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## The Question of the Disappearance of a Hero

In her essay “Don Quijote’s Disappearing Act”, Anne J. Cruz argues that Don Quixote’s death can be predicted, and as early as Part 1. Her thesis is that the first and second parts of the novel can be understood thus: “[...] Don Quijote’s final disappearing act confirms his irrevocable subsumation into his own text.” (Cruz, 840). Cruz's idea has caused much discussion and controversy, and many are divided upon their agreement with it. This statement is not true, as it neglects the writing of the “False Quixote”, as Cervantes’ response to this hoax was to end the possibility of any future Don Quixote stories. Cervantes chose to kill Don Quixote to regain control of the fictional world he had created, in retaliation against any who sought to misappropriate his creation.

At the end of Part 1 of Don Quixote, Cervantes gives a hint towards Don Quixote and Sancho’s next sally: “Don Quixote left home [and] he went to Zaragoza and took part in some famous tournaments held in that city” (Cervantes, 445). He finishes the novel with the line, “Forsi altro canterà con miglior plectio.” (Cervantes, 449), which is a quote originally from Orlando Furioso. This sentence translates to: “Perhaps another will sing in a better style”, which many interpreted as an invitation to others to continue the writing. Sometime between the publishing of the First and Second part, this invitation was taken up, and a fraud wrote a counterfeit sequel to Don Quixote, known as the “False Quixote”. Cervantes learned about this book while he was writing the Second part, and mentioned it immediately in his writing. In the novel, while Don Quixote and Sancho are traveling to Zaragoza after leaving the Duke and the Duchess, they approach an inn to stay for the night. At the inn, they hear two people reading from the False Quixote. Don Quixote confronts them about the book when he hears them say that in the story he renounces his love for Dulcinea. They then discuss how much of a lie the book is, and how many mistakes it contains. To end their conversation, Don Quixote states “I shall not set foot in Zaragoza, and in this way I shall proclaim the lies of this modern historian to the world”, (Cervantes, 849) and changes his destination from Zaragoza to Barcelona.

This is the first time that Cervantes refers to the “False Quixote” in the novel, and it carries a powerful meaning. By changing their destination, he is discrediting the “False Quixote” in its entirety by showing that it is untrue, and that Don Quixote and Sancho will do as much as they can to prove its fraudulence. After they leave the inn, on their new path to Barcelona, Sancho bumps into something hanging from a tree. Realizing that this object was human legs and feet, a terrified Sancho runs to Don Quixote, who in response calmly says “[...] these feet and legs that you touch but do not see undoubtedly belong to outlaws and bandits who have been hanged [...] which leads me to think I must be close to Barcelona,” (Cervantes, 851). Don Quixote and Sancho then find themselves surrounded by a group of thieves who rob them, but

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eventually take them in and travel to Barcelona with them. While with the robbers, Don Quixote and Sancho witness robbery and murder, sharply contrasting the law-enforcing knight Quixote practiced previously. A significant change can be seen in the mood of the book, after Cervantes found out about the publishing of the “False Quixote”. He changed the path of the novel, metaphorically and literally, through changing their destination of city, and changing the entire tone of the novel. This is where Cruz’s argument was incorrect, as Cervantes was not planning for Don Quixote’s death since Part 1, he only planned for it after learning about the “False Quixote”.

While writing the Second Part of Don Quixote, Cervantes was beginning to fall quite ill. He had type 2 diabetes, according to the modern physician Antonio López Alonso, a disease that was unknown of at the time. As the novel approached an end, his condition worsened, and in the book Miguel de Cervantes, by Barbara Parker and Duane Parker, they say that “when Cervantes wrote about the death of Don Quixote at the end of Part II, he may have anticipated his own death as well,” (Parker, 96). After seeing one fraud copy of the novel being released, Cervantes couldn’t allow another one to be published after his death, and so he prevented it in the safest way he could: by killing off Don Quixote, and not allowing the opportunity for any more novels.

Upon his deathbed, Don Quixote recounts the items of his will to those surrounding him. After leaving money to Sancho, he gives his estate to his niece, however with a constraint: if his niece marries, “she marry a man [who] does not know anything about books of chivalry” (Cervantes, 938). If she were to marry him nonetheless, she would then lose all that was left to her in the will. By saying this, Cervantes is not only killing off Don Quixote himself, but also using him as a tool to renounce all future books of chivalry. Cervantes was worried about more than just someone stealing the Don Quixote name, but someone stealing the idea of comedic chivalric novels. Through Don Quixote’s final will, he was able to ensure that any of these books would be looked down upon, and he can be assured no future novel would attain the popularity of the “False Quixote”.

On the basis of this evidence, Cervantes did not plan to kill Don Quixote since the First Part of the novel, and that is where Cruz was incorrect. She failed to acknowledge the darker turn taken by the novel after Cervantes learnt about the “False Quixote”, and coupled with his own worsening health, he knew he had to kill off Don Quixote before any other books could be made.

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