

The Significance of Don Quijote's Discovery of a New Edition of Avellaneda

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IN THE YEAR 1605, CERVANTES—age 58, retired tax collector, veteran of military service, and also already an author, having published a pastoral novel twenty years earlier—published *Don Quijote*.¹ Not *Don Quijote*, PART I, but just *Don Quijote a secas*. The book was instantly and immensely successful. In 1605, while the typesetters were taking the type apart from the first edition, a second printing was called for, and the part that was torn apart had to be reset. There were two editions in Valencia that same year, and even two pirated Spanish-language editions in Lisbon done by two Portuguese printers. With this success, you might think that Cervantes would sit down and start writing a second part right away, but he didn't do it, and after years had gone by, it was looking like he was *never* going to do it.

Why did it look like Cervantes was not going to write a sequel? First, the structure of the book indicates that it was complete. It was written in four parts, in imitation of the celebrated *Amadís de Gaula*, the original Spanish romance of chivalry, which was also complete in four parts. Second, the title page of the Cervantes's *Don Quijote* from 1605 read simply, "El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha," and nowhere was it to be read that this was just the first of two volumes. I say this because Cervantes's first book, *La Galatea*, states boldly that it is just the first part of the work (which was never completed). And finally, at the end of the book, the reader learns, perhaps with dismay and chagrin, that there really could be no sequel to *Don Quijote* because, as the text says, "no authentic

1 Fred de Armas suggested that I publish this to complement his article. It was originally a paper delivered at the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference in 1998. Carolyn Nadeau and Matt Wyszynski were also speakers; and Jay Allen was among the half-dozen others who populated the audience.

information about his third expedition could be found, although tradition held that he went to Zaragoza to compete in a some jousts that were held there.” The hopes of those who longed for a continuation of Cervantes’ work diminished with each passing year. Cervantes meanwhile was diverting his attention to *other* projects. In 1613 he published his *Exemplary Novels*. But until he published this collection, eight years after the appearance of *Don Quijote*, there was no indication that he would publish *anything* ever again, much less a sequel to his *Don Quijote*.

Cervantes himself fueled the flames of doubt about a sequel in the very last line of the *Quijote*, which is a subtle dare, a challenge to *another* author to continue Don Quijote’s adventures. It is a slightly modified verse from Canto 30 of Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, which reads, “Forsi altro canterà con miglior plectro” perhaps *someone else will sing with a better plectrum* (or pen, as Cervantes later interpreted this line).⁷

Since Cervantes hadn’t published his own second part, since he had dared someone else—*anyone* else—to take up his pen, and since so much time had gone by, another author, a certain Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda, in all innocence accepted the challenge and wrote his own continuation. In this book—and what could be more natural—he sends Don Quijote to Zaragoza to participate in the jousting tournament, taking the itinerary from the end of the 1605 *Quijote*. At the end of the book, this second Don Quijote winds up in the crazy house in Toledo, and Avellaneda—following *exactly* what Cervantes had done at the end of his book—suggested an itinerary for a future author to take up. He stated that when Don Quijote got out of the crazy house, he took a new squire—a young lady, and pregnant as well, of all things—and went to have adventures in Ávila, Salamanca and Valladolid. He then invited yet another author to continue Don Quijote’s adventures, echoing Cervantes’ dare, saying that the knight’s adventures would not lack “a better pen to celebrate them.” No one took up this challenge.

In fact, whereas there have been editions of Cervantes’s *Don Quijote* practically every year since 1605, there was no second edition of Avellaneda’s continuation for a hundred-eighteen years. This has a bearing on my topic. In 1614, little did anyone know, Cervantes seemingly was all but finished with his own second part of *Don Quijote* when Avellaneda’s continuation came out in the city of Tarragona, printed by Felipe Roberto, who is not at all well known—he had printed only 23 books—at least, 23 *known* books—in the 26 years preceding his edition of the false *Quijote*.

When Cervantes learned of Avellaneda's continuation, he was furious—not only because Avellaneda's work had appeared first, but also because Avellaneda neither possessed Cervantes' inventiveness nor remotely understood the psychological subtleties of the original Don Quijote and the original Sancho. Cervantes was angry also because of several insults that Avellaneda had hurled at him in the Prologue, dealing with his age and maimed hand.

Since he had not yet quite finished his own second part, Cervantes, with pen in hand, had ready means with which to discredit and even conquer his mysterious foe. I would like to trace here what he did, step by step, so you can see how his method developed to destroy both Avellaneda and his characters, and so you can see how ludicrous it would seem for him, after destroying Avellaneda, to create a second edition of the book published within a year of Avellaneda's first edition.

Almost everybody says that Cervantes learned of the Avellaneda continuation while he was writing Chapter 59 of his own second part because that is where the spurious version is first mentioned. There is no reason to believe that the instant Cervantes heard of Avellaneda's book he lashed out against it with his pen. He could have found out several chapters earlier, and continued with his game plan while he figured out what to do, then, finally, in Chapter 59, had figured out how to combat Avellaneda. I do think that it was finally in Chapter 59 when he finally worked out what his complete plan of attack would be.

In any case, in Chapter 59, a certain Don Jerónimo and Don Diego come to the inn where Don Quijote is staying, and Don Quijote happens to overhear Don Diego suggest that they read another chapter from the *Second Part of Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Needless to say, this startling revelation is of immense interest to Don Quijote, partly because he had asked Sansón Carrasco if a second part of his story would be coming out. But when he hears that the book in question claims that Don Quijote is no longer in love with his lady Dulcinea (because such was indeed the case in Avellaneda's continuation), he flies into a rage and announces that *he* is Don Quijote, and that he is still very much in love with Dulcinea. The two men seem to recognize instinctively that our Don Quijote is indeed the real one, and that the one described in their book has to be a *fictional* entity who has merely been assigned the same name as the real person now in their presence.

The result of this astounding news is, of course, that Don Quijote re-

solves never to go to Zaragoza, his original destination, but to go to Barcelona instead, so that he can never be confused with his *fictional* counterpart. Why Barcelona? Why not Cuenca or even Tarragona. In fact, Don Quijote has traditionally avoided cities. Why did he have the urge to go to Barcelona? Because Barcelona was part of Cervantes' plan.

At this point Cervantes' stance is that his own characters are real and that Avellaneda's are pure fiction. But no one, not even Cervantes, can combat fictional entities. He had to make Avellaneda's characters real first.

Two chapters go by before we hear of the false Don Quijote again. When Don Quijote enters Barcelona, he is welcomed as the *REAL* Don Quijote, and "not the false, not the fictional one, not the apocryphal one who has appeared in false stories recently." Even here, Avellaneda's hero is still pure fiction, still nothing more than the hero of a novel, a figment of someone's imagination.

Then something very strange happens. In the next chapter Don Quijote is wandering around Barcelona and he comes across a book printer. One of the books being are put together is none other than the *Second part of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quijote de la Mancha*, which Don Quijote says he recognizes, and lets it go at that. It seems odd that Cervantes would create a new edition of his rival's book. Don Quijote doesn't lash out since the book printer is hardly responsible for what he prints.

Later, in Chapter 70, when Altisidora seemingly returns from the dead—and she had made up all of this, of course—, she says that she saw devils at the gates of hell playing a game resembling baseball, but instead of using balls, they were swinging at books. One of the volumes that they were playing with was brand new, that is, *never read*, and when it was hit, it flew to pieces. "One devil said: 'Find out what book that is.' And the other devil responded: 'This is the *Second part of the history of Don Quijote de la Mancha*, not the one written by... its original author, but rather by an Aragonese who comes from Tordesillas.' 'Take it away from here,' responded the other devil, 'and cast it into the depths of hell: may my eyes see it no longer.' 'Is it so bad?' responded the other. 'So bad,' replied the first, 'that if on purpose I myself wanted to write a worse one, I couldn't do it.'" Avellaneda's work is still regarded as fiction here, and the devil himself, could not write a worse book.

But it is in Chapter 72 where Cervantes gives the *coup de grâce*, and the result is truly brilliant. In that chapter, Don Quijote, the *real* Don Quijote, meets Don Álvaro Tarfe—who is the most important supporting charac-

ter in Avellaneda's story—at an inn. When our Don Quijote asks him if he is the same one written about in the book, Don Álvaro says, "I am the same... and that Don Quijote, the principal subject of that story, was a great friend of mine..."

So, now Cervantes' thrust has changed. We had thought, or had been led to believe ever since we heard of the spurious volume in Chapter 59, that Avellaneda's creation was purely a work of *fiction*, that his Don Quijote and Sancho were nothing but characters in a book, while our Don Quijote was a real person (all this, of course, within the framework of Cervantes' own fiction). But now that Álvaro Tarfe enters Cervantes' book in the flesh, and says he knows Don Quijote, we are forced to believe that there really was a second Don Quijote and a second Sancho wandering about Spain, exactly as Avellaneda had described, and that they really had gone to Zaragoza for the jousts, and that the other Don Quijote was now locked up in the Toledo insane asylum. Avellaneda's Don Quijote and Sancho then have become as real as Don Quijote and Sancho in Cervantes's *own* book. He has brought them to life and given them eternal fame rather than casting them into eternal oblivion. Don Quijote has Álvaro Tarfe sign an affidavit to the effect that the Don Quijote that Álvaro Tarfe knew was an imposter.

Now that he has destroyed Avellaneda and his work, Cervantes is going to change Avellaneda's characters back into entities of fiction. When Don Quijote is dictating his will, he declares that if his executors should ever meet Avellaneda, they should "on my part, beg his pardon, as earnestly as they can, for my having given, so unthinkingly, the cause for his having written so many and such great foolish things that are written there," meaning that his own real exploits caused Avellaneda to compose these "foolish things"—that is, fiction.

Cervantes went out to ruin Avellaneda and succeeded. So much so that people who *should* read and know the false *Don Quijote* have been so turned off that they have never done it.

So, if Cervantes was so interested in destroying Avellaneda, why *in the world* would he have a second edition printed in Barcelona, and so soon after the first edition was done? You recall that very soon after the first edition of Cervantes' *Don Quijote* was published, a new one had to be printed because the demand for it was so great. This appearance within *Don Quijote*, Part II, of a second edition of Avellaneda only a few months after the first edition would seemingly attest to an incredible popularity of Avellaneda. And we all know that, in real life, it was so popular that its second

edition didn't come out for 118 years. In that same time period, Cervantes' work had had 37 editions.

Why did Cervantes, who systematically destroyed Avellaneda, his book, and its characters, all of a sudden dignify it with a second edition? Why? For years I couldn't understand why, but now I think I do, largely because of his decision to have his Don Quijote go to Barcelona and not elsewhere.

When was it that Don Quijote decided to go to Barcelona? It was precisely in Chapter 59, when he first heard about his rival. His new friend, don Jerónimo, told him that there were jousts in Barcelona, too, and that he could compete there, and instantly our Don Quijote decides to go to that city. Of course, typical of Don Quijote, when he gets to Barcelona he doesn't ever ask where the jousts are to take place, when they'll be, where to sign up, but rather just goes with the flow. At the end, a joust does come to him which ends his career, but he wasn't looking for that one.

So, Cervantes' plan was to send Don Quijote specifically to Barcelona, and saw to it that while he was in Barcelona, that he discovered a second edition of Avellaneda. It was because Cervantes *knew* something that he caused this happen.

And what did he know? Cervantes was a tremendous reader, a student of literature, and he knew *books*. And—I confess that I conjecture here—he could tell a book from one press from a book from another press just by looking at it; just by examining the title page, because every printer had distinctive typography, decorations, and sets of unique flowery capital letters. It was on the basis of typography that Homer Serís discovered that Juan de la Cuesta, the printer who prepared the first *Don Quijote*, was in such a rush to get the new edition out, he had to job out part of the typesetting of the edition at the Imprenta Real. Serís recognized the typographic style of the Imprenta Real. So, Cervantes, by looking at a book, like Homero Serís three centuries later, could tell on whose presses it was printed.

Don Quijote himself just looked at the book for a few seconds in Chapter 59, but Cervantes must have read it very carefully. In doing so he noticed similarities in typography, decorations, and typographic style, not with Felipe Roberto, the printer from Tarragona, but rather with the presses of Sebastián de Cormellas in *Barcelona*, as the oft-forgotten Francisco Vindel showed in 1937.² Cervantes would have known books from

2 *La verdad sobre el falso Quijote* (Barcelona: Antigua librería Babra).

the presses of Cormellas well since that printer had done editions of *La Araucana*, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Lope's *Arcadia*, Lope's *El peregrino*, and several volumes of multiple plays by Lope; and even a book about *El pez Nicolao*, which Don Quijote refers to in Part II, Chapter 18.

Where the book was printed, I didn't figure out—Vindel did. What I did figure out, thanks to Vindel, was that Cervantes was playing a little game. He was saying something like: "I know that Avellaneda's book was printed in Barcelona and not in Tarragona. So, I'll have my Don Quijote go to Barcelona and there discover the real printer of Avellaneda's book." The object of the game was to find out why Don Quijote stumbled across the printing of Avellaneda in Barcelona. Up to now all annotators have been perplexed, and have duly noted that no edition of Avellaneda was printed in Barcelona in that century (In this century, twice, 1905 and 1962). I think that Cervantes was waiting for a player of his game, notably me, to come along and figure it out. And now readers of this *Bulletin* know the secret, too.

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