A Well-Worn and Far-Travelled Tome: The Life and Times of a 1652 Edition of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra’s Don Quixote

Critical Commentary

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Translated into dozens of languages and published thousands of times in numerous countries around the world in its 411 years of existence, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra’s (1547–1616) The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha has attained recognition as one of the most read books in western culture. Various reproductions of Don Quixote over the last four centuries include parodies, plays, paintings and illustrations, cartoons, comic books, movies, and music. Of the many text editions in existence today, this short study will address a particular copy of Cervantes’ Don Quixote: The History of the Valorous and Witty-Knight-Ernant Don Quixote of La Mancha, Translated out of the Spanish [by T. Shelton] now newly corrected and amended (1652), along with a few of the people who produced this seminal work and several of the notable individuals who have owned it through time. This leather-bound tome about a fictional member of Spain’s petty nobility has passed from one minor British aristocrat to another, only to mysteriously rest in Stony Brook University’s Rare Book Collection in Stony Brook, Long Island.¹

¹ Blackshire-Belay, “German Imperialism in Africa,” 239.

Christopher Goodwin received his undergraduate degrees in economics and history at the University of Missouri. He holds a master’s degree in military history from Norwich University, where he researched changes in Prussian masculinity engendered by the Napoleonic wars. His publications include the chapter “Patriotic Nationalism and Hegemonic Valorous Masculinity: The National Monument for the Prussian Wars of Liberation,” published in Remember the Dead, Remind the Survivors, Warn the Descendants. He has presented at numerous conferences on German nationalism, militarism, and gender history. His current studies focus on the history of psychological subjective identity formation and its relationship to group affiliation.
The original pages have small scorch marks and burned through pinholes, which reinforce the suggestion of many readings by candlelight or fireside.

How dedications acted as social currency within the patronage system, even though Blount claims otherwise. 19

Blount’s compilation of parts I and II were both translated by the controversial Thomas Shelton. Shelton translated the first English language edition of *Don Quixote* (1607) and later Blount’s updated and re-printed edition. 11 Although Shelton is not on the title page, he is credited with translating part I (1612) and part II (1620); his name is only at the end of the 1612 dedication. 12

According to Harrington, this edition was “The most popular version of *Don Quixote* circulating in England during the seventeenth century.” 13 Shelton’s beloved translation has carried with it two interesting theories. The first is that Thomas Shelton was an alias of Edward Blount. The second is that Shelton may have been a diplomat, which explains the “Colloquial style of translation” as well as his familiarity with Spanish customs. These are curious claims because they both lack evidence, particularly the second contention because no “Diplomat with the same name… has been established” as a possible translator. 14

The names found within the printed text are indeed interesting personages associated with the seventeenth century London book trade. The names written into the book are interesting for different reasons. The two hand-written names inside the book are “Tho: Bainbrigge” and “Maria Louisa Whyte, Barrow Hill.” The first appears on the original title page and the second appears on the newer flyleaf. Both names provide interesting points of entry to consider the secondary life of this object. The first name can be traced to Thomas Bainbrigg (died 1818), father of George Alsop Bainbrigge of Woodseat Hall in Rocester. 15 George Bainbrigge was an associate of Mark Anthony White of Barrowhill outside of Rocester. 16 The two men were instrumental in establishing the Friendly Society of Rocester in 1832 because they donated most of the money to found the Quaker meeting hall. 17 Maria Luisa Whyte married Mark Anthony White of Barrow Hill (Barrowhill), a member of the landed gentry. 18 Even though the original owner and any subsequent owners before Bainbrigg are not evident, this association suggests this 1652 edition passed from Tho: Bainbrigge to George Bainbrigge and then to Maria Luisa Whyte at Barrowhill in the nineteenth century.

Of “Barrow Hill House,” just one mile from the village of Rocester and five miles north of Uttoxeter in the center of England, Frances Redfern wrote in 1865 “The late Mrs. White collected there a fine library of books.” 19 Of this library many books remain, albeit scattered among different owners. “Maria Louisa Whyte” is inscribed on several flyleaves and title pages of other rare books, such as the third edition of Abraham Cowley’s *The Works of...*
Mr. Abraham Cowley (1672), Mary Wollstonecraft’s Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark (1796), and The Works of Virgil: Translated into English Verse by Mr Dryden (1782). As a member of the English gentry, Whyte would have had the resources to collect a “Fine library” and to have the volumes re-bound. The inside fore edge of Whyte’s re-bound Don Quixote bears a badly worn gold-lettered imprint, but enough remains to determine the re-binder. Upon close inspection the words appear as _ IMMOCK _ BIND_ _ _ _ _ — UTTOXETER, which is most likely DIMMOCK BINDINGS UTTOXETER. According to an 1818 Staffordshire business directory of Rocester (the year the elder Bainbrigge died), M. Dimmock was a bookseller in the center of Uttoxeter five miles from Barrow Hill. The fact Whyte’s name appears on the newer flyleaf suggests she had Dimmock re-bind the volume when it came into her possession. It would be of particular interest to inspect the many books still in circulation that bear Whyte’s name for evidence of Dimmock. Thus far, digital images of books from Whyte’s personal library do not include pictures of the inside front cover fore edge. According to the National Archives in England, Maria Louisa Whyte of Barrow Hill died a widow in 1855. After Whyte’s death Barrow Hill and its contents passed to Louisa Jane Finch Simpson, but unfortunately there is no discernable evidence of what Whyte or Simpson did with Don Quixote.

There are no other names hand written into Whyte’s rebound edition of Don Quixote, however the Armorial bookplate used to show the book’s owner bears the inscription “Ex Libris: Fairfax of Cameron.” The bookplate refers to the Scottish peer Albert Kirby Fairfax, twelfth Baron Fairfax of Cameron (1870–1939). Fairfax renounced his U.S. citizenship when he assumed the Barony of Cameron upon admittance to the British House of Lords in 1908. How a displaced American in London and member of the House of Lords acquired Whyte’s copy of Don Quixote, I have found no evidence. Nor could I discover how this edition crossed the Atlantic Ocean to end up in Stony Brook University’s Rare Book Collection on “12/16/67” as the label on the inside front cover attests. However, the records of Albert Kirby Fairfax may provide clues to how the Baron eventually gained possession of the book and how this copy of Don Quixote found its way from Britain to the United States. From the available evidence, I was able to determine that this well-read book, printed amid mid-seventeenth century controversies in London’s book trade, surfaced in the historical record in the small village of Rocester 143 miles northeast of the city. After rebinding in Uttoxeter, Don Quixote remained in central England for three to four decades, until an American expatriate and newly minted member of Britain’s peerage took possession of it. The American connection at this point in the book’s history is intriguing. This link allows for the impetus of a cross Atlantic transfer to Stony Brook University in the twentieth century, and a way to explain how Don Quixote went from the coveted possession of several British minor nobles to a Rare Book Collection in the United States which facilitates access for the public.

Endnotes

1 The Rare Book Collection at Stony Brook University is facilitated by Librarians Kristen J. Nyitray and Lynn Toscano, who were both indispensable to this project by helping to discern minute details of centuries-old faded text. Both Nyitray and Toscano report there is no record of how Don Quixote came to the Rare Book Collection in 1967.


9 Peter Harrington London.


11 Peter Harrington London.


13 Peter Harrington London.

14 Palace of Fine Arts, “The Translator.”

15 The English Reports: Chancery, Volume XLV (Edinburgh: William Green and Sons, 1904), 557. Of this 1652 copy of Don Quixote, printed in London 146 miles distant, came to be in Bainbridge’s possession, I have found no evidence.


17 Ibid.

18 Sir Bernard Burke, Index to Burke’s dictionary of the landed gentry of Great Britain & Ireland (London: Henry Colburn, 1853), 400.


20 W. Parson and T. Bradshaw, Staffordshire general & commercial directory (Manchester: Parson and Bradshaw, 1818), 268.


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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, lynching impacted African Americans across the Southern United States. Generations of African Americans lived with the constant fear of racial violence; however, it is inconceivable that a vibrant group of people would bow to subjugation. Therefore, this article attempts to discern how African Americans employed informal methods of resistance to oppose racial violence. In order to uncover instances of informal, unorganized resistance—theft, sabotage, boycotting, migration—this article draws on a collection of interviews conducted with formerly enslaved people in the 1930s by the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration. By utilizing the slave narratives, in conjunction with other primary source evidence, it is possible to uncover a hidden history of resistance.