

As a step toward preparing a truly critical edition of Don Quixote, Flores in this volume examines the compositorial practices of the Madrigal-Cuesta press. Analyzing the orthographic variants found in the first edition of the Quijote, he demonstrates that these variants occur in identifiable groups, and concludes that the groups reflect the spelling preferences imposed by Cuesta’s compositors. Identified by pliegos are four such compositors who worked on the first Quixote edition. Flores also shows that the pages of Don Quijote were not set serially, but with (usually) two compositors working simultaneously, estimating, by casting-off copy, the point in the manuscript at which each would begin work. That these estimates were not precise, and last/minute adjustments in the composed text necessary, explains the varying number of lines per page, many of the expansions and contractions, and even a missing chapter-heading (Chapter 43), which was deleted to make room for extra lines of type.

Because the estimates were inexact, and because two additional compositors were called in near the end of the job, suggesting a rushed schedule, Flores concludes that there would not have been a printed edition of 1604 used as printer’s copy, and the edition traditionally
accepted as the princeps is, in fact, precisely that. Flores then turns to
the second edition of Cuesta, demonstrating that the compositors of
that edition (presumably two, plus those of the pages printed at the
Imprenta Real) worked from the previously printed first edition, without
access to Cervantes’ manuscript.

Despite his ground-breaking work, Flores has [p. 955] not collated
multiple copies of the Cuesta editions of the Quijote to detect alter-
ations in press, nor doe she explain why this standard practice should
be unnecessary. It is surprising to find not even a passing reference to
Richard Schneer’s Juan de la Cuesta (University of Alabama Press,
1973), and to see that Rodríguez Marin’s editorial work is judged only
on the basis of his 1916 edition. Flores is rather hard both on Cuesta’s
compositors, who should not be judged by contemporary standards,
and earlier Quixote editors.

Skeptics in the matter of textual criticism continually question its
practical value. Flores’ declared goal is the preparation of an old-spell-
ing edition of Part I (only) of Don Quijote. By identifying the spelling
the compositors imposed on the manuscript (almost certainly Cervan-
tes’ autograph), and subtracting these alterations from the text of Cues-
ta’s edition, he intends to purify the text by establishing and following
Cervantes’ own orthography. However laudable this procedure is in
theory, the results seem meager so far: he can only conclude that Cer-
vantes wrote Dulzinea rather than Dulcinea, and that he spelled certain
forms of haber without initial h. One wonders why he did not consult
the small number of Cervantine autographs for information, however
limited, about his spelling.

Nevertheless, Flores seems to know well what he is doing, and he
may indeed produce the definitive edition of Don Quijote, Part I. One
final note: this study is well written and his complex arguments easy to
follow. Good writing is not so frequently found that it should go without
praise.

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\[1\]“Alternations,” in the printed text.]