

Salman Rushdie's novel *Quichotte* (2020) is a contemporary reimagining of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. As a modern interpretation, Rushdie explores questions of social justice within a post-truth world. The novel traces the follies and aspirations of its protagonist's journey while examining the fragile relationship between truth and fiction (Mujica). Like *Don Quixote*, *Quichotte* serves as a meditation on how narratives shape reality. The character Quichotte—an optimistic and fantastical thinker—asserts that “conscience never dies” (Rushdie 344). Because “reality was banal” (386), the novel suggests that social justice in a post-truth world may emerge from an inward and upward journey—one that delves into imagination and envisions “the portal” to a more ethereal existence (385).

In the post-truth era, propaganda distorts perception, preventing people from seeing reality clearly. Its purpose is often to conceal and deceive in order to persuade (Lasswell). Quichotte's perception mirrors the disorder of this world. Rushdie invites readers to reflect on Quichotte's imaginary companion, Sancho—a modern take on Sancho Panza, the loyal squire in Cervantes' original work. Through this relationship, Quichotte suggests that life consists of more than what is immediately visible in the material world. He proposes that alternative realities can exist if one is willing to imagine them: “Between the gods and mortal men and women there hung a veil, and its name was maya” (329). Quichotte's journey reveals this veil of illusion—the idea that the world is not necessarily limited to how it appears. Without the capacity to see beyond material gratification, one misses the point, as there is “no need for such proxy gratifications” (371).

Moreover, Quichotte's encounters with other characters underscore the consequences of distorted truths. In a post-truth society, individuals are often compelled to adjust their understanding of reality based on propaganda, thereby constructing new—if untruthful—social realities (Luce). Rushdie prompts readers to consider the cosmic illusion that the phenomenal world is the only reality. The novel also interrogates the power of storytelling in shaping perceptions of truth and illusion. As an aspiring writer, Quichotte navigates a world saturated with misinformation, taking readers on a vivid emotional journey that allows for the transformation of reality and the possibility of “reclaiming a space” (366).

In conclusion, Salman Rushdie's *Quichotte* offers an uplifting commentary on social justice in a post-truth world by presenting the possibility of a brighter alternative reality. Through Quichotte's ability to perceive illusion and resist propaganda, the unreal becomes real, not only for him but also for the reader. As we follow his quest, we are compelled to recognize that there may be more than what appears on the surface. Ultimately, Rushdie encourages readers not to judge those who seek to move beyond banality—even if doing so involves embracing illusion as a means of escaping the limitations of material reality.

Works Cited

Lasswell, Harold D. “The Theory of Political Propaganda.” *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1927, pp. 627–631.

Luce, Edward. *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2017.

Genis, Alexander. “The Illusion of Freedom: Propaganda and the Informational Swamp.” *Genis Russian Literature*, accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

Mujica, Bárbara. "Book Review: *Quichotte: A Novel* by Salman Rushdie." *Washington Independent Review of Books*, 6 Jan. 2020.

Rushdie, Salman. *Quichotte: A Novel*. Vintage Canada, 2020.