RENAISSANCE ELEMENTS IN
THE ADVENTURES OF DON QUIXOTE

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A STUDY OF CERVANTES' CRITICAL STATEMENTS

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The purpose of this paper is to examine Miguel de Cervantes' views on poetry and literature as he expressed them in The Adventures of Don Quixote.(1) This will entail the compilation of his ideas from the different parts of the novel, as well as their analysis and classification. From this, I hope to find out how far his ideas can be related to European critical thought of the 16th and 17th centuries and how far his views fall into a coherent system.

Cervantes' critical views in Don Quixote deserve to be studied for more than one reason. He is one of the greatest literary figures, not only in Spain but in all European literature and, as an artist, he was bound to criticise his work during the time of its composition. It is not often, however, that the writer practises this criticism in the work of art itself as does Cervantes in Don Quixote, where he explains what he is trying to do and relates it to the literary productions of other writers of his time and to the statements of other critics. He defends a certain conception of art and a view of life consonant with his critical values and, from the critical point of view, reveals affinities with certain theories of literature.

Cervantes' statements on art acquire particular significance in Don Quixote since it is a novel in which "The interaction of literature and life is a fundamental

theme. . ."[2] The hero of the novel, Don Quixote, illustrates the effect of bad literature on a deluded intelligence. He tries "to turn life into art while it is yet being lived,"[3] with the result that not only "the boundaries between what is imaginary and what is real, but those between art and life, are indeterminable."[4] The effect of this imaginative literature is not limited in the novel to Don Quixote, who is an extreme case, but has a hold also on the Duke and Duchess who in actual fact enact fantastic situations for their amusement, on the Innkeeper who is liable to turn into a second Don Quixote, and on those cultured people who "devise imitation Arcadias. Books affect people's lives; literature is part of their experience; Cervantes' novel is, among other things, about books in life."[5] In the "Inquisition" held in the library over Don Quixote's books in which the barber and the priest sort out the books that are to be burnt, it is amusing to note that the priest himself had a very intimate knowledge of these books and had obviously read them with great interest. (I,6)

Since the hero could not distinguish between life and fiction and "everything that our adventurer thought, saw or imagined seemed to follow the fashion of his reading",[6] it follows then that

> the discussion of history (matters of fact) and poetry (fiction) in II,3 . . . springs therefore, like other such passages, from the very heart of the novel. (7)

Furthermore, these views are reminiscent of the general ideas of the Renaissance and the revival of classical ideas that one is driven to the possibility of relating them to what one may call an international movement of criticism in the 16th century.

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All the characters who discuss the basic problems of literature in the novel speak for their author, including at times, strangely enough, Don Quixote himself. He is at times in an ironic position because the aim of the novel is an attack on novels of chivalry and the deluded hero is a prey to them. Author and characters alike attack these novels of chivalry which are strongly defended by Don Quixote who attempts to live the life of a knight errant, to exclude the present, to resurrect an ideal and illusory past and to "turn life into art." He had buried himself so much in his books that he

> filled his mind with all that he read in them, with enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooings, loves, torments and other impossible nonsense; and so deeply did he steep his imagination in the belief that all the fanciful stuff he read was true, that to his mind no history in the world was more authentic. (8)

But Don Quixote, who ends by denouncing books on chivalry, has his sane moments in the novel during which he impresses his listeners with his wisdom and wide learning.

Whenever he discusses problems of literature, his arguments are as sound as those of the author or his amazed listeners - such as the Canon, the students and writers that he met on the way. Again and again,

> Don Quixote pursued his discourse so rationally and in such well-chosen language that none of his hearers could possibly take him for a madman just then. (9)

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Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was born in Alcalá in Spain in 1547 of an ancient but impoverished family. His father, who was a doctor, moved his family several times to different towns in the hope that he would make a better living in the next one. Fortunately, Miguel got his education in his formative years from a schoolmaster well-oriented in the new critical spirit which was centred at that time in Italy.(10) In 1568, at the age of 21, he took service in Italy and, in 1571, took part in the battle of Lepanto which he described in the Captive's tale in Don Quixote (I, 39-41). As also described in the tale, he took part in other campaigns until 1575, when he was captured by pirates as he was on his way home, and was made prisoner in Algiers for five years. He was released in 1580 and returned to Spain. He tried hard to get a government job and to make a living out of writing and in both of these he was not successful at first. He wrote six plays and a pastoral novel, Galatea, all of which were failures. It was only when the first part of Don Quixote

was published that he found immediate success. In 1613, he published a collection of short stories called Novelas Ejemplares ("exemplary novels") and a tale of adventure, Persiles y Sigismunda. He died in 1615, a year after the publication of the second part of Don Quixote. The book, however, was already famous and the first part reprinted several times and translated into English and French: Cervantes was thus able to speak in Part II of the reception of his novel and to answer some of his critics. Like many Elizabethans of the day, Cervantes was a man of action as well as a man of letters. ". . . Edmund Spenser, Walter Raleigh and Philip Sidney were respectively an administrator, a courtier and adventurer, and a soldier, yet for all that the finest poets of their day."(11) Unlike them, however, (except perhaps Spenser in the last months of his life), he found it hard to make a living.

Italy was the centre of literary criticism in the 16th century and its influence on Europe persisted until the middle of the 18th when it was replaced by France. The Renaissance came later to Spain than it did to France and literary criticism did not begin there until the very end of the 16th century when it was completely dependent on Italian authorities.(12) Owing to his knowledge of the Italian language and to the years that he spent there as a young man, Cervantes must have been greatly influenced by the cultural movement in Italy.

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The Prologue to Part I of the novel captures the essence of Cervantes' critical attitude. It takes the form of a conversation between Cervantes - who portrays himself ironically as an author facing an imaginary literary problem - and a friend who attempts, no less ironically, to solve it for him. It consists of a satirical indictment against contemporary literary conventions and a statement of new ones based on a balance between classical authority on one hand and "common sense" on the other. The whole is written in a sharp, satirical tone.

Cervantes tells his friend of the difficulties that he finds in writing a prologue, for he would have preferred not to write one, but to present the book to the reader "naked and unadorned, without the ornament of a prologue or the countless train of customary sonnets, epigrams and eulogies it is the fashion to place at the beginnings of books."(13) The passage in which Cervantes states his problem is somewhat long but should be quoted as it contains his criticism of contemporary writing. He draws a sharp contrast between his own concise style with that adopted by his contemporaries.

He wonders what "that ancient law-giver they call the public" will say when they see him come out with

> a tale as dry as a rush, barren of invention, devoid of style, poor in wit and lacking in all learning and instruction, without quotations in the margins or notes at the end of the book; whereas I see other works, never mind how fabulous and profane, so full of sentences from Aristotle, Plato and the whole herd of philosophers, as to impress their readers and get their authors a .

> reputation for wide reading, erudition and eloquence? And when they quote Holy Scripture! You will be bound to say that they are so many St. Thomases or other doctors of the church, observing such an ingenious solemnity in it all that in one line they will depict a distracted lover and in the next preach a little Christian homily, that is a treat and a pleasure to hear or read. My book will lack all this; for I have nothing to quote in the margin or to note at the end. Nor do I even know what authors I am following in it; and so I cannot set their names at the beginning in alphabetical order, as they all do, starting with Aristotle and ending with Xenophon - and Zoilus or Zeuxis, although one of them was a libeller and the other a painter. My book must go without introductory sonnets as well - or at least sonnets, by dukes, marquises, counts, bishops, great ladies or famous poets; although were I to ask two or three friends in the trade, I know that they would give me them; . . .(14)

The reply of the author's friend reaches even more satirical heights. He tells him that the sonnets, epigrams and eulogies can be written by himself and "baptised" and given any names he likes, "fathering them on Prester John . . . or the Emperor of Trebizond. . ."; as for the quotations from books, all he has to do is to work in some pat phrases or bits of Latin that he knows by heart; and as for the references to authors, he can look for a book where the authors are listed from A to Z and put this same alphabet into his book. "Besides," he concludes cynically, "nobody will take the trouble to examine whether you follow your authorities or not . . ."(15)

What makes the satire so daring is the fact that such falsifications were not only put into practice but received theoretical justification. Imitation of the classics led to what Hallam calls the cult of external form(16) which depends mainly on mechanical precepts and rhetorical devices.

Vida's Ars Poetica reveals many rhetorical tendencies and suggests, among other things, "that the poet should prepare a list of phrases and images for use whenever occasion may demand."(17) Thus, Cervantes was criticising the established literary and critical conventions of his time.

The problem is then solved for Cervantes by his friend, since the book is an "invective against books of chivalry, which Aristotle never dreamed of, Saint Basil never mentioned, and Cicero never ran across." Being a fictive work,

> Nor do the niceties of truth or the calculations of astrology come within the scope of its fabulous narrative; nor is it concerned with geometrical measurements; nor with arguments that can be confuted by rhetoric; nor does it set out to preach to anyone, mingling the human with the divine. . . (18)

Having stated what fiction is not, he then turns to what fiction should be. It is an imitation, he says, "and the more perfect the imitation the better your writing will be." He then defines what style he should use and the effect he should have on his readers. Again, the passage is important enough to be quoted:

> You have only to see that your sentences shall come out in plain, in expressive, in sober and well-ordered language, harmonious and gay, expressing your purpose to the best of your ability, and setting out your ideas without intricacies and obscurities. Be careful too that the reading of your story makes the melancholy laugh and the merry laugh louder; that the simpleton is not confused; that the intelligent admire your invention, the serious do not despise it, nor the prudent withhold their praise. In short, keep your aim steadily fixed on overthrowing the ill-based fabric of these books of chivalry, abhorred by so many yet praised by so many more; for if you have achieved that, you will have achieved no small thing. (19)

Thus, Cervantes has already established in his Prologue a great many critical points. He has not only defined the nature of fiction by calling it imitation (and the more exact the imitation the better), but also the value of fiction. Cervantes points out that he does not want to preach but the effect that he wants to produce should be related to instructing the audience and to influencing it in a certain direction. As we shall see elsewhere in the novel, the emphasis will also fall on the effect of a work of art on the audience. The word "instruction" is not used in the two Prologues but it is used repeatedly by the characters in the novel. In the Prologue to Part II, however, he answers the critic who tells him that his novels are "satirical" rather than "exemplary" though they are good, to which he answers that "they could not be good unless they were good in every respect."(20)

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Cervantes' justification of poetry contains Platonic, Aristotelian and Horatian elements although the Platonic are not basic to his concept of poetry. However, Plato's hold on the Renaissance was too strong to be ignored and his objection to poetry, as expressed in his Dialogues and The Republic, had to be met by any artist or critic commenting on poetry.

Imitation as used by Plato is not limited to any subject-matter and, when applied, refers to the relation between what he calls "the essential nature or Form" of a thing and something which is made like it.(21) The artist

does not make the essence of the thing, nor the thing itself (for that is the work of a craftsman), but he creates an appearance, gives a semblance of its existence and is therefore thrice removed from the essential. Secondly, if the imitator uses the essential and eternal as his model, his imitation of the good and true must by necessity be beautiful; but if his model is a created object, then his imitation would not be beautiful. The poet is therefore condemned by Plato, for his work is thrice removed from the truth, and thus from beauty, and is banished from the ideal state.

Cervantes, in his turn, also believes that many poets should be banished from Spain, yet his objections are directed against poets and not against poetry to which he gives superiority over all other human activities. In doing this, Cervantes follows in the wake of the Italian critics, Bernardo Tasso and Daniello, who "asserted that Plato had not argued against poetry itself but against the abuse of poetry."(22) This too was echoed by Sidney when he says that Plato was "banishing the abuse, not the thing, not banishing it, but giuing due honor vnto it."(23)

Like Minturno, Cervantes points out "the broad inclusiveness of poetry, which may be said to comprehend in itself every form of human learning, . ."(24) and establishes the superiority of poetry over all other activities. For Cervantes, poetry is like

> a tender, young and extremely beautiful maiden, whom all other maidens toil to enrich, to polish and adorn. These maidens are the other sciences; and she has to be served by all, while all of them have to justify themselves by her. (25)

Poetry, therefore, should not debase itself for the sake of the crowd or the court. It should restrict itself to great kinds of poetry "in the form of heroic poems, piteous tragedies, or gay and artificial comedies . . ." and should not run to "base lampoons and impious sonnets." Poets are the evil-doers and poetry "must not let herself be handled by buffoons, nor by the ignorant vulgar", and by vulgar, Cervantes does not mean the common and humble people, but all "who are ignorant, even if they are lords or princes."(26)

Sidney, too, complains "that base men with seruile wits vndertake it, who think it enough if they can be rewarded of the Printer" and these, "by their owne disgracefulnes disgrace the most gracefull Poesie."(27) Poetry, he declares elsewhere in the Apologie, is superior to all sciences and,

> indeede Poetrie euer setteth vertue so out in her best cullours, making Fortune her wel-wayting handmayd, that one must needs be enamored of her. (28)

For "Poesie," he adds, "must not be drawne by the eares; it must bee gently led, or rather it must lead."(29)

The abuse of poetry was again condemned by Cervantes in another work, The Man of Glass, one of his "exemplary" novels, in which the main character is an eccentric but

who, like Don Quixote, is sound on intellectual matters.

> When another student asked him what opinion he held of poets, he answered by saying that he had a high respect for the science of poetry but none for poets themselves; and when they wished to know what he meant by that, he went on to say that of the infinite number of poets in the world there were so few good ones that they were practically negligible; and thus, since there were no poets to speak of, he could not esteem them, though he admired and reverenced the science of poetry, which contains within itself all the other sciences, makes use of all of them, adorns itself with them, and cleanses them, while bringing to light its own marvellous works that fill the world with profit, delight and wonderment. (30)

He quotes Ovid and Plato to prove "the esteem in which a good poet is to be held", as divine, "vates", the beloved of the gods, but

> This is said of the good poets, but what of the bad ones, the poetasters? What is there to say except that they are the most stupid and arrogant tribe in all the world? (31)

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Cervantes did not go further into Plato's arguments against poetry because his own theory of poetry was not a transcendental but an empirical one with its source in the Poetics of Aristotle. The latter believed that the objects of imitation were not Ideas or Forms but "the actions of men;"(32) and men being good or bad, we can represent them as either better, or worse, or exactly as they are. Cervantes believed that art is an imitation and that it has to be an exact imitation. At the same time,"art is not better than nature, but perfects her."(33) Thus, according to

Cervantes, authors and actors of drama hold

> up to us at every step a mirror in which the actions of human life are vividly portrayed. Indeed there is no comparison which presents to us more truly what we are and what we ought to be than the play and the players. (34)

Cervantes uses the analogy of the mirror in an earlier passage when he gives a definition of drama that he ascribes to Cicero: ". . .Drama, according to Tully, should be a mirror to human life, a pattern of manners, and an image of truth."(35) The image of the mirror is suitable for his dual purpose of imitation, for it is used both as a reflection of nature and as the ideal pattern we should follow. It is as an ideal that Don Quixote is humourously called by one of the characters in the novel as the "mirror of chivalry" and he himself speaks of his horse, Rocinante, as the "flower and mirror of steeds."(36)

It naturally follows that the element of verisimilitude is essential to imitation, and is indeed equated with it, for the desired effect can never be achieved by"anyone departing from verisimilitude or from that imitation of nature in which lies the perfection of all that is written."(37)Consequently, if this is to be achieved, then the element of probability is of great importance in a work of art.

It is for this reason that Don Quixote's books of chivalry were burnt by the priest and the barber and

only one of them was spared because it was "a rare treasure of delight", in which

> the knights eat and sleep and die in their beds, and make their wills before they die, and other things as well that are left out of all other books of the kind. (38)

The Canon admits that they give him a certain pleasure when he reads them, but "their adventures are incredible" and, later, that they are "beyond the realms of common sense." He points out all the "monstrous absurdities" contained in books of chivalry - wandering damsels and love-lorn princesses, dragons, serpents and giants, spells, battles and desperate encounters.(39)

Cervantes, however, permits the imitation of ideal human nature rather than actual nature in the epic form and in the epic hero who has "all those attributes which constitute the perfect hero, sometimes placing them in one single man, at other times dividing them among many." Even so, the use of such perfection is subject to the element of possibility or probability, for it should be contained in "an ingenious plot, as close as possible to the truth."(40)

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Dealing with the concept of imitation in antiquity, Prof. Richard McKeon asserts that

> a third variant to the meaning of Plato and Aristotle may therefore be said to derive from the tradition of writers on rhetoric. In age, this view is at least contemporary with the other two

and it has perhaps an even longer and certainly less distorted history since the age of Plato. (41)

This third variant of imitation is essential to an understanding of the major critical theories of the Renaissance, for chief among the writers of rhetoric was Horace who introduced a new meaning to imitation and contributed greatly in directing Renaissance critical thought. Aristotle's influence on Europe my date from the 16th century, but Horace's influence began much earlier and "At no period from the Augustan Age to the Renaissance does the Ars Poetica seem to have been entirely lost."(42) Spingarn also quotes a passage written in 1580 by Juan de la Cueva which illustrates the powerful influence of the Italians on Spanish criticism and of the sovereign position held by Horace [illegible] which he sets down in his Ars Poetica.(43)

Aris otle's theory which [illegible] nature, of fiction against reality [illegible] of poetic truth against the historical event, was transformed by the rhetoricians of antiquity: "Truth, if it is discussed, is usually measured in these later times by asking whether or not the event took place, and whether the object was such as it is represented."(44)

With Horace and the rhetoricians, the emphasis shifts from the work of art in relation to the universe to the work of art in relation to the audience. The prominence given to the effect of a work of art on an

audience was to furnish a criterion of art:

> Horace's criticism is directed in the main to instruct the poet how to keep the audience in their seats until the end, how to induce cheers and applause, how to please a Roman audience, and, by the same token, how to please all audiences and win immortality. (45)

Once the interest shifts from the work of art to the audience, imitation will be important only in so far as it produces an effect on that audience and not as an essential and basic structure of the work of art.

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The concept of imitation held by Cervantes, as well as many of the critics of the Renaissance, was the one expressed by Aristotle in his Poetics:

> It will be clear from what I have said that it is not the poet's function to describe what has actually happened, but the kinds of thing that might happen, that is, that could happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary. The difference between the historian and the poet is not that the one writes in prose and the other in verse; . . .The difference is that the one tells of what has happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen. For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts.
>
> By universal truths are to be understood the kinds of thing a certain type of person will probably or necessarily say or do in a given situation; and this is the aim of poetry, although it gives individual names to its characters. (46)

Cervantes also distinguishes between the poet and the historian in the same Aristotelian terms:

> . . . but it is one thing to write as a poet, and another as a historian. The poet can relate

> and sing things, not as they were but as they should have been, without in any way affecting the truth of the matter. (47)

Sidney also compares history with poetry and finds history lacking in those qualities which poetry has.

> . . . the Historian . . . is so tyed, not to what shoulde bee but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that hys example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a lesse fruitfull doctrine. (48)

Poetry, on the other hand, is not "bound to tell things as things were"and its examples can give delight and can teach through beauty.(49)

It becomes evident, however, that the Renaissance critics, like Cervantes, "did not completely understand the ideal element in Aristotle's conception."(50)Cervantes finds common traits between poetry and history both in subject-matter and in their effect: historical books and "their valorous exploits will entertain, instruct, delight, and surprise the highest intelligence that reads them. . . and you will rise from reading them learned in history, enamoured of virtue, instructed in goodness, improved in manners. . ."(51)History is described by him as the mother of truth, "rival of time, storehouse of great deeds, witness of the past, example and lesson to the present, warning to the future."(52)

Consequently, the Aristotelian distinction between poetry as dealing with universal truths, and history as dealing with particular facts, is removed by Cervantes,

as it had been removed by other writers and critics of the Renaissance - such as Daniello and Castelvetro - both of whom found that poetry and history had much in common for both represent vices and virtues, "both teach, delight and profit at the same time."(53)

> Castelvetro in common with most of the critics of the Renaissance seems to misconceive the full meaning of ideal truth; for to the Renaissance . . . truth was regarded as coincident with fact; and nothing that was not actual fact, however subordinated to the laws of probability and necessity, was ever called truth. (54)

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As we have seen earlier, the work of Horace and the rhetoricians was directed at the audience and one of the functions of poetry was to please or to instruct - "Poets aim at giving either profit or delight, or at combining the giving of pleasure with some useful precepts of life"(55) for the poem "is begotten and created for the soul's delight". . .(56) Horace adds that "The man who has managed to blend profit with delight wins everyone's approbation, for he gives his reader pleasure at the same time as he instructs him."(57)

In the same way, Cervantes requires the artist to have the same effects on his audience for, when he speaks of the drama, he says that the audience coming out of a good play should be

> entertained by the comic part, instructed by the serious, surprised by the action, enlivened by the speeches, warned by the tricks, wiser for the moral, incensed against vice, and enamoured of virtue. (58)

Furthermore, in both Horace and Cervantes, credibility is instrumental for imitation to achieve its end, otherwise the audience would neither be delighted nor instructed. Imitation therefore should give the semblance of life or literal truth. As Horace points out, "Works written to give pleasure should be as true to life as possible, and your play should not demand belief for just anything that catches your fancy."(59) His advice to the artist is therefore

> that the experienced poet, as an imitative artist, should look to human life and character for his models, and from them derive a language that is true to life. (60)

Again, with regard to the question as to whether a poem is the work of nature or of art, both Horace and Cervantes give the same answer. Horace speaks of the necessity of "native genius" which has to be cultivated:

> The question has been asked whether a fine poem is the product of nature or of art. I myself cannot see the value of the application without a strong natural aptitude, or, on the other hand, of native genius unless it is cultivated - so true is it that each requires the help of the other, and they enter into a friendly compact with each other. (61)

while Cervantes speaks of knowledge helping nature:

> ". . . the natural poet who makes use of art will improve himself and be much greater than the poet who relies only on his knowledge of the art . . . So nature combined with art, and art with nature, will produce a most perfect poet. (62)

Cultivation of talent is therefore important and the writer must study and imitate the writings of others. ". . . you must give your days and nights," states Horace, "to the study of Greek models" . . . and adds that the Socratic writings would provide the writer with material.(63) Cervantes, too, held the same opinion when he said that

> when any painter wishes to win fame in his art, he endeavours to copy the pictures of the most excellent painters he knows; and the same rule obtains for all professions and pursuits of importance that serve to adorn the commonwealth.(64)

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In Cervantes, imitation is valid if it is based on truth, for "no story is bad if it is truthful."(65) Later, towards the end of his novel and on seeing the second part being printed, he says that "Works of invention are only good in so far as they adhere to truth or verisimilituds."(66) When speaking of imaginative literature, he declares that " the more it resembles the truth the better the fiction, and the more probable and possible it is, the better it pleases."(67) Thus, probability and possibility are on the same level as truth and verisimilitude.

> Fictions have to match the minds of their readers, and . . . they may so astonish, hold, excite, and entertain, that wonder and pleasure go hand in hand. None of this can be achieved by anyone departing from verisimilitude or from that imitation of nature in which lies the perfection of all that is written. (68)

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The question of the unity of a work of art was one of the most important elements of Renaissance criticism and a work stood or fell according to whether it lacked or did not lack unity. Both Aristotle and Horace demand a measure of unity in a work of art. With regard to plot, Aristotle states that

> the plot of a play, being the representation of an action, must present it as a unified whole; and its various incidents must be so arranged that if any one of them is differently placed or taken away the effect of the wholeness will be seriously disrupted. (69)

For Horace, however, unity is not an organic unity but a means towards producing a specified effect on his audience - "It is a union of content and expression suited to achiave a specified result."(70) Because unity as conceived by Horace is not proper to the artistic organic unity of the work of art itself,

> . . . in Horace's doctrine unity has become a matter of decorum which depends on consistency in the relations of the parts of the poem to one another and appropriateness of the language to the matter, but it is otherwise unrestricted except in view of the reactions of the audiences. (71)

In Aristotle's analysis of tragedy, the fable, the characters, the diction and the thought form an integral unity with the whole work of art. With Horace, they are discussed separately, to see how far each one of them is instrumental in producing pleasure and instruction in the audience.

Cervantes speaks frequently of unity but not as a feature of the organic unity of a work but as a means of producing credibility and pleasure. Thus, in a work of art there must be beauty and harmony to cause delight to the mind, for "nothing ugly or ill-proportioned can cause us any pleasure".(72) but there can be no beauty and delight without credibility:

> What beauty can there be, or what harmony between the parts and the whole, or between the whole and its parts, in a book or story in which a sixteen-year-old lad deals a giant as tall as a steeple one blow with his sword, and cuts him in two as if he were made of marzipan? (73)

In the following quotation, Cervantes refers to the plot in terms that seem Aristotelian, but the emphasis of the image of the limbs of the monster is not because they take away from the organic unity of the book but because they render the figure distorted and ill-proportioned.

> I have never seen a book of chivalry with a whole body for a plot, with all its limbs complete, so that the middle corresponds to the beginning, and the end to the beginning and the middle; for they are generally made up of so many limbs that they seem intended rather to form a chimaera or a monster than a well-proportioned figure. What is more, their style is hard, their adventures are incredible, their love-affairs lewd, their compliments absurd, their battles long-winded, their speeches stupid, their travels preposterous and, lastly, they are devoid of all art and sense, and therefore deserve to be banished from a Christian commonwealth, as a useless tribe. (74)

Thus, as we see from this passage, Cervantes places unity on the same level as characters, diction, and incidents and considers them all equally from the point of view of proportion, credibility, decorum and appropriateness. This propriety is directed as usual towards the audience, for "Fictions have to match the minds of their readers."(75)

The same propriety must be maintained with regard to characters and dialogue, for if, as Horace says,

> the speaker's words are out of key with his fortunes, a Roman audience will cackle and jeer to a man . . . It will make a great difference whether a god or a hero is speaking, a man of ripe years or a hot-headed youngster in the pride of youth, a woman of standing or an officious nurse, a roving merchant or a prosperous farmer. (76)

Again, Cervantes echoes Horace:

> What could be more ridiculous than to paint us a valiant old man and a young coward, an eloquent servant, a statesmanlike page, a king as a porter, and a princess a scullery-maid? (77)

The same considerations of appropriateness and credibility apply to the unities of time and place: the objection again is not because they break down the organic unity of a work of art but because of their absurdity and lack of credibility. "For what greater absurdity," asks Cervantes, "can there be in our present subject than for a child to come on in the first scene of the first act in swaddling clothes, and in the second as a grown man with a beard?"(78)

There is a parallel passage in Sidney where he too complains of the unity of time in some of the contemporary plays:

> Now, of time they are much more liberall, for ordinary it is that two young Princes fall in loue. After many trauerces, she is got with childe, deliuered of a faire boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in loue, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours space . . .(79)

The anomalies of the unity of place were also criticised by Cervantes through the words of one of his characters:

> I have seen a play whose first act opened in Europe, its second in Asia, and its third ended in Africa. And if there had been four acts, the fourth no doubt would have finished up in America; and so it would have been played in all four quarters of the globe.(80)

Sidney also complains of a stage where you have Asia on one side and Africa on the other, and"so many other vnder-kingdoms, that the Player, when he commeth in, must euer begin with telling where he is, or els the tale wil not be conceiued?"(81) The stage will then become a garden, then a rock and a shipwreck, a cave and a battlefield.

In conclusion, Cervantes again stresses the credibility and verisimilitude that must be found in a play, otherwise it will be impossible to satisfy any average intelligence, in the same way as a faulty Roman play would not satisfy a Roman audience.

> If imitation is the chief aim of a play, how is it possible to satisfy any average intelligence, when an action pretends to take place in the time of King Pepin and Charlemagne, and yet they make the principal character in it the Emperor Heraclius, who enters

> Jerusalem bearing the Cross and wins the Holy Sepulchre, like Godfrey de Bouillon, though there was a whole age between the one event and the other? And when the comedy is based on a fictitious story, how can they introduce historical events into it, and mix in incidents that happened to different people at different times; and, even then, with no attempt at verisimilitude, but with obvious errors inexcusable on every count? (82)

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Thus, in Italy in the 16th century, a body of critical theory, taking its sources from the classical revival of the Renaissance, grew and developed. Furthermore, this body of criticism spread from Italy to France, England, Spain and the other European centres of learning. This movement had an international character and this was seen not only in the similar ideas shared by men of letters and in their acceptance of classical sources (such as Plato, Aristotle and Horace), but also in their deviations from their classical sources. In addition, each country, with its insistence on the use of the vernacular language, gave this critical system a national character of its own. Cervantes, as we have seen, was influenced - like Sidney - was influenced by classical writers as well as by this Renaissance system of critical thought and was able to apply his critical ideas to the great work that he gave to world literature.

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(3)Ibid., p. 125.

(4)Ibid., p.131.

(5)Ibid,

(6)Don Quixote, p.37.

(7)Riley, p. 124.

(8)D.Q., p.32.

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(11)Ibid., p.17.

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(26) Ibid., pp.568-9.
(27) Sidney, p.49.
(28) Ibid., p.23.
(29) Ibid., p.50.
(30) Miguel de Cervantes, Man of Glass in The Portable Cervantes, translated and edited by Samuel Putnam (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p.778.
(31) Ibid., p.779.
(32) Aristotle in The Art of Poetry An Classical Literary Criticism, translated with an introduction by T.S. Dorsch (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965),p. 33.
(33) D.Q., p.567.
(34) Ibid., pp. 538-9.
(35) Ibid., p. 428. The phrase ascribed to Cicero by Donatus writing in the fourth century, is: "imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis." ("a copy of life, a mirror of custom, and a reflection of truth"). The phrase is quoted by Spingarn, p. 104, as running through all the dramatic discussions of the Renaissance and particularly in connection with drama.
(36) D.Q., pp. 255 and 435.
(37) Ibid., p. 425.
(38) Ibid., p.60.
(39) Ibid., pp. 424 and 436
(40) Ibid., p.426.
(41) Richard McKeon,"The Concept of Imitation in Antiquity", in Critics and Criticism, Essays in Method (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p.138. Reprinted with minor alterations from Modern Philology, August, 1936.
(42) Spingarn, p.11.
(43) Ibid., p.146:

De los primeros tiene Horacio el puesto,
En numeros y estilo soberano,
Qual en su Arte al mundo es manifesto.

(44) McKeon, 141.
(45) Ibid., p.143.
(46) Aristotle, pp.43-44.
(47) D.Q., p.488.
(48) Sidney, pp. 16-17.
(49) Ibid., pp. 21-22.

(50) Spingarn, p.28.
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(52) Ibid., p.78.
(53) Spingarn, pp. 29 and 46.
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(55) Horace, On the Art of Poetry in Classical Literary Criticism, op. cit., p.90.
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(57) Ibid., p.91.
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(59) Horace, p.91.
(60) Ibid., p.90.
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(78) Ibid., p.428.
(79) Sidney, p. 50.
(80) D.Q., p. 429.
(81) Sidney, p.50.
(82) D.Q., p. 429.