

# Post-Modern Re-Enchantment in Disney’s Animated Film *Encanto* in Light of Max Weber’s Critique of Rationality: Promoting Diversity, Tolerance, and Coexistence

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## Introduction

This paper analyses the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern stages as, respectively, corresponding to the notions of enchantment, disenchantment, and re-enchantment. The analysis is conducted in light of Max Weber’s (1864-1920) theory and critique of disenchantment. Weber is one of the most renowned German sociologists. His theory of disenchantment is composed of three stages. Firstly, the pre-modern stage of magical religiosity is related to the supernatural, the spiritual, and the mythical. Secondly, the modern stage replaced the pre-modern irrationality with the rational, the pragmatic, and the objective. Weber (1946) describes this process of rationalization as *disenchantment (Entzauberung)*. Weber’s theory of disenchantment critiques the loss of enchantment in modern Western society: “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘*disenchantment of the world*’” (155). Weber (1992) also presented the theoretical concept of *the iron cage* in which he describes the deterministic nature of modernity as stifling and dehumanizing (xviii). Third, there is the post-modern stage of re-enchantment. The process of re-enchantment is characterized by post-modern skepticism towards binary oppositions and belief in pluralism and perspectivism. Modernity’s binary oppositions are replaced by the unresolved tensions and irreconcilable inconsistencies of the post-modern. Weber’s writings were interpreted as an implicit challenge to the repercussions of modern disenchantment through an alternative approach of spiritual re-enchantment. Indeed, Weber refers to the potential of a re-enchanted post-modern world that could escape the firm grip of rationality, reverting to an “earlier integral and meaningful state” (Wilding 2008, 76). Weber’s theory of disenchantment is traced in Disney’s 2021 Oscar-winning animated musical feature film, *Encanto*.

*Encanto* tells the story of the Madrigals, an intergenerational Colombian family headed by the grandmother Abuela Alma. *Encanto* echoes the continuum of pre-modern enchantment, modern disenchantment, and post-modern re-enchantment. The first part of the Madrigals’ narrative parallels the magical religiosity of the pre-modern period. It starts when Abuela, upon the murder of her husband, was granted a miraculous candle that bestowed a magical house (Casita) and different supernatural gifts to her children and grandchildren—except for Abuela’s grandchild,

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Mirabel. The second part of the Madrigals' life corresponds to the modern process of disenchantment. It begins when Mirabel suffers from depreciation, being the only Madrigal member without a gift. Moreover, the magic is gradually dying because Abuela transforms the mysticism of the gifts into obligations that can only be preserved by instrumental rationality rather than value rationality. Indeed, Abuela exerts stifling pressure that imprisons the members of the Madrigal family into an "iron cage" of moral responsibility. The third part of the Madrigals' life is equivalent to the post-modern process of re-enchantment. It comes with Abuela's recognition of her error: she forgot that the purpose of the miracle was originally to emancipate the Madrigals from their fears. Ironically, Abuela's recognition is initiated by the help of the only ungifted member of the family: Mirabel.

Several studies have been conducted using Weber's theory of disenchantment as an analytic approach to different literary works, but none of them was applied to Disney's animated feature film *Encanto*. Similarly, several literary theories have also been applied to *Encanto*, but none of them used Weber's theory of disenchantment. In "Is the Magic Gone? Weber's 'Disenchantment of the World' and its Implications for Art in Today's World," Kristina Shull describes Weber's reflections on the loss of enchantment and its effect on art, especially as art comes to self-contain its own set of values. Shull argues that while it may appear that art typically comprises magical elements, the truth is that Weber's disenchantment theory has proved to dominate all forms of art be it film, photography, television, or dance. These different forms of art are demystified through commodification, profit motives, and artificial creations. Because it is a recent film produced in 2021, few studies have been conducted on Disney's film, *Encanto*. In "Narrative Matters: *Encanto* and Intergenerational Trauma," Sydney Conory discusses *Encanto* in terms of the psychoanalytic critical theory of intergenerational trauma. The term "intergenerational trauma" has its roots in research conducted in areas where a historical trauma has happened. Several components of healing intergenerational trauma are included in *Encanto*, including naming the incident, noting the effect of the trauma, and expressing the feelings that family members have experienced. The study concludes that the Madrigal family's inter-generational reconciliation leads to psychologically healthy individuals.

### 1. Weber's Theory of Disenchantment:

#### **From Pre-Modern Magical Religiosity to Modern Rationality**

In Western pre-modern history, enchantment was greatly intertwined with religion. In his *Sociology of Religion*, Weber (1978) argues that early religious forms—be it non-personal spirits or symbolic forms of polytheistic deities—held enchantment as their foundation (405). Later on, monotheistic Catholic activity was never devoid of magical and mystical residuals. Indeed, even in its most rationalized form, religious activity embodied in Catholicism still contained "extra-intellectual and extra-rational" elements beyond the modern material realm of human systematized knowledge (Linker 2015). According to Weber (1978), the pre-modern

catholic world was controlled either by traditional or charismatic authority. The former refers to the rule of a master whose status was founded on his reverence for traditional heritage while the latter refers to the rule of a devoted leader who was seen as gifted with supernatural, magical traits. However, whether traditional or charismatic, both types of authority were based on “value-rational (*wertrational*)” action which means that values are established on “a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other forms of behaviour, independently of its prospect of success” (24-25). That is to say, the pre-modern catholic world—whether maintained by traditional or charismatic authority—still maintained the value-rational-related notions that are not dependent on utilitarian goals; rather, these values are dependent on ethical, aesthetic, or religious codes. The pre-modern Catholic world, thus, contained a plethora of magical and mystical residuals.

Pre-modern mythical expectations and spiritual imaginations have been, once, demystified by science, reason, and the growing secularism in the West. Ironically, it was the Protestant thought’s heightened sense of rationalism that led eventually to the rise of capitalism. The Protestant spirit eliminated magic as heretic and encouraged a material understanding of God’s ethical demands (Weber 1992, 105). The rising importance of material possessions led to the rise of capitalism which ironically led to the demise of any religious activity (181-182). According to Weber (1946), modernity is delineated in terms of a progressive desacralization: “the increasing rationalization and intellectualization [. . .] means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play [. . .] This means that the world is disenchanted” (139). Disenchanted rationalists internalized a conflict between rational disenchantment on the one hand and superstitious enchantment on the other. Saler (2006) labels this relationship as binary opposition. Marvels, wonders, astrology, prophecy, spirits, and fairies were subordinated, marginalized, and even despised. Likewise, modern historians examined enchantment-related phenomena like “magic, mesmerism, the occult, the supernatural” just as neuropsychologists investigate brain disorders to deduce how the healthy brain functions (697). Disenchanted minds were at last freed from the delusions of enchantment through the great assistance of science. The scientific disenchanted modern world subordinated the above-mentioned value-rationality “*Wertrationalität*” to instrumental rationality “*Zweckrationalität*.” Instrumental rationality refers to the modern world’s pragmatic, utilitarian, and “efficient” values (Weber 1978, 24). In other words, spiritual values have been displaced by functional ones.

However, the binary, antagonistic relationship between enchanted religiosity and disenchanted, scientific thought, developed through an intense process of rationalization, giving rise, eventually, to the cultural crisis of nihilism. Cultural nihilism of modernity refers to the loss of meaning that results from subordinating value-rationality to instrumental rationality. Because of this loss of meaning, the above-mentioned binary opposition between religion and science is transformed into infinite, irresolvable conflicts among polytheistic, self-determining value spheres of

modern life orders (Weber 1946, 147). In other words, life orders—such as commercial, spiritual, political, and sexual orders—each comes to acquire its own meaning/value according to their own unique logic. Religion, for instance, becomes no more than one value sphere among many incompatible others; it does not relate to a transcendent value or a capital T *Truth* (Weber 1946, 149). All the spheres function according to self-referential, procedural criteria. According to Weber, the negative consequences of disenchantment included *dehumanization, bureaucratization, exhaustion, and homogenization*.

### ***1.1. Dehumanization as a Consequence of Disenchantment***

Paradoxically, modernity, which should have fashioned full control and systematization over modern life, produced endless tensions among autonomous value spheres. These tensions led to the dehumanization of the modern individual who lost sight of any ultimate value. With the loss of the ultimate *Truth* and the proliferation of self-referential modern orders, “the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity” (Weber 1946, 148). Consequently, humanity was stifled within a mechanistic, deterministic, meaningless world; its autonomy was distorted, and it became no more than a cog in the wheels of predictable forces. Capturing the essence of such dehumanization, Weber (1992) quotes Goethe when the former states that the modern world is full of “specialists without spirit [and] sensualists without heart” (qtd in Weber 1992, 124). Denuded of mystical forces, modern man, as Weber (1992) coined it, entered “the iron cage” of modernity (xviii). Within the same context, Saler (2006) argues that “instrumental reason can be dehumanizing; the rapid changes of modern existence can yield feelings of anomie, fragmentation, and alienation” (693). In other words, the first consequence of disenchantment was to produce a fragmented, impoverished, alienated, and dehumanized mode of existence.

### ***1.2. Bureaucratization as a Consequence of Disenchantment***

The second consequence of disenchantment was the dominance of bureaucratic authority instead of traditional and charismatic authority which were evident in the pre-modern world of enchantment. Bureaucratic authority was characterized by favouring efficiency over emotions, the impersonal over the personal, and the functional over the authentic. Weber (1978) describes this process of bureaucratization, arguing that “bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is dehumanized, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements” (975). Thus, Weber denounces the loss of harmonious communal relations that existed at the time of Calvinism. Starting from the seventeenth century, elites resorted to bureaucratic authority to maintain a hierarchal order in which they become superior to the submissive masses. “The aristocracy of intellect” contends Weber (1946), “is hence an un-brotherly aristocracy” (355). Brotherly compassion, Weber continues, evolved to take on “a peculiarly objective and impersonal

character” within the structuring of the modern world (Weber 1992, 64). Weber also laments the loss of “the prophetic *pneuma*”—that is the spiritual sublime values—which once spread through past communities like a flame, uniting them together (Weber 1946, 155). In other words, bureaucratic authority helped maintain the elites’ hegemony and supremacy and discarded the old ties of devotion and compassion.

### ***1.3. Exhaustion of the Modern Individual as a Consequence of Disenchantment***

Thirdly, disenchantment led to the subjection of the modern individual to hard work and severe exhaustion. As previously mentioned, the spirit of Capitalism has been affected by the old Protestant devotion to “hard work” (Weber 1992, 11). Influenced by Protestant ethics,

Weber argues, the capitalists of the disenchanted modern world regarded “the fulfilment of duty” as crucial (40). They also rejected “idleness,” and evaded the “danger of relaxation.” According to Weber, capitalists also condemned “loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours” (104). Indeed, modern society was founded on its repudiation of the chaos, vulnerability, and contingency of the pre-modern orders. Modernity reacted by laying down a new foundation characterized by perfection, strenuous effort, and obligatory accomplishments. The theme of the exhaustion of the modern individual as a result of disenchantment was later thoroughly questioned by Bauman (1992) who discusses the exhaustion that burdens individuals in the modern world:

This was a life-long task, brandishing no hope of respite. Nothing was to be satisfactory if short of the ultimate, and the ultimate was no less than *perfection* [ . . . ] And perfection could be reached only through action: it was the outcome of laborious ‘fitting together’ [ . . . ] It was forced into buoyant growth by the fear of the chaos that would overwhelm the world were the search for perfection to be abandoned or even slackened in a moment of inattention. (xi-xiii)

In such a world, hard work should be vigilantly supervised. Modern man’s authority was his evidence of superiority and progress. As a result, such authority was characterized mainly by its intolerance to the least amount of relaxation or respite. As Bauman puts it, “Escape from the wilderness, once embarked on, will never end” (xiv-xv). Indeed, hard work never ended for the individual in the modern world. This is because relaxation would undermine the whole foundation of modernity and allow the pre-modern haphazardness to return.

### ***1.4. Homogenization as a Consequence of Disenchantment***

The final consequence of disenchantment is, ironically, the homogenization of the modern individual. In his book, *Max Weber and Postmodern Theory Rationalization versus Re-enchantment* (2002), Nicholas Gane described Weber’s notion of

homogenization as a consequence of disenchantment: “while the rationalization of the world appears to diversify culture through the differentiation of value-spheres, to some extent it engenders the opposite, namely the progressive homogenization of culture within all spheres of life” (43). That is, instead of eliminating cultural homogeneity, the modern disenchanted thought—with its diverse value spheres—initiated such homogenization. This homogenization is characterized by routinization and the illusion of perfection; it kills the attempts of individuals to be imaginative or creative. Indeed, homogenization “subordinates creative action to the rational consideration of means and ends” and “drain[s] social life of its vitality and ‘humanness’ (*Menschentum*)” (25). The modern individual becomes unable to devise any aesthetic, spontaneous, or mystical innovations. In his book, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, Bauman (1992) defines such homogenization as “the subversive power of unlicensed difference” and as the real enemy of modernity which loathes “the grey area of ambivalence, indeterminacy and undecidability” (xvi). Moreover, the modern homogenized individual must show obedience and submission. In other words, individuals are deprived not only of creativity but also of any ability to question or resist this coercion (44). Consequently, the modern individual is deprived of autonomy and freedom.

## **2. Re-Enchantment: Weber’s Post-modern Narrative of Emancipation**

Postmodern philosophy offers a subversive reaction to modernity and an “escape route” from the continuing rational disenchantment (Gane 2002, 83). Though defying a simple definition, the postmodern can be seen as that which seeks to reveal and violate the limitations of the contemporary Modern system by the “aporetic resuscitation of suppressed or hidden forms of difference or otherness” (10). In other words, post-modernists deconstructed modernity by exposing the inconsistencies within the modern discourse. According to this definition, Weber’s thought comprises a post-modern narrative that aims at emancipating the modern individual from the grip of the modern disenchanted world. Many of Weber’s writings were interpreted as an implicit challenge to the repercussions of a disenchanted modern world through an alternative approach of postmodern re-enchantment. This is because Weber’s writings were seen not as a *portrayal* of modernity, but rather as a *critique* of modernity. Weber (1978) declares the essential need for restoring the meaning to the world. The disenchanted world, Weber argues, destroyed faith in magic. The operations of the modern world only “‘are’ and ‘happen’” with no further signification. As a result, there is an increasing need for the overall structure of society to be subordinated to a meaningful order (506). Finally, Weber (1992) expresses his fear of a future where the cage of modernity may persist: “No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development, entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals” (124). Accordingly, Weber’s writings reveal dissatisfaction with his conceptualization of the future as being deterministically shaped by scientific positivism. Not only did Weber criticize the disenchantment of

the modern world, but he also revealed the potential of an inherent post-modern re-enchantment.

Within the same argument, Barbara Adam argues that Weber refers to the potential of a re-enchanted post-modern world that could escape the *iron cage* of rationality. She proposes that Weber's perspective of the future is dialectical since he emphasized both a rationalized future and a future that might defy rationality's firm control (Adam 2009, 11). Freud (1968) stated that although Weber did not specifically declare that rational and irrational patterns are "isomorphic," the idea dominated his entire theory (25). Turner (1993) provided some ideas in this regard by observing that Weber most likely came to perceive mystical notions as performing a dynamic function in challenging the rationalist system of modernity (83). Finally, Holton and Turner (1989) have argued that Weber's disenchantment theory appears to incorporate a postmodern moment, for it points to the emergence of "an incoherent, unstable, and meaningless world of polytheistic values and nihilism" (88). Different post-modern theorists like Zygmunt Bauman, (1925–2017), and Simon During (1950) developed Weber's post-modern perception of re-enchantment. They highlighted the possibility of challenging the instrumental rationality of modernity and of creating a new mode of re-enchantment.

Nevertheless, post-modernists had to resolve the ethical paradox of laying down a new foundation that is mystical, but not delusional at the same time. Moreover, they had to resolve the ethical paradox of presenting various moral choices that are not dependent on an ultimate value. To resolve the first paradox of how to establish a new foundation that is mystical, but not delusional, post-modernists introduced the modern notion of the capability of associating enchantments with delusion. Unveiling the inconsistencies of the modern rational order via the "aporetic resurrection" of the repressed modes of difference (Gane 2002, 10), post-modernists claimed that the irrational structures have been inherent within the rational framework of the modern world. These irrational structures, however, are not delusional because, as Ludwig Wittgenstein states, they are "disenchanted enchantments" (qtd. in Saler 2013). The term *disenchanted enchantments* refers to the idea that disenchantment (reason) and enchantment (imagination) are not opposed to each other; rather, they can co-exist under a distinctive condition: a double-minded consciousness that enables an individual to enjoy magical illusions with an ironic awareness that these illusions are not real. Consequently, this rational mode of thinking about irrational structures delights, but it does not delude (During 2002, 67). In other words, magical illusions are enjoyed with a consciousness that they are mere artifices.

Consequently, instead of a modern opposite structure between enchantment and disenchantment, a plethora of re-enchantments take place. These re-enchantments are supernatural wonders, yet they are enjoyed with an ironic rational awareness of their irrationality. In *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic*, Simon During (2002) emphasizes the co-existence of rationality and magic, reason and myth, reality and fairytale. In the new world of re-enchantment, wonders are enjoyed ironically as contingent yet delightful (65-66). By rejecting old religious

narratives while at the same time preserving certain forms of the mystical within a secular framework, re-enchantment offers an exit from the iron cage of instrumental rationality and presents new possibilities for emancipation. Indeed, post-modern secular re-enchantment offers a possibility of emancipation from the fetters of modernity's iron cage. This narrative of emancipation is evident in the artistic sphere. During (2002) refers to the "magical assemblages" that combine mystical enchantment and rational disenchantment. These assemblages—including literature, art, and cinema—delight but do not delude (66). Wonders are thus produced with a secular adaptation.

To resolve the second ethical paradox, post-modernists argued that various moral choices can co-exist without ultimate authority. Instead of referring to a transcendent meaning, moral choices are relativized. Despite the relativity of moral codes, the community members abide by their overwhelming devotion to each other, a devotion that is stronger than the devotion to any moral code:

In a cacophony of moral voices, none of which is likely to silence the others, the individuals are thrown back on their own subjectivity as the only ultimate ethical authority. At the same time, however, they are told repeatedly about the irreparable relativism of any moral code. No code claims foundations stronger than the conviction of its followers and their determination to abide by its rules. (Bauman 1992, xxii-xxiii)

Hence, post-modernist ethics work on the level of the community that is founded on arbitration. This community is not based on any authority. Ironically, the absence of a referential authority promotes solidarity among the members of such a community. This community, though it may lack the stability of the traditional community, makes up for it with the passionate devotion of its self-committed members. Furthermore, post-modernists reconceive the relativism of moral codes, not as a sign of nihilism, but as a sign of pluralism. The presence of various valid moral codes with the absence of only one referential authority also promotes diversity, tolerance, and co-existence. Tolerance is fully realized when it calls for dialogue, instead of monologist impulses. Moreover, tolerance is realized when it admits the validity of the other's preferences, and the other's right to have such preferences treated with respect (Bauman 1992, xxi-xxii). Indeed, when the members of a community become aware of the equivalent, contingent, and provisional nature of their cognitive abilities, they become more tolerant and willing to co-exist rather than condemn or fight.

### **3. Enchantment: *Encanto* and Weber's Pre-Modern Magical Religiosity**

The first part of the Madrigals' story mirrors the pre-modern world of enchantment: the stage of magical religiosity. In this stage, Abuela relates to the religious activity embodied in Catholicism which contained "extra-intellectual and extra-rational" elements (Linker 2015). Indeed, the Madrigal's miracle is based on a Christian foundation that presents magic in *Encanto* within a Christian framework.



The detailed story of the young Abuela Alma and Abuelo Pedro—which comes as a flashback by the end of the film—takes place in their village during a Holiday Candle Festival where both of them hold a candle (Bush 2021, 78:24-78:40). The candle works as an explicit reference to Christianity. The candle is also evident in the matrimonial ceremony of Alma and Pedro which is held in a church (78:48-78:53), another overt symbol of the Christian faith. Abuela Alma, when losing Pedro, prays before a *candle* for salvation. As an answer to her prayer, Abuela is gifted with an everlasting super radiant candle as a symbol of her miracle. She is bestowed with a new village, a magical house (Casita), and different magical gifts to her children and grandchildren (80:03-80:43). Again, in the new village, there is a priest and a church with a big cross on its top (33:19-33:22). Thus, in *Encanto*, magical powers are deeply intertwined with religious faith.

According to Weber (1978), the pre-modern catholic world was controlled either by traditional or charismatic authority (241). Abuela Alma takes the role of the charismatic authority that dominates the Madrigal family. Indeed, Abuela, in this stage, mirrors the charismatic devoted leader who is seen as gifted with supernatural, magical traits and who, thus, maintains the value-rational notions of enchantment. She also celebrates new gifts bestowed upon her grandchildren at the age of six. Mirabel, the only ungifted grandchild, feels embarrassed, despised, ignored, and alienated. In her song, “Waiting for a Miracle,” Mirabel prays for a gift to be bestowed upon her. The devotional prayer/song goes as follows:

Always walking alone  
 Always wanting for more  
 Like I am still at that door  
 Longing to shine like all of you shine . . .  
 I am ready! C'mon, I'm ready!  
 I have been patient and steadfast and steady  
 Bless me now as you blessed us all those years ago  
 When you gave us a miracle. (23:29-24:47)

Hence, Mirabel feels alienated from her family and deprived of God's blessing. In other words, Mirabel's loss of magical abilities becomes a manifestation for her that she neither belongs to her family nor to God's blessed people in general. Thus, Mirabel internalizes the pre-modern world's connection of magic to religious faith.

#### **4. *Encanto* and Weber's Theory of Disenchantment**

As mentioned above, according to Weber, the values of the modern world become pragmatic, utilitarian, and functional. Whereas the young enchanted Abuela Alma represented the pre-modern magical religiosity, the old Abuela represents the modern rational, pragmatic, hegemonic character. Accordingly, Abuela comes to symbolize disenchantment rather than enchantment due to the radical change in her disposition. Abuela's character transformation and her growing rationalism mirrors the above-mentioned transition from magical religiosity to material capitalism.

Indeed, as time goes by, Abuela renounces the magical for the rational and the mystical for the utilitarian. Renouncing the enchanted, Abuela's miracle starts to die. Unlike all the Madrigals, the six-year-old Mirabel was *disenchanted* in her gift ceremony instead of receiving a gift (18:38-19:29). This is the first sign of the dying miracle of the Madrigals. The second sign comes later when the young Mirabel sees the walls of the Casita cracking, the fire of the candle flickering, and the magical gleaming of the doors growing dimmer (24:58-26:17). In the following scene, Mirabel finds out that Abuela has already known that the magic is dying (29:40-30:33). However, Abuela is unable to realize that the magic is fading away because of her transformation from enchantment to disenchantment. Tracing Weber's consequences of modern disenchantment in *Encanto*, the consequences of Abuela's disenchantment are also dehumanization, bureaucratization, exhaustion, and homogenization.

#### ***4.1. Dehumanization of the Madrigals as a Consequence of Abuela's Disenchantment***

Denuded of mystical forces, modern man entered, as Weber (1992) coined it, "the iron cage" of modernity (xviii). In *Encanto*, Abuela imprisons the members of her family within this "iron cage" and measures every member of the Madrigals according to his/her gift. Abuela's criterion for judgment is not based on a value-rational criterion, but rather on an instrumental-rational one. Abuela, pragmatically, sees Mirabel as worthless because she does not offer any profit to the Madrigals or the village. Since Mirabel is the only member of the Madrigals without a gift, she grows up to be deeply fragmented, alienated, and dehumanized.

When Mirabel is asked by the rest of the children about her unique gift, she answers: "I can't just talk about myself. I'm only *part* of the amazing Madrigals" (04:38-04:42). Mirabel, thus, cannot feel valued as an individual; her value is only derived from the value of her family members. After singing about the gifts of all the Madrigals, Mirabel is given an accordion to sing about her own gift (08:02-08:10). However, Mirabel throws the accordion away; she thinks she has no story worth telling. The donkey delivery man gives Mirabel the 'special' supplies calling it: "the 'not special' special" since she is the only ungifted Madrigal member (09:10-09:28). Trying to help with Antonio's gift ceremony, Mirabel is ridiculed by her sister Isabela who tells her "if you weren't always trying too hard, you wouldn't be in the way" (10:33-10:36). Most importantly when Mirabel makes a candle doily for Abuela as a surprise, the former stares at a family photo frame hanging on the wall. Seeing that she is not in the family photo, Mirabel drops the candle and burns the doily. Abuela asks Mirabel directly to quit helping since sometimes "the best way for *some of us* to help is to step aside, let the *rest* of the family do what *they* do best" (12:15-12:20). Moreover, Abuela feels worried when Mirabel escorts Antonio up the stairs at his gift ceremony; eventually, the Madrigals take a photo together, in celebration of Antonio's new gift, but without Mirabel who feels neglected and secluded again. Singing again, Mirabel imagines Abuela standing, holding a candle,

and staring into the void. Mirabel asks Abuela in her song to see how much she is broken and alienated:

All I need is a change  
 All I need is a chance  
 All I know is I can't stay on the side  
 Open your eyes  
 Open your eyes  
 Open your eyes (23:43-24:00).

But Abuela is unable to *see* Mirabel as a human being just as she could not see her son, Bruno, because his gift was not, as Weber (1978) puts it, “efficient” (24) enough for the *encanto*. Abuela's pragmatic, modernist viewpoint dehumanizes Mirabel just as the modernist viewpoint dehumanized modern man.

#### ***4.2. Bureaucratization as a Consequence of Abuela's Disenchantment***

As mentioned above, Weber (1946) maintains that charismatic authority is replaced by the “un-brotherly aristocracy” of bureaucratic authority (355). Young Abuela Alma held a charismatic authority over her townspeople. However, as time went by, a radical alteration took place in Abuela's nature of authority. Instead of charismatic authority, Abuela adopts a bureaucratic authority towards her townspeople. The *encanto* for Abuela is no more a way to maintain a hierarchal order in which she and the Madrigals become superior to the townspeople. For instance, in Antonio's gift ceremony, Abuela is anxious that the townspeople may notice that the magic is dying. When Mirabel warns Abuela in public that the house walls are cracking and that the candle has almost gone out, Abuela looks around, embarrassed. She quickly assures the townspeople, raising her hands as if she were a governess delivering a speech to her subjects: “There is nothing wrong with La Casa Madrigal. The magic is strong” (26-34-27:14). In the following scene, the audience realizes that Abuela is already aware that the magic is dying (29:40-30:33), but she is keen on hiding this fact from the townspeople. On the contrary, Abuela assures them that the *encanto* is strong. As long as the Madrigals are efficient and functional in the services they offer to the townspeople, their superior hierarchal position is still intact.

#### ***4.3. Exhaustion of the Madrigals as a Consequence of Abuela's Disenchantment***

According to Weber (1992), disenchantment is accompanied by severe exhaustion and hard work (104). Abuela interminably pressures the magically strong Louisa to such hard work with no moment of respite allowed in fear of chaos. Mirabel, for the first time, can see the insecurities that hide *under the surface* of Louisa's magical power. Indeed, Louisa sings a spectacular song, *Under the Surface*, where she expresses that though she seems to be strong and tough, deep inside she feels pressured, coerced, and nervous. In her song, Louisa observes that

Under the surface  
I feel berserk as a tightrope walker in a three-ring circus  
Under the surface  
Was Hercules ever like, “Yo, I don’t wanna fight Cerberus?”  
Under the surface  
I’m pretty sure I’m worthless if I can’t be of service . . .  
Pressure like a drip, drip, drip, that’ll never stop, whoa-oh  
Pressure that’ll tip, tip, tip ’til you just go pop, whoa-oh-oh-oh . . .  
Give it to your sister, your sister’s stronger  
See if she can hang on a little longer  
Who am I if I can’t carry it all, if I falter? (34:47-35:50)

The pragmatic Abuela judges Louisa on an instrumental-rational rather than a value-rational basis. Thus, for Abuela, Louisa’s worth is derived only from her ability to function efficiently. Under the pressure of Abuela’s vigilant gaze, Louisa feels nervous like a tightrope walker. Louisa’s hard labour is like the modernist mode of labour: “a life-long task, brandishing no hope of respite” (Bauman 1992, xi). She also feels coerced into fighting a war she is hesitant to join; hence, she compares herself to Hercules who is just as reluctant to fight Cerberus. The mythological allusion is to Hercules’ twelve labours which have been a punishment for his temporary insanity. Louisa, thus, feels she is being punished by Abuela’s exhausting *labours*.

Indeed, Louisa dreams she could get rid of Abuela’s overwhelming load of anticipations; she only dreams to “free some room up for joy / Or relaxation, or simple pleasure” (36: 22-36:28). However, because modern society was founded on its repudiation of the chaos of the pre-modern orders, Modernity reacted by laying down a new foundation characterized by strenuous effort, and obligatory accomplishments. Abuela—like the modernist mode of thought—is intolerant of relaxation or respite because such relaxation would undermine the whole foundation of the *encanto* and would bring back—like the pre-modern chaotic mode of thought—the vulnerability of the Madrigals at the time when Abuelo Pedro was killed. Indeed, once Abuela escapes the chaotic moment when the marauders kill Pedro to the orderly condition of their Casita, she cannot allow disorderliness to return. But for this to happen, hard work should incessantly take place and should be vigilantly supervised.

#### ***4.4. Homogenization of the Madrigals as a Consequence of Abuela’s Disenchantment***

Gane (2002) refers to Weber’s notion of homogenization as a form of coercive control that kills imagination and creativity (25). In this light, Isabella may be the most complicated character of the Madrigals. She is the main victim of Abuela’s illusion of perfection and the most compliant and submissive; she even approves of

marrying Mariano just because Abuela believes that “the Guzmans and the Madrigals together will be so good for the *Encanto*” (50:30:50:35). When accused of being selfish by Mirabel, Isabella contends, “‘selfish’?! I’ve been stuck being perfect my whole entire life!” (68:13-68:17). In a *marvelous* song, *What Else Can I Do?* Isabela discovers her creative abilities when, as soon as she truly expresses her inner rebellion, a tiny, unsymmetrical cactus grows. The cactus is unsymmetrical because Isabela's creativity lies in her rejection of the instrumental rationality of material perfection. Isabella prefers beauty over perfection:

I just made something unexpected  
 Something sharp, something new  
 It's not symmetrical or perfect  
 But it's beautiful, and it is mine.  
 What else can I do? (68:47-69:05)

Beauty is ambivalent, incalculable, indeterminate, and unpredictable; it cannot be routinized or used for utilitarian effects. In other words, beauty is based upon a value-rational foundation, not an instrumental rational one. Isabella discovers her ability to resist Abuela's attempts to homogenize her flower creations. As previously mentioned, homogenization “subordinates creative action to the rational consideration of means and ends” (Gane 25). Thus, Abuela subjugates Isabella's creativity and imagination to her pragmatic ends.

Indeed, Isabella used to grow perfect roses only. These roses are proportioned, harmonious, and regular. Moreover, they reflect Isabella's delicacy and compliance. However, Isabella now can break such homogenization. She can be creative by growing what may not be perfect but would reflect her true spontaneous and mystical feelings: jacarandas, figs, vines, palms. Isabella confesses:

What could I do if I just knew it didn't need to be perfect?  
 It just needed to be? And they'd let me be?  
 A hurricane of jacarandas  
 Strangling figs (big), hanging vines (this is fine)  
 Palma de cera fills the air as I climb  
 And I push through  
 What else can I do?  
 Can I deliver us a river of sundew?  
 Careful, it's carnivorous, a little just won't do  
 I wanna feel the shiver of something new  
 I'm so sick of pretty, I want something true, don't you? (69:37-70:15)

Thus, by growing such aesthetic ingenious innovations, Isabella illustrates “the subversive power of unlicensed difference” (Bauman 1992, xvi). Unaware that she is harming the magic, Abuela adopts the modernist pragmatic, instrumental mode of thought. While she renounces the value-rational mystical approach, Abuela confines

her children and grandchildren to “the iron cage” of modernity. With Abuela’s denial and her censure of Mirabel, the magic is completely destroyed. Casita falls apart and the candle goes out. The disenchanting modernity reaches its apex. A new ideological foundation must be laid down before the Madrigals are re-enchanting.

### 5. Weber’s Post-modern Re-enchantment: Emancipation of the Madrigals

Weber’s post-modern foundation combines both mystical enchantment and rational disenchantment. These “magical assemblages”—including literature, art, and cinema—delight but do not delude (During 2002, 66). The film *Encanto* itself is an explicit example of these “magical assemblages.” Indeed, the supernatural, magical elements of the film are assembled with the contingency of these enchantments. *Encanto*’s marvellous scenes, dances, songs, and supernatural wonders are all signs of the re-enchanting post-modern secular world.

Additionally, post-modernists argued that community members’ devotion to each other is stronger than the devotion to any moral code. By the end of the animated film, the *encanto* is retrieved only when the sisterly connection between Mirabel and Isabella is recovered. This reconciliation resonates with Weber’s notion of Calvinist communal, harmonious relations that promote diversity and tolerance (Weber 1992, 64). The townspeople are aware of the great moral burden carried by the Madrigals. Showing solidarity, they sing loudly to the family:

Lay down your load  
We are only down the road  
We have no gifts,  
But we are many  
And we’ll do anything for you. (86:40-86:56)

This new community which lacks the bureaucratic authority of Abuela is characterized by an “overwhelming affective commitment of its self-appointed members” (Bauman 1992, xix) for again the Madrigals and the townspeople have no other foundation except their devotion to each other.

Furthermore, by the end of the film, Abuela adopts post-modern values instead of modern values. As soon as she realizes she is the reason for the disenchantment, she consciously renounces her bureaucratic authority over the Madrigals and the townsmen. Embracing Mirabel, Abuela sings,

And I’m sorry I held on too tight  
Just so afraid I’d lose you too  
The Miracle is not  
Some magic that you’ve got  
The miracle is you. (85:40-85:52)

Consequently, Abuela confesses a load of moral responsibility she imposed on the Madrigals and learns to be tolerant and to accept the diversity of her family. She also learns that every member of the Madrigals is more than his/her gift and should not be marginalized or coerced; each member's desires should be appreciated and gratified. As a result, each member becomes a shining star by him/herself. Mirabel sings,

Look at this home, we need a new foundation  
It may seem hopeless but  
We'll get by just fine.  
Look at this family, a glowing constellation  
So full of stars and everybody wants to shine. (85:01-85:25)

Building their Casita all over again, the Madrigals also lay the new foundation of tolerance, pluralism, and co-existence. As soon as the new foundation is established, the magic returns. By liberating every member of the Madrigals from Weber's iron cage, the (post-modern) re-enchantment of the Madrigals replaces the (modern) disenchantment: Mirabel is appreciated as the saviour of the magic; Louisa works but then relaxes in a hammock and drinks a refreshing beverage and Isabella makes new and creative plants.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, as the disenchanted modern world is replaced by post-modern forms of the magical, new suppressed modes of difference and otherness are recognized. The resuscitation of enchantment within a secular framework can help free different values like diversity, coexistence, respite, and creativity. Weber calls for transcending the limitations of modern order. Moreover, he describes how this transcendence may develop through a variety of re-enchantment strategies, each consistent with secular reason. Challenging the limits of modern rationalism, Weber sees irrational enchanted forms as having always been concealed within the dynamics of instrumental rationalism. Within a new post-modern theory, these irrational forms can uncover and deconstruct the confines of modern order, hence avoiding approaches of rationalization. This paper, thus, concludes that tensions between modern and postmodern values can be resolved. The animated film *Encanto* similarly presents the possibility of escaping modern rationalism through its overwhelming artistic practices. However, the question of whether artistic practices can separate themselves from disenchanted rationality with which they are intricately woven persists and needs yet to be explored.

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