

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DON QUIXOTE

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The psychology of Don Quixote has two senses here. On the one hand it refers to psychology applied to Don Quixote, and on the other, to the psychology we can extract from him. The psychology applied here attempts to understand the personality of Don Quixote in accordance with the context in which he lives his life (his fictional life, of course), instead of projecting onto him psychological theories – current ones or those of his time –, as is usually the case in this kind of study. Naturally, the psychology applied also involves a theory, but with the peculiarity that its frame of reference is the constructive context itself, in this case of a character from literature (though it could equally be of a real person). The result is that Don Quixote is characterized by a mimetic melancholy and a literary madness – concepts that are also relevant to the melancholy and madness of people in real life. As for the psychology we extract from Don Quixote, it serves to illustrate the constructive principle of the person in real life. This principle, called indeed the Quixotic Principle, consists in a person's adoption of a new identity taken from literary models (or models of other types). The relationship between the new identity and the original person is analyzed in terms of the person/character dialectic. Given the generality of the Quixotic Principle, we show how everyday life is full of Quixotes (though few as courageous and worthy as Don Quixote).

Key words: Madness; melancholy; person/personality; Quixotic Principle.

La psicología del Quijote tiene aquí dos sentidos. Por un lado se refiere a la psicología aplicada al Quijote y, por otra, a la psicología sacada de él. La psicología aquí aplicada trata de comprender la personalidad de don Quijote de acuerdo con el contexto en el que se desenvuelve su vida (obviamente literaria), en vez de proyectar sobre él teorías psicológicas, actuales o de la época, como es usual hacer a este menester. Ciertamente, la psicología que se aplica no deja de ser también una teoría, pero con la particularidad de que su marco de referencia es el propio contexto constructivo, en este caso de un personaje literario (aunque podría ser igualmente de una persona real). El resultado es que don Quijote se caracteriza por una melancolía mimética y una locura literaria. Se ha de añadir que estos conceptos son relevantes a la melancolía y la locura de la gente en la vida real. Por su lado, la psicología sacada del Quijote sirve para dar cuenta del principio constructivo de la persona precisamente en la vida real. Este principio, no en vano denominado 'principio quijotesco', consiste en la adopción por parte de una persona de una nueva identidad tomada de modelos literarios (y de otro tipo). La relación entre la nueva identidad y la persona previa se analiza en términos de la dialéctica persona/personaje. Dada la generalidad del principio quijotesco, se hace ver que la vida corriente está llena de quijotes (aunque pocos con el valor de don Quijote).

Palabras clave: Locura; melancolía; persona/personalidad; principio quijotesco.

‘I know who I am’, said Don Quixote four centuries ago, but people can scarcely say the same now, in these confused times, and indeed Don Quixote himself might have echoed the sentiment (Cervantes, 1605-1615/2005). These words were spoken by Quixote at the dawn of the constitution of modern individualism, so that Don Quixote could figure in the history of psychology (Leahey, 2005). Indeed, as Leahey argues, Don Quixote could be considered “the first literary creation

in which the conscience, character and personality of the protagonist are explored in an artistic fashion” (p. 101). Moreover, we might even say that such psychological constituents are above all ‘literary creations’. In this sense, psychological literature, undoubtedly plural, would be ‘scientific recreations’. ‘Scientific literature’, as Sancho Panza might propose, extending the famous *baciyelmo* solution.

With this in mind, we would have to recognize without scientific affectation the literary condition of the psychological subject. This ‘literary condition’ refers, of course, not so much to ‘discourse’ as to the life ‘course’ itself –that is, this ‘literary condition’ is in the very unfolding of life, over and above the literary culture of each person. This implies the concept of ‘the invention

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of the human' which, according to Bloom (1998/2002), would be attributable to Shakespeare. Whatever the case, at the same time as Shakespeare, Cervantes would be establishing the Western canon (Bloom, 1994/1995), both of literature and of life. "We are, many of us, Cervantine figures," says Bloom (2000), "mixed blends of the Quixotic and the Panzaesque situated in the even broader dimensions with which Shakespeare reinvented the human" (p. 158). Consequently, academic psychology would do itself no favours by remaining stuck in its own literature. Those who find it difficult today to say 'I know who I am' do not refute the canon of Don Quixote; rather, Don Quixote reveals the difficulties encountered by the modern self and the possibilities of new opportunities that still remain, assuming that all is not already lost.

The ambiguity of the title to this work serves for a consideration of psychology both applied to Don Quixote and extracted from it, though it should certainly be seen more as a psychological essay than as a study of Cervantes.

PSYCHOLOGY APPLIED TO DON QUIXOTE

Psychological themes in Don Quixote

Of the wide spectrum of themes of psychological interest in Cervantes' novel, the present work will have to concentrate on just one. Among the candidates are the following: existence and appearance (or reality and fiction), idealism and realism (or utopia and counter-utopia), perspectivism (proto-Orteguian), Bakhtian polyphony, love (courtly, unbridled, matrimonial), the meanings of the cave of Montesinos, the construction of desire in *El curioso impertinente*, the worldly wisdom of Sancho, the wise counsel of Don Quixote to Sancho the governor, the priest as psychologist providing solutions to conflictive situations, and indeed, the psychodrama not just of certain passages, but of the plot itself, consisting in the attempt to save Don Quixote from his madness through someone pretending to be a knight-errant who defeats him (a scheme actually plotted by the priest).

For its part, Ramón y Cajal's (1905/1954) psychology of Don Quixote stresses Quixotism (and its necessity both in science and in other enterprises), that of Madariaga (1926/1976) highlights above all the mutual influence of Don Quixote and Sancho, while that of Peña and Lillo (1993) concentrates on the madness, attempting to analyze it according to clinical conceptions and, at the same time pointing out that it is beyond the reach of any kind of clinical analysis, so that mad-

ness becomes the quality (divine, according to Plato) that rescues man from vulgar good sense.

Thus, of the variety of possible themes, the present work will restrict itself to just one, specifically, that of the 'personality' of Don Quixote, which has indeed been given widespread consideration elsewhere.

Various interpretations

The analysis of Don Quixote's personality, like that of any person or character, is open to all kinds of psychological interpretation. In fact, the most common are psychoanalytical interpretations. Thus, authors have asked whether Don Quixote felt repressed lasciviousness towards his niece (Johnson, 1983), or whether he was suffering from involuntional psychosis due to an oedipal conflict (Bea & Hernández, 1984), and have even speculated on paranoid psychosis brought on by *foreclosure* of the Name-of-the-Father (Sullivan, 1998). None of this appears in the text, or forms part of its diegesis. In any case, this shows, as Bloom (1994/1995) points out, "the extremes of desperation to which Cervantes has led his scholars" (p. 145).

Other interpretations attempt to understand the personality of Don Quixote in accordance with the 'scientific psychology' of the time. In this regard, authors often refer to the *Examen de ingenios* (Exam of the Talents for Sciences, 1575), by Huarte de San Juan (1989), showing that Don Quixote's temperament can be categorized as choleric, despite the fact that over time it evolves into a melancholic one due to harsh circumstances (see Halka, 1981). Commentators also turn to Luis Vives' (1948) *Tratado del alma* (Treatise of the Soul, 1538), indicating in this case which function is damaged in the knight. As the reader will recall, Vives adopts the metaphor of nutrition (equivalent today to that of information processing) to explain the functions of the soul. Thus, there would be a receptor function (imagination), a storage function (memory), a production function (fantasy), and finally a distributive function (evaluation or judgement) (*De anima*, X, p. 1170). Among these, it is then a question of skill to identify which of Don Quixote's functions is supposedly damaged. This is all very well, except that it actually has little to do with the personality of Don Quixote.

Finally, other interpretations situate the personality of Don Quixote in 'folk psychology', in this case as classic Spanish mythology (Varela Olea, 2003). Likewise, Unamuno (1905/1987) declared Quixotism as the religion of Spain, and even proposed a crusade to "rescue the tomb of the knight of Madness from the power of the

noblemen of Reason” (p. 9). Ortega y Gasset (1914/2004) initiates the thread of his philosophy with his ‘Meditations on *Quixote*’, and, insofar as it is relevant here, what emerges is a Latin (as opposed to Nordic) philosophy, that of “vital reason” (*raciovitalista*), in which life is project, and not, for example, being-towards-death. Maeztu (1926/2004) sees in Don Quixote Cervantes himself, trying to deal with an exhausted life and an exhausted era. Madariaga (1926/1976) sees in Cervantes’ knight the European spirit of action, but when he attempts to conceive a folk psychology, comparing the English, the French and the Spanish (Madariaga, 1929/1980), Don Quixote specifically represents for him the Spanish *egotism*, “living his life like a novel” in an effort to “ensure the spontaneity and integrity of individual passion against the pressure of social activity” (subordinating society to the individual) and to “follow the law of the person” (honour as passion) (p. 89). All of this has more to do with the meaning of the novel.

At all events, the psychology applied here pertains to the cultural context in which the story develops and its literary construction. The cultural context immediately situates us in the melancholy of Cervantes and of his times, while the literary construction leads us to consider the theory of the novel and the author himself. It is precisely the book’s ingenious literary construction that permits us to analyze its characters as subjects leading their own lives.

Melancholy and madness of Don Quixote

Mimetic melancholy

As regards melancholy it can be said, without further ado, that Don Quixote was conceived out of melancholy and for melancholy (García Gilbert, 1997). It was conceived out of Cervantes’ melancholy, according to the existential dialectic of Cervantes-Don Quixote (Arbizu, 1984). As Cervantes writes in the Prologue, many times he tried to write it and many times he left off, thinking about what he would say, “with the paper in front of me, the quill behind me ear, my elbow on the desk and my hand on my cheek” –a pose highly symbolic of melancholy. On catching him like this one day, a friend asked him the reason for his “imaginative” state. Cervantes offered him a selection: what the masses would say after so many years in the “silence of oblivion” (it was indeed twenty since he had published a book), the weight of the years (nearly seventy) on his shoulders, not to mention a series of literary shortcomings he attributed to himself. On the other hand, the author reveals in the Prologue

that the primary purpose of the work is “for the melancholy reader to shake with laughter”. Indeed, in his defence of books about knights-errant, Don Quixote recommends us to “read these books and you will see how they will banish any melancholy you may feel and raise your spirits should they be depressed” (I, 50).

The melancholy of Cervantes is more a question of ‘the soul of Spain in the Golden Age’ (Bartra, 2001) than of a supposed bodily constitution or cognitive dysfunction. Don Quixote himself describes Spain in the time of Cervantes “this world is all machinations and schemes at cross purposes one with the other” (II, 29). Indeed, “encountered temptations push in the society of Quixote’s period in opposite directions, a society marked by the grand enterprise of putting discipline into beliefs and behaviours at the same time as by the ever more numerous spaces of liberty it affords; by the fascination brought about by the traditional models and by the questioning of them; by the reassertion of a strong society and by the constant formulation of doubts that pertain to it” (Vincent, 2004, pp. 306-7).

Melancholy seems to be in everyone and everything (and not just in Cervantes). Thus, ‘sad and melancholy’ went a poor galley slave in chains (I, 22), ‘melancholy’ was the princess Micomicona (I, 29), Rocinante himself appeared ‘melancholy and dejected’ (I, 43), ‘melancholy’ are some governments (II, 13), the Guadiana ‘wherever it goes, shows its sadness and melancholy’ (II, 23), the sound of music is sometimes ‘extremely sad and melancholy’ (II, 36), while omens pour forth ‘melancholy from the heart’ (II, 58). As far as Don Quixote is concerned, we should not forget that he is the Knight of the Sad Countenance, as dubbed by Sancho (I, 19).

What is important to bear in mind is that this image of the Knight of the Sad Countenance follows models already given (Riquer, 2003, p. 157), and in any case forms part of the canon of melancholy as constructed by the Baroque (Bartra, 2001). Indeed, this consideration of melancholy as a cultural category (Bartra, 2001) is central to the approach taken here. In this perspective, humoural explanations would form part of the cultural elaboration of melancholy, rather than being its supposed cause. This in no way implies that the melancholy is gratuitous (without cause), nor that it is not a *real* fact (quite another thing is how it has *become* real in each era).

The cause (material cause or raw material) of melancholy could be said to reside in sadness due to the circumstances of life (not lacking in either Cervantes’ or Don Quixote’s case). The point is that this initial sadness takes the form of melancholy, in accordance with social

learning that shapes “being-sad”, and with all the cultural stylization of the time (the canon of melancholy). Thus, Cervantes, on writing the Prologue, is sad according to a particular iconography of melancholy, while the sadness of Don Quixote reflects the image of the Sad Countenance. This consideration in the Aristotelian terms of material/form avoids the distinction (certainly problematic) between two melancholies (one real and the other invented) demanded in the study by Bartra (2001). Furthermore, the material/form perspective permits us to perceive the aesthetic nature of melancholy, in terms of both its effect on others (Cervantes appeared melancholy to his friend, and Don Quixote presented a sad countenance to Sancho) and of one’s own affect (feeling melancholy involves a pose as well as an attitude).

It is precisely this aesthetic nature that allows the construction of a style or, as we shall see later, a character. For the time being it suffices to say that the melancholy corresponds to aesthetics, and thus to artifice –which does not mean, of course, that it is not a real experience, only that there is no experience without aesthetics (regardless of culture), nor subjective reality that is not constructed (even though it be by the name it is given).

In the case of Don Quixote, this style or form adopted by his melancholy is taken chiefly from Amadis de Gaule, his model. It is, then, a mimetic melancholy, where the mimesis should be understood not as mere imitation, as the term is usually interpreted, but rather as the very condition through which the experience of life is constituted (Gomá Lanzón, 2003). The experience of life, and particularly, in what concerns us here, the experience of desire, does not spring from some supposed self-originating source (as we are frequently led to believe by romantic novels), but is taken from the desire of others, desiring what is desired by others. The novel intercalated in Don Quixote (I, 33-35), *El curioso impertinente*, is a paradigmatic construction of this process which, moreover, functions as an analogy of the main action. Hence, bad novels make us believe that desire is felt spontaneously, which would be a ‘romantic lie’, whilst good ones show the model of imitation, which would be the ‘novelesque truth’, as termed in Girard’s (1961/1985) seminal work in the field.

In order to distinguish mere imitation from “authentic” imitation, we might compare Lope de Vega’s *Comedia del príncipe melancólico*, written between 1588 and 1595, with the melancholy of Don Quixote, as Bartra (2001) does. The conclusion is that while Lope’s comedy goes no further than continual pretence, the imitation

of Don Quixote constitutes a character that is all of a piece, with the seams of the pretence invisible. In this sense, the melancholy of Don Quixote, while not a comedy, is nevertheless artificial, though artificial here involves real construction, *poiesis*, poetry (in this case the poetry of identity).

Consequently, mimetic melancholy, while it may involve imitation, is all the same a true melancholy. On this view, mimetic melancholy would be not a type of melancholy, but indeed the prototype of all melancholy, since melancholy would be a learned experience (as all experiences are learned). The difference is in the fact that bad novels, like bad clinical manuals, would have us believe that melancholy is a natural experience (as though it came directly from humours or neurons). But melancholy does not emerge as teeth do. First of all, because it requires a culture that includes it as a model (Bartra, 2001). Who would be melancholic if they did not know that melancholy existed?

Literary madness

But melancholy in itself does not mean madness, and Don Quixote was mad. So, what is the solution? In order to understand this madness we need to consider the literary construction of the book, that is, Cervantes’ theory of the novel (Riley, 1986/2000). Two highly interesting questions for our purposes arise from this theory: on the one hand, that of the relationship between fiction and reality, and on the other, the question, already referred to above, of imitation.

The relationship between fiction and reality raises the specific question of how Don Quixote comes to confuse the fiction of novels of chivalry with historical reality, to the extent of making himself “a knight-errant, roaming the world over in full armour and on horseback in quest of adventures, and putting in practice himself all that he had read of as being the usual practices of knights-errant” (I, 1). The novel gives no more explanation than “what with little sleep and much reading, his brains got so dry that he lost his wits” (I, 1), which is undoubtedly in line with the treatises of the period. Naturally, the novel needs no further explanation, and in what concerns us here the necessary explanation can come only from the novel itself.

In order to understand the confusion of fiction and reality we have to take into account imitation – a precept, indeed, of the aesthetic of the period, based on Aristotle’s *Poetics*. In the case of Don Quixote it was the imitation of chivalric heroes, but it could also be an aesthetic imitation of nature, a metaphysical imitation of

ideas or a rhetorical one of the ancient mode of expression (Gomá Lanzón, 2003, pp. 152-3). That of Don Quixote is, more specifically, an imitation of life taking as models fictional characters (which he believed to be real). It is of little matter in this context whether the model comes from fiction or from history. *Hamlet* is probably more influential than the majority of real English people, while the model of Alexander the Great owes more to literary invention than to historical record. And what can we say of the imitation of Christ? Was not Ignatius Loyola, according to Unamuno, 'a knight-errant in Christ'? Is it not so that one only really loves the idea of love that one has? –as St Augustine would say and Botton (1994/1996) recalls; and after all, in the words of La Rochefoucauld, who could fall in love if they had never heard of love?

Where Don Quixote goes too far is in taking such fabulous models and trying to imitate them literally. And he tried to do so, moreover, in an artistic way, leading his life like a novel. Even so, in living his life like a work of art, Don Quixote is doing no more than following the aesthetic precepts of the times. In this regard, we need look no further than Castiglione's (1984) *Book of the Courtier* (1528), which deals precisely with leading one's life as a work of art, and whose equivalent today would be a handbook of 'social skills'. In this regard, what Don Quixote follows is in fact none other than a secular 'way of perfection', as in "the narrow path of knight-errantry" (II, 32).

Life as a work of art involves the protagonist being the free architect of him or herself (Avalle-Arce, 1976), which would be the destiny of the novel and of the modern individual (Weiger, 1979). Apart from other highly important implications of this freedom of character (among them the fact of an apparent independence from the author) is that of the Quixotic freedom to go mad (not to feign madness). For the madness of Don Quixote is real while at the same time having much of the artificial. It has something of a game (Torrente Ballester, 1984), despite the protestations of Peña and Lillo (1993). This game in Don Quixote should be understood within the 'game of the world', which "Cervantes appears to take seriously and ironically at the same time" (Bloom, 1994/1995, p. 157). Moreover, the world as theatre is the classic device of Cervantes' novel and, it goes without saying, of the Baroque.

How can we characterize the madness of Don Quixote? It is certainly outside the reach of any clinical analysis, as Peña and Lillo (1993) have shown. Indeed, such analyses are somewhat ridiculous. Don Quixote's mad-

ness cannot be dissociated from the belief in what books say. His is a case in which mimesis (confusing fiction with reality) is taken to extremes, but a certain mimesis occurs even in those reading the novel today, insofar as they become involved in their reading. Everyone who knows how to read, or even just to listen, will believe in fictions, even if it be because what is said is not always said from reality (if indeed reality is not what people say, which would already situate us in some degree of Quixotic madness). Almost all the characters in Don Quixote are readers of chivalric novels, and to a greater or lesser degree do accept as real some sort of fiction. Sancho himself, who has not read a book in his life, ends up becoming Quixotized. This influence of literature and, indeed, of language (after all, language speaks to us, as Heidegger would say), is a human condition, as is also perhaps a certain element of madness.

In fact, while all the characters in the novel may say that Don Quixote is mad, few are free of some degree of madness, and those who are free of it are guilty of a vulgar sensitivity. Who sets the tone for normality? Sancho? Sancho, apart from becoming Quixotized, is himself a carnivalesque figure. As for the priest, the barber and the bachelor, though reasonable men, they trust more in fiction to save Don Quixote than in sound reason. Of the innkeepers, Juan Palomeque believes in novels of chivalry (I, 16). What can we say of the Duke and Duchess, who live by appearances (II, 30)? And that would leave the housekeeper, the niece and the odd innkeeper and muleteer. Because the Knight of the Green Coat, Diego de Miranda, who is supposed to be Don Quixote's counterpart, represents the anodyne midpoint in everything. As Riley (1986/2000) says, "The Knight of the Green Coat indeed emerges as an early example of the *bon bourgeois*, somewhat philistine [...] satisfied with his Erasmist moderation and complacent Epicureanism" (p. 179). He is attentive on receiving Don Quixote and Sancho in his *chalet* but, in the end, the Mirandas would be the type who, according to Unamuno 'understand everything' and who, in truth, understand nothing, and whom Don Quixote himself would identify as common people, despite their having dozens of books.

On the other hand, nothing prevents Don Quixote from seeing Cardenio as an 'unhappy madman' (I, 23). Don Quixote himself seems to have different levels of madness (McCurdy & Rodríguez, 1978). Thus, for example, in the Sierra Morena he decides to imitate 'melancholy' acts of folly, like those of Amadis, rather than 'furious' ones, like those of Roldán (I, 25). But Don Quixote is

also capable of displaying the greatest good sense, outside of his mania. As it was said, his madness is that of ‘a madman full of streaks, full of lucid intervals’ (II, 18).

What characterizes Don Quixote’s madness is the fact of his going mad without cause, without trauma (‘what lady hath scorned you?’ is the reproach from Sancho, II, 25). “There’s the point — replies Don Quixote — [...] to act foolishly without good reason” (I, 24). We should understand this to mean, of course, without any other cause or reason than believing in what he had read, taking fiction as a model for life, and thus living life as a work of art (Avalle-Arce, 1976). Hence, Don Quixote’s alternating madness (“full of streaks”) can be characterized, or perhaps cannot be better characterized otherwise, as literary madness (Martínez Torrón, 1998). Naturally, literary madness implies believing in everything one reads and hears (and sees on the screen), and is even more complete if one turns it into a way of life. It may be that Cervantes exaggerated the figure of Don Quixote, both to ‘shake the reader with laughter’ and as an ironic counter-model of the ineffectiveness and anachronism of the values prevailing in Spain at the time (Martínez Torrón, 1998). Clearly, Don Quixote is more than a simple parody of chivalric novels, as we would have children believe

PSYCHOLOGY EXTRACTED FROM DON QUIXOTE

The Quixotic Principle

The psychology that emerges from Don Quixote already has a name. We refer to the so-called *Quixotic Principle*, introduced into psychology by Sarbin (1982), after Levin (1970/1973). Basically, the ‘Quixotic Principle’ concerns the adoption of an identity in accordance with literary characters. Even though the paradigm of Don Quixote is developed on the plane of literary fiction, the principle functions with both fictional (literary or otherwise) or historical characters (be they heroic figures or ordinary models) and with precepts that shape behaviour (such as being a good Christian or a *metrosexual*), and even in relation to the information by which one organizes one’s life (scientifically, technologically, as a Buddhist, and so on). We might add that not even science (or more appropriately here, psychology) is exempt from the Quixotic Principle, insofar as ‘format of the editors’ formats not just the style, but indeed scientific thinking and activity themselves (Fierro, 2004). What is brought into play here is a way of life following a narrative or project or the influence of significant others (Alonso García & Román Sánchez, 2005). Likewise, we

can speak of the construction or ‘poetics of identity’ (Sarbin, 1997), and even of ‘personality as a work of art’ (Pérez-Álvarez & García-Montes, 2004).

As regards the personality as a work of art, we should not harbour aesthetic prejudices. We can consider just as much a work of art the personality projected by a punk as that projected by a dandy, that of a “chav” as that of a person with style, that of a “Hooray-Henry” as that of a “right-on guy”, or that of those who adopt a ‘neurotic style’ as a way of life as that of those who play the victim (widespread in today’s society). Moreover, whatever the eventual result, the final “work” involves its ethic, so that we are talking not about mere superficial posturing, but indeed about a genuine attitude towards life.

The Quixotic Principle is contained in the narrative as a root-metaphor for psychology (Sarbin, 1986) and, specifically, for contextualism as a conceptual framework of psychology (Sarbin, 1993). In any case, the narrative does not refer here to life as discourse, but rather to life as action or as continuous current of behaviours (drama). Hence, drama is actually the most appropriate image of this conception (Scheibe, 2000). The point is that life unfolds through action, with the contingencies that arise. Contingency and drama could be the terms of psychology according to contextualism, constructionism or behaviourism (Pérez-Álvarez, 2004a), depending on the preferred narrative.

The dramatic construction of the person

The person/character dialectic

The Quixotic Principle provides, in the development of the literary character (in the novel), the actual constructive principle of the person in life. And this, for a start, raises two problems. One, within the novel, consists in the conjugation of the (fictitious) character with the person, also fictitious, but representing a greater reality (suggesting that fiction is also constructed with realities). The other problem, between the novel and life, consists in the legitimacy of taking literary principles as valid principles for life (suggesting that life is also constructed with fictions). This second problem can be solved, through Aristotle, by considering that the novel already incorporates life (mimesis) and contains more truth than history itself. After all, history gives an account of what happened in a real case, and the novel tells of what could be, without limiting itself to a particular case.

However, what most concerns us here is the first problem, that of the conjugation of the character with the person in the novel, even if the eventual interest lies in per-

ceiving the constructive principle of the person in life. Given that we have to concern ourselves with Don Quixote, what we start out with is the nobleman Alonso Quijano, the origin of whose name we know little, not to mention his life. We can speculate about the nature of a nobleman at the time, and about the identity of Alonso Quijano in particular. It suffices to recall that 'what with little sleep and much reading' of chivalric novels, he got the idea of making himself a knight-errant, dubbing himself Don Quixote de La Mancha, in an act of conversion perhaps not quite so spectacular but no less decisive than that of Saul of Tarsus into Paul (later St Paul). Thus, Don Quixote becomes the character and Alonso Quijano the original person (a nobleman who launches himself as a knight-errant). Although both are literary characters, Don Quixote is more literary, not only because he is steeped in literature, but also because he is in fact fictitious (feigned) with respect to Alonso Quijano, who is closer to historical reality. In any case, person and character are both *him*, even if they are not both *the same thing*. Such duality constitutes real persons (Pérez-Álvarez, 2004b), even though their constructive basis may appear entirely literary (the paradigm for which is indeed Don Quixote). In this regard, it is important to perceive the person/character dialectic between Alonso Quijano and Don Quixote.

The person (Alonso Quijano) takes on a character (Don Quixote) and the character reworks the person. As Don Quixote would say, each is the child of his works. This complex dialectic can be described, however, according to a three-stage process consisting of feigning, pretending and forging (Pérez-Álvarez & García-Montes, 2004).

Feigning, pretending and forging

The comfortably settled nobleman Alonso Quijano begins by *feigning* the person he wants to be. He thus gives himself a new name and dons the armour that invests him as the knight-errant Don Quixote. He takes on a beloved as befits him ('a knight without a lady is like a tree without leaves'), and duly sets out as would an authentic knight. His feigning is serious enough to lead the people he comes across to follow his game, with greater or lesser seriousness (in the case of Sancho, with total seriousness). It should be pointed out in this regard that the Knight of the Mirrors (II, 12-15), for failing to take Don Quixote sufficiently seriously, is defeated by him, when his intention was to defeat him with the condition that, on being at the mercy of the victor, 'he would return to his village and his house', renouncing his mad-

ness (such was the 'therapeutic' strategy plotted by the priest, the barber and the bachelor). But it so happens that Don Quixote triumphs and continues his adventures, until, with the same strategy taken more seriously, he is finally vanquished by the Knight of the White Moon, in reality the bachelor, who had already made a previous attempt (II, 64-65).

Given this complementing of roles that Don Quixote generates in others, we might say that his feigning comes to involve *pretending*, that is, 'pretending to be', in this case, a knight, acknowledged more or less seriously by others. It is worth pointing out in this regard that as the story progresses, Don Quixote is more deceived by others than by his own madness. We should not forget that all the people in the second part of the book had read or heard tell of the first part, so that they already know his story. And real life is indeed far from immune to the deceit referred to here. Deceit is inherent to social functioning –both in the culture of the Baroque (Maravall, 1975) and in courtly society (Elias, 1969/1982), not to mention in the bourgeois society of today, with all its forms of politeness (Berger, 1967/1990). In truth, whether we use the term deceit, politeness or political correctness is merely a question of style.

Whatever the case, this feigning and pretence in Don Quixote do not cancel out the original person of Alonso Quijano, whom if anything they transform, as I shall argue. First of all, it should be borne in mind that Alonso Quijano remains present. Thus, the retreats into the woods that Don Quixote makes from time to time (for example, I, 28; II, 9) could be seen as a retreat from the public character to the person alone with themselves, which occurs when a failure casts doubt upon the effort invested in an enterprise. In this regard we might recall the numerous characters that Don Quixote himself finds hidden away in the woods (Cardenio, Marcela), seeking refuge in their own person after a disappointment. But the main appearance of Alonso Quijano occurs in 'the great adventure of the cave of Montesinos' (II, 23). In truth, more than an appearance, it would be a descent by Don Quixote to the principle of reality. In this sense, we could say that the cave of Montesinos, among others possible interpretations, is also, and even above all, an allegory of the descent of the character to the person of origin. Thus, Don Quixote recovers somewhat the proportion between the ideal that guides his life and the modern world that imposes its reality. Although Don Quixote continues on his way, there begins a metamorphosis of the character which heralds the reappearance of Alonso Quijano. Consequently,

putting the character into practice does not cancel out the original person. Indeed, we might say that the person, in this case Alonso Quijano, is the condition of possibility of the character, and hence, its limits.

However, the ups and downs of the character do not leave the person unaffected. The feigning and pretence lead to the *forging* of a change that transforms the person in such a way that nothing is any longer like before. Although, in the end, Don Quixote loses the wager of his life, he will not turn back into the same Alonso Quijano. Don Quixote is vanquished by the arms of others, but remains as the ‘winner of himself’ (Romo Feito, 1994), on assuming the responsibility for his defeat and keeping his word, for, as he says, “though I lost my honour, I did not lose, nor can I lose, the virtue of keeping my word” (II, 56). A promise that means dying, as a final heroic act. Alonso Quijano dies through what remains in him of Don Quixote. He does not die as a poor nobleman, but as a defeated knight. In reality, he lets himself die at the hand of melancholy, and his death is thus a thoroughly positive act. If his character were not forged by the efforts of the knight, he would remain at home looking after his *hacienda*, as his housekeeper wanted him to, or he would become the shepherd Quixotize, as Sancho would have wished. But recovering his sanity involves surrendering to melancholy and, in practice, to death: “Sirs, not so fast, in last year’s nests there are no birds this year” (II, 64).

The dramatic task of the person

The dialectic outlined above highlights the dual aspect of the person – person/character, as stable and, at the same time, changeable personality. This duality manifests itself in many forms: I/me or transcendental/empirical, for example (to which Spaniards could add the *ser/estar* dichotomy). In any case, the very notion of person already involves this dual aspect: that which is due to others according to the way we are recognized, and that which is due to ourselves according to whom we know we are. In a society with such a plurality of contexts as today’s, multiple are the persons contained in each of us, as Whitman and Pessoa would say, and this may be the reason why it is more difficult to know who one is. Strictly speaking, we would be as many persons as the number of people we know. It is not a question here of deceiving others (which, of course, could be the case), but rather of the multi-faceted performance learned according to the context. It may involve self-deception, when one believes in the role one chooses or is forced to choose, and even more so when the evidence

of the decision is erased. In this regard, Don Quixote was not trying to fool anyone, even though he may have fooled himself, depending on the firmness of his feigning. Don Quixote was a product of others, and at the same time knew who he was.

This tension between being what one is and being something else in the eyes of others (different for each “other”), then, would characterize the dramatic task of the person. Formulated in somewhat paradoxical terms, the task would be to *try to be what one appears to be* and, at the same time, to *try to become what one is*. Although the task of becoming what one is complements that of being what one appears to be, the truth is that the complement is not a harmonious one; rather, it is paradoxical and even tragic, because *trying to become what one is* is at once obligatory and impossible. It is obligatory if one has any degree of self-respect to avoid being “just anything”, and it is impossible because there is no such being-oneself free of social conditioning factors (Pérez-Álvarez & García-Montes, 2004). In the end, the tragedy of the person is to be nothing but a character (Pirandello, 1911/2000). But ceasing to be a character can be as difficult as taking off the knight’s rusty armour (Fisher, 1990) and giving up our belief in fairytales (Grad, 1995).

Quixotes of everyday life

The term “Quixote” basically refers to an idealist who acts disinterestedly in pursuit of causes s/he considers just (and fails). ‘Quixotes 400 years later against all injustice’ (Magazine, 2004) is an article that refers, specifically, to twelve people from different fields (justice, medicine, science terrorism, abuse, etc.) who embody ‘marvellous madness in this age of steel’ (Trapiello, 2004). For, one must have something of the Quixotic to seek solutions for the ‘detestable times in which we live’.

However, it is not my intention to dwell on this commonplace of the heroic Quixote, but rather to mention –if nothing more than in passing– the Quixotic Principle as a general principle of the modern individual. As pointed out elsewhere, the Quixotic Principle functions in various ways. Where formerly it was novels of chivalry that provided the models, it can be romantic novels, instead of literature it can be cinema and television, or even scientific literature (information), and so, as architects of themselves, individuals can make of their personality a work of art, whatever the final result and the art employed.

While Cervantes’ novel has a male protagonist, it does

not mean we must reject the possibility of a corresponding female figure. And we need look no further than the book itself, where Marcela (I, 14) represents the woman who decides things for herself. Indeed, the female Quixote would become a literary figure, comparable to that of Don Quixote himself. In this regard, without being either the first or the last, the most obvious example is *The Female Quixote* (1752), by Charlotte Lennox (2004). Its main character, Arabella, from so much reading of romantic novels, begins to confuse fiction with reality, believing that all men are in love with her. Like Don Quixote, it is a satire, in this case of romantic novels, but it nevertheless highlights the role of literature (fiction) in women, which forms part of an authentic revolution in reading (Wittmann, 1997/1998).

But the female Quixote *par excellence* would be Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), to the extent that the Quixotic Principle is also known as 'Bovarium'. The peculiarity of Flaubert's novel is that it shows, with Cervantine irony, the Quixotic Principle in relation to the influence, this time, of a popular form of literature (romantic novels) on the practical organization of an everyday life (a young woman disappointed with her marriage). The point is that 'Emma Bovary', a case taken from the real world, ends up overcome by the plans she herself had believed in and created, conceiving for herself a character that the actual person could not cope with.

If, as Voltaire argued, metaphysical systems are to philosophers what romantic novels are to women (quoted in Levin, 1970/1973), this would open up another field for the Quixotic Principle (not now limited to literature). Metaphysics and, in general, great narratives, would constitute another type of chivalric novel. But of course, metaphysics, including religion, is not what it was, so that instead of believing in one great narrative one believes in many (which complicates the Quixotic Principle). In general, Chesterton was right in saying that when we stop believing in God we start believing in just any old thing. The modern era has been rightly dubbed the Chaotic Age (Bloom, 1994/1995), with no canon other than the latest information. Indeed, the constant stream of new information gives rise to a new Quixotic figure, the 'informed subject'. In order to speak judiciously, one needs to situate the information in relation to knowledge and wisdom. In this context, the typical 'informed subject' would be a type of idiot, without real knowledge (their curiosity and thirst for knowledge is no more than touristic) or wisdom (given the loss of the common sense that in the past was learned in the

practical course of life). Informed-idiots manage their life in accordance with the information that reaches them. In fact, this figure received its Quixotic unmasking over a century ago in Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881).

The diversity of identities and styles current today gives rise to a multitude of Quixotic figures, and one could even say of personalities as works of art. Important in this regard is the so-called 'subculture', in which a decisive factor is 'the meaning of style' (Hebdige, 2002/2004). As already stated, the *punk* style is just as much a work of art as that of the *dandy* (or in today's jargon, the *metrosexual*). For its part, adolescence, with its 'myths, representations and stereotypes' (Domínguez, 2004), would constitute another altarpiece of Quixotic figures, with unparalleled highs and lows. The woman of today, insofar as she is the 'free creator of herself' (Gil Calvo, 2000, p. 190), would offer a new version of the female Quixote, or indeed not so new, if we recall Marcela. If the desire for fame is to be considered a life quest (Riley, 2002), Quixotes would be springing up all around us. And finally, with regard to mimetic melancholy, it has now degenerated into depression, with a model given by the clinical literature, so that, as is well known, life imitates art, in this case the clinical art (Pignarre, 2001/2003).

According to the sense given here to the Quixotic Principle, nobody can escape from being Quixote. Even so, the difference may lie in the fact that one type of salvation may not be the same as another. All will depend on the project undertaken and the effort invested. Insofar as people are lost in their characters, as is so often the case in these confused times, few shall be able to say 'I know who I am'.

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