



Mikhail Afanas'evich Bulgakov
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Mikhail (Afnas'evich) Bulgakov Biography

Name: Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov
Birth Date: May 2, 1891
Death Date: 1940
Place of Death: Russia
Nationality: Russian
Gender: Male
Occupations: novelist, playwright

Further Reading

- There is no full-length study of Bulgakov in English. Most of the English-language editions of his works, however, contain valuable introductory material. Shorter treatments of Bulgakov are in Gleb Struve, *Soviet Russian Literature, 1917-50* (1951); Marc Lvovich Slonim, *Modern Russian Literature from Chekhov to the Present* (1953); Viacheslav Zavalishin, *Early Soviet Writers* (1958); and Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature since the Revolution* (1969).
- My life with Mikhail Bulgakov*, Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983.
- Milne, Lesley, *Mikhail Bulgakov: a critical biography*, Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- A pictorial biography of Mikhail Bulgakov*, Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1984.

Dictionary of Literary Biography Biography

Mikhail Bulgakov wrote prolifically during a time when old social orders were breaking down and traditional values were rejected. In his story "No. 13. Dom El'pit-Rabkommuna" (No. 13. The Elpit-Rabkommun House, 1922), which describes the destruction of an historic building, the narrator says: "It was a glorious time . . . And then there was nothing. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* It's terrible to live, when kingdoms are falling." The heroes of Bulgakov's work--often engaged in creative pursuits of some kind--find it difficult to survive in a changing world. So, too, did Bulgakov struggle to write as the prerevolutionary Russia of his childhood and young adulthood crumbled around him. In "Kiev-gorod" (Kiev-Town, 1923) Bulgakov describes his youth as a lost paradise, a motif that occurs repeatedly in his work:

No eto byli vremena legendarnye, te vremena, kogda v sadakh samogo prekrasnogo goroda nashei Rodiny zhilo bespechal'noe, iunoe pokolenie. Togda-to v serdtsakh u etogo pokoleniia rodilas' uverenost', chto vsia zhizn' poidet v belom tsvete, tikhno, spokojno, zori, zakaty, Dnepr, Kreshchatik, solnechnye ulitsy letom, a zimoi ne kholodnyi, ne zhestkii, krupnyi laskovyi sneg . . . I vyshlo sovershenno naoborot. Legendarnye vremena oborvalis' i vnezapno, i grozno nastupila istoriia.

(But those were legendary times, times when a carefree young generation lived in the gardens of the most beautiful city in the country. At that time certainty was born in the hearts of that generation that its entire life would pass white, quietly, peacefully, dawns, sunsets, the Dnieper, Kreshchatik, sunny streets in the summer, and in the winter large-flaked, caressing snow, not cold or harsh. And it turned out to be just the opposite. The legendary times were broken off, and suddenly, and menacingly, history came.)

Bulgakov faced daunting obstacles: the chaos of World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the ensuing civil war; disease, poverty, and homelessness during the early 1920s; and political oppression and censorship during his last decade. For Bulgakov, the written word became a victory over history. Lesley Milne, in *Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography* (1990), posits that "his literary rehabilitation is regarded as an important barometer of *glasnost*."

Mikhail Afanas'evich Bulgakov was born on 3 May 1891 in Kiev, the center of early Russian culture. The atmosphere in the Bulgakov home reflected that of Kiev, where literature, theater, and music were a valued part of everyday life. The practice and study of religion was also important; the family included several priests, a famous theologian, and a professor of theology. The latter was Bulgakov's father, Afanasii Ivanovich Bulgakov, a stern and scholarly man who also enjoyed music and played the violin. He married a bishop's daughter, Varvara Mikhailovna Pokrovskaja, a strong,

well-educated, and spirited woman. The Bulgakovs were not wealthy, but by all accounts their home was rich in culture and hospitality. Elements from Bulgakov's childhood home at No. 13 Andreevskii spusk (Andreev Hill)--such as the image of a lamp with a green shade, the sound of classical piano music, and the presence of books--became icons of stability in his later work. Mikhail ("Misha") was his parents' first child of ten. Six of his siblings survived, directly and indirectly inspiring characters in Bulgakov's work: Vera, Nadezhda, Varvara, Nikolai, Ivan, and Elena.

Bulgakov did not begin formal schooling until he was ten years old, enrolling in the First Kiev Gymnasium in the fall of 1901. At school Bulgakov enthralled his classmates with tales that combined fact with fiction so seamlessly that one could not be distinguished from the other. As he did at home, he devised sketches and verbal hoaxes designed to mystify and confuse his listeners. Even in his earliest work, Bulgakov is fascinated with the concept of reality magically giving way unexpectedly to the implausible. Bulgakov began to take writing seriously when he was fifteen. His early "humoresques," as he called them, were based on the farcical stories he created for family and friends and took various forms: stories, plays, satiric verse, and caricatures. In one adolescent play, a doctor is advised by his brother to travel to a patient by automobile, a still unreliable form of transportation; because the doctor's brother was counseled by the devil, the doctor's car does not reach the patient in time. In another story, "Ognennaia zmeia" (The Fiery Serpent, 1912), an alcoholic is killed by his own hallucination. With these elements of fantasy and devilry, the influence of fellow Ukrainian Nikolai Gogol is readily apparent in Bulgakov's earliest fiction.

Bulgakov was still in school when his father died unexpectedly in March of 1907 from sclerosis of the kidneys, a condition that was accompanied by painful migraines. Despite the difficulties inherent in being left a widow with seven children, Varvara Mikhailovna was able to maintain her family financially and spiritually. Working first as a teacher and then as the treasurer of the Froebel Society for Furthering the Cause of Education, Varvara Mikhailovna could not always check her children's raucous behavior, although she was known to reprimand them sternly at times. The love of music, theater, and literature played a central role in the continuing happiness of the Bulgakov home.

Although enjoyment of the arts was a family tradition, Bulgakov, like many of his friends and family members, decided to become a doctor. In August 1909 he entered the medical school of the Saint Vladimir Imperial University, which had a demanding five-year program. Bulgakov actually took seven years to complete his training, however. His continued interest in writing and performing in theatrical sketches, along with the courtship of his first wife, interfered with his studies so that he was forced to repeat his second year and to complete an additional year of course work. On 26 April 1913 Bulgakov married Tatiana Nikolaevna ("Tasia") Lappa, the niece of Varvara Mikhailovna's best friend, Sofia Nikolaevna Davidovich. Only fourteen when she met Bulgakov, Tatiana Nikolaevna came to Kiev from Saratov each summer and got along well with the Bulgakov family. Despite these pleasant connections, Tatiana Nikolaevna, the daughter of a civil servant, was deemed unsuitable for Bulgakov. Nevertheless, she proved to be hardworking and capable, training as a nurse and helping Bulgakov through the difficult war years that followed.

Despite his early academic difficulties, Bulgakov graduated with honors on 6 April 1916 with a specialty in venereal diseases. The tsar's army was in dire need of medical personnel at that time. Bulgakov served in the reserves during World War I and volunteered for the Red Cross at the front lines in southwestern Ukraine. His wife followed him there, sometimes holding the leg of a wounded soldier while Bulgakov performed an amputation. In September of 1916 he was assigned to the small village of Nikolskoe in Smolensk province as a doctor for the Zemstvo, a public welfare organization established by the Russian nobility in the late nineteenth century. One of the goals of the individual zemstvo units was to provide access to medical care in rural areas. Nikolskoe was remote, located almost five hundred miles southwest of Moscow, thirty-two miles from the nearest town. In the year that Bulgakov served in Nikolskoe, he saw 15,361 patients and performed a wide range of procedures, including amputations, abortions, and a tracheotomy. He was disturbed by the prevalence of venereal disease, especially its insidious effects on children. Confronting the ignorance and superstition of the Russian peasant, Bulgakov was also burdened by his role as the sole practitioner of a civilized and cultured life. In September 1917 Bulgakov was transferred to the district town of Viazma. At the zemstvo hospital there, he became head of the department of infectious and venereal diseases.

During Bulgakov's time as a zemstvo doctor, the idea of writing became his sole means of battling his intense feelings of isolation. Tatiana Nikolaevna acted as housekeeper, nurse, and secretary but did not provide the kind of intellectual company to which Bulgakov was accustomed. Indeed, when

he started to pursue his dream of being a writer in 1916, he kept his work a secret from her, believing her incapable of appreciating his creativity. In a letter to his sister Nadezhda in December 1917, he describes his living conditions and the people of Viazma as "repulsive" and "hateful." It certainly did not help Bulgakov to know that enormous historical events were taking place in Russia's cities while he was isolated in the provinces. Attempts to gain a military discharge failed until March 1918. In the meantime Bulgakov was forced to read about his family's terrifying civil-war experiences in the letters that managed to reach him. Biographer Ellendea Proffer writes that Bulgakov was like the Englishman marooned on a desert island who insists on shaving every day: for Bulgakov, the stories he was developing during his time as a country doctor represented for him an island of civility in a sea of barbarism.

In the early spring of 1918 Bulgakov and his wife returned to a German-occupied Kiev. They lived with Bulgakov's family at No. 13 Andreevskii spusk, where Bulgakov saw patients and worked on his writing. During this time he produced "Zelenaia zmeia" (The Green Serpent, based on the earlier "Ognennaia zmeia"); a draft of *Zapiski iunogo vracha* (Notes of a Young Doctor, 1963); and two stories, "Nedug" (The Ailment) and "Pervyi tsvet" (The First Bloom, 1917). Later, Bulgakov reworked "Nedug," the story of his civil-war experience, in a novel of the same name, but abandoned it in the early 1920s to devote himself to *Belaia gvardiia* (The White Guard, 1925-1929).

The civil-war years in Kiev were tumultuous. When the Bulgakovs returned home in the spring of 1918, the Ukrainian nationalist government, the Central Rada, was ruling at the behest of the German government, whose occupation of the Ukraine was provided for by the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty. The Rada proved too liberal a body for the Germans, who then backed the nationalist conservative Pavel Petrovich Skoropadsky in his successful bid for power in April 1918. Skoropadsky, who assumed the obsolete title of hetman, was in power only briefly. By December of the same year the defeated German army withdrew from the Ukraine, and the extreme nationalist Simon Vasil'evich Petliura replaced the hetman. As a physician, Bulgakov, along with two of his brothers, took part in the rather disorganized attempt to defend Skoropadsky, who, unbeknownst to many, had already left the city with the Germans. When he realized that Skoropadsky had deserted his supporters, leaving them to perish at the hands of Petliura's forces, Bulgakov returned home, deeply disillusioned. For a time his brothers were trapped at the gymnasium, surrounded by Petliura's men, and the family did not hear until several months later that they had survived.

The Petliura forces were brutal, focusing their deadly terror particularly on the Jewish citizens of Kiev. On the night of 2 February 1919, as the Bolsheviks stood poised to retake the city, Bulgakov watched a Cossack chief beat a Jew to death with a ramrod. Although the residents of Kiev welcomed the Bolsheviks, the Red forces initiated their own reign of terror, especially among the intelligentsia in the city. The Bulgakov family knew many people who were arrested or executed solely based on their social standing or profession. Again, the political tide turned quickly. In September 1919, Petliura's Ukrainian forces and Anton Ivanovich Denikin's White Army ousted the Bolsheviks from Kiev. Bulgakov left for the city of Vladikavkaz with the White Army, with whom he sympathized. After Tatiana Nikolaevna joined him in the Caucasus, Bulgakov was attached to a medical unit.

The historical events that Bulgakov experienced firsthand seem to have instilled in him a sense of powerlessness, especially when Petliura's army trapped his younger brothers. In Bulgakov's work, his heroes are often fearful of the forces of violence and chaos, represented by mob rule, rampant ignorance, or a ruler's tyranny. These anxieties discouraged him from being a doctor in wartime, and in February 1920 Bulgakov abandoned medicine to devote himself full-time to his writing. By then the local newspapers had already published several of his feuilletons and stories about civil-war Kiev. His first publication was a story called "Dan' voskhishcheniia" (A Tribute of Delight, 1920), which, according to the three fragments that survive, includes the seeds of *Dni Turbinykh* (Days of the Turbines), the play he adapted from *Belaia gvardiia* in 1926. To support himself while he wrote, Bulgakov worked for some of the newspapers (which shut down and sprang up again on a regular basis) and gave literary lectures at the People's University in Vladikavkaz and in drama workshops. He was also appointed the head of the Lito (Literary Section) of the Podotdel iskusstv (Subdepartment of the Arts), which in turn was a division of Narobraz (the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment). Bulgakov did not hold this office for long; he was fired in October 1920. A reference to his allegiance to the Whites followed his name on the official report of his dismissal.

In postrevolutionary Vladikavkaz, which was war torn, riddled with typhus, and under Soviet control, Bulgakov's passionate defense in his public lectures of the merits of nineteenth-century

artists such as Gogol and Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin earned him a reputation as a counterrevolutionary. Later, Bulgakov's insistence on maintaining certain norms of prerevolutionary life and values resulted in the coining of the antibourgeois term "Bulgakovshchina" (Bulgakovism). The true beginning of his writing career also marked the start of Bulgakov's lifelong problems with the censorship of the official Soviet literary community and, because writing was now his sole livelihood, with the difficulties of basic survival. In *Zapiski na manzhetakh* (Notes on the Cuff, 1922-1923) he writes: "They have banned the evenings . . . I can't figure out what we're going to eat. What are we going to eat!"

Despite his political problems, Bulgakov managed to stage several short plays at the First Soviet Theater. On 6 June 1920 the play *Samooborona* (Self-Defense) premiered. This "humoresque in one act" focuses on the measures the citizens of Vladikavkaz took to defend themselves against the regular raids on the city by the local tribes. In the fall of 1920 the play *Brat'ia Turbinykh* (The Brothers Turbin) was staged. Later destroyed by Bulgakov, *Brat'ia Turbinykh* was apparently similar to *Dni Turbinykh* and dramatized many of the experiences he and his family lived through in Kiev during the civil war. The play was a popular success. Inspired, Bulgakov wrote "Glinianyie zhenikhi" (The Clay Bridegroom, 1920), a drawing-room comedy based on mistaken identity. Because of its light-hearted content during a time when ideological themes were increasingly emphasized, the play was not permitted to be staged. Bulgakov also wrote *Parizhskie kommunary* (The Parisian Communards), which marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Paris Commune. The latter premiered in March 1921 and seemed to alleviate the weight of Bulgakov's bourgeois reputation. He was allowed to publish a feuilleton, "Nedelia prosveshcheniia" (The Week of Enlightenment, 1921); a theater review; and an article on the actor S. P. Aksenov.

In a 1 February 1921 letter to his cousin Konstantin, Bulgakov expressed regret for not starting his writing career earlier. "My life is a torment," he wrote; "You cannot imagine how much sadness filled my soul because my play was showing in this God-forsaken hole, because I delayed for four years what I should have begun doing long ago: writing." However, Bulgakov's attitude toward the writing that he produced in Vladikavkaz was often one of self-contempt. The last play he wrote in the Caucasus earned his particular scorn. *Synov'ia mully* (Sons of the Mullah, 1921) is a revolutionary drama set among the local Ingush tribe. It was written in the course of a few days, with a native lawyer adding authentic details that evoked an enthusiastic response from Ingush audiences. Nevertheless, in *Zapiski na manzhetakh* Bulgakov characterized the play as a "totally idiotic thing."

Despite the uneven quality of these early pieces, they introduce some of the more important themes that run throughout Bulgakov's work. "Nedelia prosveshcheniia" is a satirical work about free cultural events organized by the Podotdel iskusstv. Red Army soldier Sidorov is discovered by his superiors to be illiterate. In what he perceives as punishment, he is forced to watch a performance of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *La Traviata* (The Fallen Woman, 1853). The senselessness of the assignment is underscored by Bulgakov's comic description of the opera through the eyes of the naive soldier. Sidorov's relief at having endured the performance is cut short when he is obliged to attend other cultural events throughout the week. Outraged that only the uncultured are forced to participate in this process of "enlightenment," he decides to go to school and become literate. There his education is more rudimentary but genuine.

The theme of enlightening the masses takes on a revolutionary hue in *Synov'ia mully*. The Mullah Khassbot's elder son is a soldier, submissive to authority and respectful of the old ways. The younger son, a student, is a revolutionary. During the course of the play the older son struggles with his desire to arrange a marriage that does not meet his father's approval. His younger brother encourages a break with tradition that would free his family and the other members of his community from the bonds of both family and social authority. His speeches emphasize the people's inner transformation through nonviolence and education. He will not kill the district chief who threatens to arrest him, nor will he lead as chief himself, insisting instead on free elections. In the end the soldier son tears off his epaulets, and Khassbot professes his understanding of the revolutionary ideals: "I see, I see now."

Either by circumstance or volition, Bulgakov decided against emigration, a path his brothers Nikolai and Ivan took. In 1921 Bulgakov left Vladikavkaz for Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. From there he went to Batum, a port city on the Black Sea, where he made an attempt to leave the country on a boat bound for Turkey but was not able to board. After this failed effort, for the next several years Bulgakov seemed resigned or perhaps compelled to remain in Soviet Russia. In late September 1921 he returned to Kiev, where he saw his mother for the last time; Varvara Mikhailovna died in February 1922 of typhus, which Bulgakov also began suffering from in the early 1920s. At that

time, Bulgakov was living in Moscow, where his work was being published in the newspapers *Rabochii* (The Worker) and *Gudok* (The Whistle) and the literary journal *Nakanune* (On the Eve). It was the beginning of a new era for Bulgakov, as his family dispersed and his mature writing began.

By 1922 Bulgakov had reconstructed his experiences of the civil war and its aftermath in the Caucasus and the beginning of his life in Moscow in the autobiographical *Zapiski na manzhetakh*, fragments of which were published in the periodicals *Nakanune*, *Vozrozhdenie* (Renaissance) and *Rossia* (Russia) in 1922 and 1923, with additional excerpts appearing posthumously in *Zvezda vostoka* (Star of the East) in 1967. Bulgakov tried to publish the work as a book, but it was rejected by the Berlin publishing house Nakanune and the Moscow publishing house Nedra; the published fragments are all that survive. Chronicling his own literary apprenticeship in the face of terrible difficulties, Bulgakov dedicated the work to his fellow struggling Russian writers. While *Zapiski na manzhetakh* describes with bitter humor the cruel living conditions and obtuseness of Soviet culture, it also contemplates in a broader sense the meaning of a writer's life given a certain historical context. Bulgakov's narrator describes his recurrent bouts with typhus, his perpetual homelessness and hunger, his lack of proper clothing, the paucity of money, and his need to sell his few possessions--coat, bedsheets, books--to survive. Beyond the concerns of physical survival, however, lie questions of the writer's spiritual well-being. As David M. Bethea points out in *The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (1989), one of the overriding themes of Bulgakov's later work is "that of the artist's higher calling in a world relentlessly dragged down by Realpolitik and the base urges of a cynical ruling elite." In *Zapiski na manzhetakh* a petty bureaucracy and the philistinism of critics and the "new" poets threaten to diminish the writer. The imagery Bulgakov uses to convey his plight underscores his helplessness: the writer is a baby in a box, a slinking rat, a fly caught in flypaper, and a beetle stuck on a pin. References to Pushkin--the humiliation of his lowly court rank and his cowering hero Evgenii--also serve the theme of diminishment.

The twenty-seven short chapters that comprise *Zapiski na manzhetakh* describe an era of disruption and instability in their style--the jottings on the cuff suggested in the title--and in their use of language. Each vignette consists of a quick staccato of ironic reportage. The absence of any personal detail unrelated to the narrator's literary struggles and an often elliptical approach toward the rest of his life reflect the uprooting he has experienced. The source of the narrator's inability to use language coherently is unclear. In the chapter "Tif vozvratnyi" (Recurring Typhus) the breakdown of language is attributable to feverish delirium; in other chapters the narrator seems to imitate the truncation of office memos, advertisements, and slogans. With the loss of sensible language, the literature of the past becomes the narrator's lifeline. *Zapiski na manzhetakh* teems with the names of Russian and western European writers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These literary references not only allow the narrator to imagine or dream about an escape from his present reality but also reconnect him to a lost culture of moral and spiritual values.

As biographer Edythe C. Haber notes, the hero's traditional values are no match for the forces of chaos, and he initiates a pattern of flight. Bulgakov's civil-war stories, published in 1922 in the journals *Rupor* and *Nakanune*, also demonstrate this tendency. In "Neobyknovennye prikliucheniia doktora" (The Unusual Adventures of a Doctor) Doctor N. flees three times, twice from Petliura's army in Kiev and then from the Whites in the Northern Caucasus. In the first part of the story the doctor's action takes on a mock-heroic quality reminiscent of Gogol and Laurence Sterne. In his first triumphant escape he jumps a fence and evades a ferocious dog by dousing the animal with iodine (the loss of which he later regrets). Like many of Bulgakov's heroes, the doctor pursues the goal of homecoming. He longs for the coziness of the intellectual's study, symbolized by the ubiquitous Bulgakovian lamp and books. "Domoi!" (Home!) becomes his battle cry. Later in the story, as the doctor witnesses the suffering of the Chechen natives at the hands of Cossack troops, his ideal of home acquires a moral superiority. Ultimately, the apparent cowardice of the doctor's habit of running and cowering "like a rat in a strange courtyard" is mitigated by the senselessness of the war itself.

In "Krasnaia korona" (The Red Crown) Bulgakov further develops the idea of honor and cowardice. In this story the narrator has lost his sanity; overwhelming fear drives his fragmented thoughts. His condition stems from two incidents. In the first, he witnesses a man being hanged from a streetlight and does not speak out. He considers his own silence to be a criminal act. The reader may wonder why the narrator, given his wartime circumstances, assumes responsibility for the hanging. The reason becomes apparent as the narrator links the event in his mind with the other incident: his inability to fulfill a promise to his mother to bring his younger brother Kolia home from the war. Although Kolia agrees to leave the front, he insists on completing one last maneuver with

his squadron. He says, "Ia ne mogu stavit' èskadron" (I cannot leave the squadron), a phrase that later becomes an agonizing refrain in the narrator's addled brain. When the brother returns, he seems, from a distance, to be dressed in a red dress uniform and wearing a red crown. In actuality, however, what the narrator sees is his brother's blood-soaked body, held up in his saddle by two riders who flank him. Afterward, in a nightly dream, Kolia appears to his brother and, gesturing to his "red crown," repeats, "I cannot leave the squadron." Because the narrator succumbed to the idea that his brother's responsibility to the squadron took precedence over the values of the family, he mistakenly attributed the idea of honor to a senseless war. The narrator's feelings of guilt and responsibility for his failure drive him insane.

Yet, in Bulgakov's work the power and "magic" of the imagination can often rewrite the past. In "Krasnaia korona" a second dream allows the narrator temporarily to restore his lost home life. The dream re-creates the family living room with its familiar furnishings: the red plush upholstery, the armchair with the wobbly leg, the portrait on the wall, the vase with flowers, and the piano. His brother, young and alive, beckons laughingly to the narrator, who is relieved of his guilt:

V gostinoi bylo svetlo ot lucha, chto tianulsia iz glaz, i bremia ugryzeniiia rastailo vo mne. Nikogda ne bylo zloveshchego dnia, v koroty i poslal ego, skazav: "Idi," ne bylo stuka i dymogari. On nikogka ne uezzhal, i vsadnikom on ne byl. On igral na pianino, zvuchali belye kostiashki . . . i golos byl zhiv i smeialsia.

(The living room was lit from the light of his eyes and the burden of my guilt was lifted. That horrible day, when I sent him off, having said, "Go," never happened. There was no rumble of guns and no smoke. He never left and never became a horseman in the cavalry. He was playing the piano. The ivory keys rang out . . . His voice was animated and he was laughing.)

Even in his dreams, however, the narrator cannot escape the excruciating sense of responsibility for his brother's death. He can only briefly sustain the oneiric vision of the family living room. The language and imagery in the narrator's dream of salvation is reversed in the final iteration of the nightmare:

Naprasno v zhguchei toske v sumerki i zhdu sna--staruiu znakomuiu komnatu i mirnyi svet luchistykh glaz. Nichego ètogo net i nikogda ne budet. Ne taet bremia. I v noch' pokorno zhdu, chto pridet znakomyi vsadnik s nezriachimi glazami i skazhet mne khriplo: "Ia ne mogu stavit' èskadron."

(At twilight, burning with despair, I wait in vain for the dream of the old familiar room and the peaceful light of his radiant eyes. None of that exists and never will exist. My burden is not lifted. And at night I wait submissively for the familiar horseman with the blind eyes to appear and to say to me with a rasping voice: "I cannot leave the squadron.")

The narrator's dream vision fails to provide him an escape from the unbearable pangs of conscience. In the end there is no path to salvation and no possibility of a return to health. Both the narrator and his doctors declare his condition as hopeless.

Unlike the narrator of "Krasnaia korona," the hero of "V noch' na 3-e chislo" (On the Eve of the 3rd) is able to realize his ideal of a quiet home place. Doctor Bakaleinikov is a quiet, scholarly man caught up in the chaos on the night of Petliura's retreat from Kiev. The doctor seems unable to escape from the atrocities he witnesses--most notable the brutal murder of a Jew--and powerless to stop them. The bridge that separates Kiev from the Slobodka suburb, where the action of the story takes place, becomes a symbolic division between the violence of war and the peaceful realm of the home. From the bridge, the doctor can see the cross of St. Vladimir, the emblem of Kiev's tradition of spirituality and culture, and longs for the quiet of home and urban civility: "Vot on--gorod--tut! Gorit na goriakh za rekoi vladimirskii krest, i v nebe lezhit fosforecheskii blednyi otsvet fonarei. Doma. Doma. Bozhe moi! O mir! O blagostnyi pokoi!" (There it is--the city--there! In the hills across the river St. Vladimir's cross seems to burn and a pale phosphorescent reflection from the streetlights lay over the sky. Home. Home. Oh my God! O peace! O blessed peace!). The answer to his prayers seems to come from the sky, as the glow of rocketry announces the arrival of Bolshevik forces and the imminent dispersal of Petliura's Cossack forces. The doctor returns home, where he can only escape his feelings of helplessness and self-loathing in a drug-induced sleep. The ensuing silence in the house is echoed throughout the city and beyond. Indeed, even the heavens, shattered earlier by gunfire, seem to have regained their sublime serenity.

The story "Ia ubil" (I Killed), later included in the collection *Zapiski iunogo vracha*, considers a

course of action other than flight. The narrative is framed by a discussion among a group of Moscow doctors who debate whether losing a patient during surgery is tantamount to murder. They all seem to agree that there is an essential difference between a bad medical outcome and a premeditated killing: "Ubiistvo ne svoistvenno nashei professii" (Murder is not in the nature of our profession), comments one participant. However, Doctor Iashvin turns to the group and admits that he once killed a patient with forethought. He tells the group how he was mobilized to treat the wounded during the night of Petliura's retreat from Kiev. Moments before his planned escape, the doctor is detained and brought to the headquarters of a unit commanded by a Colonel Leshchenko, where he is held in a room lit by a bare bulb and bearing traces of blood on the wall. While his own life is under constant threat by the ruthless Leshchenko, Iashvin is horrified by the sounds of the beatings and executions he hears emanating from the lower level of the building. Later that night, Iashvin is called upon to treat the wounded Leshchenko. A woman who demands to know why Leshchenko shot her husband interrupts them. During the encounter she reprimands Iashvin for treating Leshchenko, who condemns her to twenty-five lashes of a ramrod. Iashvin, stunned by Leshchenko's willingness to beat a woman, shoots the patient and escapes through a window into the night.

Presenting Leshchenko's cruelty in light of the condemned woman's innocence, "Ia ubil" depicts the doctor's actions as necessary and justifiable homicide. More than any of Bulgakov's other intellectual heroes, Iashvin must leave the confines of his cozy study and actively battle the forces of chaos around him. Images of darkness and light define the boundaries of these two worlds. The bare bulb in Leshchenko's headquarters, like the dark city streets, contrasts starkly with the warm and cozy lamplight of the doctor's home. As Iashvin describes his study to his listeners, he repeatedly mentions the lamp: "Na stole u menia v kabinete lampa gorit, v komnate teplo, uiutno . . . lampa gorit uiutno . . . knigi razbrosany" (On the desk in my office the lamp was burning, the room was warm and cozy . . . the lamp was burning cozily. . . books were scattered all over). The lack of references to any medical equipment in the doctor's office allows the reader to imagine that Iashvin, like Bulgakov, might have chosen a literary path rather than a medical one. Indeed, Iashvin's host in Moscow points out the doctor's narrative talent: "Vrach ty ochen' neplokhoi, i vse taki poshel ne po svoei doroge i byt' tebe nuzhno tol'ko pisatelem" (You are a very decent doctor, but you have not followed your true path. You should be a writer). Although intellectuals may believe that the pen (or the stethoscope) is mightier than the sword, Bulgakov suggests that these sentiments may sometimes prove inadequate.

The play between pen/stethoscope and sword continues throughout the other stories that make up *Zapiski iunogo vracha*, a collection consisting of nine stories Bulgakov first published in the journals *Meditinskii rabotnik* (The Medical Worker) and *Krasnaia panorama* (Red Panorama) between 1925 and 1927. Battle imagery permeates the collection as the young zemstvo doctor protagonist wrestles with the forces of darkness: the ignorance of the peasants, the natural elements, and his own arrogance that blinds him to the needs of his patients. Newly trained and lacking any clinical experience, the doctor enjoys mixed success. In "Stal'noe gorlo" (The Steel Windpipe, 1925) and "Polotentse s petukhom" (The Embroidered Towel, 1926) he manages to perform lifesaving surgeries, all the while running between the operating room and the textbooks in his living quarters. "Kreshchenie povorotom" (Baptism by Rotation, 1925) shows the doctor saving an infant only by following the directions of the more experienced midwife. In "Zvezdnaia syp'" (The Speckled Rash, 1926) he bullies a mother into leaving her three children at the clinic to be treated for syphilis. Although the length of treatment is still inadequate, the doctor believes that he has made some difference. His confidence dissolves in the face of another mother's mockery in "Propavshii glaz" (The Vanishing Eye, 1926) when her decision to delay the recommended surgery saves her child's eye. The doctor's arrogance symbolically echoes the child's actual blindness. The work ends with a warning: "nuzhno pokorno uchit'sia" (always be a humble student). "V'iuga" (The Blizzard, 1926) and "T'ma egipetskaia" (Black as Egypt's Night, 1926) dwell thematically on the main threats to the doctor--death and ignorance. The lantern at the entrance to the hospital serves a similar function as the lamp in a cozy study; it is a beacon of healing and civilization in a dark wilderness. The final story, "Morfii" (Morphine, 1927), relates in diary form how one doctor loses his battle, succumbing to the effects of morphine addiction (with which Bulgakov also struggled) and ultimately committing suicide. "Morfii," which was serialized in *Meditinskii rabotnik* on 9, 17, and 23 December 1927, was the last work by Bulgakov published in the Soviet Union during his lifetime.

Throughout the 1920s Bulgakov chronicled his Moscow years in almost two hundred feuilletons and short stories published in the literary journal *Nakanune* and newspapers such as *Gudok*. These pieces offer broad sketches of the capital during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) as life was reasserting itself after the civil-war years. At that time Moscow was characterized by

contradictions; the juxtaposition of rich and poor, past and present, and real and counterfeit fostered a cacophony of life captured in the work of satirists such as Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov, Mikhail Mikhailovich Zoshchenko, and Evgenii Ivanovich Zamiatin. Bulgakov's targets included the pretensions of the nouveau riche, the greed of the old bourgeoisie, the vulgarity of the working class, and the general loss of civility in society. In "Pokhozheniia Chichikova" (The Adventures of Chichikov, 1922), Gogol's picaresque rogue from *Mertvye dushi* (Dead Souls, 1842) returns to 1920s Moscow only to discover that his cynical schemes have become more the norm than the exception. Perhaps one of the most frequent subjects of 1920s satire was the housing crisis and the unbearable living conditions in Moscow. In 1926 a collection of Bulgakov's stories on the housing issue was published as *Traktat o zhilishche* (A Treatise on Housing). It consisted of "Moskovskie stseny" (Moscow Scenes), "Samogonnoe ozero" (Moonshine Lake), "Psalom" (Psalm), and "Moskva 20-x godov" (Moscow of the 1920s). The overriding sentiment of all four stories is stated in "Moskva 20-x godov": "Uslovimsia raz navsegda: zhilishche est' osnovnoi kamen' zhizn' chelovecheskoi" (Let us agree once and for all: living quarters are the foundation of human life).

"Moskva 20-x godov" chronicles the absurdities of living conditions in the capital. "Samogonnoe ozero" is a dark portrayal of the communal apartment, with scenes of drunkenness, wife-beating, and finally, the killing of an oddly out-of-place rooster. In "Psalom" Bulgakov reiterates the idea of home as refuge. A meditation of sorts, this story, with its interweaving of domestic imagery and repeated phrases, quietly shows three lonely people becoming a family in a happy home.

"Moskovskie stseny," also known as "Chetyre portreta" (Four Portraits), introduces the idea of the fantastic into the home, describing the drastic measures one man takes to protect his apartment from the Housing Committee. The narrator explains how his friend makes three of six rooms "magically" disappear: "k kovru pristavil etazherku, na pustye butylki i kakie-to starye gazety, i biblioteka slovno sginula--sam chert ne nashel by v nee khoda" (He put a book stand on the rug in front of it along with empty bottles and some old newspaper, and the library vanished--the devil himself could not have found the entrance). Much like a doctor who kills his patient during an operation, the narrator's friend in "Moskovskie stseny" ends up destroying the true meaning of home in the process of protecting it, reducing it merely to measurable living space. In the end, distant cousins crowd the apartment, and the walls display the portrait of Karl Marx, whose communist ideal lies at the root of this devilry.

In two other stories of the *Nakanune* era, the rationality of Soviet society leads to the physical destruction of the home. In her discussion of "Khanskii ogon'" (The Khan's Fire, 1924) Haber detects a distinct pessimism in Bulgakov's account of Prince Tugai-Beg, who returns to his ancestral estate only to find this once-living storehouse of five generations of family history has become a museum--as Haber says, "the common property of the new Soviet man." Enraged by what Haber calls the "perversion of the original significance of the house," the prince sets fire to the structure, which is by now only the empty shell of the culture it once represented. Like Tugai-Beg's family home, the fashionable Elpit-Rabkommun House, the subject of Bulgakov's "No. 13. Dom El'pit-Rabkommuna," is destroyed twice. First, it is appropriated by the state and converted into a workers' commune. Then, falling victim to the ignorance of its uncultured residents, the building burns to the ground. Once a lively center of literary and theatrical circles, the Elpit-Rabkommun House symbolizes the cultural achievements of the recent past. After the Soviet authorities expropriate the building, objects that once expressed and reflected the cultural values of the home are replaced by items that represent the comparative lack of culture among the new tenants. At one point the sounds of piano music are replaced by "lively" gramophones that sing "in ominous voices." The Elpit-Rabkommun House "falls" when it is transformed from a cultural monument into a socialist monument. The new residents are "temnye liudi" (ignorant or "dark" people), who do not appreciate the symbolic importance of the place. Finally, a spark from an illegal stove ignites the house. Although the old world is a tragic witness to its own destruction, certain domestic articles representative of its past culture survive the flames on a hopeful note that is lacking in "Khanskii ogon'." An elderly man watches the Elpit-Rabkommun House burn as he clutches to his chest two symbols of traditional Russian culture and domestic ritual--a samovar and an icon.

Perhaps signifying the compartmentalization of his writing and personal life, Bulgakov makes no mention of his wife, Tatiana Nikolaevna, in the *Nakanune*-era prose. Indeed, as his writing career started to take off, his marriage began to fall apart. The sophisticated literary circles in Moscow exacerbated Bulgakov's impatience with Tatiana Nikolaevna's intellectual limitations, and she was often excluded from the social gatherings. In January 1924 at a party for Count Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoi, Bulgakov met Liubov Evgen'evna Belozerskaia. Originally from St. Petersburg, the vivacious and charming Liubov Evgen'evna had lived abroad, spoke French, and was well versed in literature--she worked as an editor for various publishers and newspapers. After Tatiana

Nikolaevna reluctantly agreed to a divorce, Bulgakov convinced Liubov Evgen'evna to marry him. The setting for his proposal was a bench at Patriarch's Pond, where his novel *Master i Margarita* (The Master and Margarita, 1967) opens. Bulgakov and Liubov Evgen'evna were married in the spring of 1924, but it was not until the end of that year that they found a room of their own.

While courting Liubov Evgen'evna, Bulgakov was finishing work on *Belaia gvardiia*. The novel, like the later play version, *Dni Turbinykh*, revisits the themes and characterizations already familiar in Bulgakov's civil-war stories. The action takes place in Kiev during Petliura's forty-seven-day reign, ending on the night of 3 February 1919. The Turbin family (Turbin was the name of Bulgakov's grandmother) is overtly autobiographical. Aleksei Turbin is a former army doctor specializing in the treatment of venereal diseases. His younger brother, Nikolka, is a cadet at a military high school. Elena, their sister, is married to Talberg, an opportunist serving on the staff of the hetman. The story opens on a somber note, with the death of the Turbins' mother. At her funeral Father Aleksandr reads ominously from the Book of Revelation: "The third angel emptied his cup into the rivers and streams; and they became blood." The many apocalyptic images throughout *Belaia gvardiia* lend a sense of predetermination to the theme of a world on the verge of collapse. Even the three "miracles" of salvation that take place during the battles that rage outside the Turbins' cozy home cannot, in the end, forestall what seems destined in the stars. Neither can these miracles prevent the inevitable breakup of the family and, along with it, its traditions and cultural values.

Belaia gvardiia is a literary paean to Bulgakov's childhood city and home. As in the civil-war stories, the domestic realm acts as a symbolic antipode of the battle scenes. The cultured home, the civilized city, and faith in the monarchy come into conflict with the chaos of the countryside and the revolt of the peasantry. Thus the walls of the Turbin home become an important boundary between the two worlds. The familiar and worn furnishings of the home, encountered repeatedly by the family over the years, create a sense of timelessness in the apartment. Of particular importance are "the bronze lamp with the lampshade and the most wonderful bookcases smelling of mysterious old-fashioned chocolate with Natasha Rostova [of Leo Tolstoy's *Voina i mir* (War and Peace, 1865-1869)] and *The Captain's Daughter* [Pushkin's 1836 novel] in them." However, as in the plots of these works by Tolstoy and Pushkin, war will intrude on the Turbins' family happiness: "the light in the bronze lamp will go out, and *The Captain's Daughter* will be burned in the stove." Perhaps because Tolstoy and Pushkin set their tales of war in a distant era, they were able to conclude with the resurrection of family within a familiar social order. For Bulgakov, writing only a few years after the events depicted in *Belaia gvardiia* took place, this restoration proved impossible. Despite his lack of historical perspective, Bulgakov was able to perceive a causal relationship between a peaceful home and the chaos of war. Aleksei Turbin argues that the sole purpose of war itself should be to preserve the hearth."

The destruction of the home also signals the loss of the Turbins' cultural values and the collapse of social myths that were held as truth. This dynamic plays out especially in the themes of honor and flight. In *Belaia gvardiia*, it is not the doctor-hero Aleksei Turbin who runs, but his brother-in-law Talberg who leaves Kiev with the hetman, abandoning his wife, Elena. A lamp with the shade removed--reminiscent of the bare bulb in Leshchenko's headquarters in "Ia ubil"--becomes the emblem of Talberg's betrayal:

A potom . . . potom v komnate protivno, kak vo vsiakoi komnate, gde khaos ukladki, i eshche khuzhe, kogda abazhur sdernut s lampy. Nikogda. Nikogda ne sdergivaite abazhur s lampy! Abazhur sviashchenen. Nikogda ne ubegaite krys'ei pobezhkoi na neizvestnost' ot opasnosti. U abazhura dremlite, chitaite--pust' voet v'iuga,--zhdite, poka k vam pridut.

(And then . . . then it was repulsive in the room, as in any room filled with the chaos of packing and, still worse, when a shade is pulled off a lamp. Never. Never pull a shade off a lamp! A lampshade is sacred. Never run away from danger, scurrying like a rat into the unknown. Doze by the lampshade, read--let the blizzard howl--wait until they come to you.)

For Nikolka, Colonel Nai-Turs's command to the cadets to run from Petliura's invading forces is incomprehensible. Yet, in a world turned upside down, Nai-Turs acts out of bravery rather than cowardice, in the end sacrificing his life for his young troops. The issue of values--specifically the idea that the values embraced by the Whites were, in part, worth preserving--played a significant role in the troubled publication history of *Belaia gvardiia*. Its first thirteen chapters appeared in two parts in 1925 in the journal *Rossiia*, which was subsequently shut down for publishing a work so sympathetic to the Whites. Reviewers of the 1926 play version, *Dni Turbinykh*, attacked Bulgakov on the same grounds, although the production proved to be a favorite of Joseph Stalin, who

reportedly saw the play fifteen times. The novel was not published in its entirety until a Paris edition appeared in two volumes in 1927 and 1929.

Bulgakov's last work on his civil-war experiences, the play *Beg* (Flight), was banned in 1928 while still in rehearsal. The first full Russian publication was not until the 1962 volume *P'esy* (Plays). Again, the subject matter concerns the Whites, their defeat in southern Russia, and their mass immigration to Constantinople and Paris. With the destruction of home and family already a fait accompli, a motley assortment of people are thrown together in exile. Among them are Serafima Korzhukhina, a woman from St. Petersburg; Sergei Golubkov, a young intellectual; and Major-General Grigory Charnota. Originally titled "Serafima's Knight," the play focuses on a knight-dragon-captive maiden plot configuration. Thus, when the White general Roman Khludov threatens to execute Serafima, first Golubkov and then Charnota attempt to save her. Yet, as Haber points out, this plot is complicated by the compassion with which the characters treat each other. Their weaknesses are forgiven, with the recognition that to be human is to err (although, in Bulgakov's fictional universe, to act out of self-interest is a sin that cannot be expiated). And, as in *Master i Margarita*, redemption comes in the form of a homecoming. Referring to the "Vosem' son" (Eight Dreams) of the subtitle, Golubkov expresses his desire to wake from present reality and return to the home of the past.

Bulgakov's later plays turn away from the past and focus on the new Soviet reality. The plot of *Zoikina kvartira* (Zoya's Apartment, 1926; revised, 1935) is based on a newspaper report about a gambling operation fronted by a sewing shop in the apartment of a woman named Zoya Buialskaia. Bulgakov's play, which changes the gambling den to a bordello, is one of several satires aimed at life during the NEP, which, by allowing limited private enterprise, spawned thousands of illegal businesses. Despite ideological attacks on the play, *Zoikina kvartira* was a popular success. *Bagrovyi ostrov* (Crimson Island, 1928), based on Bulgakov's 1924 story of the same name, satirizes the 1917 Revolution, using characters from Jules Verne to represent the British and French interventionists, who value their own financial interests over the freedom of the revolutionary islanders. However, as J. A. E. Curtis points out in her 1981 study, the play also targets Soviet censorship of the 1920s.

Bulgakov's satirical *D'iavoliada* (Diaboliad, first published in *Nedra* in 1924), chronicles the absurdities of Moscow's labyrinthine bureaucracy. The plot of the novella is based on a small infraction that takes on enormous and fatal proportions. The quiet hero, Korotkov, an employee at a match factory, mistakes his boss's signature for the word *kal'sony* (underwear) and includes that item as part of an order. When his gaffe is discovered, he is fired. The rest of the novella chronicles Korotkov's attempts to explain himself to his boss, Kal'soner, by chasing him through the endless floors and corridors of Moscow's bloated bureaucracy. Because both Korotkov and Kal'soner have doubles, the pursuit becomes an exercise in bedevilment, as the hero soon realizes. Further frustrating the resolution of Korotkov's dilemma is the loss of his personal documents and, consequently, his identity. As Bulgakov writes in *Master i Margarita*, "Net dokumentov, net cheloveka" (Without documents, a person does not exist). From his vantage point of nonexistence, the only way out for Korotkov is suicide, which he commits by jumping from one of the tallest city buildings.

When *D'iavoliada* was published in a collection of the same name in 1925, Bulgakov also included the novella *Rokovye iaitsa* (Fatal Eggs, 1925). Although *Rokovye iaitsa* is set in the near future--the Soviet Republic of 1928--this science-fiction tale satirizes the present. One of the main targets was the breathless reporting by overly enthusiastic journalists in the 1920s about magnificent scientific advances that were close at hand. Although Bulgakov was fascinated by science, he was aware of the dangers inherent in ignoring the social and political implications of technological progress. The horror of chemical weaponry during World War I was fresh in his mind and later served as the basis for his apocalyptic play *Adam i Eva* (Adam and Eve, written in 1931 and first published in 1971). Faustian themes often appear in Bulgakov's work, and *Rokovye iaitsa* depicts a man striving to become a god. The hero of Bulgakov's story is a scholar, the scientist Professor Persikov, who, as head of the Zoological Institute, discovers a red ray that increases the size and aggressiveness of various organisms. In the midst of a chicken plague, a journalist publicizes the effect of the ray, and Rokk (Fate), the head of a collective farm, convinces the professor to use the ray on imported chicken eggs. However, the shipment of chicken eggs is confused with some reptile eggs the professor has been expecting, and the results are giant anacondas and reptiles that wander the countryside, causing horrible deaths and wreaking havoc. All attempts to subdue the reptiles--Rokk even tries playing a waltz from the opera version of Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin* (1823-1831, published in full in 1833)--fail. Finally, an unheard-of summer frost kills the monsters as they advance on Moscow.

As a succession of invading armies has discovered over the centuries, Russia's best defense is its climate. So, too, does the shipment of foreign reptiles meet its Waterloo in the frozen landscape of suburban Moscow. However, the manipulation of natural order by scientists and the State causes death and destruction. The practicality of the State has fatal consequences, but the open question concerns the scientist's responsibility for his own discovery. Although he is reluctant to do so, Persikov is pressured to turn his accidental discovery over to Rokk by a mysterious and highly placed government authority. When he finally agrees, Persikov says, "I wash my hands of it." Persikov is portrayed as both devil and god. The imagery that describes his working space at the Zoological Institute, where he reigns as supreme creator and destroyer of life, suggests a hellish atmosphere. As is rarely the case in Bulgakov's fiction, the *temnye* (dark) masses seem to understand the cosmic proportions of the disaster better than the intellectuals do. The religious and traditional beliefs of the provincial folk, scorned by the State and the scientific community, seem vindicated when nature, in the form of a "Moroznyi bog na mashine" (Frosty Deus ex Machina, the title of chapter 12) descends to right itself. When the professor's assistant tries to reproduce the conditions under which the professor discovered the red ray, he realizes that there is a missing element beyond knowledge that he cannot pinpoint scientifically. The parallels between the professor's scientific experiment and the State's social experiment suggest the limits of rationality.

Sobach'e serdtse (Heart of a Dog, 1925; published 1968) is another tale about a medical experiment with unexpected results. Again, Bulgakov examines the moral responsibilities of science as well as the links between social and scientific experimentation. *Sobach'e serdtse* has a more simplified plot structure than *Rokovye iaitsa*, allowing Bulgakov to treat more deeply the characterization and ethical dilemma of his hero, Professor Preobrazhensky. He also "humanizes" the dog upon which the professor conducts the experiment (which involves replacing the dog's pituitary gland and testicles with those from a murdered ne'er-do-well) by narrating parts of the story from the animal's point of view. Indeed, the professor and the dog, Sharik, share the same goals of a comfortable and well-ordered home with delicious meals, although what is merely a civilized existence for Preobrazhensky represents a kind of religious salvation for the starving, homeless mutt. When the professor first rescues the dog from the street, he treats the animal for the various ailments and diseases that have resulted from his indigent life. Bulgakov establishes a parallel between Preobrazhensky and the doctor in *Zapiski iunogo vracha*, who soon realizes that much of the disease he treats stems from the ignorance of his patients. In *Sobach'e serdtse*, the relationship between medicine and enlightenment again highlights the link between experimentation in the scientific and social realms. Bulgakov's belief in the futility of rapid education of the uncivilized masses is summed up when Preobrazhensky (whose name means "transformation" and also the religious concept of "transfiguration") admits the failure of his experiment: "Science does not yet know how to turn beasts into people."

Given Bulgakov's well-known love for dogs, it would be difficult to decide what he regarded as the nobler goal of Preobrazhensky's scientific inquiry: a more humanoid dog or a more dog-like human. In any case, the professor's attempt to create a new man with a "psychically lofty personality" fails, broadly speaking, because the transformation does not preserve the kindly heart of the dog. Sharik loses his tail and most of his fur, begins walking upright, and learns to talk. Although Preobrazhensky's creature, now called Sharikov, does retain some canine qualities--snapping at fleas and chasing cats--he continues on the course of moral degradation that the murdered criminal had begun. A repellent character, Sharikov acts as a disruptive force in the professor's home and life, inviting the housing committee to "settle" outsiders in the apartment and causing *razrukha* (general disorder). The foul-mouthed Sharikov refuses to become civilized and, as Preobrazhenky must admit, remains "at the lowest stage of development." Finally, the professor and his assistant, Bormental, on the brink of committing an act of violence, force Sharikov to undergo an operation to reverse the effects of the first procedure.

Sobach'e serdtse concerns itself with hierarchies and a sense of proper order. Preobrazhensky strives for order at home and in society, defending himself from the proletariat mindset. As a dog, Sharik gratefully welcomes the offer of a cultivated home; as a man, Sharikov invites the meddling head of the housing committee, Shvonder, into the professor's apartment. When Shvonder tries to appropriate and reallocate the professor's living and work space, Preobrazhensky's reaction reveals his unwillingness to use any room in a way in which it was not intended. Shvonder's absurd arrangement would have the professor eating in the bedroom, reading in the examining room, dressing in the reception room, operating in the maid's room, and examining patients in the dining room. "I humbly request that you go about your business," the professor retorts, "and give me the opportunity to take my lunch where all normal people take it, that is in the dining room, and not in the front hall or in the nursery." When Preobrazhensky appeals to an influential friend to help stave

off Shvonder's advances, he reveals a disturbing fact about the social structure: the ominous link between the sciences and Soviet officialdom. In his opposition to terror and violence--even for the sake of self-preservation--Preobrazhensky clings to an ethic from a past generation in a society of increasing practicality and expedience. Yet, despite his insistence on certain organizing principles of morality and society, the professor's work attempts to reverse the natural process of aging. As in *Rokovye iaitsa*, the hubris of the scientist threatens to destroy him.

Bulgakov complicates the issue of blame in *Sobach'e serdtse* by imbuing Preobrazhensky with qualities of both god and devil. To Sharik, the professor is a personal savior and a supreme being. He is "a wizard, magician, and sorcerer . . . a divinity . . . a pagan priest." But when the professor operates, the scene inspires horror:

Sharik lezhal na kovre v teni i, ne otryvaias', gliadel na uzhasnye dela. V otvratitel'noi edkoi i mutnoi zhuzhe v stekliannykh sosudakh lezagli chelovecheskie mozgi. Ruki bozhestva, obnazhennye po lokot', byli v ryzhikh rezinovykh perchatkakh, I skol'zkie tupye pal'tsy koposhilis' v izvilinakh. Vremenami bozhestvo vooruzhalos' malen'kim sverkaiushchim nozhikom i tikhon'ko rezalo zheltые uprugie mozgi.

(Sharik lay on the rug in a shadow and, not tearing himself away, watched terrible deeds. Human brains lay in repulsive, caustic, and turbid muck, in glass vessels. The hands of the divinity, bared to the elbow, were in rust-colored rubber gloves, and his slippery, stubby fingers were puttering about in the convolutions. At times the divinity armed itself with a small, glittering knife and slowly sliced the yellow elastic brains.)

Allusions to criminal or unnatural acts become explicit when Preobrazhensky and Bormental are compared to murderers, robbers, and, in one instance, "a satiated vampire." Although unwilling to condemn Bormental for saving his mentor from ruin at the hands of the uncouth Sharikov, the reader is left to wonder about the return of Sharik as a "slavish" dog, happy to serve his master while vaguely aware of his lost freedom. For Bulgakov, domestic comfort is a double-edged sword.

Because of their indictment of the proletariat and of the corruption of the early Soviet system, official reaction to *Zoikina Kwartira* and the *D'iavoliada* collection was condemnatory. And, as perhaps the best example of Soviet-era satire, *Sobach'e serdtse* was not published in the U.S.S.R. until 1987. Bulgakov's relationship with the censors grew progressively worse. By March 1929 all of his plays were banned from performance, and he was not allowed to publish. The action of the censors reflected a dangerous period in Soviet society. In February 1929 Communist leader Leon Trotsky, later regarded as the head of internal opposition to Stalinism, was exiled. The NEP, an experimental period of market economics initiated by Lenin in 1921, ended, and Stalin's show trials--theatrical miscarriages of justice designed to terrorize and indoctrinate the populace--began. Bulgakov's censure left him with neither a source of income nor a creative outlet.

During this period he met and fell in love with Elena Sergeevna Shilovskaia. Like Liubov Evgen'evna, Elena Sergeevna was interested in French culture, especially the theater. Bulgakov would read pages of his new play *Kabala sviatosh (Mol'er)* (*A Cabal of Hypocrites [Molière]*, written in 1931) alternately to his wife or to Elena Sergeevna. Bulgakov also sat with Elena Sergeevna on a bench at Patriarch's Pond, as he had done when he proposed to Liubov Evgen'evna, and described to her the beginning of what later became *Master i Margarita*. Bulgakov's writing was a part of the romance with Elena Sergeevna. When she returned from a summer vacation in 1929, Bulgakov handed her a "gift": a manuscript that was an early version of *Teatral'nyi roman* (*Theatrical Novel*, written in 1936; translated as *Black Snow: A Theatrical Novel*, 1967).

Bulgakov's desire to leave the Soviet Union was renewed in the 1930s. Throughout 1929 and 1930, he drafted or sent several letters to various members of the Soviet government, including Stalin, detailing his impossible situation--a writer banned from publishing--and vainly requesting permission to emigrate. Although never granted an exit visa, Bulgakov did receive a divorce from Liubov Evgen'evna. He and Elena Sergeevna were married in October 1932.

Despite the terrible strain on Bulgakov throughout the 1930s, he was remarkably productive. Elena Sergeevna's interest in his work and her ability to create a peaceful creative environment for him at home might have been, in part, responsible for Bulgakov's considerable output. The most momentous event to influence Bulgakov's productivity in the 1930s, however, was a telephone call from Stalin to the author on 18 April 1930. Because of this conversation, Bulgakov was appointed an assistant director of the Moscow Art Theater and began his creative life again. Milne hypothesizes that Stalin might also have shielded Bulgakov from the terrors of the decade: arrests,

interrogations, imprisonment, and death. Bulgakov's play "Batum" (written in 1938), a biography of the young Stalin, is sometimes regarded as grateful homage, although interpretations of the play range from satire and the grotesque to a macabre fascination on Bulgakov's part with Stalin. During this time, as he was working on *Master i Margarita*, Bulgakov wrote several plays and adaptations. Perhaps it was this intense period of persecution that moved his work onto a more philosophical level. In her essay "Reality and Illusion: Duality in Bulgakov's Theatre Plays," published in *Bulgakov: The Novelist-Playwright* (1995), Barbara J. Henry writes that in almost all of Bulgakov's plays he "calls for the necessity of balance between good and evil, and, correspondingly, a recognition of the ability of the individual to tip that balance in either direction, solely with the weight of conscience." *Mol'er* deals with the struggle between the artist and the censor, and with the glory of art and that of the tyrant. In Bulgakov's play *Poslednie dni (Pushkin)* (Last Days [Pushkin], written in 1935), the poet never appears, and his absence creates a powerful motif. *Teatral'nyi roman* satirizes the world of the theater, specifically the director Ivan Vasilievich Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theater. In the novel a young writer struggles with his own creativity while trying to protect his play from the whims of the theater director. Other plays strive to define a utopia for the creative persona. Both *Blazhenstvo* (Bliss, 1933) and its derivative, *Ivan Vasilievich* (1936), use time travel as a satirical device.

For Bulgakov the 1930s culminated with the work for which he is most widely known in the West. *Master i Margarita* is Bulgakov's masterpiece and "sunset" novel, as he called it, which he worked on from 1928 until his death in 1940. The eponymous Master is an historian who has written a novel about the historical Christ during the days leading up to his crucifixion. The critic Latunsky, part of the State-sponsored writers' bureaucracy, denounces the Master's work. The Master's cozy world of domesticity, which he shares with his lover Margarita, and his creativity are destroyed. Plagued by fear and anxiety, the Master burns his manuscript one stormy night and disappears. He later becomes a patient at Doctor Stravinsky's psychiatric clinic outside of Moscow. Many of the characters in *Master i Margarita* seek the care of Doctor Stravinsky. Certain inexplicable events that take place in Moscow during the first full moon of spring cause its inhabitants to question their sanity (and more than one literally to lose their heads). Aside from the sinister disappearances common in Moscow of the 1930s, most of the curious happenings are attributable to the devil, Woland, and his entourage, who pose as a troupe of black magicians and give stage shows. Woland invites Margarita, who has been mourning the Master for a year, to act as hostess at his Black Sabbath Ball. She complies and is granted her wish: to find the Master and his book. Woland restores the Master to her and returns the novel to him. As he does so, he assures the writer of the immortality of art, saying, "Rukopisi ne goriat" (Manuscripts don't burn). Then, through the machinations of the devil and the intervention of Ieshua, the Christ figure of the Master's novel, the couple is led to a domestic idyll in a distant dimension, where they are to live forever in peace.

In *Master i Margarita* Bulgakov attempts to restore the values and conditions out of which Russia's literary heritage emerged by returning his writer-hero to a cultural "home" of the past. Throughout the novel, Bulgakov associates literary creativity with the domestic realm, which becomes a symbolic battleground where the idealism of the artist confronts the positivistic ideology of the state. In *Master i Margarita* the new Soviet State's utilitarian understanding of literary production is demonstrated through its misuse of the home. Bulgakov examines the losses of home and literature as cultural referents and part of the eternal tension between the rational and irrational, a thematic nexus seen earlier in *Traktat o zhilishche*. In Bulgakov's work the home ideally preserves and conveys a sense of continuity between the present and the literary traditions of the past. When the forces of rationalism reduce the intangible significance of the domestic and literary spheres to useful functions, the ties between the cultural past and present reality weaken. In *Master i Margarita* the "antihome," as Iurii Mikhailovich Lotman calls it in his *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (1990), becomes the locus of cultural displacement. The bureaucrats, writers, and citizens who treat home and literature as mere commodities act as agents of the antihome. Bulgakov signals the perversion of the cultural symbols of home and literature by associating the antihome and its agents with ironic, banal, and often hilarious invocations of Russia's literary monuments. When references to other literary works suggest the theme of home (for example, the mention of Pushkin's *Kapitanskaia dochka* in *Belaia gvardiia*), Bulgakov underscores the connection between literature and the domestic realm while also highlighting the disruption of the link itself. Ultimately, the ironic references to the "masters" of Russian literature demonstrate that the true writer--like Bulgakov and his Master--is homeless within Soviet society.

The building that houses MASSOLIT (an acronym Bulgakov invented to poke fun at the Russian penchant for acronyms), home to the Writers' Union, is one of the most prominent antihomes in *Master i Margarita*. Supposedly named for the nineteenth-century dramatist Aleksandr Sergeevich Griboedov, the building actually represents the ironic debasement of the literary tradition of its

namesake. The Griboedov House demonstrates how bureaucratic management rationalizes the essentially irrational phenomenon of literary inspiration. Its halls are lined by the various departmental offices that administer the writing process: "Waiting List for Paper," "Cashiers Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5," "Sketch Writers: Personal Accounts," "Editorial Board," and so forth. Within the context of Bulgakov's novel, the desiccation of Russia's rich literary tradition is furthered by the MASSOLIT writers themselves, who regard authorship as a commodity. The membership card issued by the Writers' Union, for example, does not testify to the immeasurable quality of *literaturnost'* (literariness) in an author's work but offers the expedient writer privileges and creature comforts usually off-limits to the rest of the Soviet public. These perquisites include admission into the Griboedov House restaurant and access to the first-rate MASSOLIT apartments and dachas. The inordinately long line at the door of the "Housing Problems" office indicates the writers' excessive concern for their living arrangements, as does the heated exchange among the twelve writers who sit vainly waiting for Berlioz, the head of the Union. They do not know that a trolley, as predicted by the mysterious Woland, professor of black magic, has already severed Berlioz's head, the locus of rationality.

A second exchange over the definition of a writer precedes the destruction of the Griboedov House in one of the final chapters of *Master i Margarita*. Appearing at MASSOLIT just before their departure from Moscow, Woland's cohorts Korov'ev and Begemot regard the building in mock admiration. "How lovely to think of so much talent ripening under that roof," Korov'ev says. Posing as writers, the two attempt to enter the restaurant, only to be turned away by the woman at the entrance, who insists that one cannot be a writer without the proper identification. Citing Fyodor Dostoevsky as an example, Korov'ev protests that authorship is defined by the quality of aesthetic production rather than conferred by state-issued documentation:

Tak vot, chtoby ubedit'sia v tom, chto Dostoevskii--pisatel', neuzheli zhe nuzhno sprashivat' u nego udostoverenie? Da voz'mite vy liubykh piat' stranits iz liubogo ego romana, i bez vsiakogo udostovereniia vy ubedites', chto umeete delo s pisatelem.

(And so, in order to convince oneself that Dostoevsky is a writer, is it really necessary to ask him for a certificate? Why, take any five pages from any novel of his and without any certificate whatsoever you will be convinced that you are dealing with a writer.)

As the gatekeeper of the official Soviet writing establishment, the woman cannot comprehend Korov'ev's objections to the practical approach by the Writers' Union to literary production. She can only affirm the obvious: "Dostoevsky is dead." Begemot protests, "Dostoevsky is immortal!"

In another instance, Bulgakov's narrator links the improper use of home space with a parody of Russia's literary tradition. Notified of Berlioz's gruesome death, his nephew Poplavsky rushes to Moscow from Kiev. He does not make the trip out of grief. Rather, he is anxious to acquire the rights to his uncle's apartment, a precious commodity during the housing crisis. "An apartment in Moscow" the narrator observes. "That is serious. Practical people know that such moments do not repeat themselves." Poplavsky is this type of *delovoi* (practical) person, quickly assessing the material value of Berlioz's apartment. However, by treating the home as a commodity, Poplavsky associates himself with the antihome and, thus, the degeneration of literature. He arrives at the apartment only to experience a perplexing encounter with Woland's pernicious entourage. Bulgakov's narrator remarks ironically on the similarity between Poplavsky's unceremonious expulsion from the apartment and the first scene of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1875-1877), in which domesticity also serves as a measure of moral conduct. Woland's assistant Azazello heaves the contents of Poplavsky's suitcase, including a roasted chicken wrapped in greasy waxed paper, down the staircase, and Poplavsky after them. Surveying the scene, the narrator recalls the opening line of *Anna Karenina*: "Vse smeshalos' v dome Oblonskikh, kak spravedlivo vyrazilis znamentyi pisatel' Lev Tolstoi. Imenno tak i skazal by on v dannom sluchae. Da! Vse smeshalos' v glazakh u Poplavskogo" ('Everything was a mess in the Oblonsky's house,' as Leo Tolstoy so aptly put it, a remark which applied exactly to the present situation. Everything was a blur for Poplavsky).

Lotman notes how buildings with symbolic value--the Griboedov House and the Dramlit building, where the members of the Writers' Union work and live--serve as targets for Bulgakov's sense of cosmic justice. The case of Nikanor Ivanovich Bosoi, chairman of the Housing Committee of Berlioz's building, however, shows how the representatives of these antihomes are themselves morally judged. A notoriously corrupt housing official, Bosoi accepts a four-hundred-ruble bribe from Korov'ev. Through Korov'ev's machinations, the money magically turns into illegal foreign currency. Bosoi is so distraught by the inexplicable turn of events that he is taken to Doctor Stravinsky's psychiatric hospital, where he admits to taking bribes. For him, living space only

provides a means for financial gain. Accordingly, Bosoi also uses Russia's literary monuments for utilitarian purposes. In a dream on the night of his arrest, Bosoi and his fellow money hoarders are forced to listen to an aesthetic representation of their own prosaic crime: Pushkin's "Skupoi rytsar" (The Miserly Knight, 1830). Bosoi is only familiar with Pushkin's name insofar as it is invoked in crude expressions of petty financial concern:

Nikanor Ivanovich do svoego sna sovershenno ne znal proizvedenii poeta Pushkina, no samogo ego znal prekrasno i ezhednevno po neskol'ku raz proiznosil frazy vrode: "A za kvartiru Pushkin platit' budet"" ili: "Lampochku na lestnitse, stalo byt', Pushkin vyvintil", " Neft', stalo byt', Pushkin pokupat' budet""

(Until he had his dream, Nikanor Ivanovich did not know the works of the poet Pushkin at all, but Pushkin he knew very well. A couple of times each day he came out with such phrases as: "Who's going to pay for the apartment--Pushkin"" or: "Who unscrewed the lightbulb on the staircase--Pushkin, huh"" "Who's going to buy heating oil, Pushkin, huh"")

Bosoi's cultural illiteracy, underscored by the ironic comparison between him and Pushkin's knight (*bosoi* and *skupoi*), emphasizes the discontinuity between the literary tradition of the past and present-day Soviet society. Comic parallels like these show how the present is alienated from the cultural past when the relationship between home and its inhabitants no longer reflects emotional and aesthetic values but conveys only rational and financial concerns.

In *Master i Margarita*, the Master's basement apartment becomes the focus of a struggle between the intangible ways of being at home and the forces of rationalism. The rooms where the Master and Margarita spend their days and where the Master writes his novel are first characterized and cultivated by creativity, love, and the rituals of homemaking. When the Master's novel is censured and a neighbor covetous of the apartment denounces him as ideologically unsound, home and novel are destroyed. Although Woland is able to restore both, the triumph of the couple's homecoming remains uncertain and incomplete. The Master renounces his writing, destroying any hope that the basement will again hum with creative energy. The forces of the material world prevent the restoration of the security that the symbolic walls of the home provided.

The Master's novel chronicles the days leading up to the execution in Ershalaim (Jerusalem) of the soft-spoken philosopher Ieshua (Jesus), depicting the terrible decision of Pontius Pilate, the betrayal and murder of Judas of Iscariot, and the anguish of Matthew Levi. Like the poem by fellow writer Ivan Bezdomnyi about the life of Christ, the Master's novel is condemned, at least in part, for its treatment of Ieshua's death as history rather than myth. The four Ershalaim chapters dovetail with the Moscow chapters to create a labyrinthine network of thematic parallels. Drawing connections between the Master and Bezdomnyi, but also the Master and Woland, the interspersed Ershalaim chapters also result in myriad ironic value inversions about, for example, the nature of evil and the authenticity of creative vision.

However, the Ershalaim chapters--one an eye-witness account by Woland, another Bezdomnyi's dream vision, and the last two part of the Master's recovered manuscript--function as more than an interpolated novel within *Master i Margarita*. Although separated by more than one thousand years, the events of the Moscow and Ershalaim chapters take place during the same days of the spring lunar cycle that mark Passover. Attesting to the unity of human history, the temporal relationship between the two cities creates a universal context for the philosophical issues at play in Bulgakov's work: the rational versus the irrational, good versus evil, illusion versus truth, the natural versus the supernatural world. In Moscow's positivistic society such oppositions lead to the kind of schizophrenia that plagues Bezdomnyi and renders Muscovites unable to distinguish between black magic and political subterfuge. Bulgakov suggests a thematic link between the transcendence of these oppositions and the idea of home that was so central to both his life and work.

Throughout his adult life Bulgakov attempted to define a domestic sphere of literary activity that provided him a symbolic tie to the past. Unable to establish such a home within Soviet culture, Bulgakov faced real homelessness, which, in a March 1930 letter to the Soviet government, he linked to the demand for utilitarian literature. In the letter Bulgakov complained that, because of his refusal to write a "Communist play," he was treated maliciously in the press. Claiming that he could not be of "any use at home in his own fatherland," Bulgakov requested permission to leave the country. "I need to see the world," Bulgakov wrote, "and once I have seen it, to return." Bulgakov's desire to see the world, like that of the Master, was answered only with confinement. Four years after he composed the letter, still taunted by Soviet officials with unrealized promises of an exit visa, Bulgakov wrote: "I am a prisoner."

Faced with a kind of house arrest in the present, Bulgakov took refuge in the past. Concurrently with work on *Master i Margarita*, Bulgakov was writing stage adaptations of the lives and works of Pushkin, Gogol, and Tolstoy. In the letter to Stalin in which he requested permission to leave the Soviet Union, Bulgakov tried to establish a nonironic connection between himself and Gogol. Quoting heavily from Gogol's work, Bulgakov argued that in order to appreciate Russia he must view it from afar. Ultimately, Bulgakov was forced to witness the events of his time from within the Soviet Union. During his lifetime Bulgakov was not able to attain the kind of domestic idyll that he creates for the Master, although he fulfilled his own desire to carry on Russia's rich literary tradition. Like Woland, Bulgakov faithfully believed that "manuscripts don't burn" and that true creativity, like Dostoevsky, is immortal.

Master i Margarita stands as Bulgakov's testament about the power of art to transcend the oppressive confines of history, if not the boundaries of his own homeland. In the spring of 1939 Bulgakov read *Master i Margarita* in its entirety to a group of friends but continued to dictate revisions to his wife while battling his failing health and eyesight. This sense of urgency might have stemmed from Bulgakov's repeated prediction throughout 1939 that he was living his final year; he had begun suffering from sclerosis of the kidneys, the same disease that killed his father. On 10 March 1940 he died. Bulgakov was buried in the prestigious Novodevichii Cemetery in Moscow. Even in death Bulgakov continues to share a symbolic link with one of his "masters." On his grave is a stone taken from the tombstone of Gogol. Part of this stone, known as "Golgotha" because it suggests the hill in Jerusalem, was removed from Gogol's grave and stored for years before Elena Sergeevna saw the stone and incorporated it into Bulgakov's gravesite.