

Article from the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, ed. Wayne Dynes (New York: Garland, 1990).

Note: no footnotes could be published with this encyclopedia article. The asterisk indicates a reference to another article in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de (1547-1616), Spanish novelist. Cervantes, of Jewish ancestry, is one of the last major representatives of the Spanish humanism that was extinguished by the Counter-Reformation. That Cervantes might have had homosexual desires and experiences was first suggested in print in 1982 and restated more explicitly in 1987. There is much to support this suggestion: his teacher Juan López de Hoyos, to whom he remained close until his death in 1583, called him “my dear *beloved disciple”; fleeing Spain under circumstances which remain obscure, Cervantes subsequently spent a year in Naples (*Spain), of which he always conserved fond memories and wished to return. He spent five years a captive in Algiers, where he was on surprisingly good terms with a homosexual convert to Islam; he refers several times in his writings to the pederasty that flourished in the Ottoman empire; on his return from Algiers he was accused of unspecified filthy acts. Cervantes had an illegitimate daughter, but his childless marriage was unhappy, and he and his wife lived separately for long periods. Like Manuel *Azaña, he put a very high value on freedom.

While Cervantes presented the male-female relationship as the theoretical ideal and goal for most people, the use of pairs of male friends is characteristic of his fiction, and questions of gender are often close to the surface. In his masterpiece *Don Quixote*

(1605-15), which includes cross-dressing by both sexes, the middle-aged protagonist has never had, and has no interest in, sexual intercourse with a woman. A boy servant who appears fleetingly at the outset is replaced by the unhappily-married companion Sancho Panza. The two men come to love each other, although the love is not sexual. Part I of the book was dedicated to the Duke of Béjar, to whom Cristóbal de Mesa dedicated his *Patrón de España* and Góngora the only completed section of the *Solitudes* (*Spain).

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