



Innovation is freedom

The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha

- Miguel de Cervantes, Book I 1605, Book II 1615

Miguel de Cervantes is attributed with the creation of **The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha**, nothing less than the father of the modern novel. Not a minor recognition to say the least! But what exactly did the also ingenious Don Miguel do to deserve such an honor?

His time period was known for chivalric, pastoral and picaresque romances and the *novella boccacciana*. The most popular and widespread of them all were the knight errantry novels, where open narrations were customary. A succession of adventures and event-filled journeys marked the life of the protagonist, and epic praise and veneration of knighthood were not in short supply.

If we consider the kindly discourse of the Canon in Chapter 47 of Book I, when he declares that books of chivalry "are harsh in their style, incredible in their achievements, licentious in their amours, uncouth in their courtly speeches, prolix in their battles, silly in their arguments, absurd in their travels, and, in short, wanting in everything like intelligent art; for which reason they deserve to be banished from the Christian commonwealth as a worthless breed", we can deduce that Don Miguel de Cervantes did not have a high appreciation for this type of novel; and he found nothing more opportune than to write a work that ridiculed and questioned the conventions of the chivalric novel.

And not only did he make a mockery of this literary model but he was bold enough to make *metafiction*, that is, fiction about fiction, playing with multiple narrators who make reference to each other throughout the text. Even in Book II –published in 1615– the characters that meet along the way recognize Don Quixote and Sancho Panza as characters in Book II, which they claim to have read. It is all craft; it is all literature!

Without a doubt, what drove Cervantes to write this work that broke all the literature molds of its time was not the conscious act of creating a new literary form but rather an overdose of boredom and an enviable and marvelous act of freedom. Not in vain **freedom is born from innovation** by experiencing and expressing itself above the mainstream.