

BOOK REVIEW
CERVANTES
by Santiago Muñoz Machado (Editorial
Crítica, Barcelona 2022, 1,037 pages)
and
*ANATOMY OF LIBERTY IN “DON QUIXOTE
DE LA MANCHA” : RELIGION, FEMINISM,
SLAVERY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS
IN THE FIRST MODERN NOVEL ”*
by Eric Clifford Graf (Lexington
Books, London
& New York 2021, 279 pages)

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The years immediately following the pandemic have brought us two works of great value dedicated to Cervantes. The first one we are going to discuss was the second to be published in 2022 by the scholar, jurist and man of letters Santiago Muñoz Machado, currently director of the Royal Spanish Academy. We are discussing this one first as it is the more extensive and has the broader scope of the two. Indeed, Muñoz Machado undertakes (at this stage!) the arduous task of presenting us with a new biography of Cervantes when one might practically consider that everything of importance in this field had already been said. However, Muñoz Machado rises to this challenge with flying colours, presenting us, with great mastery and a knack for synthesis, as it were, with a compendium on the ‘state of the art’ regarding Cervantes from today’s perspective. Thus, throughout the 626 pages that make up the main text, the reader can gain a very accurate understanding of the different schools of thought and of everything of significance that has been written about Cervantes and his work. And for that alone, we should be eternally grateful to Muñoz Machado,

for it saves the modern reader an enormous amount of time in gaining a perspective on Cervantes's world that is both broad and profound. But Muñoz Machado's merit does not stop there, for he also analyses, makes contributions and highlights some novel issues, some of them of great interest, ranging from the relatively minor topic of Cervantes's alleged homosexual activity in Algiers, to the exquisitely treated sections devoted to marriage and relationships between couples (a subject that so inspired Cervantes); the political and religious aspects of Spain in his time (notably his treatment of the work of Jerónimo Castillo de Bobadilla —pp. 412 ff.— a scholastic precursor of the dynamic conception of competence); the role of the Inquisition and of magic and sorcery in the culture of the era of Don Quixote (of obvious importance in enabling our hero to justify 'by way of enchantment' many of his problems and inconsistencies); or the final chapter devoted to the Old and New Law, where Muñoz Machado, as an eminent jurist, gives us the best of himself. In short, this is a highly remarkable book which also includes 125 pages of notes at the end of the main text (what a pity they were not included at the foot of each relevant page!) and 213 pages of bibliography and indexes. However, and merely to offer a critical comment—one which in no way detracts from the book's quality and great merit—I would mention the overly brief and, in my opinion, unfair treatment the author gives to the seven-volume biography published by Luis Astrana Marín between 1948 and 1958 under the title **Vida ejemplar y heroica de Miguel de Cervantes**, which I had the great pleasure of reading some decades ago. For, despite everything, Muñoz Machado has no choice but to acknowledge, albeit grudgingly, the definitive nature of Astrana Marín's work, from which all subsequent biographers and commentators, including Muñoz Machado himself, have been compelled almost literally to draw. Even more serious, it seems to me—and this is my second criticism, particularly relevant for readers of *Procesos de Mercado*—is that Muñoz Machado has squandered the golden opportunity presented to him to devote at least one chapter to the role of freedom in Cervantes's thought and work. Indeed, apart from a few apt observations, which could have been written by Bruno

Leoni and even F. A. Hayek, regarding the evolutionary and customary nature of true Law (with a capital L) as opposed to the artificial and interventionist nature of legislation (with a lowercase l), as discussed on pp. 622–623, and a very brief reference to the work of Luis Rosales, Muñoz Machado says little or nothing about freedom.

Fortunately, this significant shortcoming and gap in Muñoz Machado's work has been filled by the book published by the Hispanist Eric Clifford Graf, entitled (in Spanish) **Anatomía de la libertad en *Don Quijote de la Mancha**, which must therefore be regarded as an essential and indispensable complement to Muñoz Machado's treatise. For any liberal-libertarian thinker, reading Clifford Graf's monograph provides a passionate intellectual pleasure. It systematically addresses all the themes in which the true idea of freedom—understood as the absence of institutional coercion emanating from the State—emerges in Cervantes's immortal work: religion, feminism and the prominence of women, driven, according to Graf, by Catholicism (p. 72); the odious institution of slavery; politics and the despicable use, as Oppenheimer would say, of political means based on statism and coercion as opposed to economic means consisting of the peaceful production and exchange of goods; and, in short, the significant ideas in the field of economics which, in embryonic form, and following our Golden Age scholastics (led by Juan de Mariana), are incorporated into Don Quixote. It should be noted that the fundamental importance of Clifford Graf's book has come to be recognised internationally, to the extent that the journal *Cosmos + Taxis: Studies in Emergent Order and Organisation* (Volume 12, Nos. 3 and 4, 2024) has devoted an entire monographic issue to a symposium organised by Brian Brewer of Trinity College Dublin, featuring the most distinguished specialists, who study and discuss Clifford Graf's book in depth; who, in addition to responding elegantly to all the participants' papers, treats us, by way of an epilogue, to a new article entitled "Tocqueville's Cervantine Federalism: The Hybrid French Art of Exiting the New World", in which, amongst other things, he compares the positive influence of "Quixotic" liberalism and that of our scholastics on the founding fathers

the Founding Fathers of the United States (particularly Jefferson and Madison) in the face of the ‘monstrosity’ of the statism espoused by Hamilton and his acolytes, which, to the misfortune of the United States (and the world), is what has ultimately prevailed.

And, just as we did with Muñoz Machado, I have only two brief critical comments. The first concerns the term ‘dynamic efficiency’ which Clifford Graf mentions on p. 225, attributing it to Hayek, when its origin lies in Schumpeter’s work, and as for his analysis of it as a natural result of the spontaneous market order that surpasses Pareto-static efficiency and drives civilisation forward, this is developed in my work of the same title (*The Theory of Dynamic Efficiency*) published by Routledge in 2010. And even more important than this last, minor observation, I believe it is necessary to point out that Clifford Graf fails to mention the Comuneros Revolution of Castile as the first liberal revolution in Europe, which, supported by the Franciscans and Dominicans who developed the theory of tyrannicide later taken up by Father Juan de Mariana, was, unfortunately, crushed by the oppressive power of the tyrannical and foreign King Charles V, who introduced and consolidated in our country an absolutist statism alien to our true traditions and which, regrettably, and reinforced by the Habsburgs and Bourbons, would ultimately exert such a negative influence throughout the Spanish Empire on both sides of the ocean.

And we must conclude by emphasising the urgent need for Eric Clifford Graf’s work to be translated into Spanish as soon as possible, published, and made available, in particular, to all Spanish-speaking readers and lovers of freedom in Spain and the Americas.