

Cervantes Project: The Digital Quixote Iconography Collection

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Abstract

In 2001 the Cervantes Project (CP) started the creation of a hypertextual archive to include digital images of the illustrations taken from over 500 of the most significant editions to form the textual iconography of the *Quixote* (as permitted by copyright limitations). Our main objectives are to make the illustrations more accessible and to establish their contribution to the reception and interpretation of the text. At the time of this poster's creation, the archive has acquired, digitized, and made available online more than 25,000 images, supported by a fully searchable database and complemented by rich metadata and innovative visualization tools.

Poster Abstract

It is often stated by critics that the *Quixote* is a theatrical, graphic, and visual book. Thus, visual representations, like theatrical performances, popular iconography, and book illustrations, have been recognized as significant contributions to the understanding of Cervantes' masterpiece. Nevertheless, the thousands of woodcuts, engravings, etchings, drawings, and lithographs that have accompanied the text are, for the most part, a little known interpretative tradition, and a much neglected critical and artistic treasure.

1

Obstacles, such as the difficulty to get access to rare books, have prevented the illustrative tradition from being well appreciated by scholars, students, and users in general. In 2001 the Cervantes Project (CP) started the creation of a hypertextual archive to include digital images of the illustrations taken from over 500 of the most significant editions to form the textual iconography of the *Quixote* (as permitted by copyright limitations). Our main objectives are to make the illustrations more accessible and to establish their contribution to the reception and interpretation of the text. At the present time, the archive has acquired, digitized, and made available online more than 25,000 images, supported by a fully searchable database and complemented by rich metadata and innovative visualization tools.

2

The availability of the archive will contribute to the understanding and appreciation of Cervantes' novel by initiating new explorations from many perspectives: textual, artistic, critical, bibliographical, and historical. In particular, we provide resources and assistance to examine the reception and evolution of the *Quixote's* readings across time, culture, audience, and milieu. Furthermore, the images can be grouped according to several layers of content to cater for the users' need for information selection of a specific critical focus. This is achieved by cataloging each image using a comprehensive taxonomy of the episodes, adventures, themes, and characters. We are also in the process of inserting cataloged anchors in the textual narrative to establish thematic interlinking between the locality in the narrative and the subject of the illustrations.

3

At the same time, this novel iconographic approach in our project will enable scholars to go beyond the literary aspect of Cervantes' works. As an invaluable pictorial depository, we also emphasize supplying information regarding the historic value and artistic significance of the images. The hermeneutic and aesthetic values of each individual image can be carefully examined by art historians and the results incorporated in the archive as scholarly commentary. Additionally, we are also developing biographical commentary about artists and engravers. These rich scholarly commentaries will

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help to boost the study of book illustration art, which has been to date secondary in Art History, in aspects such as the evolution of techniques, from the first woodcuts (early 17th century) to modern mechanical offset (20th century), and the influence or achievement of an engraver, illustrator, or lithographer.

For additional information about the project, and to view the Digital Quixote Iconography collection, see <http://cervantes.tamu.edu/>.

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Poster



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