



## **The Mythic Structure of Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita**

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In this essay, Haber finds that Bulgakov's use of the mythic stories of Faust and Christ does not follow strict, linear interpretation but rather diffuses elements throughout to create a new mythic structure. Haber is M.A. and Ph.D., Harvard University, B.A., University of Michigan, Professor Emerita, University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Center Associate, Davis Center

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The first appearance of Mikhail Bulgakov's ***The Master and Margarita*** in 1966 and 1967<sup>1</sup> bestowed upon Russian literature one of its most beguiling yet puzzling works. From the first the novel was recognized both for its literary merit and for its enigmatic quality, and numerous literary scholars and critics took upon themselves the demanding yet exhilarating task of wending their way through the maze of plot and subplot, literary, religious, and socio-historical allusions. Some have explored the novel's genre, associating it with Menippean satire;<sup>2</sup> others have investigated its relation to the Faust legend, to devil lore, to the Bible and Biblical history.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, all the industry and cogitation devoted to ***The Master and Margarita***, while resulting in some interesting and valuable articles, have not thus far produced a consensus either as to its structural principles or its meaning.

A fundamental task in dealing with both of these questions has been to explore the relations of the novel to its mythic framework,<sup>4</sup> that is, to the Faust legend on the one hand, and to the gospel story of Christ and Pontius Pilate on the other. Attempts to do this have so far produced varied and contradictory results. While one critic tells us that the Master is a Faustian character, we are informed by another that this timid and frightened soul bears little resemblance to Faust. Instead, one learns that it is Margarita who plays the Faustian role in Bulgakov's novel or, more surprisingly, that Koroviev, the devilish interpreter and choirmaster, is in fact Faust.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, we hear from one side that the Master is a Christ figure and from another that he more closely resembles Pontius Pilate.<sup>6</sup> The devil, Woland, true to his role in the novel, has also been a breeder of confusion. He has been regarded both as the embodiment of evil (taking the form of either the traditional Satan, or Goethe's Mephistopheles, or even Stalin) and as a rather likeable and beneficent fellow.<sup>7</sup> One is tempted to conclude that Bulgakov, who described with such evident relish the chaos which the powers of darkness visited upon the literary Moscow of his time, purposely continued the devil's work by bequeathing his novel to future generations of literary scholars.

It seems that the source of all this confusion lies in the fact that while Bulgakov makes use of the stories of Faust and Christ, he does not transport their plots and characters whole into his tale of modern Moscow. Rather, he approaches the myths as complexes of plot motifs and character traits, which can be broken down to appear in quite different combinations in his main plot. Thus, particular traits of Pilate, for example, might appear in several different characters and combined within a single character with features attributed to other personages in the mythic plots. Bulgakov, indeed, reminds one of Gogol's demon, who "chopped up the whole world into thousands of pieces and then mixed them all indiscriminately together."<sup>8</sup> In Bulgakov's case, however, the chopping is not "indiscriminate," nor does it result in Gogolian absurdity. Instead, as I hope to demonstrate, the author, in adapting and modifying the timeless myths of Faust and Christ, gives significance and value to a world otherwise singularly devoid of meaning.

### **Faust 1: Woland and Mephistopheles**

By his choice of an epigraph Bulgakov immediately alerts the reader to the importance for understanding his work of Goethe's *Faust* and, more specifically, of the Faustian devil.<sup>9</sup> In his twentieth-century Moscow, as in Goethe's Renaissance Germany, "part of that power which eternally wills evil and eternally works good" is going to make its appearance. Yet a simple identification of Woland/Satan and Mephistopheles is unconvincing; both the nature of the two devils and the results of their actions contrast too sharply. I believe that the explanation for their very different essences lies in the fact that while they both are, in a way, "willers of evil," the prevailing norms of humanity upon which they try to wreak destruction are quite unlike. This becomes especially clear if one compares the beginnings of *Faust* and ***The Master and Margarita***. For further analysis it is necessary to recount the opening of *Faust* and its significance.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of the first act of *Faust* we encounter the hero in a state of profound spiritual crisis. He has reached the limits of human learning and is tormented almost to the point of committing suicide by his inability to go still further, to attain knowledge of the superhuman through communion with the spirit world. Still earlier, in the Job-like "Prologue in Heaven," it was implied that this restless striving for ever greater awareness is the quintessential human trait. When God asks Mephistopheles how man is faring, the latter mockingly describes this very same restlessness by comparing it to the futile jumping of a grasshopper: "'& he to me / a long-legged grasshopper appears to be, / that springing flies, and flying springs, / and in the grass the same old ditty sings".<sup>11</sup> He later describes Faust, who possesses this quality to the highest degree: "'No earthly meat or drink the fool suffices. / His spirit's ferment far aspireth, / half conscious of his frenzied, crazed unrest'" (ll. 301-3).

At least one of the devil's goals in tempting Faust is to annihilate this most human of traits, to cause his victim to sink into a state of contented lethargy. This can be seen in the wager the two make at the beginning of their acquaintance: FAUST: When on an idler's bed I stretch myself in quiet, then let, at once, my record end! & canst thou with rich enjoyment fool me: let that day be the last for me! The bet I offer!  
MEPHISTO: Done!

(ll. 1692-93; 1696-98)

In pursuance of his aim the devil uses two kinds of weapons, one material and the other intellectual. The former, as the wager indicates, consists of bestowing upon Faust all that he desires, over-whelming him with experiences and sensations of all kinds so that ultimately he will be sated and will sink into undisturbed repose. The intellectual weapon is more subtle: Goethe's devil assumes the rather attractive role of the witty modern skeptic who, through mockery, attempts to annihilate all higher values. As Faust himself describes the devil, "'cold and scornful, he / demeans me to myself, and with a breath, / a word, transforms thy [nature's] gifts to nothingness'" (ll. 3244-46). Stuart Atkins concludes, "If [Mephistopheles] is hatred of being, creativity, love, moral action, aspiration, it is less because hate, for example, is the opposite of love, than because sceptical nihilism is the very antithesis of life itself--at least of life as something more than mere physical existence."<sup>12</sup>

Mephistopheles's wiles fail, however, because, although under the devil's influence Faust falls into error temporarily, his (Faust's) striving never ceases and he ultimately overcomes. Indeed, it is suggested that it is only through this process of erring and overcoming that Faust keeps climbing to higher levels of awareness. As the Lord says in the "Prologue in Heaven," "Men err as long as they do strive" (l. 317). It is in this sense that Mephistopheles, the willer of evil, finally "works good."

The opening of *The Master and Margarita* indicates a prevalent view of mankind that has little in common with Goethe's heroic vision. At the beginning of Bulgakov's novel, as of *Faust*, we are introduced to a very learned and respected man, in this case, the literary editor and head of the literary organization MASSOLIT,<sup>13</sup> Mikhail Aleksandrovich Berlioz. But while Faust desperately seeks communion with spirits, Berlioz is complacently instructing the ignorant young poet Ivan Nikolaevich Homeless that the realm of gods and devils does not exist at all.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, as his conversation with Homeless indicates, in this world "truth" is not attained through strenuous spiritual and intellectual activity or, indeed, through experience but is imposed from without.

If Faust is the ideal Renaissance man, then Berlioz, with his denial of all wonders, with his complacent belief in rationalistic materialism, could be looked upon as the norm of the modern. (His practice of intellectual coercion and social command<sup>15</sup> of literature give him, of course, a particularly Soviet coloration.) And if Berlioz is the typical human of his time and place, it is clear that such a devil as Mephistopheles, with his skeptical nihilism,

would have no work in Soviet Russia at all. Indeed one might say that, with the aid of both his weapons, the material and intellectual, Mephistopheles has already conquered in Soviet Moscow. In Bulgakov's vision, the Muscovites, and especially the conformist writers and theatrical people who are the main butt of his satire, have already succumbed to the double lure of material comfort and the atheistic dogma of Marxism-Leninism. It is already in the state of ideal mental torpor which Mephistopheles envisioned for mankind: "Would he just lay amid the grass he grows in!" (l. 291).

Bulgakov gives us hints throughout the novel of the conquest of the Mephistophelean spirit, of what might be called the "lesser diabolical," in the Moscow of the late 1920s and 1930s. For example, the triumph of material temptation is clearly evident in the description of the restaurant at Griboedov's, the home of MASSOLIT:

*Dripping with perspiration, the waiters carried sweating beer mugs high over their heads, shouting hoarsely and with hatred, "Sorry, citizen!" Somewhere in a loudspeaker a voice commanded: "Karsky shashlik, one! Zubrovka, two! Tripe polonais!" The thin high voice no longer sang but howled, "Hallelujah!" The clashing of the golden cymbals occasionally covered even the clatter of the dishes which the dishwashers were sending down the chute into the kitchen. In short, hell.<sup>16</sup>*

The description of Archibald Archibaldovich, the diabolical director of the restaurant, shows the Mephistophelean denial of the mysterious and marvelous in this hell:

*It was said, it was said by mystics that there had been a time when the handsome man did not wear a frock coat, but a wide leather belt with revolvers tucked into it, and his raven hair was tied with scarlet silk, and he commanded a brig that sailed the Caribbean under a dead black flag bearing the sign of the skull.*

*But no, no! The seductive mystics are lying. There are no Caribbean Seas in the world, no reckless buccaneers are sailing them, and no corvettes are chasing them, no cannon smoke drifts low over the waves. There is nothing, and there never was! There is only a stunted linden tree out there, an iron fence, and the boulevard beyond it. & And ice melting in the bowl, and someone's bovine bloodshot eyes at the next table, and fear, fear. &*

(pp. 66-67)

It is fitting that the poet Ivan Homeless, seeking to exorcise the devil and armed with icon and candle, wreaks such havoc at Griboedov's instead.

If Soviet Moscow has already been conquered by Mephistopheles, then the later diabolical arrival, Woland, whose purpose is to "work evil" in this society, must be of a very different sort. And indeed he is. He is very far from being a skeptic; in fact, at the very beginning of the novel, he is placed in the position (highly incongruous for a devil) of asserting the existence of Christ. And it is he who gives to those two atheists, Berlioz and Homeless, the vision of Jesus in his fateful meeting with Pontius Pilate. Throughout his conversation with Berlioz, Woland counters the editor's complacent determinism (he *does not* know what he is going to do that evening) and rationalism (his head *will* be cut off by a female Komsomol member). And of course the devil proves to be absolutely

right.

The death of Berlioz certainly shows Woland to be a power of destruction (in fact, in a rather more literal sense than is Goethe's Mephistopheles). But by destroying the facile skepticism and self-satisfied inertia which Berlioz so fully represents, the devil brings to life other qualities: the marvelous and the dynamic, which until then lay totally dormant. Furthermore, throughout the novel, in all the varied activities of the devils in Moscow, the same end is served. The chaos which they rain down on the many pompous and privileged mediocrities reveals the underlying deadness of their way of life. As one Soviet critic has put it:

*The world of ordinary notions has collapsed, been smashed to smithereens, it is unclear what is waiting ahead--and--[the Muscovites] are crushed, annihilated, and nothing can hide from us that their essence--is the absence of any essence. They are empty--they all wholly consist only of their bribes, apartment squabbles, gold ten-ruble pieces under the floor, intrigues, bureaus, habits, jobs, the belly. This is a milieu without spiritual values, the philistine world, which has no inner support, a world wholly consisting of external circumstances, surrounding a person by a quirk of fate, in which a man is not free. If these circumstances are no longer, if they collapse somewhere--that's all, the man is no longer.<sup>17</sup>*

By making a shambles of this stultified world, the devils liberate it from the deadening bonds of probability, rationality, and privilege, and bring to life a marvelous world guided by spirits--colorful, funny, and totally unpredictable.

All of this suggests that, at least with regard to the devil, ***The Master and Margarita*** is *Faust* turned upside down. In Goethe's work the hero is seeking for ever higher levels of existence, while the devil attempts to annihilate life. As Mephistopheles says of himself: I am the Spirit that denies, and rightly so, for all things, from the Void called forth, deserve to be destroyed-- 'twere better, then, were naught created.

(II. 1338-41)

In Bulgakov's world, on the contrary, mankind is dominated by life-denying forces, while the devil, in putting these forces into disarray, is reasserting life. Woland's words, addressed to Berlioz's skull at Satan's ball, seem to confirm such a view:

*You have always been a fervent proponent of the theory that, once a head is severed, man's life ceases, he becomes ashes and sinks into nonbeing. & May it be fulfilled, then! You will sink into nonbeing, and I shall be delighted to drink from the vessel into which you are transformed--to drink for being!*

(p. 287)

## **Faust 2: the Master and Margarita**

In ***The Master and Margarita*** the only humans who have escaped the lures of Mephistopheles are the two title characters. Their significance becomes clearer, as does

Woland's, after an examination of Goethe's *Faust*. Most important in this regard is the main action of part 1, the love story of Faust and the simple village girl Margarete.

It is interesting and, I believe, significant that while there is only passing mention of Faust toward the end of Bulgakov's novel, the name Margarete, which appears in the title and is also the name of the heroine, is given considerable prominence. This suggests that the author has modified the perspective in his retelling of the Faust story, just as he has in his version of the story of Christ. In both cases characters who play secondary roles in the earlier stories (Margarete and Pontius Pilate) have become at least as important as the main protagonists (Faust and Christ). While this has been recognized in the case of Pontius Pilate, little attention has been paid to the significance of Goethe's Margarete in Bulgakov's novel. This is because the similarities between Margarete and Bulgakov's Margarita appear to be slight. The true significance of Goethe's heroine (whom I will henceforth call Gretchen, her diminutive, to avoid confusion) is both more pervasive and less obvious, as I shall show.

In trying to establish some relationship between the heroes of *Faust* and ***The Master and Margarita***, the first tendency is to compare the Master and Faust. There are indeed similarities between the two. Faust is a man who is forever seeking knowledge, searching for fundamental truths. The extraordinary force of his creative intellect and his ability to spurn received wisdom in his quest are underlined by the contrast between him and the more ordinary scholar of his time, his assistant Wagner. The Master also, as writer of the novel on Pontius Pilate, shows his ability to divine the truth and to shun the commonplace of his day. He is contrasted to the throngs of other writers who make their appearance in the novel by his willingness to follow his creative intuition rather than accept externally imposed verities. One need only compare him to Ivan Homeless. Both men have written works on Jesus Christ. But while Homeless's poem was written on social command (although he was "tripped up" by his "imaginative powers," p. 5), the Master wrote only out of inner necessity. By following his inner voice he has succeeded in recreating with great verisimilitude what we are led to believe by the whole course of the novel is the true story and has culled from it its great moral significance.

If, however, the Master shares with Faust the quest for truth aided by creative intellect, it is nevertheless clear that his is hardly a Faustian personality. Faust's most striking trait is his constant striving, his fearlessness in the face of the greatest adversities. Even when very old and blind, he does not succumb to care but plans new and grandiose projects. With virtually his last breath he declares, "He only earns his freedom and existence / Who daily conquers them anew" (pt. 2, ll. 11575-76).

The Master, in comparison, cuts rather a pathetic figure; at the first attacks of hostile critics he is overcome by deep depression, becomes afraid of the dark, and feels the octopus tentacles of madness clutching him. He succumbs to fear and, when we first meet him, is an inmate in an insane asylum, that place of undisturbed sedation and rest. Later, when abducted from the hospital by the devils, he says, "'I no longer have any dreams, and there's no inspiration, either & they have broken me, I am bored, and I want to go to the basement'" (***Romany***, p. 708).

If the Master's fear and madness distinguish him from the dauntless Faust, these very same traits ally him with Goethe's heroine, Gretchen. On the plot level one finds some striking parallels between the two. The simple and virtuous Gretchen out of passionate love oversteps the bounds of socially accepted behavior and has a love affair with Faust. She has a baby, and, alone, tormented by guilt and the taunts of the townspeople, and terrified by the threats of public ostracism, she murders her child.

The Master has an illicit love affair with Margarita. The heart of their relationship, in a sense its spiritual offspring, is his novel on Pontius Pilate. The creation of this novel (like the birth of Gretchen's baby) goes beyond the norms of behavior in Stalinist Russia. The

Master, confronted with the "moral" outrage of the literary world, is overcome by terror and destroys the manuscript, that beloved child of his and Margarita's souls. Gretchen ends up in prison, with execution awaiting her. The Master, it is hinted, also spends some time in prison<sup>18</sup> but finally settles in an insane asylum (whose function in the Soviet Union, one must note, is not always distinguishable from that of a prison).

Yet another indication of the tie between Gretchen and the Master occurs after Satan's ball. Margarita, before requesting the release of the Master, feels she must beg the devils to forgive the Gretchen-like Frieda, whom she met at the ball. It is only after the child-murderer Frieda has been freed from her punishment that Margarita feels she can ask for the liberation of the Master who, in burning his manuscript, has committed an act analogous to Frieda's, although on the spiritual level.

Thus, Bulgakov has fashioned his Master from an amalgam of character traits of Goethe's hero and heroine. While he is a seeker of truth and a creative personality like Faust, at a time of danger and moral crisis he, like Gretchen, succumbs to fear and madness and destroys his "child," his manuscript. Bulgakov has not simply created a Russian Faust or anti-Faust; instead, the Master displays that combination of creative gifts and failures of courage which Bulgakov must have observed among the most talented men of his time (and, insofar as the Master is an autobiographical portrait, in himself).<sup>19</sup>

Turning now to Margarita, we find that a similar fusing of traits in Goethe's characters goes into her makeup. It is Margarita who in many respects plays the Faustian role in the novel. She, after all, is the one who makes the pact with the devil and thereby manifests Faustian courage. Although aware of the danger of dealing with Satan, Margarita fearlessly agrees to everything: "I know what I'm going to. But I'll go to anything because of him &" (**Romany**, p. 644). The courage it requires to carry out the role of queen at Satan's ball is emphasized by words spoken to Margarita:

*"Don't be frightened," Koroviev calmed her sweetly, taking Margarita by the arm. & And in general I will allow myself the boldness to advise you, Margarita Nikolaevna, never to be afraid of anything."*

(**Romany**, p. 667)

Later Woland says, "And so I beg you! I thank you ahead of time. Don't lose control and don't be afraid of anything" (**Romany**, p. 676). And, in spite of some terrifying moments, Margarita succeeds in carrying out her difficult role with style and spirit.

But, although Margarita displays a Faustian temperament, she bears more resemblance to Gretchen in the motivation for her behavior. She does not make her pact with the devil to attain knowledge or universal experience; she does it out of love: "I'll go to anything because of him. & I am perishing for love" (**Romany**, p. 644). In both *Faust* and ***The Master and Margarita***, it is the men who are endowed with formidable intellectual and creative gifts, which the women can only admire or at best encourage. Margarita's is a double devotion to the Master and to his novel:

*He who called himself Master worked feverishly on his novel, and the novel came to absorb the unknown woman, too. &*

*She foretold him fame, she urged him on, and began to call him Master. She waited impatiently for the promised final words about*

*the Fifth Procurator of Judea, repeated the phrases that especially pleased her in a loud sing-song, and said that the novel was her life.*

(pp. 159-60)

Gretchen, although incapable of Margarita's critical appreciation, is overawed by Faust's intellect and knowledge: Dear God! However is it, such a man can think and know so much? I stand ashamed and in amaze, and must assent to all he says.

(ll. 3211-14)

Thus the Master combines Faust's intellectual gifts with Gretchen's "feminine" weakness, while in Margarita the courage of Faust and Gretchen's loving heart are blended. It is Margarita's combination of courage and love which ultimately serves to rescue the Master from the mental hospital and from the larger imprisonment of Soviet life. Here also Bulgakov adapts to his purpose plot motifs from *Faust*.

Both parts of *Faust* end with rescue scenes. In part 1 Faust, with the aid of Mephistopheles, attempts to rescue Gretchen from prison. She, however, repelled by the evil of the devil, refuses to go with her beloved and, as a reward, ascends to heaven. At the end of part 2 the situation is reversed. The soul of the dying Faust is about to be spirited off by Mephistopheles to hell when, through the intercession of Gretchen with her love, he is saved and transported to heaven.

In ***The Master and Margarita*** the changes in the nature of the characters allow Bulgakov to merge these two endings. Margarita, a fusion of Faust's courage and Gretchen's love, is operating in concert with a devil who is no longer opposed to heavenly values but represents a complementary force. They rescue the Master from the hospital, which exemplifies fully the earthly Mephistophelean forces. They then escape from this deadly hell on earth, to be granted, if not the light, then at least eternal peace.

### **Pontius Pilate and Yeshua Ha-nozri**

The discussion of Bulgakov's adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* indicates the correct approach to the second mythic line in the novel, the story of Jesus and Pontius Pilate. The version presented in the Master's novel differs substantially from the familiar gospel accounts. Therefore it is necessary to begin with an examination of the retelling.

In the Master's version the center of attention is Pontius Pilate and his spiritual conflict. The inner struggle arises during his encounter with Jesus, who here takes the form of the ragged vagabond, Yeshua Ha-Nozri. The two characters appear as antipodal figures. Pilate is presented as the tyrannical and evil-tempered representative of state power. Thus, we first see him against the grand, ominous background of Herod's palace, that monument of earthly power, and he is introduced to us by his official title, the Procurator of Judea.

In comparison, Yeshua seems weak, vulnerable, even mildly comic. It is the human rather than the divine that is emphasized in Bulgakov's Christ. His story is stripped of the miracles which mark the Gospel tellings; even his Hebrew name, Yeshua Ha-Nozri, is restored in order to remove the divine associations of Jesus of Nazareth (as well as to create a sense of historical verisimilitude). Furthermore, Yeshua is deprived of Jesus's band of disciples and, it seems, of his mass following. Only a single disciple, Matthu Levi, remains to him. Therefore, in his encounter with Pilate, Yeshua becomes a mere solitary man, the individual with his private vision, confronting the awesome power of the state.<sup>20</sup>

The first stage of this confrontation shows the apparent pathetic weakness of Yeshua. By addressing Pilate with the simple human title, "good man," he incites the wrath of the Procurator, who insists that his official title, "Hegemon," be used. As punishment for his offense Yeshua is whipped by the centurion, Rat-killer, a representative of the state's brute power. He easily crushes Yeshua with one blow.

As the interrogation unfolds, however, we see the hidden power of the seemingly weak Yeshua. For one thing, he possesses truly remarkable intuitive powers which allow him to perceive truth hidden from the ordinary eye. Thus, by merely looking at Pilate, he realizes that he is suffering from a terrible headache, is contemplating death, and is dreaming of the only creature he loves, his dog. In answer to Pilate's astonished queries, Yeshua denies that he is a physician, attributing his knowledge to the movements of Pilate's hands and lips. (Since Yeshua is, above all, a truthful man, we cannot help but believe his denial of divine or magical powers.)

Yet another way in which Yeshua begins to win Pilate over is by his appeal to the simple humanity of the Procurator. The effectiveness of Yeshua's approach can be seen in his conversation with Pilate (and the secretary's reaction serves to show just how extraordinary Yeshua's behavior is):

*"A stroll would do you much good, [said Yeshua], and I would be pleased to accompany you. Some new thoughts have come to my mind, and I believe that they might interest you. I should be glad to share them with you, especially since you impress me as a very intelligent man."*

*The secretary turned deathly pale and dropped the scroll on the floor.*

*"The trouble," continued the bound prisoner without being stopped by anyone, "is that you keep to yourself too much and have lost all faith in men. After all, you must agree, a man cannot place all of his affection in a dog. Your life is too barren, Hegemon." And the speaker permitted himself to smile.*

*The secretary's mind was now on a single question: could he, or could he not believe his ears? He had no choice but to believe. Then he tried to imagine what fantastic forms the wrath of the fiery-tempered Procurator would take at this unprecedented impertinence of the prisoner. &*

*Then came the cracked, husky voice of the Procurator, who said in Latin:*

*"Untie his hands."*

(pp. 24-25)

By appealing to the "good man" in the Procurator (although he now calls him Hegemon),

Yeshua succeeds so well in winning him over that Pilate devises a scheme whereby the prisoner can be rescued. This happy process is interrupted, however, when Pilate finds out that, aside from advocating destruction of the temple, Yeshua stands accused of the highest of crimes, speaking against Caesar. He tries to suggest to Yeshua that he deny his words and thereby save his skin:

*"Did you ever say anything about the great Caesar? Answer me! Did you? Or & did you & not?" Pilate stretched out the word "not" somewhat more than was proper in court, and his glance sent Yeshua a thought that he seemed anxious to suggest to the prisoner.*

(p. 29)

But Yeshua, given the choice of sacrificing the truth or sacrificing his own life, unwaveringly stands up for truth. Answering "'It is easy and pleasant to speak the truth'" (p. 29), he goes on to express his opposition to all Caesars and rulers in the name of human freedom.

By refusing to understand Pilate's hints, Yeshua forces upon the Procurator a difficult choice: should he save Yeshua and risk his own position and perhaps life, or should he condemn this perfectly good man out of a sense of self preservation? Pilate chooses: "'Do you suppose, wretched man, that the Roman Procurator will release a man who said what you have said? Oh, gods, gods! Or do you think I am prepared to take your place?'" (p. 32). And so we see a striking reversal of roles here. The seemingly weak Yeshua refuses to betray his principles, even if he must pay for them with his life. But Pilate, the valiant cavalryman and awesome representative of Roman power, fears for himself and betrays another. The defenseless individual turns out to be strong, and the powerful ruler plays the coward.

The role of cowardice later becomes even clearer. For while Pilate has considered taking poison to escape the misery of his existence, it is reported that Yeshua, even on the cross, refuses a poison or sedative offered to him to cut short his suffering. And we are told Yeshua's final words on the cross: "'Among human vices he considers one of the main ones to be cowardice'" (**Romany**, p. 721). Pilate, in his dream the night after the crucifixion, states the issue even more strongly, calling cowardice "'the most terrible vice'" (p. 334). The narrator adds:

*No one could have accused the present Procurator of Judea and former tribune of the legion of cowardice on that occasion, for example, in the Valley of the Maidens, when the furious Germans had almost hacked the giant Rat-Killer to death. But you must pardon me, philosopher! Can you, with your intelligence, suppose that the Procurator of Judea would ruin his career over a man who has committed a crime against Caesar?*

*"Yes, yes &" Pilate moaned and sobbed in his sleep.*

(p. 334)<sup>21</sup>

Let us now return to the main plot. Parallels between the Master and Christ are easy to find. Both are solitary individuals who follow an inner vision much at variance with

established dogma. Both possess almost miraculous intuitive powers which allow them to grasp truths not evident to ordinary men. This privately held vision sets each at odds with the establishment of his time--in Yeshua's case, Rome and the priesthood, in the Master's, the state-supported priests of the literary world. The respective establishments, sensing the threat to their dominance posed by an independent and truthful voice, try to silence it through persecution of the bearer. And while Yeshua is betrayed by the false disciple, Yehudah, the treacherous Aloisy Mogarych performs a similar service for the Master.<sup>22</sup> Finally, Yeshua is crucified and the Master is driven first to prison and then to the madhouse.<sup>23</sup>

If, however, Yeshua remains courageously true to his vision to the end, the Master, as we have already seen, does not. Instead, succumbing to his fear, he burns and renounces his novel. And if Yeshua, on the cross, refuses the palliatives offered by Pilate, choosing instead to die of the burning sun, the Master readily accepts the sedation given him by Dr. Stravinsky (who, not coincidentally, reminds Ivan Homeless of Pilate).

In his submission to fear and in his desire for no more than rest, the Master resembles Pontius Pilate more than Yeshua. Thus, just as Pilate says that cowardice is "the most terrible vice," the Master says of his fear, "'Oh, yes, there is no illness in this building worse than mine, I assure you!'" (p. 167).<sup>24</sup> The Master rather likes the rest provided by the insane asylum, while Pilate longs desperately for a dark room and cold water and thinks of taking poison. Pilate says after his dream of Yeshua, "'Even at night in the moonlight I have no rest! & Oh, gods &'" (p. 335). And the Master, having been spirited from the hospital by the devils, utters almost the identical words (p. 300). Finally, towards the end of the novel, the Master feels liberated only after he has set Pilate free from his age-long punishment; it is only after he releases Pilate from his punishment that the Master himself feels free: "Someone released the Master to freedom, just as he himself had just released the hero created by him" (*Romany*, p. 799). (One recalls the similar case earlier in the novel, when the Master's rescue from the hospital follows upon the release of the Gretchen-like Frieda from punishment.)

Thus the Master, who possesses special gifts of vision like Yeshua, has a Pilate-like failure of courage. Here, as with the Faust legend, Bulgakov combines traits attributed to two different personages in the mythic story in order to create his image of the modern Russian artist as gifted but weak.

Let us now examine the relationship of Margarita to the characters in the Master's novel. On the material level one can find parallels between Bulgakov's heroine and Pilate. Like the Procurator's, hers is a privileged life. She has a large apartment in an excellent house, a loving husband, and all the money she needs to buy anything she likes. To the great mass of Muscovites we encounter in the satiric parts of the novel, whose highest goals are to get a better apartment or more money or fashionable clothes, Margarita stands as an envied ideal. As the narrator declares, "It can be said with absolute assurance that many women would have given anything to exchange their lot for the lot of Margarita Nikolayevna" (p. 235).

And yet, before she met the Master, Margarita was profoundly unhappy. Like Pilate, she even contemplated taking poison. Margarita, who is childless and does not love her husband, is suffering from emotional emptiness. In this she also resembles the Procurator. In her relations with the Master she feels love for the first time, and she, in a sense, becomes his disciple. (She believes in his novel. She calls him Master.)

But, although their external situations are similar, at the moment of critical choice Margarita displays her moral superiority to Pilate. For, while Pilate is afraid to sacrifice his own privilege and therefore condemns Yeshua, Margarita unhesitatingly gives up everything, risks her safety and even her soul for the sake of the Master.

Although Margarita's intense and fearless loyalty distinguishes her from Pilate, it allies her with two other characters in the Master's novel. One is Matthu Levi, the former tax collector, who, as Pilate hears incredulously, threw his money away to follow Yeshua. Later, in his plan to kill Yeshua and thereby spare him the torments of crucifixion, Matthu is indifferent to his own fate:

*And if God should bless him with but another free instant, he might have time enough to kill himself as well, escaping death on the post. This, however, was of little concern to Levi, the former tax collector. It made no difference to him how he would die. His only desire was that Yeshua, who had never harmed anyone, escape the agony in store for him.*

(p. 189)

Matthu arrives too late, however, to carry out his plan. And it is not accidental that Margarita, recalling her return to the Master's apartment the day after his disappearance, says, ""Yes, I returned like the miserable Matthu Levi--too late!"" (p. 237).

Pilate's dog, Banga,<sup>25</sup> also exhibits this trait of selfless, courageous love and loyalty. Woland says of the dog, ""If it is true that cowardice is the greatest sin, the dog is not guilty of it."" He goes on to say, ""Those who love must share the fate of those they love"" (p. 386). And, as we see, Banga has shared his master's fate for almost two thousand years. Similarly, Margarita is to eternally remain with her beloved. Pilate, on the other hand, who had a failure of love and courage, has been longing for a reunion with Yeshua for those many centuries and envies the ragged Matthu Levi for his closeness to his Master.

Thus, Margarita, Matthu Levi, and Banga have in common their fearless love. But there is yet another character in the Master's novel who manifests this cherished trait to the highest degree: Yeshua himself, who sacrificed himself for love of all "good men." One could say, therefore, that not only Matthu Levi, but Margarita and, in a way, even Banga, are exhibiting a Christ-like trait in their courageous devotion. All of these earthly beings, however, substitute a narrower love of one man for Yeshua's all-embracing love. Neither Margarita nor Matthu Levi accepts the view that all men are good. In fact both display intolerance and hatred for those they consider the enemies of their beloved Masters (Yehudah, the critic Latunsky) and desire revenge.

Margarita, however, has moments when she transcends her narrow and, in its way, selfish love, the two occasions on which she displays disinterested compassion for sinners who have suffered much. The first involves Frieda, the second Pontius Pilate. Both times her pleas for forgiveness are selfless. In Frieda's case, they actually seem to go against Margarita's self interest; in interceding for Frieda, Margarita believes she is using up her one request of Satan and will not be able to ask for the liberation of her beloved Master. It turns out that this is not the case, however; Satan/Woland makes clear that such acts of mercy are not in his line and therefore allows Margarita a second request. Woland indicates both here and in Pilate's case that forgiveness lies within Yeshua's realm, not his. Thus, in her self-less compassion, Margarita comes the closest of all the characters in the novel to the Christian ideal.

And so Margarita, like the Master, is given traits of both Pilate and Christ. She enjoys an envied and privileged position like Pilate, but when she is attracted by a man of higher vision, she does not fearfully cling to her material status. Instead, like Yeshua, she sacrifices herself for love and even, on occasion, manifests the Christian virtue of mercy.

## Yeshua and the Devil: the Moonlit Realm

The observation that Margarita is a follower of Christ is, on the surface, rather disconcerting. For she is, after all, a witch, who gleefully destroys the critic Latunsky's apartment, not to mention the other pranks she plays on unsuspecting Muscovites. And more important, she agrees to serve as queen at Satan's ball. Yet in Bulgakov's strange world there is no necessary contradiction here. My earlier discussion has already suggested that Woland is not evil in the usual sense; he and Yeshua are not so much inimical as complementary forces. Woland himself develops this idea, using the images of light and shadow to explain the relationship of the divine and diabolical:

*What would our good be doing, if there were no evil, and what would the earth look like if shadows disappeared from it? After all, shadows are cast by objects and people. There is the shadow of my sword. But there are also shadows of trees and living creatures. Would you like to denude the earth of all the trees and all the living beings in order to satisfy your fantasy of rejoicing in the naked light?*

(p. 368)

In Margarita there seems to exist that very blend of light and shadow which, according to Satan, is necessary for life itself.

If one looks beyond Margarita, one finds that, in general, Bulgakov's Satan and Christ, although they use opposite means, serve the same ends. For although Yeshua works through light and love and Woland through darkness and violence, the aim of both is the destruction of the deadening and coercive status quo in the name of life and freedom. Thus, while Woland's cohorts destroy the hellish Griboedov's and apartment number 50, Yeshua advocates, at least figuratively, the destruction of the temple and the overthrow of Caesar. The high priest Kaiyaphah, echoing Jesus's words in the gospels, recognizes that this mild-mannered visionary is not a prince of peace but a disruptive, anarchic force: ""It is not peace, not peace, which the seducer of the people brought to us in Yershalaim &"" (**Romany**, p. 454).

The close relationship between Yeshua and Woland is further supported by an examination of the symbolism of sun and moon in the novel. It has been claimed that Bulgakov here adopts traditional symbolism, associating Yeshua with the sun and Woland with darkness and the moon.<sup>26</sup> While the second half of the statement is indisputable, Yeshua's tie with sun imagery does not hold up to close scrutiny. Instead the sun and the oppressive heat associated with it seem to be allied to the harshness of absolute authority against which both Christ and Satan struggle.

An examination of references to the sun in the chapter entitled "Pontius Pilate" makes this clear. We see Yeshua "with a face maimed and bruised by blows & standing before [Pilate] under the *pitiless morning sun* of Yershalaim" (emphasis added) (p. 23). Later Pilate sees that a ray of sun "was creeping up to Yeshua's worn sandals, and that he was trying to *step out of the sun*" (emphasis added) (p. 24). When the high priest Kaiyapha arrives at the palace the sun "was scorching Yershalaim & with extraordinary fury" (p. 33). Pilate, who wants to save Yeshua, invites Kaiyapha "out of the merciless heat," while the high priest, who wants the prisoner executed, refuses. When Pilate realizes that he has been defeated in his power play with Kaiyapha, "the fiery sphere was almost overhead" (p. 38). Finally, when Pilate announces to the Jerusalem crowd that it is Barrabas and not Jesus who is to be released, "it seemed to him that the sun rang out and burst over his head and filled his ears with fire" (p. 42).

In the later chapter which describes the crucifixion the sun plays the same merciless role, dispersing onlookers and tormenting the condemned. It is only the centurion Rat-killer, that servant of tyranny, who is unbothered by the blazing sun. He has not even removed his breastplate, decorated with silver lion heads (also emblematic of autocracy): "The sun beat down on the centurion without effect, and the lion heads were intolerable to look at--the eye was blinded by the blaze of silver boiling in the sun" (p. 185). It is impossible to link this merciless, oppressive sun with the gentle and forgiving Yeshua. Rather, it reminds one of the "naked light" which "denude[s] the earth of all the trees and living things" mentioned by Woland. This image may well be meant to symbolize all authoritarian states or sets of dogma (including Matthu Levi's Christianity, but not Yeshua's) where the Wolandian "evil" is not allowed and people must live in an enforced state of "goodness."

The sun and stifling heat are associated with such coerciveness in the main plot as well. Thus the oppressive heat described in chapter 1 is a fitting background for the scene of social command which we are to witness. And in the last view which the devils have of Moscow "innumerable suns were melting the glass across the river under the pall of mist, smoke, and steam hanging over the city, scorched to white heat during the day" (p. 381).

Both Christ and the devil are opposed to stifling earthly authority, and we find that both of them are associated with the moon, not the sun.<sup>27</sup> In general, the moon is linked in the novel with an entire order of existence unacknowledged or suppressed by the sunlit "real" world: with madness, dreams, the spirit realm, rather than the material. Its association with the devil, as I have said, needs no demonstration. Its symbolic tie with Yeshua becomes clear when Bulgakov describes how, on the night after the crucifixion, the moon of the new faith rises above the candelabra of the established religion:

*Passing the tower, Yehudah turned and saw two giant five-point candelabra light up at a tremendous height above the Temple. & It seemed to him that ten enormous lamps were lit over Yershalayim, vying with the light of the single lamp which rose higher and higher over the city--the moon.*

(p. 330)

Later, after Yehudah's murder, Aphranus, who has arranged this revenge against Yeshua's false disciple, glances "at the five-pointed candelabra & or at the moon which hung still higher than the lights" (p. 333).

The link of the moon with Yeshua is reinforced in Pilate's dream in which the Procurator imagines himself walking up a moon beam with the ragged philosopher. The same imagery reappears at the end of the novel, when Yeshua and Pilate, followed by the Master and Margarita, are engulfed in a river of moonlight. Thus, both of these unearthly beings, Satan and Christ, whose existence is denied by the sunlit world, are tied to the moon. Indeed, the ambiguous moon, both chaste Diana and dark, demonic Hecate, is a singularly fitting symbol for the seemingly opposed, yet united, forces of Jesus and Satan.

The death of Yehudah illustrates the convergence of the forces of Christ and Satan. In contrast to the gospel account, Judas does not hang himself but is murdered in the moonlight by order of Pilate. Here murder, a Satanic act, is performed in the service of Christ. That the murder is to be looked upon as a devilish deed is indicated by an analogous event which occurs at Satan's ball: the murder of Baron Meigel. The baron, an

informer and a spy like Judas, is murdered by the devils on what is apparently the anniversary of that murder long ago.

The life-giving nature of such murders is suggested by the strange words Woland murmurs to Margarita as he orders her to drink Meigel's blood: ""Don't be afraid, Queen & Don't be afraid Queen, the blood has long run down into the earth. And on the spot where it was spilled, grapevines are growing today"" (p. 289). And Margarita indeed discovers that Meigel's blood has been transformed to wine, making this ritual a sort of eucharist in reverse. The blood which "has long run down into the earth" refers, perhaps, to that of the biblical prototype of Baron Meigel, Judas, whose destruction, paradoxically, brought new life, the life-giving grape.

All of this is not to say, of course, that the forces of Christ and Satan are entirely coequal, that the means of violence and of love are put on the same moral level. This is made particularly clear in the story of Pilate, whose act of retribution against Yehudah does not at all wipe out his earlier failure in love and courage:

*It was clear to [Pilate] that during that day he had let something slip away irrevocably, and now he wanted to correct the slip by some petty and insignificant and, most important, belated acts. His self-delusion consisted in the fact that the Procurator tried to convince himself that these acts, the present, evening ones, were no less important than the morning sentencing. But in this the Procurator succeeded very badly.*

**(Romany, p. 725)**

The end of the novel also indicates that in the divine hierarchy Satan occupies a lesser position than Jesus. For Matthu Levi brings an order from Yeshua, which the devil is to obey.

One must hasten to repeat, however, that the intentions of Yeshua do not at all conflict with the devil's. The latter is certainly not opposed to the rescue of the Master and Margarita, and even the occasional victories of the Christian spirit of mercy over his Queen Margot only call forth a few sardonic utterances from this not at all vile Prince of Darkness.

### **Everything Ended and Everything Ends**

And so the Master and Margarita leave behind the sun-scorched capital to receive their final reward in the higher realm of justice and mercy. Because of his failure of courage, the Master is not granted the highest reward, the light. Instead his will be a life of idyllic rest. Woland compares the Master in his new life to Faust: ""Don't you want to sit, like Faust, over a retort, hoping to create a new homunculus?"" (p. 388). As Stenbock-Fermor rightly points out, in Goethe's work it was not Faust but his rather mediocre assistant, Wagner, who created the homunculus.<sup>28</sup> And in general Faust never led, and never would have been content with, the serene and drowsy life of the Master's eternal home. Such a life could satisfy only a Faust who is lacking the fearless, restless spirit of the Goethean hero. And indeed, as earlier demonstrated, such a description fits the Master very well.

In his epilogue Bulgakov returns to earth. In this world little permanent and significant change has been wrought by the devils' visitation. Indeed, the Judas-like Aloisy is now prospering as financial manager of the Variety Theater, a sinister comment on the state

of affairs. And everyone, in spite of his experiences, continues to deny doggedly the existence of the devils and all supernatural forces.

Only Ivan Nikolaevich Homeless, who was so affected by the devils, the Master, and the moon, has changed profoundly. On the surface it appears that the former poet, now professor of history and philosophy, Ponyrev, has been cured of his earlier schizophrenia. In other words, he has become an acceptable member of Soviet society. Although he has rejected his former excesses as MASSOLIT poet, he still supports the rationalistic bases of his society and does not accept the notion of diabolical intercession in his life: "Ivan Nikolayevich knows everything and understands everything. He knows that in his younger days he had been a victim of criminal hypnotists, had undergone treatment and had been cured" (p. 398).

But his normalcy is more apparent than real. For during the spring full moon Ivan Nikolaevich's reason loses its power; he grows restless and dreams strange dreams. In other words, the schizophrenia is still in force. Indeed, it seems that such an illness is inevitable in one who has visions of higher truth and yet is striving to survive in the earthly sunlit world. This split in the life of the secret disciple of the Master bears more than a passing resemblance to that in Pilate's, a secret disciple of Christ who is also disturbed by the full moon. (Could hemicrania and schizophrenia be related phenomena?) In the person of Ivan Homeless, Bulgakov seems to be suggesting that this Pilate-like double life is bound to appear in the Soviet artist or intellectual who tries to live both in the world of his imagination and in the atheistic and oppressive everyday world. In this sense Bulgakov's novel, no less than his hero's, is about Pontius Pilate.<sup>29</sup>

It is fitting that Ivan, a current victim of Pilatism, should be granted Bulgakov's final vision in the form of a dream under the full moon. The dream is suffused by moonlight. Pilate and Yeshua are walking, arguing, and trying to reach some agreement. They engage in a puzzling dialogue:

*"Gods, gods!" says the man in the cloak, turning his haughty face to his companion. "What a vulgar execution! But tell me, please tell me," and his face is no longer haughty, but pleading, "it never happened! I beg you, tell me, it never happened?"*

*"Of course, it never happened," his companion answers in a hoarse voice. "You imagined it." &*

*"That is all I need!" the man in the cloak cries out in a broken voice and rises higher and higher toward the moon, drawing his companion with him.*

(p. 401)

An odd reversal has taken place here. In this moonlit realm, associated throughout the novel with fantasy, madness, and the imagination, we are told that an occurrence in the "real" world was imagined. Bulgakov seems to be saying that in this spiritual land a different level of reality is in force. The factual event as such is irrelevant; only movements of the spirit are important. And once Pilate's soul, after long centuries of suffering and repentance and aided by Yeshua's love and mercy, has renounced his terrible deed, it is as if it had never taken place.

Earlier in the novel there was another such occurrence, contrary to all earthly logic: the

devil, reversing the Master's Pilate-like act of burning his manuscript, restores it whole with the declaration, ""Manuscripts don't burn"" (p. 300). And indeed, as a spiritual phenomenon, the manuscript, the work of art, is indestructible, whatever its material fate might be. It is fitting, therefore, that the Master, whose path in the novel has, in many respects, been parallel to Pilate's, should at the end follow the Procurator up the moonbeam, led by his beloved Margarita. It is also significant that this vision of reconciliation and love which ends the novel should provide comfort to yet another victim of Pilatism, Ivan Homeless. Margarita's words to the historian, ""Everything ended and everything ends"" (p. 402), promise a final release to him as well.

Furthermore, it might be said that with these words Bulgakov is offering solace to all the followers of Pilate in Stalinist Russia, to the artists and thinkers who have had a glimpse of the truth but have retreated from it. In their world there are few who are courageous enough to fully emulate Faust or Christ. Many have succumbed in some measure to Gretchen's crime and Pilate's vice. But even to those it is promised that, because of their higher vision, the spiritual realm will ultimately redeem them. Then all the sinister Yershalaims and Moscows will disappear, and the marvelous moonlit realm, imagined but the highest form of reality, will be triumphant.

## Notes

M. A. Bulgakov, "Master i Margarita," pt. 1, *Moskva*, 1966, no. 11, pp. 6-130; pt. 2, 1967, no. 1, pp. 56-144.

A. Vulis, "Posleslovie," *Moskva*, 1966, no. 11, pp. 127-30. A more detailed examination of the question appears in E. Proffer, "Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*: Genre and Motif," *Canadian Slavic Studies* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 615-28. See also E. Proffer, "The Master and Margarita," in *Major Soviet Writers: Essays in Criticism*, ed. E. J. Brown (New York, 1973), pp. 388-94.

E. Stenbock-Fermor's "Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* and Goethe's *Faust*," *Slavic and East European Journal* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1969): 309-25, is a detailed examination of the novel's relation to the Faust legend. The role of devil lore is discussed by A. C. Wright, "Satan in Moscow: An Approach to Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*," *PMLA*, no. 88 (1973), pp. 1162-72, while E. K. Beaujour, "The Uses of Witches in Fedin and Bulgakov," *Slavic Review* 33, no. 4 (December 1974): 695-707, deals with the question of witchcraft. A. Krasnov, "Khristos i master. O posmertnom romane M. Bulgakova "Master i Margarita"," *Grani*, no. 71 (1969), pp. 162-95; no. 72 (1969), pp. 150-92; no. 73 (1969), pp. 175-94, explores the novel at length in the light of the Bible and Christian tradition.

I am following here the definition of myth given by the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, 1965): "Myth may be defined as a story or a complex of story elements taken as expressing, and therefore implicitly symbolizing certain deep-lying aspects of human and trans-human existence" (p. 538). By using this term I do not mean to reflect upon the factual truth or falsehood of the stories.

Some of the early superficial reviews in English equated the Master with Faust, e.g., "The Devil in Moscow," *Time*, October 27, 1967, p. 105; E. Pawel, "The Devil in Moscow," *Commentary*, March 1, 1968, pp. 90-93. J. Delaney, in "The Master and Margarita: The Reach Exceeds the Grasp," *Slavic Review* 31, no. 1 (March 1972): 89-100, looks upon the Master as a "Faust in a hospital gown," although she also sees certain Faustian features in Margarita. Stenbock-Fermor, on the other hand, sees no connection between the Master and Faust and assigns the Faustian role to Koroviev.

Among those who draw parallels between the Master and Jesus (although usually not

complete) are Delaney; Wright; V. Lakshin, "Roman M. Bulgakova, "Master i Margarita", *Novyi mir*, 1968, no. 6, pp. 284-311. E. Proffer, on the other hand, in "On *The Master and Margarita*," *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, no. 6 (1973), pp. 533-64 (henceforth referred to as Proffer, *RLT*), doubts a connection between the two and sees much similarity between the Master and Pilate.

The most detailed examination of Woland as the traditional prince of evil is given by Krasnov, "Khristos i master," *Grani*, no. 72, pp. 150-59. Proffer and Stenbock-Fermor generally equate Bulgakov's and Goethe's devils. The seemingly improbable yet persistent identification of Woland and Stalin is suggested by L. Rzhnevsky, "Pilatov grekh," *Novyi zhurnal*, no. 90 (1968), p. 69. It is also made in two of the more curious and improbable articles on the novel, A. Kovac, "The Problem of Good and Evil in Bulgakov's Novel, "The Master and Margarita"," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 1968, no. 2, pp. 26-34; and D. G. B. Piper, "An Approach to Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 7, no. 2 (1971): 134-57. Furthermore, according to E. Proffer (*RLT*, p. 562, n. 27), this idea has gained some currency in the Soviet Union.

Among those who find Woland quite a sympathetic character are Lakshin; Wright; Beaujour; G. Makarovskaia and A. Zhuk, "O romane M. Bulgakova "Master i Margarita"," *Volga*, no. 6 (1968), pp. 161-81. E. M. Thompson in "The Artistic World of Michail Bulgakov," *Russian Literature*, no. 5 (1973), pp. 54-64, looks upon Woland as the continuation of the tradition of the romantic devil.

"Nevsky Avenue," in *The Overcoat and Other Tales of Good and Evil*, trans. D. Magarshak (New York, 1965), p. 177.

I am limiting my examination to the relationship of the novel to Goethe's *Faust*, which I have found the most fruitful. For details about borrowings from other works dealing with Faust, see Stenbock-Fermor.

In my interpretation of *Faust*, I am heavily indebted to S. Atkins, *Goethe's Faust* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958).

*Goethe's Faust: The Prologues and Part One*, trans. B. Taylor, ed. S. Atkins (New York, 1966), p. 60, ll. 287-90. All subsequent references to part one will be from this edition. References to part two will be from *Goethe's Faust: Part Two*, trans. B. Taylor, ed. S. Atkins (New York, 1962). All line references will henceforth be incorporated in the text.

*Goethe's Faust: The Prologues and Part One*, p. 28.

MASSOLIT: Probably a veiled reference to the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), the writer's organization which dominated Russian literature from 1928 to 1932, the period during which the novel takes place. RAPP critics sharply denounced Bulgakov and other writers whose works did not conform to their ideological or aesthetic views.

V. Bolen in "Theme and Coherence in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*," *Slavic and East European Journal* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 427-32, notes briefly that "Berlioz is ironically contrasted with Faust" (p. 429).

Social command (*sotsial'nyi zakaz*): a term denoting the policy toward literature adopted by the Communist party in 1928 in connection with the first five-year plan and carried out by RAPP and the editorial boards of publishing houses. Under this policy specific themes were dictated to writers with the goal of stimulating socialist construction. The theme assigned to *Homeless*, while not directly connected with the five-year plan, is meant to further the ideological ends of the state. Statements of RAPP leaders make it clear that they supported such historical themes, if treated from the proper Marxist point of view. (See E. J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928-1932* [New

York, 1953], p. 170.)

That Bulgakov is specifically ridiculing social command is indicated later in the novel (p. 160), when his hero, the Master, recalls that the editor to whom he submitted his manuscript asked him "'a totally idiotic question: who had given me the idea to write a novel on such a strange subject?'"

M. A. Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. M. Ginsburg (New York, 1967), p. 66. All subsequent page references will be incorporated in the text.

The Ginsburg translation is based upon the version of the novel published in the journal *Moskva*, which, it was later discovered, made numerous excisions from the full text. I have nevertheless chosen to quote from this rather than the other, more complete, English translation of the novel by M. Glenny (New York, 1967) because of the many mistakes in the latter version. Passages cited which have been omitted from the Ginsburg edition have been translated by me from the recent Soviet publication of Bulgakov's novels, *Romany* (Moscow, 1973). This is the most complete version published thus far. Such passages will be indicated in the text by the word *Romany*, followed by the page reference.

I. Vinogradov, "Zaveshchanie мастера," *Voprosy literatury*, no. 6 (1968), p. 62.

Noted by Delaney, "*The Master and Margarita*: The Reach Exceeds the Grasp," p. 97.

Many details concerning the Master are autobiographical. Bulgakov burned a rough draft of his novel as well as some other works (cf. "Pis'ma-protesty M. Bulgakova, A. Solzhenitsyna i A. Voznesenskogo," *Grani*, no. 66 [1967], pp. 155-61). E. Proffer doubts the authenticity of this letter (*RLT*, pp. 559-60, n. 3) but points out another autobiographical detail: Bulgakov's third wife, Elena Sergeevna, made a black cap with a yellow "M" on it for her husband (pp. 560-61, n. 5).

A similarity between the situation and mental state of the novelist and his hero is suggested in a letter Bulgakov wrote to Stalin in May 1931, quoted in "K biografii M. A. Bulgakova: Pis'ma I. V. Stalinu, A. M. Gor'komu, V. V. Veresaevu, P. S. Popovu i drugim," Publik. Lesli Miln, *Novyi zhurnal*, no. 111 (1973), pp. 151-74 (translation mine):

*Since the end of 1930 I have been ill with a serious form of neurasthenia, with attacks of fear and profound (predserdechnoi) melancholy, and at the present time I am completely spent. & The reason for my illness is clearly known to me: in the broad field of Russian literature in the USSR I was the only literary wolf. & And they treated me like a wolf. And for several years they pursued me according to the rules of the literary hunt of a captured beast in an enclosed yard. I have no malice, but I became very tired and, at the end of 1929, I collapsed. After all, even a beast can get tired. The beast announced that he is no longer a wolf, a literary man. He renounces his profession. He becomes silent. That, let us say right out, is faintheartedness.*

(p. 155)

In a later letter to P. S. Popov (April 1932), Bulgakov writes, "In general I want nothing except, for Christ's sake, to be left in peace, so that I can take hot baths. & In general, I want absolutely nothing" (p. 167).

This point is well made by I. Vinogradov. It is also made by M. V. Glenny, "Mikhail Bulgakov," *Survey*, no. 65 (October 1967), p. 12.

The theme of cowardice has been treated by many critics. See especially L. Rzhnevsky, "Pilatov grekh," pp. 70-72.

The role of Aloisy as a Judas-like false disciple becomes especially clear in a passage of several paragraphs published for the first time in *Romany*. The passage appears in chap. 13 ("The Appearance of the Hero"). The Master describes to Ivan Homeless a friendship which sprang up between him and his neighbor, Aloisy, in the period following the completion of his novel. Aloisy is a journalist, a bachelor living in tight quarters, for whom Margarita develops an intense dislike. The Master describes the reasons for his closeness to Aloisy:

*Aloisy won me over by his passion for literature. He didn't rest easy until he had prevailed upon me to read him my whole novel from cover to cover. He offered a very flattering opinion of my novel, but with startling accuracy, as if he had been present, he told me all the comments of the editor concerning the novel. He hit the mark a hundred times out of a hundred.*

(*Romany*, p. 561)

Aloisy's odd patronymic also hints at his treachery and his tie with Judas. *Mogarych* (also spelled *magarych*) means a gift on making a good bargain. While Judas's gift for betraying Christ is thirty pieces of silver, Aloisy receives what in the Moscow of the 1930s was at least as precious: the Master's excellent apartment.

A gifted writer persecuted by the autocracy and by a threatened literary establishment also provides the theme for two of Bulgakov's plays, *The Cabal of Hypocrites* (*Molière*) and *The Last Days* (*Pushkin*). Parallels between the second play and *The Master and Margarita* are especially striking. Pushkin, like Yeshua, seems weak and vulnerable in the face of his powerful and treacherous enemies. They manage to kill him, and yet, through his poetry, he is the ultimate victor. Just as Yeshua, even after death, gives Pilate no rest, at the end of the play the spy Bitkov (who took thirty rubles for his service), accompanying Pushkin's corpse to its burial place, says:

*Yes, he wrote verses. And because of those verses nobody has any rest & neither he, nor the authorities, nor I, servant of God, Stepan Ilich.*

*He's dead & But this is what I'm afraid of. We'll bury him, but will it do any good? Maybe peace won't come again.*

(*Dramy i komedii* [Moscow, 1965], p. 410) (Translation mine)

The Pushkin motif in *The Master and Margarita*, which cannot be discussed here, shows that this disrupting effect of a great writer still preserves its force.

V. Lakshin argues eloquently that a distinction be made between the Master's fear (*strakh*) and Pilate's cowardice (*trusost'*). There are, of course, differences between the two. Pilate's cowardice forces him to betray another and therefore arouses indignation. The Master, who betrays only himself--one might say the Christ within himself--evokes compassion instead. If, however, one defines cowardice as submitting to one's fear, it is difficult to deny that the Master, in burning his manuscript and retreating to a mental hospital, has this trait.

According to Proffer, Banga or Liubanga was Bulgakov's nickname for his second wife, Liubov' Evgeevna (*RLT*, p. 562, n. 32).

V. Lakshin, "Roman M. Bulgakova," p. 288; E. Proffer, *RLT*, pp. 551-55. For a detailed and more general discussion of leitmotifs than mine, see Proffer's articles.

L. Rzhnevsky sees the connection of the moon with Jesus, but not with Woland.

Stenbock-Fermor, "Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*," p. 314.

L. Rzhnevsky ("Pilatov grekh," pp. 79-80) suggests this pervasive "Pilatism" in Stalinist Moscow but applies the term only to the minor satiric characters. These share with Pilate his bondage to material well-being and to this degree are victims of Pilatism. They do not have an inkling, however, of the other, spiritual, world and therefore do not experience his inner conflict. Only such higher natures as the Master and Ivan Homeless are capable of that.