

Don Quixote, a Building Novel

Admira Nushi
Univesity of Tirana
Faculty of Foreign Languages
Spanish language department, Tirana, Albania
adanushi@hotmail.com

Received 09.05.2016; Accepted 21.06. 2016

Abstract:

Building novels are literary genres which describe the life of a character from childhood to maturity. Don Quixote, the one we know, is described as a product of chivalric readings. He has finished his education since the beginning of the novel. If he hadn't read those books, surely, his life would have been completely different. The change that happened in his mind was converted into concrete actions followed by visible events. In the center of the book is a hero, a main character like Quixote, who changes psychologically, evolves under the circumstances that shape or educate him, as required by the genre, from a burlesque character transformed into a character with high expectations, willing to sacrifice for others, a free volition man, a fearless character who is not afraid of the sufferings, an example of human heroism. In our study, we see the evolution of the character in hic chivalric avenue and his alienation under Sancho's accompany. Except of this, our numerous assumptions as a building novel, a romantic hero, unsettled or antihero makes it impossible to reach an explicit definition. According to Lucas, being a Romanesque character, from our point of view, he is more a problematic hero. Nonetheless, he is a bit of all and represents manifold features, as this is the first modern novel in Europe which compresses features of many genres and subgenres as the own nature of the novel is of encyclopedic genre which assembles many universal components developing a special totality.

Keywords: *Building novel, hero, genre, action, alienation*

Introduction

Don Quixote, Cervantes' hero started his deliria, in Mancha, at the age of 50, wearing illusions he mixes two worlds, the real one with the imaginary, fantastic, chivalric world. Our hero gets inspired to the most fantastic adventure, along the journey in two books, taking with him a simple and normal man, fascinated by the ideal and imaginary world in which his master attracts him, especially in the Iron Age and not in the Golden one. The adventures through which he passes are normal for a knight, but they become extraordinary because Quixote is looking for these adventures outside the chivalric reality, in a past age, with a jade horse and a squire who with the passing of time feels to be victim of his master's idealism. Quixote established himself in this adventure,

because he wanted to get away of his reality of a poor aristocrat in a past age, in a life without emotions, without any dreams realized, after being strongly encouraged by reading chivalric books. Quixote became a knight because he believed that someone had to fight injustice, the evil of the world, so he threw in the huge task of the idealist warrior.

In the second chapter, of the First Book he gets out of the house dressed as a knight, while he realizes that to be such he needs a name. For some moments he doubted his decision, but later he settled it, he would ask for help to the first man he would encounter.

“...Thus setting out, our new-fledged adventurer paced along, talking to himself and saying, “Who knows but that in time to come, when the veracious history of my famous deeds is made known, the sage who writes it, when he has to set forth my first sally in the early morning, will do it after this fashion? ... Happy the age, happy the time,” he continued, “in which shall be made known my deeds of fame, worthy to be moulded in brass, carved in marble, limned in pictures, for a memorial for ever... (Cervantes, 2008, 18-19)

At dusk he came to an inn, which he imagined to be a castle with four towers and with a shiny silver top, with a suspended bridge across the ditch, just like he had read in the book. At the door he met two prostitutes who he imagined to be *“two fair maidens or lovely ladies taking their ease at the castle gate.” (Ibidem, 20)*. Quixote began to eulogize them according to the chivalrous style, but the women didn't understand and quaked with laughter, while the hero was embarrassed and got angry, but luckily the innkeeper appeared. This is a scene and in the book there is plenty of other like this, where the chivalrous ideal is confronted to the reality, and as always in such situations Quixote turns into a ridiculous excuse or is simply considered insane.

“Here we have the case of Don Quixote, who fifty years thrown into the road ... and is a Bildungsroman. Don Quixote and Sancho get to learn to live. They resumed his life. Every novel is a novel learning. In novels and in life we are to the end learning to live. The custom is the worst enemy of knowledge. Surrendering to the usual habits and routine has something of death, death of the soul, intellectual death (Fraguas, 2014)

While studying the figure of Quixote, we notice that we don't know his past. Nothing about his parents, but we do know his niece and her attention; we do not know why he is single, nothing shines on the relationships with the people of de la Mancha, while we only know the priest, the barber and their kindness towards Quixote. We do not know if he suffered any trauma during his childhood, nothing about his youth, but we see that he is a man that honors human values very well, such as he is ready to sacrifice for them. He loves hard, like no other, diligently and with adoration the girl who he never met, he swears to love and on its behalf makes chivalric adventures. Quixote does not pursuit happiness, which is the main characteristic of the romantic heroes, on the contrary he gives everything. He asks for personal glory, popularity, but this is not contrary to the values of the society of his time. Quixote does not want to harm himself and the others; he is even the protector of the weak, for example of the ladies at risk. These characteristics make the Cervantes' hero, different from the romantic hero. Quixote is a funny, insane, charming character; he does not ask for personal benefits and simply mimics the knights. Of course, Quixote is not a romantic hero-

type like that of Emma Bovary of Flaubert, although the critics commonly compare them. He is an idealist facing the society that rejects him.

1. What is novel of education?

Novels of education, of formation, are literary genres that show the life of a character from childhood to maturity. The term derives from German and it is literally translated into Albanian, Novel of education or formation. The German philologist Johann Carl Simon created and baptized this genre, in 1819. But the existence of the elements of this genre dates earlier. The theme of this novel lies on the physical, moral, psychological and social evolution of the character, from childhood to maturity. In this evolution, we distinguish three stages: learning in youth, in the years of pilgrimage, and in the end the excellence.(Ruesca, 2014)

Elements of the novels of education/formation are to be found in many classic and Spanish medieval literary works, especially in the moralizing works of art, but the Spanish literary criticism thinks that in Renaissance with the picaresque novel, we find the beginnings of this genre. E. g, the novel *Lazarillo de Tormes*, shows the vital process through which passes the protagonist, Lazaro, who learns to defend himself in life, after having suffered so much from the ill-treatment of some abusive masters.

This genre was born along with the German Romanticism, with the work of Wolfgang Goethe, published in 1795-1796, entitled *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. The translation of the novel into English influenced the European and the world literature. The genre progressed with time in different European countries, where we find not only the formation of the character but also the failures, so we find somehow the route that follows the character until its full formation. This genre was widely developed in the XIX, XX century, compared to its beginnings. Today, there are a lot of famous writers, whose works of art belong to this genre. By the second half of the XX century, the genre has lost its importance, but still many novels are written or movies are filmed in which his elements are found.

In the Spanish contemporary literature, a great name for Spain in the world, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, in 2001 wrote the novel *La Sombra del viento*, which preserves important elements of the novel of education. This novel has been translated into different languages of the world and in Albanian too. The author shows the childhood and maturity of Daniel Sempere, through the mystery of the love for the book. This book can be called the Novel of Education of the XXI century.

When speaking about the novels variety, their subgenres, we bring in mind the detective, crime, horror, mystery, fantasy etc., but it is not often mentioned the novel of formation or education. This genre may be implied, like part of any other genre. So for example *Old Goriot*, of Honoree de Balzac, is called the novel of customs and also the novels of education, from the character point of view, like the sisters Goriot and Rostinjak.

2. Can the novel *Don Quixote*, from a given point of view be also a novel of education?

The Spanish literary criticism recognize as part of this genre many books that were written before this genre was called as such, that also contain certain elements of this subgenre that simultaneously

represent other genres. There are books being referred to as such, although they do not follow the evolution of the hero from a chronological perspective. The character maturity can be seen in a linear manner, or given as a result of an elliptical time, consequence of the factors described in the book.

This way we know that *Madame Bovary* can also be considered as a novel of education, although Emma's education with the romantic and sentimental books is only expressed with some phrases in the novel.

But let's get back to our hypothesis: Is *Don Quixote* among other things also a novel of education? We think so. This genre holds in its center a hero: a main character, like Quixote. The character, in the novel of education must be recognizable in front of the group, with specific characteristics. Such is *Don Quixote*, an idealist, wants to change the world, to make it a better place, and stands alone in front of other characters and the world that opposes him. Quixote is physically impressive too, thin very tall, it looks like he attracts attention with his ugly gaunt appearance.

"In a village of La Mancha, the name of which I have no desire to call to mind, there lived not long since one of those gentlemen that keep a lance in the lance-rack, an old buckler, a lean hack, and a greyhound for coursing."

"The age of this gentleman of ours was bordering on fifty; he was of a hardy habit, spare, gaunt-featured, a very early riser and a great sportsman."(Cervantes, 2008)

In the novels of education another requirement is the psychological change of the character, his evolution, under the influence of the factors that form or educate it. Usually through inner monologues, the characters memories, dialogues, different figures, etc. the mental and imaginary profile, in which the character moves, is created. This is a requirement in order the reader to better understand the reasons why the character reacts in a way or in another. In different novels we notice that heroes have different ages, although most of them are revealed since childhood, special importance has their maturity, the transformation.

Don Quixote is transformed from a burlesque character to a character that aims high, ready to sacrifice himself for the others, free-willed, a fearless character who is not afraid of the sufferings, converting itself into an example of the human heroism. Despite this, the *Don Quixote* that we know, since the beginning of the book, is offered as a product of the reading of chivalric novels. He has finished his education since the entrance of the novel.

He converts himself from *Alonso Quixano* to *Quixote*, because he did not like the monotonous life he did, because he thinks that the world must be changed, the human destiny must change. *Alonso Quixano* was a book-lover, a bright scholar, he holds debates with his friends and it is clear that he has deep knowledge on things. He longed reading so much that he sold lands and bought books. He tried too many times to change the destinies of the characters of the books he read, or to write the end of the book as the author invited him, but some great and dense thoughts stopped him, his mind was full of what he used to read in those books: fantasy, magic, fights, etc. He liked hunting and often he went out at dawn because he liked it so much. The truth is that he did not only change his name, but his whole life. He himself starts changing his life, because he is not a fatalist. If he would not think this way he wouldn't have become a fugitive knight, but would stay at home, and his niece would give care of him waiting for him to get old.

Quixote conditions the alteration of other characters like Sancho, who was clear-headed and practical, but gets quixotised in his way of thinking, that much that he accepts to become the governor of an island for idealistic reasons. His way of speaking changes, he uses chosen words, rhymes the verses according to the style of the great authors, meanwhile his manners become more delicate

“good luck betide him that invented sleep, the cloak that covers over all a man's thoughts, the food that removes hunger, the drink that drives away thirst, the fire that warms the cold, the cold that tempers the heat, and, to wind up with, the universal coin wherewith everything is bought, the weight and balance that makes the shepherd equal with the king and the fool with the wise man.” (Cervantes, 2008, 530)

Can't this way of changing of Sancho be considered like another dimension of the novel of education?

Quixote changes the name of the girl of his dreams, to whom he never spoke, and idealized her in his mind like the Dulcinea of Troboza. From Aldonza Lorenzo to Dulcinea of Troboza, to the idealized, deified woman, to the “ lady of his thoughts”, to the “ peerless woman”, to “ the lady of his heart”, “ top absolute beauty of the interlunar world”, but in the end the reality is bitter without love, without idealizations, because the real Aldonza Lorenzo is far from Quixote's ecstatic imagination

“...Sancho Panza, when he carried a letter on your worship's behalf to the said lady Dulcinea, found her sifting a sack of wheat; and more by token it says it was red wheat; a thing which makes me doubt the loftiness of her lineage.” (Cervantes, 2008: 259)

We know Quixote at a certain age and for the time it was even called old age, but his transformation is really special, the literary criticism has called it the Quixote's sanchism. Quixote gets influenced by his closest friend who has got a practical sense and gets oriented better than him in the real world; he gets free of the chivalric illusions and ravings. In the second book, Quixote starts to copy Sancho even in his way of speaking, with popular phraseology.

“A genius assumption this of Cervantes that introduced in the theory of Literature the theme of alienation which later on took a central place in the modern literature, especially in the XX century” (Uçi, 2005: 13-15)

“Never have I heard thee speak so elegantly as now, Sancho,” said Don Quixote; “and 3980 here I begin to see the truth of the proverb thou dost sometimes quote, ‘Not with whom thou art bred, but with whom thou art fed.’.” (Cervantes, 2008: 531)

In the novels of education the author likes to delve into the character's mind, to discover his reveals, to reveal details to the reader, even until the end of what is being talked about, because in the novels of education the character is not shallow and does not have one perspective, but it is complex.

Quixote is wiser than his esquire, who satisfies himself only with the essential food, with the present, while the idealist Quixote tells to his esquire that this world is nothing but a tangle of tricky intrigues and opposing purposes.

Ready for his chivalric adventures Quixote discovers part of his vision with the words: *“Here, brother Sancho Panza,” said Don Quixote when he saw it, “we may plunge our hands up to the elbows in what they call adventures; but observe, even shouldst thou see me in the greatest danger in the world, thou must not put a hand to thy sword in my defence, unless indeed thou perceivest that those who assail me are rabble or base folk; for in that case thou mayest very properly aid me;*

but if they be knights it is on no account permitted or allowed thee by the laws of knighthood to help me until thou hast been dubbed a knight.” (Ibidem, 53)

On the other side, the series of adventures that Don Quixote undertook are undoubtedly an educational and transforming journey.

In the novels of education the subjectivism reaches its peak, it even discovers not only the emotions and mind perceptions of the characters but also of their bodies. Except this, almost in every novel of education, love is a formative experience, as such, even though it is virtual, it takes all of its educational and formative importance in Don Quixote. Undoubtedly, it is a transforming experience.

Quixote’s love with Dulcinea becomes a companion throughout the literary work. It is a platonic, idealized, poetic and surreal love. The girl is almost perfect; Quixote even changes her name for her to be such. Amazing in the body, in the soul and being such she deserved every one of the thoughts and braveries that the hero realized on her behalf. Their acquaintance is not mutual, but for the hero a gaze of her is enough, a gaze which he never took.

Dulcinea fulfills all the conditions of the girlfriend of a knight, even beyond that she became a myth for the famous women of the universal written literature, because she embodies the model of the perfect woman, she distinguished herself over the women of the previous literature and influenced the ones that followed her and inherited her traits, as far as it is spoken today about the Dulcinea in different literatures over the world.”

“Oh my lady Dulcinea del Toboso, perfection of all beauty, summit and crown of discretion, treasure house of grace, depositary of virtue, and finally, ideal of all that is good, honourable, and delectable in this world! What is thy grace doing now? Art thou, perchance, mindful of thy enslaved knight who of his own free will hath exposed himself to so great perils, and all to serve thee?” (Ibidem, 301)

All the chivalric novels acknowledge one knight’s love, Quixote as one of their admirers remained faithful to what he had read, he wished to remain a real knight, and even the biggest fugitive knight of all the times.

“So then, his armour being furbished, his morion turned into a helmet, his hack chris- 181 tened, and he himself confirmed, he came to the conclusion that nothing more was needed now but to look out for a lady to be in love with; for a knight-errant without love was like a tree without leaves or fruit, or a body without a soul.” (Ibidem, 16)

Never shall we forget that in the novels of education the character is who he is also because of some given circumstances: social order, the influence of their friends, school education, etc. The characters of these novels are searching their identity, their personality; they realize real or inner journeys with the intention of changing the outer world.

Quixote sometimes verbally confirmed the influence that the chivalric books had in his life, the main reason why he conducted three exits. If he had not read those books, his life would have been completely different for sure. The changing that happened in his mind were accompanied by apparent events.

“You must know, then, that the above-named gentleman whenever he was at leisure 175 (which was mostly all the year round) gave himself up to reading books of chivalry with such ardour and avidity that he almost entirely neglected the pursuit of his field-sports, and even the management of his property; and to such a pitch did his eagerness and infatuation go that he sold many an acre of tillageland to buy books of chivalry to read, and brought home as many of them as he could get”. (Ibidem)

A characteristic of the characters of the novels of education is that the character is an idealist, warrior, melancholic, solitary, and observer, sensitive like Quixote or Emma Bovary. Unable to realize their ideas, as a result of the external pressure, the situation, or the reality that surrounds them, but during the development of the novel they try and achieve some of their necessary objectives. This can be called their maturity or disambiguation moment.

Quixote's maturity when he doubts himself the existence of his imaginary girlfriend, while previously he raised the sword against anyone that would deny or doubt her existence, her virtuosity or her beauty.

“God knows whether 2923 there be any Dulcinea or not in the world, or whether she is imaginary or not imaginary... (Ibidem, 13)

These characters, even though they try hard, do not understand the reality that surrounds them, that is why they choose to get away. They get away toward the knowledge of new things which replace the old ones, they advance in behavior and in the way they see the world, even though they quite often replace an illusion with another, a dream with another one.

I think this is the reason why the author conducts Quixote through three exits, even though he is not able to realize completely the reality that surrounds him. Quixote does not only get away of his reality, he immerses in his deliria, what in fact is an escape of his kind. Cervantes wants to show us, through Quixote, that life, the human history is a product of wisdom, sense, prudence, but also a product of mistakes, ingenuousness, idealism, insanity. Cervantes even, being the real experiencer of the life experiences, places the character in front of unimaginable experiences. One of the most dramatic adventures of the hero is that facing the lion, no matter how really endangered he was, he behaved with great courage, this makes him a hero and not an insane like Sancho comments on him.

“The cart went its way, and Don Quixote, Sancho, and he of the green gaban went theirs. 2477 All this time, Don Diego de Miranda had not spoken a word, being entirely taken up with observing and noting all that Don Quixote did and said, and the opinion he formed was that he was a man of brains gone mad, and a madman on the verge of rationality.... I protest, Senor Don Quixote, everything you have said and done 2479 is proved correct by the test of reason itself... (Ibidem, 133-134).

The exits and adventures are undoubtedly life lessons, formative and educational experiences that make of Don Quixote what he is in his death's bed, a wise and prudent man, that has undergone his life journey and has finished his education firstly from the books and then from life too.

Conclusions

There is a big difference between Cervantes, as a character and author, and Quixote as a character. Being that, Cervantes was an expert of his time, he had been for years a successful career military, heroically fought in the battle of Lepanto, lived for five years as a slave in Algeria from where tried so many times to escape. When he came back to Spain he became a merchant, tax collector, with very important contacts in the world of the theatre and the mundane one, but also in the world of the prison and the poor. Later on, Cervantes becomes a successful writer. With such an intensive life, storm-beaten, the author is an expert of life; this is the reason why his books are full of life experiences that treat everyday issues. Cervantes combines everything with a profound social,

human, emotional sensitivity, with the love for nature, human beings, art, music, with an extraordinary personality from every point of view.

Despite the fact that Cervantes knew quite well the human being, the victory and the defeat, the good and bad luck, the heroism and the frightening, his most famous character is not a genuine hero, is not an adventurous hero but a charming raving person. Cervantes' hero is an antihero of literature.

References

1. Bajtín, Mijaíl, (2003). La novela de educación y su importancia en la historia del realismo, México: Siglo XXI Editores.
2. Catalina Arango Rodríguez, Selen, (2009). .La novela de formación y sus relaciones con la pedagogía y los estudios literarios, Folios, Segunda época Número 30, 2009.
3. Cervantes, Miguel de, (2008). .Don Quixote of La Mancha, Part I, Onufri: Tirana.
4. Cervantes, Miguel de, (2008). Don Quixote of La Mancha, Part II, Onufri: Tirana.
5. Fraguas, Antonio, 09 July 2013, Toda la novela es una novela de aprendizaje, Literary magazine on the internet Letrillas.
[http://www.letraslibres.com/revista/letrillas/toda-novela-es-una-novela-de-aprendizaje_\(consulted on June 10, 2014\).](http://www.letraslibres.com/revista/letrillas/toda-novela-es-una-novela-de-aprendizaje_(consulted%20on%20June%2010,%202014).)
6. Ruescas, Javier, revista online de literatura juvenil: El templo de mil puertas, *Literatura genérica, Aprendizaje*. p. 8-13,
http://www.javierruescas.com/Web_Oficial_de_Javier_Ruescas/img_web/repors/Aprendizaje.pdf
(consulted on June 10, 2014).
7. Ryan, Michael: *Teoría literaria: una introducción práctica*. Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2002.
8. Uçi, Alfred: The most readable book in the world- Shtegtimi i Don Kishotit në Shqipëri, Dita magazine, September 18, 2005.