

Don Quixote de la Mancha[a]■ is a modern novel and the first polyphonic novel written by the Spanish Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Its first part published with the title of The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha at the beginning of 1605, it is the most outstanding work of Spanish literature and one of the main works of universal literature.[1]■ In 1615 its continuation appeared with the title of Second Part of the Ingenious Knight Don Quixote of La Mancha. Don Quixote of 1605 was published divided into four parts; but when Don Quixote of 1615 appeared as the second part of the work, the division into four sections of the volume published ten years earlier by Cervantes was effectively revoked.[2]■

It is the first work that genuinely demystifies the chivalric and courteous tradition due to its burlesque treatment. It represents the first modern novel and the first polyphonic novel; As such, it exerted an enormous influence on the entire European narrative. Considered "the best literary work ever written", it topped the list of the best literary works in history, which was established with the votes of one hundred great writers from 54 nationalities at the request of the Norwegian Book Club and Bokklubben World Library in 2002; Thus, it was the only exception in the strict alphabetical order that had been established.[3]■

The novel consists of two parts: The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha, published in 1605, although printed in December 1604, at which time it should have been read in Valladolid,[4] and the second part of the Ingenious Knight. Don Quixote of la Mancha, published in 1615.[b]■

In August 1604, Cervantes wrote the prologue and the burlesque poems that precede the first part, a date on which he should have already presented the original for approval to the Royal Council,[5] since the administrative procedures and the mandatory approval by The censorship was completed on September 26, when the royal privilege was signed.[6] Don Francisco de Robles, "bookseller of the King our Lord", was in charge of the edition, investing between seven and eight thousand reales in it. of which one fifth corresponded to the author's payment. Robles commissioned the printing of this first part to the house of Juan de la Cuesta, one of the printing presses that had remained in Madrid after the transfer of the Court to Valladolid,[7]■ which finished the work on December 1, very quickly. for the conditions of the time and with a rather mediocre quality, of a level not higher than that usual at that time in Spanish printing presses.[8] This princeps edition of 1604 also contains a very high number of errors that multiplies several times those found in other works of Cervantes of similar length.[9]■

The first copies had to be sent to Valladolid, where the mandatory fee was issued that had to be inserted in the specifications of each copy and which was dated December 20, so the novel had to be available in the then capital the last week of the month, while in Madrid it probably had to wait until the beginning of the year 1605.[4] This edition was reprinted in the same year and in the same workshop, so that there is actually two authorized editions from 1605, and they are slightly different: the most important difference is that "The Robbery of Sancho's Dapple", missing in the first edition, is told in the second, although out of place.[10] There were, too , two pirated editions published the same year in Lisbon.[11]■

There is a theory that a shorter novel existed before, in the style of his future Exemplary Novels. That writing, if it existed, is lost, but there are many testimonies that the story of Don Quixote, without understanding exactly what it refers to or the way in which the news was circulated, was known in literary circles before the first edition. (printing finished in December 1604). For example, the Toledo native Ibrahim Taybili, with the Christian name Juan Pérez and the best-known Moorish writer among those established in Tunisia after the general expulsion of 1609-1612, recounted a visit in 1604 to a bookstore in Alcalá where he acquired the Family Epistles and the Relox de Príncipes by Fray Antonio de Guevara and the Imperial and Caesarean History by Pedro Mexía. In that same passage he mocks the fashionable books of chivalry and cites Don Quixote as a well-known work. This allowed Jaime Oliver Asín to add information in favor of the possible existence of a disputed edition prior to that of 1605.

Such a hypothesis has been denied by Francisco Rico.