

**Estudios cervantinos**



Review Author[s]:  
John G. Weiger

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**Estudios cervantinos.** By Daniel Eisenberg. Barcelona: Sirmio, 1991. 153 pages.

Seven essays, all previously published, are here brought up to date and, save two originally in Spanish, translated from their English originals.

“¿Tenía Cervantes una biblioteca?” opens the volume. Although it is common to accept as autobiographical the assertion of the *Quijote's* “segundo autor” that he was fond of reading even scraps of paper found in the street, Eisenberg’s text begins with an open mind: “Tomemos o no como autobiográfica la afirmación” (11), a perspective that informs his approach to other undocumented but commonly held assumptions, such as “su supuesta miseria económica [que] tiene algo de mito romántico” (14), Cide Hamete’s comment on poverty “a veces citado como evidencia de la [pobreza] de Cervantes” (16)—which presumably would have inhibited the purchase of books—and the “imprecedera leyenda de la ingratitud de Béjar” (24). This open-minded attitude permits Eisenberg to reach conclusions not by jumping to them but by piecing together textual and archival evidence. The importance of book collections is thus not limited to Don Quijote’s desiccated brain but is evidenced in Grisóstomo (whose body is surrounded by books and papers), Tomás Rodaja (“atendía más a sus libros que a otros pasatiempos”), the manuscripts in Palomeque’s inn, and, typical of Eisenberg’s attention to details, the fact that Don Quijote’s library was “ordenada por temas y situada en una habitación independiente” (33). That Cervantes possessed a personal library is, if not proven, convincingly set forth.

In “Cervantes y Tasso vueltos a examinar,” Eisenberg counters Forcione’s position regarding Tasso’s influence, arguing that such influence came to Cervantes by way of El Pinciano. The scholarship here is very impressive and the arguments very persuasive. Only the suggestion that the Tassos (father and son) served as the prototype for Don Quijote is, though intriguing and even possible, pure speculation.

“El romance visto por Cervantes” devotes more than two dozen pages to the meaning of the word “romance” in Cervantes’ time: the number of syllables was secondary to its alleged historical content. This and their often lascivious subject matter led to criticism similar to that of the books of chivalry. In general, the *romances* belonged to the common people whereas the books of chivalry were the property of hidalgos, with the exception of Don Quijote himself and of the narrators, an exception that “es muy importante,” but whose significance Eisenberg does not venture to discuss.

“Repaso crítico de las atribuciones cervantinas” comes to few new conclusions but is scarcely uninteresting. But there is no need to introduce a straw man: “saber cuáles obras son las cervantinas tiene sin cuidado a la

mayoría de los cervantistas" (83). The essay opens with the question "¿Qué escribió Cervantes?" but by its end the author has forgotten it: "Comenzamos este artículo con el deseo de conocer la causa o causas del ambiente de inseguridad y desconfianza en el campo de las atribuciones cervantinas" (102-3). It is this desire, rather than the original question, that drives Eisenberg. He presents an intriguing picture of how falsifications, particularly those of Adolfo de Castro (the villain of the piece), poor scholarship, and societal censorship have contributed to the confusion.

"La teoría cervantina del tiempo" deals less with theory than with the compilation of quotes related to time. There is no unifying principle at work. Perhaps the highlight is the insightful explication of Kenneth Allen's analysis that in the *Persiles* time runs backwards, from the beginning of the seventeenth century to before 1550: elementary, suggests Eisenberg, for the chronology corresponds with the life of Cervantes.

"Cervantes, Lope y Avellaneda" echoes the title of Riquer's book in the same series: *Cervantes, Passamonte y Avellaneda*. Despite Eisenberg's title, he supports Riquer's choice, Gerónimo de Passamonte, as Avellaneda's true identity. The case made is very convincing, but Eisenberg is not above some circular reasoning: we believe Cervantes because of his preoccupation with the truth but we discredit Passamonte because he is the author of the greatest deception in Spanish literature (136). And our reading of Avellaneda may inform a reading of Passamonte: "Ya hemos visto que Passamonte tomó elementos de Cervantes al escribir su continuación del *Quijote*. Bien pudiera haber hecho lo mismo en su autobiografía" (137).

Eisenberg assumes that a single person made the remark concerning the *Curioso impertinente's* being well-reasoned but inapposite (Eisenberg suggests Lope), although we have no reason to believe this opinion was not shared by many readers. From here Eisenberg leaps to "una hipótesis razonable" that Lope's opinion of the 1605 *Quijote* was a factor in Cervantes' decision to put aside Part II and devote his energies instead to the *Novelas ejemplares* (128). And Eisenberg twice maintains that Don Quijote "estaba loco por las mujeres" (125, 129), an assertion that this reviewer's reading of the text cannot support. Finally, Eisenberg shows that the textual errors concerning Sancho's ass were not caused by a printer's carelessness but are the consequence of Cervantes' own revisions.

Two minor details: Cervantes would be the first to object to being called "don Miguel" (53); the chapters are called "artículos" rather than "capítulos," reflecting the book's major weakness: the essays are not related by any common thread save that of Cervantes himself.

JOHN G. WEIGER

*University of Vermont*