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Thinking in a broad context of what literature has survived over the two hundred thousand years humans have lived, there has really not been a whole lot of authors self motivated enough to compose a collection of written work, known as a novel. The first ever evidence of 'writing' was seen about five thousand years ago in Mesopotamia; but that consensus only relied upon what clay tablets were found. There probably is a helluva lot more written work that was either stolen, lost, destroyed or merely unknown. Speaking on a consensus of the literature that is a part of the common consensus of the literary world, Spanish born Miguel de Cervantes, 'is crowned the man to write the first ever novel. Not only that but, the novel Don Quixote is deemed as the greatest novel ever written. In 1605 when Don Quixote was published, little did Cervantes know that his work would both be the first novel and greatest of its kind in human history? Indeed, when the first part of Don Quixote was published, it had gained relative popularity, which in turn motivated him to publish part two ten years later in 1615. Composing literature was scarce up until the Renaissance era, so earning a pay cheque was out of the question, Cervantes had lived all of his life poor.

It is extraordinarily rare to let alone create something for the first time, such as a novel, but to also create the best of its kind? The magnitude of genius it would take for a single man to write a novel with little to no influence, other than ancient Greek plays and chivalric poems of that nature, then to do it again ten years later? Unlike other writers of his time, such as his literary rival Shakespeare, who is commonly compared to Cervantes, writes from intuition. What that means is that the steam that is blown out of his ass, is good steam. Innovating words that

rhyme and words that sound good together like a musical anthem, from revelations of some sort, is then written down on paper. That is another form of genius which is different from Cervantes. On the other hand, the steam that comes out of Cervantes is steam that he experienced. For example, Cervantes had lived a brutal life of pain and anguish, which provided great fuel for his writing. The story that Cervantes writes comes from his past, rather than a revelation.

Cervantes had spent a good amount of years serving the Spanish crown as a soldier. He fought in various battles, one of them resulting in losing his left hand, another one when his fleet was raided by Muslim pirates, resulting in Cervantes serving his Moorish enemies as a slave; but later was held for ransom and was able to return to La Mancha to write *Don Quixote*. Cervantes himself had been fascinated by knight errantry, as he had already lived the life of an unfortunate, adventurous knight, and also reading chivalry, one of them being *Amadis de Gaula*, a play that is about knights serving their duke and duchess in the medieval era, which is the core reason of driving *Don Quixote* mad in the first place. One of the reasons why *Don Quixote* is a madman is that knight errantry supersedes the Renaissance era, which lasted from 500 A.D. to 1400, two hundred years before Cervantes' time. Today, that would be the equivalent to a random old man picking up a stick, thinking it is a bayonet musket from the Napoleon wars two hundred years ago, and charging into traffic thinking the cars are horse carriages of the French.

The main message of *Don Quixote* is that life should be life as it should be as opposed to how it is.

“And went, as people say,
Adventuring their way.” (Cervantes pg. 454)

Don Quixote in Cervantes' novel is exemplified as an idealist, as one who strives and manifests their visions and desires. *Don Quixote* thinks a barber cap is a helmet; hotels are

castles; windmills are giants; flock of sheep is an army; and El Dulcinea, is a lover as a figure of Don Quixote's imagination who is enchanted into the ugliest girl imaginable, and so he starts his mission to disenchant his true lover. At surface level, the novel Don Quixote is merely a book filled with lines of nonsensical proverbs and accounts of the foolhardy imagination of a wannabe knight: a comedy. Indeed, Don Quixote is true that it is a nonsensical 'funny book,' but behind the facade of the lighthearted comedy, there are captivating truths to be exposed. For instance, what if Don Quixote is not a madman, and those windmills are actually giants? Or his barber cap is really a helmet? You see, windmills are only windmills because they are objectified based on popular belief. The only reason these windmills are windmills is because that is what is commonly agreed; thus Don Quixote is a madman because he disagrees with the public. This could be compared to Socrates on trial, arguing against the concept of piety. In Don Quixote, Cervantes is arguing against the concept of sanity. If most people agreed that these windmills are in fact giants, similar to a vote in trial, they would ultimately be deemed as giants.

As Alonso Quixano set off on his adventure from La Mancha, read well in the regulations of knight errantry, changed his name to Don Quixote, found the worthy armor and steed, and recruited Sancho Panza as his loyal squire, Don Quixote was ready to defeat his foe, serve the king and queen and help the poor and needy. Throughout the novel Don Quixote, there had been a continual inseparable conversation between illiterate peasant Sancho Panza and madman Don Quixote. The squire and knight had continued to balance each other out, as they were polar opposites: literate vs. illiterate; fat vs. skinny; humble vs. prideful; down to earth vs. idealistic; gullible vs. paranoid; knight vs. squire. These endless contradictions serve as a common theme in Don Quixote.

Similar to how Martin Luther's translation of the bible built the German language; Dante's inferno the Italian language; Shakespeare in English; Cervantes' Don Quixote had revolutionized the Spanish language, similar to all of these famous authors of each region, usually in the Renaissance era. In the late 16th century and early 17th century, when Cervantes had lived, there had been a mass-censorship across the holy roman empire to only impose Christian influence. Thus, many of Cervantes favorite books of medieval literature were burned. As said in the beginning of Don Quixote, all of [his] books that were deemed un-christian-like were burned by Don Quixote's housekeeper and niece. Cervantes was living in a purified Spain subsequent to the Spanish Inquisition imposed by Isabella of Castile. There were also a lot of anti-semetic, anti-moorish and anything that wasn't christian, was alienated and executed. Cervantes himself fought Muslims in war, was captured by Muslim pirates and grew up resenting them. But in his work of Don Quixote, Cervantes depicts the narrator of the novel, Cid Hamet being the voice of Don Quixote as a Muslim. This means Cervantes himself saw the dire effects of narrow-mindedness of his time in book burning, censorship and discrimination. So he wrote a book that his enemy was the narrator, and gave an account of an open-minded alternate reality.

The writing style of the novel Don Quixote entails a series of 'episodes' where Don Quixote is depicted in a different setting and characters, but all being loosely connected. For the reasons of Cervantes telling a series of fantastical episodes in an open-minded manner, there is a strong possibility that he could be compared to the first ever historian, Herodotus. Instead of intuition driven Shakespeare, comparing Cervantes to Herodotus would be more accurate. Even though the histories of either Herodotus or Cervantes may not be true, they both capture all sides of the story, and they both write from experience.

The ending of Don Quixote is captivating. He had switched professions from knight errant to shepherd, then suddenly died. What could this mean? Perhaps this could continue the philosophy of endless contradictions. Are knights and shepherds polar opposites, but almost exactly the same? Cervantes also touches on the comparison between a soldier and a student. This could mean that whichever career one chooses, it will always come with its hardships, and no matter what path, there will never be an 'ideal' circumstance. After Don Quixote decided to retire from knight errantry, he died. Right after he insisted his merits are non-sense, El Dulcinea suddenly became disenchanted from ugly peasant girl to beautiful wife? Was the death of the character 'Don Quixote,' and the death of Alonso Quixano connected? Don Quixote died because of hopelessness and lack of imagination and doubting his career because of inevitable hardship. Cervantes' message is that anything is real if one could imagine it, no matter how absurd the antics are to others. In today's generation, it is critically important to stay open minded and not let the robotic era of narrow-minded objectification take over. What more is there to the human experience other than the manifestations of the imagination?