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Ink and Graphite: A Visual Comparison of Don Quixote and Journal of a UFO Investigator

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As is evident, both Miguel de Cervantes and David Halperin ponder reality in their respective novels, *Don Quixote* and *Journal of a UFO Investigator*. In Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Don Quixote adopts an entirely new persona and imagines things are not what they appear. He mistakes a windmill for a giant, inns for castles, and prostitutes for princesses, raising the question of whether or not he is simply crazy and actually believes he is seeing the aforementioned fantasies. Most would find it ridiculous to say that the giants, castles, and princesses are reality; however, if one person truly believes in them, shouldn't that be grounds for those things to be considered real? Does that therefore mean that fantasy is indeed Don Quixote's reality? These questions are undeniably intriguing, and similar questions rear up in Halperin's *Journal of a UFO Investigator*. In both novels, there were a significant number of characters and events that were questionably considered reality, providing a basis for this project, which seeks to capture the differences between fantasy and reality through drawings of the aforementioned novels and using ink and graphite as mediums.

Both *Don Quixote* and *Journal of a UFO Investigator* have a drawing which encompasses their respective main characters. The drawings separate the real characters from the imaginary using ink and graphite. This creates the illusion of invisibility, conveying the notion that the characters drawn in graphite are merely a figment of the hero's imagination.

To begin, the literary classic *Don Quixote* follows the (mis)adventures of Don Quixote de La Mancha, an older gentleman who has convinced himself he is a knight set out to restore chivalry and justice to the Spanish countryside. He recruits a simple farmer, Sancho Panza, as his squire, and together they roam the surrounding area making friends and foes through a seemingly endless string of escapades. The arguably delusional knight-errant and his acquiescent

squire create their own reality and encounter all aspects of life on this idealistic, though well-intentioned, adventure.

Don Quixote's delusions are clear, laughable and absurd in the beginning. As the novel progresses, however, other characters begin to involve themselves, and Quixote's delusions and reality intertwine. In the drawing of Don Quixote, the windmill/giant and inn/castle are very clearly reality versus fantasy. These visions were from the beginning of the book when what Quixote believed he was seeing was obviously fantastical.

However, Dulcinea, Quixote's supposed lady-in-waiting, is a more complex character. When Cervantes first introduces her, it is apparent that Quixote is merely seeing an imaginary, perfect woman in an actual townswoman. As the novel continues, Dulcinea becomes more and more omnipresent, and less of an associated delusion. At one point, Quixote himself admits to not knowing if she is real or not, but sticks to the idea of her as reality, as she is necessary to his life as a knight errant. She develops as her own character, as an archetypal woman. Because of this, the drawing of her flows into the line of characters, almost as if she were real. While her drawing is purely in graphite, the darkness and shading in her body and clothes conveys a sense of reality that the giant and castle lack. She also has a hand placed on Quixote's shoulder, showing that she is always with Quixote as his lady and his motivation.

The real characters in the Quixote drawing are a different matter. The polar opposite men, Quixote and Sancho Panza, stand side-by-side, as they do in many similar drawings by different artists. The drawing displays a classic interpretation of Quixote's bowl helmet, but a unique interpretation of Quixote's mismatched armor, as it is extremely haphazard in its fit and appearance. Sancho Panza is exactly the ostensibly unclean, fat, and good-tempered man common in artistic depictions and Cervantes' descriptions, right down to the floppy hat,

wineskin, and dirty facial hair. Panza's donkey is extremely true to a standard donkey, contrasting the quixotic presence and exaggerated, lanky proportions of Quixote's steed, Rocinante.

Similarly, *Journal of a UFO Investigator*, a contemporary novel written by David Halperin, is incredibly quixotic. Set in the 1960s, Halperin introduces the reader to Danny Shapiro, a lonely Jewish teenager trying to cope with his dying mother and hostile father. This coming-of-age tale takes a strange turn as Danny begins to invent a reality of his own. He hunts down aliens with the help of fellow investigators, falls in love, and travels to strange lands. Danny's fictional world melds so seamlessly with his everyday life that the reader begins to question what is real and what is not, what is possible and what is imagined. Acting as the hero in his alien epics, he finds the strength to confront reality and stand up to evils both real and imagined.

Halperin writes the protagonist, Danny's, life and imagination as melding seamlessly in the first few chapters, but as the book continues, fiction and reality slowly come undone until the near-end of the novel. Then, in the last few chapters, Halperin clearly displays the distinction between fiction and reality. This is the opposite of Quixote, in which fiction and reality constantly entangle with one another.

Because *Journal of a UFO Investigator* has little to no visual representations of its protagonists, the below representations are lacking any outside influence. Once again, the drawings of imaginary characters are in graphite, while the real ones are in ink. Starting from the left are the graphite drawings of Danny's friend Julian, Danny's love interest Rochelle, and Danny's half-alien baby. Both Julian and Rochelle resemble older teens, with Julian in his formal attire and Rochelle with the baby in her arms. Next to Julian and Rochelle are the ink

drawings of Jeff and Rosa, Danny's friend and love interest in reality, respectively. They appear behind Danny, as their relationship with him isn't quite what the reader initially imagines it to be.

These four characters are on the same side of Danny because they presumably parallel one other. Both boys were Danny's friends, and Julian, the UFO enthusiast and Danny's partner-in-crime, became the friend that Jeff never was. Rochelle and Rosa both acted as Danny's love interest, and Rochelle served as the instigator of the adult relationship Danny never got the chance to have with Rosa.

As Danny is the protagonist, he is in the middle of the drawing, all spiffed up in his suit coat and glasses. Around his neck is the Star of David necklace that Rochelle gives him and that he wears consistently throughout *Journal of a UFO Investigator*, representing Danny's inescapable Jewish identity. Danny carries a UFO book in his hand, representing the importance and influence of his journal, the annotated UFO book he recovered, and any other UFO books throughout the novel. He appears as a mature teenager, because his age throughout *Journal of a UFO Investigator* ranges from middle school to Senior year of high school—a significant age gap.

Danny's parents are directly to his right. The drawing of his mother depicts the woman as old and sickly, but smiling because even though she had many troubles with her health and husband, she always seemed to try to be a loving mother to Danny. The drawing of Danny's father shows the stress of life wearing on him via his slight excess of weight, graying hairs, and aging face. Danny's father seemed to be struggling with his dying wife, mistress from college, and anti-social son throughout *Journal of a UFO Investigator*. He didn't handle any of his situation well, and the art piece shows the toll it has taken on him throughout the years.

Lastly, the science-fiction characters reside on the far left. Sketched in graphite, the antagonistic three men in black, flying saucer, and a large moon and a lake creature capture the peak of Danny's imagination. The lake creature resembles a cockroach and centipede hybrid with its insect-like arms and triangular head, as Halperin describes in *Journal of a UFO Investigator*.

The fantastical characters are on the same side Danny's parents because they were Danny's outlet for coming to terms with his mother's illness and father's abuse. Danny retreated into an alien world that he still didn't quite understand, but not understanding this strange world was a much better alternative to being unable to cope with the unknown in his real world.

In summary, both of these novel's heroes relied on books to create their worlds for them. While the presentation of their fantasies versus realities differed, both Danny in David Halperin's *Journal of a UFO Investigator* and Quixote in Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* lived in the world that they wanted to, rather than merely accept reality as it was. The below sketches of the protagonists and antagonists of the respective novels display this concept perfectly, with major distinctions between reality and fantasy shown only with the power of ink and graphite.



Don Quixote. 8.5" x 11". Ink and graphite on plain paper.



Journal of a UFO Investigator. 8.5" x 11". Ink and graphite on plain paper.

Works Cited

De Cervantes, Miguel. *Don Quixote*. Trans. Edith Grossman. New York: Ecco, 2003. Print.

Halperin, David J. *Journal of a UFO Investigator*. New York: Viking, 2011. Print.