

BUYING AT AUCTION

BUILDING THE BRITISH MUSEUM LIBRARY'S COLLECTIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY¹

Geoffrey West

In January 1847 the library of the British Museum received the last of its donations on a grand scale, that of Thomas Grenville: some 20,240 volumes, from the incunable period to the year of his death, from all parts of the world and in a wide variety of languages. The depth of Grenville's collection strengthened the library's existing holdings in classical literature and in the established canon of European, particularly Romance, literatures, while its broad range added works in less common languages and from more exotic locations. In fact, this wondrous donation coincided with the collection development policy envisaged by Antonio Panizzi in his evidence to a Select Committee of Parliament in 1836. Central to his vision was the acquisition of foreign-language material, both contemporary and early, and of books that were 'rare, ephemeral, voluminous and costly'.² The last detail was of course the most problematic. Acquiring foreign material and rare books demanded more money first and foremost. When Panizzi became Keeper in 1837 the annual purchase grant for printed books had just exceeded £2000 for the first time.³ For the year 1845/46, he aimed at securing from the Treasury £15,000 for current and non-current books. In this he was partly successful, obtaining £10,000, a figure that was maintained for four decades. However, lack of storage space, which was eventually solved by the creation of the Round Reading Room and the surrounding book stacks, restricted expenditure to well below £10,000 between 1849/50 and 1857/58).

The increase in funding was crucial for the Museum library, as the nineteenth century was an age of great auction sales from the 1830s onwards. Notable bibliophiles whose libraries came under the hammer included Richard Heber (in 1834-37); the Duke of Sussex and Robert Southey (both in 1844); Benjamin Bright (in 1845); Guglielmo Libri (in 1847); Ludwig Tieck (in 1849). Between 1869 and 1880 three important sales of extensive Mexican collections took place in Europe. The first of these, the foundation collection of the projected Imperial library of Mexico, generally known as the Andrade collection, was sold in Leipzig in 1869. Later that same year, the private library of Father Agustín Fischer, one of the more shady characters in the history of the Latin American book trade, was auctioned in London. The third was the library of the former Imperial

¹ A revised and slightly expanded version of the talk of the same title given at the British Library on 9 February 2000.

² Quoted by P. R. Harris, *A History of the British Museum Library, 1753-1973* (London: British Library, 1998), p. 104, note †.

³ This and subsequent figures are taken from Harris, *British Museum Library*, pp. 132-33, 147 and 217.

Cabinet Secretary, José Fernando Ramírez, which was auctioned in 1880, also in London.⁴ Returning to European books, the roll-call continues of collectors whose libraries were auctioned and many of whose treasures found a place in the Museum's stacks: Theodor Weigl (in 1872); Joaquín Gómez de la Cortina, Marqués de Morante (in 1872 and 1873); Sergei Sobolevskii (in 1873); Henri Burgaud des Marets (also in 1873); William Beckford (in 1882 and 1883); Achille Seillière (in 1887, 1890 and 1893); James Lindsay, Earl of Crawford (in 1887 and 1889); R. S. Turner (in 1888).⁵ Finally, the sale of the library of Ricardo Heredia took place in Paris between 1891 and 1894. Many of his books had once belonged to some of the notable collectors just mentioned, as well as to Vicente Salvá and his son, the catalogue of whose library is one of the foundation-stones of Spanish historical bibliography.⁶

The three sales – and libraries – that will be studied here contained a wide variety of European printed books. However, the focus will be on the Romance language material or on material in the other languages of Romance-speaking countries. Significant collections of English books have largely been excluded, as they warrant a study, or studies, of their own. However, the first library to be considered belies this bias.

In 1849 Ludwig Tieck, the German Romantic author and scholar, decided to sell his books to pay off family debts. Tieck's extensive library reflected his interests: English and Spanish literature, as well as German, and drama in particular. He had translated Shakespeare and had long promised an extensive book about him. In collaboration with the brothers Schlegel, he had also translated and published (1799-1801) Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. The sale of his books was handled by the Berlin bookseller Adolphus Asher, who regularly extended preferential treatment to the British Museum as a favoured customer.⁷ Asher sent to Panizzi pages of the catalogue as they came off the press. He fixed the prices of the books that Panizzi selected but he gave him leave to accept or reduce them as he thought appropriate. Asher was a fervent admirer of Panizzi and often deferred to his judgement. Many of the books in the catalogue had thus already been sold before the sale took place in December 1849, prompting the American bookseller Henry Stevens to refer to it as a 'sham'.⁸ This was not the first time the Museum had received such treatment from Asher; he had done likewise in 1846 with the collection of the Viennese bookseller Matthäus Kuppitsch.

The catalogue of the Tieck sale, which was prepared by Albert Cohn, Asher's employee and eventual successor, lists over 7930 lots, plus several hundred editions of individual Spanish plays in a separate sequence.⁹ It has five main sections: Language and Literature

⁴ See Geoffrey West, 'Atlantic Crossings: The Trade in Latin American Books in Europe in the Nineteenth Century', in *Trends and Traditions in Latin American and Caribbean History: Papers of the Forty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials*, ed. Denise A. Hibay (Austin, TX: SALALM, 2005), pp. 29-43.

⁵ Brief information about the majority of these sales is given by Harris, *British Museum Library*.

⁶ Pedro Salvá y Mallén, *Catálogo de la biblioteca de Salvá ...* (Valencia: Impr. de Ferrer de Orga, 1872). On Vicente Salvá, see Manuel Sánchez Mariana, *Bibliófilos españoles: Desde sus orígenes hasta los albores del siglo XX* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional; Ollero & Ramos, 1993), p. 88.

⁷ See David Paisey, 'Adolphus Asher (1800-1853): Berlin Bookseller, Anglophile, and Friend to Panizzi', *British Library Journal*, 23 (1997), 131-53, esp. pp. 138-39, 141-42. See also *Handbuch deutscher historischer Buchbestände in Europa. Band 10: A Guide to Collections of Books Printed in German-speaking Countries before 1901 ... held by Libraries in Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. Graham Jefcoate et al. (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 2000), pp. 52-54.

⁸ Quoted by Paisey, 'Adolphus Asher', p. 139.

⁹ *Catalogue de la bibliothèque célèbre de M. Ludwig Tieck qui sera vendue à Berlin ... parmi MM. A. Asher & Comp.* (Berlin: imprimé chez Trowitzsch et fils, 1849). Because some lots comprised considerably more than

(with subdivisions for the major European languages), History, Literary History, Theatre and Miscellaneous. Language and Literature accounts for more than half the titles and of these Spanish and German books predominate, followed by English, Italian and then French. The relatively short Theatre section covers theatre history and dramatic theory, just as Literary History covers criticism and theory. Texts are included in Language and Literature. Tieck's library was largely the working library of a writer and scholar. It contained rare items certainly, but his books were not beautiful: they were for use, not ornament. Evidence of this is the quantity of notes, underlinings and marginalia that they contain. Asher and Cohn obviously considered these annotations increased the books' value, as several items in the catalogue are highlighted by an asterisk, on occasions an accolade of rarity, but also on account of Tieck's personal contributions. One such item is his copy of Shakespeare's works in twenty-three volumes (Basel, 1799-1802), of which the catalogue observes that the notes represent more than forty years of study ('ces notes renferment les fruits d'une étude de plus de 40 ans', Lot no. 2152). Tieck's comments refer to dates, attributions and comparisons between existing editions.

Tieck's annotations in his books range from exclamation marks, underlinings and marginal marks to critical observations, which are hard to read and moreover contain personal abbreviations.¹⁰ His copies of play texts contain glosses in German and explanatory notes. He possessed, for example, William Gifford's 1816 edition of Ben Jonson's plays and the 1692 edition; both his sets are now in the British Library.¹¹ The annotations in his copy of the latter consist largely of transcriptions in German of Gifford's notes; hence the Gs at the end of most of those found at the opening scene of Act I of *The Alchemist* (fig. 1).

Some of Tieck's marginalia however are less scholarly. Occasional outbursts, such as 'Unsinn' (Nonsense!) or 'O wie dumm' (How stupid!), are in the best undergraduate tradition of spontaneous critical comment.

Especially significant among Tieck's Spanish books acquired by the Museum are his catalogues and editions of Golden Age plays. The German Romantics were largely responsible for the re-evaluation in early nineteenth-century Europe of Lope de Vega, Calderón and their contemporaries. The Museum Library's holdings of Golden Age drama, an area not generally to the taste of the collectors whose libraries formed the foundation collections, had recently been augmented by books from the W. B. Chorley sale.¹² The Museum now acquired Tieck's own catalogues of Spanish *comedias*, each with his own annotations. The underlinings in his copy of *Indice general alfabético de todos los títulos de comedias ... por varios autores antiguos, y modernos* indicate the works he himself possessed (approximately one-third of the total, he proudly noted) (fig. 2).¹³

Tieck also inserted alternative titles: 'Comendador de Ocaña' indicates Lope de Vega's *Peribáñez*, for example. Another of his catalogues is more ambitious. This was his

one title, Edwin H. Zeydel calculated that 'the Tieck library contained over 9500 actual titles and considerably over 12,000 volumes'. See his 'Ludwig Tieck's Library', *Modern Language Notes*, 42 (1927), 21-25. On Tieck's books acquired by the British Museum, see David Paisey's contribution on the British Library in *A Guide to Collections of Books Printed in German-speaking Countries before 1901*, p. 84.

¹⁰ See Harvey W. Hewett-Thayer, 'Tieck's Marginalia in the British Museum', *The Germanic Review*, 9 (1934), 9-17.

¹¹ London: printed by T. Hodgkin for H. Herringman, etc., 1692, BL pressmark C.61.f.1, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 1933. London: G. and W. Nicol, etc., 1816, BL pressmark C.182.a.1, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 1934.

¹² William Brownword Chorley's Spanish books were sold by S. Leigh Sotheby & Co. on 21 October 1846.

¹³ Madrid: Imprenta de Alfonso de Mora, 1735, BL pressmark C.182.aa.3, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2802.

THE ALCHEMIST.

THE ARGUMENT.

Before the Play begins
the Sicknes bot, a Master quit, for fear,

The Sicknes bot, a Master quit, for fear,
His House in Town, and left one Servant there.
Ease him corrupted, and gave means to know

A Cheater, and his Punk; who, now brought low,
Leaving their narrow Practice, were become
Co'sners at large; and only wanting some
House to set up, with him they here contract,
Each for a Share, and all begin to act.
Much Company they draw, and much abuse,
In casting Figures, telling Fortunes, News,
Selling of Flies, flat Dawdery, with the Stone; *See, priests, sanctimonies, &c.*
Till it, and they, and all in Fume are gone.

In every Act, and of 6. the play is in 20 short hours
A short play, 20 short hours
PROLOGUE.

Fortune, that favours Fools, these two short Hours
We wish away, both for your sakes, and ours,
Judging Spectators; and desire in place,
To th' Author Justice, to our selves but Grace.

Our Scene is London, 'cause we would make known,
No Country Mirth is better than our own:

No Climate breeds better Matter for your Whore,
Bawd, Squire, Impostor, many Persons more,

Whose Manners, now call'd Humours, feed the Stage;
And which have still been Subject for the Rage

Or Spleen of Comic Writers. Though this Pen

Did never aim to grieve, but better Men;

How'er the Age he lives in dash endure *see the world*

The Vices that she breeds, above their Cure, *see the world*

But when the wholesome Remedies are sweet,

And in their working Gain and Profit meet,

He hopes to find no Spirit so much diseas'd;

But will with such fair Corollaries be pleas'd:

For here he doth not fear who can apply.

If there be any that will fit so nigh

Unto the Stream, to look what it doth run,

They shall find things, they'd think, or wish, were done;

They are so natural Follies, but so shewn,

As even the Deers may see, and yet not curn.

Act I. Scene I.

Face, Subtle, Dol Common.

Belov'd, I will. *Sub.* Thy worth. I farr at thee.

Dol. Ha! you your Wit? Why Gentlemen! for

love— *Sub.* What do you? *Dol.* I am a

352 *Fac.* Sirrah, I'll strip you— *Sub.* What to do? *Hick Figs*

Out at my— *Fac.* Rogue, Rogue, out of all your fleighs.

Sub. He doth not fear who can apply.

Fac. He doth not fear who can apply.

Dol. Nay, look ye, Sovereign, General, are you Madmen?

Sub. O, let the wild Sheep loose. I'll Gum your Silks
With good Strong-warter, an' you come.

Dol. Will you have

The Neighbours hear you? Will you betray all?

Heark, I hear some body. *Fac.* Sirrah— *Sub.* I shall mar

All that the Taylor has made, if you approach.

Fac. You most notorious Whelp, you insolent Slave,

Dare you do this? *Sub.* Yes faith, yes faith. *Fac.* Why, who

Am I, my Mungil? who am I? *Sub.* I'll tell you,

Since you know not your self— *Fac.* Speak lower, Rogue.

Sub. Yes, You were once (time's not long past) the good,

Honest, plain, Livery three-pound-thrum, that kept *see the world*

Your Masters Worthips Houle here in the Friars, *see the world*

For the Vacations— *Fac.* Will you be so lowd? *Sub.* *see the world*

Sub. Since, by my means, translated Suburb Captain.

Fac. By your means, Doctor Dog?

Sub. Within Man's memory,

All this I speak of. *Fac.* Why, I pray you, have I

Been countenanc'd by you, or you by me?

Do but collect, Sir, where I met you first.

Sub. I do not hear well. *Fac.* Not of this, I think it.

But I shall put you in mind, Sir; at Pie-corner,

Taking your meal of Steam in, from Cooks Stalls;

Where, like the Father of Hunger, you did walk

Piteously costive, with your pinch'd-horn-nose,

And your Complexion of the Roman Wall,

Stuck full of black and melancholick Worms,

Like Powder-corn that at th' Artillery-yard,

Sub. I wish you could advance your Voice a little.

Fac. When you went pinn'd up in the several Rags

Yo' had rak'd and pick'd from Dunghills, before day;

Your Feet in mouldy Slippers, for your Kibes

A Felt of Rug, and a thin thredden Cloke,

That scarce would cover your no Buttocks—

Sub. So, Sir!

Fac. When all your Achemy, and your Algebra,

Your Minerals, Vegetals, and Animals,

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Sub. *see the world*

Fac. *see the world*

Fig. 1. *The Works of Ben Jonson* (London: printed by T. Hodgkin for H. Herringman, etc., 1692). *The Alchemist*, act I. C.61.f.1, p. 211.

interleaved copy of the final volume of Vicente García de la Huerta's *Theatro hespañol*.¹⁴ Here Tieck supplied variant titles, but also added works that had been omitted from the original. He also questioned attributions and made minor corrections.

In addition to the catalogues, the Museum acquired collected editions and editions of single plays. The former include his copies of Lope de Vega, printed over the period 1604-1647;¹⁵ and of Calderón in various editions.¹⁶ If I mention just one edition of two individual plays – *Los bandos de Verona* by Rojas Zorrilla and *Los Castelvines y Monteses* of Lope, published in Leipzig in 1839 – it is because it illustrates the fundamental point I wish to make about the majority of Tieck's Spanish books acquired by the Museum.¹⁷ They represented contemporary scholarship and a new literary appreciation in which the Museum was then lagging behind. The same is true of Tieck's German books, less so concerning his Italian and French material. A change in literary taste is further illustrated by the acquisition of Tieck's copies of Spanish ballads, which until Grenville had not been well represented in the Museum's collections and were now in fashion. The German interest in them is attributable to the Romantic interest in popular, or folk, literature. The Museum purchased two *cancioneros*, one printed in Antwerp in 1568, the other in Madrid in 1593.¹⁸

However the Museum lost one desirable item, another *cancionero* printed in Antwerp in 1550 and rarer than the other.¹⁹ This turned out to have been stolen from the library of the Duchy of Brunswick at Wolfenbüttel and was duly returned by the Museum.²⁰

Inevitably among Tieck's books now in the British Library there are bibliographical rarities and specimens of early printing. Two examples must suffice. The first is an edition of the French prose romance of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, printed in Chambéry in 1484, of which just one other, imperfect, copy has survived.²¹ The second is a Spanish version of John of Capua's translation of the fables of Bidpai, printed in Seville in 1534.²²

Exactly how many of Tieck's books are now in the Library is difficult to determine as only two lists have survived.²³ Without the invoices, which are by far the best source of information, we have to rely on Asher's correspondence with Panizzi and on the

¹⁴ *Catalogo alfabetico de las comedias* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1785), BL pressmark C.182.aa.6, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2802.

¹⁵ BL pressmark 1072.l.3-20, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2817.

¹⁶ Calderón, *Segunda (- Tercera) parte de comedias ...* (Madrid: M. de Quiñones, 1637, 1664), BL pressmark C.57.c.40, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2456. *Verdadera quinta parte de comedias ... que publica don Iuan de Vera Tassis y Villaroel ...* (Madrid: F. Sanz, 1682), BL pressmark C.57.c.40*, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2456. *Comedias ... que saca a luz Don Juan Fernandez de Apontes ...* (Madrid: Viuda de M. Fernandez, 1760-63), BL pressmark 11725.e.1, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2457.

¹⁷ *Las dos comedias famosas. Los bandos de Verona de Francisco de Rojas ... y Los Castelvines y Monteses de Lope de Vega ... segun las mejores ediciones viejas espanolas en un tomo colegidas y reimprimadas por el Conde de Hohenthal-Stetteln y Deuben* (Leipzig & Paris: Brockhaus y Avenarius, 1839), BL pressmark C.182.aa.2, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2761.

¹⁸ *Cancionero de romances* (Antwerp: Philip Nuyts, 1568), BL pressmark C.20.a.37, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2478. *Pedro de Moncayo, Flor de varios romances nuevos* (Madrid: Pedro Gómez de Aragón, 1593), BL pressmark C.62.a.27, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2750.

¹⁹ *Cancionero de romances* (Antwerp: Martin Nuyts, 1550), *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2476.

²⁰ As noted by Paisley in *A Guide to Collections of Books Printed in German-speaking Countries before 1901*, p. 84.

²¹ *Livre de Baudoin comte de Flandre et de Ferrant fils du roi du Portugal* (Chambéry: Antoine Neyret), BL pressmark 1A.43405, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2886.

²² *Exemplario. Libro llamado exemplario ... nuevamente corregido* (Seville: Juan Cromberger, 1534), BL pressmark C.62.e.4, *Catalogue ... Tieck*, no. 2449.

²³ An invoice (but without prices), stamped 9 Apr. 1850, includes two lists of books from the Tieck sale, one of seven, the other of twenty-four books (British Library Corporate Archive, Acquisition Invoices, DH 5/6).

inconsistent pencil marginalia in the Library's copy of the sale catalogue. We do know, however, that Panizzi was allowed to spend up to £800, but in the event spent (by my calculation) in the region of £650.²⁴

The second library within the Library to be studied here is very different from Tieck's. It is the so-called *Bibliothèque Patoise* of Jean-Henri Burgaud des Marets (1806-1873), a collection of books both in the minority languages of Europe and in the dialects of the major languages.²⁵ The auction took place in Paris in May 1873, but was not a great success. Many lots remained unsold and were subsequently purchased by the bookseller Maisonneuve, who issued a second catalogue in 1874 listing the unsold items and adding a number of books that Burgaud had retained for his own use and which were thus absent from the first catalogue of 1873.²⁶ The total number of entries in the two parts of the catalogue was 3561. Each part is divided into separate sections which give an idea of its range; the headings include:

- Langue basque
- Patois français et romans [includes Provençal, Gascon]
- Dialectes espagnols [includes Catalan, Galician]
- Dialectes italiens
- Rhêto-romansch
- Langues celtiques [including Breton, Scots Gaelic, Irish, Welsh]
- Patois anglais
- Patois allemands
- Argot des voleurs
- Langue des gîgains

The Museum's negotiations with Maisonneuve in 1873 were protracted and prone to misunderstandings. A sample of the catalogue and then a copy of the catalogue itself were sent to the Museum in advance of the sale.²⁷ William Rye, Keeper of Printed Books, first rejected Maisonneuve's proposal that the Museum buy the whole collection, nor would he allow him to act as agent.²⁸ Instead he indicated those books in which the Museum was interested, left Maisonneuve to purchase them and fix the sale price. Rye then agreed provided the price was right.²⁹ The final outcome was that the Museum acquired some

²⁴ Asher estimated the value of books not already in the Museum's collection not to exceed £800 (letter to Panizzi, 25 May 1849; BL Corporate Archive, Panizzi Papers, DH 1/10, fol. 248v). Panizzi asked to spend up to that amount and the Trustees left the matter to Panizzi's discretion (Memorandum from Henry Ellis, Principal Librarian to Panizzi; BL Corporate Archive, Panizzi Papers, DH 1/10, fol. 249r). See also Paisey, *A Guide to Collections of Books Printed in German-speaking Countries before 1901*, p. 53.

²⁵ On the life of Burgaud des Marets, see Camille Beaulieu, *Vie et travaux de Burgaud des Marets. Philologue, bibliophile et poète santongeais* (La Rochelle: Editions Rupella, 1928).

²⁶ *Bibliothèque patoise de M. Burgaud des Marets. Livres rares et précieux ...* (Paris: Maisonneuve 1873-74). Apart from the date, the only substantial change to the text of the titlepage of the second catalogue is the reference to the 'late', 'feu M. Burgaud des Marets'.

²⁷ Letter from Maisonneuve (28 Mar. 1873; BL Corporate Archive, Department of Printed Books (DPB), In-Letters, DH 4/13, fols 33r, 34v).

²⁸ Letter from Maisonneuve to Rye (12 Apr. 1873; BL Corporate Archive, DPB, In-Letters, DH 4/13, fol. 37rv). Reply of Rye to Maisonneuve (21 Apr. 1873; BL Corporate Archive, DPB, In-Letters, DH 4/13, fol. 38rv).

²⁹ Original letter of Rye, which was misunderstood by Maisonneuve (10 Apr.; BL Corporate Archive, DPB, In-Letters, DH 4/13, fol. 36rv). Letter of Rye to Maisonneuve (1 May; BL Corporate Archive, DPB, In-Letters, DH 4/13, fol. 40rv).

970 books at a total cost of approximately £937 from the two catalogues, although the second invoice does include some non-Burgaud items.³⁰

Basque material had a prominent place in Burgaud's collection and the Museum acquired 130 books in or about the Basque language.³¹ One of the rarer is the Basque version of St Francis de Sales's *Introduction à la vie dévote*, printed in Toulouse in 1749.³² French imprints predominated among Burgaud des Marets's books. Besides Basque, he possessed books in other minority languages, e.g. a collection of maxims in Gascon verse,³³ and a Breton translation of Adrien Parvilliers, *Les Stations de Notre-Sauveur*, printed in Vannes in 1766.³⁴

From Iberia Burgaud collected books, not just in Basque, but in all the minority languages of the Peninsula, e.g. a collection of poetry in the Valencian dialect of Catalan, containing *Lo procès de les olives*, an anonymous satirical poem about a man who hides under a lady's bed and overhears her conversation with her women friends in which they make lewd remarks and criticisms about old men.³⁵

Nor did Burgaud restrict his collecting to languages from southern Europe. He was interested also in books in German and English dialects and in books both in and about the minority languages of northern Europe. He owned, for example, a copy of MacCurtin's Irish grammar, written in English, but printed in the Low Countries.³⁶ There had been a tradition of printing in the Irish language in Louvain by Franciscans who had been driven from Donegal in the early seventeenth century. Most of the printing was of Catholic religious material, but MacCurtin's grammar also used the type for printing grammatical examples and a Catechism in Irish. This is thought to be the last book printed in Irish in Louvain; the type appears to have been melted down some time after.³⁷

Burgaud des Marets's library was that of a scholar and a collector. As a linguist he collected and published examples of French dialect. He was fluent too in Polish and translated into French works by the leading writer Adam Mickiewicz, who was one among his circle of friends. An avid bibliophile, he amassed an extraordinary number of books in a wide range of languages. His counterpart, and correspondent, in London was Louis-Lucien Bonaparte, although the latter's scholarly interest extended to comparative philology. The British Museum's acquisitions policy, or at least its implementation, is not especially clear. Books in minority languages were acquired for philological and dialectal study as if they were specimens of Natural History. Landmark texts of provincial printing

³⁰ The books that the Library acquired can be identified from the invoices, dated 26 July 1873 and 21 July 1874 (BL Corporate Archive, DPB, Invoices for purchases, DH 5/31, 5/33). They list the books purchased according to their number in the sale catalogue.

³¹ For a fuller discussion of the acquisition of Basque books, see Geoffrey West, 'Los fondos vascos de la British Library: los libros que fueron de Henri Burgaud des Marets', *Sancho el Sabio. Revista de cultura vasca*, 14 (2001), 229-36.

³² *Philotea, edo Devocioneraco bide erakusçaillea ... Joannes de Haraneder ... berriro escararat itçulia* (Toulouse: J. F. Robert, 1749), BL pressmark 886.d.2, *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 150.

³³ Guillaume Ader, *Lou Catounet Gascon* (Thoulouse: per la beuze de I. Colomiez & R. Colomiez, 1607), BL pressmark 11498.aa.32, *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 924.

³⁴ *Stationneu hur-Salver Jesuss-Crouistt, enn e Bassion, represanted e trihueh figure ... Lacaid e Bererhonéç dré C. V. Cillart ... Guéd el litanieu ag er Bassion; pedair canenn spirituèle ...* [etc.] (Guinét: C. Galles, 1766), BL pressmark 4808.a.1, *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 2100.

³⁵ *Lo proces de les Oliues y somni de Joan Joan, ordenat principalment per ... Bernat Fenollar...* [edited by Onufre Almudever] (Valencia: Joan de Arcos, 1561), BL pressmark 11450.a.27, *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 1597.

³⁶ Hugh MacCurtin, *The Elements of the Irish Language, Grammatically Explained in English* (Louvain: Martin van Overbeke, 1728), BL pressmark 1568/3631, *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 2177.

³⁷ See Dermot McGuinne, *Irish Type Design: A History of Printing Types in the Irish Character* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992), pp. 23-36.

were also considered important. Yet duplicates were acquired in this sale. MacCurtin's Irish grammar was one such and the Library seems not to have been concerned at duplicating the existing Grenville copy, possibly because of the work's importance. Several editions of certain works were also acquired: e.g. the French and Breton dictionary of Guillaume Quiquer, dated 1652 and 1671.³⁸ At the same time the top two titles among the Basque books were missed because Rye thought erroneously that they were duplicates, even when Maisonneuve pointed out that they were not. These two works were the first edition of Pedro de Axular's *Guero* and Leizarraga's Basque version of Calvin's catechism.³⁹

My third and final library within the Library consists of relatively few books, but each is a 'monument of typography' in the terminology of the famous Quaritch catalogue of 1897. Moreover several are monuments not just of typography, but of nineteenth-century French binding too, the work of Chambolle-Duru, Belz-Niedrée and of Hardy-Mennil. They are books acquired from the library of Baron Achille Seillière (1813-73), easily distinguished in most cases by the super-libris displaying the Seillière arms (fig. 3). 'Bibliothèque de Mello' refers to the castle of Mello in the French department of Oise, the family seat, purchased by Achille's father, François. The Seillière family made its fortune largely in banking.⁴⁰ The Baron's sons inherited his library, but both were dead by 1890. Three significant book sales took place. The first, in 1887, was in London at Sotheby's; the second in Paris in 1890, and the third in 1893, also in Paris.⁴¹ The lots of both the 1887 and 1890 catalogues are remarkable. The introduction to the first states that 'in no previous sale ... will be found such a remarkable assemblage of early Romances of Chivalry and ancient French literature – even though we were to look back for sixty or seventy years to the Sales of the Duke of Roxburghe and Colonel Stanley ... There is scarcely a volume that is not found to be of real value and importance' (p. iii). It is a particularly amazing bibliographic array for scholars of Spanish literature, as it contains no fewer than sixteen editions of Fernando de Rojas's *Celestina* (lots 232-47).

Unfortunately, early 1887 was a bad time economically for the Museum. The Treasury was demanding substantial cuts in all acquisition budgets for 1887-88 and the Seillière sale came right at the end of financial year 1886-87. Thus, the budget for printed books for the year 1887-88 was £6200, while for each of the previous five years it had been

³⁸ *Dictionnaire et colloques françois et breton* (Morlaix: J. de Ploesquelec, 1662), BL pressmark 1568/3863, *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 2112. *Dictionnaire et colloques françois-breton* (Quimper: G. le Blanc, 1671), BL pressmark 1568/3473, *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 3438. The Library already possessed the 1626 and 1738 editions, as well as those of 1722 and 1725 (both ex-Grenville).

³⁹ Rye's and Maisonneuve's references to the Basque items in question are in two letters, dated 10 Apr. and 12 Apr. 1873 (see BL Corporate Archive, DPB In-Letters, DH 4/13, fols 36r and 37v respectively). Pedro de Axular, *Guero, bi partetan partitua eta berecia ...* (Bordeaux: G. Milanges, 1643), *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 27. A B C, *edo christinoen instructionea othoitiz eguiteco formarequin* (La Rochelle: Pierre Hautin, 1571); this work follows Leizarraga's calendar, *Kalendrerá, bazco nois daten, ilhargui berriaren eta letra Dominicalaren eçagutzeco manerarequin ...* (La Rochelle: Pierre Hautin, 1571), *Bibliothèque patoise*, no. 193. In my article of 2001 (see n. 31), I was too generous to Rye, who in fact refused to acknowledge the rarities that were on offer.

⁴⁰ See *Dictionnaire des dynasties bourgeoises et du monde des affaires*, ed. Henry Coston (Paris: Editions Alain Moreau, 1975), pp. 518-21.

⁴¹ *Catalogue of an Important Portion of the Very Choice Library of the Late Baron Seillière* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1887); *Catalogue de livres rares et précieux manuscrits et imprimés composant la bibliothèque de feu M. le baron Ach. S****** (Paris: C. Porquet, 1890); *Catalogue de livres rares et précieux manuscrits et imprimés composant la bibliothèque de feu M. le baron Ach. S****** (Paris: C. Porquet, 1893). The British Library lacks a copy of the third catalogue.

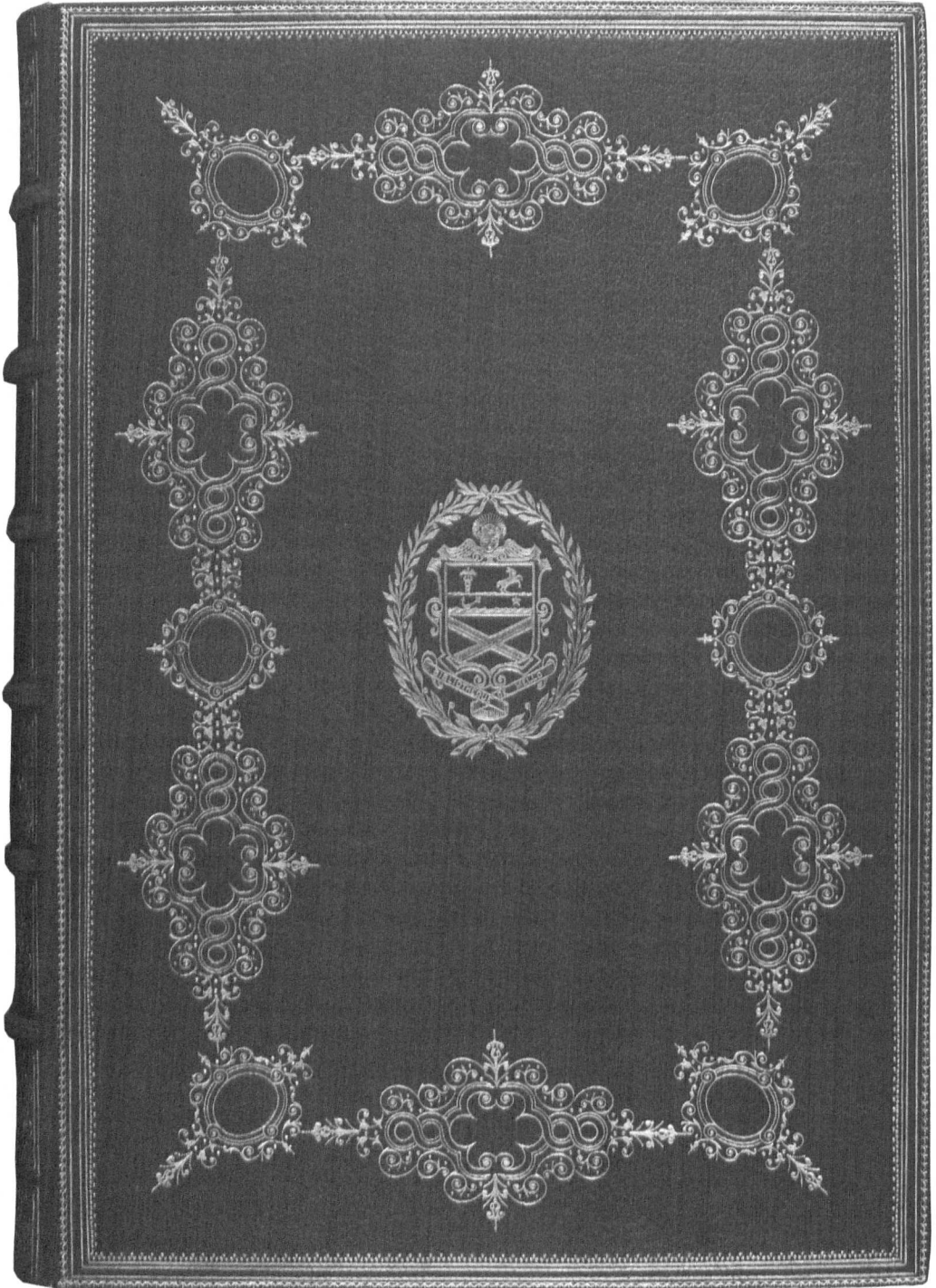


Fig. 3. *Fuero real de España* (Burgos: J. de Junta, 1541). C.2o.e.4, front cover.

between £9650 and £10,000.⁴² The sale was also competing with the demands of the Crawford sale, which was coming up in June the same year. Thus, for the 1887 Seillièr sale expenditure of just £100 was requested and agreed, and five books were acquired via Quaritch.⁴³ Of these the most expensive was a Spanish version of the Old French prose romance of Roland and Angelica, printed in Seville in 1533, which cost £50.⁴⁴ However, one of the two Spanish treasures of the collection, the unique copy of the first edition of the first four books of *Amadís de Gaula*, printed by Jorge Coci in Zaragoza in 1508, was purchased from Quaritch in 1895. The history of the volume is not known prior to its acquisition by Seillièr from the bookseller Edwin Tross who had acquired it at Ferrara in 1872.⁴⁵

Other editions of Spanish prose romances from the 1887 sale subsequently found their way into the Museum: in 1896 an *Esplandián* (the fifth book of the Amadís cycle), printed in Rome in 1525, and, in 1918, a *Florisendo*, the only recorded copy of the first edition, printed in Salamanca in 1510.⁴⁶

Acquisitions at the 1890 sale were more plentiful: five items were purchased via Quaritch at a cost of £347 14s. 9d.; and sixteen less costly items for £180 5s. from Albert Cohn.⁴⁷ The most expensive item was another Spanish prose romance, the story of the Knight Platir (Valladolid, 1533), which cost £100.⁴⁸ However, the Museum failed to secure the unique copy of the first, sixteen-act, version of *La Celestina*, now in the Hispanic Society of America.⁴⁹ The Museum set a limit of £50, but the book was purchased by Quaritch for just over twice that price.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, as with the 1887 sale, items from 1890 sale arrived subsequently: an Italian edition of *Florisel de Niquea* and another edition of *Esplandián* (Burgos, 1587), both in 1893.⁵¹ As a measure of

⁴² See Harris, *History of the British Museum Library*, p. 341.

⁴³ Invoice, BL Corporate Archive, DH 5/55, stamped 14 Mar. 1887. Correspondence. Trustees' Minutes and Reports of the Keepers of Printed Books, DH 2/38, Minutes, 12 Feb. 1887, fol. 6r.

⁴⁴ Pero López de Santa Catalina, *Libro segundo de Espejo de cauallierias* (Seville: Juan Cromberger 1533), BL pressmark C.38.h.18, *Catalogue ... Seillièr* (1887), no. 415.

⁴⁵ I discussed the acquisition of the *Amadís* of 1508 by the British Library in 'La adquisición del *Amadís de Gaula*, Libros I-IV (Zaragoza, 1508) por el Museo Británico' (paper read at the VI Reunión de Trabajo de la Asociación Española de Bibliografía in 1998, unpublished). For a brief summary, see 'La historia de un ejemplar único: British Library: C.20.e.6', in *Amadís de Gaula 1508: quinientos años de libros de caballerías* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional de España, 2008), pp. 159-61.

⁴⁶ *Las sergas del virtuoso cauallero esplandian* ([Rome]: J. de Junta & A. de Salamanca, 1525), BL pressmark C.20.e.11, *Catalogue ... Seillièr* (1887), no. 418. *El sexto libro del ... grande rey Amadís de Gaula* (Salamanca: Juan de Porras, 1510), BL pressmark C.20.e.34, *Catalogue ... Seillièr* (1887), no. 443.

⁴⁷ Invoices, BL Corporate Archive, DH 5/63, stamped 19 June 1890 (Quaritch), 14 July (Cohn). In fact, the Museum Director, Edward Maunde Thompson, had authorized a budget of only £350 for the auction (BL Corporate Archive, DH 2/44, Correspondence. Trustees' Minutes and Reports of the Keepers of Printed Books, 1890, vol. 1, Minutes, 12 Apr., fol. 18r). This was in response to Garnett's report (DH 2/44, Correspondence, etc. I, Reports, 9 Apr., fol. 191). Subsequently he approved the purchase of the books from Cohn (BL Corporate Archive, DH 2/44, Correspondence, etc. I, Minutes, 12 July, fol. 47r). Garnett's original recommendation is at DH 2/44, Correspondence, etc. I, Reports, 2 July, fols 228r-229v.

⁴⁸ *La cronica ... del cauallero Platir* (Valladolid: N. Tyerri, 1533), BL pressmark C.57.g.3, *Catalogue ... Seillièr* (1890), no. 813.

⁴⁹ *Catalogue ... Seillièr* (1890), no. 415, where the imprint is given as Burgos: Fadrique de Basilea, 1499. However, the most likely date is 1501. See Julián Martín Abad, *Post-incunables ibéricos* (Madrid: Ollero & Ramos, 2001), no. 1337.

⁵⁰ Richard Garnett, Head of the Department of Printed Books, reports that the sum of £50 'could not be applied, owing to the high prices obtained on the latter days of the sale' (BL Corporate Archive, DH 2/44, Correspondence, etc., I, Reports, 2 June 1890).

⁵¹ *La historia de gli strenui e ualerosi Cauallieri Don Florisello di Nichea, e Anassarte* (Venice: M. Tramezzino, 1551), BL pressmark C.57.a.17, *Catalogue ... Seillièr* (1890), no. 801. *Libro primero delas sergas del ... cauallero Esplandian* (Burgos: S. de Aguayo, 1587), BL pressmark C.20.d.26, *Catalogue ... Seillièr* (1890), no. 786.

consolation for the failure to secure the *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, the Museum acquired from Quaritch in 1898 Seillière's copy of an edition of the *Tragicomedia*, supposedly printed in Seville in 1501, but in fact printed in Rome c. 1516.⁵²

Baron Seillière's library consisted of choice items and he had exacting criteria, as the splendid bindings of his books show. His tastes were well defined: literary and somewhat anachronistic, favouring the Classics, histories and romances of chivalry. The vast majority of his books were printed before 1700.⁵³ It is through him that the British Library's present collection of monumental Spanish imprints, begun by Grenville, was consolidated and enhanced.

I have described three libraries within the Library, or more precisely excerpts of them: the working library of a scholar and writer, a collector's library and the library of a connoisseur. The books reached the Museum's shelves by different routes: directly at auction or purchased from booksellers after passing through others' hands. What all three do demonstrate however is that the second half of the nineteenth century was truly a Golden Age for foreign-language acquisitions by the library of the British Museum.

⁵² Fernando de Rojas, *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* ('Seville', '1501'; i.e. Rome: M. Silber, c. 1515-16), BL pressmark C.20.b.15, *Catalogue ... Seillière* (1887), no. 232. See Martín Abad, *Post-incunables ibéricos*, no. 1338.

⁵³ See also Geoffrey West, 'Los libros españoles que fueron del barón Achille Seillière ahora en la British Library de Londres', *Trabajos de la VIII Reunión de la Asociación Española de Bibliografía* (2003) (Madrid: la Asociación & Biblioteca Nacional, 2004), pp. 161-72.