

THE "DON QUIJOTE" IN ITALY

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THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

1935

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## INTRODUCTION

The "Don Quijote" is one of those rare manifestations of the genius which has given and still gives to its critics the possibilities of exercising their various interpretive powers. Thus in Spain and outside of Spain there flourished about Cervantes, a kind of spurious literature in which the work of the critic is nothing but a mere play of fancy.<sup>1</sup>

The criticism of Baldonero Villegas<sup>2</sup> offers one of the best illustrations of what those critics can do. For this author Don Quijote is nothing more than the representation of a symbol. For him the shepherd Marcela-Marcaeli, personifies the primitive church of the Christians; Pedro is the symbol representing the Roman Pontif and Luscinda - Luz de Oriente - stands for Science.

In Italy, until a few years ago, there was not a complete work about the "Don Quijote," but Italian critics have often written on the subject, and have searched for the true meaning of Cervantes' work without relying upon strange hypotheses.

<sup>1</sup>Icaza, F. A. El "Quijote" durante tres siglos. Madrid, 1918.

<sup>2</sup>Baldonero Villegas in Bibliografia Critica de Cervantes by D. Leopoldo Ruis. VIII p. 184-187.

The history of the Italian critics of Cervantes might be divided into three different periods. The first period is represented by Franciosini, Pasquale, Gamba which consists of the first translations with a few words of appreciation and praises as a comment. The first Italian translation - that of Franciosini - appeared in the year 1622, a date which marks the beginning of the ever more increasing popularity of the greatest Spanish writier in Italy.

The second period is that in which "varias escuelas criticas estudian el Quijote como un capítulo de su concepto del Orlando, ya contraponiéndolo, ya paralelamente; y ven ambos como fin y término de la novelística cabal-leresca."<sup>3</sup> Gioberti, Carducci, Rodolfo Renier, De Sanctis and Nencioni are among the best representatives of this period.

The third period - the present - has as its principal exponents writers like Graf, D'Ovidio, Papini, Savi-Lopez, Borgese, etc. In this period is found the true esthetical interpretation of Cervantes. The "Don Quijote" is studied by itself without any hindering comparison of it with other Italian works. But other works of Cervantes,

<sup>3</sup>Icaza, F. A. op. cit. p. 68.

however, are as yet given little attention by most of the Italian critics, with the exception of Savi-Lopez and E. Mele.

I do not intend to make use of this classification because my particular purpose is that of choosing among those writers the ones whose opinions as a whole represent everything the modern critic has found in "Don Quijote." The aim of this study, therefore, is to give an exposition, with some comments, of what the most important critics of Italy have written about Cervantes' "Don Quijote."

But since a classification of some kind seems to be necessary, in order to have a certain guidance, I choose to divide my study under the following headings:

- I Earlier Critics.
- II Modern Critics.
- III Toffanin.
- IV Pirandello and Humorism.

## I

### EARLIER CRITICS

The main characteristic of the writers of this group is that, in general, they lack originality of opinion and depth of interpretation. Besides, some of them have written only a few scattered expressions about Cervantes' "Don Quijote," while the criticism of others, although they have written much, is nothing more than the repetition of what previous critics have said both in Spain and elsewhere.

Before dealing in detail with those writers whose criticism is quite abundant, it is perhaps worthwhile to mention some of the few Italian critics whose names are often quoted in relation to Cervantes.

Saverio Bettinelli,<sup>1</sup> for instance, after having praised "Don Quijote's" humorism, its realism and the perfect representation of each single character, concludes by saying that the novel of "Don Quijote" has no equal in other literatures.

Cesare Cantù<sup>2</sup> has something more definite. For him that book is "una satira senza fiele," a national epopee; and the leading characters, Don Quijote and Sancho

<sup>1</sup> Saverio Bettinelli. Risorgimento negli studi, nelle arti e nei costumi dopo il mille. Bassano 1775. p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> C. Cantù. Storia universale. Milano. Treves, 1838. p.209-40

represent, respectively, one the "ideal" and the other the "real." He noticed also the trivial contrast between wisdom and madness which give rise always to a feeling of compassion and sympathy towards the protagonist. And his conclusion is that the book in its "whole" is full of melancholy - a thing which shows how near the sublime is to the ludicrous.

As for Luigi Settembrini, "L'ascetismo spagnolo," he says, "ora religioso, ora cavalleresco, ora voluttuoso, e ch     rappresentato con tutti i colori dell'immaginativa dai poeti, specialmente dal Lope de Vega e dal Calderon,   deriso dal Cervantes nell'unico 'Don Quijote.'"<sup>3</sup> Obviously these words are full of meaning but it is to be regretted the author did not fully explain how that 'ascetismo' is scorned by Cervantes. His conclusion, however, is the logical conclusion to which will arrive all those critics who think that Cervantes, in general, expresses the triumph of reality against the exaggerated ideals. This same opinion for example is found also in R. Renier's comparative study between Ariosto and Cervantes. "Por lo demas quien condujo el naturalismo hasta sus ultimas consecuencias, y lo verifico conscientemente, fue Cervantes. Toda la parodia contenida en el Quijote estriba en el contraste entre la vida caballeresca que el protagonista vive y la vida real,

<sup>3</sup>Settembrini L. Lezioni di letteratura italiana. V. II. p.119.

humana del siglo; ordenado todo, con un arte admirable, de manera que resulte, por una parte el lado ridiculo della vida fantastica, y por otra el lado serio y apetecible de la vida reale!"<sup>4</sup> The author goes on by saying that Cervantes wanted to represent in his "Don Quijote" the sound and constructive parody of Chivalry. He sees in him a twofold purpose: one literary and the other, the more profound, involves the vices and weakness of mankind. It is true that the satire is directed against the bad books of chivalry but in the course of its development it involves also the habits and the beliefs of Chivalry. "No es que que contraponga," the Italian critic continues, "es que pone en contraste el sentimiento humano con el sentimentu caballeresco."<sup>5</sup> Then, further on, commenting the irony of Cervantes he distinguishes in it three purposes. The first and the most significant is to combat the degenerated literature of chivalry. The second purpose, a secondary one, is directed against the chivalry as a literary genre, while the third still of less importance, is both a civilian and literary satire combined. Thus the work of Cervantes in Renier's opinion must not be considered only as destructive but also and more so as highly constructive both in regard to the conception of life and of

<sup>4</sup>Renier R. Ariosto e Cervantes. Firenze. 1878. Taken from D. L. Rius. Bibliografia Critica de C. Villanueva y Geltrin. 1904. T. III, p. 351.

<sup>5</sup>L. Rius, op. cit. p. 352.

literature. The former is accomplished by means of the evolution of the 'costumbres,' and the latter by the genius of the author. As to the humour of "Don Quijote" this Italian author says that "La comica singular eficacia de toda la obra nace de la desproporcion entre la realidad y el mundo imaginario en que el heroe vive!"<sup>6</sup> That contrast which lasts until the end makes possible the understanding of what F. De Sanctis said of Cervantes in his comparing him with Ariosto. "L'Ariosto," he says, "non ha intenzione di mettere in gioco la cavalleria, come fece il Cervantes. In questo mondo fanciullesco dell'immaginazione (Ariosto) dove si rivela un così alto sentimento dell'arte e insieme la coscienza di un mondo adulto e illuminato, si dissolve il Medio Evo e si genera il mondo moderno. E perché questo è fatto senza espressa intenzione, anzi con la bonomia e naturalezza di chi si sente e concepisce a quella guisa, i due mondi non sono tra loro in antitesi come nel Cervantes, ma convivono, entrano l'uno nell'altro, sono la rappresentazione artistica dell'un mondo con sopravviva l'impronta dell'altro. In questa fusione più sentita che pensata, e che fa dell'autore e della sua concezione un solo mondo armonico perfettamente compenetrato sta la verità e la perpetua giovinezza del mondo ariostesco. Al contrario il 'Don Quijote' è opera di eterna freschezza,

<sup>6</sup>L. Rius, op. cit. p. 352.

perché ivi lo spirito cavalleresco si dissolve nella immagine di una nuova società, che gli sta dirimpetto e con la sua presenza lo rende comico."<sup>7</sup>

The Spanish critic F. Icaza,<sup>8</sup> who rightly casts off the criticism made by comparisons, denies the said antithesis in Cervantes by saying: "Si el cerebro de F. De Sanctis hubiera penetrado en la obra Cervantina como ahondó en la del Ariosto la habría hallado paralela a la de Cervantes."<sup>9</sup> But it seems to me that Icaza's statement lacks the corroboration of facts. If he wants to deny the antithesis, he has to show how and when the fusion of the Medieval world with the Modern takes place. He does nothing of the kind. He simply adds that "Todo es armonia en el aparente desequilibrio; y en su antitesi vital esta el secreto de su juventud eterna."<sup>10</sup> But that expresses exactly the same opinion of De Sanctis. Thus, strange as it may seem the Spanish critic is forced to admit that which he first so ardently denied.

It seems to me that until now this very important aspect of the "Don Quijote" has not yet received a serious attention by the critics with the possible exception of

<sup>7</sup>De Sanctis, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, V.II, p.40.

<sup>8</sup>Icaza, El Quijote durante tres siglos.

<sup>9</sup>Icaza, op. cit. p. 90.

<sup>10</sup>Icaza, ibid.

Papini.<sup>11</sup> I think that a clear understanding of the true meaning of those two worlds (impersonated one - the idealistic - by Don Quijote, and the other - the realistic - by Sancho) would make us realize more all the profound beauty of "Don Quijote" and its vital artistic conception. Besides, the solution of that problem would render impossible or at least less frequent certain exaggerated interpretations.

Don Quijote, the purest, the noblest champion of every conceivable ideal, fails in his accomplishments, and, when dying, he repents for having wanted in vain the realization of his inner aspirations.<sup>12</sup>

Sancho, the coarse and vulgar peasant, during the development of the action, becomes more and more refined and so imbued with Don Quijote's ideals that the II part of the book is the romance of Sancho.<sup>13</sup> And not only that, but he, Sancho, - mirabile dictu - is the one who cheers up the depressed champion of the knights errant.<sup>14</sup>

These are the plain facts which even the mind of the most superficial reader cannot fail to grasp. Every one can see for himself that the character of the two protagonists is not - "tutto di unpezzo" - as it may appear at

<sup>11</sup>Papini. Stroncature, p 333-59.  
<sup>12</sup>Cervantes. D. Q. ch. 74.  
<sup>13</sup>Savi-Lopez. Cervantes, p. 91.  
<sup>14</sup>Cervantes. D. Q. ch. 74.

the first glance. Each one of them has something of the other. There is no doubt that we understand more the transformation of Sancho which is quite natural for one who lives in constant companionship with such men like Don Quijote. But we can hardly accept the almost absurd conversion of Don Quijote at the end.<sup>15</sup> His conversion at the end of the I part would have been more logical, because it is after those wonderful but unsuccessful exploits that Don Quijote should have felt the disillusion for the impossibility of asserting the triumph of his ideals in a world hostile to them.

Now why do we understand more the gradual transformation of Sancho rather than that of Don Quijote? Because the evolution of Sancho is more of our liking and in accordance to our logical way of reasoning. It is true that we are instinctively attracted more by evil than by good. But whenever our cold reasoning faculties are called to pass judgment upon others - when right and wrong are involved - then what it asserts is, very often, the true expression of truth, - provided that the perception of the truth is within the limits of man's power.

Thus it is logically satisfying ~~the fact~~ that Sancho becomes a better man, a refined one and richer in noble

<sup>15</sup>Unamunno. Comento al D. Q. This author goes to the extreme by calling Cervantes mad because of the rinsavimento of D. Q.

ideals, but it is a pitiful thing to see Don Quijote renounce to his life of great ideals and become a little like the former Sancho, and acknowledge even slightly the tremendous importance of the world of reality. But why does Cervantes make his protagonists overlap each other, thus shadowing the harmonious character of both, each of whom represents respectively those two worlds? The reason I think will easily be found if we only stop to consider those two worlds as a means and not as an end.

All the critics recognize the existence of those two worlds although there are those who think that they are in contrast<sup>16</sup> and those who say that they are in harmony.<sup>17</sup> It is hard to say which one of them is right. No one, however, can deny that any time those two worlds come in contact there is a crash after which each of them remains as it was before: only the bones of the hero pay for the consequences of that crash. Thus it would be absurd to think that the common sense of Cervantes ever attempted to fuse or to harmonize them. We know that the author was not an accomodating person. He was a fanatic in his principles.<sup>18</sup> His whole life shows that he loved the ideal and hated the real. Cervantes' interest in writing

<sup>16</sup>De Sanctis. op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>Icaza. op. cit.

<sup>18</sup>Borgese. op. cit. p. 338.

his "Don Quijote" was not that of asserting the triumph of any one of them in particular. He wanted to show - as he does by making his two protagonists undergo that original metamorphosis - the profound truth that man has to make harmonious within himself the value of those two worlds and live accordingly. It is impossible to live like Don Quijote only on ideals, - reality would not allow that, - and morally it would be too depressive to live like Sancho. Thus, Cervantes seems to say, since we cannot have an ideal world, since we cannot be either a Sancho or a Don Quijote, let us try to become each one of us the ideal man: that is possible only by being half Sancho, half Don Quijote.

Passing now to Carducci, quite often we find that his name stands up as the chief representative of the positivistic critics of Cervantes.<sup>19</sup> It is true that this great Italian poet belongs to the positivistic school of criticism, but he has not written anything so valuable to be counted among the great critics of Cervantes. He has however translated from Heine an essay on Cervantes. From that I believe is derived the exaggerated mentioning of Carducci in connection with Cervantes' criticism.

As to Gioberti's<sup>20</sup> criticism it is perhaps more of a

<sup>19</sup>Icaza. op. cit. p. 90.

<sup>20</sup>Gioberti. V. PENSIERI E GIUDIZI sulla Letteratura Italiana e Straniera.

scientific and philosophical nature. In studying Cervantes' "Don Quijote" he finds out that there the "deforme" which he defines as the "ombra del bello"<sup>21</sup> is worked out with divine mystery. "Il male," he says, "deve essere adoperato con gran misura e mitigato col bene, e da questo squisito temperamento nasce la stupenda perfezione del Chisciotte."<sup>22</sup> The author then passes on to consider the Epic Poem when it is serious and when it is not. When it is serious and it is meant to delight the imagination by means of feelings and ideas, it must have "un indirizzo" and "un fine obbiettivo". In that case, the author says, the epic writer wants to give the representation more or less complete of the cosmic type, and he wants to express also the cyclic motion through which human happenings are directed toward a unique object by the Providence and by men. The contrary is true when the poetic tale is not serious and it is meant only to arouse the ridicule which is a subjective feeling. "Il riso," he says, "che nasce da un contrapposto disarmonico e inaspettato, e il fine che suppone un concerto nei mezzi ordinati a conseguirlo, sono insieme discordi."<sup>23</sup> Thus, in Gioberti's opinion, the "Don Quijote" is the most

<sup>21</sup> Gioberti. op. cit. p. 30-31.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 312-13.

illustrious expression of this kind of poetry. The author goes on saying that "quanto più il romanzo spagnuolo è privo di finalità obbiettiva, tanto più è chiaro lo scopo propositosi dallo scrittore, il quale scopo consiste appunto nel mostrare che gli ordini cavallereschi non hanno alcun costrutto, e nel dare risalto alla loro nullità reale facendone, come oggi si dice, una caricatura."<sup>24</sup>

The discussion of this Italian critic ends with the following words, "Cervantes ritraendo la cavalleria profana nel suo scadere e facendo spiccare la nullità dei suoi effetti, la mostra come una follia compiuta e un delirio ridicolo." Apart from the intrinsic value of Gioberti's criticism for which Don Quijote is a 'poema epico burlesco', this criticism is important because it brings a new light into the dispute about the fusion of those two worlds. For Gioberti, the ridicule and the satire spring out from the crash between the various conflicting elements, a crash, however, which because of its own existence cannot admit either fusion or harmony. The great importance of that crash is shown by the fact that the moment in which that crash ends the romance also ends. Thus Don Quijote's conversion takes place because of his failure in obtaining the triumph of the world of his

<sup>24</sup> Gioberti. op. cit. p. 314.

imagination, and because of the impossibility of bringing harmony between them.

A. De Gubernatis<sup>25</sup> has written much about Cervantes. But except for a general treatment often full of great common sense, there is no particular problem which has been thoroughly studied by this author. He noticed like Renier<sup>26</sup> and D'Ovidio,<sup>27</sup> some general likeness between the personality of Ariosto and that of Cervantes as well as in the treatment of their subject. Cervantes, he says, like Ariosto, has given a large role to inns and innkeepers. Both authors were two perfect knights, and therefore they could not have in mind to ridicule the true and noble chivalry. But since they were both two great humorists "dovevano essersi accorti del grande e serio contrasto che esisteva fra la realtà e il sogno."<sup>28</sup> The atmosphere in which the two poets lived, however, was not the same. The social and political transformation which took place in Spain was very great, and Cervantes in his quality of an old hidalgo had seen too well the effects of this change. Thus he ought to be more touched by the contrast of the new times and by the bitterness of the delusions which could be

<sup>25</sup>De G. Storia Universale, VI a IX. Corso di Lezioni.

<sup>26</sup>op. cit. Lezione XX.

<sup>27</sup>op. cit.

<sup>28</sup>De. G. Lezione cit.

met by the dreamers of his epoch, among whom he was perhaps the most sublime. For that reason we have in Cervantes, more than in Ariosto, a greater power of representation of the hero. Thus we find in "Don Quijote" as De Gubernatis says "La maggiore intensità e profondità del suo proposito nel fermare il suo eroe senza mai perderlo di vista, dovendo tutti i suoi detti, tutti i suoi gesti, tutti i suoi fatti corrispondere a quella visione dietro la quale il buon cavaliere correva con una povera lancia che aveva già perduto sul fine del Cinquecento in Spagna ogni virtù."<sup>29</sup> For this reason Cervantes' humor is not so varied; it is rather limited and centered around the same purpose. But at the same time the internal satisfaction which the dreamer feels in pursuing incessantly and hopefully his ideal without annihilating his own dream, satisfied only with melancholical reflexions, is the source of a rare beauty which has not its equal, and which as yet has not been surpassed. The author believes in the moral superiority of "Don Quijote" over "Orlando Furioso" because Cervantes' culture was all romantic and modern, and also because "non scrivendo in una corte, ma nella solitudine per isfogo dell'animo suo contrastato dalla sventura, ma pur sempre sereno, non inquinò in alcun modo la parte intrinseca dell'opera

<sup>29</sup>De Gubernatis, op. cit. Dezione XX.

d'arte."<sup>30</sup> Thus the progressive development of the action "non ha pari per omogeneità di contorno."<sup>31</sup> This author, too, is not pleased by the way the "Don Quijote" ends. He would like to cut off the last chapter of the second part because he thinks that the only way out for Cervantes would have been to make his hero aware of having dreamed. For De Gubernatis the transformation of Sancho is quite natural and in accordance to his accommodating nature. He justifies Sancho's following Don Quijote first because of his personal attachment to the hidalgo, and secondly because of his hopes of being highly recompensed even though at times he is really affected by the exalted ideals of his master. He thinks that Cervantes, by putting Sancho beside Don Quijote has clearly shown that between the two extremes lies the truth. "Don Quijote" is based on such deep observation of human nature that the contemporaries of Cervantes were justified in thinking as real the progressive representation of those two wonderful types. This Italian critic then says that a great difference exists between the first and the second part. The second part is less vivacious, less comic, but "più ricca d'accidenti, d'osservazioni e di forza critica,"<sup>32</sup> while the first part on the contrary is:

<sup>30</sup>De Gubernatis, op. cit. Lezione XX.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

"più fresca, più ispirata e opera veramente d'un genio creatore."<sup>33</sup>

In a short but sparkling essay Nencioni<sup>34</sup> attacks violently all those critics who comment Cervantes "come un capitolo dell'apocalisse."<sup>35</sup> "Vogliono trovarvi di tutto," he says, "perfino le idee più rivoluzionarie dell'età moderna."<sup>36</sup> "Il metodo e il linguaggio di questa critica," he continues, "aspettano il loro Molière, e prima o dopo l'avranno."<sup>37</sup>

Nencioni then goes on saying that Shakespeare, Ariosto and Cervantes are the greatest poets who gave forth the foremost description of three different cases of madness. Of course each description is different from the other because the temperament of each author is different and also because the genre in which they wrote is different. In one thing, however, the three poets are alike, that is "nella verità scientifica della rappresentazione ideale."<sup>38</sup>

Don Quijote is affected by a persistent monomania. Cervantes has wonderfully described the various phases

<sup>33</sup>De Gubernatis. op. cit. Lezione XX.

<sup>34</sup>Nencioni. Le Tre Pazzie.

<sup>35</sup>De Lollis, op. cit. This author interprets Cervantes as if he were the greatest forerunner of the social and political rebel of today.

<sup>36</sup>Nencioni, op. cit.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

of that pathological condition in all its details. Nothing is left unsaid. The origin, the allucinations, the insensibility, the exaltation, the melancholy, the feverish sadness, the end of the process when the recovery takes place: everything is described with the utmost care.

Thus we see Don Quijote's mind in a continuous state either of allucinations or of clear reasoning. At times his allucinations spurn him to accomplish epic, heroical deeds, as when he goes before the cage of the lions.<sup>39</sup> At times he shows a wisdom unparalleled, as when he gives advice to Sancho for the government of the island. The author in his comment of the madness remarks that Don Quijote is mad only because of the anacronism of his ideas and not for those ideas considered in themselves. As to the humorism, he says that "nel contrasto tra l'ideale di Don Quijote e la realtà della vita quotidiana, fra il suo lirismo e i proverbi contadineschi di Sancho Panza- contrasto espresso senza ire o rancori, senza declamazioni e senza fiele satirico, ma col benigno sorriso del filosofo e dell'artista- consiste l'humour genuino e insuperato del Don Quijote."<sup>40</sup> The daring of Don Quijote and the terrors of Sancho, he adds, amuse us because

<sup>39</sup>Cervantes. p.II. ch. 17.

Don Quixote de la Mancha. p. II. ch. 17. Edicion publicado por Rodolfo Schevill y Odolfo Bonillo, Madrid 1928.

<sup>40</sup>Nencioni. op. cit.

of their disproportion with real circumstances. When the author passes to look at the general merits of Cervantes' masterpiece, his admiration is unlimited. He admires the greatest and most original humour, the wonderful psychological analysis and the stupendous portrait of the various exploits of the monomaniac. With the following words the author concludes his study:

"È ammirabile in questo libro veramente meraviglioso una esuberante ricchezza di felice immaginazione, il riso fine, quasi galante del gentiluomo spagnuolo, e in ogni pagina il profondo sentimento del Rinascimento."<sup>41</sup>

As to D'Ovidio<sup>42</sup> the superficiality of his study is too evident both for its method and for the elements taken under consideration. The comparison he makes between "Don Quijote" and "I Promessi Sposi" as well as that between Ariosto and Cervantes, whether done by contrast or by similitude is always too narrow in its purpose. His mentioning of Ariosto is made in such general terms that what he says cannot be called real criticism. His praises for the form and the content of "Don Quijote" is abundant but vague so that it is impossible to give an exact account of its saying.

<sup>41</sup>Nencioni. op. cit.

<sup>42</sup>F. D'Ovidio & L. Sailer "Discussioni Manzoniiane." Città di Castello. S. Lapi Tipografo Editore. 1888.

In this work D'Ovidio points out that the library of D. Ferrante reminds one of that of Don Quijote. Don Ferrante and Don Quijote are two monomaniacs. He finds the conversation of D. Abbondio and Perpetua quite identical to that of Don Quijote and Sancho. The author goes on saying that the character of Don Ferrante is imitated from Cervantes, as from Cervantes is also imitated the make-believe of transcribing his *Promessi Sposi* from a manuscript of the 17th century. In D'Ovidio's opinion D. Abbondio and Don Quijote are imbued with opposite sentiments, but "l'eccesso del sentimento dominante in loro crea in tutti e due effetti consimili, storture cioè di ragionamenti."<sup>43</sup> The author concludes the comparison by saying that "D. Abbondio is the hero of fright, while Don Quijote is the hero of courage."<sup>44</sup>

The lack of a serious and profound analysis in this work is revealed when D. Ovidio attempts to look under the surface of the "Don Quijote." "Cervantes," he says, "ha un vero protagonista, l'italiano no; l'uno è la cura satirica d'una malattia morale che ha radice nel carattere stesso della nazione/e negli avanzi dei costumi medievali: l'altro è una larga rappresentazione or satirica or tragica di tutta o quasi tutta la società civile di un

<sup>43</sup>D'Ovidio. op. cit. p. 59.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. p. 60.

tempo e di un paese, e, nello sfondo la rappresentazione di tutta o quasi tutta la vita umana."<sup>45</sup>

Comparisons are always misleading, especially in the case of those two masterpieces. Each one of those works represents in its entirety a unique vision of life and mankind, based on the temperamental characteristics of each author so different from the other. Obviously what D'Ovidio says of Manzoni is true. But to say that in Cervantes is not found "la rappresentazione di tutta o quasi tutta la vita umana" is a little too much. Surely, in the "Promessi Sposi" the universal appeal is more evident because there are many protagonists, and also because each one of them plays an important role. Thus for that reason alone, the treatment of mankind seems to be richer and more complete. But if the author, however, would have considered with more reflection the complex nature of Cervantes' two protagonists impersonating both the most important problems of life - such as the problem of reality and truth studied in its relations with pure idealism - he would have seen then that the canvas of "Don Quijote" is as large as life itself. Moreover, although it is true that the background of "Don Quijote" is Spain and its people, this Italian critic could have

<sup>45</sup>D'Ovidio. op. cit. p. 62-63.

noticed very easily that under the surface of that Hispanism beats the heart of Mankind.<sup>46</sup> He could have seen then how and why the Spanish author has imbued his creation with universal significance - a fact easily proved by its everlasting popularity in all times and among all kind of peoples.

Another point in which D'Ovidio's opinion is not very well corroborated by facts is there where he talks of the second part of the "Don Quijote" asserting that it "procede languidamente."<sup>47</sup> The reason he gives for that lack of vivacity is first because it was written ten years later, and second because "La vera sostanza dell'opera consiste nel curioso cozzo che fa la monomania vanitosa e pur magnanima del cavaliere, col senno materialista e volgare, ma sano e retto dello scudiero Sancho, e nell'atteggiamento diverso che quelle due diverse menti prendono avanti alla realtà o alla idealità. Sicché dopo un certo numero di fatti, di avventure, di discorsi in cui quel cozzo s'è ripetuto, e quella monomania s'è mostrata in varie forme, la novità comincia a mancare, le scene nuove cominciano a parer troppo copia delle

<sup>46</sup>Borgese in op. cit. p. 329, says in this regard that "D. Q. è il cuore della Spagna anzi dell'uman genere."

<sup>47</sup>D'Ovidio. op. cit. p.63.

anteriori e un certo languore si avverte sin dalla metà della parte prima."<sup>48</sup> That is true only for those who insist on seeing at any cost Don Quijote as the only protagonist throughout. But a deeper inquiry into the work will show that Sancho is the real protagonist of the second part which reveals a Sancho entirely transformed and still transforming himself into such a complex character that one might say that the new Sancho - if the two heroes were to start all over again - would be another Don Quijote.<sup>49</sup> Besides, this transformation takes place at the expense of Don Quijote who persists in following in vain his dreams without ever losing his uniformity in performing his exploits. And as long as Don Quijote is the protagonist, in his defeats he appears as a comical figure, but as soon as Sancho becomes himself the leading character, those defeats and all those accidents make of Don Quijote a grotesque figure.<sup>50</sup> Thus when D'Ovidio criticizes Cervantes for mingling "al comico più fine un comico di bassa lega."<sup>51</sup> he should be more discriminating in his assertions by making a necessary distinction between a lower kind of comic and the grotesque which in

<sup>48</sup>D'Ovidio. op. cit. p. 63.

<sup>49</sup>Most of the critics - among whom Savi -Lopez (see op.cit.) - agree that the second part is the romance of Sancho. Papini - see op. cit. - goes a step farther and says that Sancho is not an Anti-Don Quijote but rather an Ultra-Don Quijote.

<sup>50</sup>Savi-Lopez in op. cit. says that the grotesque element predominates in the second part, and he adds that it would be interesting to study when the comic ends and

<sup>51</sup>D'Ovidio. op. cit. p. 63. (the grotesque start.

Gori's<sup>52</sup> opinion is the most essential element of any real work of art.

After a rapid and concise synthesis of Cervantes' biography the Italian critic, Carol Segrè, stresses the great love of the Spaniard for his country, and his heroic exploits as a soldier. His war-like spirit, his courage, his noble character, he says, are felt throughout his "Don Quijote." "L'insecchito Cavaliere," he continues, "sotto le follie e le ingenuità del quale è solito con singolare fantasia di raffigurare le sue piú nobili inclinazioni, riproduce anche a questo riguardo le virtù di Cervantes."<sup>53</sup>

But the purpose of the author in writing this essay was, is, it seems, to show the great and unselfish love of Cervantes not only for his country and for his fellow citizens but also for all Mankind. That love, he thinks, appears not only in Cervantes the soldier and the writer, but also and more vividly in Cervantes the man.

Segrè goes on saying that it is well ascertained now that after the publication of "Don Quijote" books of Chivalry were no longer written, and that the works of Chivalry already existing had lost at once their reputation.

<sup>52</sup>Gori, G. Il Grottesco.

<sup>53</sup>Segrè, C. "Cervantes Soldato" p. 33.

Thus "la vittoria di Don Quijote segna il conseguimento di un fine altamente morale e civile."<sup>54</sup> The author then adds that although very little is known about Cervantes' life, that ~~it~~ is enough to reveal to us "un animo buono, tranquillo, incapace di vendetta."<sup>55</sup> "Tra la punta canzonatrice e la infinita bonarietà che s'incontrano l'una coll'altra in ogni pagina del suo libro, riluce la virtù grande della pazienza: quella pazienza maschia e onesta, che deriva dalla indulgente superiorità con cui si considerano le passioni e le vanità degli uomini."<sup>56</sup> Segrè explains that by saying that the experience acquired by Cervantes in his endless, dangerous and painful peregrinations, and above all the sight of so much suffering, of so many vices and of so many virtues "hanno dato un carattere speciale o meglio il carattere dominante al 'Don Quijote!'"<sup>57</sup> One feels, indeed, throughout the book the presence of a man who has known life in its entirety, with all its miseries and with all its splendors. "Si sente per quelle pagine," this Italian critic continues, "l'uomo che ha assistito agli orrori della guerra, che ha nella prigioni udito i lamenti degli oppressi, nelle

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Segrè. op. cit. p. 44.

55 Ibid. p. 36.

56 Ibid. - That indirectly contradicts Boregese-see op. cit. - who finds in D. Q. a rich abundance of 'bile cèr-  
vantina.

57 Ibid. p. 47.

ricche sale le grida d'esultanza degli oppressori, che ha toccato gli abissi squallidi della povertà, mentre al suo sguardo si svolgevano gli splendori d'un lusso insultante, che ha veduto l'indegno sollevato e il giusto umiliato; e che innanzi a tutta questa storia di piante e di sventura, in cui s'è trovato più attore che spettatore, innanzi a questo quadro di soprusi, d'iniquità, è stato invaso da una compassione grande per le miserie di quaggiù, da un'indulgenza grande per gli errori di chi soffre. Non v'è forse un libro in cui vibri più sincero l'amore dell'uomo."<sup>58</sup> Thus the result of that love of Cervantes for Mankind was the creation of his immortal "Don Quijote," whose motto is to protect the weak and to crush the tyrant. His efforts are always and exclusively directed toward bringing advantage to others. His words are kind, sincere and always spurning people to do good things, His actions might seem a little queer at times, but "La follia nulla toglie alla forza del suo parlare e al merito dei suoi atti"...."anzi inonda un vigor nuovo speciale a tutta la sua condotta, gitta un colorito più brillante sui mali, sui torti, di cui ei si presenta illuso riparatore."<sup>59</sup>

This strongly felt humanitarian ideal of Cervantes, indeed, appears more clearly pointed out in that part of

<sup>58</sup> Segrè. op. cit. p. 47.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 50.

the book where Don Quijote mentions the fabulous existence of the Golden Age of Mankind.<sup>60</sup> "C'è," says Segre, "un non so che di commovente in questo folle, che nelle ingenue volate del suo pensiero si ricostruisce tutta una società retta dall'amore, animata dalla fratellanza, e basata sull'abolizione del tuo e del mio."<sup>61</sup> All that is so forcibly expressed in the wonderful book of the great Spaniard, that Segre does not hesitate in saying that "Cervantes nella purezza della sua pietà vedeva, come avevano veduto i primi fedeli, nella uguaglianza, nella comunione perfetta il conseguimento della felicità sociale."<sup>62</sup>

Segre concludes his essay with the following appropriate words: "Quest'aura d'amore che alita tra mezzo le pagine del 'Don Quijote' gl'infonde un carattere di modernità, lo rende non solo un libro del presente, ma forse un libro del futuro."<sup>63</sup> Thus as I said before, Cervantes' canvas is as large as life itself, and all that Segre has written about "Don Quijote" is unquestionably true, so true that C. De Lollis<sup>64</sup> - another Italian critic - has found in it almost those very same things. But Lollis'

<sup>60</sup>Cervantes. D. Qu. part I, ch. 74.

<sup>61</sup>Segre. op. cit. p. 52.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>C. De Lollis: Cervantes Reazionaria.

conclusion, however, is quite different. For him Cervantes is a reactionary, the forerunner of the most daring reformers whose ideals in order to be put into practice must be imposed by force. The contrary is true for Segre, because he thinks that Cervantes' intention was simply that of pointing out the rightful way of living by means only of persuasion and examples.

## II

## MODERN CRITICS

Since these writers represent, among the modern critics who wrote on Cervantes, the best names among the Italian literary men of today, it is natural that their work on the subject should be the last word on the right interpretation of "Don Quijote." Thus it seems quite appropriate to put them in a category apart. And the curious fact about those critics is that three of them have each of them an indirect essay on the "Don Quijote" of Cervantes. Each one of those three critics, indeed, - Tilgher, Papini and Borgese - review Unamunno's "Comment on 'Don Quijote!'" Furthermore Borgese in the same essay on Unamunno has dedicated almost one half of his work on Savi-Lopez who is the fourth writer of the group and one of the best acknowledged students of Cervantes.

Thus from these four Italian critics we should expect the most interesting and the most original piece of critical work, because I think that there is no better and more stirring opportunity for a writer to reveal his mind on any subject matter than when he criticizes another work written on the same subject.

Adriano Tilgher. It takes a philosopher like Tilgher to review Unamunno's "Comment of 'Don Quijote!'" - with

great warmth, and to expound upon its thought as if he were in agreement with him. But after having read Tilgher's work it seems almost impossible to say what he thinks of Cervantes' "Don Quijote." Perhaps it is true what he says of himself that he is not a student of Cervantes,<sup>1</sup> because it seems to me that the only thing the author is interested in is to look at Unamunno's work as if it were a proposition of Logic whose terms he can interchange at will thus showing that any arrangement is false but the one he has in mind.

The general impression which Tilgher arouses in the reader is that Cervantes' "Don Quijote" must be read without any attempt to go beyond what is evident to everybody. "Let us - Tilgher seems to say - "read 'Don Quijote' let us enjoy it and admire it, but do not let our fancy be stirred nor our heart excited." This method of criticism is new even for the author himself who for the first time in his literary career appears to be the advocator of a very humble kind of critical appreciation. The only good thing the author does in his study is to expound wonderfully and thoroughly Unamunno's meaning of his Comment.

"Se vogliamo comprendere il significato intimo di questo elogio della follia - thus Tilgher defines the work in question - , applichiamo ad Unamunno il procedimento

<sup>1</sup>Tilgher. Voci del Tempo. p. 75.

stesso da lui applicato a Cervantes: distinguiamo ciò che Don Quijote fu per sè dinanzi alla sua coscienza stessa, da ciò che è per Unamunno. Don Quijote crede alla realtà delle visioni che gli passano per la mente: il mondo di allucinazioni nel quale vive lo ha, sí, creato lui, ma non sa di averlo creato, esso ha per lui tanta consistenza obbiettiva quanta ne ha per Sancho il mondo nel quale questi si muove. E dato il mondo nel quale Don Quijote crede di vivere le sue azioni sono perfettamente coerenti e intonate alle leggi di quel mondo. Don Quijote non ha alcuna coscienza di essere venuto a negare un mondo ed a crearne sulle rovine di esso uno nuovo di zecca. Ma Unamunno sa che Don Quijote è pazzo, che il mondo nel quale vive non ha realtà fuori della sua immaginazione, e, nondimeno lo esalta e glorifica. Perché? Per l'ideale di bontà che splende alla mente del Cavaliere e lo muove pel mondo in cerca di torti da riparare e d'ingiustizie da raddrizzare? No. Unamunno ammira e invidia Don Quijote perché, nato in un mondo che rinserrava in confini estremamente angusti la sua volontà di vivere e di agire, il Cavaliere seppe colla violenza dell'entusiasmo rovesciare tutti gli argini che quel mondo gli alzava contro e crearsene un altro tutto di sua fattura, in cui la sua volontà di agire potesse liberamente traboccare."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Tilgher. op. cit. p. 76-77.

Thus it is evident that the author admits that Don Quijote lives in perfect coherence with the world he has created, but he resents the facts that he does not know that he himself has created that world. He believes that the objective consistency of Don Quijote's world is as powerful as that of Sancho. He believes that Don Quijote's aim is to deny a world, and to create a new one on the ruins of the former, but he resents that Don Quijote in his state of insanity ignores all that. This Italian critic sees the ideal of goodness which shines in the mind of Don Quijote and moves him through the world in search of "torti da riparare e ingiustizie da raddrizzare;"<sup>3</sup> and yet he says that the hero has "èpiani da attuare, nè sistemi sociali da realizzare."<sup>4</sup> It seems to me that Tilgher's assertion that the hero goes through the world in search of "torti da riparare e ingiustizie da raddrizzare"<sup>5</sup> implicitly admits as being true that which he afterwards denies. Where could he, indeed, find more appropriate words to point out a more complete plan in which all the social systems of this world would be included? Nowhere, I am sure. If Tilgher would stop to consider for a moment the rich and fruitful embodiment

<sup>3</sup>Tilgher. op. cit. p. 76-77.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

implied in that ideal of goodness which he does not fail to see in the hero, he would certainly come to the conclusion that the depth of that ideal is too great to be circumscribed within the narrow limits of a plan whatsoever. There is no doubt that its practical realization is so hard to obtain that Tilgher could even be justified in the absurdity of that ideal of goodness which is according to his own interpretation. "l'ansia perpetuamente insoddisfatta e perpetuamente rinascente, e il lavoro incessante, e l'ebbrezza dell'ascendere verso una meta che piú si sale verso di lei, e piú dilegua nelle profondità dei cieli."<sup>6</sup> It is absurd to look for any particular plan in this universal one. If this critic were not a Don Abbondio but a father Cristoforo or a Federico Borromeo, he would say to himself what he says of Unamunno whom he rebukes because the latter elevates Don Quijote, the hero, not because he brings happiness among men - and this is what Tilgher would have expected from Cervantes - but "per volere, per agire, per sconvolgere come una tempesta le acque stagnanti del mondo che lo circonda, per destare nelle moltitudini dei Sancho - (this is the hardest thing for Tilgher to tolerate<sup>7</sup>) - ansie generose, inquietudini perpetue, nostalgie indefinite."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Tilgher. op. cit. p. 77-78.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

These are the main points in the criticism of Tilgher. But to be truthful, one cannot say that the author has written a piece of literary criticism. His work is rather the answer of a philosopher to another philosopher whose thinking is the antithesis of the other. Unamunno is the rebel, with the spirit and the enthusiasm of the Modern Reformer bitterly fighting against the actual organization of Society and strongly wanting the most radical changes. Tilgher instead is the blind conservative, intolerant and afraid of the slightest change. And he goes so far in his belief that at the end of his study he says that the catastrophic tragedy of the World War was caused by the endless number of the restless Sanchos overcharged with the fire of those absurd ideals of reforms.

Thus, to conclude, we can say that both Tilgher and Unamunno find expressed in "Don Quijote" the same ideals, but whereas Unamunno, believing in those ideals, derives from them exaggerated conclusions along his personal way of thinking, Tilgher instead, rejects them because he does not attribute them with any value. In short, Tilgher is against Unamunno simply because the latter takes Cervantes too seriously while for him the latter's work is nothing more but "la favola di Don Quijote."<sup>9</sup> Thus

<sup>9</sup>Tilgher. op. cit. p. 68.

in this work this Italian critic never shows any attempt to prove whether Unamunno is wrong in his findings in themselves; he only shows amazement because the Spanish critic "con sorprendente originalità ha contrapposto la creatura al creatore, Don Quijote a Cervantes, e dove questi aveva trovato argomento di risa di beffe alle spalle del povero hidalgo della Mancha, egli scopre un motivo di glorificarlo e di proporcelo a modello."<sup>10</sup>

Papini, G.<sup>11</sup> This author, a real student of Cervantes, looks at Unamunno's work from a broader and impartial point of view. Thus although he defines it as "Il commento appassionato ad un capolavoro,"<sup>12</sup> he calls its author

<sup>10</sup> Tilgher. op. cit. p. 72. Even Papini - (op. cit. p. 337) - who certainly is not in favor of any super-interpretation of Cervantes, is forced to admit that "Se prendiamo il libro di Cervantes alla lettera ci vedremo una satira letteraria, un romanzo picaresco di prim'ordine, inframezzato di novelle, ma se da quella constatazione empirica sapremo inalzarci nei sotteranei dell'opera e trascendere magari le intenzioni dello stesso autore, scopriremo sotto quelle storie ridicole, sotto quelle barzellette ironiche e quelle assurde conversazioni, una delle più potenti versioni dell'umana tragedia."

<sup>11</sup> Papini. "Stroncature" p. 347. Says that for three years he has studied the Castilian literature.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 340.

"Il piú fortunato e profondo esegeta del 'Don Quijote.'"<sup>13</sup>  
 "Il libro di Cervantes," he adds, "come tutti i libri veramente profondi, puó essere dato ai ragazzi per farli divertire, e puó servire di testo a un filosofo per una teoria sulla vita."<sup>14</sup> As the author goes on, his opinion about it is put forth more clearly. For him "Don Quijote" is not any longer the protagonist of a novel or "la felice invenzione di un carcerato di genio. Egli appartiene, come Ulisse, come Farinata, come Amleto, come Gulliver, come Fausto, come Don Abbondio, a quella razza umana che non é descritta in nessun manuale di antropologia ma é piú viva delle altre cinque. Essi incarnano, grazie al soffio divino che vi spiró l'arte dei loro padri, un lato, un aspetto dell'umanitá."<sup>15</sup> For that reason they are eternal types, platonic ideas, the protagonists of the spirit and therefore more real "degli uomini che ci passano accanto e che hanno una scheda col loro nome nel censimento governttivo."<sup>16</sup>

It is in accordance with this broad interpretation that Papini thinks that all the various interpretations

<sup>13</sup>Papini. op. cit. p. 340.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. p. 335.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 336-7.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. p. 337.

attempted by the different critics are true "vere, si capisce, di quella verità che non può essere misurata col metro logico o dimostrata coi teoremi."<sup>17</sup> Further on he says that the artistic creation which is imbued with such a richness of life and which is so powerful "può essere infinita così come è eterna."<sup>18</sup> Thus, "ogni spirito può mettervi del suo senza sformarla."<sup>19</sup> It is for that reason therefore that Papini does not become alarmed when Unamuno thinks that "Don Quijote," "è lo spirito umano, grande soltanto nella pazzia, nell'abbandono al destino, nella ricerca della gloria e della grandezza, è nel tempo stesso il simbolo vivo della sua razza, il successore e il compagno di quegli idealisti valorosi e pugnaci, e di quei cristiani mistici e innamorati che costituirono nel passato la più vera nobiltà della Spagna."<sup>20</sup> Papini's sound and impartial criticism is clearly shown when he says that "il "Don Quijote" dell Unamuno è in questo almeno profondo: che non è monocolore, non ha un carattere solo, non impersona un'idea fissa. Egli non riduce la sua figura a uno schema unitario togliendo e tagliando il corpo che l'arte vi pose attorno,

<sup>17</sup>Papini. op. cit. p. 338.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. p. 341-2.

ma, anzi, non si contenta neppure di quel che il libro ci dà, e aggiunge invece di togliere là dove il vecchio storico tacque o non disse abbastanza."<sup>21</sup> To conclude we can say that Papini's criticism on the whole implies that Unamunno's interpretation of "Don Quijote" is not merely the result of an enthusiastic lover of that masterpiece, but also and above all, the work of a great critic.

Besides this Comment on Unamunno in which "Don Quijote" is indirectly discussed, Papini has written another essay on Cervantes in occasion of the celebration of the three-centennial celebration of his death.

There are in this short essay a few but originally expressed ideas which are not found in the works of other critics - not at least so concisely and so clearly expressed. The author accepts all the reasons brought forth by Cervantes in explaining the origin of his masterpiece, but he thinks also that "il libro ha una portata enorme che di solito i letterati non sono capaci di vedere."<sup>22</sup> He is of the opinion that Cervantes' work is not, as it appears, a mere satire in action against the fanciful exaggerations of the chivalrous literature. The true meaning of "Don Quijote" he argues, is loftier. It has "un significato artistico, e per riflesso politico."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Papini. op. cit. p. 341.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. p. 348.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. p. 350.

The truth of this assertion is corroborated by a rapid survey of the literary condition in Europe before and at the time of the appearance of "Don Quijote." There was flourishing then a Court literature, and as such it contained all the vices and faults which are always present whenever spontaneity is lacking. Art was a plaything. The writers' chief concern was to please a minority. They were expressing ideals which they did not feel, being only the slaves of literary rules and models which could not have had any place either in their mind nor in the world in which they lived in that particular time. The artificiality of that imitation, the poverty of content were felt everywhere in the literary field. In lyric poetry Petrarca was the dictator. The poetry of Chivalry had reached the peak of absurdity. In the field of tragedy and comedy Seneca and Plautus were respectively the abused models for all the writers with the exception of Machiavelli and Aretino. The conditions of the Novel were still worse. "Le novelle," says Papini, "erano destinate alla ricca borghesia e alla plebe inguantata delle Corti che vi leggevano e v'imparavano le più graziose porcherie amoroze, e il romanzo vero e proprio, il romanzo moderno, il romanzo di anime e di costumi, non esisteva che in germe presso qualche novelliere italiano e qualche

picaresco spagnuolo."<sup>24</sup> With "Don Quijote" the plebeian realism was put forth against the false and disappearing idealism of the higher classes, whose definitive defeat was brought about only three centuries later. "Il 'Don Quijote,'" says Papini, "è il primo capolavoro della reazione contro l'eleganza, la mondanità, la futilità, l'irrealità, la schifiltosità dei letterati umanisti e all'antica, i quali, per farsi perdonare l'uso delle lingue volgari, troppo spesso scrivevano cose che non sentivano in una lingua che non parlavano."<sup>25</sup> Thus with "Don Quijote" the most sincere and sound naturalism established itself in the world of literature. The people, all the real people, adds Papini, is the true protagonist of that book. It is "Il libro del terzo stato."<sup>26</sup> Sancho comes from the people. From the people are also shepherds and muleteers who are Don Quijote's best listeners. Even Don Quijote, although a nobleman, is too close to the people more than one might think at first. He is from the county where the real people lives, and he is as poor as the people whom he loves and with whom he comes in contact.

Another aspect which Papini treats well is in regard to the meaning of the two chief characters. "Non è più tempo, he says, di credere servilmente e ciecamente a

<sup>24</sup> Papini. op.cit.p. 350.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 351.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

quella vecchia interpretazione che fa di Don Quijote e di Sancho, dello striminzito cavaliere e del cicciuto scudiero, una delle forme più celebri del contrasto fra lo spirito e la carne, fra l'anima e la materia, tra l'idealismo e il sensualismo!"<sup>27</sup> Don Quijote is not - Papini thinks - the classic type of the spiritualist who pursues only the shadow of his dreams. If it were so, he would stay home and read books. While even at the height of his madness the Hidalgo is never satisfied with leisurely following his visions in the quietness of his room, but "vuole fermamente che i suoi desideri si convertano in azioni concrete, che le sue immaginazioni diventino realtà."<sup>28</sup> He is above all a practical man, a man tired of simply enjoying in rapture the ideals of justice found in the mysticism of the Chivalry. He wants that justice and love "regnino davvero sulla terra, anche a costo di rimetterci la pelle."<sup>29</sup> He is not a mere dreamer, "ma un corpo e una volontà al comando delle sue visioni e dei suoi sogni."<sup>30</sup> It is true that in the midst of the action very often his judgments are mistaken, but "si tratta di errori della sensibilità riscaldata dall'

<sup>27</sup>Papini. op. cit. p. 353. S. Lopez in op. cit. points out the same opinion but he does not give any explanation.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. p. 354.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

entusiasmo e non già di prete fantasmagorie."<sup>31</sup> He mistakes a reality for another, but he wants always "muoversi in mezzo alla realtà, e questi errori se fanno vergogna al suo giudizio non pregiudicano la sua buona volontà di uomo d'azione."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, those partial mistakes of judgment are not so ridiculous, because after all to go against a windmill is not less dangerous than to go against real giants. Don Quijote therefore is not a symbol of the pure spirit because "egli," thus Papini concludes, "è un uomo di giudizio che viaggia coi suoi bravi danari in tasca - (that is not true, see C., D. Q. p. I, ch. 3.) - che si contenta di pane e cacio quando non c'è altro ma che mangia volentieri del buono quando ne trova e che na tra i suoi fini lontani anche quelli non molto idealisti d'impadronirsi di qualche isola."<sup>33</sup>

As to Sancho, it is not true that he represents "il solo corpo, la vile materia."<sup>34</sup> Sancho is the **worthy** servant and friend of Don Quijote to whom he resembles more than it might seem at first to the superficial reader. A man who leaves the security of his home, Papini says, and all his things to be the faithful follower of a recognized madman, at first for the certainty of a salary,

<sup>31</sup> Papini op. cit. p. 354.

<sup>32</sup> Papini. op. cit. p. 354.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 355.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

but afterwards with the hope of acquiring honors and power "non   uno che si attenga soltanto al particolare e alla terra."<sup>35</sup> And since willingly he goes through all those hardships, we must conclude that he is not "lo scettico che bada soltanto alla realt  dei sensi e alle regole del senso commune."<sup>36</sup> This Italian critic goes on saying that to have faith in a madman one must be somewhat of a madman himself. And it cannot be said, as some critics might infer, that Sancho is a fool because in the unrolling of events he reveals a greater and greater power of intelligence together with an amazing cleverness of judgment. Thus Sancho himself is in a lesser degree "donchisciottesco"<sup>37</sup> and therefore "i due eroi invece di contrapporsi, sono uniti dall'amore reciproco e dalla fede commune."<sup>38</sup>

It is quite evident therefore, that the opposite of Don Quijote, the real anti-Don Quijote, is not Sancho but another, the bachelor Sansone Carrasco, to whom the commentators of Cervantes have not as yet given much consideration. This character is surely the prototype of the half wise man, of the man mediocre and pitiful, not entirely ignorant nor entirely enlightened like Don Quijote.

<sup>35</sup>Papini. op. cit. p. 355.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. p. 356.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

In his pedantic love for the common wisdom he wants by all means "debellare e smascherare la pazzia di Don Quijote. Egli non ha ne la fede del carbonaio nè la fede del santo, non conosce che il buon senso."<sup>39</sup> And to bring Don Quijote within the limits of the common sense he employes every means. "Sansone Carrasco," Papini concludes, "simbolo sempre vivo della piccola borghesia mezzo istruita e nemica di ogni arditezza, è il vero contrapposto, è il vero assassino dell'anima e del corpo di Don Quijote....e tutti i pazzi, tutti gli idealisti, tutti gli eroi tutti i martiri del mondo debbono esecrare nel nome di Sansone Carrasco quelli che rizzano i cancelli della prudenza contro i voli del sogno e del genio."<sup>40</sup>

Borgese, G. A. This author, like Papini, has written his essay as a review of Unamunno's work. After having read Borgese and Papini one finds quite natural any interpretation of Cervantes no matter how fantastic it might be. Why indeed, should one wonder at those critics for interpreting "Don Quijote" differently, when both - in spite of being contemporary of the Spanish critic - can reach a different conclusion in the criticism of Unamunno?

For Papini "Il Don Quijote dell'unamunno, è in questo

<sup>39</sup>Papini. op. cit. p. 356.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. p. 357.

almeno profondo: che non   monocorde, non ha un carattere solo, non impersona un'idea fissa."<sup>41</sup> The reverse is true with Borgese who finds in Unamunno "Un'impressione nante unilateralit ." <sup>42</sup>

There is no doubt that Unamunno in his enthusiastic rapture before "Don Quijote" is led to exaggerate in his appreciations, but Borgese does not seem to be interested in discriminating the truth from those exaggerations. On the contrary, led astray by Unamunno's enthusiasm, he puts all his efforts in accentuating those exaggerations. Thus it is quite impossible to deduce the author's opinion on "Don Quijote." Here and there one finds expressed some sound critical opinions as it is when he says that in Don Quijote is advocated the ideal of love for all mankind. But he adds that it is "Umanit  in senso spagnolo, che vuol dire ostinata e furibonda sovrapposizione dell'ideale con la realt , mentre per noi italiani la suprema umanit  anzich  nel folle slancio e nell'arbitrio fantastico, consiste in una lenta e paziente compenetrazione e fusione dell'ideale con la realt , e nel considerare l'idea come il calore centrale della vita, non come un fuoco d'incendio che debba consumarla e disperderla nell'azzurro."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Papini. op. cit. p. 341.

<sup>42</sup>Borgese, G. A. Accanto al D. Q. in "Studi di letterature Moderne." Milano. Treves. 1920. p. 329.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

Further on, in this same essay, Borgese points out his own interpretation of Cervantes. But the general impression which the reader has is that both Papini and Borgese believe in an idealized interpretation of "Don Quijote" although one - Papini - accepts with indulgence Unamunno's exaggerations, while the other rejects them with veiled irony. But we feel that both of them have in their mind the same representation of "Don Quijote" which in turn would not be very different from that of Unamunno. Thus all three of them noticed that Cervantes at the same time "trasumana Don Quijote in un' atmosfera di entusiastico lirismo, e lo sberleghia coi lazzi piú crudeli."<sup>44</sup> But while for Papini as well as for Borgese this powerful trashumanation is not affected by the ridicule, and although Borgese gives to the latter a great importance, for Unamunno instead this ridicule has so little weight that he does not pay to it even the slightest attention.

Borgese thinks that in all the works of Cervantes the artistic unity is given by the peculiar atmosphere of the author's feelings: It is given by "quella sua amara e misantropica malinconia che da il tono alle Novelle come al Don Quijote. Malinconia che non é tenera, elegiaca melodiosa, ma colma d'acredine e pronta ad impeti

<sup>44</sup>Borgese. op. cit. p. 340.

aggressivi."<sup>45</sup> In his opinion the character of Don Quijote is the offspring of the tragedy of the genius of Cervantes. He thinks that a continuous excruciating dualism pervades his works. "Egli non poteva," he says, "nè rinunziare alle dolci immagini nè appagarsene.... nec tecum neq sine te vivere possum. Salendo verso l' ideale, s'accorgeva che era illusione e ne sghignazzava, scendendo verso la realtà vedeva ch'era delusione e ci s'inveleniva."<sup>46</sup> Thus because of this "Dualistico strazio, che é il dramma stesso della Fantasia,<sup>47</sup>...la protagonista perpetua dell'opera di Cervantes é la Fantasia."<sup>48</sup> From that therefore is derived the impossibility for Cervantes to harmonize those two antagonistic elements. Thus as long as the hero lives in his illusion, that is as long as the tension between dream and reality lasts, the romance also lasts. But the moment in which that heroic furor ceases to be, the Novel ends, and Don Quijote must die. "Non essendo per lui la realtà saggiamente, freddamente considerata altro che un presentimento dell'umida ombra sotterranea in cui caderà la bara."<sup>49</sup> The only atmosphere in which the hero can live is that of the "sogno realizzato."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Borgese. op. cit. p. 333.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 341.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. "

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 338.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. "

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 340.

P. Savi-Lopez. In his essay Borgese praises highly Savi-Lopez's book on Cervantes although he disagrees with him chiefly in two main things. First in considering the "Don Quijote" as a tragedy, and second in the fact that he finds a bitter satire where Savi-Lopez find only a benevolent irony.

In the "Cervantes" of Lopez we have at last a brief but complete book on Cervantes written in Italian.<sup>51</sup> This author is a critic of genius and a profound scholar. But although he is a true student of the Spanish literature, and although his name is always mentioned among the best critics of Cervantes, his criticism is never too elaborated but very plain. He never lets himself into an excessive enthusiasm, nor does he hide his thought under a vain showing of erudition. Thus in his critical survey of Cervantes works, his exposition is clear and his criticism sound because his guide is always a healthy common sense. One sees therefore in this work that he does not go in search of hidden meanings, nor does he stop in formulating any speculative hypothesis but he proceeds rapidly and straight forwardly to the point. From there the brevity of his work which to some critics appears too

<sup>51</sup> Savi-Lopez. Cervates. Napoli. Ricciardo Ricciardi Editore. 1913.

elementary.<sup>52</sup>

But there is no doubt that the author realizes and points out all the possible interpretations of "Don Quijote". He understands that it is possible to think of Don Quijote as comparable to any one of the great mystics of the Spanish people, but he adds "C'è fra loro una parentela d'anime, anche se li distingue una differenza d'obbietto e di grado nell'astrazione."<sup>53</sup> Thus he says that the most important thing is to see whether the Don Quijote of those comparisons is the same Don Quijote of Cervantes. For him there is no reason why we should see in Don Quijote more than what the author himself has repeatedly said and insisted upon. It is true that in the course of the narration the two protagonists become more and more complex, he says, but that is due only to artistic necessities. Cervantes, he thinks, is not like Lucian<sup>o</sup>, who in his satire confines himself to an hyperbolic and exaggerated caricature piling up too many untruthful details with a fervid imagination, thus giving pleasure only because he expresses himself with a clear and cool style. In reading Lucian<sup>o</sup> our sentimental participation is absent, the satire remains always a mere

<sup>52</sup>Americo Castro in 'El Pensamiento de C.' p. 8, says that the work of Savi-Lopez is "Un libro de caracter claro y elemental."

<sup>53</sup>Savi-Lopez. op. cit. p. 86.

satire. This author "cerca il suo effetto aggiungendo stravaganze a stravaganze con un racconto del tutto esteriore, senza trasportare quel suo universo fantasmagorico in un debole, doloroso cervello umano, che somigli al nostro, e se ne accenda e soffra."<sup>54</sup> With Lucian~~o~~ adds Savi-Lopez, "tutto è fittizio, tutto è fantastico. Nel Don Quijote invece tutto è umano."<sup>55</sup> Thus it is not true that we love Don Quijote because he amuses us, "lo amiamo perché ci commuove."<sup>56</sup> And it is because of this commotion of ours that we are led to see symbols and transcendental meanings which would give nothing more than a mere subjective interpretation rather than an objective one.

Another reason for those transcendental interpretations is offered by the fact that both protagonists appear to be in contrast and impersonating two opposite ideals. That is not true for Savi-Lopez. First of all, he says, it was customary in the Spanish theatre to put side by side a noble character and a lower one, an heroic figure and a comic, plebeian nature. Thus Cervantes in placing Sancho near Don Quijote followed a national tradition. Certainly Sancho is "d'un comico dissimile

<sup>54</sup>Borgese. op. cit. p. 121.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid. p. 88.

da quello del suo padrone."<sup>57</sup> But they are not two symbols in conflict, "ma due diverse nature comiche."<sup>58</sup> Both protagonists are moved "dalla forza d'un sogno."<sup>59</sup> Don Quijote aspires to the regeneration of the world with the power of his sword, while Sancho's modest aspiration is to secure a treasure and to get the governorship of some island. "Don Quijote ha il sogno eroico, Sancho ha il sogno plebeo."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, as Cervantes goes on in his narration, Sancho becomes more and more alike Don Quijote so that in the second part "è Sancho che prende il sopravvento."<sup>61</sup> Toward the end of the novel the transformation of Sancho is indeed so complete that he almost becomes an ultra-Don Quijote "fino a credere che fosse verità quell'incantamento di Dulcinea in cui egli medesimo aveva fatto da incantatore per burla."<sup>62</sup> Furthermore the comic of the two chief characters is based in part "sopra un dissidio intimo parallelo."<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Savi-Lopez. op. cit. p. 91.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 93.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. A further proof that Sancho is an ultra-Don Quijote is given by fact that Don Quijote wants to realize his chimera thrusting in his sword, while for Sancho the realization of his aspirations rests entirely in someone else, and exactly in Don Quijote, a madman!

<sup>63</sup> Savi-Lopez. op. cit. p. 94.

Don Quijote "era un cuerdo loco y un loco que tiraba a cuerdo,"<sup>64</sup> while Sancho "tiene malicias que le condenan por bellaco, y descuido que le confirman por lobo."<sup>65</sup>

In regard to those who consider Don Quijote as the mouthpiece of Cervantes, Savi-Lopez admits as a principle that there is a certain relationship between an author and his creatures. But this Italian critic warns them not to derive deductions from that exaggerated relationship.

It is true that the Odyssey-like life of Cervantes under many respects is like that of Don Quijote. But when in the second part Don Quijote ceases to be a comic figure to become the caricature of himself, that is, a grotesque type, it is absurd to insist in that likeness. "Qui dove la figura austera dell'incomparabile maniaco si stempera sotto l'azione delle burle grossolane di cui egli è vittima, qui si ha la migliore prova che Cervantes ne volle raffigurar se medesimo nel suo eroe ne farlo più o meno deliberatamente depositario d'una verità superiore!"<sup>66</sup> Cervantes, says Savi-Lopez, in his "Don Quijote" as in all his works, does not intend to formulate any higher interpretation of the world, nor to express any particular political ideal, neither religious nor moral. "Egli segue la fede dei suoi padri, rispetta l'ordine

<sup>64</sup>Cervantes "Don Quijote." ch. XXXII.

<sup>65</sup>Cervantes. Ch. XVII. Savi-Lopez. op. cit. p. 100.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid Savi-Lopez. p. 101.

costituito e le verità riconosciute".<sup>67</sup> The Spaniard is simply a realist who represents with the greatest originality a characteristic phase of the world in which he was both an actor and a spectator. He had suffered much, and hoped much in vain. He knew life in its entirety. But in spite of his bitter experiences he is always serene and indulgent. "In lui," adds Savi-Lopez, "non vi è nulla di tragico. Il suo umore sorride, non ghigna. Il suo occhio rimane quasi sempre sereno davanti al bene come davanti al male. Egli è un puro artista al quale la vita offre un nobile spettacolo da guardare piuttosto che una collezione di fatti e di sentimenti da giudicare."<sup>68</sup> No doubt there appear here and there his worries, his malincolies even his wraths, but they are always superficial commotions of his conscience in comparison with the conscious and compliant love with which he looks at life. Thus of all the various attitudes of his soul the most evident and the most profound is his benevolent smile. Certainly all that does not make of Cervantes an optimist, because he likes to show even the slightest weaknesses of life, but "la sua stessa ironia sembra guidata da un amore fraterno."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Savi-Lopez. op. cit. p. 30.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid. p. 31.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid. p. 32.

It is then with that kind of smile that Cervantes expresses the noble ideals and the false desires and passions of Mankind. And the artistic unity of his work is represented not only by the two protagonists but also and in particular by the even and pure light of this kind of humour.

Is the creation of Cervantes' genius a satire or the apotheosis of Mankind's illusions? "Folle o saggio," says Lopez, "Don Quijote   colui che sa fortemente e sdegnosamente vivere secondo la propria verit ."70 He is not like an ordinary man who meekly adapts himself to the surrounding world. But since the world in which he is born does not correspond to his inner desires, he changes with his imagination that world according to his mind. Only within himself is found the center of his life; a center which was represented by his inflexible faith in his ideals of goodness and justice. And it was because of that faith that the hero could bring about the harmony between the things outside of him, and his world. An harmony however, concludes Savi-Lopez, which was achieved not in the solitude but in the action.

<sup>70</sup>Savi-Lopez. op. cit. p. 75.

## III

## TOFFANIN

This author for the first time in the history of Cervantes,<sup>1</sup> criticism has studied and illustrated in detail a new aspect of "Don Quijote." He brings us nearer to the "genuina ispirazione del poeta" and almost more "in confidenza con Lui."<sup>2</sup> With him "la grande e semplice poesia del 'Don Quijote,'"<sup>3</sup> appears more beautiful, it acquires a richer meaning. With Toffanin's study the figure of Cervantes both as a poet and as a literary critic takes a new and undreamed value.

Wrongly, some critics - like Rabbizzani<sup>4</sup> - look at the "Don Quijote" as a product of the Renaissance thus concluding that Cervantes writes pure art, art for art's sake. But that, says Toffanin, is "un onore da risparmiare a quella sua pensosa fronte castigliana. C'è in lui qual cosa della tristezza tassesca; e c'è di, più, l'ironia superba del genio."<sup>5</sup>

It is true that Cervantes was a Spaniard, but even if he was not influenced by the Italian culture, - since the

<sup>1</sup>De Castro. op. cit. p. 28. El pensamiento de Cervantes.

<sup>2</sup>Toffanin. p. 212.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Rabbizzani, G. Bozzetti di Letteratura. Lanciano, Carabba. 1914.

<sup>5</sup>Toffanin. p. 213.

literary Renaissance in Spain took place late and with less evidence revealing itself more than anything else under the aspect of the Controriforma -, he would have felt and shown more than anything else the effects of this literary Controriforma. Thus rather than a Rinascentista, Cervantes should logically be a controriformist in literature. But in addition to that the poet was in Italy from the year 1569-1775, when the poetics of Castelvetro and Piccolomini were published, and when the great problem of History and Poetry in literature was implanted.<sup>6</sup> Cervantes, therefore, must have known and heard about the literary controversy "in cui si discuteva del poema eroico e dell'universale con quelle ridicole apologie dei personaggi illustri anzi illustratissimi a dispetto degli umili o semplicemente umani che venivano banditi nel particolare e nella storia."<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that the poet took part in that alluring polemic from which the critic was stirred and the poet inspired. The source of their theories was the same for Tasso and Cervantes and the "mondo morale tra cui si formò il C."<sup>8</sup> was the same also, for Toffanin. Both of them perhaps "ebbero gli stessi libri, udirono le stesse cose, frequentarono forse, talora, gli stessi uomini....Fra il

<sup>6</sup> Toffanin. p. 212.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 212.

Tasso e il Cervantes ci fu solo questa differenza: che dove l'uno pianse e si disperò, l'altro, genio sublime, sorrise."<sup>9</sup> We should therefore expect to see in the background of "Don Quijote" arise and take form the soul with which the author reacted before the existing Aristotelian problem. If it were not so "La diatriba portentosa tra Don Quijote e Sancho" would lack "parte del sapore satirico."<sup>10</sup> Thus Toffanin affirms and De castro<sup>11</sup> accepts that "il primo effetto degli influssi italiani sul Cervantes é il 'Don Quijote' e m'accosto sempre piú" he adds - "all'opinione che questo scompigliato e freschissimo 'Don Quijote' nacesse da un'ispirazione polemica che s'integrò con tutta la superba fantasmagoria cervantiana, ma non disparve mai."<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the second part, indeed, Cervantes puts forth the Aristotelian problem with the precision of a critic and the passion of a poet. Thus Don Quijote represents the poetry, the Universal, and Sancho is the History, the particular, while Sansone Carrasco with the wisdom of his common sense is the arbiter of that situation. "Ascoltiamo," says Toffanin, "Don Quijote e Sancho, che

<sup>9</sup>Toffanin, p. 212.

<sup>10</sup>Castro. op. cit. p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>Toffanin. p. 213.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

reduci dalle loro campagne si svelano a vicenda i loro cuori nel segreto delle consapevoli pareti domestiche, e vedremo il problema dell'Universale e quello del particolare, i diritti della poesia e quelli della Storia, le ragioni dell'ideale e quelle della realtà, diventare schiettissimo pianto umano nelle confessioni di Don Quijote, formidabile buon senso nelle pretese di Sancho: e tutte quelle pedagogherie italiche, dal Robertelli in su, ci ritornano alla mente leggere e brillanti come un raggio di luna."<sup>13</sup> Don Quijote therefore is one who wants to lift himself up from the Particular of History to the Universal of Poetry. The conclusions of the Italian controversy, by which the genius of Tasso was chained, were that a poetical character ~~w~~ould, in order to survive, live like a vampire at the expenses of the worth of his companions making them carry the load of his defects. It is for that reason then, that the hero is ready to make the greatest sacrifice and the most painful one for his good heart. He is ready to sacrifice Sancho - the history - for his sake, for poetry's sake. As a man of justice, he recognizes the iniquity of his doing,<sup>1</sup> but necessity requires it. "A entrare nel pelago della poesia con Sancho," says Toffanin, "Don Quijote sente che quello lo tirerebbe al fondo con rovina reciproca. Onde, in

<sup>13</sup>Toffanin. op. cit. p. 214.

gran segreto, si apparta col turbolento scudiero, si confessa a lui e si prova a farlo tacere, a impietosirlo e a disporlo al grande sacrificio che  , per la celebrit  di Sancho, una specie di suicidio."<sup>14</sup> All the talking is done with such a profound and human understanding that one is led to say: Don Quijote is right, and he does not defend his egotism but his ideal; Poetry.

Now at this point every one can imagine the surprise of Don Quijote in learning that the story of his enterprises was already written, without omitting the name of Sancho nor "i secretuzzi storici che quello portava con s ."<sup>15</sup> And the first thought which comes to Don Quijote's mind is an Aristotelian question, for which the author of his exploits must be either a friend or an enemy.

"Amico per ingrandirle e innalzarle sopra le pi  segnalate imprese di cavaliere errante; nemico per annichilarle e metterle al disotto dell pi  vili che fossero mai state scritte di inglorioso scudiero."<sup>16</sup> In so thinking Cervantes followed Aristotle's teaching for which in the Tragedy as well as in the Epic Poem the characters should be either better or worse than they really are according to the universal. Thus he did not even think for a moment that the author could have told the facts simply as they

<sup>14</sup> Toffanin. op. cit. p. 214.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 217.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 216.

had really happened, and "farne un'opera bella e interessante."<sup>17</sup> Still greater became the painful surprise of Don Quijote when later on he knew that the author had left nothing untold. Thus from the parodistic dialogue which is so full of pathos comes out the solution to the passionate question when Sancho says that the truth cannot be forgotten.<sup>18</sup> To that Don Quijote replies with all Aristotelian paraphernalia adding that whenever the protagonist might have his reputation spoiled by the truth about his facts, those facts should be kept silent - always provided that no harm is brought to history. . . To prove his point Don Quijote says that in good faith Aeneas was not altogether so pious as Virgil describes him, nor was Ulysses so prudent as Homer shows him.<sup>19</sup> To that the reply of Sansone Carrasco is that one thing is to write as a poet, and another to write as an historian." "The poet," he says, "may say, or sing, not as things were, but as they ought to have been; while the historian must relate them not as they ought to be but as they really are without adding or subtracting anything from the truth."<sup>20</sup>

From the discussion between the three interlocutors comes out the solution to the Aristotelian controversy and

<sup>17</sup>Toffanin. op. cit. p. 216.

<sup>18</sup>Cervantes, D. Q. ch. LV.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

the definition of the "Don Quijote" which is, in the opinion of this Italian critic "La risposta piú profonda data da un poeta, ed in poesia, al questionario aristotelico."<sup>21</sup> It shows the absurdity of those rules according to which Poetry should be the abstract expression of good and evil, of saints and heroes, thus bringing about always an exaggeration of the reality. It is "proprio la satira dell'eroico come accaparratore dell'illustre, e distruttore dell'uomo, il quale è poi esso quel tal vero oggetto della poesia."<sup>22</sup> The triumph of Sancho, therefore, more than the triumph of the particular upon the universal, represents the true and profound interpretation of both "già affiorata appena nel pensiero del Piccolomini e del Patrizi."<sup>23</sup> Toffanin goes on to say that there is no doubt that the poet must conceive "sotto specie d' eternità il particolare che vede e rappresenta, ma questo eterno (o universale) non è nella cosa ma in lui."<sup>24</sup> Thus when the poet possesses that within himself he sees and conceives it as existing in everything, in the beating of Sancho as well as in that of Don Quijote. For that reason then, the particular of the Story to become Poetry does not need to be written in verses. It can become Poetry

<sup>21</sup>Toffanin. op. cit. p. 218.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. p. 220.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. p. 219.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

even when it is written in prose and without much change in its aspect. The only thing that the poet needs, and the most essential one is that he sees it and feels it "Con occhi e cuore di poeta."<sup>25</sup> Thus "Il 'Don Quijote' è un poema di cose storiche (cioè di cose comuni) e scritto in prosa."<sup>26</sup>

If one consider for a moment the critical period in which the realization of that truth was so boldly represented, the greatness of Cervantes appears simply wonderful. Poetry then was living a poor and artificial life, incapable, almost fearful of expressing the new thought, the new conception of life. The poetry of that epoch, says Toffanin, "si isolava dall' realtà e dalla storia."<sup>27</sup> Cervantes came and with the power of his genius brought it back into reality. He gave to the poorly vegetating Poetry a new life and a new freedom. "Proprio in quella cerchia che le pareva preclusa: l'umanità di tutti i giorni, con le sue miserie e le sue gioie più comuni: e l'ideale non ne restava bandito, ma s'incarnava in essa rigoglioso e possente."<sup>28</sup>

From this study of Toffanin a new value, a new profound meaning appears to the mind of the reader of that

<sup>25</sup> Toffanin. op. cit. p. 219.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

masterpiece. And Sancho is not the negation of Poetry because he is imbued with the same powerful poetical feelings. Cervantes represents in his "Don Quijote" "l'eterno problema dell'uomo, con una interezza assoluta."<sup>29</sup> One finds expressed in "Don Quijote" the unsolvable contrast between idealism and reality, poetry and vulgarity, ending in "onesta ironia fatta di incitamento all'umiltà: il trionfo di Sancho."<sup>30</sup> That which is left to the reader is "una sfiducia nelle forze dell'idealismo puro che è religione."<sup>31</sup> Thus the hero of the poet appears to be Sancho who stands as the "segno del nostro incerto destino mortale, cui è sciocco ribellarci perché lo dobbiamo portare sulle spalle, cercando di conformare ad esso, il meglio possibile, la povera vita."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup>

Toffanin. op. cit. p. 221.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

## IV

## PIRANDELLO AND HUMORISM

"Quanto piú bella e piú nobile sarebbe la vita, piú giusto il mondo, se i propositi dell'ingegnoso gentiluomo potessero sortire il loro effetto. Don Quijote é mite, di squisiti sentimenti, prodigo e non curante di sé, tutto per gli altri. E come parla bene! Quanta franchezza e quanta generosità in ciò che dice! Egli considera il sacrificio un dovere, e tutti i suoi atti, almeno nelle intenzioni, sono meritevoli d'encomio e di gratitudine."<sup>1</sup> Thus Pirandello interprets the figure of Don Quijote, and he says that we all love the virtuous knight, and "Le sue disgrazie se da un canto ci fanno ridere, dall'altro ci commuovono profondamente."<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, for those contrasting feelings aroused in the mind of the reader that Pirandello can hardly believe that Cervantes' "Don Quijote" is a satire.

If Cervantes, he says, "voleva far dunque strazio dei libri di cavalleria, per il male effetto che essi producevano negli animi dei suoi contemporanei, l'esempio ch'egli reca con Don Quijote non é calzante. L'effetto che quei libri producono in Don Quijote non é disastroso

<sup>1</sup>Pirandello. p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

se non per lui, per il povero hidalgo. Ed   disastroso solo perch  l'idealit  cavalleresca non poteva pi  accordarsi con la realt  dei nuovi tempi."<sup>3</sup>

Pirandello like most of Cervantes' critics feels somewhat perplexed before the apparent contradiction which exists between the interpretation of "Don Quijote" and the reason - or reasons - which caused the writing of that masterpiece. He thinks that by finding out the truth about it, it will bring fourth the definition of the work and consequently the right interpretation of it.<sup>4</sup> Thus guided by this belief this critic cannot very well agree with Sainte-Beuve who says that "nei capolavori del genio umano vive nascosta una plusvalenza futura, la quale si svolge di per s  sola, indipendentemente dagli autori medesimi, come dal germe si svolgono il fiore e il frutto senza che il giardiniere abbia fatto altro se non avere zappato bene, rastrellato, inaffiato il terreno, e dato ad esso tutte quelle cure e conferito quegli elementi che meglio valessero a fecondarlo."<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt, Pirandello comments, that when a poet really succeeds in giving life to his creature, the latter "vive indipendentemente dal suo autore, tanto che noi possiamo immaginarla

<sup>3</sup>Pirandello. p. 117.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 118. See Chapter on Toffanin.

<sup>5</sup>Pirandello. p. 118.

in altre situazioni in cui l'autore non pensò di collocarla, e vederla agire secondo le intime leggi della sua propria vita, leggi che neanche l'autore avrebbe potuto violare."<sup>6</sup> But it is absurd to deduce from that that Cervantes' "Don Quijote" was the unconscious production of a genius. On the other hand "si può dire e sostenere sul serio che l'intenzione del poeta nel comporre il suo libro era solamente quella di togliere con l'arma del ridicolo ogni autorità e prestigio che avevano nel mondo e presso il volgo i libri di cavalleria, a fin di distruggerne i mali effetti, e che il poeta non si sognò mai di porre in quel suo capolavoro tutto quello che ci vediamo noi?"<sup>7</sup>

Since Pirandello's answer to the above question is nothing but his own interpretation of Cervantes as a humorist, I think it is quite appropriate to say something about it.

First of all one must not forget that Cervantes never actually did what he advocated in his preachings (this is unquestionably true in regard to his esthetic theories) and the clearest proof of this contradiction between practice and theory, is given by the fact that after the publication of the second part of "Don Quijote" in the

<sup>6</sup>Pirandello. p. 118.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. p. 119.

year 1605, - a date which should have marked the death of the books of chivalry - Cervantes spent the last years of his life in writing "Persiles y Sigismunda" which is perhaps the strangest of all the strange books of chivalry. And the most amusing thing is that he died assured that his fame would rest entirely upon that last work of his.

Furthermore, we know that Cervantes lived in a period when literature was at a critical turning point. Then Art in general and literature in particular was either a servile imitation from the great masters or the free, uncontrolled expression of the individual. The discovery of Aristotle's poetic helped in delaying the rebirth of a new literature. Toffanin has shown the outstanding importance of Cervantes both as the most representative figure of the epoch as a critic and as a poet.<sup>8</sup> But there is something more than that to be said of Cervantes as a critic. It can be affirmed, in spite of what the author himself says, that Cervantes' intention was not that of putting an end to the writing of romances of chivalry by means of the ridicule. He rather rehabilitated that literary genre in particular and art in general, by pointing out with his "Don Quijote" that art must have a purpose. Looking, indeed, at the romances of chivalry of Cervantes' time we see that they were a disordered and

<sup>8</sup>See the chapter on Toffanin, or read Toffanin, op. cit.

endless narration of strange happenings in which the unbelievable, the absurd, is the dominant element."<sup>9</sup> "It seems," Cervantes says, "that they meant to produce a chimera, a monster rather than a well proportioned figure."<sup>9</sup> . . . . "For myself, I can only say, that when I read them, as long as I do not stop to think that they are all lies and frivolities, they give me a certain amount of pleasure; but when I come to consider what they are, I fling the very best of them at the wall, and would fling it to the fire if there were one at hand."<sup>10</sup> From those words we can infer a little more than what Cervantes said and add: The books of chivalry as they were written had their time. The people had grown up, and therefore they should be nourished with better food so as to be lifted up from the ignorance in which they were kept by those absurd ingenuities. But since the ideals which had given birth to that legendary world of the fancy were always the cherished ideals of the wise man, Cervantes, a victim himself of frustrated ideals, could not even think of ridiculing them. He only wanted to give a serious appearance of reality to the representation of those ideals. Before those ideals were as buried in that legendary world, now with him it is that legendary world which is

<sup>9</sup>Cervantes. op. cit. part I, ch. 41.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. " ch. 47.

as drowned in those ideals.

The truth of what I have been saying until now can be found in Menendez y Pelayo - the greatest Spanish critic - who calls "Don Quijote" the best romance of chivalry.

"La obra de Cervantes <sup>he says</sup> no fue de antitesis, ni de seca y prosaica negación, sino de purificación y complemento.

No vino a matar un ideal sino a transfigurarle y enaltecerle; Cuanto habia de poetico, noble y <sup>hio</sup> hermoso en la caballeria, se incorporó en la obra nueva con más alto sentido.

Lo que habia de quimerico, immoral y falso, no precisamente en el ideal caballeresco sino en las degeneraciones de él, se disipó como per encanto ante la clásica serenidad y la benevola ironía del más sano y equilibrado de los ingenios del Renacimiento. Fué de este modo, el Quijote, el ultimo de los libros de cabellerias, el definitivo y perfecto, el que concentró en un foco luminoso la materia poetica difusa, a la vez que, elevando los casos de la vida familiar a la dignidad de la epopeya, dió el primero y no superado modelo de la novela realista moderna."<sup>11</sup> Thus we may conclude by adding that all the hatred of Cervantes for the romance or chivalry culminates in not following - in his work - the

<sup>11</sup>D. Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo, Estudios de Critica Literiaria, Madrid, 1927 V. IV. p. 52-53.

old fashion of his predecessors who had to repeat themselves because none of them was a genius.

The principal characteristic of Cervantes in his spirit of reform, of innovation, was the introduction of a comic element which by its predominant power gives more value and puts in a greater light those ideals which although wanted to be realized in a fantastic world, in the world of imagination, they are however wonderfully seen and felt in the crushing of that imaginary world which by force wants to replace the sensible world of reality;

Really this introduction of the comic element, and therefore the new way of treating the 'materia cavalleresca,' is not entirely new because it is found in Pulci, Ariosto, Folengo and others. In Pulci, however, the comic is an element merely episodic and parasitic. It is a comic "senza scopo metafisico."<sup>12</sup> Morgante and Margutte are simply two comic figures created by the genius of the author only for amusement. Folengo, in order of time and because there is a lot in common between Baldus and Don Quijote, can be considered the true forerunner of Cervantes in this respect. Certainly Baldus' madness is not comparable to that of Don Quijote but the causes and the starting point of their madness are the same for both. "Appunto nella stupenda efficacia di tali cagioni,"

<sup>12</sup>See Gioberti. op. cit. p. 314.

says Zumbini, "è riposta la satira della letteratura cavalleresca, ch'era il sommo fine del poeta spagnuolo. Che cosa si poteva far di peggio verso questa che il mostrar come la gente ne perdesse il senno? Ora il poeta italiano compie una satira della medesima specie. E veramente Baldo è anche lui un pazzo, ma ove se ne volesse definire in altro modo il vario e bizzarro carattere, si potrebbe sempre tirarne la stessa conseguenza contro quella specie di letteratura. O che gli effetti di tale letteratura sull'eroe di Cipada non furono altrettanto e forse più perniciosi di quelli prodotti sull'eroe della Mancha? Anzi, alla fin dei conti questo fece più male a se stesso che agli altri, dove Baldo mise sossopra il mondo, e, per giunta, l'inferno!"<sup>13</sup> Zumbini goes on to explain how the same romances of chivalry inflamed the mind of Baldo - the hero of Folengo - as well as of Don Quijote - the hero of Cervantes - When Baldo was a mere lad he performed the strangest exploits excited by those readings. He was still attending school when he happened to read those books of chivalry. Soon he burns them, breaks the head of his teacher and runs away. His only purpose now is to emulate those knights in the accomplishments of their wonderful deeds. He brings trouble not

<sup>13</sup> Zumbini "Il F. precursore del C." in Studi di Letteratura Italiana p. 165.

only to this world but even to hell.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore it should be noticed that both Folengo and Cervantes in the enumeration of the romances of chivalry, which their respective heroes had read, have in common not only the same general idea, but also many details. There is for instance the mentioning in both of Morgante.<sup>15</sup> Folengo speaks twice of Rinaldo<sup>16</sup> of whom Cervantes says that he was the knight preferred by his hero.<sup>17</sup> But still more significant is the description of the same particular state of the fancy which produced the maddening of the two heroes.<sup>18</sup> But in spite of this striking likeness between the two works, in spite of the same comic element introduced by them, the spirit which pervades them is entirely different. The Italian poet looks at life with a sceptical cinicism, while Cervantes' outlook is filled with benevolent understanding; thus the former with his remarkable caricature is simply destructive in his effects if not in his intentions, while Cervantes is always constructive both in his intentions and in his results.

Besides Folengo, Ariosto is the other great forerunner

- <sup>14</sup>Folengo. Opere, I. p. 82-3.  
<sup>15</sup>Ibid.; Cervantes D. Q. p. I, Chap. 1.  
<sup>16</sup>Folengo. Opere, I. p. 82-3.  
<sup>17</sup>Cervantes D. Q. p. I, Chap. 1.  
<sup>18</sup>Folengo *ibid*; Cervantes, *ibid*.

of Cervantes. He is, according to Gioberti,<sup>19</sup> the initiator of that humorism of which Cervantes became the absolute master. It is inevitable that the Italian critics whenever they speak of Cervantes ~~they~~ cannot help to compare him with other Italian poets. Because of the fact that the Italian literature had been always the world store-house for at least ideas and characters it is almost natural to associate any writer with the Italians. But there is in common between Ariosto and Cervantes something very valuable. Besides, it is very significant that the ~~cu-  
rate~~ lavishes his praises on Ariosto.<sup>20</sup> Cervantes was fully aware that the Italian Poet was the creator of the new poetry "ispiratrice dell'opera piú stupenda che si trovi nello stesso genere dopo il Furioso."<sup>21</sup> But no critic, outside of the Italians, has as yet attempted to explain this new poetry, or the intrinsic nature of Cervantes' humorism. Sheville, for instance, says only that "the pleasure and entertainment derived from persuing "Don Quijote" are its chief claims to immortality. For the humor and the wit of the book will constitute its eternally youthful qualities."<sup>22</sup> "It may be presumed," he adds

<sup>19</sup> Gioberti. op. cit. p. 313.

<sup>20</sup> Cervantes. D. Q. p. I. ch. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Gioberti. Pensieri e giudizi. p. 313.

<sup>22</sup> Sheville, R. "Cervantes." California Univ., 1918, p. 214.

further on, "that the best portions of 'Don Quijote's' history, notably in the first part, are those in which Cervantes emphasizes the characters, the point of view, the moral attitudes of the two protagonists towards all their experiences. In this lies the inexhaustible well-spring of Cervantes' humor which no change of time or custom has permitted to grow stale."<sup>23</sup> But rightly says the Italian critic Gori, "La satira, la beffa, lo scherno delle condizioni mentali, sentimentali, e sociali; tutto ciò non si cancella dal Don Quijote né dal Baldus né dal Pantagruele. Ma," he continues, "come in questi, così nel 'Don Quijote' essi sono elementi parassitari."<sup>24</sup> This author in his study of the Grottesco maintains that real art is that one which asserts itself in a free and uncontrolled expression of the individual "non logico, non reale, e non sensibile" but rich "in risonanze metafisiche."<sup>25</sup>

Thus according to this theory "Don Quijote's" beauty is great because exceedingly rich in metaphysical resonances. To explain in details all his meanings it would be necessary to violate the mysterious regions of Metaphysics and expound the conception of the "io puro"

<sup>23</sup> Sheville. p. 227. op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Gori. Il Grottesco. p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.,

of Gentile, for which only a Croce could be the worth anatomist of such a body of abstractions. Here I say only that Gori the futurist exhausts "fino all'assurdo" the plain theory of humorism of Gioberti. The theory of this author appears in the comparison he makes between the Epic Poem and the Poetic tale. He says that the Epic Poem when it is serious and when it wants to give enjoyment to the imagination by means of affections and ideas, must aim at an objective purpose. In that way the epic poem is going to give a representation more or less complete of the cosmic type expressing thus the cyclical motto. But, he says, "Prima condizione di ogni lavoro estetico che abbia per mira il sollazzo e la festività del lettore è il difetto di unità rigorosa intrinseca ed organica, che nasca dalla natura dei pensieri e delle operazioni e sia come dire dialettica cosmologica, storica, e in qualche modo sostanziale ed effettiva. Non un perfetto scompiglio come il caos e l'infinito degli atomisti, che essendo inapprensibile, faticherebbe indarno e cesserebbe ogni dilettazione. Ma l'ordine che si reca nell'oggetto ridicolo deve essere apparente e superficiale, non organico, non dinamico, non tale che occulti l'intrinseca contrarietà, invece di solo dissimularla, e quasi con velo trasparente coprirla."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Gioberti. Pensieri e Giudizi, etc. p. 314.

For that reason Aristophanes is lacking a serious and teleologic coordination of the events. From that distinction, therefore, appears the essential and deep contrast between the tragic and comic composition: one excludes the other. Thus, Gioberti concludes, "La forma epica più illustre di questa specie di poesia è il Chisciotte del Cervantes, lavoro di perfezione così squisita e stupenda che qualunque lode gli si porga non sovrasta per avventura al merito effettivo di esso.<sup>27</sup> E quanto più esso è privo di finalità obbiettive, tanto più è chiaro lo scopo propositosi dalle scrittore, il quale scopo consiste appunto nel mostrare che gli ordini cavallereschi non hanno alcun costrutto, e nel dare risalto alla loro nullità reale facendone come oggi si dice la caricatura, cioè la satira. L'Alcaiese, ritraendo la cavalleria profana nel suo scadere, e facendo spiccare la nullità dei suoi effetti, la mostra come una follia compiuta e un delirio ridicolo."

Going back to Pirandello now we see that he does not exclude a priori all the various interpretations of "Don Quijote," nor does he reject everything Cervantes had said in connection with his masterpiece. But this original dramatist and philosopher wants to go a little beyond the surface of things. For him who believes in the

<sup>27</sup> Gioberti. op. cit. p. 314.

"sdoppiamento" of personality, and for whom reality does not exist, at least not according to what we see and know, the appearance of things is not entirely satisfying because that is not the truth, at least not all the truth. Thus Pirandello with the most winning sense of logical reasoning, shows his originality as a critic in expounding the "vera ragione del 'Don Quijote' e quella più profonda dell'umorismo di esso."<sup>28</sup>

There is no doubt, he says, that the idea of writing the "Don Quijote" was born in the horizon of the Mancha. But the true "Don Quijote" was already born in Alcala de Henares in the year 1547. Before, he did not recognize himself, that is, he had not seen himself well as he really was. In his illusion, with his mind full of noble ideals, he believed that he was really fighting against giants, and that the helmet of Mambrino was really on his head. But there, in the dark prison of the Mancha, "egli si riconosce, egli si vede finalmente, si accorge che i giganti erano molini a vento e l'elmo di Mambrino un vil pizzo da barbiere."<sup>29</sup> There he sees himself and laughs at himself. Thus, in Pirandello's opinion, it is not the case of talking of "plus-valenza futura," which would be only the unconscious outcome of Cervantes' mind in the

<sup>28</sup>Pirandello. "h'umorisms." p. 115.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. p. 118.

moment of his artistic creation. But it was all the contrary because the author was entirely aware of what he was doing. "Pero no he podido yo contravenir la orden de naturaleza, que en ella cada cosa engendra su semejante. Y así, ¿que podía engendrar el estéril y mal cultivado ingenio mio, sino la historia de un hijo seco, avellanado, antojadizo, y lleno de pensamientos varios y nunca imaginados de otro alguno; bien como quien se engendró en una cárcel, donde toda incomodidad tiene su asiento, y donde todo triste ruido hace su habitación?"<sup>30</sup>

In those words is contained the real reason for the origin of the book, as Pirandello sees it, which reveals the soul of the poet with all his illusions as he loved them and as they went to clash against an hostile world. That work, however, does not represent either the apotheosis nor the casting down of the hero, although it seems that Cervantes does both things at the same time. Those two antagonistic aims, indeed, are both expressed with the same power of imagination, and with the same warmth of feelings. But the poet, at end of his life, certainly would not partake of either of the two aims, because, if that were the case the comic and the tragic element then - since they are in contrast - would bring about either a tragedy or a parody. But nothing of the kind happens.

<sup>30</sup>Cervantes "Don Quijote." Prologue, p. 2.

And that we have no tragedy is shown by the fact that the poet's laugh is ever present. Nor is it the case of saying that Cervantes wanted to make a parody because the laugh is so fine, so touchingly human that one feels, too near the presence of its opposite, the tragic element. Cervantes' laugh is the laugh of a real humorist, perhaps the greatest of them all. Thus the great Spaniard - like any true humorist, blends the comic and the tragic which in turn give rise to the pure comic itself, and this is accomplished by means of the rationalization. In Pirandello we have, therefore, for the first time the explanation - an attempt at least - of the real essence of Cervantes' humorism.

All the critics, the Italians included, have until now repeated themselves in noticing that in Don Quijote a comic situation arises whenever the hero wants to meet the outside world which he sees transformed according to his own imagination. Thus it is that contrast, that is, the clash between the real world and the world of his imagination which provokes our laughs. And the reason why we still love the hero, and we feel sympathy for him, is - those critics say - because each one of us has in himself a little of his soul.<sup>31</sup>

A. Graf, for instance, who is a great Italian critic,

<sup>31</sup>Savi-Lopez, Papini, Borgese, in op. cit.

in talking of Cervantes' humor is not very far from the common opinion of the other critics. But from the comparison that he makes between Don Quijote and Don Abbondio, that contrast is seen under a better and more effective point of view. "Dopo l'inarrivabile ed unico Don Quijote," he says, "divenuto oramai una specie di entità morale necessaria allo spirito umano e all'umano discorso, credo sia Don Abbondio il personaggio più profondamente umoristico dell'universa letteratura."<sup>32</sup> Don Abbondio, he adds, is the opposite of Don Quijote. Don Quijote is always, no matter what happens, in the pursuit of idealistic duties inspired by his chimera. Don Abbondio, instead, stops doing his actual, real duties, the very moment in which there appears to be the slightest sign of danger. "Don Quijote per troppo animo passa oltre il segno; Don Abbondio per manco d'animo non ci arriva."<sup>33</sup> One is so absorbed in his ideal that he loses the consciousness of reality, and the other is so absorbed by the reality of things that he has lost the power of even perceiving his ideal, moral obligations. "Ad entrambi," Graf concludes, "le cose riescono al contrario dell'intenzione, perché entrambi vivono in un mondo pel quale non son fatti e che si burla di loro."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>A. Graf. op. cit. p. 190.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

All that is true, Pirandello would say, but it is not enough. He is not satisfied by merely noticing the fact that the world makes fun of Don Quijote. Pirandello wants also and above all to know the real essence of that laughable situation; he wants to know whether that laugh is the laugh of the parodist or that of the humorist. A. Graf, for instance, does not even seem aware of "quella profonda amarezza che è come l'ombra seguace d'ogni passo, d'ogni atto ridicolo, d'ogni folle impresa di quel povero gentiluomo della Mancha."<sup>35</sup> Pirandello, instead, not only senses that, but he tries also to explain it by saying that the same feelings which inspired Cervantes followed him throughout the representation of his creature, the formation of which was made possible by his own sorrow. And if Cervantes, therefore, surrounds the hero with ridicule, he does that deliberately because "La riflessione, frutto d'amarissima esperienza, ha suggerito all'autore il sentimento del contrario, per cui riconosce il suo torto e vuole punirsi con la derisione che gli altri faranno di lui."<sup>36</sup>

For according to Pirandello's opinion it is necessary that the real humorist - if he wants to be called one - possesses a special attitude of the mind which becomes active always whenever the reflexion and conscience take

<sup>35</sup> Pirandella. op. cit. p. 118.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

the lead. This special attitude is precisely the humoristic disposition, which creates, whenever it works, "il sentimento del contrario."<sup>37</sup> With the humoristic writers the reflexion is everything. It does not hide itself, it does not remain unseen as in any other work of art; "non resta cioè una forma quasi del sentimento, quasi uno specchio in cui il sentimento si rimira, ma gli si pone innanzi da giudice, lo analizza spassionandosene, ne scompone l'immagine, e da questa analisi, dalle scomposizioni un altro sentimento sorge o spira: il sentimento del contrario."<sup>38</sup>

In Don Quijote the activity of the reflexion is not very evident because "essa, frutto della tristissima esperienza della vita, - esperienza che ha determinato la disposizione umoristica del poeta - si era già esercitata sul sentimento di lui, su quel sentimento che lo aveva armato cavaliere della fede a Lepanto."<sup>39</sup> Thus the reflexion disentangling itself from that sentiment, had placed itself against it as a judge when he was in the dark prison of the La Mancha. Consequently by analyzing that sentiment with cool bitterness, the reflexion had already aroused in the poet the sentiment of the contrary. Thus the Don Quijote is nothing more than the result of the sentiment of the contrary. It is "il sentimento del

<sup>37</sup>Pirandello. op. cit. p. 177.

<sup>38</sup>Pirandello. op. cit. p. 149.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. p. 151.

contrario oggettivato."<sup>40</sup> For Cervantes, did not represent the cause of that process but only its consequence. For that reason "Il sentimento del contrario spira attraverso la comicità della rappresentazione, è questa comicità è frutto del sentimento del contrario generato nel poeta dalla speciale attività della riflessione sul primo sentimento tenuto nascosto."<sup>41</sup> Thus Cervantes' humorism esthetically and psychologically can be considered "come un fenomeno di sdoppio nell'atto della concezione."<sup>42</sup> And the episodes, the long pauses which had been so much criticized in "Don Quijote" assume now a new and deep meaning. Those digressions constitute the essential characteristic of all true humoristic works. They are, says Pirandello, "la conseguenza necessaria e inevitabile del turbamento e delle interruzioni del movimento organizzatore delle immagini per opera della riflessione, la quale suscita un'associazione per contrari."<sup>43</sup> That same contrast, therefore, which is in the mind of the author passes into his representation.

And because the reflexion with its sharp eyes annihilates our ideals, we understand how and why the religious

<sup>40</sup>Pirandello. op. cit. p. 152.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. p. 157.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. p. 156.

ideal of Manzoni is reduced to a Don Abbondio, while the chivalrous ideal of Cervantes is reduced to a Don Quijote. But Manzoni, Pirandello concludes, "se ne consola creando accanto al curato di villaggio Fra Cristofaro e il Cardinal Borromeo. Ma è pur vero che la creatura sua più viva è quell'altra, quella cioè in cui il sentimento del contrario si è incarnato. Il Cervantes, invece, non può consolarsi in alcun modo perché, nella carcere della Mancha, con Don Quijote - come egli stesso dice - genera qualcuno che gli somiglia."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> op. cit.  
Pirandello./p. 168.

## CONCLUSION

From the preceding sketchy account of the Italian literature on "Don Quijote," we see that there is not as yet a complete and modern work on that subject. Although modern philosophers and great critics have written a rich and varied literature on Aesthetics and on literary criticism in general, most of the works of art however, are still studied fragmentarily and not in their totality.

All the critics agree in believing that to criticize a masterpiece is the same thing as to recreate it by going through the same process through which its author went. Thus in interpreting a work of art the critic's task should be simply that of showing or pointing out how the author's vision gradually came to take form in his mind. In so doing there would not be found any discrepancy nor any contradiction in any real work of art. Those contradictions are seen as existing only and always whenever the critic wants to study some scattered elements without the help of the harmonising spirit of the author, which is the only pervading force which blends together all the various elements.

That easy, unilateral criticism about Cervantes' "Don Quijote" is found not only among the Italian critics,

but also in the literary writings of the other literatures. Even in Spain - the birth place of the hero - the figures of the main characters is seen through this fragmentary interpretation. There is, for instance, the work of Castro - "El Pensamiento de Cervantes" - which although is supposed to represent the non-plus ultra of the various interpretations of Cervantes is instead, in my opinion, the most fragmentary of them all. There is no doubt that everything this great Spanish critic has found in "Don Quijote" is or might be there, but after reading that voluminous work one almost forgets entirely the figure of Don Quijote which lies as buried in that pile of details. The only author who really attempts to recreate the epopee of "Don Quijote" as it was seen by its author, is Unamunno. And since the creative and interpretative power is derived not by the fact that he can more than any body else penetrate the personality of the author, but only because his way of thinking, his creed can wonderfully fit into the creed of "Don Quijote." The interpretation of Unamunno is rejected by all the critics. But in spite of that and not withstanding the fact that the Spanish critic and philosopher reaches the apex of absurdity by saying that Cervantes is the real fool of the narration because he makes the hero recuperate his reason at the end, Unamunno's work remains as the unique interpretation of "Don Quijote" done

according to a broader and really aesthetical point of view.

In Italy, as we have seen, the critics have limited themselves in following that same modest type of criticism. Savi-Lopez and Pirandello are the only writers whose interpretation is intentionally of an higher class. I say intentionally because in reality the accomplishment of both authors is not very effective. That is especially so with Savi-Lopez, who differs from the other critics only in his method of approach, otherwise there is nothing new in his interpretation because after all he simply repeats what had been said already ab antiquo. With Pirandello we have the representation of a somewhat new outlook in the study of "Don Quijote." The author, however, is not interested in expounding his personal interpretation; therefore we do not find expressed in his study everything he sees in the "Don Quijote." Certainly here and there he makes some valuable critical assertions, but only en passant, as it is when he says that Cervantes has fused together the comic and the tragic element. His chief interest lies, indeed, in his attempt to prove how and why Cervantes is a true, perfect humorist. Pirandello, it is known, believes that our personality is never revealed by what we do, but rather by what we do not do, so that we are neither what we appear to be to others, nor what we

appear to be to ourselves. Our real ego, he thinks, is that one which reveals unexpectedly itself by accident because of tortuitous circumstances. Thus to be coherent to himself he thinks that "Don Quijote" does not represent Cervantes as he lived or thought during his life time. "Don Quijote" is Cervantes only insofar as it represents what the world has made of him, rather than what the author wanted to make of himself. Cervantes - in Pirandello's opinion - looks back at his past life and sees himself not as he really was for himself but as he was treated by a world which had distorted his whole life, so that it happened to him something alike to what happened to Don Quijote. But Don Quijote somewhat deserved the hardships he went through, because he wanted to live in the world of his time an anacronistic life. The poor Cervantes, instead, kept himself apace with his time, and yet his accomplishments, judging from the result of his actions, were not less disastrous than those of the magnanimous knight. The "Don Quijote," is, in other words, the objectification of an opposite sentiment, and that is precisely what constitutes the essence of Humorism. There is no doubt that the great critic of tomorrow will find in Pirandello's theory the inspiration for a greater if not decisive interpretation of Cervantes.

Thus it can be seen that even if Pirandello does

not add very much to the practical interpretation of Cervantes, he has however laid down the foundation for a new orientation in the study of Cervantes.

No matter how opposed to this fragmentary criticism one might be, its contribution, however, in regard to "Don Quijote" is not to<sup>be</sup> neglected. In this respect Papini and Toffanin are the two Italian writers who have given the greatest contribution, revealing some unthought elements discovered by them in the Spanish masterpiece.

Papini has shown and settled once for all the wrong belief of the old criticism which thought of Don Quijote as the prototype of the purest idealism, and of Sancho as the champion of the soundest realists of the earth. Papini has clearly demonstrated that each one of the two leading characters has something in common with the other so that one completes the other and both give us the most complete and the most efficacious representation of every thing we know or we might conceive about idealism and realism. Furthermore, Papini has brought to light the profound meaning of a character to whom no one before had given due attention. For Papini Sancho Carrasco - the bachiller - is the true representative of that lowest kind of common sense, on account of which both the Sancho and the Don Quijotes are banished from this world of ours.

What wonderful study of the "Don Quijote" could be made if a critic guided by the help of those scattered elements would attempt to arrive at that synthesis which gave eternal life to the vision of our world of which no matter how much we know about it has always something new to reveal to us. From such a study we would have the nearest approach of the mind of Cervantes. We might see perhaps that Cervantes' intention was simply that of describing the various attitudes of Man before life showing that contrast, struggle and conflicts of any kind are the deus-ex machina of the world. Only thus we could understand the idealism and the realism of "Don Quijote" which the author has described merely because as a true artist, he could not hide them. He had only the freedom of stopping them at a desired moment, thus making them reveal themselves in circumstances created by his imagination. Only in thus thinking we can understand how the question of the particular and of the universal, of history and of poetry could harmoniously fit in the framework of that epopee without appearing out of its place, because, since the action of each character is guided and aroused by a reaction, that is, by his attitude towards any problem of Mankind's concern, that problem as any other problem cannot remain unseen by man. Since that

Aristotelian question, discovered and studied by Toffanin, remains almost unsolved in "Don Quijote," because its solution - as it is put by Cervantes - is a compromise, we may conclude by saying that Cervantes in his wonderful book has enclosed our world with all the various manifestations of Mankind, his various attitudes towards the problems or necessities created by the imagination.

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Date: May 22, 1935