumption of entertainment content, making them victims “to that increasingly prevalent psychological disorder in which the boundary between truth and lies became smudged and indistinct” (4), and self-perception is “incapable of distinguishing one from the other, reality from ‘reality’” (4). Like the protagonists of novels, everyone likes to think that inside them lives a strong, admirable person. But, given the strong dependence of the individual on the public opinion, most tend to direct their fantasies of building the ideal world to a stable sense of reality, leaving *fighting windmills* to extraordinary individuals who do not care about the public reaction to their actions. Hence, the eccentricity of quixotes and their recalcitrant nature in the public sphere.

In fact, despite the authors' attempts to create a textbook madman, they seem to simultaneously push the reader to believe that the only sane and realistic characters in novels are the protagonists. Instead, too much passion for anything has a destructive effect, which leads to the inadequate perception of these humans by society. In their works, Cervantes and Rushdie explore the motives of their characters' behaviour by depicting incidents from real life, without hiding positive or negative traits. Their novels deal with taboo

topics —money, crimes and immoral acts. That is, the authors use one of the most important principles of realistic art— showing the literary hero in close connection with the environment.

Narratives of solitude: I need a 'Panza'. One of the real problems of humankind, that is crucial for any society and time, and which both novels deal with, is solitude. Failed attempts to find a partner in real life led to creating an ideal image that is far from the truth and endowing it with exaggerated positive features. The search for the beloved lady, which Cervantes's Don Quixote explains: "for the knight errant without a lady-love was a tree without leaves or fruit, a body without a soul" (Cervantes 23), which seems to us somewhat far-fetched by the character himself because it is difficult for a mentally unstable person to interpret his actions. The conformation of our conclusion can be found in Rushdie, who directly mentioned the illness of his character, Mr. Ismail Smile suffering a stroke, because of which "he fell victim to that increasingly prevalent psychological disorder in which the boundary between truth and lies became smudged and indistinct" (Rushdie 4). Thus, in the lives of the two 'knights' appear ghosts —the personification of their ideal love: "Dulcinea of Toboso whose name is based on the word a duke— 'sweet'" (Cervantes 24) and "the beautiful, witty, and adored Miss Salma R" (Rushdie 4).

In Rushdie's novel, we find more detailed explanation of the main character's illness: "He spoke slowly and moved slowly too, dragging his right leg a little when he walked —the lasting consequence of a dramatic Interior Event many years earlier, which had also damaged his memory" (Rushdie 5). With such a disease, a man needed permanent care, but "the truth was that he had almost no friends anymore. There was his wealthy cousin, employer, and patron, Dr. R. K. Smile, and there was Dr. Smile's wife, Happy, neither of whom he spent any time with" (9). Cervantes, on the other hand, did not mention Don Quixote's illness, but noted that "The truth is that when his mind was completely gone, he had the strangest thought any lunatic in the world ever had" (Cervantes 21). He was a lonely old man with only servants around him: "He had a housekeeper past forty, a niece not yet twenty, and a man-of-all-work who did everything from saddling the horse to pruning the trees" (19). Sometimes it seems that the heroes of the novels get some pleasure from their solitude because individuals experience solitude as a positive space rich in opportunity (Long et al. 582). But their mental state

requires care because this kind of loneliness is associated with detrimental solitude or self-isolation and has substantial implications for mental and physical health (Smith and Victor 1710). These realistic depictions of the existing conditions of the heroes are a realistic move by the authors to provoke their readers to develop empathy for the protagonists, conjoined with the mimetic effects of “uneducated” reading.

The desire to appear as a real ideal knight in front of the ideal beloved postponed the meeting of the heroes of both novels: “And so, having completed these preparations, he did not wish to wait any longer to put his thought into effect” (Cervantes 24) — “Therefore it would be necessary for him to prove himself worthy of her, and the provision of these proofs would henceforth be his only concern” (Rushdie 6).

To perform chivalric deeds Don Quixote needs a squire. His choice falls on “a farmer who was a neighbour of his, a good man —if that title can be given to someone who is poor— but without much in the way of brains” (Cervantes 55). Sancho Panza becomes more than a squire. It is to him that Don Quixote confides his thoughts and calls him a friend: “You must know, friend Sancho Panza...” (56). Later, the relationship between master and servant becomes so trusting that the former calls him *my son*: “Here, Sancho my son, help me to undress, for I wish to see if I am the knight foretold by the sage king” (252). Although, most likely, this appeal indicates Don Quixote’s real attitude to Panza as less experienced and intelligent. A lonely soul, misunderstood by others, is looking for a like-minded person who will support him in the most foolish deeds, even “in the fearful and never imagined adventure of the windmills, along with other events worthy of joyful remembrance” (58).

Cervantes’s characters live, as Don Quixote notes, “in an age as despicable as the one we live in now” (333), while Rushdie’s hero lives in “the Age of Anything-Can-Happen” (Rushdie 7). The latter tries to invent himself an ideal partner for heroic deeds, who materialises from his imagination: “The longed-for son, who looked to be about fifteen years old, materialized in the Cruze’s passenger seat” (17). It is this imaginary son who becomes everything to Quichotte:

My silly little Sancho, my big tall Sancho, my son, my sidekick, my squire!
Hutch to my Starsky, Spock to my Kirk, Scully to my Mulder, BJ to my

Hawkeye, Robin to my Batman! Peele to my Key, Stimp to my Ren, Niles to my Frazier, Arya to my Hound! Peggy to my Don, Jesse to my Walter, Tubbs to my Crockett. (19)

Rushdie exploits some precedent names throughout the novel which are “presented at both the linguistic and cognitive levels, accumulating the characteristics of a stereotype, prototype, metaphor, and intertext, jointly forming the concept of priority that defines a degree of cognitive perception” (Bezrukov and Bohovyk 210). Exploiting precedent names in *Quichotte* provides the reader with some features of the novel’s characters.

Sometimes the awareness of loneliness pushes to search for someone who is able, if not to help, then to sympathise with the grief:

If your misfortune were one that had all doors closed to any sort of consolation, I intended to help you weep and lament to the best of my ability, for it is still a consolation in affliction to find someone who mourns with you. (Cervantes 183)

Perhaps everyone dreams of the support shown by Panza to his master: “God knows I’d be happy if your grace complained when something hurt you” (60). And they are looking for someone who will put an end to their despair in search of their soul mate:

So perhaps he was a visitor from the future, the child of Quichotte’s forthcoming marriage to the great lady, and had traveled back through time and space to answer his father’s need for a son’s companionship, and end his long solitude. (Rushdie 19)

Life is arranged in a way that in pursuit of an ideal, overcoming loneliness, dependence arises, like those “unfortunate men who, against their wills, were being taken where they did not wish to go” (Cervantes 163). In Cervantes, we find the episode in which Don Quixote contemplates “approximately twelve men on foot, strung together by their necks, like beads on a great iron chain, and all of them wearing manacles” (163). The character, an idealistic dreamer, a man with noble intentions, cannot understand for whatever reason “for whatever reason, these people are being taken by force and

not of their own free will” (163). Among the slaves, there are real thieves, those convicted of petty crimes, and those wrongly convicted, but all suffer from cruel treatment equally. Without denying the criminal responsibility for the crimes committed, Don Quixote’s statement “to me it seems harsh to make slaves of those whom God and nature made free” (170). acquires a special sense. The ideal world of the character is collapsed by the reality of the existing order where dependence leads to internal suffering: “To be chained to another human being, like a possession. For this I know what’s the word. Slavery” (Rushdie 83).

To trust or not to trust? Throughout its existence, humankind has faced the betrayal of friends, the loved ones, relatives, or colleagues. This form of coexistence is constant and unchanging, ranging from marital fidelity to loyalty to one’s ideals, political beliefs, and country. In Cervantes’s novel, the reader learns the story of the distrustful husband Anselmo, who most of all wanted to test the virtues of his wife Camila, asking his friend Lotario to seduce her. As a result, the husband is punished for his mistrust: “In short the beauty and virtue of Camila, together with the opportunity that her ignorant husband had placed in his hands, overthrew Lotario’s loyalty, and without considering anything but what his longing moved him to do” (Cervantes 288). The wife could not resist the temptation and betrayed her husband with his best friend: “Camila surrendered; Camila surrendered, but is that any wonder if the friendship of Lotario could not remain standing?” (290). Adultery is one of the painful forms, but not the only one, and each is designed to inflict wounds that only time can heal: “Your father, the only half of a brother I’ve got, I hoped I could trust, but he betrayed that trust. And at the time that felt like an unforgivable thing” (Rushdie 258). Cervantes and Rushdie in no way act as moralists in their stories, which are real for any society and time.

The old/new problem of trust is also touched upon by the authors in connection with the relationship of Don Quixote and Quichotte with the Panzas, who are created by the writers as ideal companions, do not stand the test of trials and eventually appear to the reader as ordinary people with their shortcomings. The protagonists’ trust in both Panzas is based on the need to find a soul mate, and the latter successfully exploit this, as their loyalty is based on selfishness. Cervantes depicts Panza, who always has his interest in his relationship with Don Quixote, for example, he does not leave the

thought of Quixote's promise to make him a king: "I became king through one of those miracles your grace has mentioned, then Juana Gutierrez, my missus, would be queen, and my children would be princes" (Cervantes 57). Rushdie's Panza finds himself in an even more difficult situation because he cannot leave Quichotte, for fear that he might disappear, and Panza recognises this dependence: "Whatever you say,' Sancho shrugged. 'Right now, in my life, you're the one holding all the important cards'" (Rushdie 107). The endless search for those who can be trusted is one of the endless aspirations of humankind, reminiscent of fighting windmills because loyalty is not a virtue that can be counted on. Healthy egoism sometimes wins in existential situations and life circumstances.

From 'ladies of easy virtue' to 'maal' and unrequited love. In each society, always, there are prejudices against one or another caste. Some stereotypes dissipate or disappear, but the attitude toward women of easy virtue remains unchanged. Usually, they appear before the eyes of the viewer or reader as uneducated or spoiled, with bad manners. That is how we see 'ladies of easy virtue' in Cervantes's book: "when they heard themselves called maidens, something so alien to their profession, they could not control their laughter, which offended Don Quixote" (Cervantes 26). The respectful attitude is so unusual for "ladies" that it only makes them laugh: "The language, which the ladies did not understand... intensified their laughter" (27).

The characters, building phantasmagorical castles in their imaginations, faced reality, which is subject to the laws of society. Modern society tries to be tolerant, so prostitution in many cultures is no longer defined as an acute problem. Women are relatively free in their choice, but they get a "quality mark". Thus, in Rushdie's novel, we find the following characteristics: "A sexy girl was *maal*, literally 'the goods'. A girlfriend was *fanti*. A young, hot, but unfortunately married woman was a *chicken tikka*" (Rushdie 152). The choice of the word *the goods* to refer to the girls is perhaps the most transparent characteristic of the availability of girls, or at least that is how they appear to the reader. Modern society has recognised that trying to forbid prostitution is like fighting windmills because this issue existed long before it was recognised and remains relevant today.

The most severe suffering on the emotional level is experienced by those who feel pain from unrequited love or from the inability to be together with the object of their passion:

I was left with nothing, abandoned, it seemed to me, by all of heaven, the enemy of the earth that sustained me; air denied me breath for my sighs, water denied its humour for my eyes; only fire grew stronger so that my entire being burned with rage and jealousy. (Cervantes 224)

Cervantes tells the story of the tragic love of Grisóstomo, who fell in love and proposed to the beautiful Marcela, but she “finally disillusioned and disdained him for the last time, putting an end to the tragedy of his wretched life” (92). It is difficult to determine who ultimately becomes the victim in this situation, because it is the object of love who is subjected to *verbal* and *emotional abuse*:

Do you come [...] to see if with your presence blood spurts from the wounds of this wretched man whose life was taken by your cruelty? Or do you come to gloat over the cruelties of your nature...? Tell us quickly why you have come, or what it is you want most, for since I know that Grisostomo's thoughts never failed to obey you in life, I shall see to it that even though he is dead, those who called themselves his friends will obey you as well. (98)

Any justification, in this case, does not work on the accuser. This is due to the emotional perception of death and gives rise to philosophical reflections on the existence of ideal love: “If the amount of love in the universe is finite and unchanging, then it follows that as one searcher finds the love he seeks, another must lose his love; and that when one love dies *here* —and only when a love dies!— it becomes possible for another love to be born *there*” (Rushdie 98). Love inevitably leads to emotional losses and trying to avoid it is like fighting windmills.

Wounds that time can't heal. In this research, we distinguish three types of abuse: verbal, emotional, and physical. People face cruelty and violence constantly, regardless of time and place of residence. The Spanish hidalgo, who on the pages of the novel by Cervantes is depicted as a strange old man, seeks only to win the love of his imaginary beloved, but during the journey he meets people who deliberately want to harm the hero. Thus, for example, to emotional abuse, we refer to the situation when, in search of adventures, Don Quixote visited the inn: “The innkeeper [...] already had some inkling of his guest's madness... and to have something to laugh

about that night, he proposed to cheer him” (Cervantes 30). The act can be regarded as meanness and treachery, and therefore has nothing to do with humour, because “such a public insult might be processed differently and experienced more humiliating” (Otten et al. 182). Children neglected by their parents suffer from emotional abuse: “Feeling (quite rightly) like the less-loved child, she saw Brother (quite rightly) as the unjustly favored son, and her rage at her parents expanded like an exploding star to engulf her sibling as well” (Rushdie 34). The issue of children’s psychological suffering, whose parents are divorced, also finds a place in Rushdie’s novel. After Brother’s divorce from his Wife and her marriage to a Chinese-American husband, “Son was angry with both Brother and Ex-Wife and retreated from them both into his secret world” (214). The reluctance of parents to understand their children leads to the alienation of the latter when closely related people become strangers to each other: “And he [Son] didn’t want to come home or see his parents or be in touch with them” (214). The fictional ideal world of the main characters is destroyed every time by reality which is devoid of a romantic and ideal worldview.

Emotional abuse often leads to physical abuse, because the “victim” of ridicule appears in the eyes of the perpetrators as a defenceless puppy whom anyone can push. The innkeeper portrayed to his guests “the lunacy of his guest” (Cervantes 32), which prompted them to inflict even more insult on him:

The wounded men’s companions, seeing their friends on the ground, began to hurl stones at Don Quixote from a distance, and he did what he could to deflect them with his shield, not daring to move away from the trough and leave his armor unprotected. (33)

In Rushdie, the physical violence was suffered by Sancho, who for the first time experienced a whirlpool of negative emotions: “After you were badly beaten, the essential part of you that made you a human being could come loose from the world” (Rushdie 339). Created by the power of Quichotte’s imagination, the young man was in his “black-and-white life”, which contained the memories of his father but was far from the reality he knew in the American environment. Physical abuse is difficult to hide or not notice. As a rule, the cruelty is a response to the inflicted harm or

a demonstration of physical superiority over the “victim”. Often the role of the latter is assigned to a child, teenager, woman, or older person, that is, someone who is not able to fight back. In Cervantes’s novel, we find an episode of beating a boy:

And after he had taken a few steps into the wood, he saw a mare tied to an oak, and tied to another was a boy about fifteen years old, naked from the waist up, and it was he who was crying out, and not without cause, for with a leather strap a robust peasant was whipping him and accompanying each lash with a reprimand and a piece of advice. (Cervantes 36)

Following the adults, children also become ruthless and biased: “There are three crimes you can commit at an English boarding school. If you’re foreign, that’s one. Being clever is two. And being bad at sports, that’s three strikes, you’re out” (Rushdie 87). The reluctance to reach an understanding breeds hatred on both sides.

Verbal abuse is often used by characters to emphasise that their words or actions are incomprehensible to those who observe them: “It is not the responsibility of knights errant to discover whether the afflicted, the enchained and the oppressed whom they encounter on the road are reduced to these circumstances and suffer this distress for their vices, or for their virtues” (Cervantes 250). Sometimes verbal abuse is used against those who do not recognise the correctness of others’ actions “Do you think [...] base wretch, that you will always be able to treat me with disrespect, that it will always be a matter of your erring and my forgiving you?” (255)., or resort to condemnation: “You are mistaken, depraved villain, something you undoubtedly are since you dare speak ill of the incomparable Dulcinea” (55). People tend to form their opinions under the influence of the communication environment. When Dr. R. K. Smile lost his wealth and his enterprises lay in ruins, people of his origin claimed: “He was too greedy. He wanted to conquer the world. He told us this also, standing right in front of us, he confessed everything. But we were too stupid to see” (Rushdie 69). He was not supported but accused: “This was the level of the man’s audacity: he showed himself to us openly, but blinded us with his charm. So he rose high high. But he has fallen now” (71). Rushdie uses the contact repetition

of *high* to indicate the man's financial affairs. The sentence fragment is used to enhance content and capture the reader's attention as if falling out of rhythm. The writer uses this literary device to express and highlight the idea embedded in the sentence.

Gender inequality and racial discrimination. The issue of racism finds its place on the pages of both novels. The attitude to people with different skin colours, disdainful attitude to them as slaves, can be found in the reflections of good-natured Sancho, who imagines himself in a position very close to an emperor and "the only thing he regretted was the thought that the kingdom was in a country of blacks, and the people who would be given to him as vassals would all be blacks" (Cervantes 245). The perception of people as commodities to be exchanged for silver or gold is the price of human life and freedom: "I'll sell them all, large or small, it's all the same to me, and no matter how black they are, I'll turn them white and yellow" (245).

Rushdie does not look at racism on one side because it is easy to be accused of racism if you try to urge someone to abide by the law. Sister, who lives above the restaurant and tries to influence the owners to follow the established rules for doing business, goes to court but "when the lawsuit began, the restaurant owners accused her of racism" (Rushdie 235). She has been fighting racism all her life, but she is accused of racist views on social networks as "social media had no memory" (235). In the post-truth age, facts are not verified, and a gang of enraged persecutors, tarnish a woman's name, soon losing interest in her: "Overnight the troll army vanished, and the culture without memory, which all culture had become, instantly forgot how it had slandered an innocent woman, and moved on" (237).

The writer raises the problem of gender inequality when stereotyped thinking leads to women veiling their gender by pseudonyms: "Brother believed (without daring to compare his poor talent to their genius) that Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, George Eliot, and even J. K. Rowling (who preferred the gender-neutrality of J. K. to Jo) would have understood" (Rushdie 26). Society persistently makes boys and girls think about their difference which provokes realising their inequality. It was this attitude of the parents towards Sister and her Brother that created the female's attitude towards her male relative: "The feeling of coming second to her brother, who received privileges not offered to her" (56). Du Champ's sister, referred to by the narrator as Sister, lives in England where she is an MP, having been

the first non-white woman elected to Parliament, and “she would be only the second woman to be so chosen” (61). The problems she faced aspiring to a position were compared to climbing the highest mountain: “It was if she had ascended Everest alone and without oxygen” (61).

The issue of gender inequality has been raised for a long time, however, it remains relevant. This is especially true of societies with a patriarchal structure: “Sexual violence against South Asian women was present wherever and whenever women tried to establish independent lives and expand the zone of their personal freedoms” (256). Instead, Rushdie considers the basic idea of self-identification leaving women the way they choose. It is these ideas that Sister expresses: “I’m not fucking fighting to defend women’s right to wear the veil, the hijab, the niqab, whatever. [...] All these young women these days who describe the veil as a signifier of their identity” (285). The point is that the choice should not be imposed: “I tell them they are suffering from what that presently unfashionable philosopher Karl Marx would have called false consciousness. In most of the world, the veil is not a free choice. Women are forced into invisibility by men” (286).

Even more striking examples related to gender inequality are found in Cervantes:

Look, my friend: woman is an imperfect creature, and one should not lay down obstacles where she can stumble and fall; instead, one should remove them and clear all impediments from her path so that she may run easily and quickly to reach the perfection she lacks, which consists in being virtuous. (Cervantes 280)

It seems that Cervantes is obsessed with the desire to show that men and women should adhere to their traditional social roles. Besides, Don Quixote shows that women should have the right to choose their husbands, as long as they do not choose people who are below their social class. Despite the constant struggle against racism and gender inequality, the problem remains and sometimes resembles fighting windmills, which every time distances humankind from building an ideal society.

Conclusion

Quixote as an archetype carries a set of old/new issues, such as the conflict between the ideal and the real, the search for ways to change a life, the spiritual priorities of the individual, moral self-improvement, freedom of creative thought, etc. It is the archetypal nature of this character that took it beyond the lines of a literary piece and turned it into a cultural phenomenon, transforming the original characteristics while considering current circumstances. Quixote is an actualisation of various modifications of the archetype. Problematising this idea in the literary space of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Rushdie's *Quichotte* allows us to trace the changes in worldviews regarding the perception of different matters.

Both novels are full of social satire, but in terms of comprehension of existence, they rise to significant philosophical and psychological heights. What can ultimately save humans from darkness? Complex in form, and full of many characters, the novels are important because Cervantes's story defines and Rushdie's diagnoses correctly a society that rejects much of the past but seems to be still in search of new landmarks. The phenomenon of quixotism embodies a certain mode of behaviour and even a philosophy of life.

In the context of global challenges, a human with a quixotic worldview is not able to assess the situation, and therefore to respond adequately to the challenges of harsh reality. This type of thinking is typical of Cervantes's and Rushdie's ages, but the rapid change of historical and sociocultural landscapes causes irreversible transformations in society, which leads to the emergence of new ways to fight windmills, however, fails every time.

The ideal of universal significance, attributed to the past, and embodied in postmodern *Quichotte* is the result of powerful socio-cultural and historical shifts in the new millennium, the age of global change. In this context, the quixotic worldview becomes, on the one hand, the cause of the worldview crisis, and on the other hand, the key to finding new ways to solve it. The ideal of universal significance embodied in Rushdie's postmodern *Quichotte* perfectly fits into the conditions of the new millennium. This bifurcation of the quixotic type is caused by an attempt to implement a 'high' ideal into life, considering all relevant factors in their unity, providing the semantic

completeness of the image but leads to connotative changes in the very concept of quixotism.

Despite the radical changes that have taken place in the world since the age of Cervantes, the diachronically different stories —Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and Rushdie’s *Quichotte*— have convincingly confirmed a similarity of the strong questions raised about the societies whose ideals the heroes reflect. This consistency is manifested at the level of the deep processes that have affected world societies for centuries, and the approaches that have been developed to comprehend and adapt them to reality. At the same time, in both stories, the idea of social justice in its broadest sense becomes the prism through which the raised issues are refracted and analysed.

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