



Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita
The True Content
Alfred Barkov

Partial English translation of *Роман М.А. Булгакова 'Мастер и Маргарита': альтернативное прочтение* or *M.A. Bulgakov's novel 'The Master and Margarita': an alternative reading* - 1994

From the archives of the website
The Master and Margarita

<http://www.masterandmargarita.eu>

Webmaster

Jan Vanhellemont
Klein Begijnhof 6
B-3000 Leuven
+3216583866
+32475260793

**Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*:
The True Content**
Alfred Barkov, 1994

Note from the webmaster

In 1994, the Ukrainian polemicist Alfred Barkov published the book *Роман М.А. Булгакова 'Мастер и Маргарита': альтернативное прочтение* or *M.A. Bulgakov's novel 'The Master and Margarita': an alternative reading*.

It was a feat of strength which he repeated in 1996 with another essay: *Роман М.А. Булгакова 'Мастер и Маргарита': 'верно-вечная' любовь или литературная мистификация?* or *M.A. Bulgakov's novel 'The Master and Margarita': an everlasting love or a literary mystification?*

In both essays, Barkov ranted and raved heavily against the many so-called "erroneous" interpretations which, according to him, exist about *The Master and Margarita*. For instance, he didn't accept the idea that Bulgakov was thinking of himself when describing the Master, nor that Bulgakov's spouse Elena Sergeevna was the real life prototype for Margarita. According to Alfred Barkov, such interpretations would not correspond with the true content of the book and the real intentions of the author. Moreover, he considered such opinions as "traditional pro-Soviet and pro-Stalin presentations". Especially the English translation of *The Master and Margarita*, made by Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Connor in 1993, and its preface written by the American scholar Ellendea Proffer, are subjects of Barkov's rage.

Barkov's essays were published only in Russian. From 2002 to 2004 he made attempts himself to publish English translations on the internet, but they are only partial.

From his first essay, he summarized the Preface and the first four chapters and published it on the internet as *Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita: The True Content*.

From his second essay, he only made a summary in English and published it on the internet in 2002.

Barkov promised that he would try to translate both essays completely, but he never made it. When I was in Ukraine in 2004 and tried to contact him, I heard that he had died earlier that year, on January 4, 2004.

In 2010, most of Barkov's English texts disappeared from the internet. The reservations for his domain name (www.megaone.com) had no longer been extended. Fortunately, I could recuperate all of Barkov's texts using the *Internet Archive Wayback Machine* (www.archive.org).

Although I don't agree with Alfred Barkov, I didn't want his musings to be lost forever, so I decided to add all his texts related to *The Master and Margarita* to the website's archives.

This paper

M.A. Bulgakov's novel 'The Master and Margarita': The True Content – Alfred Barkov's English summary of the Preface and the first four chapters of his first essay *Роман М.А. Булгакова 'Мастер и Маргарита': альтернативное прочтение.* - 1994

Related papers

Роман М.А. Булгакова 'Мастер и Маргарита': альтернативное прочтение - the complete text of Alfred Barkov's first essay in Russian. - 1994

M.A. Bulgakov's novel 'The Master and Margarita': an everlasting love or a literary mystification? - Alfred Barkov's English summary of his second essay *Роман М.А. Булгакова 'Мастер и Маргарита': 'верно-вечная' любовь или литературная мистификация?* - 1996

Роман М.А. Булгакова 'Мастер и Маргарита': 'верно-вечная' любовь или литературная мистификация? - the complete text of Alfred Barkov's second essay in Russian. - 1996

**Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*:
The True Content**
Alfred Barkov 1994

Preface

*The traditional pro-Soviet rendition of *The Master and Margarita* does not agree with the true content. Mikhail Bulgakov aimed his satire at real persons depicted as the Master and Margarita.*



MUCH pretentious has been said about Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita* since it was first published nearly thirty five years ago. The list of high-toned works devoted to the novel seems to be the same endless as the notorious *everlasting love* between the Master and Margarita.

The officious concept avows that in the novel, Mikhail Bulgakov depicted himself and his last wife as the Master and Margarita. That dictates the necessity to render these characters as strictly positive, and the relations between the Master and Margarita as exalted. The misleading pro-Soviet and pro-Stalinist concept prevents the readers from noticing in the text the manifold elements indicating that the true content is completely different from the imposed interpretation.



The forms in which Bulgakov presented the 'key' elements are different. These elements are scattered over the text, some of them being of linguistic origin and performed in a binary form. To comprehend the real meaning of such cues, it is necessary to compare similar expressions located several chapters apart. The prejudiced attitude to the content of *The Master and Margarita* prevents even the Russian scholars from noticing the subtle wordplays. In cases of translations, the situation is even more serious. Being unaware of the real content of *The Master and Margarita*, the translators are unable to grasp and transfer the lexical peculiarities of the key elements while some parts of the text must be translated with special precision. That is true even with one of the recent translations of *The Master and*

Margarita into English performed by Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Connor (1). While in the original text such elements produce at least subconscious associations among those who can read Russian, their absence in the translated versions deprives the readers even of that opportunity.

Unfortunately, following the dogmatic opinion of the Russian officious establishment which still dominates in the Bulgakov studies, the Western scholars merely reproduce the erroneous maxims without questioning their efficacy. I will mention just some of them.

In Russia, for the last few centuries the notion of *master* has been the central point of controversy. The adherents of the *poetical* approach insist that the creative literary process requires the ability to feel and comprehend *lyrics* while the advocates of the *mastery* concept assert that everybody can be trained to become a poet - much in the same way the shoe-makers are trained.

After the 1917 October revolt, the Soviet establishment launched a campaign aimed at irradiation the 'obsolete bourgeois culture' and replacing it with the 'proletarian' one. That stage of the horrible process was depicted by Bulgakov in his novella *The Heart of a Dog* (2).

To replace the exterminated class of the *intelligentsia* (3), the poorly educated 'proletarians' with the *dog's hearts* were hastily trained to become poets, writers and dramatists. These *Masters* comprised the new literary establishment defined in *The Master and Margarita* as the *MASSOLIT*. In the book *Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita: the true content*, I argue that Bulgakov meant that satirical abbreviation to stand for *The MASTers of the SOviet LITerature*.

The scholars engaged in the Bulgakov studies still disregard the fact that the *Mastery* concept was consistently interjected by the Communist state, and that the process was controlled personally by Stalin. Its ideological base was elaborated by the then Minister of Culture A.V. Lunacharsky. It was Lunacharsky who forced the *Mastery* policy into application as an integral part of the Communist party 'anti-bourgeoisie' ideological strategy. In *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov depicted that odious person as Sempleyarov, the Director of Theatres and Shows, and as critic Latunsky.

Likewise, it has been overlooked that Bulgakov created the plot of *The Master and Margarita* as a sarcastic parody of A. Lunacharsky's "revolutionary" drama *Faust and the City*. It should be noted that in the early versions of *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov named Faust the character whom we have come to know as the Master. Moreover, Bulgakov had explicitly parodied the same Lunacharsky's drama *Faust and the City* in his very first anti-Communist novel *The White Guard* (1925). There is no doubt that was the very reason why the magazine in which *The White Guard* was being published was closed so hastily that the publication of the novel was not completed. It was several decades later that the Soviet public got an opportunity to read the complete version of *The White Guard* (4).

These and many other similar facts are bluntly ignored by the Russian literary scholarship. Instead, it nourishes the allegation that all troubles with the publication of Bulgakov's works were coming from the people of Jewish origin who allegedly prevented improving relations between Bulgakov and Stalin. It has become a regrettable tradition to mention some 'non-Russian' names and cite the situation depicted in *The Master and Margarita* in which some critic Latunsky carried out the campaign denigrating the Master and his novel. Factually, it was Lunacharsky who has initiated in 1928 the anti-Bulgakov campaign. In his

speech in the Communist Party Central Committee, he labeled Bulgakov as "the most anti-Soviet writer" and accused the same persons with the "non-Russian" names of promoting Bulgakov's dramas to be staged.

All that has been consistently ignored by the Russian critics who recognized themselves in the *Master and Margarita* as the MASSOLIT functionaries. They still pretend not to notice that it was exactly in 1928 that Bulgakov began writing *The Master and Margarita* - just after Lunacharsky had launched the anti-Bulgakov campaign; that the character **Latunsky** was not intended by Bulgakov as a Jew but rather as **Lunacharsky** whose origin was of a Russian nobility kin. Incidentally, Bulgakov and Lunacharsky acquired high education by attending the same H.M. Emperor Alexander High School in Kiev (Bulgakov depicted that school in *The White Guard*.)

The text of *The Master and Margarita* contains multiple indications that in the figure of the Master Bulgakov portrayed famous Russian writer Alexei ('Maxim') Gorky of whom Stalin made the official superintendent of the whole Soviet literary process. It was Gorky to whom the Soviet propaganda attached the title of *Master*. Upon his death in 1936, the official Communist Party daily *Pravda* described him as 'the Master'. But the very first person to whom the definition of *Master* was publicly applied by the writers was Stalin. In February 1936, the plenary session of the Board of the Union of the Soviet Writers (headed by M. Gorky) sent a greeting cable to Stalin. It contained the words: "You are the best master of life, comrade Stalin!" The text of the greeting address was published in the Soviet press exactly when Mikhail Bulgakov had been working on *The Master and Margarita*.



As the night-hag Margarita in Bulgakov's novel, Maria Andreeva seems to have been squint as well.

(When this beautiful woman was fourteen, she entertained herself with cutting cats' throats.)

If the text of *The Master and Margarita* is read a bit more attentively, it becomes clear that there has never existed between the Master and Margarita anything which could be described as *everlasting love*. The image of Margarita has been intended by Bulgakov as that of a debauched prostitute employed by the sinister powers. In the early versions of *The Master and Margarita* (5) that was pronounced more expressly. Numerous details contained in *The Master and Margarita* indicate that the person from whom Bulgakov modeled Margarita was the most beautiful Russian actress Maria Andreeva. Before the Russian revolutions (6), when the Bolsheviks (the Communists) were in the underground, she became a special assistant to Vladimir Lenin (just as Hella in *The Master and Margarita* was an assistant to Woland, and Bulgakov underlined the genetic relation between the images of explicit vampire Hella and Margarita.) On Lenin's assignment, Maria Andreeva recruited talented writer A.M. ('Maksim') Gorky to serve the Bolsheviks (this situation is also depicted allegorically in *The Master and Margarita*.) Available

materials present grounds for a conclusion that besides being Lenin's assistant, Maria Andreeva might have been an agent provocateur of the Tzarist secret

police spying on Lenin's political faction. (See Chapter 24 of the analysis of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*.)

In *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov did not restrict the main idea to an allegorical description of M. Gorky's and M. Andreeva's life story. The philosophy of his novel appears to be much deeper and more sophisticated than it is assumed within the traditional interpretation. The so called 'Russian idea' has been tackled in the novel, and Bulgakov's point of view happens to differ much from what is widely nourished in the Russian society. On the other hand, a well pronounced apologetic pro-Jewish leitmotif is evident as well. These last features add to the reasons why the true content of *The Master and Margarita* is subtly opposed in Russia. "Even if all that proves true, we do not need such Bulgakov anyway" is a typical reaction of some Russian media upon reading the results of the analysis.

The 300 p. book *Mikhail Bulgakov's novel The Master and Margarita: the true content* was published in Kiev in 1994 (in Russian). As a translation into English is not available, I will attempt to render the content myself and add more rendered chapters as soon as they are ready.



Maria Andreeva, Margarita in Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*, and M. Gorky whom Bulgakov portrayed as the Master

Summary in English of the chapters of *Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita: The True Content*.

Section I. Constrained with the stereotypes

Chapter I. Did Bulgakov intend solemn meaning of the notion of Master?

- In *The Master and Margarita*, Mikhail Bulgakov described Margarita as a debauched prostitute who betrayed the Master to the secret police.

Chapter II. The Master and Margarita: the denominative notion of Master

- Though the sobriquet *Master* is perceived as a proper name, in *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov transcribed the word *master* only in the lower case.

Chapter III. Why the Master was not admitted to the light - What Bulgakov described in *The Master and Margarita* as clinic is actually a jail where the Master serving the diabolic Soviet regime, converted talented poets into idiots.

Chapter IV. Mikhail Bulgakov's Margarita: a bestial whore betraying the Master - In *The Master and Margarita*, Mikhail Bulgakov depicted Margarita as a bestial whore betraying the Master to the secret police.

The summary of the rest 41 chapters follows.

In 1996, there has been completed another book tackling the issues of Mikhail Bulgakov's true intention and the content of *The Master and Margarita*. A

summary in English of its content can be spotted on the page: *Mikhail Bulgakov's novel The Master and Margarita: a literary mystification*. The same method of analysis was applied to *Hamlet* by W. Shakespeare.

Remarks

1. Mikhail Bulgakov. *The Master and Margarita*: Ardis, 1993.
2. Until recently, Mikhail Bulgakov's novella *The Heart of a Dog* was on the banned list, its mentioning in press was forbidden.
3. The definition of *intelligentsia* has been traditionally attributed in Russia to the humanitarians as a special social class.
4. In the thirties, a special version of *The White Guard* prepared by Mikhail Bulgakov was published in France. The novel was published in Latvia as well, but that edition is considered to be pitated.
5. After the political arrest of poet O. Mandelshtam in 1934, Bulgakov immediately demolished the early versions of *The Master and Margarita*.
6. The First Russian revolution took place in 1905, the Second one in February 1917, and the October 1917 Bolsheviki's revolt has been sometimes referred to as the Third one.

Section I. Constrained by the stereotypes

Chapter I. Did Bulgakov intend solemn meaning of the notion of Master? *A summary of the original text in Russian*

In The Master and Margarita Bulgakov described Margarita as a prostitute who betrayed the Master to the secret police. The belief that Margarita reflects Bulgakov's third wife is erroneous.

All versions of traditional interpretation of the contents of *The Master and Margarita* do not fit into manifold facts Bulgakov included into the text. Such facts are just ignored as if they were not existing at all. The main reason is that the approach to the content of *The Master and Margarita* is biased. That is, the commentators know in advance that the image of the Master should represent Mikhail Bulgakov himself while the image of Margarita reflects his last wife Elena Sergeevna Bulgakova.

Naturally, such attitude inevitably prompts ready-to-use answers: as Bulgakov depicted himself as the Master, the sole notion of the *Master* should be interpreted only positively; as Margarita was meant as Bulgakov's wife, the relations between the Master and Margarita should be interpreted only as exalted. Accordingly, the 'eternal house' the Master was granted in the final should be understood as being something heavenly, and so on. The Russian philologists who dictate the World the way *The Master and Margarita* should be interpreted neglect even their native traditions. Among the Russians and Ukrainians, the expression 'eternal house' always means burial; this expression is an element of any traditional folklore funeral threnos.

It has become a tradition among the scholars to neglect a very awkward situation described in the text of *The Master and Margarita*. It goes on the relations between the Master and his lover. Even at the most critical moments, Margarita used to leave the Master alone explaining to him she had to see somebody, and that was her duty. On that crucial October night Margarita has left the Master just before he was arrested. It is only too evident that Bulgakov described a secret police contact, and that Margarita betrayed the Master to the people who arrested him.

Moreover, there exists in the plot a parallel image of prostitute Niza who betrayed her lover Judas to the Roman secret police. According to multiple details, it is only too obvious that the image of Niza was intended as a trop describing the true characteristics of Margarita. Actually, the Niza-Judas situation (1) is very similar to that with the Master and Margarita (2).

The genetic connection attributed to the image of Margarita and to the figure of Bulgakov's third wife positions the scholars into an awkward situation. They have either to admit that Mikhail Bulgakov's third wife had been spying on him (that piquant issue has been given more attention in my next book - see *Mikhail Bulgakov's novel The Master and Margarita: a literary mystification*) or to revise their basic approach to the content of *The Master and Margarita*. The commentators of *The Master and Margarita* overlook the fact that the mockingly exalted style of the passages depicting the 'everlasting love' between the Master and Margarita (3) suggests that the whole novel has been intended by Bulgakov as a bitter parody.

* * *

It was only recently that I discovered striking parallels between Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It is astonishing that in the four centuries, the public did not notice the mocking intention of Shakespeare. The plot of *Romeo and Juliet* contains explicit contradictions which still remain unexplained. But the parallel between the two masterpieces is not restricted to solely inner structure elements such as multiple plots, subjects, additional levels of sophisticated composition, etc. Even the equal structure of both titles suggests that Bulgakov was aware of the satirical nature of Shakespeare's work (cp.: *The Master and Margarita* and *Romeo and Juliet*.)

Remarks

1. See chapter 26 of *The Master and Margarita*.
2. See chapter 13 of *The Master and Margarita*.
3. For the mocking description of the 'everlasting love' between the Master and Margarita see the beginning of Ch. 19.

Chapter II.

The Master and Margarita: the denominative notion of Master

A summary of the original text in Russian

In the original text of The Master and Margarita, Bulgakov transcribed the word designating the hero only in the lower case - just as master. At first, it was attributed to Woland the Satan.

According to Russian cultural traditions, acquiring the mastery qualities means inevitable death of the art. The *mastery* is understood as the technical ability just *to do* something substantial but ordinary, while the notion of *art* presupposes the presence of special spiritual qualities necessary for the creation of unique masterpieces which cannot be duplicated.

It was as early as at the beginning of XXth century that very prominent Russian writers and poets ironically referred to M. Gorky punning with the *mastery* attribute. In *The Master and Margarita* the hero designates himself as *master* (1) explicitly setting this attribute as opposed to the notion of *writer*.

It has become a tradition to refer to the hero of Bulgakov's novel as to the *Master*, every time transcribing the word with the capital *M*. In the original text of *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov transcribed the word designating the hero only in the lower case as *master*. Such unique designation of the hero suggests that by substituting the name with the sobriquet *master* Bulgakov pursued a special goal. Against the background of the centuries long *mastery vs. art* controversy in the Russian literary environment, it is evident that Bulgakov intended to discriminate the hero from real artists capable to create unique masterpieces rather than mass production.

Having erroneously attributed the notion of *master* to Bulgakov, the commentators are bound to interpret its meaning only positively thus neglecting the historical fact that the *mastery* policy was forced into application by the Soviet system, and that was a disaster to our culture.

The Soviet repressive system understood the *mastery* as the readiness of a writer to refuse his beliefs and create works prescribed by the Powers. The notion of *mastery* acquired explicitly odious meaning after the poet O. Mandelshtam was arrested in 1934 for creating a poem satirically featuring the figure of Stalin. In a telephone talk with other poet B. Pasternak, Stalin persistently demanded of him to define if Mandelshtam was a *master* or not. The Bulgakov and Mandelshtam families lived in the same block of houses, and Bulgakov and his wife were among the very first with whom Mrs. Mandelshtam shared the bad news. Upon hearing the news, Bulgakov immediately demolished the manuscript of *The Master and Margarita*. It is impossible that Bulgakov would use the notion *master* without considering its odious meaning dominating in the Soviet society. It should be added that the attribute *master* first appeared in the next version of *The Master and Margarita* written after the arrest of O.

Mandelstam. At first, it was attributed not to the hero whom we have come to know as the *Master* but to Woland the Satan.

The A. Lunacharsky's concept of the *mastery* in literature was published in 1933, well before the phone conversation between Stalin and Pasternak took place, and before Bulgakov introduced the *master* attribute in the text of *The Master and Margarita*.

As I mentioned earlier, the notion *master* was canonized in the figure of M. Gorky. It should be added that in February 1936, the plenary session of the Board of the Union of the Soviet Writers (headed by M. Gorky) sent a greeting cable to Stalin. It contained the words: "You are the best master of life, comrade Stalin!" About that time Gorky was proclaimed as *Stalin of the Soviet literature*. The fact that in the thirties, the odious notion of *master* was fixedly associated with Gorky and Stalin excludes any probability of Bulgakov's intention to describe himself as a *master*.

Therefore, the imposed interpretation of *The Master and Margarita* is erroneous.

Remarks

1. See chapter 13 of *The Master and Margarita*.

Chapter III.

Why the Master was not admitted to the Light

A summary of the original text in Russian

The clinic in Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita is actually a jail where the Master converted talented poets into fools.

All positive about the Master in the *Master and Margarita* has been derived by the scholars from Master's own account (1). That only source of very critical information appears to be inconsistent and contradicting.

The 'infernal' number '13' of the chapter is being commented often, though superficially. Many cues important for the understanding of Bulgakov's idea have been unnoticed or rather neglected.

First of all, the title of the chapter is much more informative than it is traditionally considered. Its interpretation as *The Appearance of the Hero* does not represent specificity of the Russian word translated as *appearance*. Indeed, this chapter is the very first one from which the readers learn about the Master. Bulgakov intended to stress that the Master *appears* before Ivan Bezdomny rather than before readers, and that is performed with a word play. The thing is that of the many words employed in Russian for designating the act of *arriving*, Bulgakov choose the one possessing the sense attributed to designate an arrival of something superficial, in most cases infernal. The actual word Bulgakov employed is commonly used in colloquial Russian when Devil's arrival is meant. (According to the folk traditions, the Russians and the Ukrainians (2) avoid mentioning the Devil directly. Instead, the words traditionally related to sinister are used).

Besides mentioning the 'infernal' number of the chapter – 13 -, nobody would ever deliberate the question of what is infernal in the chapter itself. Indeed, there are only two characters there, poet Ivan Bezdomny and the Master. Their conversation takes place in a tidy clinic ward. Everything looks clear and uncontaminated. And yet...

... The Master appears before the poet at midnight, against the background of the sinister moonlight (3). As any other diabolic creature, he leaves Bezdomny before sunrise. In the 1934-1936 version this same chapter describing the events in the clinic ward had the same number 13, and was titled slightly differently: *The Midnight Appearance*. That is, Bulgakov stressed the infernal character of the visit more expressly. The other different feature was that Bezdomny was visited not by the Master but by Woland the Devil. It is obvious that in the last versions of *The Master and Margarita*, the Master is endowed with the same diabolic functions as Devil Woland.

So, the *hero* did not just appear; he rather emerged from the inferno. This very important feature remains unnoticed by the scholars and translators.

Another important feature about the clinic is that it was mentioned by Bulgakov as not a clinic but as a jail. In one of the early variants of the chapter, the Master asked Bezdomyň how he had got there. That phrase employs an ideomatic expression meaning 'being imprisoned' rather than 'being hospitalized' suggests that Bezdomyň was placed not in a clinic ward but rather into a jail cell. Again, in an early version the premises where Bezdomyň was detained were unequivocally designated with a word meaning only a jail cell, and in no case a clinic ward. It is important also that the Master possessed the keys to the cells. He visited the prisoners and converted them into fools. Bulgakov demonstrates the sinister result of Master's visit with the case of poet Ivan Bezdomyň.

I am afraid that irrespective of the quality of translations, the text should be supplemented with additional comments. The thing is that Bulgakov demonstrated the process of converting the poet into an idiot by employing specific elements of traditions of social communication among the Russians and the Ukrainians.

In Russia and in Ukraine, we refer to a person by his or her last name only on very official occasions, and only in cases when we are not going to demonstrate a least respect. When we tend to demonstrate some respect to a person we tend to use the combination of the first name and patronymic rather than the last name. In this very case, before getting a drug injection, poet Bezdomyň is referred to with the most possible respect as Ivan Nikolayevich ('Ivan son of Nikolai').

After the injection, the situation considerably changes: in the narrative, the poet is referred to by his first name only, as Ivan. In the course of the Master's visit, the poet's status goes still more down to the lowest possible point: he is referred to as Ivanushka. This special form of the name Ivan denominates in Russian folklore a foolish person, an object of mockery. In daily communication, this form is used only when we sympathize with a lad deprived of wits.

This is the way in which Bulgakov demonstrates the results of the Soviet brainwashing. Bulgakov stresses that the Master is engaged by the Soviet system, and that he performs the same satanic functions as the satanic state system.

This feature remains unnoticed by the commentators, and the foreign readers are deprived of a possibility to grasp the gist of the 'infernal' 13th Chapter. For example, Mr. Kevin Moss the webmaster of the Middlebury college beautiful *The Master and Margarita* website comments this feature as follows:

Bezdomyň's first name, Ivan, links him with the Russian folkloric character "Ivanushka durachok" - Ivan the Fool, who may be stupid, but whose ineptitude wins him both success and sympathy from the Russian public. He is called Ivanushka in Chapter 30.

Unfortunately, in this case the first and the most important usage in Chapter 13 of the name *Ivanushka* is disregarded.

The sobriquet *Ivanushka* is mentioned again in Chapter 19 in a construction aimed to remind the readers that the poet has become an *Ivanushka the Fool* in the course of the Master's visit.

Remarks

1. See chapter 13 of *The Master and Margarita*.
2. Mikhail Bulgakov was born and got education in Kiev, Ukraine.
3. The sinister impact of the moonlight in *The Master and Margarita* is discussed at length in the original chapter and elsewhere in the book.

Chapter IV.

Mikhail Bulgakov's Margarita: a bestial whore betraying the Master

A summary of the original text in Russian

In The Master and Margarita, Mikhail Bulgakov depicted Margarita as a bestial whore. Margarita betrayed the Master to the secret police the same as Niza betrayed Judas.

Though traditionally the image of Margarita is rendered as highly elevated, Bulgakov's intention was opposite.

The only passage mentioning the alleged *everlasting love* of the Master and Margarita is at the very beginning of Chapter 19 (1). The Narrator's mocking attitude to Margarita and her allegedly elevated passion is explicit. Nevertheless, this fact has been neglected even by the Russian scholars. To demonstrate that the narrative concerning the 'everlasting love' is false, Bulgakov's Narrator (2) employed identical phrases *Follow me, my reader!* in two adjoining paragraphs: in the very last one of Chapter 18, and in the first one of Chapter 19.

Moreover, in the same last paragraph of Chapter 18 the Narrator declares that it's time to proceed with what he calls *the true story*, while Chapter 18 is entirely devoted to the description of a string of wicked events. Chapter 19 begins with a pathetic declaration about the true nature of the story describing the so called *everlasting love*.

To disguise the evident parallel between the two adjoining passages, the proxy author of *The Master and Margarita* (the Narrator) inserts between the two chapters an inept extra title 'Part Two' (3). Adding absolutely nothing to the comprehension of the content of *The Master and Margarita*, that insertion merely diverts the readers' attention from the evident lexical and notional parallels between the adjoining paragraphs. Due to that, these two consequent paragraphs are perceived psychologically as having very little in common. Indeed, architectonically they belong not only to different chapters but even to different sections of the book.

The further narrative about Margarita is carried out in the same ironical way. Mikhail Bulgakov (according to the structure of *The Master and Margarita*, it is rather Bulgakov's proxy the Narrator than Bulgakov himself) employs a typical way of satirical narration: the narrative is carried out 'within the zone of the language' of Margarita. Earlier, that way of narrating was extensively employed by famous Russian novelists Alexander Pushkin and Fiodor Dostoyevsky. In the case of *The Master and Margarita*, such device is demonstrated in the same Chapter 19 (4). There is there a short passage describing Margarita as *Margarita Nikolaevna* (5). It consists of five short primitive sentences, four of them beginning with the name-patronymic combination *Margarita Nikolaevna*. Demonstrating the inherent style of Margarita, the passage characterizes her as a vulgar person with primitive intellect and base manners.

The further text of *The Master and Margarita* suggests the same. For example, by the end of the book we learn very important information disavowing everything

positive about the image of Margarita: it was only after her death that her face *at last* became fair. That is, when Margarita was alive, **her face was always dark**. But that is not all: the deceitful Narrator lets out still another portion of vital information. We learn that besides being dark, Margarita's face had always been wearing a beast grin which disappeared only when she became a corpse. Just imagine a persistent ugly beast grin on the dark face of a witch. Besides, Margarita's lexicon is extremely rude (6), and Bulgakov included in an early version of *The Master and Margarita* a scene depicting Margarita performing an act of oral sex at the Satan's ball.

The existing interpretations of the content of the novel disregard the fact that in the so called Jerusalem chapters of *The Master and Margarita* (7), there exists a parallel image describing Margarita (8).

The parallel between Margarita and Niza is justified with the analogous situation in which Margarita betrayed the Master. The second parallel is presented by the scenes with the assassination of Judas and Margarita: in both cases, the colour of the faces became light only when Judas and Margarita have become corpses. Though these two events are separated with nearly two thousand years, Bulgakov conjoins them by employing special composition technique. After the ball, Margarita reads at the Master's place about the changes on the face of stabbed Judas. Few hours later she is assassinated herself, in the same Master's room where she read about Judas, and there appeared similar changes on her face.

It is only too obvious that the dogmatic doctrine according to which in *The Master and Margarita* Bulgakov depicted his wife as Margarita, is misleading.

Remarks

1. This chapter of *The Master and Margarita* is the very first one where Margarita appears before the readers. This sole fact is quite enough to provoke a suspicion that there is something strange with the process of narration.
2. According to the special kind of composition employed in *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov created within the hidden plot a kind a proxy author, so the whole text is narrated by this special character (Koroviev-Fagot). His role is dual: besides being one of the characters acting in the 'Moscow chapters' he narrates the whole story attempting to obscure that role. All malicious irony in *The Master and Margarita* comes from him, not Bulgakov.
3. Such division of *The Master and Margarita* into two parts is so illogical that nobody would ever attempt to explain its significance. In this, Bulgakov replicated the ironical division into inept 'parts' of *Eugene Onegin* by Alexander Pushkin.
4. There is much more in common between *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov, and *Eugene Onegin* by Alexander Pushkin. Factually, Bulgakov employed the sophisticated structure of Pushkin's novel, and included into the text of *The Master and Margarita* multiple references to *Eugene Onegin*.
5. In the case of Margarita, the persistent use of her patronymic stresses the ironical attitude of the Narrator. This way of expressing scornful irony is widely used among the Russians at all social levels, especially in everyday

communication. Along with that, this passage contains a reflection of actress Maria Andreeva whom Bulgakov depicted as Margarita. The thing is that having become a highly positioned theatrical bureaucrat after the 1917 revolt, Andreeva discouraged mentioning her last name (she lived apart from her husband since 1905 when she fled abroad with M. Gorky.) Instead, she preferred to be addressed to by the first name and patronymic.

6. This feature is especially prominent in the original Russian text of *The Master and Margarita*.
7. In the early versions of *The Master and Margarita* the so called 'Jerusalem chapters' were grouped together comprising a compact section. In the ultimate version, Bulgakov separated them with the 'Moscow chapters' in an apparently random way. Within the traditional ('optimistic') interpretation of the content of the novel such pattern cannot ever be explained. That interpretation ignores the fact that the text of *The Master and Margarita* contains description of destruction of Moscow when the Woland's gang leaves the city. (The collapse of Moscow was described more explicitly in the 1938 version of the novel.) An attentive reading reveals that Bulgakov has described a global disaster rather than a 'happy-end'. In that case, the pattern according to which Bulgakov placed the 'Jerusalem chapters' among the 'Moscow' ones becomes evident: he pursued the aim of synchronizing the two events separated with nineteen centuries, and presenting them as being alike. The events in Jerusalem and in Moscow have been dated with the same weekdays, in both cases ending on Saturday. To stress the synchronization, Bulgakov describes the appearance of Levy Mathew in Jerusalem on Saturday, the next day after the crucifixion: when he was brought to Pilatus he was daubed with clay. When he appeared in Moscow before Woland that was on Saturday as well, and he was still daubed with clay.
8. The scholars have established the existence of such parallels for all other characters of *The Master and Margarita*, though their conclusions are the whole block of the 'Jerusalem chapters' serves as a macro characterizing the events in Soviet Moscow as a great tragedy comparable with the crucifixion of Christ. Contrary to the facts contained in the text, the officious Russian literary scholarship asserts that the main gist of *The Master and Margarita* is the maintenance of the idea of Moscow being *The Third Rome* (though not pronounced openly, the Russian Nationalists' thesis of the prominent role of Russia has been widely adopted by the majority of the Russian society. Be the literary scholars either pro- or post-Communists, they would hardly adopt an idea that by creating *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov's could pursue a contrary thesis.)