

Web site: <http://bigfoot.com/~daniel.eisenberg>  
Email: [daniel.eisenberg@bigfoot.com](mailto:daniel.eisenberg@bigfoot.com)

This article was first published in *Hispanic Studies in Honor of Alan D. Deyermond: A North American Tribute*, ed. John S. Miletich (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1986), pp. 93-106. The text that follows is the revised English original that was used in preparing the translation, by Elvira de Riquer, published in my *Estudios cervantinos* (Barcelona: Sirmio, 1991), pp. 11-36. The edition of Cervantes' works used is that of Schevill and Bonilla, citing volume, page, and line, followed by (for *Don Quijote*) the part and chapter.

El texto traducido puede leerse en mi libro *La biblioteca de Cervantes* que, aunque inédito y no listo para publicarse, se halla en mi página <http://bigfoot.com/~daniel.eisenberg>

## Did Cervantes Have a Library?<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Eisenberg

El que lee mucho y anda mucho,  
vee mucho y sabe mucho.<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not we take as autobiographical the statement of *Don Quijote*'s "segundo autor" that he was "aficionado a leer, aunque sean los papeles rotos de las calles" (*I*, 129, 28-29, I, 9), there can be no doubt that

---

<sup>1</sup>My research on Cervantes' library was supported in part by a short-term fellowship from the Bibliographical Society of America. The following works are referred to in abbreviated form: "Astrana" = Luis Astrana Marín, *Vida ejemplar y heroica de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra* (Madrid: Reus, 1948-58); "Rodríguez Marín" = Francisco Rodríguez Marín, *Nuevos documentos cervantinos* (Madrid, 1914), also available in his *Estudios cervantinos* (Madrid: Atlas, 1947); "Fitzmaurice-Kelly" = James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. A Memoir* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913); "Pérez Pastor" = Cristóbal Pérez Pastor, *Documentos cervantinos hasta ahora inéditos* (Madrid, 1897-1902); "Asensio" = José María Asensio y Toledo, *Nuevos documentos para ilustrar la vida de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra* (Seville, 1864); "Navarrete" = Martín Fernández de Navarrete, *Vida de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra* (Madrid, 1819).

<sup>2</sup>*Don Quijote*, III, 321, 16-17, II, 25; similarly *Persiles*, I, 194, 23-24, II, 6.

Cervantes liked books, and read a large number of them. Evidence for it is everywhere. Books are discussed frequently in his works: what they do contain, what they should contain but do not, which ones to read and how to write better ones. By no means is this treatment of books limited to *Don Quijote*: at the beginning of his writing career, the “Canto de Calíope” is a detailed discussion of literature, and near the end of it, a book-length poem, the *Viaje del Parnaso*, is devoted to the same topic. Cervantes was so enamored of books that even the dogs Cipión and Berganza discuss them. While he presents sympathetically the human need for recreation, for constructive activity with which to occupy idle hours, other forms of recreation are often censured.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps I am belaboring the obvious; that Cervantes loved books, that he was a bibliophile, is not a controversial position. What I hope to establish in this article is that Cervantes not only loved books but owned them: that he had a library. There are, it would seem, three reasons why this modest thesis has not been accepted.

The first is the assumption that Cervantes used someone else’s books. While it is probable that on occasion he used the books of others, there is no documentary or textual support for a primary dependence. *Don Quijote* suggests more the lending of books than the borrowing of them,<sup>4</sup> and it would have been most difficult for Cervantes to have obtained his great culture from borrowed books. There is not even a potential lender for such books, with tastes known to coincide with Cervantes. That he refers so rarely to old books is an argument against the regular use of the library of a nobleman, such as

---

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter V of *A Study of “Don Quixote”* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 1987), for a discussion of recreation in Cervantes’ works, and the relation of reading to it.

<sup>4</sup>When books are a topic in *Don Quijote*, the controller of the books is the center of narrative attention, and books are freely, even assertively shared by such a person. “Levadle a casa y leedle”, says the priest of one of Don Quijote’s books (*I*, 102, 2–3, I, 6), an attitude confirmed by Don Quijote himself: “Allí [mi aldea] le podré *dar* más de treientos libros” (*I*, 343, 27–28, I, 24). It is Cardenio who tells us of Luscinda’s request to borrow from him a *libro de caballerías* (*I*, 342, 29–30, I, 24). Juan Palomeque, also, wishes to share the pleasure he gets from his books. The book which from the fictional presentation of it in *Don Quijote* (II, 59) would seem to have been read, at first, in a copy belonging to someone else is Avellaneda’s continuation.

Lemos; another suggestion sometimes found, that Cervantes regularly read books from the stock of his publishers, the booksellers Francisco de Robles and Juan de Villarroel,<sup>5</sup> is incompatible with the practice of a successful book dealer.

A second reason why it has been thought that Cervantes owned few books is the belief that he could hardly afford them: “los libros cuestan caros y Cervantes era pobre”, as Armando Cotarelo Valledor put it in his *Cervantes, lector*.<sup>6</sup> Let us assume for a moment that this was true, that Cervantes’ economic class was a step or more below that of those for whom new books were published, and that he would portray a character, Alonso Quijano, making sacrifices to acquire books<sup>7</sup> which he himself would not have made. Still, among Cervantes’ “muchos amigos”<sup>8</sup> were many literary figures: Cristóbal de Mesa, Pedro de Padilla, Salas Barbadillo, Juan de Jáuregui, Vicente Espinel, and so on. Someone so deserving, yet so poor that he could not afford to purchase books, would have received books as gifts; authors, just as today, received free copies of their books.<sup>9</sup> At the very least, Cervantes must have received

---

<sup>5</sup>“No creo...que Cervantes poseyera muchos libros, ni quepa reconstruir su biblioteca propia...; su vida andariega y la carencia de un domicilio fijo durante muchos años no le consentiría tenerlos; y así al fin de su vida asienta en Madrid, en su gran pobreza, es muy poco probable que pudiese comprarlos, y harto haría él con ver los nuevos que se vendían en la tienda de su editor y librero Juan de Villarroel, sita en la plazuela del Ángel, vecina a la calle de las Huertas, morada de Cervantes” (Agustín G. de Amezúa y Mayo, *Cervantes, creador de la novela corta española* [Madrid: CSIC, 1955–58], I, 55, who cites in a note Icaza’s statement, “Cervantes debía tener pocos libros”).

<sup>6</sup>Madrid: Instituto de España, 1943, p. 6. When we find incontrovertible, direct evidence of Cervantes’ book purchases (the *Historia de Santo Domingo* mentioned below), the assumption of a context of poverty means that the purchase is given additional weight (Alban Forcione, *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982], p. 327, n. 19).

<sup>7</sup>“Vendió muchas hanegas de tierra de sembradura para comprar libros de cavallerías en que leer” (*I*, 50, 18–20, I, 1).

<sup>8</sup>*Novelas ejemplares*, I, 20, 6–7, Prólogo.

<sup>9</sup>Cervantes himself, for example, received 24 free copies of the *Novelas ejemplares* (Pérez Pastor, I, 178–82; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 180; the relevant passage is extracted by Fitzmaurice-Kelly in his introduction to

copies of the many books in which his prefatory or other verses were published.

Yet neither part of Cotarelo's statement is correct: books were not expensive, as we will see later, and while Cervantes was not rich, this does not mean that he was therefore poor;<sup>10</sup> his alleged economic misery has something of Romantic myth about it.<sup>11</sup> His net worth was considerable; at the time of his marriage in 1586, he gave

---

the translation of the *Exemplary Novels* [Glasgow: Gowans & Gray, 1902], I, x, n. 1). Agustín de Rojas, in addition to 1100 *reales*, received 30 free copies of *El viaje entretenido* in exchange for its *privilegio* (Astrana, V, 532); Salas Barbadillo received 100 *reales* and 30 copies of his *Caballero puntual* (Astrana, VII, 71). In Cristóbal Pérez Pastor's *Bibliografía madrileña* (Madrid, 1891–1907), we find that Cervantes' friend Cristóbal de Mesa received 30 copies “encuadernados en pergamino” of *Las navas de Tolosa* (II, 125), Juan González de Mendoza received from Blas de Robles 36 copies of his *Historia del reino de la China* (III, 378), Juan Gutiérrez 1100 *reales* (100 *ducados*) plus 50 copies of his *Practicae Quaestiones*, out of which were to be taken the copies for the “concejos” (III, 379; at I, 325 we find these were 27 copies), Francisco Faria, in lieu of cash, 200 copies of his translation of Claudiano (II, 137), and López Maldonado, similarly, 200 copies of his *Cancionero* (III, 419). In *Orígenes de la novela*, I, NBAE, 1 (Madrid: Bailly-Bailliére, 1905), cdxci (II, 367 of the *edición nacional*, second edition, Madrid: CSIC, 1962), Menéndez Pelayo published the contract for the sale in 1582 to Blas de Robles of the *privilegio* of the never-published *Diana tercera* of Gabriel Hernández, in which the author was to receive, in addition to 500 *reales*, 12 copies of the book.

<sup>10</sup>This typically Cervantine polarization (either rich or poor, *necesidad* or *abundancia*, with nothing in between) is found in the *Aprobación* of Márquez Torres (III, 21, 23–22, 2, II, *Aprobación*), which, as Mayáns suggested, may well have been written by Cervantes himself (see my *A Study of “Don Quixote”*, pp. 16–17, n. 42).

<sup>11</sup>The case is very similar to that of an author with extraordinary parallels with Cervantes (wheat merchant, for a time, in Andalucía; a literary man with dreams of military glory; interest in true and false history; many years of reading disguised with claims of little learning; death in 1616): Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, the Inca Garcilaso. His “crónica tendencia a hablar de sus estrecheces económicas ha formado en torno suyo una leyenda de angustias pecuniarias que no es fácil de deshacer” (Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María, S. I., in *Obras completas del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega*, I, BAE, 132 [Madrid: Atlas, 1965], p. xxi). Much the same is true of Lope as well; see José María Díez Borque, *Sociedad y teatro en la España de Lope de Vega* (Barcelona: Antoni Bosch, 1978), pp. 93–95.

his wife 1100 *reales* (100 *ducados*),<sup>12</sup> “que confieso que caben en la décima parte de mis bienes y acciones” (Astrana, VII, 689).<sup>13</sup> The property of his wife was worth 4262 *reales* (144,897 *maravedíes*),<sup>14</sup> plus considerable property she was to inherit, “[una] hacienda familiar...no...despreciable” (Astrana, III, 473). Márquez Torres’ allusion to Cervantes’ poverty (*supra*, note 10), and Cide Hamete’s comment on poverty (IV, 71, 10–72, 9, II, 44), sometimes cited as evidence for that of Cervantes, were written during the period in which Cervantes was economically most comfortable, publishing the most and supported at least in part by a patron; Cide Hamete’s comment is accompanied by an attack on ostentatious expense, which is also attacked in our glimpses of Teresa and in Sancho’s experiences as governor. In sharp contrast with *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*, in Cervantes’ works we find little presentation of hunger and material need, rather many scenes of abundance, combined with a relative indifference to worldly goods.

Key evidence of Cervantes’ poverty for biographers,

---

<sup>12</sup>For simplicity, throughout this article I have converted units of money into *reales*, at the rates of one *ducado* = 11 *reales*; 1 *real* = 34 *maravedíes*. For an introduction to Spanish money, see the bibliography cited by Joseph J. Gwara, “The Identity of Juan de Flores: The Evidence of the *Crónica incompleta de los Reyes Católicos*”, *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 11 (1987 [1988]), 103–30 and 205–22, at p. 207, n. 48.

<sup>13</sup>If one tenth of Cervantes’ property was 1100 *reales*, then his total wealth in 1586 was 11,000 *reales*, a large sum considering that to our knowledge he returned from captivity in 1580 with no cash and debts to be paid from his ransom. (His ransom from captivity in Algiers was 6750 *reales* [500 *escudos*]; see Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 48–57.) The amount of the taxes he was engaged to collect in 1594 was only 75,000 *reales*. (The final figure was 2,557,029 *maravedíes* (75,207 *reales*), according to documents published by Navarrete, pp. 437–38 [Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 98, n. 1] and Ramón León Máinez, *Cervantes y su época*, I (only vol. published) [Cádiz, 1901], p. 514 [Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 109, n. 1; Narciso Alonso Cortés, *Casos cervantinos que tocan a Valladolid* (Madrid: Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1916), p. 126]. Earlier figures [Navarrete, pp. 418, 421, 423, 425] are trivially lower.)

<sup>14</sup>This figure is the 5362 *reales* (182,297 *maravedíes*) total (Astrana, III, 471; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 69, n. 3), minus the 1100 *reales* (100 *ducados*) which were Cervantes’ wedding gift.

such as Fitzmaurice-Kelly, is his borrowing of money.<sup>15</sup> This is not, however, a sign of poverty, but of good credit, which Cervantes retained throughout his life. He was, for example, able to find a guarantor for the sum of 44,000 *reales* (4000 *ducados*) and the word of he and his wife was accepted as sufficient surety for 29,400 *reales* (1,000,000 *maravedíes*).<sup>16</sup> In 1585 he was able to borrow a very large sum, 6000 *reales*, for a purpose unknown to us, apparently repaying it as agreed 6 months later.<sup>17</sup> Similarly showing that there is an unknown side to Cervantes' financial affairs, we also find him in 1589 "extrañamente muy a lo dineroso" (Astrana, IV, 366) and able to lend the large sum of 1600 *reales*; so much cash the biographer Astrana can only explain, improbably, as gambling winnings;<sup>18</sup> at this same date we find reference to an earlier loan of an even larger amount, 2160 *reales*.<sup>19</sup> On another occasion he was able to lend 990 *reales* (90 *ducados*),<sup>20</sup> on yet another 340 (Asensio, p. 15; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 80, n. 5). We have a power given to an assistant in June of 1589, and another to his wife and sister in July of 1590, to collect debts otherwise unknown to us.<sup>21</sup> Compared with which, it seems incorrect to draw conclusions of poverty from bor-

---

<sup>15</sup>Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 78, 102, 109.

<sup>16</sup>Navarrete, pp. 418, 421, and 422–25; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 89–91.

<sup>17</sup>Pérez Pastor, II, 93–97 (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 69; Astrana III, 503–05); see also Pérez Pastor, I, 93–95.

<sup>18</sup>Rodríguez Marín, Doc. CXI; Astrana, IV, 372–75.

<sup>19</sup>The document in which it is mentioned was first published by Asensio, pp. 8–9 (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 73–74); it has been reedited by Astrana, IV, 366–67, n. 4.

<sup>20</sup>Pérez Pastor, II, 254 (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 102–03; Astrana, V, 339–40). The document is a receipt, dated February of 1599, for repayment of the money from a Juan de Cervantes, either his brother or his cousin.

<sup>21</sup>The assistant: Asensio, pp. 3–7 (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 74–75). The wife and sister: Pérez Pastor, II, 175–78 (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 77–78; Astrana, IV, 458–59). The June, 1592 document mentioning the loan of 340 *reales*, made to another *comisario* of the crown, is combined with a general power to collect money owed to him; the April, 1587 power of attorney to his wife (Astrana, IV, 63) gave her power, among many other things, to collect debts due him.

rowings of 100 to 200 *reales*.<sup>22</sup>

Let us turn to Cervantes' income. He received an adequate salary as provisioner for the armada: 12 *reales*, later 10 *reales*, a day.<sup>23</sup> As tax collector he received a higher salary, 16 *reales*.<sup>24</sup> He did not always receive his salary promptly—in some cases it was delayed pending audit of his accounts<sup>25</sup>—but receive it he did, as receipts indicate.<sup>26</sup> Records have survived showing his receipt of

---

<sup>22</sup>Pérez Pastor, II, 212–14 (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, 78–79; Astrana IV, 479–81), Cervantes borrowed 110 *reales* (10 *ducados*), in November of 1590, repaying them by March of 1591. In September of 1598 Cervantes borrowed 220 *reales* for the purchase of cloth, much more than would have been needed for a suit, according to Astrana (Pérez Pastor, II, 250–51; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 102; Astrana, V, 308), and two months later he bought on credit, for 132 *reales* (12 *ducados*), 2 *quintales* of *bizcocho*, presumably not for his personal consumption (Pérez Pastor, II, 252–53; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 102; Astrana, V, 308–09). The same bias can be observed in the way Fitzmaurice-Kelly (p. 61, n. 1) compares a debt of 12 *ducados* owed by Cervantes' father with an “impossible” 800 *ducados* owed to him. Astrana is more impartial: “A los Cervantes [his parents' family] les gustaba vivir bien, y hubo en esto alternativas de penuria y prosperidad” (III, 125).

<sup>23</sup>Navarrete, p. 415; also Pérez Pastor, II, 173–74; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 75; Astrana, IV, 458. The date of the reduction to 10 *reales* a day is not known, but it was in force by October of 1592 (Asensio, pp. 30–31; Fitzmaurice-Kelly p. 80).

<sup>24</sup>Navarrete, pp. 426, 429–30; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 92.

<sup>25</sup>Navarrete, p. 77; according to him (p. 88) these delays were typical, and not a measure especially directed at Cervantes. (This is also confirmed by H. Lapeyre, “Simón Ruiz et Cervantes”, *Anales Cervantinos*, 6 [1957], 256–61, at p. 258.) Navarrete, p. 98, also points out that the failure to provide for veterans of Spain's military forces was not just an affliction of Cervantes, but a considerable problem commented on by various writers.

<sup>26</sup>The following documents acknowledging receipt of salary are known, although some are now lost (see León Máinez, p. 514, and Astrana, IV, 533 and V, 287): 1100 *reales* (100 *ducados*), March of 1589 (Pérez Pastor, II, 165–67; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 74); 400 *reales*, March, 1590 (Asensio, pp. 12–13; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 75); 180 *reales*, May, 1590 (Pérez Pastor, II, 173–74; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 75; Astrana, IV, 458); 3000 *reales*, March 1591 (Pérez Pastor, II, 217–18; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 79; Astrana, IV, 475–85; cf. Navarrete, p. 415); 3200 *reales*, July, 1592 (Asensio, p. 17; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 80; Astrana, IV, 533, n. 1; cf. Navarrete, p. 416); 600 *reales*, September, 1592 (Navarrete, p. 416); 600 *reales*, July, 1593 (Asensio, pp. 30–31; Fitzmaurice-Kelly p. 88); April, 1598, 3000 *reales* paid after audit (Navarrete, p. 77).

1100 *reales* (100 *ducados*) for a brief official employment in 1581.<sup>27</sup>

Cervantes also earned significant sums from authorship. In 1585 he sold to Gaspar de Porres, a play producer (“autor de comedias”), two plays, *La confusa* and *El trato de Constantinopla y muerte de Celín*, for 440 *reales* (40 *ducados*).<sup>28</sup> These are only two of the twenty to thirty of his plays which were produced (prologue to the *Ocho comedias*), and he was surely paid for the others as well.<sup>29</sup> For *La Galatea* Cervantes received 1336 *reales*.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Jerónimo Morán, *Vida de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra* (Madrid, 1863), pp. 339–41, *apud* Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 63 and Astrana, III, 143–44, n. 2.

<sup>28</sup>The existence of this document was first revealed in Pérez Pastor’s posthumous *Noticias y documentos relativos a la historia y literatura españolas*, *Memorias de la Real Academia Española*, 10–13 (Madrid, 1910–26), I, 101 (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 65, n. 1). It was published by Francisco Rodríguez Marín, “Una escritura inédita de Cervantes”, *Ilustración Española y Americana*, May 8, 1913, and reprinted in his book *Burla burlando* (Madrid, 1914), pp. 417–24, and pp. 431–38 of the second edition (also Madrid, 1914); it is also reproduced by Rodríguez Marín in his edition of the *Parnaso* (Madrid, 1935), pp. 414–15. The figure is sometimes erroneously given as 40 *ducados* for each play.

<sup>29</sup>Presumably it is because he sold these plays that they were lost; he did not have manuscripts of them to publish. While the identification of *El laberinto de amor* with *La confusa* has been proposed, the most recent opinion does not support it (see María Soledad Carrasco Urgoiti, “Cervantes en su comedia *El laberinto de amor*”, *Hispanic Review*, 48 [1980], 77–90, at p. 78 n. 3).

<sup>30</sup>Pérez Pastor, II, 87–89; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 66; the document is extracted in the introduction to the translation of *La Galatea* (Glasgow: Gowans & Gray, 1903), p. xv, n. 3. *La Galatea* was *tasada* at 3½ *maravedíes* the *pliego*. The book had 96 *pliegos* (since the *tasa* of the *Novelas ejemplares* said that it contained 71½ *pliegos*, it can be seen that for a book of these dimensions a *pliego* was the same as 4 folios, i.e. 8 pages in the modern system), and its price would thus have been 336 *maravedíes* or almost 10 *reales*. The printing was surely between 1000 and 1500 copies (Astrana, VI, 234; Agustín G. de Amezúa y Mayo, *Cómo se hacía un libro en nuestro Siglo de Oro* [Madrid: Instituto de España, 1946], cited from the reprinting in his *Opúsculos histórico-literarios* [Madrid: CSIC, 1951], I, 331–73, at p. 352). The gross receipts would have been between 336,000 and 504,000 *maravedíes* (9882 to 14,824 *reales*); Cervantes’ 1336 *reales* would have been from 9% to 13.5% of the retail price, paid of course in advance and before any copies were sold. Similar though not identical percentages can be

Although we have no evidence of a salary after 1600, it is obvious that Cervantes was not living in poverty. While he had houses in Esquivias and in Toledo, where he could have lived without cost,<sup>31</sup> he chose instead to live in the *corte*, Valladolid; even the move there, which took some capital, would be inexplicable if he were without resources. Although Cervantes lived in a poor quarter, Valladolid was the most expensive city in Spain, bursting at the seams with new residents. Sharing the second floor or “principal” of a new house with him was Luisa de Montoya, the widow of Esteban de Garibay, the royal chronicler.<sup>32</sup> On the floor above was another friend, Juana Gaitán of Esquivias, widow of Pedro Laínez, Cervantes’ *maestro poético*, and herself owner of property.<sup>33</sup> Although Cervantes had four female relatives living with him, he still employed a maid.<sup>34</sup>

---

obtained for the *Novelas ejemplares*. This should be compared with the author of *Don Quijote* II, 62, who wants to earn (“ganar”) 11,000 *reales* (1000 *ducados*) on gross receipts of 12,000 *reales* (two thousand copies at 6 *reales* a copy), and the confused complaint of the author of *Persiles* II, 210, 1–9, IV, 1, who would not even take the impossible sum of 22,000 *reales* (2000 *ducados*) for his book.

<sup>31</sup>Astrana, V, 426 and VI, 153.

<sup>32</sup>For some evidence of her wealth, see Astrana, V, 543–47 and Pérez Pastor, *Noticias y documentos*, I, 135–36.

<sup>33</sup>On Cervantes’ friendship with Laínez, see Rudolph Schevill, “Laínez, Figueroa and Cervantes”, in *Homenaje ofrecido a Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid: Hernando, 1925), I, 425–41, Astrana, III, 366–75 and 401–05, and V, 463–73, and the introduction of Joaquín de Entrambasaguas to his edition of the *Obras* of Laínez (Madrid: CSIC, 1951). (Entrambasaguas and Astrana differ with each other with sharp words: the former, I, 95, n. 1; I, 118, n. 1; etc.; the latter, VI, 101, n. 1.) On the property of Juana Gaitán, see Astrana, III, 374, n. 3 (where we find that her dowry at her second marriage was almost 100,000 *reales* [3,216,057 *maravedíes*]), VI, 98, n. 1, VII, 680–83, and Cristóbal Pérez Pastor, *Noticias y documentos*, I, 228 and 284.

<sup>34</sup>Discussions of Cervantes’ circumstances in Valladolid (e.g., Narciso Alonso Cortés, *Cervantes en Valladolid* [Valladolid: Casa de Cervantes, 1918], pp. 53–57; Astrana, V, 537–48), derive, directly or indirectly, from the documents concerning the Ezpeleta murder, first published, over considerable opposition, by León Máinez in 1887 (see *Cervantes y su época*, I, 364–65), and best consulted in Pérez Pastor, II, 453–537. Richard Predmore, *Cervantes* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973), p. 164, has been misled by the present, restored state of the house in which Cervantes lived; the entire house, not Cervantes’ apartment, consisted of five rooms.

Prominent among his friends was Simón Méndez,<sup>35</sup> “tesorero general de las rentas de los diezmos de la mar de Castilla y de Galicia”,<sup>36</sup> who frequently visited him on business.<sup>37</sup> Also visiting him on business were another friend, Fernando de Toledo, “octavo señor de Higuera”, and “el asentista genovés Agustín Ragio”.<sup>38</sup>

When the court moved back to Madrid in 1606, causing the collapse of rents in Valladolid (Astrana, VI, 151; Alonso Cortés, “Tres amigos”, p. 158), Cervantes moved too. With intervals in Esquivias, he lived in Madrid until his death, in a series of modest but well-located houses;<sup>39</sup> the final one was, as in Valladolid, a new house (Astrana, VII, 251). A solitary document records, without specifying when the debt was incurred, that Cervantes in 1607 owed Francisco de Robles 450 *reales*; Juan de la Cuesta, in the same document, owed Robles a much larger sum.<sup>40</sup> Two other of the few financial documents from this period

---

<sup>35</sup>That he was a friend was stated by Isabel de Saavedra, in her declaration regarding the Ezpeleta affair (Pérez Pastor, II, 520–22).

<sup>36</sup>Pérez Pastor, II, 488, n. 3; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 123, n. 1. For other information on Méndez, see Astrana, VI, 21 and VI, 79, n. 5, and Alonso Cortés, *Casos cervantinos*, p. 150.

<sup>37</sup>The testimony of Isabel de Saavedra, cited in note 35, that of Andrea de Cervantes (Pérez Pastor, II, 517–19), and also that of Costanza de Ovando (Pérez Pastor, II, 514–16).

<sup>38</sup>As described by Astrana, VI, 20–21. Fernando de Toledo’s friendship is mentioned by the same sources cited in the preceding note; on him see León Máinez, pp. 324 and 421–22, Pérez Pastor, II, 497, n. 1, and Alonso Cortés, *Casos cervantinos*, p. 148, n. 1. Ragio is mentioned by Esteban de Garibay (Pérez Pastor, II, 488); on him see also Alonso Cortés, *Casos cervantinos*, p. 149, n. 1. Alonso Cortés presents documents dealing with all three of these friends in “Tres amigos de Cervantes”, *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 27 (1947–48), 143–75. Cervantes’ financial activities in Valladolid are further placed in context (he was “an active member of the business and financial community”) by Carroll B. Johnson, “‘La española inglesa’ and the Practice of Literary Production”, *Viator*, 19 (1988), 377–416, especially p. 413.

<sup>39</sup>According to Miguel Herrero [García], “Casos cervantinos que tocan a Madrid”, *Revista de la Biblioteca, Archivo y Museo de Madrid*, 20 (1951), 3–55, at p. 43, Cervantes’ changes of address in Madrid were due precisely to his extended visits to Esquivias.

<sup>40</sup>Pérez Pastor, I, 145; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 138; Astrana, VI, 198.

record his daughter Isabel's very large dowry of 22,000 *reales* (2000 *ducados*),<sup>41</sup> and the purchase of 1800 *reales* of cloth for her trousseau.<sup>42</sup>

Cervantes also received income from authorship during his second and final period of literary composition. The *Novelas ejemplares*, in addition to the 24 free copies already mentioned (note 9), brought him 1600 *reales*; the document of the sale to Robles of the *privilegio* also contains the curious statement that Cervantes admitted that this was “su justo y verdadero precio y que no ha hallado quien más ni otro tanto por ello le dé”.<sup>43</sup> He stated in the prologue to his published collection of plays that he was paid “razonablemente” for it. For *Don Quijote*, Part I, Cervantes admitted that “su labor le tiene pagado, de que

---

<sup>41</sup>The document was published in *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos*, 4 (1874), 162–65, and is reproduced by Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 140–42. The dowry was not given by Cervantes himself, but by a businessman, Juan de Urbina, who was not just the guarantor of Cervantes (compare the language of the documents in Pérez Pastor, I, 250 and 252). Urbina agreed to pay the dowry “por algunas causas que a ello le mueven” (Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 142). According to Astrana, who ignores, I believe with justification, the contrary arguments of Herrero (*supra*, note 39), the dowry was agreed to by Urbina under pressure from Cervantes, as he was the lover of Isabel de Saavedra and father of her illegitimate child.

<sup>42</sup>Pérez Pastor, II, 434–35, item 9; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 149–50. This was also paid by Urbina, although Fitzmaurice-Kelly is in error when he says that everything in Isabel's trousseau was furnished by Urbina.

<sup>43</sup>Pérez Pastor, I, pp. 178–82; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 180; the document is extracted in the introduction to the translation of the *Exemplary Novels*, p. x, n. 1. Though this figure might seem inadequate, Pedro Laínez's *Cancionero* and *Engaños y desengaños de amor* were given, in an inventory made at his death, values of 3529 *reales* (120,000 *maravedíes*) and 5000 *reales* respectively, and remained, presumably because of the high value their possessors gave to them, unsold, unpublished, and in part ultimately lost (Astrana, III, 373; VII, 682). “En las muchas escrituras de esta índole, exhumadas por el mismo benemérito erudito [Pérez Pastor], no he hallado ninguna de autores contemporáneos o próximos a Cervantes donde el precio llegue a los 1.600 reales que éste obtuvo por sus *Novelas ejemplares*” (Amezúa, *Cervantes, creador*, I, 532–33). Besides the figures given in note 9, *supra*, Salas Barbadillo got 500 *reales*, not paid promptly, for *El caballero perfecto* and *El sutil cordobés Pedro de Urdemalas (La peregrinación sabia y El sagaz Estacio marido examinado)*, ed. Francisco A. de Icaza, *Clásicos castellanos*, 57 [Madrid: La Lectura, 1924], p. xxvi, n. 1), and Vicente Espinel 1170 *reales* for *Marcos de Obregón* (William Byron, *Cervantes: A Biography* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1978], p. 482).

se dio por contento”.<sup>44</sup> On Part II we have no figures, but in Avellaneda’s prologue we find that he intended to injure Cervantes economically with his continuation (“quéxesse de mi trabajo por la ganancia que le quito de su segunda parte”), so we can assume that some significant sum was anticipated.

Cervantes also received, as successful authors often did, money from wealthy nobles.<sup>45</sup> In the dedication of the *Novelas ejemplares* Cervantes said that Lemos was his “verdadero señor y bienhechor”; Lemos’ generosity thus antedated the dedication. In the dedication of the *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses*, Cervantes said that Lemos was his “firme y verdadero amparo”; in that to *Don Quijote*, Part II, he said that although he could not travel to China because he was “muy sin dineros”, all the same Lemos “me sustenta, me ampara y haze más merced que la que yo acierto a dessear”. The presumption is that Cervantes was also rewarded by the Duque de Béjar for the dedication of *Don Quijote*, Part I, despite old speculation to the contrary;<sup>46</sup> as Schevill and Bonilla point out (their edition of *Don Quijote*, I, 412), Cervantes never mentioned Ascanio Colonna after dedicating to him *La Galatea*, but no one has suggested that this implies that the dedication of *La Galatea* was poorly received. In the prefatory verses of Urganda la Desconocida Béjar is called, for his generosity, “nuevo Alexandro magno”; Cervantes’ friend Cristóbal de Mesa, subsequently dedicating to Béjar the *Rimas* section of his *Patrón de*

---

<sup>44</sup>Alonso Cortés, *Casos cervantinos*, pp. 154–59, at p. 156; on the authority of this edition, see p. 154. Rodríguez Marín published the document two years previously as his Doc. CXXI; in it we find that what Cervantes “tiene pagado” for *Don Quijote*, Part I was “su valor”.

<sup>45</sup>We do not have any figures for what Cervantes received from his patrons, but a friend, Juan Rufo, received 5500 *reales* (500 *ducados*) from Felipe II for the dedication of *La Austríada* (Rodríguez Marín, *Don Quijote*, nueva edición crítica [Madrid: Atlas, 1947–49], IX, 13). This was a year’s salary for a well-paid professor (see note 55, *infra*).

<sup>46</sup>See Astrana, V, 576–77 and Cayetano Alfonso de la Barrera, *El cachetero del “Buscapié”* (Santander, 1916), p. 40, n. 1. The immortal legend of Béjar’s ingratitude is still found in numerous popular works on Cervantes.

*España* (1612), called him “el mecenas de nuestra edad”,<sup>47</sup> and Cervantes was apparently truthful when he described Béjar as “inclinado a favorecer las buenas artes” (*I*, 27, 19–20, I, Dedication).<sup>48</sup> Everyone, I believe, agrees that the generous patron mentioned at *III*, 304, 18–32, II, 24, one of the few to be found in Spain, whose generosity “quicá despertara la invidia en más de quatro generosos pechos”, is that of Cervantes; the early date of composition and lack of revision which I have elsewhere argued for the first part of Part II would imply that this generous patron is not Lemos, but Béjar.<sup>49</sup>

Putting these figures in perspective, ten *reales* a day, the lowest salary figure found, was a considerable amount.<sup>50</sup> It was not, of course, as high as it could be, and Cervantes seemingly felt considerable frustration that others less talented, dedicated, or honest, who had not suffered captivity or injury in battle, received more prestigious positions and greater economic rewards.<sup>51</sup> Ten *reales* a day would permit neither luxury nor ostentation, both of

---

<sup>47</sup>On Cervantes’ friendship with Mesa, see my “Cervantes and Tasso Reexamined”, in this volume, at p. 000 (61).

<sup>48</sup>See Astrana, V, 573–74 and 585–86. Alexander the Great is also used as a symbol of generosity at *Don Quijote II*, 344, 21, I, 47 and *IV*, 272, 26, II, 60.

<sup>49</sup>Even if these lines were originally intended to refer to Béjar, there is no contradiction leaving them in a book dedicated to Lemos, for whom the praise was certainly also appropriate; it is certainly a smaller inconsistency than leaving in Part II the comment on the *rucio* error of Part I, corrected in every edition after the first. (See “El rucio de Sancho y la fecha de composición de la segunda parte de *Don Quijote*”, included in this volume.) On Cervantes’ lack of revision, see *A Study of “Don Quixote”*, Chapter VI.

<sup>50</sup>These salaries were only temporary—the longest commissions were for 250 days—but all the same the presumption is that they are representative of Cervantes’ economic station, and do not indicate his sudden, temporary elevation into a higher class.

<sup>51</sup>Besides the dedication of Márquez Torres, this may be concluded from the speech on arms and letters, especially the end of Chapter 37 of Part I, and from Don Quijote’s scorn for *caballeros cortesanos* (see *III*, 91, 17–92, 8, II, 6) and comments on the Sancho’s receipt of a *gobierno* (see *IV*, 50, 9–28, II, 42).

which were typical of noble life at the time;<sup>52</sup> it was not *renta*, which was the easy and prestigious source of income.<sup>53</sup> Yet it was a typical middle-level bureaucrat's pay, and as these salaries were paid on the basis of seven days a week,<sup>54</sup> ten *reales* a day was the equivalent of 300 *reales* a month, or 3600 *reales* a year.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup>“Nunca en parte alguna [que en la corte de España] se vio ciudad que la aventajase en el lujo y ostentación de su nobleza” (Pinheiro da Veiga, cited in Alonso Cortés, *Casos cervantinos*, p. 132).

<sup>53</sup>On living from *rentas*, see Bartolomé Bennassar, *Valladolid au siècle d'or. Une ville de Castille et sa campagne au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, The Hague: Mouton, 1967), Chapter 8.

<sup>54</sup>See especially Pérez Pastor, II, 173–74 (Astrana, IV, 458); Rodríguez Marín, Doc. CIX; Asensio, pp. 17–18 (Astrana, IV, 532–33).

<sup>55</sup>Here are some salaries for comparison, converted into the single scale of *reales* per year. The shepherd Andrés earned 84 *reales* a year (seven *reales* a month; *Don Quijote I*, 79, 18, I, 4). An apprentice seamstress, besides room, board, clothing, medical care, and instruction, received 88 *reales* (3000 *maravedíes*) a year (Pérez Pastor, I, 15-17); a new maid, apparently 14 years old, received, besides instruction and room and board, 110 *reales* (10 *ducados*) a year (Pérez Pastor, I, 135-37; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 104-05). Sancho Panza received from Tomé Carrasco 264 *reales* a year (2 *ducados* a month), “amén de la comida” (*III*, 353, 26-29, II, 28).

The chaplain of the Duque de Béjar received 1176 *reales* (40,000 *maravedíes*) a year, and Cristóbal de Mesa held this post and for a time simultaneously received the same salary again as “preceptor de su primogénito” (Rodríguez Marín, “nueva edición crítica”, IX, 11-12; Astrana, V, 574, n. 3); presumably room and board was also part of the compensation. A laborer earned 1095 to 1460 *reales* a year: 3 *reales* a day for a *cochero*, 3.5 *reales* for a carpenter, plasterer, or roofer, and 4 *reales* for a master of these trades and also for a *mulero* (Bennassar, p. 297; Díez Borque, p. 105; Moisés García de la Torre, who comments on the precision with which these matters are treated in Cervantes' fiction, “Cervantes y el mundo de los caminos: las mulas. Realidad histórica y ficción literaria”, in *Cervantes, su obra y su mundo. Actas del I Congreso Internacional sobre Cervantes* [Madrid: Edi-6, 1981], pp. 213-25, at pp. 218-19).

Murcia de la Llana, *corrector* of *Don Quijote*, Part II (son of the Murcia de la Llana who corrected Part I) received, for his part-time and indifferently executed labors, the salary of 1471 *reales* (50,000 *maravedíes*) a year and about the same amount again in “emolumentos” (Pérez Pastor, III, 434). Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera received 588 *reales* (20,000 *maravedíes*) as *procurador general de los pobres* and 1765 *reales* (60,000 *maravedíes*) as *médico del rey* (Michel Cavillac, “Noblesse et ambiguïtés au temps de Cervantes: Le cas du docteur Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera [1556?-1620]”, *Mélanges de la Casa de*

When compared with prices during Cervantes' lifetime, it can be seen that this was more than enough money to live on. It cost approximately 50 *reales* a month to rent a house.<sup>56</sup> According to the *arbitrista* of the "Coloquio de

---

*Velázquez*, 11 [1975], 177-212, at p. 181; Cavillac, ed. Pérez de Herrera, *Discursos del amparo de los legítimos pobres*, Clásicos castellanos, 199, pp. lv-lviii). Esteban de Garibay received 2353 *reales* (80,000 *maravedíes*) as *cronista real* (Astrana, V, 543); Agustín de Rojas, author of *El viaje entretenido*, earned 2800 *reales* for a year's work as an actor (Hugo Albert Rennert, *The Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega* [1909; rpt. New York: Dover, 1963], p. 183), although other actors received much less, 3 *reales* per performance, plus room, board, and travel expenses (Rennert, p. 141). An assistant of Cervantes as *comisario*, Simón de Salazar, was paid at a yearly rate of 2190 *reales* (6 *reales* a day) (Rodríguez Marín, Doc. CIX; Astrana, IV, 365). Another *comisario*, Miguel de Santa María, received the same pay as Cervantes, 4380 *reales* a year (12 *reales* a day) (Pérez Pastor, II, 171; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 75, n. 1). An inspector of boats for the Inquisition received 3285 *reales* a year (9 *reales* a day) (H. W. Taylor, "The English Experience of the Spanish Crisis of the Early-Seventeenth Century", in *Essays in Honour of Robert Brian Tate from his Colleagues and Pupils* [Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1984], pp. 131-36, at p. 134). A bill collector ("una persona a la cobranza") received 5367 *reales* a year (500 *maravedíes*, or almost 15 *reales*, a day) (Georges Cirot, *Mariana historien* [Bordeaux, 1904], p. 185, n. 1). Professors at the University of Valladolid, among the best paid in the country, received an average salary of 5500 *reales* (500 *ducados*) a year (Bennassar, p. 359). Royal *consejeros* (ministers) at the time of Felipe III were paid about 11,764 *reales* (400,000 *maravedíes*), plus expenses, a year (Richard L. Kagan, *Lawsuits and Litigants in Castile 1500-1700* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981], p. 54); Bernabé de Pedroso, as *consejero de hacienda* of Felipe III, was paid 13,235 *reales* (450,000 *maravedíes*) (Astrana, V, 295). An *oidor* at the end of the sixteenth century received a salary of 9706 *reales* (330,000 *maravedíes*), plus half that again for expenses and additional sums for special duties; "altogether, oidores could easily earn more than 500,000 or 600,000 *maravedíes* [14,705 or 17,647 *reales*] a year" (Kagan, *Lawsuits*, pp. 182-83; Bennassar, p. 366). In contrast with all these salaries, the abbot of Valladolid had an income of 29,412 *reales* a year (1,000,000 *maravedíes*; Bennassar, p. 391), prince Filiberto de Saboya received a salary of 264,000 *reales* (24,000 *ducados*) as "general de la mar" (Astrana, VII, 47), and the *rentas* of one of the richest men in Spain, Pedro de Toledo, for whom Cervantes' sister Andrea made shirts (references in the following note) were over 770,000 *reales* (70,000 *ducados*) a year (Astrana, V, 499).

<sup>56</sup>For 55 *reales* (five *ducados*) a month could be rented "unas casas" in the same part of Seville as that in which Cervantes lived (Pérez Pastor, II, 168-70; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 74; Astrana, IV, 369, n. 1); for 150 *reales* Cervantes and his "ayudantes" stayed for three and a half months in "unas casas" in Écija (Rodríguez Marín, Doc. CX). In Madrid,

los perros”, a person could eat for 1½ *reales* a day (*III*, 245, 30-246, 2);<sup>57</sup> Sancho’s daily “despensa” was the same amount (i.e., 26 *maravedíes* was half of it, *I*, 496, I, 23); and from the *esportillero* of “Rinconete y Cortadillo” we learn that if one could spend five to six *reales*, one “comía y bebía y triunfaba como cuerpo de rey” (*I*, 225, 14-16).<sup>58</sup>

In Cervantes’ day, less than a *real* would purchase a *libra* of any meat; for 1 *real* and 2 *maravedíes* a dozen eggs, and for 2 *reales* a hen could be purchased.<sup>59</sup> A *libra* of bread cost ¼ *real*;<sup>60</sup> an *azumbre* of wine, 1/3 of a *real*

---

Cervantes’ mother and sister rented “unas casas” in the Calle de Leganitos for 550 *reales* (50 *ducados*) a year (Pérez Pastor, I, 102-07; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 89, n. 2); the rent of the house in the Red de San Luis occupied by Cervantes’ daughter Isabel was 583 *reales* (53 *ducados*) a year (Pérez Pastor, II, 276-77; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, pp. 138-39). The rent for the house occupied by Cervantes in the Calle de las Huertas would probably have been slightly higher (the house next to it, on a lot some 8 times as large, was rented for 6600 *reales* a year; Astrana, VII, 13-14). However, Cervantes’ sister Andrea, a seamstress (León Máinez, pp. 388-89; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 111; Astrana, V, 498) with an apprentice (Pérez Pastor, I, 15-17; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 60) in 1577 leased “unas casas” in Madrid for 1540 *reales* (140 *ducados*) (Pérez Pastor, II, 38-40; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, p. 60). See also Bennassar, p. 293.

<sup>57</sup>A meal in a *venta* cost one *real*, as did a bed for a night (Marcelin Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, trans. Newton Branch [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970], p. 16); a large meal in Lope’s *Dorotea* cost one *real* (cited by Amezá, *Cómo se hacía*, p. 346); for 1¼ *reales* a day one could feed two children of unspecified age (Pérez Pastor, I, 99 and 103); just over one *real* a day (36 *ducados* a year) provided a child with both instruction and board (Bennassar, p. 372).

<sup>58</sup>Actors in Cervantes’ day received 3 to 5 *reales* a day for maintenance (Pérez Pastor, *Nuevos datos acerca del histrionismo español en los siglos XVI y XVII*, cited by Narciso Alonso Cortés, *Memorias de una corte literaria* [Valladolid, 1906], pp. 36-37, and by Rennert, pp. 183-85).

<sup>59</sup>These data come from Astrana’s appendix on “Precio de los principales artículos de primera necesidad en tiempo de Cervantes” (VII, 772-74).

<sup>60</sup>2½ *libras* of bread cost 22 *maravedíes* (Cristóbal Espejo, “La carestía de la vida en el siglo XVI y medios de abaratarla”, *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos*, 3ª época, 41 [1920], 36-54, 169-204, 329-54, and 42 [1921], 1-18 and 199-225, at p. 352).

(Amezúa, *Cómo se hacía*, p. 346). Two *reales* a day would rent a mule (Moisés García, p. 218). Admission to the theater for *mosqueteros* and women cost about half a *real*, and a seat on a *silla* or *banco* one *real* (Rennert, pp. 113-14; Díez Borque, pp. 142-45). A *resma* of writing paper cost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a *real* (24 *maravedíes*; Díez Borque, p. 106). In the inventory made at the time of Cervantes' marriage, we find the value of many household articles: a linen sheet valued at 11 *reales*, a new table at 16 *reales*, and so on.<sup>61</sup> Services were in this same range: at *Don Quijote*, I, 79, 27-28, I, 4 we find that a barber charged half a *real* for a *sangría*; to have a mass said cost 1 *real* (Espejo, p. 354); in the documents cited in this article the *escribano's* fee started at 1 *real*.<sup>62</sup>

Just as living expenses were well within Cervantes' means, so were books; their prices were controlled by legislation and calculated on the basis of three to five *maravedíes* the *pliego*. The Madrid *tasa* of Jáuregui's translation of Tasso's *Aminta* (Rome, 1607) set its price at only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *reales*; Juan Rufo's *Austríada* (Madrid, 1584) cost  $5\frac{1}{2}$  *reales*, and another book Cervantes mentioned, Virués' *Monserate* (Madrid, 1587), cost  $2\frac{1}{3}$  *reales*. Lope's *Isidro* (Madrid, 1599) cost 3 *reales* ( $95\frac{1}{2}$  *maravedíes*), the *princeps* of Part I of *Guzmán de Alfarache* (Madrid, 1599)  $5\frac{2}{3}$  *reales* (192 *maravedíes*) without the preliminaries. The most famous poetry anthology of the early seventeenth century, Pedro Espinosa's *Flores de poetas ilustres* (Valladolid, 1605), cost only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  *reales* (153 *maravedíes*), the same price as Agustín de Rojas' *Viaje entretenido* (Madrid, 1604).<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup>Astrana, VII, 686-91; León Máinez, pp. 241-44. An inventory of the richer possessions of his illegitimate daughter Isabel de Saavedra at her marriage is published by Pérez Pastor, I, 148-52, and Astrana, VI, 312-15. A similar inventory of the possessions of Juana Gaitán is published by Astrana, VII, 680-83.

<sup>62</sup>For comparison only I add that the fee charged by a common prostitute was half a *real* (Bartolomé Bennassar, *The Spanish Character. Attitudes and Mentalities from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Benjamin Keen [Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979], p. 193); 110 *reales* (10 *ducados*) was sufficient to influence the legal system in one's favor (*Don Quijote*, I, 303, 1-15, I, 22).

<sup>63</sup>Cervantes' own works were, by comparison, expensive:  $8\frac{1}{2}$  *reales* for *Don Quijote*, Part I, and almost the same for the *Novelas ejemplares*

The above data would seem to show that Cervantes had the funds with which to purchase books, and the inescapable conclusion is that he did so. We can see Cervantes, however, as not just a purchaser but a collector. In *Don Quijote*, besides the celebration of an old and scarce book (*Tirante el blanco*, I, 101, 13-16, I, 6) and the fictional purchase of “todos los papeles y cartapacios” which comprised Cide Hamete’s manuscript for the bargain price of half a *real* (I, 130, 29-131, 4, I, 9), we find the proposal to copy an interesting and carefully described manuscript, that of the “Novela del Curioso impertinente” (II, 87, 28-88, 21, I, 32), and finally the carrying off of “all” the papers Juan Palomeque found in a suitcase, including the “Novela de Rinconete y Cortadillo” (II, 334, 10-24, I, 47).

Even more important is the case of Grisóstomo, whose body was surrounded by “algunos libros y muchos papeles abiertos y cerrados” (I, 176, 14-15, I, 13). Vivaldo offers a passionate defense of the preservation of Grisóstomo’s papers; his instructions that they be burned are “fuera de todo razonable discurso” (I, 177, 30-31, I, 13), and deprives those of the future (“en los tiempos que están por venir”, I, 178, 9-10, I, 13) of the *ejemplo* which the *historia* of Grisóstomo and Marcela can provide. By his action, Vivaldo was able to rescue a few, including the “Canción desesperada”: “Yo te suplico...que, dexando de abrasar estos papeles, me dexes llevar algunos dellos’. Y, sin aguardar que el pastor respondiese, alargó la mano y tomó algunos de los que más cerca estaban” (I, 178, 30-179, 3, I, 13). As Ambrosio’s subsequent comment reveals, this action was appropriate.<sup>64</sup>

A document cited by Astrana, the significance of which has not been grasped, records Cervantes’ book purchases at an auction in 1590: an *Historia de Santo Domingo*, which Astrana identifies as that of Hernando del Castillo (Madrid, 1584), for 30 *reales*, and four unidentifiable “libritos dorados, de letra francesa”, for 18 *reales*.<sup>65</sup> Also

---

(290½ and 286 *maravedíes* respectively).

<sup>64</sup>“Por cortesía consentiré que os quedéis, señor, con los que ya avéis tomado; pero pensar que dexaré de abrasar los que quedan, es pensamiento vano” (I, 179, 4-7, I, 13).

<sup>65</sup>Astrana, IV, 463-64.

worthy of note is Cervantes' friendship with the Robles family of booksellers, first Blas and then his son Francisco, *libreros del rey* and publishers of four of his books.<sup>66</sup> Surely the most likely beginning for a friendship with booksellers and publishers is the purchase of their books.

Cervantes also shows an interest in and familiarity with the physical and technical side of written communication which we might expect of a collector; certainly he comments on writing and printing, book binding and size to a much greater extent than any other Spanish author of the period. From Chapter 62 of Part II of *Don Quijote* we see that Cervantes knew how a print shop ran, with the further precision that the activities Don Quijote witnessed were typical of a "large" shop.<sup>67</sup> The verses about Don Quijote discovered at the end of Part I were written in "letras góticas", Cervantes takes the trouble to tell us;<sup>68</sup> we are also told that *escribanos* used "letra processada", in preference to which Sancho should see that the "librança pollinezca" and letter to Dulcinea are written in "buena letra" (I, 361, 24-362, 10, I, 25). The fictional manuscript of the "Novela del Curioso impertinente" was found on "ocho pliegos, escritos de mano" (II, 87, 31, I, 32), "de muy buena letra" (II, 83, 3, I, 32); Cardenio's sonnet was "escrito como en borrador, aunque de muy buena letra" (I, 320, 3-4, I, 23); and for that matter, Cide Hamete's

---

<sup>66</sup>Francisco Vindel has argued ingeniously that Robles is the friend mentioned in the prologue to *Don Quijote*, Part I, and the *Novelas ejemplares* (*Cervantes, Robles, y Juan de la Cuesta* [Madrid, 1934]). For discussion, see *A Study of "Don Quixote"*, pp. 100-01, n. 83.

<sup>67</sup>The inventory of a large print shop, which some years later would be managed by Juan de la Cuesta, that of María Rodríguez de Rivalde, widow of the printer Pedro Madrigal and bride of another printer, Juan Íñiguez de Lequerica, together with a statement of her net worth (29,125 *reales*) may be found in Pérez Pastor, *Documentos*, I, 385-95. She was not the widow of Juan Gracián, as I erroneously reported in "On Editing", p. 28; his widow was María Ramírez (Pérez Pastor, II, 555-56; Astrana, VII, 760).

<sup>68</sup>See Henry Thomas, "What Cervantes Meant by 'Gothic Letters'", *Modern Language Review*, 33 (1938), 421-26, translated as "Lo que Cervantes entendía por letras góticas", *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 28 (1948), 257-64, and "An Unrecorded Sixteenth-Century Writing Book, and More about Gothic Letters", in *Estudios dedicados a Menéndez Pidal*, III (Madrid: CSIC, 1951), pp. 413-20.

manuscript of *Don Quijote*, with its illustrations and marginal notes, was written “con caracteres que conocí ser arávigos” (*I*, 129, 31-32, I, 9).<sup>69</sup> Cardenio’s “librillo de memoria” is described to us as “ricamente guarnecido” (*I*, 319, 14-15, I, 23); in describing Alonso Quijano’s library, which is arranged by subjects and located in a separate room, both the books’ sizes and their bindings are mentioned (*I*, 95, 9-11 and 102, 6, I, 6). All of which is quite in harmony with a lover not just of literature, but of books.

I hope to have established that Cervantes had a library; it is legitimate to try to say something about it. The fictional libraries of Alonso Quijano and Diego de Miranda suggest an arrangement by subject, and some of the divisions: *historia*, *poesía*, *devoción*. That reading in his works is primarily a rural activity supports the suggestion that after 1586 the library would have been located in Esquivias, in the large house he acquired with his marriage, “ancha como de aldea” (*Don Quijote*, III, 225, 6, II, 18).

It is more interesting to try to specify something of its contents, beyond the auction purchase mentioned above. The only evidence is what Cervantes wrote: the books he mentions, and those whose influence he shows. Since the mentions of books are heavily slanted toward the literary, and he carefully avoided “mezclando lo humano con lo divino, que es un género de mezcla de quien no se ha de vestir ningún christiano entendimiento”,<sup>70</sup> a bias toward literature is inevitable.

Despite the above considerations, however, some educated guesses about the contents of Cervantes’ library can be made.<sup>71</sup> No one, surely, could doubt that Cervantes

---

<sup>69</sup>The fictitious MS is discussed by Thomas Lathrop, “Cide Hamete Benengeli y su manuscrito”, in *Cervantes. Su obra y su mundo*, pp. 693-705.

<sup>70</sup>*Don Quijote*, I, 37, 12-14, I, Prologue; also II, 192, 20-24, I, 37; III, 94, 24-25, II, 6. According to William T. Avery, the author who, in Cervantes’ opinion, erroneously mixed “lo humano con lo divino” was Dante (“Elementos dantescos del *Quijote*”, *Anales Cervantinos*, 9 [1961-62], 1-28, at p. 27).

<sup>71</sup>I have taken the reconstruction of Cervantes’ library further in a separate article, “La biblioteca de Cervantes”, in *Studia in Honorem prof. Martín de Riquer*, II (Barcelona, Quaderns Crema, 1987), 271-328. I have included in it a further piece of “hard” evidence: the books owned by Cervantes’ father, which Miguel would likely have inherited.

owned a copy of *Amadís de Gaula*, and his deep knowledge of other *libros de caballerías* suggests that he owned others as well. He must, also, have owned a copy of Ariosto, probably copies in both Spanish and Italian (see *Don Quijote*, I, 98, 30-99, 11, I, 6). The author of *La Galatea* can be expected to have copies of its predecessors, the *Diana* of Montemayor, the *Diana enamorada* of Gil Polo, and almost certainly the *Diana segunda* of Alonso Pérez, which was commonly published with the work of Montemayor. If *La Araucana*, *La Austríada*, and *El Monserrate* were in Cervantes' opinion "los mejores que en verso heroico, en lengua Castellana, están escritos" (*Don Quijote*, I, 105, 9-16, I, 6), surely he had copies of those as well, plus others not as good. If he knew Garcilaso practically by heart,<sup>72</sup> he must have owned a copy, and probably one or more annotated editions.<sup>73</sup>

What this begins to sound like, of course, is the library of Alonso Quijano. The third and final reason why the topic of Cervantes' library has been avoided is the presentation of book collecting within his fiction, whose relationship to reality is so problematic. Many of Cervantes' characters own books: besides those already mentioned (Grisóstomo, Juan Palomeque, Cardenio), there are three who, we are told, own a considerable number. Tomás Rodaja, for example, the future Licenciado Vidriera, who "atendía más a sus libros que a otros passatiempos" (II, 84, 18-19), selected from his "muchos libros" (II, 78, 8) those which would be appropriate reading during his trip to Italy, a trip that is often believed to reflect Cervantes' own travels. Diego de Miranda had "hasta seis dozenas de libros, quáles de romance y quáles de latín, de historia algunos y de devoción otros" (III, 201, 17-20, II, 16). Finally, Don Quijote, in his "aldea", had "más de treientos libros, que son el regalo de mi alma y

---

<sup>72</sup>Most recently on this topic see Elias L. Rivers, "Cervantes y Garcilaso", in *Cervantes. Su obra y su mundo*, pp. 963-68 (also in *Homenaje a José Manuel Blecua* [Madrid: Gredos, 1983], pp. 565-70), who furnishes references to earlier discussions of Garcilaso's influence on Cervantes. (The article of Blecua cited in Rivers' first note is also available in *La poesía de Garcilaso* [Barcelona: Ariel, 1974], pp. 367-79.)

<sup>73</sup>"Un Garcilaso sin comentario" is chosen by Tomás Rodaja (the reference is in the following paragraph).

el entretenimiento de mi vida” (*I*, 343, 27-29, I, 24).<sup>74</sup>

Diego de Miranda’s library, which excluded both *poesía* and *libros de caballerías*, and had as many books in Latin as in “romance”, could not have been based on that of his creator. It is plausible and even likely, however, that in the fictional library of Don Quijote we have a description of that of Cervantes. Alonso Quijano is the book collector among Cervantes’ characters (*I*, 50, 18-22, I, 1); the topics of the books in his library and their dates of publication, to the extent that these are revealed to us, correspond well with the interests and adult life of Cervantes.

Considering book prices in comparison with Cervantes’ income, it was within his resources to have acquired, by the time of composing *Don Quijote*, Part I, a library the size of that of his protagonist. The average cost of Cervantes’ books, which may have included second-hand as well as complimentary books, could not have exceeded the cost of the lengthy *Don Quijote*, Part I (8½, say 9 *reales*). Three hundred books, at an average price of 9 *reales* each, comes to 2,700 *reales*. That is less than the amount Cervantes received for sale of *La Galatea* and the *Novelas ejemplares* alone. The acquisition of these books would have been spread over a considerable time period, the 20 or so years between his return from captivity and the composition of *Don Quijote*, Part I; an expenditure of 2,700 *reales*, divided over 20 years, is an average of 135 *reales* a year. When Cervantes was paid at the rate of 3,600 *reales* a year, it is certainly plausible that he spent an average of 135 *reales* a year on books.

---

<sup>74</sup>In addition, Don Quijote’s guide on his visit to the Cave of Montesinos, the confusedly erudite *primo*, “muy aficionado a leer libros de cavallerías” (*III*, 277, 25-26, II, 22), also refers to his books, which would seem to constitute a small library (*III*, 280, 6-7, II, 22).