



The Sources for Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita

B. V. Sokolov

In the essay below, Sokolov examines the philosophical underpinnings of *The Master and Margarita*. Published in *Soviet Review* 30, no. 4 (July-August 1989): 76-96.

From the archive section of
The Master and Margarita

<http://www.masterandmargarita.eu>

Webmaster

Jan Vanhellemont
Klein Begijnhof 6
B-3000 Leuven

+3216583866
+32475260793

Mikhail Bulgakov's novel ***The Master and Margarita*** was written between 1929 and 1940. Although delayed for a quarter of a century, it quickly found a stable place in our life as soon as it was published [for the first publication of the novel see: *Moskva*, 1966, no. 11; 1967, no. 1]. It is usually classified as a satirical philosophical novel. The satirical element puts it in the same family as such well-known works of the end of the '20s as the novels of I. Il'f and E. Petrov, *Twelve Chairs* [Dvenadtsat' stul'ev] and *The Golden Calf* [Zolotoi telenok], but its emphatically philosophical orientation makes it all but a unique phenomenon in the history of Soviet literature. The novel's philosophical aspects have already been examined in a number of essays. Thus, for example, N. P. Utekhin analyzes the reflection of certain general philosophical categories in the novel.¹ G. Chernikova and I. L. Galinskaia have endeavored to determine the concrete literary sources of the novel's philosophy [Chernikova 1971, pp. 213-219; Galinskaia 1986].

In our view, to determine the philosophical sources of ***The Master and Margarita*** it is first necessary to find incontestable textual parallels that will serve as evidence in support of acknowledging a particular source, and then to take into account all the preserved evidence about Bulgakov's library and the range of his reading. In the present article we shall, in the light of these considerations, point out some of the philosophical sources of ***The Master and Margarita*** not previously mentioned by investigators: articles on religious and philosophical topics from *Brokgauz and Efron's Encyclopedic Dictionary* [*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*], the philosophical works of Heinrich Heine and Anatole France, the works of the religious philosopher P. A. Florenskii, and certain others.

We meet the name Immanuel Kant in the very first chapter of ***The Master and Margarita***. Kant is the only philosopher mentioned by name in the text of the novel. In the final version of ***The Master and Margarita***, Kant's proof of the existence of God is mentioned six times, and in earlier versions it is mentioned five times [Bulgakov, **"Kopyto inzhenera,"** 1984, p. 52]. In the article "God," Kant is also named as the originator of the fifth proof of the existence of God--a moral proof existing alongside of the four other proofs, i.e., historical, cosmological, theological, and ontological.² Later on in the article we read: "since Kant's proof affirms the existence of a personal god, all pantheists have rebelled against it: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel deny it quite emphatically, and Schiller says that Kant professed a morality suitable only for slaves. Strauss sarcastically notes that Kant added to his system, which is in essence opposed to theism, a little room in which he could place God" [*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*, vol. 4 (7), p. 207]. This assessment of Kant's proof is repeated almost literally by Berlioz in the novel: ""Kant's proof," objected the learned editor, smiling subtly, "is also unconvincing. Schiller was not speaking idly when he said that Kant's argument on this question can satisfy only slaves; and Strauss simply ridiculed this proof"" [p. 258].

Kant's ethics were also reflected in ***The Master and Margarita***. The brilliant and virtuous Master obtains a reward intended for him; the indigent vagrant philosopher, Yeshua Ha-Notsri, in far-off Judea, appears to us a man of highest morality and of firm convictions. But the Master obtained the reward not from God but from the Devil--the "Prince of Darkness," Woland, and in the novel Yeshua is not a god but a man. Like Kant, Bulgakov does not believe in the gospel miracles (none of them is in the novel). But Bulgakov's Yeshua is not the "Son of God" of whom Vladimir Solov'ev spoke, following Kant. Sufferings are by no means an end for Ha-Notsri; humanly enough, he simply does not want to die ("You should let me go, hegemon," was the prisoner's unexpected request, his voice full of anxiety. "I see now they want to kill me"" [p. 276]). Yeshua is not absolutely without sin. His excruciating sufferings on the cross made him embittered and he converses coarsely with his executioners ("Ha-Notsri moved his swollen lips and answered in a hoarse croak: "What do you want? Why have you come?"" [p. 419]). But this does not accord with either the Christian ethical ideal or with the image of the all-forgiving Son of God who occupies the central place in Kant's ethical constructions. Bulgakov's character does not wish to give up his beliefs, even when their price is his life.

He affirms a purely human morality. Bulgakov proceeds from the position of a human and not a divine embodiment of the moral ideal. Bulgakov's Master suffers innocently in his earthly life, but he remains a human being, with all the flaws inherent in him, broken by the ordeals he has gone through.

The main character in Bulgakov's novel is the Master. He is not only a writer (the word "Master" establishes the measure of his professionalism, his genius) but also a kind of philosopher, who insists on his right to create, despite the shouts of the crowd ("You see, I can't bear noise, disturbance, violence, or anything of that sort. I particularly hate the sound of people screaming, whether it's a scream of pain, anger, or any other kind of scream" [p. 372]).³ In his novel about Yeshua and Pilate the Master affirms a higher human and not a religious ethical ideal. Therein lies the similarity between the author (Bulgakov) and his character, who incorporates many autobiographical features. It is strange and terrible to the Master to know that the critics have received his novel as an "attempt to drag an apology for Jesus Christ into print" [p. 383], as propaganda for the Christian religion.

One can, we think, even see parallels in the biography of Bulgakov's Master with Kant's biography and with his personality, and in particular, with certain facts presented in Solov'ev's article on *Kant* in *Brokgauz and Efron's Encyclopedic Dictionary*, which states: "Kant's personality and life are a completely integral picture characterized by an unalterable predominance of reason over emotions and moral duty over passions and baser interests. Understanding his scientific and philosophical calling as a higher duty, Kant without reservation subordinated all else to it. & Kant was very much inclined toward warm social relations, but he found that family life interfered with his intellectual work, and he always remained single. Although he had a special passion for geography and travel, he never left Königsberg, so as not to interrupt the pursuit of his duties. By nature sickly, he managed through force of will and correct living to survive to a very old age, and was never once ill. Kant gave the necessary satisfaction to the needs of the heart in his friendship with people who did not interfere with but supported him in his intellectual work. His main friend was the merchant Green, who combined such intellectual development with his great practical abilities that the entire *Critique of Pure Reason* underwent his preliminary approval. And Kant justified on grounds of friendship the only weakness of the flesh he permitted himself: he loved the pleasures of the table in a small company of friends" [*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*, vol. 14 (27), p. 322].

The Master in the novel is also indifferent to the joys of family life. He does not remember the name of his wife, and even when married to her during the time he was working as a historian in the museum he "lived alone, had no relatives, and knew almost no one in Moscow" [p. 377]. The Master gave up his job and settled in the basement of a small ramshackle house near the Arbat to write a novel about Pontius Pilate, which he regarded as his higher destiny. Like Kant, he never once left the place of his seclusion so as not to interrupt his work on the novel. The Master, like Kant, had one close friend--the journalist Aloysius M., who won the Master over with his unusual combination of a passion for literature and practical abilities and who became the first reader of the novel after Margarita ("never before have I met, and I am convinced that I shall never again meet, a person with the mind Aloysius had. Whenever I would not understand the meaning of some comment in the newspaper, Aloysius would explain it to me literally in a minute, and it was moreover evident that the explanation cost no effort whatsoever. It was the same with phenomena and questions about life. But this was not the main thing. Aloysius won me over with his passion for literature. He never rested until he persuaded me to read him my novel from cover to cover; he spoke very flatteringly about it, but told me all the editor's comments about this novel with staggering accuracy as if he had been present himself & he quite accurately explained to me why my novel could not be printed" [pp. 384-385]). But there is also much in the Master's biography that is diametrically opposed to the biography of Kant. The Master's destiny is a kind of

"negative" variant of Kant's. The Master's best friend is a despicable traitor. In contrast to the German philosopher, the Master is unable to get the better of his affliction, and moral and physical suffering break him. Also, in contrast to Kant, the Master did not see his main work in print during his lifetime.

The Master doubtlessly contains certain features of his creator, Bulgakov, but there are also major differences between them. Bulgakov was in no way a withdrawn person, such as the Master was in the novel: he was not crushed by life's adversities. The writer loved meetings with friends, and a specific circle of friends, narrow though it may have been, especially in the last years of life. Certain lines, in some sense autobiographical, are not accidental: "how nice it is to dine in this way, seated around the fireplace, informally, in an intimate circle" [p. 509] and "there is something unpleasant lurking in men who avoid drinking, gambling, table-talk, and pretty women. People like that are either sick or secretly hate their fellow men" [pp. 443-444]. Such are the words which Bulgakov puts in the mouths of representatives of otherworldly forces, Koroviev and Woland, and not of the Master whose illness forces him to shun people.

The Master has his romantic beloved, Margarita, but their love does not require the attainment of earthly family happiness. Margarita is the Master's sole support sustaining him in his creative work. They were able finally to come together only in the world beyond, in the last refuge prepared by Woland for the Master and his beloved. The fact that the place of rest given to the Master as a reward is precisely a place of creative rest, is demonstrated by Woland's final words: "& oh thrice romantic Master, wouldn't you like to stroll under the cherry blossoms with your love in the daytime and listen to Schubert in the evening? Won't you enjoy writing with a goose quill? Don't you want, like Faust, to sit over a retort in the hope of fashioning a new homunculus? That's where you must go--where a house and an old servant are already waiting for you and the candles are lit--although they are soon to be put out because you will arrive at dawn" [p. 610].⁴

In the 1936 text, the Master in his last refuge was even more explicitly invested with the traits of the eighteenth-century philosopher: "You'll live in the garden, and every morning you'll go out on the terrace and see how the grapevines are entwining your home ever more thickly, how they are creeping over the walls. The red cherry trees will drop cherries around the garden & the candles will burn, you'll listen to quartets, and the rooms of the house will smell of apples. You'll take walks, stroll, and think, in a powdered braid, in an old customary kaftan, tapping with your cane" [cited in Chudakova 1976, p. 242]. We can see here a similarity with Heine's portrayal of Kant, now become classic, in his book *The History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*: "getting up, morning coffee, riding, giving lectures, lunch, a stroll--all these things were done at a specific time, and the neighbors knew exactly what time it was--3:30--when Immanuel Kant would leave his house in his gray frockcoat with a cane in his hand, and set out in the direction of the small avenue that is still today called the Philosopher's Way in his memory. He would walk along it every day back and forth eight times at all seasons of the year, and when it was foggy or gray clouds presaged rain, the servant, old Lampe, would appear following after him with anxious concern, bearing a long umbrella under his arm as a symbol of providence.

"What a strange contrast between the external life of this man and his devastating, earth-shattering thought" [Heine, *K istorii religii i filosofii*, p. 103]. We see the same contrast in the reward given to the Master: the outward calm contrasts with the tense work of creative thought and free literary creativity.

Heine's philosophical works are in our view one other important source of ***The Master and Margarita***. We might point out that in both Bulgakov's novel and Heine's book, it is only the religious, not the ethical basis of Kantian philosophy that is placed in doubt; the irony is directed against those who, like Berlioz, believe in strict determinism and the complete predictability of all events (but this is practically the same thing as a belief in

divine providence) and not against Kant's call for human moral perfection and the necessity of living in accordance with one's conscience.

The theme of mercy, so close to Heine, is also developed in ***The Master and Margarita***. Woland's words on mercy ("only one thing remains--to provide yourself with rags and to use them to seal off all the cracks in my bedroom! I am speaking about mercy & sometimes it slips through the narrowest cracks completely unexpectedly and quite insidiously" [p. 514])--this is a paraphrase of the following passage from *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* by Dostoevsky: "but love of man, which, as Heine put it, is always sticking its nose in everything, carried the day" [Dostoevskii 1972, p. 305]. Dostoevsky's words in turn go back to the "Landscapes" by the German writer, but are not just a simple paraphrase. They are linked first and foremost to the image of the good Humpelino who had an extremely long nose, as well as with some of Heine's statements about virtue and mercy, which were not devoid of irony, as for example, the following comment: "Virtue in itself, of course, is the first of all splendors; the creator embellished it with so many charms that it seemed he would not able to create anything else just as splendid; but once again, he collected his forces, and in one of his lucid moments created Signor Francesco, the beautiful dancer, and his greatest *chef d'oeuvre* after the creation of virtue" [Heine 1935, p. 376].

There is one other place in "Landscapes" that apparently attracted the attention of the author of ***The Master and Margarita***. Heine gives an allegorical description with satirical overtones of the political struggle between the liberals and conservatives in Great Britain. He notes with irony that worldly evil can be explained by the fact that "the Lord God created too little money." Further on the German writer paints a clear picture of how God borrowed money from the Devil, with the Universe as security, when he created the world. As a result, God does not interfere with his creditor's "spreading sedition and evil. But the Devil has himself a strong interest in the world's not being destroyed completely, since in that case he would lose his guarantee; hence he refrains from exceeding the measure, and the Lord God, who also is not stupid and understands quite well that the Devil's cupidity contains a secret guarantee for him, often goes so far as to give him dominion over the whole world, i.e., he charges the Devil with setting up a Ministry." Then "Samuel takes command over the infernal host, Beelzebub becomes Chancellor, Vitzli-Putzli becomes Secretary of State, an old grandmother receives a colony, etc. These allies begin to rule each in their own way, and since despite the evil will at the bottom of their hearts, they are forced for the sake of their own advantage to strive for worldly bliss, they recompense themselves for this constraint by using the basest means to achieve good ends" [ibid., pp. 537-538].

Bulgakov's Woland and his helpmates give out "some sort of money" to the crowd at the Variety, and so make up for the apparent shortage of it. But the Devil's money is quickly transformed into ordinary paper. Using the sham money, the forces of evil lay bare the base passions and inner nature of whoever comes in contact with it. The Devil's money tempts only the satirical characters in the novel. In one of the early drafts, Bulgakov, like Heine, speaks of the Chancellor of the Evil One [Bulgakov 1983, p. 121], and in the preparatory notes for the novel he is called by name: "Addrammalech--the great Chancellor of Hades" [Chudakova 1976, p. 77]. In the beginning of the novel, Berlioz's mention of the name Vitzli-Putzli, the Aztec god, who in the German tradition is reconstrued as one of the spirits of Hades, Satan's assistants [*Legenda o doktore Fauste*, 1978, pp. 139, 144], evokes the appearance of Woland's assistant, who later on is presented as the secretary of the mysterious foreigner, the "Prince of Darkness."

In ***The Master and Margarita***, the forces of the world beyond use what at first glance are the most terrible means to achieve good ends. Only the death of Berlioz and a sojourn in a madhouse force the poet Bezdomny to reflect on his life and to undertake a fundamental reevaluation of his creative works. The Chairman of MASSOLIT, Berlioz, who affirms vulgar sociology and trendiness in literature, dies under the wheels of a tram.

However, in reality, Woland and his retinue only guess the later earthly fate of the characters of the novel (Woland predicts that Berlioz will fall under a tram and Bezdomny will end up in a mental hospital). Even the traitor Baron Maigel', who dies at the hands of Azazello, still was fated to give up his earthly existence a month later, and his appearance at Satan's Ball in a sense symbolizes his foreordained passage into the world beyond.

We might also point out that Woland's prediction of Berlioz's death ("one, two & Mercury in the second house & the moon waning & six--accident--& evening--seven &" then announced loudly and cheerfully: Your head will be cut off!" [p. 261]) fully conforms to the principles of astrology as they are expounded in the article of the same name in Brokgauz and Efron [*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*, vol. 2 (3), pp. 368-373]. The twelve houses are the twelve parts of the ecliptic. Mercury in the second house means good fortune in business. Thus we find that Berlioz is punished for having introduced business into the holy temple of literature. In an early edition, the moon leaves the fifth house, which means that Berlioz will be childless, and the accident in the sixth house proves that Berlioz is unhappy in marriage. The seventh house, on the other hand, is the house of death, and the movement of the heavenly body under whose sign Berlioz was born meant that the chairman of MASSOLIT must die that evening. Thus, Woland accurately depicted Berlioz's life path in accordance with the astrological canon. We find out in the further narration that Berlioz was not happy in his marriage and did not have children, and hence his only heir turns out to be the old man from Kiev. The fact that the chairman of MASSOLIT left no offspring symbolizes his creative nothingness, his inability to leave any kind of creative legacy behind him, except his immovable property--an apartment on Sadovaya. Here Bulgakov turned to astrology for satirical purposes.

As for Heine, for Bulgakov as well good and evil are, in the final analysis, forged by human hands, not by God or the Devil. The dialectical unity and mutual complementarity of good and evil, so vividly portrayed by the German writer in the above fragment, is most fully expounded in *The Master and Margarita* in Woland's words during his conversation with Matthew the Levite: "you spoke your words as though you denied the very existence of shadows or of evil. Think now: where would your good be if there were no evil, and what would the world look like without shadows? Shadows are thrown by people and things. There's the shadow of my sword, for instance. But shadows are also cast by trees and living things. Do you want to strip the whole globe by removing every tree and every creature to satisfy your fantasy of a bare world?" [p. 588]. It is to the spirit of evil that the forces of light turn to reward the Master and his beloved. In all likelihood the sources were in addition to Heine's work, a fragment about the Yezid sect from the appendix to Pushkin's *Journey to Erzerum* and *The Garden of Epicurus* by Anatole France, i.e., works by authors who were constantly in Bulgakov's purview.

Woland's words are very similar to the following passage from *The Garden of Epicurus*, which was written not without some influence from Heine: "Evil is necessary. If it did not exist there would be no good. Evil is the only reason for the existence of good. Without death there would not be courage, without suffering there would not be commiseration.

"What would be the use of self-sacrifice and self-denial if there were universal happiness? Is it possible to understand virtue without knowing vice, love and beauty, without knowing hate and ugliness? We owe it to evil and suffering alone that our earth can be inhabited, and that life is worth living. Hence, one cannot blame the Devil. He created at least half of the universe. And this half is so solidly fused with the other half that if you struck the one your blow would do equal harm to the other. Every time a vice is eradicated, the virtue corresponding to it disappears as well" [France 1907, p. 41]. In the appendix to the *Journey to Erzerum*, taken from a work by the Italian M. Garzoni, it is stated directly that the Yezids "think that God commands, but that he consigns the execution of his commands to the power of the Devil" [Pushkin 1950, p. 800. This

fragment was first included in the 1931 collection of Pushkin's works]. In the early drafts of Bulgakov's manuscript Woland still resembles the classical devil (even the name "Devil" in Greek means calumniator and seducer [*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*, vol. 10 (20), p. 727], and his speech and his countenance contain degrading features). But in the final text of the novel, Satan is an impartial and supreme judge of the human race, revealing both man's vices and his virtues. At this point Woland's speech, in contrast to the speech of his helpmates, finally acquires stylistic rigor.

It is interesting that the mention of the name of Kant by the representative of forces from the world beyond, as well as the presence of the Masonic triangle on Woland's cigar case, is in all likelihood not accidental. At the end of 1927, in Leningrad, a large Masonic organization was discovered. Some well-known journalists, the brothers Tur, wrote about it in the newspapers. Bulgakov attentively followed such publications. He himself published his essays in the Leningrad *Krasnaia gazeta* [Red Gazette], from which he also borrowed the theme for the play **Zoika's Apartment** [**Zoikina kvartira**]. These publications about the Masons hardly escaped Bulgakov's attention [*Leningradskaiia pravda*, January 5, 1928; *Krasnaia gazeta* (evening edition), June 15, 1928]. An international adventurer, Astromov-Kirichenko-Watson, headed the Masonic organization; he had graduated from a Jesuit college in Italy, had been a court cavalry officer and a hypnotist, and later worked as a finance inspector in one of the districts of Leningrad. He and another mason, Grediger, said that they had lived already 2,000 years, and among the arrested members of the organization were "followers of Kant who had been purged from the Party." We should recall that in Moscow Woland is taken for a hypnotist and that he was already 2,000 years old, and had once been a contemporary of Jesus. Another characteristic comment of Bezdomyi was that Kant should have been put away in Solovki for three years for his proof.

The leaders of the Leningrad Masonic organization "presented Freemasonry as a philosophical speculative current, a cultural ethical trade union, that had nothing in common with Western Masonry with its amateur politicizing. Moreover, Astromov declared that Masonry was a fellow-traveler of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and proved that "the autonomous Russian Masonry and & the Communist Party had common aims." After his arrest he even wrote a letter on the theme to Stalin. Later on in the essay it is pointed out that "certain ironic minds in the West doubtlessly enter Masonry as a pastime, to be "original."" No other reason can be found to explain the Masonic calling of Anatole France, the rationalist, cynic and anticleric, on whose grave was placed the traditional branch of acacia as is always done when a Freemason is buried. The attributes of the Leningrad Masons are also enumerated: "the interior of these Masonic lodges would be an embellishment for any museum. We saw here the old portraits of the great Masons, who belong in the ranks of bigots of genius. We saw here secret lamps 300 years old, astral knots, the real rings of Calioistro, Indian resins and Japanese incense, the bone keys of the Jesuits, Tangar statuettes, Gobelin tapestry embroidered in blue gold, and even the original oath of allegiance of the Maltese knights, undersigned by Paul I." In an earlier draft of **The Master and Margarita**, similar objects fill the apartment on Sadovaya; many carpets, a golden chalice on a pedestal for holy gifts, Woland's Catholic soutaine, made of golden brocade with inverted crosses, and a cat with turquoise eyes sitting on a rest. The Variety bartender entered a temple after leaving this apartment, where in place of an icon he saw "a picture with the most sacred content" [Bulgakov 1983, p. 125].

Like the authors of newspaper articles with the typical names of "Gallimat'e" and "a shadow from nothing," Bulgakov did not ascribe serious significance to the activities of such mystics. Bulgakov himself, according to the recollections of those who knew him intimately, had a passion not for mysticism but for mystification, a happy devilishness, for "deviltry" that became a kind of peculiar game and amusing clowning. "I am not a cleric and not a theosophist" said the writer to the playwright S. A. Ermolinskii, who knew him well [quoted in Petelin 1986, p. 223]. In his letter to the government on March 28,

1930, Bulgakov, saying that the prime characteristic of his creative works was a struggle for the freedom of the word, explained that "every other characteristic highlighted in my satirical stories is connected with the first: black and mystical hues (I am a *mystical writer*) in which an unending number of the deformities of our daily lives are portrayed, the venom which saturates my language, the deep skepticism toward the revolutionary process taking place in my backward country, and contrasting to it its favorite Great Evolution as well and, most importantly, the portrayal of the terrible traits of my people, those traits which long before the Revolution caused my mentor, Saltykov-Shchedrin, such profound suffering" [*Oktiabr'* 1987, no. 6, p. 178]. It is quite clear that for Bulgakov, mystical symbols are only a peculiar satirical technique, and he calls himself a mystical writer only in a strictly ironical sense. Bulgakov ascribed major importance in the development of society to evolution, the moral perfection of all its members, and the necessity of preserving universally human values even in the most revolutionary upheavals. But mysticism was indeed present, if in a semiphantasmagorical, semi-anecdotal form, in the life of certain circles of society, which were usually linked to the old regime, during the years that ***The Master and Margarita*** was being written. Hence, what happened was that even the most fantastical figures in Bulgakov's novel suddenly began to seem quite relevant.

Bulgakov was very familiar with the works of the well-known Russian Orthodox philosopher and mystic P. A. Florenskii. The latter's book *Imaginings in Geometry* [Mnimosti v geometrii], with numerous annotations by Bulgakov, was in the writer's library [Chudakova 1974, pp. 79-81; 1986]. In Chudakova's opinion, Florenskii's idea that when the body passes into eternity it loses extension and acquires absolute permanence is reflected in the ***The Master and Margarita*** (in the characters' last flight) [Chudakova 1986, p. 229]. However, it should be pointed out that no concrete evidence of such geometry can be found in the text of the novel. In our view, another passage from *Imaginings in Geometry* is reflected in ***The Master and Margarita***, namely, the passage which analyzes the characteristics of optics in connection with the theory of imaginary planes: "if you look at space through some not too wide aperture, standing a bit to the side of it, the plane of the wall comes into the field of vision; but the eye cannot accommodate simultaneously to both the space seen through the wall and the plane of the aperture. Hence, if one concentrates one's attention on the illuminated space, then, with regard to the aperture itself, the eye sees it and does not see it at the same time. When we examine a transparent body of considerable thickness--an aquarium filled with water, for example--a solid glass cube (inkstand, etc.)--consciousness is quite alarmingly split between the perceptions of the two faces of the transparent body, which are in different positions in it (consciousness) yet in content are the same (and in this latter situation is the source of the alarm). The body oscillates in consciousness between an assessment of it as *something* (i.e., a body) and *nothing*, a visual nothing since it is transparent. While nothing to vision, it is *something* to the touch; but this something is transformed by visual recollection into something which is *in a sense* visual. The transparent is phantasmic & as when I was standing in the Sergievo-Posadskaia Church of the Nativity, almost directly opposite the closed Tsar's Portals. I clearly saw the throne through their fretwork, while the portals themselves in turn were visible to me through the fretted copper grid on the pulpit. Three strata of space; but each of them was visible clearly only by a special accommodation of vision, and then the two others acquired a special position in consciousness and consequently, were adjudged as being only semiexisting compared with what was clearly visible &" [Florenskii 1922, pp. 58-59]. Similarly, in Bulgakov, Margarita looks into Woland's crystal ball where she sees a picture of war: "Margarita leaned toward the globe and saw that the little square of land was growing bigger and bigger, emerging in natural colors and turning into a kind of map in relief. Then she saw a river and a village beside it. A house the size of a pea grew until it was the size of a matchbox. Suddenly and noiselessly, its roof flew upwards in a puff of black smoke, the walls collapsed leaving nothing of the two-story matchbox except a few smoking heaps of rubble. Looking even closer, Margarita discerned a tiny female figure lying on the ground and beside her in a pool of blood a baby with

outstretched arms" [p. 492]. The optical effect of the two-layered image underscores the horrors of war, thereby intensifying Margarita's state of anxiety.

There is an even deeper echo of Florenskii's ideas in the novel. The action of ***The Master and Margarita*** takes place in three worlds: the biblical historical world, the eternal unchanging world of the beyond, and the world of contemporary Moscow. Accordingly, there are also three series of characters forming a triad. The characters in each triad have a functional affinity as well as certain elements of portrait resemblance. We have argued in detail in support of this structure of the novel in a separate article. At this point let us merely spell out the composition of the triads as brought to light in our research: 1.) Pilate, Woland, and Professor Stravinsky; 2.) Kaif, Berlioz, and an unknown person in Torgsin, who says he is a foreigner; 3.) Judas, Baron Maigel', and Aloysius Mogarych; 4.) Affrani, Faggot Koroviev, and a doctor, Stravinsky's assistant; 5.) Pilate's dog Banga, the cat Behemoth, and the police dog Tuzbuben; 6.) Niza, Hella, and Natasha, Margarita's servants; 7.) the centurion Mark Krysoi, Azazello, and Archibaldovich, the manager of the Griboedov restaurant; 8.) Matthew the Levite, Ivan Bezdomny, and the poet Alexander Riukhin. Yeshua Ha-Notsri and the Master form a diad and not a triad, and Margarita is a monad, thus stressing the uniqueness and unrepeatability of her earthly love--the substantial essence of morality. The point is that the eternal other world and the contemporary Muscovite worlds in a sense parody the historical biblical world in which the characters have genuinely sublime passions; the figures are totally devoid of satirical qualities. The characters of the contemporary world are often even more parodied than the figures of the supernatural forces. Thus, Stravinsky parodies Woland who in the final text of the novel has no parodied features, and the unknown person in Torgsin is endowed with externally more repulsive traits debasing the figure than Berlioz, participant in Satan's ball and part of the same triad. To paraphrase the above statement of Florenskii's, we can say that the eye of the writer accommodates in such a way that the biblical scenes are perceived as absolutely real, but the Moscow and otherworldly scenes are perceived as merely half existing.

The triadic structure of ***The Master and Margarita*** could not have been a subconscious creation. Even if we were to accept Jung's theory of archetypes and regard trinity as something primally existent in the human subconscious, in that case surely a triadic structure should be discoverable in any number of literary works. However, in practice ***The Master and Margarita*** is virtually the one and only example of such a systematic and fully developed triadic structure in world literature. Consequently, such a structure is the product of conscious and not unconscious creativity. Perhaps Bulgakov himself was parodying the theory of the Trinity, most systematically developed in Florenskii's philosophy, who placed it at the center of his philosophical system and asserted that "trinity is the most universal characteristic of being." The religious philosopher directly linked the triadic nature of being with the Christian Trinity, and made it a contingent factor in the possibility of man's direct communication with Divinity. Florenskii singled out especially the supraterritorial region of heaven where the laws of imaginary space are operative (and according to Florenskii, such a space can also exist in reality under certain conditions) and where God dwells [Florenskii 1922, pp. 45-46]. But at the end of the novel Bulgakov sends Woland and his retinue together with Margarita and the Master back to his celestial supraterritorial domain, making, in opposition to Florenskii, this imaginary space the dwelling place of the forces of darkness, represented in parodied and phantasmagorical form in the novel.

There is also a fourth imaginary world in the novel which includes the space of the Variety theater and the house at No. 302a on Sadovaya Boulevard. The characters of this world are functionally akin to the characters in the three other worlds and expand the corresponding triads into tetrads: 1.) the financial manager of the Variety, Rimsky; 2.) George Bengalsky, master of ceremonies; 3.) Timofei Kvastsov, who lives in No. 302; 4.) the Variety administrator Varenuhka; 5.) the cat held by the stranger in Armavira; 6.) Berlioz's neighbor Annushka-Chuma; 7.) Stepa Likhodeev, manager of the Variety; and

8.) Nikanor Ivanovich Bosoi, chairman of the housing cooperative. The characters carry out imaginary actions and fulfill imaginary functions in the imaginary world. Rimsky seemingly directs the development of events in the *Variety*, but in reality everything there takes place according to Woland's will. Timofei Kvastsov seemingly betrayed Bosoi, but actually he denounced Koroviev to the chairman of the housing cooperative. George Bengalsky, like Berlioz, did not become accustomed to extraordinary things and, like the chairman of MASSOLIT, loses his head as a result. However, on the urgent pleas of the spectators, the MC's head is restored and the loss turns out to be imaginary. The Armavira cat is forced to go to the police on his hindlegs with the front legs bound up with a necktie. But unlike Behemoth's enchanted cat who walks on his hind legs and extends a kerchief to the conductor, this cat is the most ordinary cat. Bosoi, like Bezdomny, repents of and renounces the past, but this happens to him only in a doze, and when he wakes up he becomes the old Bosoi again, bribetaker and swindler. In the imaginary world, all the illusions are generated by the vices of the satirical characters in the novel.

The time of the events described in the novel is also closely linked to the novel structure. These events admit of an exact dating. The action of the Moscow scenes unfolds in the four days of Passion Week, in May, consequently in this year Easter was no earlier than May 5 on the new calendar. In the twentieth century, only 1929 meets this condition; that was the year when Bulgakov began his work on the novel, a year which was personally very important for him (the year he met E. S. Bulgakova, the prototype of Margarita). The scenes in Jerusalem took place on Nisan 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th on the ancient Hebrew lunar calendar. The book *The Life of Christ*, by the French historian E. Renan, extracts of which have been preserved in Bulgakov's archives, served the author as the source of the information that from the standpoint of the Easter chronology 29 was identical to the traditional 33, and in all probability therefore was the year Christ was executed. In the first draft of the novel written in 1929, Yeshua states straight out: "nineteen hundred years will pass before it will be clear how much they have lied in writing about me." Only indirect allusions (Yeshua's age, the short--a few weeks--time of his preaching, etc.) to the fact that the action took place in '29 are left in the final text. The interval of nineteen hundred years separating the two temporal planes of the novel is shortened to seventy-six years, the period of time in which the dates on the lunar calendar fall on the same dates and days of the week on the Julian solar calendar. This accentuates even more the relationship between the Jerusalem and Moscow parts of the novel, the latter thus being a debased parodied repetition of the former. The final flight takes place simultaneously on the Easter night of Nisan 16 and May 5, thus linking the different spatial and temporal layers of ***The Master and Margarita***.

Florenskii himself, we think, could be the prototype for the scholar Fesia, one of the characters in the destroyed draft of the novel in 1929. Fesia has an extraordinary erudition in many areas of knowledge, but is especially interested in art, history, philosophy, and the literature of the Renaissance period. Keen on mysticism, he is a participant in the Shabash, and enters into direct contact with otherworldly forces. Fesia is the author of such books as *The Category of Causality and the Causal Relation*, *History as an Aggregate of Biographies*, *Ronsard and the Pleiads*, and *Studies and Dissertations on the Art and Esthetic Consciousness of the Italian Renaissance*. After the revolution, he gives a course in "Humanist Criticism as Such" in the Khumat (Art Workshops), a lecture on "Christian Wars during the Reformation" in the KAV division, and a course on the "Secularization of Ethics as a Science" in the Academy of Fine Arts, and in one other place gives a talk on "The Resplendence of Form and the Proportionality of Parts" [Chudakova, "Arkhiv," 1976, p. 70]. Florenskii, as we know, possessed truly encyclopedic knowledge. He left us works in mathematics, physics, engineering, philosophy, theology, literary criticism and art criticism, and was recruited as an engineer to draft and carry out the GOELRO plan. He was the author of a dissertation entitled "On Spiritual Truth" [O dukhovnoi istine] and after the revolution taught in many universities. He gave a course in the history of philosophy at the Church Academy, lectures on the theory of perspective

in the Vkhutemas, and was the editor of technical and mathematical encyclopedias. Contemporary scholars have commented that the "sense of cosmic oneness proper to oriental patristics, in Florenskii becomes a perception of the interlinking of all members of the corporeal world, and features of magicism and naturalism unexpectedly make for an affinity between Florenskii and the philosophical background of the Renaissance so hateful to him" [*Filosofskaia entsiklopediia* 1970, vol. 5, p. 378]. Bulgakov was possibly parodying certain themes in Florenskii's scientific pursuits in the figure of Fesia and draw affinities between his character and the era of the Renaissance, in which one can indeed find a certain similarity with the ideas of the Russian religious philosopher. Certain of Florenskii's traits perhaps are ascribed even to Woland; in the 1929 draft he is explicitly called an engineer and a consultant [see: Bulgakov, "Kopyto inzhenera," 1984] (Florenskii was an adviser to the GOELRO plan). And Fesia's mysticism may in many respects be seen as a parody of Florenskii's mysticism (Orthodox mysticism in the latter, and a belief in otherworldly diabolical forces of medieval and Western European origin in the former). In 1933 Florenskii was illegally arrested [*Filosofskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 5, p. 377]. It is interesting that the fate of the Master took a similar turn in the draft written that same year.

Notes

M. B. Utekhin, "Istoricheskie grani vechnykh istin," *Sovremennost' klassiki*, Moscow, 1986.

Kant "thought it impossible to find any proof whatsoever of the existence of God in the domain of pure reason" [*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*. Vol. 4 (7), p. 207]. Perhaps in the process of working on the novel Bulgakov began to consider this thesis of Kantian philosophy as a fifth proof. Kant himself, in fact, seemingly refuted it with his moral proof which, originally the fifth proof, became the sixth proof in the final draft ("he fashioned his own sixth proof as if in ridicule of himself" [Bulgakov, *Belaia gvardiia. Master i Margarita*, 1984, p. 258. Hereinafter references in the text to the pages of this addition are given in brackets]). Bulgakov's close friend, the philosopher and literary critic, P. S. Popov, was absorbed by the problem of the proofs of the existence of God, as evident from a study preserved in his archives [*Novyi mir*, 1987, no. 2, p. 143].

These words of the Master are a paraphrase of the Poet's speech in the theatrical prologue to Goethe's Faust: "Don't speak to me of the crowd, guilty of confusing us. It engulfs like a quagmire, it turns like a millstone"; and Wagner's words "the common people are no fun. Wherever the peasants go, there is fighting, noise and uproar right away. They have their fiddles, their leapfrog, and their tenpins. Their screams are unbearable for us."

The last refuge of the Master is the "dwelling place of dreams," about which the poet speaks in the theatrical prologue to Faust.

References

Bulgakov, M. *Belaia gvardiia. Master i Margarita*. Moscow, 1984.

Bulgakov, M. "Kopyto inzhenera. Tri otryvka iz chernovykh redaktsii romana Master i Margarita." Published by B. S. Miagkov. *Pamir* 1984, no. 7.

Bulgakov, M. "Iakoby den'gi. Iz chernovykh tetradei romana "Master i Margarita."" Published by L. M. Ianovskaia. *Daugava* 1983, no. 10.

Chernikova, G. "O nekotorykh osobennostiakh filosofskoi problematiki romana Mikhaila Bulgakova "Master i Margarita." *Analele Universitatii din Timisoara. Ser. stinte. fil.* 1971, vol. 10.

Chudakova, M. O. "Arkhiv M. A. Bulgakova." *Zapiski Otdel rukopisei GBL*. Moscow, 1976, no. 37.

Chudakova, M. O. ""I knigi, knigi &" M. A. Bulgakov." *Oni pitali moiu muzu*. Moscow, 1986.

Chudakova, M. O. "Tvorcheskaia istoriia romana M. Bulgakova "Master i Margarita."" *Voprosy literatury* 1976, no. 1.

Chudakova, M. O. "Uslovie sushchestvovaniia." *V mire knig* 1974, no. 12.

Dostoevskii, F. M. *Poln. sobr. soch.* In 30 vols. Leningrad, 1972, vol. 2.

Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona. Vols. 2, 4, 10, 14.

Filosofskaia entsiklopediia. 1970, vol. 5.

Florenskii, P. A. *Mnimosti v geometrii*. Moscow, 1922.

France, A. *Sad Epikura*. Translated by Iu. Bromlei. Moscow, 1907.

Galinskaia, I. L. *Zagadki izvestnykh knig*. Moscow, 1986.

Heine, H. *K istorii religii i filosofii v Germanii*. Vol. 7.

Heine, H. *Poln. sobr. soch.* In 12 volumes. Moscow-Leningrad, 1935, vol. 4.

Legenda o doktore Fauste. Edited by V. M. Zhirmunskii. Moscow, 1978.

Novyi mir 1987, no. 2.

Oktiabr' 1987, no. 6.

Petelin, V. V. *Miatezhnaia dusha Rossii*. Moscow, 1986.

Pushkin, A. S. *Poln. sobr. soch.* In 10 volumes. Moscow-Leningrad, 1950, vol. 6.