

## Biography of a Bibliophile and Owner of a 1605 *Quijote*: Oscar Benjamín Cintas y Rodríguez (1887-1957)

JACK WEINER

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For ALAN BENTON, sage, scholar, friend, and warrior

Y fueron siempre mis lujos invertir en buenos cuadros lo que otros  
derrochaban en yates, mesas de juego o queridas. Eso es todo.

ANTONIO ÁLVAREZ “Pagué...” 43

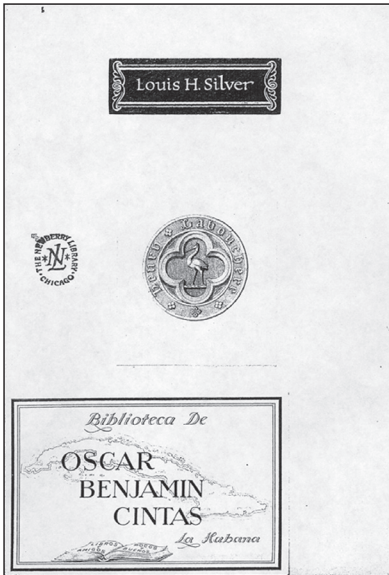
THE PURPOSE OF THIS study is to analyze the personality and motivations of this Cuban philanthropist, diplomat, bibliophile, art collector, and businessman.<sup>1</sup> I want to determine what attracted Mr. Cintas so irresistibly to his beloved books—and especially the 1605 *Quijote*—and art. This study will also show that quixotic idealism and benevolence fueled his desire to collect books and art primarily for the well being of the Cuban people. A collector’s paintings and books allow the scholar to peer into that collector’s heart and soul.

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1 I thank so many people and institutions for their invaluable help with this study. They are the Newberry Library, Northern Illinois University Founders Library, The Johns Hopkins Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Harvard University libraries, The Chicago Historical Museum, Jill Gage, Sir Hugh Thomas, John Paul Rathbone, Linda Seckelson, The Thomas J. Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Hortensia Sampedro, Margarita Cano, chief executive officers of the Cintas Foundation, Sheldon S. Rosenfeld, Julio César Pérez Hernando, Edward Green, John Buchtel, Margaret N. Burri, Juan Portela, The New York Public Library, Vinnie, The Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago, The Frick Art Reference Library, Salvador García of the Instituto Cervantes of Chicago, The Morgan Library, Erwin Levov and Peter J. Johnson, both from the Rockefeller Foundation, and William O’Reilly. In particular I thank John Beckham and Albert Madansky for their computer and bibliographic help, and my wife María Amalia for her keen eye for detail.

I hope to explain why, and sometimes how, Mr. Cintas acquired the specific books, manuscripts, paintings, and other art objects that constituted his world-renowned collections. The reader can readily find some of the answer to this question in the intriguing words of this study's epigraph.

A while ago when I was studying Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, Jill Gage a Newberry Library reference librarian suggested that I might like to see the Newberry's first edition of that novel (1605-1615).



When I opened the cover of the first volume, I saw the bookplates of the three previous owners of this Newberry copy of *Don Quijote*: Henry Labouchere, Oscar Benjamin Cintas of Havana, Cuba, and Louis H. Silver. The fact that a Cuban had owned such a rare bibliographic treasure greatly piqued my curiosity.<sup>2</sup> And that is the genesis of this study.

#### THE EARLY YEARS:

#### FAMILY HISTORY, SAGUA LA GRANDE, AND GREAT BRITAIN

Because Mr. Cintas's artistic and intellectual development are so closely associated with his family and with his native

city of Sagua la Grande, a family biography and city description are very much in order.

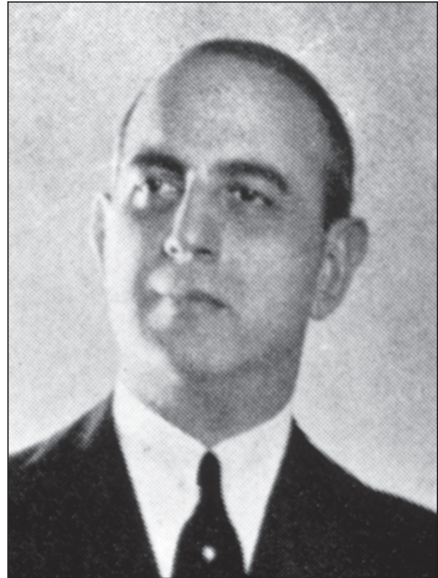
2 The Cintas/Silver/Newberry edition (Case Y 722 c 3441) is one of about a dozen known copies worldwide. Mr. Cintas purchased this edition from the rare book dealer John Francis Fleming who was a representative of the A. S. W. Rosenbach firm. In 1942 Mr. Cintas paid \$5,000 for it. In 1961 Mr. Fleming purchased it back from the Cintas estate for \$44,000 (*New York Times* May 18, p.6) In 1963 The Newberry Library purchased this very edition from the Silver estate (Towner, *passim*). The Rosenbach firm had originally purchased this book from Maggs Brothers (Knowles 50).

Mr. Cintas also bought the second edition of Barcelona of 1608 as well as the 1617 one from Barcelona both of which are also part of the Newberry Library collection. He also had several other early editions of *Don Quijote* (O'Reilly items 79-82)

In 1887 Oscar Benjamín Cintas y Rodríguez was unto the manor born in the Cuban provincial town of Sagua la Grande<sup>3</sup> although his family's economic situation had already begun to diminish.

His family had him baptized in the town's Parish Church.<sup>4</sup> It was in this large and beautiful church that a priest had baptized each Cintas family child for decades. On such occasions Mr. Cintas's maternal grandfather, José Rodríguez López († 1886)<sup>5</sup> used to take from his own home art gallery a painting of the Virgin by Murillo. He used to place it on the altar as a witness to the ceremony with the hope that the Virgin would protect these children. According to Portela this painting by Murillo is different from the one that graced Mr. Cintas's Havana mansion (Telephone conversation, March 8, 2008).

According to Ramos, in this church there also hung a canvas by the Belgian painter Jos. Correns called, "The Savior's Baptism" (Ramos [1962] 30-31). Ramos confirms that the donor was a Dutchman called Juan Van der Kieft who had married into a prominent Sagua family (Ramos *ibid.*, 33 note 2).



Oscar Benjamín Cintas y Rodríguez

3 On page 90 of Lloyd there is an 1851 painting of Sagua la Grande which would date back to Mr. Rodríguez López's adolescence. The city is right on the Sagua River and prone to considerable flooding.

4 Much of the biographical material for Mr. Cintas's early years I owe to the kindness of Mr. Raoul García Iglesias who shared with me an unpublished essay on Mr. Cintas. Of incalculable help have been the material, time, and enthusiasm that Juan Portela has offered me. He was Mr. Cintas's great nephew, to whom Mr. Cintas spoke on a regular basis during visits to Mr. Cintas's mansion. Mr. Portela (1942) is the authority on Mr. Cintas.

In Catholic countries it is common to name a child after the saint on whose day the child was born. However I have not been able to determine what Mr. Cintas's birthday is because I have not been able to find any Saint called Oscar. Also it was common to give the name, "Benjamin," to the youngest male sibling. I have every reason to believe that this was also Mr. Cintas's case.

5 "Invitation to Funeral of D. José R. Rodríguez" (Portela Archive).

Thus we could say without fear of contradiction that within a week or so of his birth, Mr. Cintas received his first introduction to great art thanks to his grandfather and to Mr. Van der Kieft. For Mr. Cintas this tradition helped to create and to maintain an environment well-disposed to art, one that would nurture him throughout his life (Portela telephone conversation, September 30, 2000).<sup>6</sup> Even though his grandfather had died the year before Mr. Cintas was born, his artistic tradition remained a part of Mr. Cintas's tradition for his entire life. In fact, according to Portela, Mr. Cintas was always particularly proud of his Rodríguez López ascendancy. He was especially rhapsodic about the time when money was less of a problem, and his grandfather's family enjoyed prosperity. Probably the single greatest economic loss for this family was its two sugar mills (Portela e-mail October 02, 2007). But like the Phoenix, eventually Mr. Cintas turned his own family tragedy and his own economic ashes into wealth and unsurpassed personal greatness.

When Mr. Cintas's maternal grandfather died, the family passed its mantle of culture to his wife, doña Margarita Rodríguez López. She in turn passed it to her nephew Francisco P. Machado (1852-?). Don Francisco had received part of his education in the United States and was a person with progressive ideals. He was very active in local politics and finance and was a staunch defender of Cuban sugar interests in the United States Congress.

According to Lloyd, the Machado residence is a "splendid example of a high-class Cuban country house, and contains many valuable art and literary treasures." (Lloyd 447)<sup>7</sup> This house was also the center for Sagua la Grande *literarati* (Lobo 310). I would venture to say that Mr. Cintas also inherited his uncle Francisco's taste for books and paintings which most likely included the family Murillo painting.

In contrast with the Rodríguez López family branch, there seems to be almost nothing publically known about the Cintas branch of the fam-

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6 Before and during Mr. Rodríguez López's visits to Spain, Bartolomé Murillo (1617-1682) was Spain's most popular and best known painter. His paintings hung on the walls of galleries throughout Western Europe particularly in Holland, in The United States, and in Great Britain (Stratton 91). One could also easily understand Mr. Rodríguez López's attraction for Murillo and his desire to own a painting by this artist.

7 There is an impressive photo of this house in the Spanish version of Lloyd, 452 (Portela Archive).

ily. In fact Mr. Cintas hardly if ever speaks about the paternal side of his family.

The Cintas family had been well established in Spain before it arrived in Cuba. Nevertheless we have precious little information if any on the origins of the Cintas-Rodríguez family. We also have almost no information on the infancy, childhood, and adolescence of Mr. Cintas (Alberto Barral e-mail September 21, 2007).

Mr. Cintas was one of at least three children born to Lorenzo Cintas and Amelia Rodríguez.<sup>8</sup> Don Oscar's male sibling was Lorenzo (c.1885) who I believe was a fencing instructor (Ramos [1958] 115). Mr. Cintas's sister María seems to have been the youngest sibling, and she outlived him. According to a distant relative, Professor Pierre Cintas, Lorenzo perished during World War I (E-mail, April 12, 2007.) This is also the opinion of Johnson (E-mail, March 11, 2008). However, according to Portela the brother Lorenzo died in World War II (e-mail April, 12, 2008).

Portela also told me that Mr. Cintas had a niece married to an Englishman who died during World War II on a flight from Lisbon to London (e-mail March 12, 2008). By extraordinary coincidence, tragically she and her husband perished on the same flight on which Leslie Howard died (Portela e-mail, March 13, 2008).

From what I have been able to determine, the Cintas family was very loving. It instilled in its children a need to do good not only for themselves but for others as well. Like those who inspired him, in his own way Mr. Cintas was very active in public life.

Don Oscar's enlightened parents provided him with an excellent and cosmopolitan education, both at school and at home. He attended the Sagua la Grande Jesuit School, where his education included compassion, social awareness, and responsibility.<sup>9</sup> Such a caring and nourishing background was a driving force in Mr. Cintas's future philanthropy.

Mr. Cintas's maternal grandfather was also a major benefactor of the city (Barral e-mail, September 21, 2007). According to Portela, don José

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8 Don Oscar's father was an alderman in 1879. (Alcover [1905] 298). Don Oscar's maternal grandfather had a brother named Santiago who was also mayor of Sagua (Ibid., 336-340).

9 In Sagua la Grande Mr. Cintas and his family lived on Calle García 107. (*Memoria Oficial Octava* 450 note).

and his brother Santiago owned and ran a sugar brokerage. They also dealt in lumber (Portela, telephone conversation, September 30, 2007). Mr. Rodríguez was also a wealthy bank and land owner. Both of them were in business at least by 1859 (Alcover [1905] 180).

As one could expect the Rodríguez López family exercised considerable power in Sagua la Grande (Pérez 131). However, according to Portela, it lost a great deal of money during the economic panic of 1879 and most likely committed suicide the year before Mr. Cintas was born.<sup>10</sup> The Cintas branch of the family also had some minor sugar holdings in Sagua la Grande.

Among Mr. Rodríguez López's most notable examples of urban philanthropy was to donate to Sagua la Grande the old building where the Casino Español once stood (Machado 92). Indeed we can safely say that Mr. Cintas's maternal grandfather was an inspirational model of civic pride and duty for the young grandson. Later in life Mr. Cintas would emulate such an egalitarian and wonderful grandfather in many ways.

Probably among the very first paintings that Mr. Cintas ever saw and recollected as a child, and which doubtless inspired him was by the Spaniard Federico de Madrazo y Kuntz (1815-1894). It was an impressive, full length portrait of his paternal grandfather signed on February 23, 1872 by the painter (Museo Nacional 93-620 and Álvarez, "Cuba..." 57). Judging by the date, location, and formal dress of Mr. Rodríguez López in this portrait one could conclude that he occupied some diplomatic post in Madrid. And in effect, he was a Cuban representative to the Spanish Parliament (Las Cortes). Apparently also he was a lieutenant colonel, at least at the time of this portrait (Alcover [1905] 240).

Mr. and Mrs. Rodríguez López often traveled to Spain because their son José Ramón studied law in Madrid (Portela e-mail September 25, 2007). Don José's wife was Margarita Machado an aunt of the Sagua la Grande historian Francisco de P. Machado to whom we have already referred and to whom we will refer again in this study (Portela e-mail September 24, 2007).

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<sup>10</sup> Alcover gives 1884 as the year of the economic collapse of the Rodríguez-López business empire ([1905], 344).

I originally had thought that don José was one of the Cuban delegates to Las Cortes sent there to deal with the question of slavery in Cuba (Corwin 186, 238-254).<sup>11</sup> Although he most likely dealt with this problem, he was not an official member of this delegation (Valverde 39).

In spite of his wealth and prestige Mr. Rodríguez López was not a social climber. Just the opposite was true. For example, according to Portela, the Spanish Queen Isabella II had indeed offered him a title of nobility, but he declined this honor. He stood for a democratic Cuba, and a title of nobility in his opinion was incompatible with a democratic society. Doubtless his reputation and memory influenced his grandson Oscar.

It is important to note that not everyone from Sagua la Grande shared Mr. Rodríguez López's egalitarian sentiments. An interesting observation on this matter is that the Sagua la Grande representative to this Madrid commission to study the matter of slavery in Las Cortes was indeed a member of the Cuban nobility the Conde de Vallellano (Valverde 39).

The Spanish founded the modern Sagua la Grande around 1818, very late in Cuban colonial history. The city is fifteen miles from the north coast of Villa Clara. Its port is Isabela de Sagua, and it is on the Sagua la Grande River. Among the products which that region produced were sugar, cattle, rice, and beans. In fact, during the nineteenth-century Sagua la Grande was the largest sugar cane exporter in the world (Teña 11). Most of its sugar production went to the United States.

During Sagua la Grande's earliest years the general appearance of the city was dismal and chaotic mainly because it lacked urban planning. For example, there was so much fetid water in the streets that the city looked and smelled like a swamp. At that time its population was 2,400 inhabitants and had some 400 homes (Machado 97). In contrast, in 1913 it had an estimated population of 16,000 inhabitants (Lloyd 445).

But in 1850 the city began to change with the arrival of the new Spanish representative, lieutenant colonel Joaquín Fernández Casariego.

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<sup>11</sup> There were Cuban slave holders and there were Cuban abolitionists all contending for their own interests (Barcia 140). The year 1870 was a crucial one for slavery in Cuba. For that was the year in which Segismundo Moret and other members of the Spanish Cortes helped pass a law which became the groundwork for the eventual abolition of slavery in Cuba in 1886 (Scott 96). I suspect that Mr. Rodríguez López was an abolitionist.

He began to govern the city in an admirable manner. His efforts radically changed these deplorable conditions. For example, he had a surveyor lay out a blueprint for a very attractive city which included paved streets. One of these was Colón Street on which the Casino Español stood (Machado 101). There is no doubt but that the colonel's enlightened changes created an environment which would make don Oscar very proud to be a *sagüero*, as a native of Sagua is called.

The new governor helped to develop a sewage system. He also improved the municipal docks so that Sagua la Grande could increase its export and import capacity. He beautified the local cemetery and created numerous benefic societies. The city could also boast of a university (Machado 84).

He improved land transportation and established the Cuban Central Railways Limited. This made the city less isolated. All of this and much more the Colonel managed to do within only five years. (Machado 97-102). In essence Mr. Cintas's place of birth had become an enlightened city with a developing population and commercial center.

However, not all was pleasant in Sagua la Grande. I do not know where Mr. Cintas was on June 16, 1906. There is a very good chance that he was attending school elsewhere. But on that fateful day the skies above Sagua la Grande opened and poured rain of biblical proportions on that city. The Sagua River overflowed its banks and did horrific damage. The flood waters were such that they reached roof tops (Machado 439-448). But even if Mr. Cintas was not present physically, there is no doubt but that his family and friends would have described to him what had happened on that day in his beloved city.

Although Mr. Cintas came from a privileged background, this privilege could hardly protect him from the harsh reality of events in Cuba. As a very young boy he witnessed the depravation, hunger, and disease that military conflict and political turmoil created. In Cuba's struggle for independence, people died from beri-beri, lack of adequate medical treatment, poor hygiene, and gunshot and stab wounds. For many years these deplorable conditions were rampant and killed thousands. I do not know how the Cintas family fared, but no doubt those general conditions had a traumatic effect on Mr. Cintas and his family.

During this conflict, the United States offered assistance both to Cubans as well as to United States citizens caught up in this maelstrom of chaos. Not many angels abounded during these struggles. Both the Spanish authorities and the insurgents burned property and killed people (*Despatches* Roll 6 June 2, 1897 to September 1, 1900). Those years were extremely harsh for Cuba, and I do believe that the bloody struggle for independence from Spain deeply influenced Mr. Cintas's *weltanschauung*.<sup>12</sup>

With Cuba now free and independent from Spain, her conflicts with the United States were now to begin and in earnest. At that time little did eleven year old Oscar Benjamín Cintas know how much his life and the life of the United States were going to intertwine.

During Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain, many in the United States and many in Cuba clamored for the annexation of that island (Thomas 289). The United States had long reached the Pacific Ocean but was always interested in exploration, expansion, and development. The Americans coveted Cuba for its natural wealth, soil, and space where North American settlers could begin life anew.

It is quite clear that many Cubans including the young Mr. Cintas realized that there was much to be gained from a Cuban-American relationship, although I doubt that Mr. Cintas was an annexationist. He loved both his native land as well as his adopted United States of America. And indeed Mr. Cintas was, "a great friend and admirer of America" (*Parke-Bernet Catalogue*, 1963, no page given). In spite of this I do not believe that he favored relinquishing any Cuban sovereignty to the United States. Don Oscar was a great Cuban patriot. This is quite evident when one examines his role in Cuban-American diplomatic relations and his love of the Cuban people.

Because of Sagua la Grande's traditional relationship with sugar, it was a place where great dependency on slaves had existed long before 1886, the year in which Spain finally abolished slavery in Cuba. However, it should not come as a surprise to know that there was lingering anti-black sentiment in that city as well as in other parts of the island (Testa

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<sup>12</sup> In Sagua la Grande as a result of this war there were hundreds of orphans for whom the city cared in various orphanages (Gutiérrez Quirós 10 and on the page, "A la memoria de mi padre").

11). Perhaps some of this resentment surfaced because many blacks there practiced African religions (Testa 31).

In spite of its early association with slavery, in the early twentieth century Sagua la Grande appears to have been a progressive and pleasant place. There were even integrated public schools (*Memoria Oficial Octava* 305, 321). Sagua la Grande had good schools, both co-educational and non-coeducational (Rodríguez Altunaga 236, 249). Sagua la Grande also had newspapers and printing presses (*Ibid.*, 263). As early as 1856 it had a theater, concerts, and opera (*Ibid* 279-280 and Gracia *passim*). It obviously had an active cultural life. According to Alcover ([1905] 224, 226) there were also a Masonic Lodge and a Public Library.

Something of great curiosity and interest about Sagua la Grande was the fact that in it there also was a considerable artistic Chinese population. In spite of the menial jobs which many of them performed, these community members had created a traditional Chinese theater (Rodríguez Altunaga 279 and Pérez de la Riva 250, note 173). According to Barnet the Chinese theater in Sagua la Grande was very elegant and constructed from wood (95). At the time of Mr. Cintas's birth Sagua la Grande was the home of at least 8,000 Chinese (Pérez de la Riva 198). In addition to performing heavy manual labor they were engaged in many businesses, such as restaurants, tailor shops, and candy stores (Barnet 96).

All in all Sagua la Grande was an interesting, prosperous, sophisticated, and rather cosmopolitan city in which to come of age (Lloyd 443). This ethnic diversity and inclusiveness certainly provided a greater view of the world than the uninitiated might have believed to be possible for such a city in the provinces of Cuba. One might add that this environment was also the home of many distinguished Cuban physicians (Ramos, 1947 *passim*) musicians, journalists, and writers (Alcover [1901] *passim*). Among the latter was the eminent essayist Jorge Mañach.

Later in life Mr. Cintas acquired a very extensive collection of Chinese vases, mainly via the Duveen Brothers from John Pierpont Morgan Jr. (O'Reilly #282). Perhaps an initial attraction for things Chinese might have come from his exposure to the Chinese community in Sagua la Grande. It is unlikely, but not impossible, that they would have had examples of rare vases. However, the Chinese vases that were in Sagua la

Grande might well have made a lasting impression on the artistic tastes of Oscar Cintas. On the other hand Portela talks about the beautiful porcelain, mainly green, which was part of the Rodríguez López household in Sagua la Grande (Telephone conversation, March 9, 2008).

In addition to railroad facilities, in Sagua la Grande there was the abovementioned attractive Casino Español (Lloyd 449 Testa 50).<sup>13</sup> Judging by photographs from Mr. Cintas's early years in Sagua la Grande, this casino was an elegant place indeed (*Memoria Oficial Octava* 211,225). One could imagine that within its confines a rather young Mr. Cintas with other well-to-do local neighbors and friends would congregate on a regular basis.

Another Sagua la Grande cultural institution was the Liceo Club founded on October 10, 1899. The cream of Sagua la Grande society belonged to this club, including one Lorenzo Cintas, who was most likely don Oscar's uncle, and definitely a member of the Cintas family (Lloyd 451). It was a very impressive structure as can be seen by Lloyd's photograph (451). Its general appointments were as beautiful as they were luxurious.

Like most cities Sagua la Grande also did have its vices. For example, there were opium dens (Pérez de la Riva 250, note 172). There was also a red light district, a venue for a traditional rite of passage for young men (Cueto 49). Such institutions must have made a great impression on Mr. Cintas and may have inspired in him a desire for social justice.

Mr. Cintas's earliest trip to Great Britain enlightened him even more and opened his eyes and ears to the English language, culture, and art. This in part explains his fluency in English and his taste for English paintings, silver, furniture, and literature, some of which later in life he would acquire. According to Portela (Telephone conversation September 30, 2007) Mr. Cintas spoke English like an Englishman. It was impeccable. I have read some of his correspondence, and I can verify that his written English was also perfect (Barral 77-78).

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13 For a greater description of the Liceo Club and its history see (Lloyd 449).

Sagua la Grande was a very important railroad center which at that time was mainly in the hands of a British consortium.<sup>14</sup> But there were also Americans involved in these and other activities. As it turned out the British controlled the railroad from Sagua la Grande west, while the Americans controlled the railroads in eastern Cuba (Lloyd 333-335).

The English-speaking colony of Sagua was quite large and well off economically. However, there were very few British in other parts of the island (Lloyd 366). Without a doubt Mr. Cintas came to know members of this Sagua la Grande community which would pay him great dividends later in life. It goes without saying that those English speakers had a most beneficial impact on Mr. Cintas's life.

In Great Britain by the eighteenth century there was already a tradition which one called "The Grand Tour." In particular, for members of the British elite class this was a precious, privileged, and invaluable educational opportunity to visit another part of Europe and to discover new horizons. This tour was in a way the capstone of their early studies and helped to prepare these young people for their lifelong professional activities and social lives.

Very often as a result of the "Grand Tour," these travelers took back to Great Britain works of art and literature. These mementos became the basis for many new British private collections or added to already existing ones. I would imagine that the houses and collections which Mr. Cintas saw in Great Britain stimulated the growth of his own book collection and the galleries in his own Havana mansion which he eventually filled with so many great works of art and literature (*Treasure Houses...* passim).

In essence, in the nineteenth century this, "Grand Tour," also existed for the privileged few in Latin American (Ely 69). When Mr. Cintas was still very young, his father passed away. Perhaps on the advice of her Sagua la Grande British friends, his mother doña Amalia decided to send her young son to Great Britain. She wisely realized how important such an exposure to English culture would be for young master Oscar.

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14 According to Alcover [1905] in Sagua la Grande there were many other consulates: France, Sweden, Norway, Mexico, Uruguay, and Argentina (30). Later in life Mr. Cintas was to visit at least some of these countries.

I suspect that Mr. Cintas began his trip to Great Britain soon after studying with the Jesuits in his home town, which would be around 1904. Even though grandfather don José and his brother Santiago had lost much if not all of their wealth, Mr. Cintas's mother must have received financial support from the local English-speaking community, and was able to send him to Great Britain for more education. Alcover suggests that it possibly was the British consul in Sagua who sponsored young Oscar (Alcover [1905] 424). Abroad, the children of the Cuban wealthy usually had such a sponsor (Ely 194, note 285). In Great Britain young Oscar's guardian was a certain Sir William Todd, a man who had been a friend of his maternal grandfather.

We know that at whatever age he began his studies in Great Britain, he remained there until he was twenty-one years of age, i.e. 1908 (State Department Document 701.3711/471). This date is very close to November 9, 1909, when he most likely returned to Cuba via New York. As was the case for his British friends, this "Grand Tour" of which the young Mr. Cintas partook certainly prepared him for the life that he soon would embrace.

There is little doubt that from his very early years the British had an enormous influence on him. Mr. Cintas began his Grand Tour in England, but later in his life it ended at the Savoy and Ritz-Carlton in New York and in his mansion in Havana (Barral *passim*). His favorite New York restaurant, where he dined almost on a daily basis, was the Colony (Portela, Telephone conversation, March 9, 2008).

#### ASCENDANCY IN BUSINESS AND IN CULTURE:

##### ADULT LIFE IN CUBA AND IN THE UNITED STATES

When Mr. Cintas returned to Cuba from Great Britain he soon obtained an entry level position in the British railroad Empresa de Ferrocarriles. He quickly rose through company ranks and was in charge of buying and selling railroad cars and equipment. When the company sent Mr. Cintas to its Havana office it was an obvious promotion. By then Mr. Cintas was an experienced salesman in a profession which would soon make him a wealthy man.

Mr. Cintas was a good businessman and defended Latin-American business interests to the very best of his ability ("Charlie's Oscar" *Time*, July 24, 1939). His insistence on developing his Company's Latin American branches brought him into direct conflict with his former friend and boss William Hartman Woodin (1869-1934). This conflict caused Mr. Cintas to resign from the American Car and Foundry ("Charlie's Oscar," *passim*).

Mr. Cintas made considerable efforts to develop his Latin American market. One of these measures was to invite Mr. Manuel Alonso de Areyza (1895-1984) into his enterprises. Mr. Alonso was the former captain of the Spanish Davis Cup team and the fourth ranking tennis player in the United States (*New York Times*, February 17, 1928 p.34). He resided in the United States in the 1920s.

The relationship between Mr. Cintas and Mr. Woodin had not always been so rocky. For example, in January and February 1928 the Sixth Pan American Conference took place in Havana. Among those in attendance were officials from the Chase National Bank, Electric Bond and Share, John Pierpont Morgan (1867-1943),<sup>15</sup> and Mr. Woodin.

Mr. Woodin was also an outstanding book collector and numismatist. It would seem likely that these shared interests and enthusiasm helped create their original friendship (Google). Among other posts which Mr. Woodin occupied was the presidency of the American Car and Foundry Company<sup>16</sup> and Consolidated Railway (Thomas 586).<sup>17</sup>

The American businessmen who attended this Pan-American Conference preferred a Cuban businessman to be president of Cuba. This was not a meeting for the faint of heart. I do not know whether or

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15 Mr. Morgan had financial dealings with Cuban banks as early as 1921. (Morgan Archives ARC 1216 (072). He had made numerous trips to Cuba and other Caribbean locations where they received him well. During difficult financial times, perhaps 1935-1938, Mr. Morgan sold many of his art works. Mr. Cintas probably purchased the Morgan porcelain collection during such a period. (Morgan Papers (143):109.1.

16 Founded in 1899 (Kaminski, 1)

17 Mr. Wooding was also either president or board member of J. B. Brill Company (Kaminski 33), Montreal Locomotive Works, and the Railway Steel Spring Company. He was also Director of the Federal Reserve Bank in New York.

J. G. Brill and Company, "at its zenith,... was the largest manufacturer of streetcars and interurbans in the United States" (Wikipedia).

not Mr. Woodin and his colleagues had their eye on Mr. Cintas for the presidency of Cuba. Not long after this Conference, Mr. Woodin made Mr. Cintas a protégé, and he became vice-president of Mr. Woodin's companies. In 1933 while Mr. Cintas was Cuban ambassador to the United States, President Roosevelt appointed the infirm Mr. Woodin Secretary of the Treasury (Thomas 558).

Mr. Cintas often traveled to Europe and to the United States for business and for pleasure. His excellent bearing and manners were always his calling card. Along the way he developed his excellent taste in art and in books. During these trips to Europe and later to the United States he began to invest in art and in books and to expand his cultural horizons.

At the same time Portela made it quite clear to me that Mr. Cintas loved to use very salty language and tell salacious and ribald stories and jokes. Mr. Portela also describes his great uncle as quite a ladies man, but most likely this was the case when he became a widower.

Perhaps one of Mr. Cintas's most important trips abroad was his visit to Paris in 1925. On the return voyage to Cuba early in December of that very same year he met his future wife Graziella Tarafa (1903-1941). She was a native of Matanzas and had been in Paris to purchase the trousseau for her up and coming marriage in Cuba. According to Portela, Mr. Cintas and Miss Tarafa fell hopelessly and uncontrollably in love at first sight. So passionate was their love that they married immediately in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Perhaps part of their mutual attraction had to do with the fact that her family also owned a significant porcelain collection as well as other art objects.

The hard part of this event was yet to come. Both Mr. Cintas and doña Graziella had to break the bad news to her fiancé who was patiently awaiting her arrival when the ship docked in Havana (Telephone conversation with Portela, September 30, 2007). One can only imagine how that fiancé must have reacted when he saw his planned marriage go up in smoke. Perhaps here there is an unintended but ironic echo of Paris and Helen. For the lovers returned home on the S. S. Homeric (December 9, 1925) (*Ancestry*).

Mr. Cintas's father-in-law was Colonel José Miguel Tarafa (1863-1932) (New York Times July 25, 1932, p.15), a hero of Cuba's War of

Independence from Spain. In the city of Matanzas, Colonel Tarafa had considerable sugar and railroad interests (Jiménez 76). He was a member of the Cuban Sugar Producers Committee. Indeed, Colonel Tarafa was an important person in Cuban economic life and society (Ayala 232). One could safely say that this marriage held many social and economic advantages for Mr. Cintas. The Tarafa family was indeed one of the most wealthy and socially prominent families in Cuba.

The Tarafa family most likely was among the Spanish planters who began their businesses in Cuba early in the nineteenth century (Moreno Fragnals 142-143). Colonel Tarafa was born poor but became wealthy because of his acumen and contacts with American corporations (Jiménez 76, Zanetti 264).

Along with his excellent manners and erudition Mr. Cintas had by all reports an attractive physical appearance (Thomas, 614, n. 34). According to *Time* magazine, Mr. Cintas was extremely well tailored, dapper, “handsome, and strapping,” and smoked cigarettes (July 24, 1939 Google). This unfortunate habit may have contributed to the cancer which eventually killed him (Norman, 5).

From what I have seen, Mr. Cintas was a kind, considerate, and generous person. On one occasion he even gave his Havana gardener and housekeeper a Mary Cassatt painting most likely as a token of gratitude and as a means of instilling in him a love of art.

On the other hand his friend Lastra describes Mr. Cintas as, “a severe man, his firm preference for solitude and soliloquy earned for him a reputation of egoist” (18). Perhaps Lastra describes Mr. Cintas following his beloved wife’s premature death.

Nevertheless, I do believe that Mr. Cintas preferred the quiet of his mansion to the hustle and bustle of Havana social and business life particularly among Cuba’s social elite. Most likely he sought refuge in his home amidst all of these great works of art and literature. In a way these items became his religious relics and his home his cathedral. According to Portela, his grand uncle was born Roman Catholic but was not an observant one (E-mail, October 1, 2007).

Mr. Cintas had a great sense of humor particularly about his own mortality. For example, in December of 1934 while in Lima he became very ill

but then recovered. A little later from the Plaza Hotel in Buenos Aires<sup>18</sup> he wrote his friend, the American diplomat and Assistant Secretary of State, Francis M. White (1892-1961), “For a time it looked as if I were going to leave my perfectly good bones in Peru!” (Milton S. Eisenhower Library Special collections Ms. 194 Box 1).

I do not know when Mr. Cintas first came to the United States. But I know that he made at least eighty boat trips here mainly to New York (*Ancestry*, passim).<sup>19</sup> He seems to have preferred New York as a base of operations during much of his life, and spent a good part of each year in the United States.

Mr. Cintas was Cuban Ambassador to the United States between 1932 and 1934. In this capacity he did all that he could to ensure that Cuba receive fair treatment in its dealings with the United States. And it seems that he made considerable progress in this area. Mr. Cintas was a tenacious bargainer and very tough opponent in business, diplomacy, and in the acquisition of art and books (Duveen-Cintas passim).<sup>20</sup> His, “blazing black eyes,” could intimidate (*Time*, July 24, 1939; Google).

As ambassador his principal concern was how to deal with Washington on the matter of sugar cane production and of sugar cane tariffs. Related to these problems was Mr. Cintas’s wish for the United States to remove the Cuban dictator General Gerardo Machado (1871-1939) from the Cuban presidency (*Foreign Relations of the United States V* (1933):339). During Mr. Cintas’s ambassadorship to the United States, the United States abrogated the Platt Amendment of 1901 which, “had made Cuba an American protectorate” (Pierre Cintas comments on line).

As Cuban ambassador Mr. Cintas attended the World Economic Conference (*Foreign Relations of the United States Ibid.*, 291) and was a member of the Commission of Neutrals to resolve the Chaco dispute

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18 Part of the Ritz Carlton Hotel chain.

19 New York was some fifty-six hours from Havana on a daily basis and eight and one half days from Havana to London (Lloyd 373)

20 As it turned out Mr. Cintas was not the Cuban Government’s first choice. But the Cuban Government’s preferred candidates for this post—Márquez Sterling and García Kohly—did not have the sufficient personal wealth to occupy this position (State Department Document 701.3711/464). So Mr. Cintas went to Washington.

between Bolivia and Paraguay (Ibid. 126-129). It is obvious that many important people sought Mr. Cintas's advice and expertise.

A propos of tough bargaining, Mr. Cintas must have used his business bargaining skills for the common good as well as for his own. He even knew how to bargain with the Soviet Union. For example, in 1930 he purchased for the hallway approach to his grand dining room in Havana, two lapis lazuli columns which previously had graced the Czars' palace at Tsarskoe Selo (Lobo, 310). The Soviets had sold many books and works of art for hard currency, and in 1930 this pair of columns was among them.

According to Mr. Cintas, the importance of good relations with the United State was paramount to the well being of Cuba itself (Lastra, 18). This becomes quite obvious in a letter from December, 1934 to the aforementioned American diplomat Francis M. White. Mr. Cintas had had contact with him at the State Department between 1932 and 1934 and most likely before when Mr. White served in Cuba and many other Latin American countries. Writing to Mr. White from Lima, Mr. Cintas laments, "The reports I receive from Cuba are far from satisfactory. What a disgraceful mess your incompetent successor in the State Department has made of my country!" (The Milton S. Eisenhower Library Special Collections Ms. 194 Box 1).

I have every reason to believe that from his earliest childhood Mr. Cintas had always opposed slavery in any and every way. Hence his adoration of Lincoln and of Lincoln scholars. Mr. Cintas loved freedom, and from what I have been able to surmise, he was egalitarian in spite of his privileges. His choice of documents, books, and iconography, particularly American, manifests his great love of freedom and of equality (O'Reilly, *passim*). The following two examples are fundamental to this manner of judging Mr. Cintas's feelings on the matter of slavery and of national unity.

On April 27, 1949 at the Parke Bernet Galleries, Mr. Cintas purchased the Colonel Alexander Bliss copy of Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." At that time it was the only copy of this speech in private hands. It is also the only copy that bears Lincoln's signature. Its price of \$54,000 was the highest price ever paid for a document at a public auction<sup>21</sup> As the reader

<sup>21</sup> Mr. Cintas also owned an 1863 printed copy of the same address (Parke Bernet Catalog #2040 (1961)64:314A).

can see Mr. Cintas went to great extremes to obtain the objects and to achieve the objectives which he truly desired.

The bidding was fast and furious. With the advice of his agent Harry E. Russell, Mr. Cintas outbid John Francis Fleming. On that day Mr. Cintas was indeed a, "Happy Bibliophile" (*Life Magazine*, May 16, 1949, 145-48). And in true Cintas style he promptly donated his purchase to the United States Government. That document now hangs in the Lincoln Room of the White House.

In 1952, for \$12,000 Mr. Cintas purchased the famous Thomas Hicks portrait of Abraham Lincoln (*New York Times*, April 20, 1952, p.74). It was the first portrait of Abraham Lincoln painted from real life. Hicks finished it on June 13th, 1860 (Chicago Historical Museum, "Cintas Will"). It depicts the future president while he was still in Illinois.

Again, in true Cintas fashion he donated the Hicks painting, but this time the donation went to the Chicago Historical Society.<sup>22</sup> Apparently he did so because of his great admiration for the Society's secretary, the noted Lincoln scholar and historian, Paul McLleland Angle (1900-1975) (Robert Kent, The Chicago Historical Society e-mail May 10, 2007). And indeed Mr. Angle was most worthy of Mr. Cintas's respect and admiration for works such as his essay, "Four Lincoln Firsts" (*passim*)<sup>23</sup>

The Johns Hopkins' Milton S. Eisenhower Library houses a copy of *Letters of John Hay and Extracts from Diary* (1908) which had belonged to Mr. Cintas. Mr. John Milton Hay's (1838-1905) book was not a surprising choice for Mr. Cintas. Mr. Hay had been a friend and secretary of President Lincoln for whom Mr. Hay had great affection. He was a major biographer of Lincoln and an abolitionist (*Letters* iv, vii). In 1898 President William McKinley appointed him Secretary of State (1898-1905) (*Letters*, xvi).

I have often thought about why Mr. Cintas admired President Lincoln so much. I can think of at least two reasons. After all the horror of the wars for Cuba's independence, Mr. Cintas wanted Cuba to be a peaceful, just, and unified nation. This was President Lincoln's greatest

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<sup>22</sup> Now called the Chicago Historical Museum.

<sup>23</sup> Of great interest also is Professor Angle's *On a Variety of Subjects*. Chicago:Chicago Historical Society, 1974.

accomplishment and blessing for this country. Most likely Mr. Lincoln's, "House Divided Speech," of June 16, 1858 made a lasting impression on Mr. Cintas's psyche (Angle, 4).

As we have already mentioned, Mr. Cintas knew a great deal about slavery from his days in Sagua la Grande, and I am convinced that even then he opposed it vigorously. The fact that his family was involved in the sugar cane industry and the fact that Sagua la Grande had one of the highest concentrations of slaves in Cuba must have made a deep and lasting impression on Mr. Cintas from his earliest childhood (Knight, 41).

From a political point of view Mr. Cintas wanted a Cuba that reflected the words of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes (1819-1874), a fighter for Cuban independence from Spain. "We only want to be free and equal as the Creator intended all mankind to be... we believe that all men were created equal" (Thomas, 244). These words echo the United States Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." These thoughts also permeate *Don Quijote*. One might then conclude that Mr. Cintas agreed with the words of the Founding Fathers of this nation, of President Lincoln, and of Cervantes. Such a conclusion perhaps explains why Mr. Cintas would offer so much of his fortune to obtain two of these eternal and universal works. In fact so enthusiastic was Mr. Cintas about President Lincoln that he said, "In Cuba we need recollections of Lincoln. He raises our spirit" (my translation) (Álvarez *Carteles*, 30 (1949):40).

The Cleveland Public Library contains a book from the Cintas Library entitled *Pastoral del illmo. Sr Obispo de Cuba, para todo el estado eclesiástico secular, y regular de su diócesis*. (Habana: Imprenta del Cómputo Eclesiástico, 1700) by Joseph de Hechavarría Yelguezúa. This book is rare. Only two or three libraries in the world list it.<sup>24</sup> In his book, bishop Hechavarría explains to all the priests of his Havana diocese that blacks are their brothers and consequently worthy of compassion and respect. The bishop wanted to bring blacks into the Church and wanted them to feel welcome by considering them equal to whites (3, 8). He was also worried because so many blacks adhered to their African religions (16).

<sup>24</sup> Either Mr. Cintas or the Cleveland Public Library purchased the Hechavarría work from H. P. Kraus according to an undated Kraus letter.

Mr. Cintas did not have to look abroad for heroes. He had many of them in his native land. Among these was the great liberator of Cuba from Spain General Máximo Gómez y Báez (1836-1905).<sup>25</sup> This general was a perfect model for Mr. Cintas *à la* Abraham Lincoln.

This general advocated peace and reconciliation between Cubans and Spaniards, and among Cubans of all backgrounds and races. He was most anxious for all Cubans to share in the country's bounty in a truly fraternal manner. This is what the General wanted to do, and he saw a model for his thoughts in the United States because, "Ésa es la grandeza del pueblo yankee" (Gómez, 25). Like Lincoln before him, General Gómez wanted peace and wellbeing throughout his land. Both the General as well as Mr. Cintas understood the idea that a house divided against itself could not stand.

As it turned out, in 1899, when Mr. Cintas was only twelve years old General Gómez visited Sagua la Grande. The population greeted the hero with affection and enthusiasm. In his honor there were festivities and a great banquet in the Uriarte Theater. It is most likely that Mr. Cintas, if he was not away at school, and his family were in attendance (Gómez 27).

Mr. Cintas willed these Lincoln symbols of freedom and equality to the United States as a token of his goodwill to this country. But these were not the only such occasions. From January to March 1936 he loaned his Goya portrait of the "Marqués de Caballero" to the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of a special exhibition of the works of this painter.<sup>26</sup> It was a major exhibition and showed that Mr. Cintas was among the art collectors elite in this country (Ivins #11). Also in 1940 he lent Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Rabbi," to an art exhibit at the New York World's Fair (Parke Bernet [1963] 40). Mr. Cintas's friend Lastra contends that his art collection rivaled those of Morgan, Mellon, and Frick (18). Regardless of whether or not Mr. Lastra is correct, one can safely say that the Cintas collection was indeed a most impressive one.

Before his death many of Mr. Cintas's paintings were in the United States (Lastra, 18). But in Cuba he also had many books and manuscripts

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25 General Gómez, however, was a native of the Dominican Republic (Thomas 255, note 7).

26 Telephone conversation with Barbara File archivist at the Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on July 12, 2007. I am grateful to Ms. File for her help.

(Álvarez, “Cuba poseerá” 57, 61). Mr. Cintas was a client of the Chase National Bank and later of the Chase Manhattan Bank. As it turned out, not long before his death Mr. Cintas had entrusted a significant portion of his rich book and art collections to the Chase National Bank: Ethan Alyea, his legal counsel<sup>27</sup>, David Rockefeller, and a long list of other art and legal specialists. Mr. Rockefeller met Mr. Cintas early in the 1950s (Johnson, e-mail Tuesday March 11, 2008). Mr. Cintas did this in order to establish a trust for his possessions most likely after his earlier efforts to create a library and museum in his Havana residence failed.

In the fifties as a result of their meetings members of the Chase National Bank trust division persuaded Mr. Cintas both for idealistic purposes—as well as for tax benefits—to create a foundation in this country for Cuban-American writers, artists, and musicians, and invited Alfred Barr the former director of the Museum of Modern Art to help in this process. Mr. Rockefeller was not involved initially in these events although he was aware of this process. Nevertheless, at one point he did encourage Mr. Cintas to establish what would soon become the Cintas Foundation (Johnson e-mail March 11, 2008). This cultural entity originally was called the Cuban Art Foundation. But later in 1963 in honor of Mr. Cintas the Board of Directors posthumously changed the name to the Cintas Foundation (Wikipedia).

At one point Mr. Rockefeller became the executor of Mr. Cintas’s will and was responsible for disposing at auction of his paintings, books, and other works of art (Portela e-mail March 10, 2008). With these auction sales Mr. Cintas financed his foundation (Portela, e-mail March 12, 2008). In addition Mr. Cintas also willed a great part of his real estate, stocks, and bonds to help finance this enterprise (Portela archive).

Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller did visit Mr. Cintas in his Havana residence. There on one occasion, shortly before his death, Mr. Cintas gave the Rockefellers, “six pieces from a Vienna Dessert Service” (Johnson, e-mail, March 11, 2008). This gift was more important and symbolic than one might realize. For, as we have already stated, according to Portela, in 1959 revolutionaries entered the Cintas mansion and

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27 Mr. Alyea was a partner in the law firm of Dewey, Ballantine, Bushby, Palmer & Wood and was a loyal member of the Cintas Foundation (Alyea file, American Philosophical Society).

destroyed the mighty porcelain collection that Mr. and Mrs. Cintas had collected. (Portela telephone conversation, March 9, 2008). So at least the set that Mr. Cintas gave the Rockefellers still exists and intact. And so was the money that Mr. Cintas managed to invest in order to create his foundation.

In 1959 Mr. Cintas's loyal valet, Pancho Sotomayor, delivered many of his boss's treasures to several Cuban cultural institutions. It would seem to me that he did this either because he was fulfilling Mr. Cintas's wishes or that he simply wanted to prevent happening to them what had happened to Mr. Cintas's porcelain collection. I might add that in his holograph will of October 7, 1953 Mr. Cintas named executor of his estate Dr. Luis Vidana y Valdés. Mr. Cintas instructed Mr. Vidana to treat well his servant Pancho Sotomayor because he was like Mr. Cintas's own family (Portela archive).<sup>28</sup>

In his will Mr. Cintas left money for the poor of Sagua la Grande. In such a way Mr. Cintas never forgot his roots and people who were less fortunate than he was (Portela archive).

From the moment that I examined the Cintas Newberry copy of *Don Quijote* there was something about Mr. Cintas that impressed me and has made him a person for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration. In his Havana mansion Mr. Cintas had assembled a collection of old books and manuscripts. Equally as important he had a very large collection of Old Master paintings thought at that time to have been worth some \$2,000,000, a very large collection of porcelain, and of other *objets d'art*.<sup>29</sup> Mr. Cintas originally had intended to create a public art museum for the Cuban people in his Havana residence which was located on Calle

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28 Mr. Cintas's paintings have hung on the walls of museums such as the Montclair Art Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the Cummer Art Gallery in Jacksonville, and the University of Miami Lowe Gallery (D'Otrange Maštai, 135).

29 Among his valuable possessions was English silver (Christie, Manson & Woods, pp. 36,140). "A set of twelve George II plain circular dinner plates with shell and, gadrooned borders, engraved with a coat-of-arms in a foliate cartouche 10 in. diam. by Paul de Lamerie, 1745 (233ozs. 18 dwts.)." (*Ibid.*, 140).

One can find copies of almost all of the Cintas auction catalogues on Scipio. However, two from O'Reilly Plaza Art Galleries: "French 18th & 19th Century Porcelains, Georgian & Other Silver," and "Fine Diamond and Gold Jewelry," both, in 1961 do not list Mr. Cintas's art objects under his name (Watson Library).

15, Number 551, corner of D Street in the Vedado neighborhood (*Libro de Oro*, 209 and Eduardo Luis Rodríguez (passim). But its construction required the acquisition of additional land which belonged to his neighbors. However, they balked. Consequently the hoped for Cintas Havana art museum never came to fruition. Had this not been the case, the museum would probably have been one of the best Latin American art collections of Old Masters. And surely it would have been one of the most important art collections in Cuba (Álvarez, passim).

According to Portela, in conjunction with the museum Mr. Cintas had also hoped to establish a foundation in Cuba with his own collection of art which would have afforded him tax advantages. He then went to President Batista who told him that his collection could have tax advantages if the collection were housed in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes but not in Mr. Cintas's mansion. Mr. Cintas refused, and that was the end of that. This perhaps is the source of the long time hostility between President Batista and Mr. Cintas (Telephone conversation with Portela, March 9, 2008).

Also according to Portela, Mr. Cintas had a huge library. It was, in fact, so large that Mr. Cintas had to construct a separate building on his property in which to house it. After Mr. Cintas's death I understand that the majority of his books which remained in Cuba ended up in the Biblioteca Nacional in Havana, where I believe that they remain to this day.

Mr. Cintas occupies a very special place among his generation and peers. He was a Maecenas in a part of the world where such philanthropy is not as widespread or as universally well known as it is in other countries. Mr. Cintas said that it was his responsibility to preserve his paintings, books, art objects, and manuscripts for the Cuban people. He did not squander his money on yachts, gambling, and mistresses as other wealthy people did. (Álvarez, "Pagué" 43). Art, books, and other things of beauty were his passion. So was the Cuban people.

Quite a number of his countrymen had similar intentions. Therefore Mr. Cintas was not alone in his plans for a national art gallery. With him, for example, was José Gómez Mena who was another very important Cuban art collector. Both he and Mr. Cintas dreamed of creating this

museum in Cuba (Del Buſto, *passim*). In the words of Mr. Gómez Mena's grandson J. Pepe Fanjul, "They were friendly competitors for many works of art and both were involved in the creation of a major painting museum." (Letter of July 10, 2007).

In 1955 after a sustained effort and numerous transformations and negotiations the Cuban government and these art collectors finally formed what was then called the Patronato de Bellas Artes y Museos Nacionales (Rippe 16). The purpose of this council was to improve the quality of the art museums in Cuba.

The Council asked a number of its members to contact museums abroad. They were to seek information on how to elevate the level of public art collections in Cuba. Within Cuba there was a constant flood of private donations to these public institutions. Among those in this group were Mr. Cintas and Julio Lobo (Rippe 8). Other contributors were the Archdiocese of Havana, José Gómez Mena, la Casa de Beneficencia, María Ruiz de Olivares, the marchioness de Pinar, Joaquín Gumá, Count of Lagunillas, and Tomás Felipe Camacho (Rippe 9).<sup>30</sup>

As it turned out Mr. Cintas was very wise to have kept many of his Old Masters in the United States. From that residence in Havana, the Castro government confiscated art works and most likely has sold some of them at auction and privately, mainly in Europe (González, *passim*).<sup>31</sup> Outside of Cuba most of Mr. Cintas's relatively few remaining Old Master paintings are on permanent exhibit at the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami Coral Gables (Cintas Foundation Brochure). These works remain, however, the property of the Cintas Foundation.

Mr. Cintas's collections were born of his financial acumen, his unerring eye, and connoisseurship (Christie's, "Important Old Master Paintings" (1997, p. 238). For example, the July 3, 1963 Cintas art auction produced the massive sum of \$1,280,500 (*Sotheby's Highly Important Paintings*, p.27).

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<sup>30</sup> Among other contributors there were Juan Mingorance Gutiérrez, María Dolores Machín, the widow of H. Upmann, Count of San Fernando de Peñaver, Evelio Govantes, Ignacio Ponce de León, Antonio García Hernández Valdivia de Santo Tomás, Osuna-Varela Zequeira, and Manuel Mimó Abalo (Rippe 12).

<sup>31</sup> According to many, Mr. Cintas's former mansion is now the Chinese embassy.

Mr. Cintas's wealth derived mainly from sugar and railroads. When the Cuban National Art Gallery which he envisioned in his Havana residence did not come to fruition he converted his wealth, art, and books into funding for his foundation. In this way ingeniously and even quixotically, Cintas Foundation awards perpetuate the artistic creative process which Mr. Cintas so much adored.

According to Portela, his granduncle was a complex person. For example Mr. Cintas and other family members did not always get along well. In fact they were very frequently involved in disputes. He was for the most part antisocial, suspicious, and irascible. He was not at ease in general company, but preferred to be with his works of art and books. Mr. Cintas knew the philanthropic efforts of many American patrons of the arts such as Mellon, Frick, Morgan, Carnegie, Marshall Field, and Huntington among others. (Álvarez, "Cuba poseerá" 57). And they obviously influenced him.

Mr. Cintas collected books and art from the Renaissance to the early Twentieth Century. These included painters like Tiépolo, Sánchez Coello, Titian, El Greco, Velázquez, Gainsborough, Goya, Sorolla, and Zuloaga. They cover the gamut from profoundly religious canvases to those of a lay nature (Álvarez, "Cuba... *passim*, Lowe, and Montclair).

As far as I know there is no separate Cintas archive *per se* although his papers are held together as a unit in various storage areas. Many were stolen, and I have heard that many were sold in the Havana flea market. If this is the case then we have a great artistic tragedy.

The full nature and size of Mr. Cintas's library are difficult to determine. To this day we have no clear idea of just how many of his books and manuscripts have remained in Cuba and which ones they are. Nevertheless I would guess that there are many still there most likely hundreds if not more.

Mr. Cintas's library outside of Cuba is also difficult to establish with great clarity, but I shall try to do so. The largest book auction catalogue of solely Mr. Cintas's books that I know is by O'Reilly's Plaza Art Galleries, Inc. of New York (May 26th, 1961). O'Reilly's lists 480 books by author and title. It also indicates hundreds and hundreds of books sadly sold in bulk without specifying title or author (O'Reilly:479-487). The only

manuscript in this catalogue is a “Spanish Patent of Nobility” (*hidalguía*) (1568) (item 370).<sup>32</sup> Because this company and its records no longer exists I guess that we will never know all the items from that sale.<sup>33</sup> As with his paintings Mr. Cintas had a wide spectrum of book interests. The largest known areas of his collections pertain to history mainly American, British, and Latin American. His collection of biographies deals with presidents, kings, and statemen. His range of books on world literature is also extensive.

*The American Book Auction Catalogue of 1961-II-10* contains 329 items from various sellers including Mr. Cintas. But unfortunately the catalogue does not specify the owners of individual books. So there is no way to determine which books were Mr. Cintas’s and which were not.

Of special interest for us is the Parke-Bernet Galleries auction “2040” of rare books including Mr. Cintas’s on May 16 and 17, 1961. This catalogue contains eleven of Mr. Cintas’s books among which are the first edition of *Don Quijote* (1605 and 1615). There is also the first volume of the 1608 edition of *Don Quijote* (18 #76). In 1963 the Newberry Library purchased the first edition of *Don Quijote* from the Louis Silver collection (Towner 6-7).<sup>34</sup>

The only extensive Cintas correspondence that I have been able to locate is between him and the House of Duveen. It is said that during the first half of the twentieth century the most important art dealer in the world was Joseph Lord Duveen (1869-1939). Anyone who was anybody in art collecting normally purchased some art via this company which

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32 It is a shame that I cannot identify this *hidalguía*. Perhaps this document had something to do with Mr. Cintas’s own family and blood line. O’Reilly lists four rare editions of *Don Quijote* (#79-82).

33 William O’Reilly, son of the former owner of the now defunct Plaza Art Gallery, recently confirmed my findings. (Telephone conversation, March 2, 2008). I thank Mr. O’Reilly very much for his help.

34 I have traced two titles from the Cintas library which the O’Reilly Galleries auctioned in May, 1961. We also know that Mr. Cintas contributed Cuban imprints to the University of Florida. But that is not all. The George Peabody Library of the Johns Hopkins University has a former Cintas copy of a 1931 edition of James Fenimore Cooper’s *The American Democrat*. In the University of Chicago catalog I have seen a reference to a copy of Juan Pérez de Montalbán’s (1602-1638) *Sucesos y prodigios de amor* (Brussels, 1626).

was also called Duveen Brothers. So it should not come as a surprise that Mr. Cintas also dealt with this institution.

The written record between Mr. Cintas and the House of Duveen contains about one hundred documents mostly bills of sale which cover the years between 1927 and 1953. The original Duveen Archives are at the Getty Library.<sup>35</sup> There are also microfilm copies at the Watson Library of the Metropolitan Art Museum, The Courtauld Art Institute of London, and at the Institut National d'histoire de l'art in Paris. To the best of my knowledge these documents are also the largest collection of Cintas generated documents available for public scrutiny outside of Cuba.

The Duveen-Cintas correspondence offers a penetrating view of Mr. Cintas's personality, character, and *weltanschauung*. An overall examination of its contents is in order. The first letter dated December 2nd, 1927 is from Lord Duveen himself and addressed to Mr. Cintas care of The Railway Equipment Company of Cuba. By this time Mr. Cintas had already arrived on the arts and financial scene in Cuba. A year after this letter the Sixth Pan American Conference took place in Havana (January-February 1928). By this conference Mr. Cintas had surely arrived.

This Duveen-Cintas letter is the first that I have ever seen addressed to Mr. Cintas by anyone. In it Mr. Duveen congratulated him on the acquisition of Cosimo di Rosselli's (1439-1597), "The Crucifixion." Mr. Cintas had purchased it from the John Levy Galleries.<sup>36</sup> This letter praises Mr. Cintas's superb taste in art, and it shows that Mr. Duveen had his eye on him as a potential and above all a wealthy client. Mr. Duveen was absolutely correct in this assessment of Mr. Cintas. The letter is also an example of Mr. Cintas's learning process about art and about the world of art collecting.

Mr. Cintas continued to buy art from the House of Duveen. For on January 31st, 1940 it sent Mr. Cintas information on United States customs regulations for art. The United States Customs Act of 1930 stated

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35 I am very grateful to Casie Kesterton for photocopying these items for me.

36 This letter gives the name of an additional art dealer from whom Mr. Cintas purchased works of art. In spite of my sincerest efforts I have not been able to find any correspondence between Messieurs Levy and Cintas. But it surely must exist somewhere. (*John Levy Galleries passim*)

most emphatically that works of art were for the most part exempt from import duty.

The fact that Mr. Cintas had such a document in his possession suggests that he was considering transporting at least some of his works of art and books to the United States. It is very possible that he was worried that his very own Cuban government might try to confiscate his paintings and other works of art. We know that he had very little confidence in President Batista.

World War II found Mr. Cintas frequently in New York as a guest at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.<sup>37</sup> On January 5th, 1942 Mr. Cintas received a brochure from the House of Duveen. It was about the Thomas Gainsborough portrait of William Pitt which Mr. Cintas had recently purchased.

On January 6th, 1942 The House of Duveen sent Mr. Cintas the 177th copy of its *Duveen Pictures in Public Collections of America* (1941). The House of Duveen only requests that Mr. Cintas retain this publication for his library. Not one of these Duveen-Cintas letters alludes to the events of World War II. Mr. Cintas's life was totally isolated and insulated from the carnage of that conflagration. Geography and wealth kept his life so.

The date of the next letter to Mr. Cintas is July 26, 1945 addressed to him while he was still a guest at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. It contains a photograph and brochure of the Rembrandt portrait of, "Hendrickje Stoefells." Naturally Duveen Brothers was hoping that Mr. Cintas would purchase it. On September 7, 1949 B. S. Boggis of Duveen Brothers sent Mr. Cintas a brochure for the sale of Van Dyck's, "The Countess of Carlisle."

One of the most important and revealing parts of this correspondence is a series of letters between Duveen Brothers and Mr. Leto M. Prindle, Professor of Classical Languages and Literatures at the University of Vermont (December 5, 1945). In this correspondence Professor Prindel explains to Duveen Brothers that he would like a photograph of Frans Hals's "The Merry Lute Player," which was in Mr. Cintas's collection. He needed that photograph for his course on European painting, and he

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37 Mr. Cintas also stayed at the Ausable Club a resort in St. Hubert's P. O. in Essex County, New York (Duveen-Cintas July 8th 1952)

had heard that the painting was in the Cintas Collection in Havana. He asked Duveen Brothers to obtain this necessary photograph.

One December 7, 1945 Duveen Brothers forwarded Professor Prindle's letter to Mr. Cintas who had been traveling and had recently returned to Havana (March 27th, 1946). Mr. Cintas explained that the letter had just caught up to him and that he was only too happy to satisfy Professor Prindle's request.

Professor Prindle had expected a negative response from Mr. Cintas in that Mr. Cintas would not want to share his paintings with anyone else. To this Mr. Cintas responds, "I am delighted that he likes this painting but I fail to understand his fear that I might not want it shown. I did not execute it; I am merely its temporary custodian—great works of art have no owners in the ordinary sense they belong to everybody" (March 27, 1946) These words are so descriptive of Mr. Cintas's feelings on the role of art and books for the general public. At the same time these words reflect Mr. Cintas's generosity.

As we have already stated, one of Mr. Cintas's business qualities was that he was a very hard bargainer who invariably low-balled. Rarely if ever did he pay the prices which the House of Duveen, or for that matter any other dealer asked. Mr. Cintas simply walked away and left the dealers dangling. He badgered and cajoled the Duveen staff on a regular basis. Take for example the case of John H. Allen, who according to Mr. Cintas wanted too much money for a Rembrandt. As Mr. Cintas wrote, "Sometime ago I made you a cash offer which you turned down and today I do not feel in the same good mood as I did then" (November 19, 1946).

In the late forties and early fifties Mr. Cintas bought from Duveen Brothers many pieces of porcelain and quite a number of paintings (May 12, 1948 and January 3, 1949). It is little wonder that Duveen Brothers did not want to alienate this client.

Tragically, on December 27, 1941 doña Graziella died of cancer at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center (Pierre Cintas). He would succumb to the very same illness some sixteen years later. She and Mr. Cintas had no children, and he never remarried. After her death, "Oscar preserved her bedroom untouched for the rest of his life as a shrine to this great love" (Lobo, 310).

In spite of such spousal fidelity, according to Portela, Mr. Cintas was interested in marrying again. Two of these ladies, however, were not from Cuban high society, and they were not interested in him. During much of his life—I do not know when it began—Mr. Cintas manifested a great dislike for Cuban high society. Most likely this explains his choice of some women when he became a widower.

Mr. Cintas had built a beautiful mausoleum in Havana's Colón Cemetery in which to bury his wife, doña Graziella and for himself as well (Portela, e-mail October 26, 2007). Like Paris's Cemetery of Père Lachaise and Buenos Aires's La Chacarita this Cuban cemetery also is famous for the many important people who are buried there and for the beautiful funerary art work which graces its grounds (Lloyd, 139).

Probably the first canvas which Mr. Cintas ever saw was that baptismal Murillo painting of the Immaculate Conception. And so it was in death. For his tomb has a, "beautiful relief of a Madonna and child" (Lobo, 310). For a man who was not a practicing Catholic it is perhaps ironically fitting that an image of the Virgin should have graced both his baptismal font as well as his tomb.

Mr. Cintas died in Cuba on May 11, 1957 (Chicago Historical Museum Cintas will). He had been director of the Cuban Railroad Company's sugar mills in Punta Alegre<sup>38</sup> Jatibonico, and Jobabo<sup>39</sup> He was also president of Railroad Equipment of Brazil and of Argentina" (*New York Times*, May 12, 1957). He was director of the American Car and Foundry and the American Locomotive Sales Corporation. He had subsidiary companies of other manufacturing organizations as well.

At the time of his death Mr. Cintas's estate officially was worth around ten million dollars, only one million of which was in Cuba (Chicago Historical Museum, *Ibid.*). Lastra has suggested that it was fifteen million dollars (18). His wealth also included 212,500 shares of the common stock of the Punta Alegre Corporation, but with the Castro government

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38 David Rockefeller also served on the board of this company (Wikipedia). There is a photograph of this company's tracks in Lloyd 263. Also in *Manual... 121-127*.

39 There is a photograph of each of these sugar mills in Lloyd 260 and 263. Lloyd published this work in order, "to attract to Cuba that capital and labour to which it offers such unlimited scopes" (preface).

their value evaporated.<sup>40</sup> However, I suspect that Mr. Cintas's total personal wealth was much greater than the official amount.

I do believe that it is time for the Cuban authorities to recognize the enormous contribution that Mr. Cintas has made to Cuban society and to recognize his personal greatness. Some of Mr. Cintas's paintings are hanging in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Havana. Perhaps this is the first hope of a thaw to study, recognize, and to acknowledge Mr. Cintas's considerable contribution to Cuban culture in Cuba and abroad (Linares, 61).

After its long journey, the Cintas collection of the earliest editions of *Don Quijote* now rests securely in the Newberry Library. Don Oscar acquired them because he loved *Don Quijote's* message of freedom and humanity. These volumes are at the Newberry because he sold them to fund what eventually became the Cintas Foundation. Mr. Cintas had a very large library, but his copy of the first edition of *Don Quijote* was its crown jewel. As the reader has seen, with a Midas touch, Mr. Cintas transformed his library and art collection into gold for his foundation.

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