

SULLA SCIALUPPA DI SALVATAGGIO
THOMAS MANN E LA TRAVERSATA CON
«DON CHISCIOTTE».

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Abstract:

The paper analyses the Voyage with «Don Quixote» by Thomas Mann (1934), an essay that, in the form of a half-fictional logbook, recounts Mann's first ocean crossing from Europe to America. The analysis is methodological on different levels, thanks also to the extensive use of the Tagebücher by Mann, an essential source in research about the Voyage with «Don Quixote». The Voyage with «Don Quixote» is first of all historically contextualized: in the first year of Mann's voluntary exile he interrupted his writing of Joseph in Egypt, the third part of the biblical tetralogy, in order to evaluate the advisability of openly intervening in the political problems of his time (the rise of National Socialism in Germany) through two means: an open letter to the «Times» or a proper book of political reflections, entitled Politikum. Instead, in the end Mann chose the Voyage with «Don Quixote», with its ironic and encrypted writing. It is here that the second level of the critical reading is introduced, which unearths on the one hand the hidden psychological reasons (Thomas Mann's reaction to the Voyage, and on the other hand its directly political motivations (the debate about National Socialism, also about the direct and indirect consequences of the elimination of Röhm's SA). Moreover, there is an even broader background: the crisis and the decline of European and also American culture in the age of civilization, characterized by the impetuous rhythm of technological development and the stagnation of spiritual evolution. Therefore, the crossing is made on a modern ocean liner, but with his eyes fixed on the lifeboat.

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