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Don Quixote (Texts and Translations)

Mikhail Bulgakov



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When Soviet censors approved Mikhail Bulgakov's stage adaptation of Don Quixote, they were unaware that they were sanctioning a subtle but powerful criticism of Stalinist rule. The author whose novel The Master and Margarita would eventually bring him world renown achieved this sleight of hand through a deft interpretation of Cervantes's knight. Bulgakov's Don Quixote fits comfortably into the nineteenth-century Russian tradition of idealistic, troubled intellectuals, but Quixote's quest becomes an allegory of the artist under the strictures of Stalin's regime. Bulgakov did not live to see the play performed: it went into production in 1940, only months after his death.

The volume's introduction provides background for Bulgakov's adaptation and compares Bulgakov with Cervantes and the twentieth-century Russian work with the seventeenth-century Spanish work.

Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940) grew up and was educated in Kiev. He practiced medicine but soon turned to journalism and writing. He struggled persistently for artistic freedom but was frustrated by the Soviet censorship. "In the last seven years," he wrote to a friend in 1937, "I have created sixteen works in various genres, and they have all been slain."

Translation

The original Russian text of this work is available in a companion volume.

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