

Scholarly Editions and Real Readers

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At first sight, it seems surprising that *Don Quixote* has not been approached by textual studies in the new light cast by recent critical positions and the computer revolution. It is true that the problems it entails are not excessively complex, insofar as the number of elements involved is not a massive one; however, this text brings into play the basic issues in ecdotics,¹ including the question asked most frequently over the last decades: “where is the text?”, or laying a stress upon literary matters, “where is the work?”; or from yet another point of view: “what sorts of editions should we make?”, “what should be the roles of editors and scholars?”

What we have come to know as the First Part of *Don Quixote* was published in Madrid, under the title of *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, in late 1604, although it was dated 1605; the Second Part, entitled *Segunda parte del ingenioso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha*, also appeared in Madrid in 1615. The *Ingenioso hidalgo* contained no indication that the book was not a complete, self-sufficient work; however, a book entitled *ingenioso caballero* cannot, strictly speaking, declare itself the “Second Part” of another one called *ingenioso hidalgo*. Things become even more complicated if we consider that the *Ingenioso hidalgo* was divided into four clearly distinguishable “parts”, and therefore, in the best of cases, the sequel should have been called *Quinta parte...* (and so it was understood by Avellaneda, the author of the apocryphal continuation of 1614, and indeed was used in some early editions).

¹ “Ecdotics” is probably an unfamiliar term to English readers, but its equivalents in Romance languages have been used since the publication of H. Quentin’s classic *Essais de critique textuelle (Ecdotique)*, Paris, 1926. In its wider sense “ecdotics” has come to be used increasingly to denote the study of “all the elements that mark the entire path of a text between the author and the readers (or users), as long as such elements are considered from the perspective of an edition, ancient or modern, printed, electronic or of a different type.” This is how the term has been defined, for example, in the journal *Ecdotica*, published by the Dipartimento di Italianistica of the University of Bologna and the Centro para la Edición de los Clásicos Españoles (presentation and summary of volumes 1 and 2 in <http://www.cecc.uab.es/publicacions.asp?coleccion=8>).

This detail should suffice to raise simple, yet intricate questions, such as the following: which title should be printed on the cover of a modern edition of *Don Quixote*? Are the *Ingenioso hidalgo* and the *Ingenioso caballero* two works, or just one, and should they be published as two books or as one? There are many other elements causing the same perplexity.

A few weeks after the *princeps*, in early 1605, the same bookseller and the same printer published a second edition of the *Ingenioso hidalgo*, containing a couple of lengthy additions, which were doubtless made by Cervantes, and a few minor variants which, given the previous certainty, may be attributed to him, at least in part. The two lengthy additions clearly made by Cervantes concern Sancho's ass, which in the *princeps* version is sometimes lost and sometimes found with no explanation as to how or why. This inconsistency, caused by materials being shifted from one place to another in the "original", or printer's copy, led to obvious laughter; Cervantes tried to solve this by inserting the said fragments, one (in chapter XXIII) to account for the disappearance of the ass, and the other (in chapter XXX) to mention its re-appearance. Nevertheless, Cervantes made a spectacular mistake, caused by haste (the second edition was prepared even faster than the first one, to the extent that two printers were involved), and above all, by the over-confidence and lack of care of one who lives within his own work and attaches little importance to detail. Thus, the fragment concerning the loss of the beast was inserted earlier than it should, so that Sancho continues to ride for a couple of chapters, and it is only later that he starts to miss the ass... In other words, the intended solution had only made things worse. How could the conundrum be solved? At the beginning of the Second Part (1615), when Don Quixote and his friends comment on the repercussions of the publication of the *Ingenioso hidalgo*, Cervantes goes off at a tangent (II, 3-4). Instead of telling things as they happened — since, after all, the matter was hardly so serious and important — he prefers not to mention the mistake in the second edition and to cast a modest veil upon the famous error in the first one: the theft of the animal is told as it was most prob-