

Published in *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 14
(1990 [1991]): 305-08.
Posted on <http://bigfoot.com/~daniel.eisenberg>

Daniel Eisenberg. *Las Semanas del jardín de Miguel de Cervantes*. Estudio, edición, y facsímil del manuscrito. Salamanca: Diputación de Salamanca, 1988 [1989]. ISBN: 84-7797-008-4. [Índice onomástico.]

Eisenberg presents a case which deserves the attention of all *cervantistas*. I do not believe that he proves it, but the very attempt to prove it, and the evidence adduced, are enlightening, and he is to be congratulated on having argued his brief with such scrupulous, well-documented fairness.

Eisenberg argues the case for attributing to Cervantes an anonymous Golden Age manuscript containing a "Diálogo entre Cilenia y Selanio, sobre la vida del campo." The contents of his book consist of: a brief history of the scholarly controversy about the manuscript, backed up by a useful Appendix which quotes the relevant texts in chronological order; a defense of Eisenberg's method; various sections which pick out individual themes or motifs in the dialogue ("La verdad," "La hipocresía," "El gobierno," and so on) and make correlations with equivalent themes in Cervantes' works; the text of the dialogue, with orthography and punctuation regularized and modernized; the facsimile of the original manuscript. What of the contents of the dialogue itself? It purports to be one of a series of conversations, of which one or some have been held in a *huerta*. It begins on an allegorical note: Selanio asks Cilenia what has been her experience of living with Truth, a being so shunned and despised by men. She avows her joy at the experience, and agrees with Selanio that it has opened her eyes to men's hypocrisy. Then she presses him to explain his reasons, which she does not share, for preferring life in the country to life at court. Selanio sketches critically a variety of vices and vocations—covetous merchants, flattering courtiers, envy, incompetent rulers—then elaborates his praise of country life, advocating the kind of Christian/Stoic ideal expressed by Luis de León and Francisco de Aldana, with an admixture of amatory neo-platonism in a pastoral vein. The relation between Cilenia and Selanio is somewhat reminiscent of that between Filón and Sofía in León Hebreo's *Diálogos de amor*: she is his Beloved, in the spiritual sense, and she admires him for his virtues and intellect. He takes the leading role in the dialogue, though she promises to defend the cause of court life on their next encounter.

The manuscript exists in the Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina, Seville, and was published for the first time by Adolfo de Castro—"el mayor falsario de las letras hispánicas"—in *Varias obras inéditas de Cervantes, sacadas de códices de la Biblioteca Colombina* (Madrid, 1874), though it had previously been discovered by José María Asensio. As Eisenberg admits from the outset, with Adolfo de Castro as your friend, who needs enemies? The very title of Castro's book is mendacious, since most of the works contained in it were either not "inéditas" or not by Cervantes. Castro's attribution of the dialogue to Cervantes was supported by some late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century scholars: Asensio himself, Julián Apraiz, and the youthful Menéndez Pelayo (who uncritically swallowed all Castro's

attributions in the above-cited book, and then, older and wiser, never deigned to mention it again). However, leading Cervantine scholars in this century—Givanel Mas, Amezúa y Mayo, Schevill and Bonilla, Astrana Marín—have shown themselves much more dubious. There has been a modern study of the dialogue by Francisco López Estrada, also dubious, in *RFE*, 57 (1974-75), 159-94.

I too am sceptical, above all because there seem to be no *prima facie* grounds of high, middling, or low probability for making the attribution at all. Apart from evidence of the “smoking gun” variety, what *are* the *prima facie* grounds for connecting an anonymous work of the Golden Age with Cervantes? Let us remind ourselves of the [p. 306] criteria by means of concrete examples. In the case of (i) the Porras de la Cámara version of “Rinconete y Cortadillo,” (ii) the “Canción desesperada,” (iii) the *romance* “La morada de los celos,” (iv) “La tía fingida,” (v) the “Relación” of the festivities in Valladolid to celebrate the birth of Philip IV, they are as follows: (i) this is a work which is mentioned by title in *Don Quixote* I, 47, and was later published by Cervantes in the *Novelas ejemplares*; (ii) this is a poem which exists in a sixteenth-century manuscript and was later incorporated, with variants, by Cervantes in *Don Quixote* Part I, 14; (iii) this is a poem which is attributed to Cervantes in an early seventeenth-century *cancionero* and contains evident affinities with the themes and imagery of *La casa de los celos*; (iv) this anonymous *novela*, containing various technical and stylistic affinities with Cervantes’ fiction, appeared in the same miscellany with two other anonymous *novelas* which are undoubtedly by him; (iv) this official chronicle of the festivities surrounding the royal birth appears to be attributed to Cervantes by two independent witnesses in the seventeenth century. It will doubtless seem heavy-handed to enumerate the criteria thus, but I do so with a purpose: one must have *one* or *some* reasons like these to start with, otherwise, why not attribute the dialogue to any one of a thousand *ingenios* living in Spain around 1600? The dialogue shows no evident connection with the title *Las semanas del jardín* that Cervantes mentions in the preliminaries to three late works. Its genre, roughly speaking, is the post-Erasman satiric or didactic dialogue (cf. those in praise of country life in Antonio de Torquemada’s *Coloquios satíricos*): a genre that Cervantes, with entrenched commitments to poetry, drama, and prose fiction, seems unlikely to have dabbled in. [Methinks I hear an editorial voice in my ear: “Anthony, what about the ‘Coloquio de los perros’?” To which I reply: “Yes, Dan, I hadn’t forgotten the ‘Coloquio,’ in which, in my view, post-Erasman satire enters into synthesis with other elements—Lucian, Apuleius, Aesop, the picaresque—all harnessed to a novelistic, rather than essentially didactic end.”] The date of the dialogue, somewhere around 1610 in Eisenberg’s view, seems to me to be the last quarter of the sixteenth century; this is suggested, not just by the genre, but by echoes of Garcilaso and pastoral motifs, affinities with Luis de León, Aldana, and León Hebreo, and also by the periodic and reduplicative style, lacking in Baroque *conceptismo* and *cultismo*. That is to say, the probable date does not seem to me synchronous with Cervantes’ references (from 1612-16) to *Las semanas del jardín*.

Eisenberg’s grounds for attribution, starkly summarized, are: (i) a *corazonada*, motivated by the beauty and merit that he finds in the dialogue, worthy only of a great author; (ii) “los paralelos ideológicos, apoyados...en las palabras con que se expresan estas ideas.” Argument (i) would obviously be insufficient, whatever one’s views as to the qualities of the dialogue, which is, in my view, interesting and worthy, but no more. We are thus left with argument (ii). Here I find Eisenberg’s attempt to argue the case for attribution enlightening, because I have often considered the same attempt,

and pondered the problems inherent in it, with regard to “La tía fingida.” He considers the method of style-frequency-analysis, but rejects it, as being still too problematic. The method that he proposes is, as he admits, traditional, yet he considers it none the worse for being so. Nor indeed do I. Argument (ii), even in the absence of *prima facie* evidence, would be quite persuasive, though not of course conclusive, *if* the ideological-cum-stylistic affinities were sufficiently specific. As my exposition of the dialogue’s themes in the second paragraph will have indicated, its ideological links with Cervantes, indeed with many other Golden Age authors, are plentiful. These themes, *pace* Eisenberg (p. 35), are commonplaces. My doubts about argument (ii) in this case concern the weakness of the supporting *stylistic* links. Let us look at some concrete examples.

Many of the parallels that Eisenberg adduces are so general or incidental as to be [p. 307] insignificant; I leave those aside, and concentrate on those which are more plausible. Selanio says of the countryman’s happy lot: “No le aprietan ni congojan las revueltas de las ciudades, ni por odio, amor ni interés se inclina a los bandos que hay en ellas, ni le trae desatinado y ciego la pasión y ambición de los ciudadanos, ni los embustes y enredos con que solicitan cátedras y oficios en la república.” This is juxtaposed with the gypsy elder’s assertion in “La gitanilla”: “Ni sustentamos bandos, ni madrugamos a dar memoriales, ni acompañar magnates, ni solicitar favores.” Both passages exhibit the same order of ideas, certainly; but the first is rambling and diffuse in contrast with the second, in which symmetries of stress and assonance artfully emphasize the symmetries of thought, and give it spirited force. Quite simply, Cervantes writes much, much better than the author of the dialogue; and the difference in quality, here, can be measured by Cervantes’ pithy and artistic handling of *concinmitas*.

Here is another comparison. In this instance, the anonymous author does somewhat better, achieving something like Cervantes’ balanced symmetries and duplications: “tendidos en el blanco heno, no echan menos las ricas cortinas ni los toldados aposentos, sirviéndoles de lo uno y de lo otro el cóncavo convés del cielo, y los verdes y hojosos árboles.” Eisenberg compares this with snippets of the speech from “La gitanilla,” omitting the passages indicated by square brackets, which I re-instate: “[Para nosotros las inclemencias del cielo son oreos, refrigerio las nieves, baños la lluvia, músicas los truenos y hachas los relámpagos;] para nosotros son los duros terrenos colchones de blandas plumas.... Por dorados techos y suntuosos palacios estimamos estas barracas y movibles ranchos; [por cuadros y países de Flandes, los que nos da la naturaleza en esos levantados riscos y nevadas peñas, tendidos prados y espesos bosques que a cada paso a los ojos se nos muestran].” The anonymous author shows none of the energy of these fragments, which insist, with cumulative, cadenced repetitions and paradoxical oppositions: “Our hardiness and closeness to nature are such that, for us, its very inclemencies and privations are luxuries.” Particularly notable in the gypsy elder’s speech is the all-or-nothing effect of the repeated negations: “a nuestra ligereza no la impiden grillos, ni la detienen barrancos, ni la contrastan paredes...,” contrasted with totalizing affirmations, achieved by sweeping enumeration: “los montes nos ofrecen leña de balde; los árboles frutas; las viñas uvas; las huertas hortaliza; las fuentes agua, los ríos peces y los vedados caza, sombra las peñas, aire fresco las quiebras, y casas las cuevas.”

The same effect is achieved in the opening of “La ilustre fregona,” with reference to Carriazo’s enthusiasm for the picaresque life: “Se fue por ese mundo adelante, tan contento de la vida libre, que en la mitad de las incomodidades y miserias que trae

consigo no echaba menos la abundancia de la casa de su padre, ni el andar a pie le cansaba, ni el frío le ofendía, ni el calor le enfadaba: para él todos los tiempos del año le eran dulce y templada primavera; también dormía en parvas como en colchones; con tanto gusto se soterraba en un pajar de un mesón como si se acostara entre dos sábanas de Holanda.” The same techniques, with the same all-or-nothing effect, are deployed to exaggerate Carrizales’ jealousy in “El celoso extremeño,” capable of monstrously inverting the routine employed in normal households: “A los ratones della jamás los persiguió gato, ni en ella se oyó ladrido de perro: todos eran del género femenino. De día pensaba, de noche no dormía; él era la ronda y centinela de su casa, y el Argos de lo que bien quería; jamás entró hombre de la puerta adentro del patio.” And the gypsy elder’s style of sweeping enumeration (see above: “los montes nos ofrecen...”) recurs in Don Quixote’s superb, and “camp,” evocation of his forthcoming pastoral sabbatical: “Daránnos con abundantísima mano de su dulcísimo fruto las encinas, asiento los troncos de los durísimos alcornoques, sombra los sauces, olor las rosas, alfombras de mil colores matizadas los estendidos prados, aliento el aire claro y puro, luz la luna y [p. 308] las estrellas, a pesar de la escuridad de la noche, gusto el canto, alegría el lloro, Apolo versos, el amor conceptos....” Note how, in this fragment, the reiterated pattern of zeugma is switched and reversed in the last two phrases, just as it is in the last three phrases of the fragment from “La gitanilla.”

My point is that stylistic individuality *can* be pinpointed; if it could not, there would be no such thing as parody. In discussing the passages from “La gitanilla” I have not mentioned, but have not forgotten, a major determinant of that individuality: the fact that it is a *gypsy* speaking, not an abstract embodiment of civilized reason, like Selanio. That is to say, stylistic individuality is here harnessed to a novelistic purpose, typically Cervantine in nature. Thus, I believe that Eisenberg’s criteria of similarity, on which his attribution is based, are insufficiently strong and precise. Eisenberg apparently believes that stylistic individuality *cannot* be pinpointed (see p. 31), and that quantity can make up for quality. So he accumulates a plethora of cases where there is an overlap of themes, expressed in somewhat or vaguely similar words. Unless the verbal similarity is specific, argument (ii) falls.

ANTHONY CLOSE
Faculty of Modern and Modern Languages
University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge CB3 9DA
United Kingdom